

“Journeying together Change for continuity”

The term “Synodality”, journeying together, is no longer a phrase unknown to all of us. We hear it frequently in the Church and from Pope Francis. Synodality is a term that the Church, for some time, has been pursuing with commitment to rediscover its profound meaning, to reappropriate a way of life constitutive of the people of God and to reawaken the fascination to be walking together.

What did Don Bosco do at Valdocco?

We know well that Don Bosco, from the very beginning of his mission in Valdocco, involved many lay people, friends and collaborators, so that they would participate in his mission among the young.

We (Salesians) were born and grew up historically in communion with the laity, and they with us. Indeed, we must emphasize the importance of the role of the young people in the development of the Salesian charism and mission.

Don Bosco found among his young people, his first collaborators, who thus turned out to be the co-founders of the Congregation.

Our theme is beautifully said: “change for continuity”

I would like to add another two more words:

“Change – Choice – Continuity – Commitment”

CHANGE:

“The young people of today are different when we were at their age” we often hear this sentence repeatedly. And it is true! And they must be different, because the surrounding factors are changing that could shape their views of the world differently.

Many of us here belong to Generation X, some belong to Millennials and a few to Generation Z. There is a temptation for us all to say that our generation is the best generation because we have lived and have experienced those years with our own lives. Jesus reminded us in the Gospel of Saint Luke: “No one after drinking old wine wants the new, for they say, ‘The old is better.’” (Lk 5:39)

When do we make our Association grow old? When we encase it in the past, hold it back or keep it at a standstill. As members, we should not stand apart from others. All

should be considered friends and neighbors with everyone. Yet at the same time we must dare to be different, to point to ideals other than those of this world, testifying to the beauty of generosity, service, perseverance, fidelity, pursuit of justice and the common good, love for the poor.

The Association attentive to the signs of the times, knowing the reality and the reason why the association has no attraction to the young and why the Association is not able to dialogue with the GEX...

The digital environment is characteristic of the contemporary world. It is no longer merely a question of using instruments of communication, but of living in a highly digitalized culture that has had a profound impact on ideas of time and space, on our self-understanding, our understanding of others and the world, and our ability to communicate, learn, be informed and enter into relationship with others. (CV 86)

The web and social networks have created a new way to communicate and bond. They are “a public square where the young (also the adults) spend much of their time and meet one another easily (CV 87)

We can't simply complain about the young of today is different from our youth. They are different but they are not bad. Youth are all the same because they are full of energy, they are open, quick to learn and very generous...

How did Don Bosco see the young people suffering in a changing society? And how did he respond to this situation?

When Marchesa Barolo saw Don Bosco was so busy with his oratorian boys and the health situation of Don Bosco was very bad, she advised him to take care of his health and do only what was strictly to his duty: run the Hospice, stop going to the prisons, and above all, shouldn't think of the abandoned boys.

Here comes to the word “**CHOICE**”

Stood in front of these two choices: Oratorio or Hospice. All of us know the answer of Don Bosco: “no one cares for these poor boys but I care”. Don Bosco chose the option for the poor and the abandoned. The option for the disadvantage is always priority no matter what may happen. Don Bosco could read the sign of the time and dedicated total his life for the young and ready to accept the consequences, the uncertainty is awaiting ahead but with great faith in the providence.

A great example of the faith of Mother Mary, she has always been a teacher for Don Bosco.

The choice of Mary, the young woman of Nazareth, to say “yes”, “be it done unto me”. Her ‘yes’ was the ‘yes’ of someone prepared to be committed, someone willing to take a risk, ready to stake everything she had, with no more security than the certainty of knowing that she was the bearer of a promise... Her yes and her desire to serve were stronger than any doubts or difficulties. (CV 44)

The choice of Don Bosco is to be with the young and to serve them. The choice to transform them into lambs.

The choice to dedicate total his life for the young: “For you I study, for you I work, for you I live, for you I am ready even to give my life” (SDB Const. 14).

CONTINUITY:

To keep in mind the mission, continue to fulfill the mission, continue to transform the young people by using the preventive system.

The term ‘loving kindness’ (amorevolezza) indicates that emotional involvement which constitutes one of the most characteristic aspects of the educational method of Don Bosco. It implies the creation of an educational environment permeated by the family spirit, by mutual confidence, easy dialogue, joy and friendship; by a life together, not only with regard to scholastic matters but also in the great variety of possibilities for the use of free time: sport, theatre, music, group activities, initiatives in the field of social service and the apostolate, etc.; in other words it implies that ‘oratorian atmosphere’ through which educational work becomes for the young what the Oratory was: ‘a home that welcomed, a school that prepared for life, and a playground where friends could meet and enjoy themselves’ (SDB Const. 40).

In such an atmosphere one can foster and accompany initiatives in which the youngsters themselves are the protagonists. (AGC 321, p. 22-23) p.26

COMMITMENT: to educate the young to holiness

The integral educative vision that we see incarnated in John Bosco is a realistic pedagogy of holiness. We need to get back to the true concept of ‘holiness’ as a component of the life of every believer. The originality and boldness of the plan for a ‘youthful holiness’ is intrinsic to the educational art of Don Bosco, who can rightly be called the ‘Master Of Youth Spirituality’.

Be committed to our daily witness by living the Salesian charism no matter we have different back ground of beliefs. We are all Don Bosco’s children.

Don Bosco invited all of us to share in the mission ‘do good to the young people...’ this invitation changes the direction of the Past Pupils from being loved to giving love; from receiving to giving... When we are in the mission, the focus is no longer to one’s own interest but the interest of the young people, for their benefit.

I would like to borrow Don Bosco’s word to remind you about your commitment: “One thing I urge you, my dear children, more than any other and that is: wherever you might be, always show yourselves to be good believers and honest citizens... Many of you already have families. So, share the education you received in Don Bosco’s house, with your nearest and dearest.”

This isn’t just about keeping true to our roots; it’s about bringing real energy to our mission and making a difference in the lives of those around us.

I conclude with this little thought: ‘A rule of nature’

Trees do not eat their own fruit

The sun does not shine on itself

And flowers do not spread their fragrance for themselves

Living for others is a rule of nature

We are all born, to help each other.

No matter how difficult it is...

Life is good when you are happy.

But much better, when others are happy because of you.

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