

SAINT JOHN BOSCO Rev. W. G. Austen S.D.B.

It has been often pointed out that a beneficent Providence sends into the world at precisely the most opportune time those specially chosen—and therefore specially gifted souls—who are to bring to it healing, strength, and newness of life. Examples abound, and the birth of John Bosco, who was destined to be the Apostle of the nineteenth century, at a most opportune moment, is but one more instance, even if a specially striking one.

In August 1815 the long reverberations of war had scarcely died away in Europe, for the Napoleonic campaigns had only just ceased. Scarcely had any country escaped their ravages, much less Italy, from North to South, from Milan and Venice to Rome. What chance had religious practices and training on the generations which grew up in those disturbed times! Or what prospect had the unsettled states of developing contented and prosperous peoples! Some at least of these problems were to be solved by the future Apostle of education, and of healthy industrial progress on a Christian basis. The child came into a devout Catholic family of peasant folk on August 16th, 1815, born just at the passing of the great Feast of the Assumption of Our Lady, as though she, too, his future patroness and intimate guide, had sent him as a gift to the world, which through him might be brought nearer in mind and heart to her Divine Son; and perhaps not without significance was he named John, for in some ways he was both a Precursor and an Evangelist, preaching the Gospel of truth, of virtue, and of duty.

His early home was not many miles away from the great city of Turin, which was destined to be the centre of his world-wide apostolic labours. Becchi, his native place, is but a hamlet, though now grown famous, and the cottages of John's family were small and meagrely equipped. His father died when he was only two, so that he was trained principally by his mother, Margaret Bosco, who, however, was clearly endowed with the qualities necessary to fit her to play her part successfully in the moulding of so wonderful a nature. It was she who gave John his earliest religious knowledge, who implanted the seeds which produced his vigorous and well-balanced character, who, all unknown to herself, prepared a worthy instrument that God would use in His own way, and in His own good time. But when the boy was nine years of age, his mother may have had a suspicion that his future was not quite what the rest of the family desired for him; that it lay not among the fields and barns, but in some greater work as yet not made clear to anyone. For at that early age John began to have what can only be regarded as a long and continuous series of visions, though they were styled by him merely dreams. And how significant, down to small details, was the first of these visions, and how well worth recording!—nay, it is the very key to his future apostolate. Here is the dream.

As he sleeps one night, he sees a large playground with lads at play; they are talking and laughing together, some indulging in unbecoming words and even using the Holy Name of God disrespectfully. To stop such conversation he rushes forward, about to deal out blows right and left. But suddenly a man of august presence appears; from his shoulders hangs a white cloak, and his face shines with a brilliant light. He calls John by name, telling him to be a leader and guide to the boys, to instruct them with gentleness and charity. Trembling with fear and confusion, John pleads that he is unable to undertake such a work, and as the boys begin to gather round the mysterious personage, John ventures to ask who he is. The personage seemed to evade the question and said:

"For the very reason that these things seem impossible to you, you must make them possible by

obedience and by acquiring the necessary learning."

"And how shall I obtain the necessary knowledge?"

"I will give you a teacher, under whose guidance you shall become wise, and without whom all wisdom is mere foolishness."

"But who are you, who speak in this mysterious manner?"

"You must ask my mother, and she will tell you."

"At that moment," John's narrative adds, "I saw beside him a lady of majestic mien, clothed in a mantle that shone all over with brilliants, as though it were studded with stars. As the person perceived that I was yet more confused, he signed to me to approach the lady, who took me kindly by the hand and said: 'Look!' And as I looked, I saw that the boys were no longer there, and their places were taken by a large number of animals of various kinds."

"Here is your field of labour," said the lady; "you must be humble, brave, and strong, and what you now see happen to these animals you must afterwards do for my sons."

"I looked round again, and lo! the animals had all been instantaneously changed into quiet lambs, which gambolled about the two personages. At this sight, I began to cry, exclaiming that I could not understand anything, and begging the lady to explain it to me. In reply she merely placed her hand on my head and said: 'You will understand everything in due time.' Then I awoke, and the dream had passed; but I seemed to be quite sure of its reality, and so clearly had I seen the successive actions, that it was not possible to sleep any more that night."

On the following morning John related his dream to the household. None gave any particular importance to it, except his mother, who said: "Who knows, perhaps you will become a priest!"

A Path Strewn With Thorns

John was one of those gifted boys to whom all things come with surety and ease. He was sturdy in growth, stronger than most boys of his age, quick at learning, and had a memory that seemed to retain with the utmost facility all that he read or studied; and yet withal was modest, frank, unassuming, and ready to assist everyone, both at home and outside. For such a promising boy the paths of study and intellectual attainment were surely open; he desired to become a priest, particularly that he might instruct other boys, whom he already perceived to be much neglected, and like sheep without a shepherd; the doors of the seminaries would therefore surely open to him. On the contrary, there seemed no means of obtaining the necessary education, and further advances towards the goal seemed quite blocked. His elder brother, a stepbrother, declared that John must take his share in the toils of the farm, and that learning or going to school was quite out of the question; nay, he made things so impossible that John had to go away to neighbouring farms to get work. This was indeed a period of severe trial, yet the boy persevered in his desires to become a priest, and waited with patient expectation upon the designs of Providence. He could adapt himself to any sort of work, whether in connection with the farms or various trades. In these occupations he picked up much knowledge and experience, which were of great service to him in after life, when his apostolate among boys had become a reality. Wherever he lived he exercised a youthful apostolate. He would draw the boys together, and sometimes their elders too, and instruct them in Christian doctrine; or entertain them with stories of the lives of the saints, or from the Bible; nay, he would reward them for their attention by some entertainment, in which

his gifts of conjuring and sleight-of-hand would astound the country-folk. A hymn or decade of the Rosary closed this new sort of religious service and while the people went their ways, wondering what so wonderful a boy would become, John returned thoughtfully to his farm or temporary occupation, waiting for a sign.

The obstacles mentioned above that prevented John from pursuing the usual courses of instruction, were only very gradually smoothed away, but eventually his school and seminary courses became possible. He was eminently successful in every branch of study, and was ordained on the vigil of Trinity Sunday, June 5th, 1841. His first Mass was celebrated in the church of St Francis of Assisi, for though the people for miles around his native place were anxiously awaiting his home-coming as a priest, he preferred to say his first Mass in retirement in Turin. He asked for the special grace of <efficacy of word>, so as to be able to do good to souls. His request must have been fully granted.

The Apostolate Of The Young

Though several appointments were ready for the newly ordained priest, he accepted the offer of Don Cafasso (now Beatified) to pass some time in higher ecclesiastical studies at the Institute in Turin which he directed. What part of their day was not devoted to study and spiritual exercises was employed in the labours of the sacred ministry, particularly in visiting hospitals and prisons. It is easy to see that in the last-named places the young priest would come into direct touch with transgressors of the law of all ages and conditions; he was drawn particularly to the young criminals, whose downfall was often due to lack of care and instruction, and to the influence of evil companions. He began to notice also that there were many youngsters, whose homes appeared to be the streets and squares; his ascendancy over youths and his winning way at once attracted these boys, but as yet he could make no arrangement to gather them together, as there were no premises available. For the present he continued his work and studies at the Institute, when quite unexpectedly there occurred one of those apparently casual incidents which prove to be the beginning of great developments.

The incident has often been related, and with good reason, for the Madonna of his first vision sent to him, on the Feast of her Immaculate Conception, his first boy. It was December 8th, 1841. The Servant of God felt more especially on that day a great desire to draw into a family those young friends of his among the boys, who so much needed a home and a protector. Now a home needs a loving mother, and Our Lady was to be both its mother and its protectress; and so it was precisely on the day sacred to her greatest glory that she wished the beginning of the Oratories to be made. The importance of this event was not lost on Don Bosco, for he records it fully in his memoirs. We may give it in brief, but according to his own description.

"On the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, I was vesting for Mass, and the Sacristan seeing a boy near asked him to serve. The boy replied, somewhat ashamed, 'I cannot.' The other insisted, and when the boy again refused, upbraided him roundly, and brought down the handle of his long feather-duster about the boy's head. The lad escaped as soon as possible, but I rebuked the Sacristan and sent him to call the boy back. On his return, I reassured him, and said that if he would stay and hear Mass, I would see him afterwards, as I had something particularly interesting to discuss. After my Mass and thanksgiving, I took him apart and questioned him. He was an orphan, and though already sixteen years old could neither read nor write, nor had he made his First Communion. He did not go to any instructions as he was too big for children's classes. 'If I

give you instruction alone, would you come?' 'Oh, very willingly.' 'Well, when shall we begin?' 'At once if you wish.'" Don Bosco knelt down to say a <Hail Mary>, before beginning, and to ask Our Lady for the grace to save that soul. What an efficacious prayer, and how pregnant of great things!

The instruction began with the Sign of the Cross, and lasted about half an hour. On parting, Don Bosco gave the boy a medal of Our Lady, and arranged for him to come on the following Sunday, and to this apparently very simple event the origin of the <Festive Oratories> is traced.

The Festive Oratories

The <Oratorio Festivo>—a term very inadequately rendered into English by the name <Festive Oratory>—was then the first work on behalf of the young which St John Bosco established. Its name only partly interprets its nature, for the great development of this very fruitful idea was perhaps not foreseen even by its originator. On a Feast of the Church it began, as related above; on Feasts—and that title includes Sundays—it was continued, and hence its appellation <Festive>. An Oratory suggests prayers, religious services, instructions, music, the celebration of the ritual of the Church—and all these had their place in the Oratory that Don Bosco began. In fact, that had been his main idea, viz., to be able to gather the boys, whether from street, home, or workshop, in order to be able to instruct them in a manner adapted to their special needs, and to bring them under the influence of the splendid Services of the Church, and to teach them to frequent the Sacraments, the source of spiritual life and strength. This he speedily achieved. The first boy, who will ever be connected with that Feast of the Immaculate Conception, brought others with him on the following Sunday, and Don Bosco found room for them at the church of St Francis of Assisi. But after two or three Sundays it was perfectly obvious that some other meeting place must be found. The numbers had increased beyond all expectation, and the ordinary Church services would be interfered with.

Don Bosco now began to display to the full his remarkable attraction for youths of all classes. They were drawn by his generous and devoted charity, which made any and every sacrifice for their welfare; his zeal knew no bounds his methods of organization were masterly and easily adaptable, his instructions were given with clearness and simplicity, his illustrations were abundant, his stories full of interest. His boys loved him as a father and benefactor, and attached themselves to him with an enthusiastic ardour. The enthusiasm of youthful hearts for Don Bosco may be seen from such an amusing scene as the following, which is indeed typical of the mirth and fun of which Don Bosco had an inexhaustible supply.

Passing one day near the market, he suddenly came across one of his Oratory boys, who had been buying things for his mother. Several homely articles were being carried carefully along, among them a glass of vinegar and a bottle of oil. As soon as the youngster saw Don Bosco, he began to jump for joy, and made towards him. The priest with a knowing smile said: "I wonder if you can do what I do?" And he began to clap his hands together. The boy, carried away with the pleasure and excitement of the meeting, placed the bottle under one arm and tried to imitate the clapping—but down with a crash went both bottle and glass. At the sound of the splintering on the pavement, the boy was overcome with fear, and as the tears came, he sobbed out that a good hiding awaited him when he got home.

"Oh," said the priest, "we can find a remedy for this little mishap; come along with me." He took

him into a shop near by, explained the accident to the proprietress, and asked her to provide the boy with things to make up for the others. The woman supplied the articles in a moment, quite taken by the generosity of the young priest, and the rather amusing plight of the youngster. She asked Don Bosco who he was, and on hearing his name she recognized the benefactor of the boys, and refused any payment.

Don Bosco enlisted the services of more educated boys and young men to help him in the instruction of others. To these he would give advanced classes in religious knowledge, would teach them Latin and Greek, and he set many of them on the way to ecclesiastical studies. Some were his future assistants and the nucleus of the Society which he afterwards formed.

The Oratory now became an established feature of the life of Turin and its neighbourhood. Every Sunday the boys would gather together at an early hour. They had opportunities for Confession, would then assist at Mass and an instruction, then breakfast, and then games. There would also be music classes, and lessons in Catechism to backward boys, while some would learn Latin or instruct other boys to serve Mass. At noon, some would go home for a meal and come back in the afternoon, others had provided themselves with some simple food, and would stay with Don Bosco all the time. In the afternoon there were games, until the time for the religious instruction and Benediction. After a few weeks they learnt to sing Vespers, and soon the functions of the Church became the foremost feature of the day. In the evening when the weather allowed, games continued till dark, or perhaps a walk to some neighbouring village church or sanctuary was arranged. When the walk developed into an excursion into the country, as it not infrequently did, Don Bosco would borrow a horse from a friend, to carry the refreshments, or even a donkey; and for a part of the journey the boys would insist on his riding, while they carried the provisions, and led the horse by the bridle, and trotted along by its side. Nothing was gayer than the company as it strolled along the pleasant byways, and interspersed the joyous talk with hymns or litanies, or recited the Rosary and other prayers. The shades of night fell all too soon upon the Oratory's Festive Day.

But it was far from being all gaiety. The good work done among the boys aroused the hatred of the enemy of souls, and even of many persons endowed with the customary amount of human wisdom. But the lack of some suitable building and permanent meeting place was Don Bosco's chief source of anxiety. He gathered the boys wherever he could. He had accepted a chaplaincy to a hospital, and this had some vacant rooms which he used as a temporary chapel; but soon it was found too small and inconvenient. Was there perchance an ancient church not in use—he would take it, until ejected by prejudiced authority, or by the clamours of residents in the neighbourhood.

In connection with one of these obstructions to his work, there was an occurrence which seems remarkably like a clear intervention on the part of Divine Providence, and produced an extraordinary and salutary impression. During his searching for an assembly place, Don Bosco heard that the church of St Peter-in-Chains was free on Sunday afternoons. He approached the chaplain and obtained from him permission to use the church and grounds. The whole of the Oratory therefore assembled at St Peter's on the following Sunday afternoon, but Don Bosco had not prepared against an unknown but formidable enemy. When play had been in progress a short time, there appeared in their midst the chaplain's housekeeper, a servant of the old style, and not lacking in the gift of strong, expressive language. She abused Don Bosco and his boys in downright style, threatened them with all sorts of penalties when the chaplain returned (for he happened to be out that afternoon), and defied them ever to return again. The position was a

delicate one. The boys gathered round their father and friend, much amazed at this attack; he, however, took the insult quietly and gave directions that they should go into the church for their instruction and service, and that they must afterwards disperse to their homes. This was carried out, and as they left, the irate woman hurled after them her last "good riddance!"

The sequel is sad, but contains something of awe in the swift and complete retribution. As soon as the chaplain returned, his housekeeper gave her version of the afternoon's proceedings, and at her persuasion he wrote to the Municipal authorities, asking them to prevent Don Bosco and his boys from coming to the district again. It was his last letter! A few hours after he had written it, he was suddenly brought to death's door by an apoplectic stroke, and died within three days; a similar fate befell the housekeeper two days later, so that before the week was out, these two, who had opposed the Oratory, chiefly out of blind prejudice, were removed from the scene. On the preceding Sunday Don Bosco had said that neither the chaplain nor his housekeeper knew if they would be there themselves on the following Sunday. His remark looks singularly like a prophecy.

After many disappointments at not being able to get any suitable place, Don Bosco rented a field. It was used for recreation and instructions, but for Mass and services the boys marched to some convenient church, usually in some village not far away. Arriving at a Franciscan church one day, the bells pealed out a merry chime of welcome. Who had rung them? Or who had ordered them to be rung? An exhaustive examination could discover nobody. It was traditionally held that guardian angels had produced the strains of welcome.

The field began to show signs of wear. The owner therefore gave Don Bosco notice, and now there really seemed no hope. Who can realize the anxiety he suffered, while passing through these early years of uncertainty and opposition; for not only was he refused a place to hold the Oratory in, but the civil authorities and even his fellow priests urged him to abandon so difficult and so unusual an undertaking. Pressure of all sorts was brought to bear, but happily he had behind him the approval of Mgr. Franzoni, the Archbishop of Turin. Don Bosco was ever the champion of ecclesiastical authority, and also of civil authority, and amid all his anxieties at this critical time the sanction of the Archbishop was his one source of encouragement. The clergy of Turin objected to the methods he employed, rather than to the good work itself. In their conversations with him he had not only defended his work, but had ventured to hint that immense developments lay before it, and that he already saw it great and flourishing. In saying this he was drawing upon knowledge vouchsafed to him in his mysterious dreams, but it was not likely that practical men would attach any importance to such intangible things. Don Bosco was clearly becoming demented, they said, nay he was already so; therefore why not have him removed to a mental home? How a couple of his ecclesiastical well-wishers attempted to convey him to a mental hospital, and how they were themselves conveyed and consigned to it instead of him, is one of the most amusing incidents of those days, and led both friends and enemies to drop the idea that Don Bosco was losing his senses.

In the meantime the notice to quit the field was fast expiring. It was Palm Sunday, April 5th, 1846, when the boys and their father gathered together for what they all knew was to be the last time in the field. Anxiety was noticeable in Don Bosco's face and manner. He walked apart as though abandoned. He was weighing the call of God, all the good that the Oratory had accomplished for the crowds of boys, his hopes for the future—all this against the persuasion of friends, the opposition even of the good, the failure of so many attempts, and the last blow, heavier in some ways than the others. He returned presently to the main group of boys, and they

recited the Rosary together to obtain from Our Lady some much needed help. The Rosary was scarcely said when a man entered the field, and on enquiring for Don Bosco he was introduced to the priest. He was the saviour of the situation. He had heard that Don Bosco needed a place for the boys to meet in. He had one; would Don Bosco come and see it? He went and saw, not only with haste, but with eagerness and amazement at the swift answer to their prayers. But lo! He was led to a poor shed, or barn, and it had none of the requirements of a place for the services of the Church. The owner said he would put it into a habitable condition within a week, and on receiving the assurance that it would be ready Don Bosco closed the bargain, relying on friends, who never failed, to send the money. By a miracle of labour the place was transformed within a week, and the Oratory celebrated the resurrection of Our Lord in their newly risen chapel—a chapel lowly, cramped, ill-suited; but it was a foothold, secure and permanent, and round it grew up by expansions and developments the immense Salesian Mother House, the world-renowned Oratory of Turin, at the period of its erection an object of wonderment, but then only existing in the mind of Don Bosco, only seen in vision, looming out of the darkness of the future.

Once a permanent dwelling was secured, all things seemed possible. The Sunday gatherings in and around the chapel—for there was some ground attached—assumed larger and larger proportions, other buildings were gradually acquired or erected, and there was a probability of realizing Don Bosco's early dreams. Opposition, however, was by no means at an end. Even so sagacious a man as the Marquis Cavour, father of the great Italian statesman, and at that time Mayor of Turin, persuaded himself that these gatherings of boys and young men were a menace to the good order of the city. Don Bosco used every argument; in vain; only the intervention of the Archbishop saved him. The Marquis then decided to send police to the Sunday meetings, to keep order and to report. They came, and they stayed to pray. The Marquis therefore gradually dropped his ill-advised campaign. Don Bosco was also attacked openly by emissaries of the Waldensian Sect. These extreme Protestants had obtained a foothold in Northern Italy, and by recent proclamations had freedom of worship like all other sects. This they abused by carrying on vast efforts at persistent proselytizing. Don Bosco countered their attacks by preaching and by issuing pamphlets of Christian Doctrine. He was eminently successful—no one could be a more astute or courageous champion of the Church, and the sectaries saw their plan defeated, their money wasted, their ambitions shattered. They hired assassins who shot at Don Bosco while he was giving Catechism. His cassock was torn, but he was unhurt. He continued to instruct, and made a joke out of the ill—success of the shot and the unskilfulness of the shooters. It was in connection with this persistent campaign against his life that there occurred the wonderful and quite inexplicable appearances of Don Bosco's dog. This fine animal, named Grigio, was natural enough to look at, but quite otherwise in regard to the suddenness of his appearances and disappearances. He would appear by the side of Don Bosco when danger lurked, would accompany him to the Oratory, see him safely in, and then go away and disappear as mysteriously as he had come. He saved Don Bosco from ruffians on several occasions; on one of these, two burly, hired ruffians had already sprung upon the priest, at a spot some distance from the city; but no sooner had they done so, when the immense dog, with a bark well calculated to inspire fear in anyone, leapt upon them, dragging them to the ground, and apparently about to tear them to pieces. Don Bosco had to call him off, in order to save the would-be assassins from the results of their own nefarious action. The dog obeyed Don Bosco immediately, and walked beside him till he reached the vicinity of the Oratory. Several times when danger was about, the fine animal appeared by the side of Don Bosco and thus protected him from harm.

The Oratory Boarding School

It has been seen that Don Bosco had gathered around him a regular army of boys, who visited his Oratory regularly on Sundays and Feast-days, and many of them came also on the week-day evenings after their school or work. He soon discovered that much of the good that was done on Sunday was lost during the week, from the unfortunate surroundings in which many were placed. He therefore decided to have a certain number in his house, and by acquiring neighbouring property he was able to establish a school, where the boys were trained under his fatherly care and religious guidance. His own mother became the mother to this family, and her maternal interest was exercised in all manner of ways, so that it is difficult to see how these early stages of the Oratory could have been successfully passed without her invaluable aid.

Don Bosco was much more than the Director of the House. He had acquired a knowledge of several trades, during the varied occupations of his boyhood; now they were all useful, and he could teach others, until regular trade masters were formed or could be engaged to teach. In this work, as well as in the Sunday Oratories, Don Bosco developed his own method of training and supervision. He called it the <Preventive System>, because by exercising a fatherly and considerate supervision and direction, he anticipated any likelihood of mischief and obtained the maximum of goodwill. There was daily Mass and frequent reception of the Sacraments, for he regarded this religious formation as fundamental. Thus the youths gained a conscientious responsibility, were trained early in good habits, received counsel and correction at opportune moments, while their day's work was interspersed with recreation and their leisure time engaged in such interesting and educative pursuits as instrumental and vocal music, and giving theatrical representations, suitable to their age and talents. Don Bosco himself was music-master, playwright, and producer, though these positions were soon taken over by the boys themselves, many among whom had talents of a high order. Thus the Technical school came into being. They produced numbers of first-class craftsmen, master-builders, printers, architects, and suchlike, and thus did Don Bosco produce generations of Christian citizens, who were an honour to the state, and an influence for stability, endeavour, and progress. It was well said, that while there were thousands of doctrinaire reformers with panaceas for the troubles of the rising democracy, Don Bosco was realizing more than they hoped for by his sane, religious training of the young, and by providing citizens with a practical, Christian outlook. His success as an Educator was now established. He had long perceived that a considerable number of his boys were more suited for intellectual pursuits than for manual crafts. Classes were therefore organized, and thus the Oratory had a combination of students and trade scholars, trained on the same lines, though towards different ends. Of these students many became priests. Don Bosco provided the seminaries, sadly depleted of students as a result of the long wars and the restrictions of new laws adverse to religion, with large numbers of young clerics, who gradually filled the gaps among the clergy, and were the mainstay of the Church in Northern Italy. Quite a number became Bishops and among the students of this time were the late Cardinal Cagliero, who was one of the first members of the Salesian Society, and a little later Cardinal Gamba, Archbishop of Turin.

The success of the student branch of his Oratory led to numerous demands for colleges elsewhere. But how could Don Bosco comply with such requests without trained staff to send to them? This had been thought of. The best and most reliable of his young assistants were gradually initiated by Don Bosco into the practices of piety and the mode of life, which would be characteristic of members of a religious society. Ecclesiastical sanction was given, and the young Religious Order was evolved. Don Bosco had seen in vision long ago priests and clerics among

his assistants, and now their gradual training and being gathered together into a religious society, under simple vows, seemed the most natural thing in the world. Strange to relate, one of the Ministers of State, who had been instrumental with his colleagues in passing laws abolishing Religious Orders, during the period of irreligion and anti-clericalism in Italy, now came forward to advise Don Bosco as to how to form a Religious Society, which should be in keeping with the new Constitution in Italy, and with the modern trend of affairs. Don Bosco was quite capable of doing this himself, and had long given much thought to the best way of forming a band of religious assistants for his work; but he was pleased to accept good advice from any source, and particularly from so authoritative a minister, who in spite of misguided notions and actions in regard to laws affecting religion, had the clarity of vision to see that Don Bosco's work involved immense and far-reaching consequences and would be one of the saving influences among the rising generations.

When the young members of this religious band had successfully come through their period of training and trial, they made their vows into the hands of Don Bosco, who in 1874 obtained the final approbation of the Salesian Society. Shortly after, he also secured the approbation of the Holy See for the religious Society of Nuns, which he placed under the title of Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. The Congregation was established and directed by Don Bosco for some time, and later on governed by the Superior Generals of the Salesian Society, until its organization was complete, and it assumed the direction of its own affairs. Its success has been one of the most striking religious developments of modern times. It was formed to do for girls what the Salesian Society, as an educational body, was doing for boys; for the Salesians were now already called upon to fulfil other duties towards the Church and society, besides their special work of education.

By the year 1874 Don Bosco had thus formed two religious bodies, both formed upon his plan, imbued with his ideas, and filled with his spirit. These great works had cost him much toil and anxiety, for during the later stages, as in the earlier ones of his apostolate, the enemy of souls continued to stir up opposition in many quarters. Sometimes it was the civil powers who, by ill-advised, restrictive laws, sought to abolish the educational status of his schools, and thus prevent him from having schools at all. Sometimes it was ecclesiastical authorities, who convinced themselves that certain dangers lay beneath Don Bosco's methods and popularity, or refused required faculties and sanctions. But in these latter difficulties Don Bosco always maintained a perfectly correct attitude, and relied upon the direction of the Supreme Pontiffs, with whom he was always in cordial relations. When the two religious bodies were established, he perceived the way opening for an advance into the Missions, for he had long desired to take part in the conversion of heathen peoples, and to spread the Kingdom of God and His Church in lands yet untrodden by the missionary. Nay he had seen <them >also in vision, and had foretold with precision what great developments would take place in certain far off lands, and how his sons would bring religion and civilization to many still benighted people.

The Queen And Patroness Of His Work Mary Help Of Christians

The summary given above has brought the reader rapidly through the chief decades of Don Bosco's work. An immense achievement had been accomplished. He had built up a House of Wonders at Turin, and the vitality of his creation had already reproduced the success of the Oratory, on a smaller scale, in many other places. It has been said that religious influences were

the chief forces relied on by him in his educational system and indeed the inculcation of religious principles and the regular practice of Christian duties, with the frequent reception of the Holy Sacraments, had resulted in marvellous transformations of wayward characters, and had produced thousands of Catholic citizens, prominent in practically all walks of life: his method had also trained saintly youths, who formed a band around him, as had been the case with several other founders of Religious Orders.

But above and around and within all this, there was another powerful, though gentle, influence. Our Lady had been with Don Bosco in his boyhood, had sent him his first pupil on the Feast of her Immaculate Conception, and was constantly by him in his labours and trials, directing and comforting him. Her hymns were the first songs of praise that rose from his boys, and her Rosary was their favourite devotion. She was their mother and patroness, their queen and heavenly guide; she was especially their source of help both spiritual and temporal, and hence they called her most frequently the Help of Christians. This title was the one that Don Bosco regarded as most efficacious for the modern needs of Christian peoples. He showed in pamphlet and discourse how the Mother of Jesus had ever been the champion of Christian peoples; how she had overcome Pagans and heretics and other enemies of the Church; how she had ever come to the aid of those who had recourse to her in need. Hence he made Mary Help of Christians the favourite title, under which he and his children would invoke her, and it proved a wondrous watch-word and protection and a treasure inexhaustible, producing innumerable favours and graces and creating another age of miracles.

The boys learned this devotion from their first contact with Don Bosco. The Ave Maria, the Salve Regina, the Angelus, the Rosary, the various hymns, her Office, her Feasts, her processions, her sodalities, novenas, and tridiums, all these made a crown of devotions, ever renewed and ever recurring as a theme of joyous music, pleasing to the Queen of Heaven, and compelling her, as it were, to bestow her choicest gifts. To Don Bosco himself Our Lady was a heavenly yet constantly attending guide and protectress. He consulted her as an ever responsive oracle; he knew that his apostolate was her specially protected work, he relied upon her ultimate assistance, though, in the meantime, he must travel, as she did, along the way of dolours. He was faithful and courageous and humble as she had been, on a higher plane of sacrifice. She had in him a perfect instrument, to fashion the young after the pattern of her Divine Son, and one who would bring to His Sacred Feet the youthful hearts He so much loved. <Ad Jesum per Mariam>.

The Help of Christians soon showed that her reign of power never ends. Apart from many strikingly clear answers to prayers during the early stages of the Oratory, Our Lady crowned her work by setting up with her own hands, as it were, the chief glory of the Oratory, the sanctuary named after her, the world-renowned Basilica of Mary Help of Christians

As with Don Bosco's other projects, there were all sorts of objections to the building of the new sanctuary. The place was unsuitable, said some; the church is not necessary, said others; it was far too ambitious a scheme, others thought; its proposed title was very objectionable, said one of the examining surveyors of the town council. Don Bosco quietly persisted. The foundation-stone was laid and the work begun. And then Don Bosco expected Our Lady to play her part, and this she did in a most remarkable fashion. The first of the great favours received through her intercession in connection with the building of this famous shrine is surely worthy of record. Indeed, as a fact in any history of devotion to Our Lady it would merit a prominent place. Its importance is made all the greater by the fact that it set the fashion, so to speak, and a series of similar favours granted through prayers to Mary Help of Christians began immediately and has

continued to the present day.

It happened that just when Don Bosco was in great need of a sum of money he was sent for to visit an invalid lady. She had been bedridden for three months, was unable to move, and was troubled by a racking cough and high fever; she was in great suffering.

When Don Bosco entered her room and had enquired about her illness, she said "If only I could regain a little of my health, there is no sacrifice I wouldn't make in return; it would be an immense relief if I could only get up."

"Then make a Novena to Mary Help of Christians," said Don Bosco.

"What prayers must I say?"

"For nine days you must say three times the Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory be to the Father to the Most Holy Sacrament, and three times the Hail Holy Queen to Our Lady Help of Christians."

"I shall willingly do that, and what charitable work shall I do besides?"

"If you think fit, and if you obtain some decided improvement, you could make an offering to the church of Mary Help of Christians, which has just been begun at the Oratory."

"Yes, indeed I will. If during the Novena I improve just enough to be able to get up and walk about my room, I shall make an offering to the church you speak of." On the last day of the Novena Don Bosco returned to visit the invalid, as he particularly needed a thousand francs that day, to pay the workmen.

As soon as the door was opened and the servant saw Don Bosco, she exclaimed, "My mistress is perfectly cured, and has already been out of the house several times." And then there came forward the lady herself, all happiness and enthusiasm. "I am cured," she said, "and I have already been to church to thank Our Lady. Come in and I shall give you the offering which I have already put by for you; it is my first, but it is by no means the last."

The Servant of God, without making much comment on the singular occurrence, took the packet from the lady, and opened it as soon as he reached home, for the demands upon him brooked no delay. It contained the thousand francs he required, neither more nor less.

From that day so many were the favours granted by Mary Help of Christians to those who sent offerings for the new church, that Don Bosco was able to say in all truth that the Madonna had built it herself. They came from all parts of Europe, and from all classes of persons. His secretary at the time states that in one week it was a common thing for Don Bosco to receive hundreds of letters, and sometimes there were thousands, all asking for his blessing and prayers, and for the assistance of Mary Help of Christians. Wherever he went there were always crowds of people to hear his preaching and conferences, and to obtain from him the blessing of Our Lady.

Just about this time there was a very singular manifestation of the power of Mary Help of Christians in quite a different manner from the many cures, and the solutions of difficulties, and the obtaining of requests, which had been granted in answer to prayer. In response to a pressing invitation from generous Co-operators, Don Bosco went to Montemagno to preach a triduum before the feast of the Assumption. At Montemagno it happened that there had been a long drought; a brilliant, burning sky had refused rain for over three months, and neither private nor public prayers could obtain any. The first evening of the Triduum, when he entered the pulpit, Don Bosco said:

"If you will come to the sermons during the Triduum, and if you will make your peace with God by a good confession, if you will prepare to celebrate the coming feast of Our Lady by a general Communion, I promise you in the name of Mary that abundant rain will come to refresh your parched fields."

Our Lady had spoken by the mouth of her servant. When he came down from the pulpit and went into the sacristy, he noticed that the people watched him very curiously, and the parish priest said to him, "Oh, bravo! I shouldn't have your courage."

"What courage do you mean?"

"The courage to announce in public that rain will infallibly come on the day of the Feast."

"And did I say that?"

"Certainly, you used these precise words: 'In the name of Mary Most Holy, I promise you that if you make the Triduum well you shall have rain!'"

"Surely not; you must have misunderstood, I don't remember to have said it." "Ask any of those present and you will see." In fact the people had all heard and understood the promise, and the confessionals were crowded. There were not enough confessors for the large number of penitents.

Don Bosco continued to preach the Triduum, and as he went to or from the church the people would say to him: "When is the rain coming?"

He would reply, "Be sure to make a good confession."

On the morning of the Feast of the Assumption the general Communion was the most numerous within memory and the weather was as fine and serene as ever. That day Don Bosco was at lunch with the Marchese De Maistre, who had been chiefly instrumental in arranging the Triduum, but before the meal was over he rose and went to his room. He was in some anxiety, because his words had raised such expectations.

The bells of the church rang for Vespers, and the service soon began. Don Bosco was in the sacristy, looking out of the window, as though enquiring of the sky if it would never rain. The heat seemed unbearable. What could he say in the pulpit if the Madonna did not grant the favour?

A gentleman named Signor Porta, who afterwards became a Salesian priest, relates that he accompanied the Marquis to the church that afternoon, and they were talking of the promised rain; they were perspiring heavily, and wiping their brows, although it was not more than ten minutes' walk from the house to the church. They went into the sacristy first, and there they saw Don Bosco waiting. The Marquis said to him: "This time Don Bosco has gone a bit too far. He promised some rain, and there is anything but that." Then Don Bosco called the sacristan and sent him out to look round the country and see if there were any signs of rain. He went, and after a short time returned and said: "The sky is as clear as a looking-glass, but over towards Biella there seems to be a tiny little cloud, as big as the print of a shoe." Was it to be like the little cloud of Elias, no bigger than a man's hand. "Very well," answered Don Bosco, "give me the stole." Others who were in the sacristy said: "And suppose it doesn't rain after all?" "It will be a sign that we do not merit it," replied Don Bosco.

When the Magnificat was sung, he slowly went up the steps of the pulpit, saying in his heart to Our Lady, "It is not my reputation that is at stake at this moment, but yours. What will the mockers of your power say, if they see that the hopes of all these people, who have done their

part, are deluded in the end?"

The multitude of people who had filled every corner of the church fixed its gaze upon him. When the Hail Mary was said it seemed to him that the light of the sun was dimmed a little. He began the opening phrases of his sermon, and then in the distance there were heard long, deep peals of far-away thunder. A murmur of joy passed over the immense congregation. The servant of God paused a moment, and a downpour of rain was heard breaking on the windows. The sermon became a hymn of praise to Mary, and words of hope and consolation to the people.

After the Benediction the people stayed in the church or in the porch, as the rain was still coming down in torrents. The miracle was recognized on all sides, the more so because at Grana, a neighbouring village, where they had mocked at Don Bosco's prophecy, there fell a storm of hailstones so terrible, that it destroyed all their crops, while not a hailstone fell outside that village.

The devotion to Mary Help of Christians has been taught and practised wherever the work of Don Bosco became known, wherever there were Salesian Co-operators, and in the far-away Missions. It continues to spread and to obtain wonderful answers to prayer, scarcely less abundant or less wonderful than in the days of Saint John Bosco himself.

The Science Of The Saints

It may be well to turn our attention away from the exterior life for a time, and briefly consider the interior life of the Servant of God. The eulogy passed upon the virtues of Don Bosco by the Sovereign Pontiff Pius XI, at the time of the Beatification, are a complete and authoritative testimony.

Union with God was habitual with him, even in the midst of the most absorbing occupations. Whether at home or abroad, in carriage or train, his discourse breathed the love of God, and was full of desire to increase His glory. His life was a continual prayer, an uninterrupted union with God. Faith—was thus one of the virtues most clearly observed in him, a Faith that led him ever to seek the glory of God in all the marvellous works which he undertook. This high degree of Faith fostered his burning devotion to the Most Holy Sacrament and to the Mother of God, who was so closely associated with his apostolate; it accounts for his devotion to the Guardian Angels and the Saints, for his veneration for the Church and its Supreme Head, towards whom he ever manifested supreme loyalty and devotion. While at prayer his outward demeanour was neither exaggerated nor affected, it was perfectly reverent and showed that he was absorbed in the presence of God. Those Salesians who worked with him were convinced that he spent many hours of the night and sometimes whole nights in prayer. At the Altar he was always most exact and devout, and all who assisted at his Mass were struck by his devotion and attention. During the Holy Sacrifice he was often moved to tears of joy and pious emotion, and at times seemed quite rapt in ecstatic prayer.

It would follow from his ardent faith that Don Bosco was a most zealous seeker after souls, and some of the previous pages have made this clear. Nay, his very motto declares it: <Da mihi animas, caetera tolle>. "Give me souls, take all else away." This inspired those unwearied labours in the Sunday Oratories which gradually undermined even <his> robust constitution. Rest he knew not. "As long as Satan contrives to entrap souls, so long must I combat him." His zeal for the cultivation of ecclesiastical vocations is only another expression of this. He was one of the greatest of all promoters of vocations, and he had special gifts from God to make him eminently

successful in discovering and training them. Not only did he form all the early members of his own Society, but he provided the Seminaries with students and the secular clergy with new numbers, so sorely needed in that period of persecution and difficulty.

This zeal in the training of vocations was an object ever near to his heart, and uppermost in his mind and thoughts, and frequently recommended to his Co-operators; it was the reason for his institution of a special branch or section of Salesian work, which would be devoted particularly to saving and training vocations among young men, who had not had an opportunity of early studies, and had realized later in life that God called them to the Sacred Ministry. It will be seen from this, that Don Bosco had fostered, some fifty years ago, the work of the "<Late Vocations>" or "<Young Priests>" so zealously promoted nowadays.

But to have a more correct idea of the merit of a soul, it is necessary to know something of the degree of humility it has reached. In Don Bosco humility was so profound that it emanated from his whole person. On making his acquaintance, one would be surprised at the modesty and simplicity of this unassuming priest, whose name was known the world over. He never attributed anything to himself. In reference to obviously wondrous results he would say: "By the grace of God, we have been able to do so and so." Without knowing Don Bosco, a gentleman came to the Oratory one day, desiring to recommend some deserving boy to the Superior. He treated with Don Bosco as though he were some assistant come in to deal with the case, and went away under that impression. The Servant of God saw no necessity for enlightening him. If anyone referred to him as an extraordinary man, or a saint, he would smile and turn the matter aside by a joke, and never allowed anything to escape him which might suggest any reasons for believing such things. Indeed, he sought to hide all appearances of superiority, and the gifts he had received were known to very few. To gain vocations, or to encourage his followers, he would sometimes refer to what Divine Providence had accomplished, but never allowed a hint that he, personally, had achieved anything.

Of the other virtues, practised also in a high degree, many examples might be given. He is known as the "Apostle of the young," and therefore we should not omit particular mention of his zeal on their behalf. To one of his priests he wrote: "Almighty God has sent me to the young; therefore I should be sparing of my efforts in other directions, and keep my strength for them." In his preface to his "Book of Devotions for Youth," he tells the boys that others might write more learnedly for them, but no one could do so with greater affection, or have a stronger desire for their true happiness.

What a wonderful incident was that which occurred when he sought, and eventually obtained to the general surprise—from the Minister of Home Affairs—permission to take out for a day in the country all the youths detained in a place of public correction! The story has been narrated by many authors; for the influence over the young that it reveals in the Servant of God has perhaps never been equalled. In those days of harsh penal measures, it was even a finer and bolder adventure than it would be in our more philanthropic days. But the true affection of his all-consuming charity drew Don Bosco to these unfortunate youths, and no effort would he spare on their behalf. Under his care they flocked out of the gates of their institution, they had a glorious day in the country, and all returned to their place of detention in the evening, full of gratitude towards the zealous priest, and with generous resolutions to redeem the past.

His own boys of the Oratory, whether in study or workshop, and the boys of the various colleges, had unbounded confidence in him, and he possessed their love, admiration, and undying

attachment. Wherever he went, youths of all sizes and ages were immediately drawn into his company, as though by some secret attraction unperceived by others, but irresistible to them. The system of education evolved by Don Bosco was wholly based on gentle consideration and zealous care, and was founded upon the teaching of Holy Scripture and of the Catholic Faith. He maintained that the moral character can only be rightly and fully trained with the aid of the Holy Sacraments, which can apply a remedy for mistakes and falls, and can provide the strength for building up good habits and complete characters.

The gifts of the Holy Spirit were abundantly bestowed upon him, especially Wisdom and the virtue of Prudence. As a counsellor he was sought on every side. He was engaged for long hours in giving audiences, and an eminent Jesuit declared that the self-restraint and fatigue which these continual audiences entailed, would alone suffice to show that his virtue was heroic. It was ever the same, whether he was in Turin or away from it. People came from long distances to seek advice, or to get relief and consolation in the midst of their troubles, to ask for his prayers and blessing. Persons of all classes and ranks came for interviews, including Cardinals and Ministers of State. He dealt with all, with his customary modesty and frankness; he was courteous alike to poor and lowly, as to the rich and noble.

Some reference has been made to the vast works which he initiated on behalf of religion and society, and these serve to bring out very prominently his unbounded confidence in God. The unending series of difficult undertakings was carried through by his illimitable trust in Divine Providence and he referred all that was accomplished to the goodness of God. Cardinal Cagliero, one of his most intimate associates in all the early Salesian work, and a witness of perfect competence and reliability, describes Don Bosco's confidence as being on a gigantic scale. The description of the wonderful ways in which his needs were met through supernatural aid makes some of the most interesting, as well as the most perplexing, pages in his biography. We have space for only one instance which is typical.

Early in the year 1858 he had a heavy debt to pay and as usual no resources. The creditor had already given ample time, but had fixed January 20th as the last possible date. On January 12th Don Bosco recommended his needs to the prayers of his boys, and he appointed some to go to the church to pray before the Blessed Sacrament, while he went into the city to see what could be done. While walking in the town, a man, who was a perfect stranger to him, addressed him thus: "Oh, Don Bosco, is it true that you are in need of money?" "In great need," he replied. "Yes, just as I thought," said the stranger. "Well, here is something for you." So saying he handed him a packet containing a large sum of money. Don Bosco very naturally began to make enquiries as to who his benefactor was, but was quietly assured that the donor wished to remain unknown, and only asked for a remembrance in his prayers.

But wonderful things happened daily in the life of Don Bosco, so that it was a tissue of wonders, or, as the Holy Father said at the time of the Beatification, one continued miracle. He had always the gift of prophecy, if in that term we are prepared to include, not only a foretelling of the future, but also a vision of things actually happening in distant places. He predicted the stability and immense development of his work, just when there was a storm of persecution raging against it; and many years before the buildings of the Oratory arose, he had foretold its construction and appearance even in detail. He foretold also public events, the rapid recovery of many who were ill, and the imminent deaths of several great personages. During many years not a pupil of the Oratory died without his foretelling it quite a long time before. And so the story of wonders might go on and on.

Last Labours

One of his latest undertakings of special importance was the building of the Sacred Heart Church and Institute at Rome, a work undertaken by the express wish of His Holiness Pope Leo XIII. It was consecrated by the Cardinal Vicar on May 14th, 1887, and this happy completion of the project seemed a fitting crown to his life of labour and sacrifice for Our Divine Lord. His health had now become quite broken, and extreme weakness followed any exertion; yet he never ceased to direct his world-wide Society, and to dictate letters and appeals to the Cooperators. On December 4th, 1887, he said Mass for the last time. On the 6th he was supported into the Sanctuary of Mary Help of Christians to assist at the touching ceremony of the Departure of the Missionaries; and how the crowds flocked round him when it was over! On the 7th there arrived the chief leader of his Missionaries, Mgr. Cagliari, and also the Bishop of Liege, who came to get Salesians for that city. Don Bosco was much afraid that lack of staff would prevent his accepting this new work, but during the night he was assured of its success by Our Lady, and he therefore told the Bishop that the House would be opened. He lingered on over Christmas and into the early part of 1888.

On January 29th, the Feast of the Patron of the Society, he received Holy Communion for the last time, and then fell into a state bordering on unconsciousness. He passed away in the early morning of January 31st, surrounded by the chief Superiors of the Society, who were overwhelmed at the magnitude of the loss. That very morning, just after his death, Don Bosco appeared to several sick persons, to give them consolation and relief. His passing was mourned by all countries, his obsequies were more like a triumph than a funeral.

So wondrous a life was speedily to place Don Bosco among the venerated Servants of God. His Cause was begun in the local Curia as early as June 4th, 1890, two years after his death, and was formally introduced by the Sacred Congregation of Rites on July 23rd, 1907. His Beatification took place on June 9th, 1929, amid scenes of enthusiasm almost without parallel. Since that time, many remarkable favours have been received through his intercession, and two of them were declared by the Sacred Congregation of Rites to be miracles of the first class. This prepared the way for the Canonization, which took place on Easter Sunday, April 1st, 1934. There were again scenes of great enthusiasm, such as few Canonizations have evoked, and the rejoicing of the whole Catholic world paid a striking tribute to the love and devotion which he had inspired in so many hearts.

To the foregoing brief account of Don Bosco's life, there is here added a rapid glance at the vast work which claims him as its Founder and Father. At the time of his death it was established in many places both in Europe and America. During the twenty-two years of his first successor, Don Michael Rua, the number of houses increased from sixty-four to three hundred and forty-one, and were opened in all the principal countries of the old and new world. These new foundations were made at the request of persons in the highest authority, including the Sovereign Pontiffs themselves, and the chief personages in various States. In more recent years the development in Europe and in the missions has continued, the missionary demand being now the more insistent, and its supply being one of the chief anxieties of the Holy Father.

In coping with these demands, the resources of the three main parts of Don Bosco's work are severely taxed. The Salesian Society and the Nuns of Mary Help of Christians are concentrating more and more upon the increase and training of new members, so that the ever growing

developments may accomplish their beneficent purposes, and the hopes of the Church may not be frustrated. The Salesians and the Nuns have received the main share of the inheritance of Don Bosco—an inheritance of labour for the salvation of souls—by an apostolate that has such varied forms of work that it appeals to all classes.

The Superiors of any of the Salesian Houses will readily advise any applicants for admission into the Society, or they may apply direct to the V. Rev. Fr. Provincial, Salesian College, Battersea. The Apostolate among the young, both at home and in the Mission field, gives scope for the labours of Priests, Teachers, and Lay-Brothers, and there is an immense amount of good work ready for those labourers who will enter the vineyard of the Lord. The Nuns of Mary Help of Christians will also welcome postulants. The English-speaking world, especially in the Missions, has constant need of the ministrations of the Sisters, whether in schools, work-rooms, hospitals, or Sunday Oratories. The chief house in England is at Chertsey, where the Mother Provincial will be pleased to receive applications:—The Convent, Eastworth Road, Chertsey.

Saint John Bosco had from the very beginning of his work the assistance of many friends among the Clergy and Laity. Indeed it was to them, under God, that he owed the development of his work, and he sought always to increase the number of his co-workers, or Co-operators as they were called. He united them into a great body of Associates, with the approval and blessing of the Sovereign Pontiffs, who, in fact, placed themselves at the head of the list of members, and who gave largely from both their spiritual and material resources.

The Salesian Co-operators have rapidly grown into one of the most numerous and most widely spread Catholic Associations. They have the status of a Third Order of the Church. Pope Pius IX, and Pope Leo XIII, under which two Supreme Pontiffs Don Bosco developed and exercised his great Apostolate, both perceived that the new Association of Salesian Co-operators was destined to achieve a vast amount of good, both for the Church and for Society for they would work in close co-operation with the Salesians would promote their works of charity and religion, would themselves take part in Sunday Oratory work and in the apostolate of the Press, would pave the way for new undertakings, would assist the Missionary enterprises particularly by their financial support (since these vast religious expeditions cost large sums of money), and, in short, would be apostles in their own sphere of action, and participate in the merit of all that Salesians were accomplishing in every part of the world, in all the years to come.

The Association has been joined by the Sovereign Pontiffs, by Cardinals and Bishops, and by thousands of the Clergy, for it is an Association which enrolls all in the service of charitable and religious enterprise: these leaders of the Church have been followed by an immense army of the laity, including all ranks of society, and both sexes. No wonder the Popes have given special blessings and indulgences to the Association of Co-operators, and encouraged them to work wholeheartedly in the many good works which modern needs demand. Needless to say the members are daily remembered in the prayers of the Salesians and Nuns, and have a share in the Holy Mass offered daily in the Sanctuary of Our Lady Help of Christians for all the Co-operators. On their behalf, as a matter of fact, Saint John Bosco obtained some of his most wonderful favours, and still continues to shower his blessings upon them. The interest of Pius XI in the Cooperators was manifested over and over again; but perhaps it was most strikingly shown in the great spiritual favour given them, through our Superior General, at an audience on June 6th, 1922. This favour is a special Indulgence granted for sanctified work, viz.

"To the Salesians, the Nuns of Mary Help of Christians, their Co-operators, pupils and past

pupils, every time that they sanctify their ordinary work by some pious invocation or ejaculation.[1] We grant an indulgence of 400 days, and a plenary indulgence once a day, applicable also to the Souls in Purgatory."

The rules for joining the Association of Salesian Cooperators are simple. Circles have been established in most English-speaking countries, and application for membership should be made to the V. Rev. Fr. Provincial, Salesian College, Battersea, London, S.W.II.

Co-operators and friends and admirers of the work of St John Bosco may desire to join in a great memorial to his honour and memory in England. Such a memorial is already in existence and it is one that he would willingly accept as being after his own heart. It is no other than the new Salesian Missionary College, recently opened at Shrigley Park, Macclesfield, Cheshire. As being especially dedicated to the newly canonized Servant of God, it has become a centre of devotion to him. There some of his sacred relics are enshrined, and prayers are daily offered to him on behalf of the Society and its Co-operators. Readers are invited to send their petitions to be laid on his altar, and to ask for the prayers of the young students who are preparing to join with so many others in continuing Don Bosco's Apostolate. May he send many vocations to the College, and may he inspire many hearts to co-operate in providing the means to bring them to realization.

Endnotes:

1 No special words are required—the simple raising up of the mind to God fulfils the condition.

Saint John Bosco, By Rev. W.G. Austen S.D.B. Published by the Incorporated Catholic Truth Society, London, 1954.