

ASSOCIATION OF SALESIAN COOPERATORS SUO

THE CORD



”a three-ply cord is hard to break.”

Don Bosco

JANUARY 2025



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**“THE LORD ACCOMPANIES WITH THE
ABUNDANCE OF HIS GRACE ALL
THOSE WHO WORK IN THE SPIRIT OF
THE “DA MIHI ANIMAS, CETERA
TOLLE,” DOING GOOD TO YOUTH AND
TO ORDINARY FOLK.”**

~ PVA, Art. 41

FROM OUR COORDINATOR

Letter from the Province Coordinator

Alex del Carmen, Ph.D.

Dear Salesian Cooperators,

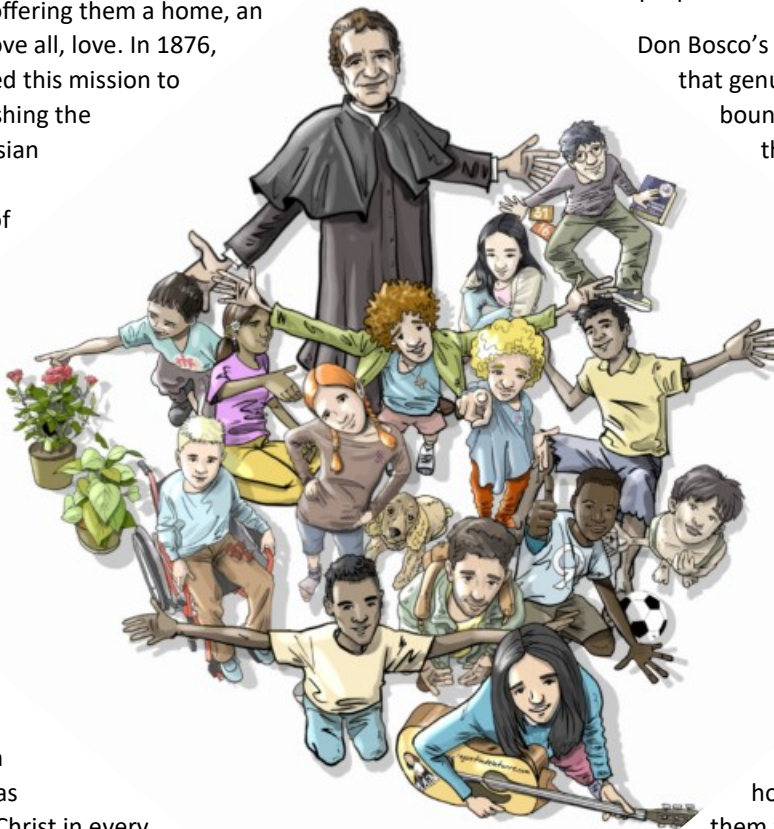
I invite you to pause and reflect on a vital aspect of our Salesian vocation: our love for the poor and for immigrants, and how this love is at the heart of our duty as Cooperators. From the very beginning, Saint John Bosco understood that loving the poor was not optional but essential. He founded the Salesian Society in 1859 specifically to help poor and migrant youth who were lost amid the upheavals of industrializing society. He walked the streets of Turin seeking out the abandoned, the orphaned, and the immigrant youth, offering them a home, an education, and above all, love. In 1876, Don Bosco extended this mission to the laity by establishing the Association of Salesian Cooperators with the same mission of educating and caring for the poor. We

are
heirs of
this legacy
of active
charity.

At the heart of Don Bosco's ministry was the recognition of Christ in every young person, especially in those most destitute or far from their native home. He often reminded us that "Constantly love the needy and the poor"—not in word only, but in concrete action. Don Bosco saw in the face of each poor boy the face of Jesus Himself. No one was a stranger to him; no child or youth was deemed "too poor" or "too foreign" to embrace. In

every vulnerable young person he served, he recognized an immortal soul and a precious life loved by God. This conviction gave birth to his tireless efforts: from sheltering homeless boys to teaching them skills, Don Bosco's whole life proclaimed that true religion is lived through charity. For Don Bosco, charity was a school of virtue. He demonstrated humility by living poorly himself, joy through simple encounters with youth, and total trust in God's providence to supply the needs of his mission. He created environments where young people could experience safety, the joy of being loved, and hope for a future full of purpose and grace.

Don Bosco's example teaches us that genuine love transcends all boundaries. In his time, many of those he helped were migrants from villages or other regions, feeling lost in a big city. Today, we encounter similar faces of Christ



in immigrant families and refugee children who arrive in our communities seeking hope. The Gospel calls us to see them with the eyes of Christ: "I was a stranger, and you welcomed me." Our Salesian charism likewise challenges us to see Christ in the young and the vulnerable, to accompany them with the tenderness of Mary, and to inspire them with the hope and trust that Don Bosco himself placed in God's plan. We are called to promote what has been called a

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FROM OUR COORDINATOR

“gospel culture of welcome, encounter, and healthy integration,” ensuring that those who knock at our door find not just services, but a family and a home in our presence. In Don Bosco’s words to his first missionaries, “Take special care of the sick, the children, the aged, and the poor, and you will gain the blessing of God and the goodwill of people”. This advice rings true for us today—our care must extend to all who are hurting or marginalized, including those who have left their homeland.

Let us also remember the special role of Mary Help of Christians in our spirituality. Don Bosco was an ardent devotee of Mary under this title, and he placed every project under her maternal guidance. He used to say that our Blessed Mother has done everything in his work. Just as Mary guided and supported Don Bosco in his mission to the poorest youth, she guides us in our mission of loving service today. In her, we find the strength and courage to persevere in this work. She who once experienced the hardship of being a refugee in Egypt with Joseph and the child Jesus knows the sufferings of the displaced. We can imagine Mary walking with each immigrant family, whispering comfort and hope. We trust that she intercedes for us and blesses our efforts, so that even our small acts of service bear great fruit in Jesus’ name. When the work is tiring or when discouragement creeps in, let us turn to Mary Help of Christians—our mother, teacher, and guide—confident that she will obtain for us the grace to love as Jesus calls us to love.

As we look around our communities, we see so many opportunities to practice this charity. The young immigrant student struggling to learn a new language, the single mother in poverty, the teenager without guidance or friendship – all of them are entrusted to us. Don Bosco would tell us that in serving them, we serve Jesus Himself. What a beautiful and challenging responsibility this is! But we do not bear it alone. We carry it together as a family, strengthened by the Holy Spirit. And we carry it with the support of Mary, who continues to pour out the grace of her Son upon our Salesian Family. Remember that our Founder believed in working together – Salesian priests, sisters, and cooperators, along with the young people themselves, all collaborating to build the Kingdom of God. In that same spirit of family, let us encourage one another in this mission. When one of us grows weary, let another lift them up. When one initiative struggles, let us all rally to support it. Unity in spirit and purpose will give us strength.

May God bless each of you abundantly as you carry out this beautiful mission. May He fill your hearts with peace and renew your zeal to serve Him in the young and the poor. Remember that in serving those most in need, you are serving Jesus Himself and sharing in the Church’s deepest calling. And remember that Mary Help of Christians walks with you; she will obtain every grace you need to persevere with joy. Don Bosco is surely smiling upon your efforts, and he intercedes for us from heaven as we press on in this work of love.

Wishing you and your families an abundance of grace and joy as we live out our calling. Let us continue to support each other in prayer and action, so that our Salesian family may be a living sign of God’s loving presence among the young, the poor, and the stranger.

In Don Bosco,
Alex del Carmen, Ph.D.
Province Coordinator, Western U.S. Province of Salesian Cooperators



OF SPECIAL INTEREST



FOR THE 111th WORLD DAY OF MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES 2025

October 4-5, 2025

Migrants, missionaries of hope

Dear Brothers and Sisters!

The 111th World Day of Migrants and Refugees, which my predecessor chose to coincide with the Jubilees of Migrants and of the Missions, offers us an opportunity to reflect on the connections between hope, migration and mission.

The current global context is sadly marked by wars, violence, injustice and extreme weather events, which force millions of people to leave their homelands in search of refuge elsewhere. The widespread tendency to look after the interests of limited communities poses a serious threat to the sharing of responsibility, multilateral cooperation, the pursuit of the common good and global solidarity for the benefit of our entire human family. The prospect of a renewed arms race and the development of new armaments, including nuclear weapons, the lack of consideration for the harmful effects of the ongoing climate crisis, and the impact of profound economic inequalities

make the challenges of the present and the future increasingly demanding.

Faced with frightening scenarios and the possibility of global devastation, it is important that there be a growing desire in people's hearts for a future of peace and of respect for the dignity of all. Such a future is essential to God's plan for humanity and the rest of creation. This is the messianic future anticipated by the prophets: "Old men and old women shall again sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each with staff in hand because of their great age. And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in its streets... For there shall be a sowing of peace; the vine shall yield its fruit, the ground shall give its produce, and the skies shall give their dew" (Zech 8:4-5, 12). This future has already begun, since it was inaugurated by Jesus Christ

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OF SPECIAL INTEREST

(cf. Mk 1:15; Lk 17:21), and we believe and hope in its full realization, for the Lord is always faithful to his promises.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches: “The virtue of hope responds to the aspiration to happiness which God has placed in the heart of every man and woman; it takes up the hopes that inspire human activities” (N. 1818).

What is more, the search for happiness, and the prospect of finding it beyond one’s place of origin, is certainly one of the main motivations for the movement of people today.

This link between migration and hope is clearly evident in many contemporary experiences of migration. Many migrants, refugees and displaced persons are privileged witnesses of hope. Indeed, they demonstrate this daily through their resilience and trust in God, as they face adversity while seeking a future in which they glimpse that integral human development and happiness are possible.

Moreover, we can see the itinerant experience of the people of Israel repeated in their own lives: “O God, when you went out before your people, when you marched through the wilderness, the earth quaked, the heavens poured down rain at the presence of God, the God of Sinai, at the presence of God, the God of Israel. Rain in abundance, O God, you showered abroad; you restored your heritage when it languished; your flock found a dwelling in it; in your goodness, O God, you provided for the needy” (Ps 68:7-10).

In a world darkened by war and injustice, even when all seems lost, migrants and refugees stand as messengers of hope. Their courage and tenacity bear heroic testimony to a faith that sees beyond what our eyes can see and gives them the strength to defy death on the various contemporary migration routes. Here too we can find a clear analogy with the experience of the people of Israel wandering in the desert, who faced every danger while trusting in the Lord’s protection: “he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the deadly pestilence; he will cover you with his pinions, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness is a shield and buckler. You will not fear the terror of the night, or the arrow that flies by day, or the pestilence that stalks in darkness, or the destruction that wastes at noonday” (Ps 91:3-6).

Migrants and refugees remind the Church of her pilgrim dimension, perpetually journeying towards her final homeland, sustained by a hope that is a theological virtue. Each time the Church gives in to the temptation of “sedentarization” and ceases to be a *civitas peregrine*, God’s people journeying towards the heavenly homeland (cf. Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, Books XIV-XVI), she ceases to be “in the world” and becomes “of the world” (cf. Jn 15:19). This temptation was already present

in the early Christian communities, so much so that the Apostle Paul had to remind the Church of Philippi that “our citizenship is in heaven, and it is from there that we are expecting a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. He will transform the body of our humiliation that it may be conformed to the body of his glory, by the power that also enables him to make all things subject to himself” (Phil 3:20-21).

In a special way, Catholic migrants and refugees can become missionaries of hope in the countries that welcome them, forging new paths of faith where the message of Jesus Christ has not yet arrived or initiating interreligious dialogue based on everyday life and the search for common values. With their spiritual enthusiasm and vitality, they can help revitalize ecclesial communities that have become rigid and weighed down, where spiritual desertification is advancing at an alarming rate. Their presence, then, should be recognized and appreciated as a true divine blessing, an opportunity to open oneself to the grace of God, who gives new energy and hope to his Church: “Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it” (Heb 13:2).

The first element of evangelization, as Saint Paul VI emphasized, is that of witness: “All Christians are called to this witness, and in this way they can be real evangelizers. We are thinking especially of the responsibility incumbent on migrants in the country that receives them” (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 21). This is a true *missio migrantium*, a mission carried out by migrants, for which adequate preparation and ongoing support must be ensured through effective inter-ecclesial cooperation.

At the same time, the communities that welcome them can also be a living witness to hope, one that is understood as the promise of a present and a future where the dignity of all as children of God is recognized. In this way, migrants and refugees are recognized as brothers and sisters, part of a family in which they can express their talents and participate fully in community life.

On this Jubilee, when the Church prays for all migrants and refugees, I wish to entrust all those who are on the journey, as well as those who are working to accompany them, to the maternal protection of the Virgin Mary, comfort of migrants, so that she may keep hope alive in their hearts and sustain them in their commitment to building a world that increasingly resembles the Kingdom of God, the true homeland that awaits us at the end of our journey.

From the Vatican, 25 July 2025
Feast of Saint James, Apostle

OF SPECIAL INTEREST

(ANS - Rome) - On the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the Association of Salesian Cooperators - the third group of the Salesian Family, founded by Don Bosco himself - the World Council of the Association is pleased to announce that the VI World Congress of Salesian Cooperators will be held in Sacrofano, Rome, at the 'Fraterna Domus' house, from 7 to 10 May 2026.

"This Congress represents a moment of great importance for our Association. It is the occasion on which Salesian Cooperators from all over the world come together in a spirit of unity and communion with the Rector Major, our highest authority, to discuss and define the future of our mission," explain the World Council.

The event was convened by the Rector Major and is organised by the World Council. The operational and technical coordination is entrusted to Antonio Boccia, World Coordinator of the Association.

About 400 Salesian Cooperators are expected to participate, together with delegates from the Salesians of Don Bosco (SDB) and the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians (FMA), from the 110 provinces where the Association is present, divided into 12 regions.

The motto chosen for this significant meeting is: "Be yeast to be fruitful". This is a significant reminder of the vocation of Salesian Cooperators to be a positive force, a 'leaven' that brings Gospel values to the world, so that their action in the world 'bears fruit and your fruit remains' (Jn 15-16).

The days of the Congress, which will last four days, will follow a path of reflection already started during the three years of preparation for the 150th anniversary. They will begin with a look at the past of the association, and then analyse the internal reality, the role of the institution within the Salesian Family, in the Church and in the world. After understanding the current context, a look at the future will be projected, to identify the challenges waiting to be addressed. The final objective will be to outline the guidelines and programmes for the association for the next six years (2026-2032).

During the Congress, the Rector Major will also appoint the new World Coordinator of the Association of Salesian Cooperators, who will take office from 2026.

In the coming days and throughout the 2025-2026 academic year, the World Council of Salesian Cooperators will unveil the official logo, anthem and other promotional materials specially designed for the Congress.

'We want this important event to involve, in a spirit of collaboration and sharing, all Salesian Cooperators around the world,' conclude the members of the association's World Council.

PROVINCE ANIMATION

Salesian Cooperators In the Western United States Rejoice at the Induction of New Cooperators and the Opening of a New Local Center



By Kristie Martinez, Salesian Cooperator –

(San Antonio, Texas) – The Association of Salesian Cooperators in the Western United States has celebrated a significant milestone! On May 3, 2025, in Colorado Springs, Colorado, we had the joy of receiving the promises of 8 new Salesian Cooperators of the St. Michael the Archangel Center.

Father Mel Trinidad, SDB Provincial, presided over the ceremony, and the Provincial Coordinator, Alex del Carmen, received the promises. With this ceremony, the new local center was canonically established, strengthening our presence and mission in the region.

It is worth noting that the first Salesian Cooperators of the St. Michael the Archangel Center made their promises in 2022. With the induction of these new Cooperators, the minimum of 6 Cooperators required to open a center, according to our Project of Apostolic Life, is met!

This is the first Salesian Cooperator center in the state of Colorado, and it is facilitated by the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. With this addition, eleven Salesian Cooperator centers exist in the USA Western Province.

PROVINCE ANIMATION

Dear Cooperators,

The Provincial Council is dedicated to having a fraternal and effective Provincial Congress, October 10-12, 2025, where we will elect the next Provincial Council. We also thank our Cooperator brothers and sisters in Texas who will host this special gathering.

Please review the attached Province Congress Information Packet, both in English and Spanish. We ask that you give careful consideration to attending this important province gathering, as everyone is invited, including aspirants.

Attendance is especially important for Local Center councilors and SDB / FMA delegates, as their presence is needed

for the electoral quorum. Hopefully, every center will offer some group support for councilors and delegates who may find cost an obstacle.

Registration Process:

You can register by using the following link. Registrations are due by July 31st, or as soon as possible, as the deadline has been extended.

ASC Provincial Congress Registration Form Link

[Registration Form](#)

If you have already registered, please watch for a second email this week with information on registration payments.

Nominations of Cooperators to fulfill the responsibilities of the next Provincial Council are also needed. Any Cooperator can nominate someone, including yourself. In the packet, you will find a reflection page to consider the profile of a provincial animator. **Please note:** it is not necessary to nominate someone for a specific position. Cooperators are elected to the Provincial Council and, once elected, they will determine specific positions among themselves.

Every Local Center is encouraged to offer nominations from their center or other centers in the province; however, nominations should be sent on an individual basis. Please use the link below.

ASC Provincial Congress Nomination Form Link

[Nomination Form](#)

Thank you for your attention and for your presence, if possible, at our upcoming Provincial Congress. Let us pray for one another to be guided by our love for Don Bosco and Mary Help of Christians.

United in our promise and mission,

Provincial Congress Planning Committee

ASC-SUO PROVINCIAL COUNCIL

A graphic for the Provincial Congress 2025. It features a dark background with a large yellow arrow pointing right. Inside the arrow is a photo of a group of people, including a priest in white vestments. Text on the graphic includes: "Salesian Cooperators, USA West", "V PROVINCIAL CONGRESS", "OCTOBER 10-12, 2025", "Venue: Mexican American Catholic College San Antonio, Texas", "Theme: 'Sparkle our light for Don Bosco'", "Registration now open!", and a call to action "Register on Our Website! www.SalesianCooperators.com" with a small circular logo to the left.

PROVINCE ANIMATION

**Salesian Cooperators of the
USA Western Province are
coming together for...**



A Special Rosary

TO PRAY FOR THE SOULS OF THE FLOOD VICTIMS

Saturday, August 2nd

3:30 PM Texas / 2:30 PM Colorado / 1:30 PM California



*"Where the Rosary is
recited there will
be days of
peace and tranquility."*

~ St. John Bosco



COOPERATORS IN ACTION

Congratulations to Our Very Own Federico Fede Parada!



Provincial Councilor, Federico Prada, from St John Bosco Center, San Antonio, was selected from a group of young adults from across the entire region to represent the Interamerican Region at the 2026 World Congress in Italy! The USA Western Province congratulates you!

Official Announcement:

From the Interamerica Regional Consulta, we are proud to announce that María Rafaela and Federico will be our young representatives at the World Congress of the Association of Salesian Cooperators, to be held in May 2026 in Rome.

This conference will bring together two young Salesians Cooperators by region, who will join the provincial coordinators of the 103 provinces of the Association around the world, as well as an additional provincial councillor and an SDB delegate or an FMA delegate. In addition, in each of the 11 regions, two young Salesian Cooperators under the age of 35 were invited, which guarantees a dynamic participation of about 440 people.

We would like to thank all the provinces who sent their proposals, as well as each of the young Salesian cooperators who participated in this process. Their commitment and generosity reflect the strength of our Association.

Thank you for being part of this path to the World Congress!

FORMATION

Educating Beyond Weaknesses

THE MESSAGE OF THE RECTOR MAJOR, Fr Fabio Attard, SDB

Jesus' encounter with Peter illuminates and depicts with a particular light our mission as evangelizers and educators.

In the last chapter of the Gospel of John, chapter 21, we find Jesus' encounter with Peter. We read a dialogue that is built on three questions and then ends with a mandate (Jn. 21:15-23). I would like to comment on this encounter which casts a particular light on our very mission as evangelizers and educators. It is a passage that presents a fundamental moment in Peter's life and also in the mission of the nascent Church.

For us who are engaged in the Salesian mission, it is also rich in educational and pastoral meaning.

After the resurrection, Jesus appears to the disciples on the Sea of Galilee and, after sharing a meal with them, turns to Simon Peter with three successive questions which touch directly on His relationship with Peter: "Simon, son of John, do you love Me?" In the first two questions, what Jesus asks for is a demanding love that does not count the cost. This question, asked twice to Peter, is demanding and challenging. He is aware of his weakness caused by his betrayal. For this reason, his answer both times is, indeed, one that testifies to love, but to a love that is more human, that is fragile. In the face of these two answers, Jesus still entrusts him with the care of His flock.

It is the third question that puts Peter in crisis because Jesus asks Peter precisely for the commitment to that love of which he is capable: human love with its weaknesses, fragility, and limitations. We can say that Jesus calls Peter



to a "high" love, but he does not want to put him in a situation of impossibility, of being discouraged.

Peter, for his part, realizes both the fact that his love is weak and the fact that Jesus does everything He can to help him not to give up. He wants to be sincere and stay close to Jesus. And his answer to the third question is a testimony of how his heart, even if wounded, wants to be placed entirely in the hands of Jesus: "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love You." (v. 17)

Thus, we discover that this is not only a threefold dialogue that recalls and surmounts Peter's threefold denial before the Passion. Here we have an example of a dialogue that marks a path based on that true love which fosters reconciliation and encourages growth and responsibility with regard to oneself and others. We catch a glimpse of how this dialogue between Jesus and Peter is a model of spiritual and human education.

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FORMATION

Here are some observations that are useful to us who accompany children and young people in their growth and maturation.

True love is based on that trust that never fails

After the betrayal, Jesus not only forgives Peter, but goes further: He entrusts him with an even greater responsibility. This represents an extraordinary educational lesson for us: the trust given is a renewed confirmation of the respect we have for the person. It is a love that confers both dignity and responsibility. Jesus does not limit himself to forgiving, but gives Peter back his mission, enriched by a new understanding.

Respect for individual times and paths

Peter's betrayal foretold by Jesus is not followed by the commonplace reaction of "I told you so!" Jesus "sees" betrayal but He also "sees" beyond. Jesus' love is a Love that knows human weakness but has the strength to stir up the seed of goodness within the wounded heart - and this seed never disappears. Here we see how Jesus finds what Don Bosco called "the point of goodness in the heart of every boy" and does everything possible to make it emerge. Evil committed must never have the last word. The last word must be had only by love, the Charity of the Good Shepherd.

This means having correct patience and respect for the right moment. Experience teaches us time and again that evil committed only needs to be met with affection, patience, and compassion, especially where children and young people are concerned. Don Bosco comments on this very well when he speaks of the Preventive System. The moment when children and young people feel they are surrounded by a mature and adult love, which facilitates and does not condemn, which listens and does not command, propels that hidden but ever-present point of goodness towards the good. It is a spring that sets in motion surprises of goodness that often have been either forgotten or overwhelmed by negative experiences lived and/or suffered.

How urgent it is today that our children and young people find healthy and mature, patient and far-sighted adults,

parents, and educators! Authentic are those paths that respect the uniqueness of the person with his weaknesses but also with his potential. We are true benefactors when we can see time as a space for gradual and consistent growth. It is an attitude that avoids proposing or, even worse, imposing standardized models that put people into boxes.

Comparisons and the temptation to compete

Towards the end of the encounter between Jesus and Peter, there is a detail about which I would like to make a comment. Peter asks Jesus about John, "And him?" Jesus cuts it short, as we say today: "If I want him to stay until I come, what does it matter to you?"

It is a very curt answer, and one that is a good lesson for Peter. In a nutshell, Jesus invites Peter to focus on his own growth without asking curious and useless questions about others. And this "dry" answer remains for us! To be responsible and help others towards self-responsibility also implies clarifying boundaries so that the growth process does not go off-track. The risk of making comparisons and being in competition with others is detrimental. The true educational path is personal, not competitive. Diverting one's attention from oneself to look at others diverts attention from one's own journey.

Conclusion: education as a relationship of love that begets the future

The passage culminates in the invitation "You follow me." These three words contain the essence of the Christian educational process: personal discipleship, direct relationship with the Master. Authentic education is not the transmission of concepts, but an introduction to a living relationship.

The threefold "Do you love me?" reveals that love is the foundation of every authentic educational relationship. Only when the educator truly loves the student, and the student responds with love, is that space of freedom and trust created in which the person can grow fully. Christian education, the Salesian experience, finds in this passage a sublime model: a process of transformation based on love, forgiveness, trust, and respect for freedom.