



Feast Day: January 31 (Born:1815 :: Died:1888)

John Bosco was born in Turin, Italy. His parents were poor farmers. His father died when John was only two years old. John and his brothers helped their mother work on the farm as she struggled to keep the family together. He was intelligent and full of life. By the age of nine, John wanted to become a priest and his mother let him go to school. John used to wake up early in the morning to do his chores before he left for school. Finally, a holy priest, St. Joseph Cafasso, found out about John's wish to be a priest and helped him enter the seminary.

He learned to do all kinds of trades: carpenter, a shoemaker, a cook, a pastry maker, farmer.... He didn't realize how much this knowledge would help others later. John would also go to circuses, fairs and carnivals, practice the tricks he saw magicians perform, and then present one-boy shows. After his performance, while he still had an audience of boys, he would repeat the sermon he had heard in church that day. John became a priest in 1841.

As a priest, Don Bosco, which means Father Bosco, began his great ministry. This kind priest felt sad when he saw so many children living on the streets of Italy. Like a loving father, he gathered together these homeless boys and taught them trades. This way they would not have to steal or get into trouble.

By 1850, there were 150 boys living at his home for boys. Don Bosco's mother was the housekeeper. He loved these children, however naughty they were, and the boys loved him because John Bosco always encouraged them. Every night he asked his boys to say three Hail Mary's, so that the Blessed Mother would help them keep away from sin. He also helped them receive the sacraments of Reconciliation and Holy Communion. He asked the young boys to imitate Jesus in everything they did - whether it was work, study or play and told them that God wanted everyone to be saints as He had a great reward waiting for them. His advice to them was, "Pray when it's time to pray. Study when it's time to study. Play when it's time to play. Show kindness to everyone you meet. But do it all for the love of Jesus."

Don Bosco started his own religious order of priests and brothers. They were called the Salesians, after St. Francis de Sales. Then he started the order of Salesian sisters with the help of St. Mary Mazzarello. These men and women pray and teach young people about God's love in countries all over the world even today.

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