

# ST. JOHN BOSCO



THE OBSTACLES IN HIS LIFE AND HIS DEDICATION TO YOUTH



To the ones who read this book,

As a Salesian of Don Bosco, I have always been fascinated with the life of St. John Bosco. He inspired me to become a priest and to give my life for the education and evangelization of young people.

Overcoming obstacles with a great trust in Jesus and Mary makes Don Bosco an exemplary role model for young people today.

I hope you enjoy reading about Don Bosco's great faith and imitate it in your own life.

May God Bless You.

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*Illustrations taken from sdb.org, property of the Salesians of St John Bosco*

# St John Bosco

**JOHN MELCHIOR BOSCO**  
was born on August 16, 1815, around the time when the French Revolution just ended and Napoleon was exiled. It was when the Industrial Revolution had begun. Many traveled to the city for any job opportunity. However, not everyone was lucky enough, especially the young. They lived in the streets. In order to survive, some committed crimes and ended up in prison. Don Bosco was called by God to take care of the young who were poor and abandoned.

John Bosco dreamed of getting an education and maybe becoming a priest.



His mother's name was Margaret (Mama Margaret) and she was supportive of his dream but his older two brothers, especially Anthony, his stepbrother, thought that an education was not necessary and that the priesthood was a dumb idea.





John Bosco went to the county fair and saw acrobats performing and was impressed.

He watched them do their tricks and then learned to do them himself and would practice all the time.



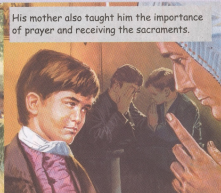
He became very good at putting on performances and would even attract a nice crowd of friends and neighbors to watch him perform.



At the end of the performances he would lead the crowd in a little prayer and teach them a few things about the faith.



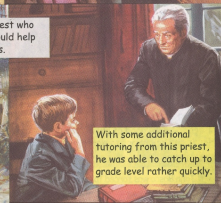
He learned how to read by basically teaching himself and would spend long hours reading books.



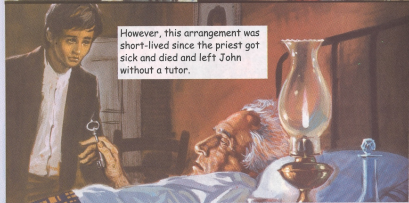
His mother also taught him the importance of prayer and receiving the sacraments.



Finally he met a priest who told him that he would help him with his studies.



With some additional tutoring from this priest, he was able to catch up to grade level rather quickly.

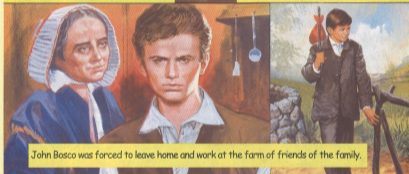


However, this arrangement was short-lived since the priest got sick and died and left John without a tutor.



When his older brother, Anthony, found out he was "wasting" so much time studying, he became very angry.

Anthony told him, "No more studies as long as I'm in control of this house." (Remember, their father was already dead.)



John Bosco was forced to leave home and work at the farm of friends of the family.



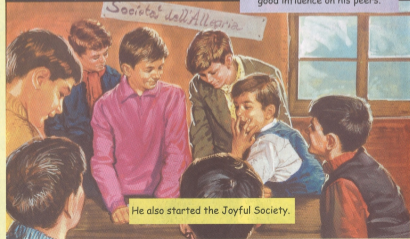
That family took him in and let him work for nearly two years. At least the fighting with his brother stopped.



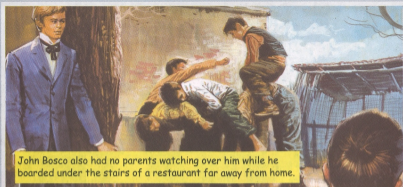
Finally, it was time for high school and John Bosco had to walk at least ten miles to get there.



He met some good kids at school and was known to be a good influence on his peers.



He also started the Joyful Society.



John Bosco also had no parents watching over him while he boarded under the stairs of a restaurant far away from home.



He knew how to be tough and he knew how to be kind.



After John Bosco finished high school, he continued his dream to become a priest.



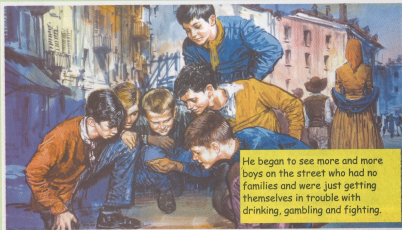
So far he had beaten the odds for a poor boy to get as far as the doors of the seminary.



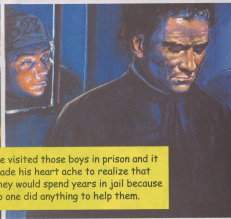
In 1841, John Bosco became a priest.



He was now known as Don Bosco because "Don" is the Italian word for "Father" - therefore, Fr. Bosco.



He began to see more and more boys on the street who had no families and were just getting themselves in trouble with drinking, gambling and fighting.



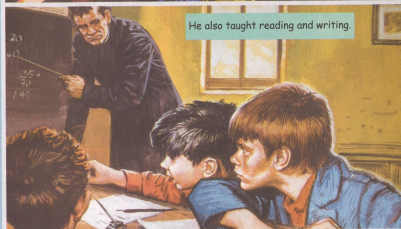
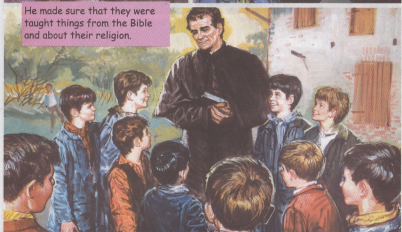
He visited those boys in prison and it made his heart ache to realize that they would spend years in jail because no one did anything to help them.



He started gathering the kids up to provide an Oratory for them.



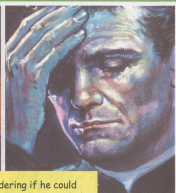
He made sure that they were taught things from the Bible and about their religion.



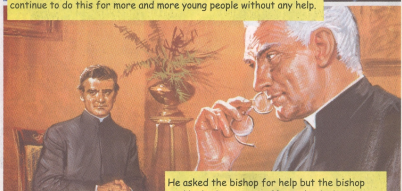
He also taught reading and writing.



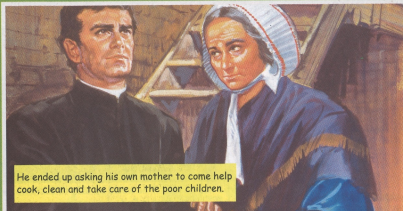
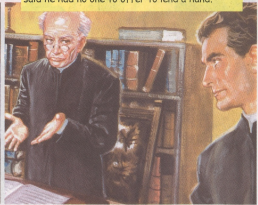
The biggest obstacle for Don Bosco at this time was that he had no idea from where the money would come.



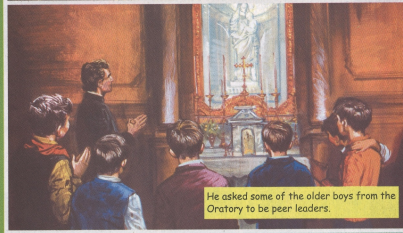
He would wake up in the middle of the night wondering if he could continue to do this for more and more young people without any help.



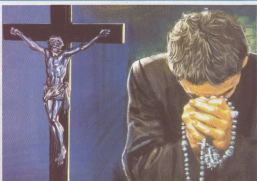
He asked the bishop for help but the bishop said he had no one to offer to lend a hand.



He ended up asking his own mother to come help cook, clean and take care of the poor children.



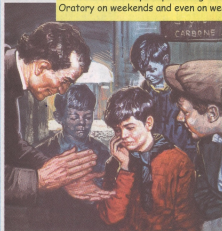
He asked some of the older boys from the Oratory to be peer leaders.



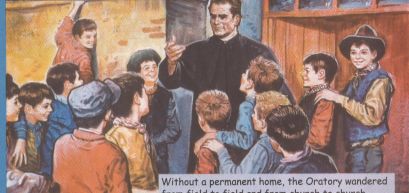
He still had no idea if he would be able to sustain his work. He trusted in God.



More and more boys kept coming to Don Bosco's Oratory on weekends and even on weeknights as well.



Don Bosco took the time to become their friends.

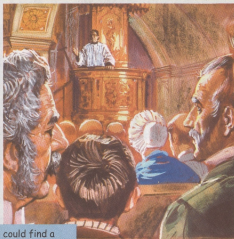


Without a permanent home, the Oratory wandered from field to field and from church to church.





Don Bosco prayed that one day he could find a permanent home for his work with the youth.



A guy offered him a field with an old dilapidated house attached to it. He was willing to sell it at a fairly cheap price.



Above:  
Below:

A miniature model of the Pinardi Shed, the first home of the Oratory. In that same model, a part of the roof is open to show the Oratory's first chapel. The Pinardi model is found at an exhibit room in Casa Valdocco, Turin, Italy.





The original painting of Mary Help of Christians in the basilica built by Saint John Bosco. The image was said to be a vision from one of his dreams.

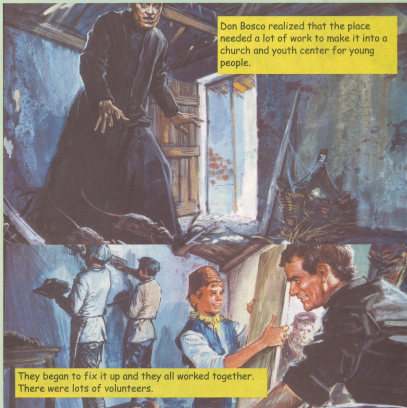
**BECCHI:** This is the home where Don Bosco spent his childhood years.



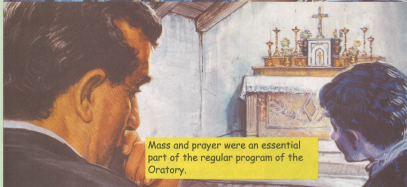
**TURIN:** This is the *Basilica of Mary Help of Christians*. When construction broke ground, Don Bosco only had about 65 cents in his possession.



Don Bosco realized that the place needed a lot of work to make it into a church and youth center for young people.



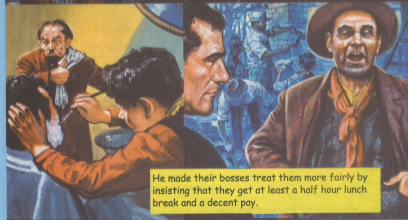
They began to fix it up and they all worked together. There were lots of volunteers.



Mass and prayer were an essential part of the regular program of the Oratory.



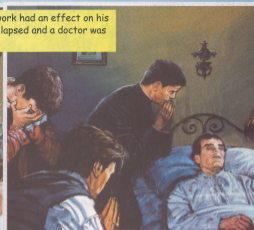
Don Bosco visited the kids at their places of work when they were not at the Oratory on weekends.



He made their bosses treat them more fairly by insisting that they get at least a half hour lunch break and a decent pay.



All this hard work had an effect on his health. He collapsed and a doctor was called.



At one point he was near death and all the students at the Oratory prayed fervently.



By God's grace he was brought back to health and could work with his boys.



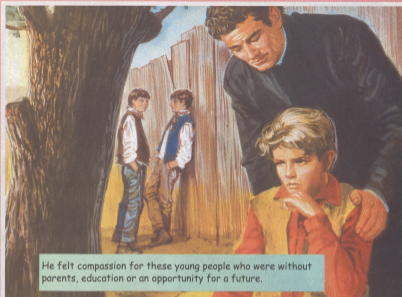
Whenever new kids came along,...



...even if Don Bosco did not have the resources to take care of them,...



...he could not say no.



He felt compassion for these young people who were without parents, education or an opportunity for a future.





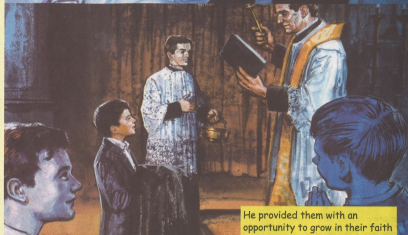
He provided food.



He provided an education.



He provided lodging.

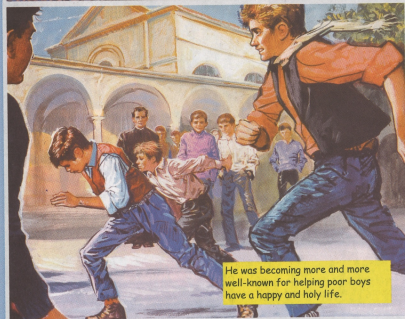


He provided them with an opportunity to grow in their faith and come to know Jesus.





Bosco was guided by the Blessed Mother and protected by her in his mission.



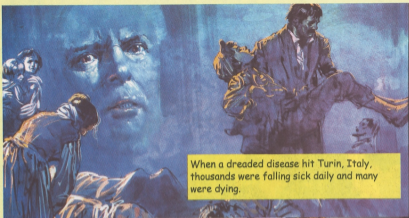
He was becoming more and more well-known for helping poor boys have a happy and holy life.



These kids were improving themselves....



...and under his instruction, were growing up to be successful.



When a dreaded disease hit Turin, Italy, thousands were falling sick daily and many were dying.



Don Bosco went to the hospitals and to the homes of the sick to pray for them.



He also asked his boys to go and help take care of the ill.



He promised them that if they did their best to care for those who were ill they would not get the plague.



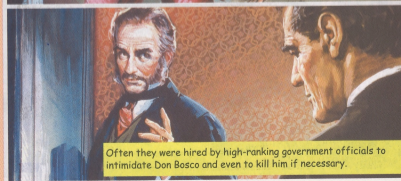
None of the boys nor their families ever got sick.



Don Bosco had several attempts made on his life.



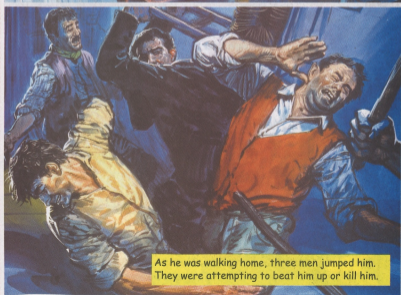
Thugs associated with certain political parties were against the Catholic Church and especially against Don Bosco and wanted him out of the way.



Often they were hired by high-ranking government officials to intimidate Don Bosco and even to kill him if necessary.



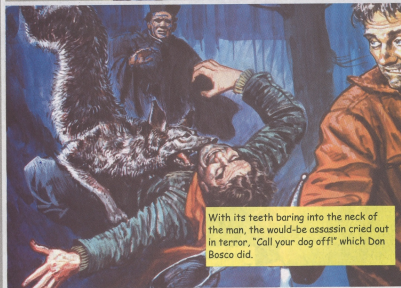
One night Don Bosco went out to a far away church to say mass.



As he was walking home, three men jumped him. They were attempting to beat him up or kill him.



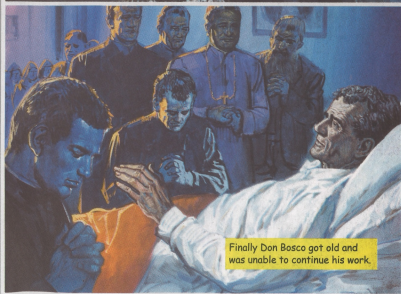
Out of nowhere, a huge gray dog appeared and pounced on the assailants.



With its teeth baring into the neck of the man, the would-be assassin cried out in terror, "Call your dog off!" which Don Bosco did.



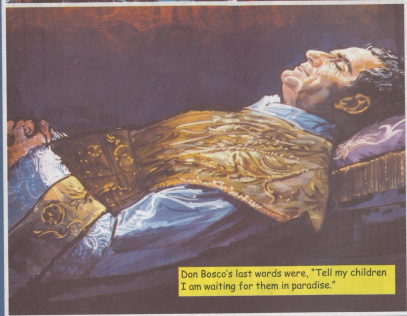
That dog was a guardian angel who appeared out of nowhere several times throughout his life to save Don Bosco.



Finally Don Bosco got old and was unable to continue his work.



The day he died, thousands of people gathered outside his bedroom to pray for him. It was January 31, 1888.



Don Bosco's last words were, "Tell my children I am waiting for them in paradise."

At the city entrance of Castelnovo Don Bosco formerly Castelnovo d'Asti





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