

SALESIAN LECTIO DIVINA - 1

Theme: The Preventive System of Don Bosco

*(could be integrated with lauds or vespers;
or prayed even as part of an hour of adoration)*

1. Read (text given below)
2. Reflect & share (using the given points)
3. Pray (shared prayers, and common prayer at the end as given below)

1. READ (text given below)

Reading from Constitution Art 38
and / or
Reading from Don Bosco's Writing

A. Reading from Constitutions art 38 :

"Don Bosco has handed on to us his Preventive System as a means for carrying out our educational and pastoral service. "This system is based entirely on reason, religion and loving kindness." Instead of constraint, it appeals to the resources of intelligence, love and the desire for God, which everyone has in the depths of his being. It brings together educators and youngsters in a family experience of trust and dialogue. Imitating God's patience, we encounter the young at their present stage of freedom. We then accompany them, so that they may develop solid convictions and gradually assume the responsibility for the delicate process of their growth as human beings and as men of faith."

B. Extracts from the Writings of Don Bosco

"The Preventive System consists in making the laws and regulations of an institute known, and then watching carefully so that the pupils may at all times be under the vigilant eye of the Rector or the assistants, who like loving fathers can converse with them, take the lead in every movement and in a kindly way give advice and correction; in other words, this system places the pupils in the impossibility of committing faults.

This system is based entirely on reason and religion, and above all on kindness; therefore it excludes all violent punishment, and tries to do without even the slightest chastisement.

This system seems preferable for the following reasons:

Being forewarned the pupil does not lose courage on account of the faults he has committed, as is the case when they are brought to the notice of the superior. Nor

does he resent the correction he receives or the punishment threatened or inflicted, because it is always accompanied by a friendly preventive warning, which appeals to his reason...

... In the preventive system, the pupil becomes a friend, and the assistant, a benefactor who advises him, has his good at heart, and wishes to spare him vexation, punishment, and perhaps dishonor.

By the preventive system pupils acquire a better understanding, so that an educator can always speak to them in the language of the heart, not only during the time of their education but even afterwards. Having once succeeded in gaining the confidence of his pupils he can subsequently exercise a great influence over them, and counsel them, advise and even correct them, whatever position they may occupy in the world later on.

The practice of this system is wholly based on the words of St. Paul who says: "Love is patient and kind....Love bears all things... hopes all things, endures all things." (I Cor 13, 4-7)

1. It follows that the Rector must devote himself entirely to the boys; he should therefore never accept engagements which might keep him from his duties, and he should always be with his pupils whenever they are not engaged in some occupation, unless they are already being properly supervised by others.
2. Teachers, craft masters and assistants ... should strive to avoid as they would the plague every kind of sentimental friendship for their pupils... Care should be taken that the pupils are never alone. As far as possible the assistants ought to precede the boys to the place where they assemble; they should remain with them until others come to take their place, and never leave the pupils unoccupied.
3. Let the boys have full liberty to jump, run and make as much noise as they please. Gymnastics, music, theatricals and outings are most efficacious means of obtaining discipline and of benefiting spiritual and bodily health... "Do anything you like," the great friend of youth, St. Philip, used to say, "as long as you do not sin."
4. Frequent confession and communion and daily Mass are the pillars which must support the edifice of education, from which we propose to banish the use of threats and the cane...
5. Every evening after night prayers before the boys go to rest, the Rector or someone in his stead shall address them briefly, giving them advice or counsel concerning what is to be done or what is to be avoided. Let him try to draw some moral reflection from events that have happened during the day in the house or outside; but his words should never take more than two or three minutes. This is the key to good behavior, to the smooth running of the school and to success in education.

Fr. John BOSCO

2. Reflect

Each one could share (any of the below)

- Reflections on what we just now Heard, or
- A Personal Experience of living the preventive system, or
- A Personal Experience of seeing a Salesian living the preventive system

3. Pray

{Short spontaneous prayers based on the reflections}

(Conclude with the following prayer based on the Prayer of Fr Viganò in Constitutions and Fr Chavez in AGC 379)

We thank you Father,

because you have called us by name

to be in the Church the signs and bearers of your Love to the young.

As we celebrate the bicentenary year of his birth,
we thank you Loving Father, for the Gift of Don Bosco
to whom you gave the 'oratorian' heart of Jesus, the Good Shepherd,
and through whom you began in the church
'an original way of living the Christian Life –
the Salesian Youth Spirituality of the Preventive System'.

O Merciful Father,

We feel the weight not only of our personal shortcomings
but also those of the institution when, as a Congregation,
we become aware that we have not always been able to take seriously
the recommendations left us by Don Bosco.

Don Bosco said in his spiritual testament: "Be on your guard and see to it
neither the love of the world, nor affection for relatives, nor the desire for a
more comfortable life lead you to the great mistake of profaning your
sacred vows and betraying the religious profession by which we are
consecrated to the Lord. Let personal and financial sacrifices be made if
necessary, but **always practise the preventive system** and we shall
have vocations in abundance. When the desire for ease and comfort
grows up among us, our pious society will have run its course. Never
forget that we work for poor and abandoned children."

Grant, O Faithful Father,

that with Mary's guidance,

we may persevere to the end on this 'way that leads to Love.'

We ask this through Christ Our Lord. Amen.