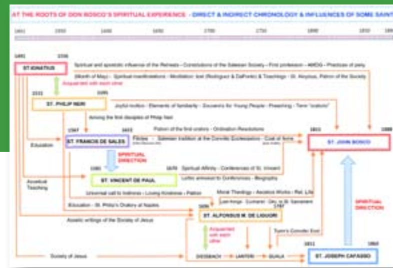
2012-2013 • Don Bosco's Pedagogy
DECEMBER ISSUE

GETTING TO KNOW Don Bosco

Insights from Turin 2

Diagram:
Don Bosco's Spiritual Roots:
Chronology of Saintly Influences

by Fr. Giuseppe Buccellato



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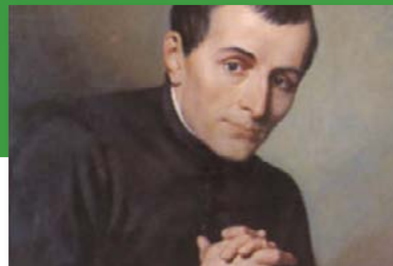
Cafasso's Religious Stance

by Lucio Casto
and translated by Fr. Arthur Lenti



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Don Bosco's Young People

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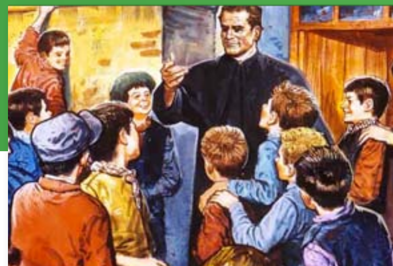

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Insights From Turin

Salesian scholars from around the world met at the Salesian Mother-House in Turin this November to discuss research in Salesian spiritual direction and spiritual accompaniment. This was the third of four annual meetings orchestrated by Fr. Fabio Attard and Fr. Miguel Angel Garcia, designed to examine St. John Bosco's understanding and practice of spiritual direction while evaluating an integration of the Salesian concept of spiritual accompaniment.

Just days prior to our departure, Fr. Arthur Lenti ended up in the hospital, which prevented Fr. Arthur from travelling to Turin and taking part in the discussion, much to the disappointment of the Youth Pastoral Team from Rome and the other participants. Much of Fr. Arthur's input was summarized and presented in his absence and the gathered assembly watched a brief video greeting recorded from Fr. Arthur's hospital bed. Fr. Arthur left the hospital after ten days, but his recovery continues, as he persists in his research.

The work of Fr. Giuseppe Buccellato and Fr. Arthur Lenti are, perhaps, the most pertinent studies contributing to the study of Don Bosco and his educational genius for the current year. Both of these Salesian authors converged on their evaluation of the priestly and pastoral formation of Don Bosco at the Convitto. From this point of focus, a new appreciation for the influence of Fr. Cafasso arises as much of the style and content of Don Bosco's personal mission and discernment for that mission has its roots in the intentional formation of Fr. Cafasso. Both Fr. Arthur and Fr. Giuseppe insist that many thinkers and spiritual directors united to make the Convitto experience one that put priestly formation in a new light. This formation, then, produced great minds and educators of depth such as John Bosco.

These Salesian scholars are not the first to demonstrate links between Don Bosco and the saints and educators leading to Don Bosco's moment in history, but the precision of their linkage and the naming of the distinct schools of education and spirituality offer new angles for understanding the thinking of Don Bosco.

Fr. Giuseppe Buccellato offered an insightful graphic that visually lays out the relationships of various educators, formators, and spiritual masters in the evolving mission of priestly formation in Turin. The contribution of this formation upon Don Bosco cannot be under estimated. This valuable graphic can be found on the next page!

AT THE ROOTS OF DON BOSCO'S SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE - DIRECT & INDIRECT CHRONOLOGY & INFLUENCES OF SOME SAINTS

1491 1550 1600 1650 1700 1750 1800 1850 1888

ST. IGNATIUS (1491 – 1556)

Spiritual and apostolic influence of the *Retreats* - Constitutions of the Salesian Society - First profession - AMDG - Practices of piety

(Month of May) - Spiritual manifestations - Meditation: text (Rodriguez & DaPonte) & Teachings - *St. Aloysius*, Patron of the Society

Acquainted with each other

ST. PHILIP NERI (1515 – 1595)

Joyful mottos - Elements of familiarity - *Souvenirs for Young People* - Preaching - Term "oratorio"

Among the first disciples of Philip Neri

Education

ST. FRANCIS DE SALES (1567 – 1622)

Patron of the first oratory - Ordination Resolutions

Filotea (Intro Devout Life) - Salesian tradition at the Convitto Ecclesiastico - Coat of Arms (and motto)

SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

Ascetical Teaching

ST. VINCENT DE PAUL (1581 – 1670)

Spiritual Affinity - Conferences of St. Vincent

Letter annexed to Conferences - Biography

Universal call to holiness - Loving Kindness - Patron

Education - St. Philip's Oratory at Naples

Ascetic writings of the Society of Jesus

ST. ALFONSUS M. DE LIGUORI (1696 – 1787)

Moral Theology - Ascetics Works - Rel. Life

Last things - Eucharist - Dev. to Bl. Sacrament

Acquainted with each other

Turin's Convitto Eccl.

Society of Jesus

DIESSBACH → LANTERI → GUALA

ST. JOHN BOSCO (1815 – 1888)

SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

ST. JOSEPH CAFASSO (1811 – 1860)

A Work in Progress…

Fr. Arthur's preoccupation in preparation for the meeting in Turin had been the examination of the mentoring offered Don Bosco by St. Joseph Cafasso at the Convitto. Delighted by the recent publications of Fr. Cafasso's sermons and retreats, Fr. Arthur found provocative evidence underscoring the significant influence that Fr. Cafasso had on both Don Bosco's discernment of God's will in his life, as well as his entire understanding of his priesthood and his.

Arthur traces the key builders of this new pastoral approach to priestly formation and credits those responsible for shaping various modes of Don Bosco's perception and his spirituality. The merit of St. Joseph Cafasso, asserts Fr. Arthur, is his helping Don Bosco deal with some of his own educational and devotional "hang-ups." For this, Arthur suggests a careful study of the origins of the Pastoral Institute (Convitto) and the direction it gave to Don Bosco and to priests of the period. The history is rich and deserves reflection. Within the intricacies of the historical details can be found the foundations laid by the Jesuits. Don Bosco attended retreats at St. Ignacio from 1844 to 1860. This foundation, these retreats and the contributions of so many priests such as Diesbach, Lanteri, Gualla and others, with the support of Bishop Franzoni, grew into a movement known as the Amicizie—strong enough to counter the anti-clericalism and repression throughout politically difficult times.

As part of his preparation for the meeting in Turin, Fr. Arthur translated an introduction written about Fr. Cafasso and the Pastoral Institute. Because Fr. Arthur's reseach has yet to reach publishable form due to his medical hiatus, more information will be offered in future Study Guides. In the mean time, below is the afformentioned traslation.

Fr. Cafasso's Religious Stance

From the introduction of:: *Edizione Nazionale delle Opere di San Giuseppe Cafasso*, Vol. 2 "*Esercizi Spirituali al Clero — Isruzioni*"
by *Lucio Casto* and Translated by *Fr. Arthur Lenti, SDB*

… At this point we must ask ourselves, What figure of priest emerges from the writing of Cafasso? But first one should recall that the historical moment in which the Saint lived was in many ways one of the most sensitive in the nineteenth century — the moment, that is, in which in Piedmont more than in other regions of Italy there occurred a transition between two epochs — that is, from conservative absolutism to the birth of the liberal State. This transition affected the life of the Church in important ways, because of the well known developments of the Italian Risorgimento.

Even though the Church of Turin of mid-nineteenth century still retained notable influence on society, yet the signs of a growing abandonment of religious practice

began to be felt, first in the cultural and political world and a little later in large sections of the population.

In such a changing context (political, social and ecclesial) Fr. Cafasso offered a specific priestly model; and it is important to understand its “historicity” so as to avoid misinterpretations. The turning point on which hinges the priestly model proposed by Fr. Cafasso rests on a religious-spiritual choice. It is not that of a priest engaged polemically with the State, nor that of a priest fighting the anticlericalism pervading politics and culture. Rather Fr. Cafasso aimed at depriving anticlericalism of its very polemical basis by presenting a religious-spiritual model of the priest totally engaged in the salvation of souls. It was a choice that bore good fruits. For, in spite of the socio-political difficulties arising from the vicissitudes of the Risorgimento, the Piedmontese clergy managed to remain close to the people and to exercise considerable influence on the religious and moral formation of the people. The result was that no schism occurred nor any significant defection of the people from parishes and parochial institutions.

Fr. Cafasso’s option proposed to the clergy of his day has to do above all with striving for holiness. The priest is bound to strive after Christian perfection as demanded by his vocation. This holiness may be attained through engaging in priestly ministry in its entirety. Priestly holiness is not optional but is demanded by the sacrament that the priest has received. It is required by the very fact that the priestly service rendered to the Christian community is directed to the sanctification of the faithful. This understanding explains Fr. Cafasso’s efforts to combat mediocrity and laxity in some clergy — priests that he brands as infected with the “secular spirit.”

In this regard, Fr. Cafasso’s criticism is directed not so much against scandalous or rebellious priests as against priests lacking in priestly spirit, preferring the quiet life, addicted to pursuits that have little to do with priestly ministry — idle priest, priests dabbling in politics, priests addicted to business affairs. In other words, Fr. Cafasso firmly maintains that a priest’s business is to be a priest.
It is evident moreover that for Fr. Cafasso priestly holinessis possible and may be pursued by engaging in pastoral ministry. We are not dealing with monastic holiness but with apostolic holiness. In the history of priestly spirituality this truth is not always emphasized — namely, that for the shepherd of souls evangelical perfection is not monastic holiness but apostolic holiness. Fr. Cafasso entertained no doubts about this.

… Fr. Cafasso is a saint living with unassailable certainties stemming from a faith founded on the Church’s teaching — certainties that imparted to his activity and his interior life an unrestrained note of optimism. It is the optimism that is clearly in evidence in the moral teaching of the Pastoral Institute (Convitto Ecclesiastico) guided by Fr. Cafasso. It is the optimism that imparted that special dynamic thrust to his apostolic action and to that of his spiritual sons, first among them all to Don Bosco. It is also the apostolic optimism that dealt the final blow to the rigorist tendencies the still survived in the pastoral practice of the Church of Turin. It is also the apostolic optimism that explains the local and missionary fervor that characterizes Piedmont’s Catholicism in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Finally, should we again emphasize that Fr. Cafasso’s priestly model is outdated. It was devised and proposed for a specific time and place. Certain structural aspects of the model may still be regarded as valid at any time. Such as for example the figure of the priest as pastor of souls, who is totally devoted to the ministry and who strives for holiness through the ministry), but other features are outdated. The greatest injustice perpetrated against Fr. Cafasso’s greatness was to extend for almost a century after his death his model of society and of Church that had already become outdated at mid-nineteenth century.

Don Bosco's Young People

The Conditions of Pre-Industrial Youth in Don Bosco's Times

Fr. Joseph Boenzi, SDB

John Bosco was born on 16 August 1815, in the year of Napoleon's final defeat at Waterloo. The leaders at Congress of Vienna had cheerfully if cryptically redrawn the map of Europe to favor a balance of power (the phrase coined by the English diplomat), but mainly to make sure that no people of nation could threaten the dominance of the Big Four: Austria, Russia, Prussia and Great Britain… and France… make that the Big Five.

Naturally, the redistribution of royal houses and redrawing of boundaries, did not sit well with many of the secondary powers, nor especially with a growing Middle Class that had Napoleon had called upon during the years of his expanding empire. However, there was much to do at the beginning of the Restoration, and it would take several years before those who did not believe in the convenient solutions of Metternich and his cohort at the Congress would finally be in a position to speak up.

Thus we can safely say, John Bosco was born at the beginning of the Restoration, but the first forty years of his life would represent a period of noticeable change in his native Piedmont (heart of the Kingdom of Sardinia and the Duchy of Savoy), as well as throughout the whole of Italy. And although Italy was merely a geographical expression, according to Prince Metternich, the region would quickly have a different opinion of itself. Within a generation Italian nationhood would become a tangible goal, and the movement for unification would be spearheaded by the Piedmontese – more specifically from Turin.

Social Scene of Don Bosco's Turin

Turin had long considered itself a world-class capital, although few others in Europe would do more than snort at such a statement in 1815. The city had welcomed the return of the king a few month previously with decorum more than pomp. When Victor Emmanuel I set foot on Piedmontese soil for the first time after the defeat of Napoleon, his first act was to give thanks to God and to the Virgin Mother, and then to process with the clergy and the people, not to the royal palace, but to the cathedral to sing the *Te Deum* and to pray for guidance for the rebuilding of the realm. The country faced grave economic difficulties, caused by over two decades of war and heightened by the country's political divisions.

Napoleonic occupation and aftermath

The dukes of Savoy had built up Turin as their fortress-capital. Although Napoleon had given orders for the walls of the city to be demolished, very little of the promised Napoleonic changes to the infrastructure had ever been put into place in over a decade of French occupation. Instead of ten bridges, the New Order had managed to construct one stone bridge across the Po to replace a very sturdy wooden one. What the Napoleonic officials did accomplish was the reordering of the administrative organization of the city and province. For instance, they abolished the old organizational plan of the city into 145 neighborhoods and established four administrative districts based on the main traffic arteries in and out of the city: Po, Dora, Moncenisio and Monviso.

Hand in hand with the implementation of a civic master plan, Turin under Napoleon saw the dissolution of all royal entities for governance, education and law enforcement. At the same time, the French reconfig-

ured all ecclesiastical structures in Turin. The number of parishes was reduced from seventeen to eight, and those properties belonging to the former parishes, as well as all those belonging to monastic orders and lay confraternities were seized and auctioned to the highest bidders to fill the imperial treasuries. Napoleon, however, was not opposed to religious practice. In fact, he published a new catechism where loyalty to the Emperor was presented as a religious obligation. He also introduced a new feast day in the liturgical calendar – that of Saint Napoleon.[1]

When Napoleon met his defeat, the entire civil service that his supporters had put in place collapsed in Piedmont, as it did throughout the former Napoleonic Empire. This collapse caused some friction among the people of Turin, for some had found the reforms, particularly the administrative reforms of Napoleon to be quite reasonable and workable. Others were determined to turn the clock backwards to 1789 and looked forward to the return of the absolute monarchy, and the alliance between the throne and the altar.[2] Conflict was not immediate, however, for everyone was happy to see the French leave the region; everyone, no matter what their opinion of the Napoleonic regime, wanted to have their country back.

Industry and enterprise

While it is common to speak of the Industrial Revolution as beginning in the early nineteenth century, this terminology belongs to phenomena in the United Kingdom and the northern United States of that era. This was not the case in Italy. Rather than a revolution, "at most one might speak of an industrial awakening or an incipient industrial development."[3]

In Turin at the start of the Restoration the term *industries* mainly referred to the manufacturing of textiles. These were akin to cottage industries, with the spinning of thread on hand-turned spinning wheels and weaving of cloth on foot-pedal looms. More workers were employed as the demand for cotton, wool and silk fabrics increased. Hand crafting, artisan and family businesses flourished with a minimum of technology. These small, home-centered enterprises created new opportunities for commerce as Turin reorganized itself as the capital city of the Kingdom of Sardinia made it a place for new opportunities.[4]

In the same period, new fortifications were built, as the old, damaged structures were demolished. Small factories to produce weapons and munitions went into operation. A new population of builders and soldiers needed to be housed, and so new jobs in construction attracted a growing number of youth and young adults to the city to rebuild the city and the Kingdom. New jobs called for a larger workforce, but instead of new prosperity, the population of Turin, especially the young, experienced new hardships.[5]

Migrant trends

The shift in demographics was not due, therefore, to an industrial revolution. People were not so much attracted to the cities as they were forced to flee the countryside. The lot of the peasant populations had been in radical decline since the beginning of the French invasions in the 1790s. The family farm had all but phased out as agrarian reforms redistributed property in to large estates. Once independent farmers were reduced to share cropping; share croppers were reduced to becoming day laborers. Fertile lands had become battlefields, and harsh storms reduced production even further. Hunger became the constant companion of an increasingly impoverished rural population.

> *The people who flocked to the city in a desperate move for survival [were those] who were largely responsible for urban growth. Most of these immigrants remained in the city, for they had nothing better to go back to. They settled wherever they could, but especially in the existing poorer districts along the rivers Dora and Po to the north and northeast [of Turin]. This is the area that saw the most significant and quickest urban expansion. It was also the area where some small industries were meanwhile being located, because of available waterpower from the rivers. Urban development in these areas was in the form of tenement houses built to lodge immigrant families and individuals. Soon these northern districts turned into overcrowded slums.*[6]

By the late 1840s, new migration trends were fully visible. Youth began to flood into Turin and other large cities in Piedmont in search of employment opportunities. These young people came from rural areas where recurring agricultural crises made it impossible to support a family. Just as the farms were beginning to fail, the cities were expanding trade and, as we have seen, Turin experienced a construction boom. Trade and construction provided abundant opportunities for unskilled labor.

Turin's new arrivals came from the rural areas of Piedmont, particularly the Monferrato region, but also from the newly annexed Liguria and the outskirts of Genoa. More would-be workers arrived from the border areas and even from Lombardy. Among the young workers there was also a fringe population of political refugees from France and the Austro-Hungarian Empire. These latter were often not among the working class, but mixed freely among the higher classes, exchanging ideas and experiences in conversations that would eventually prompt new thinking among Turin's leading citizens.[7]

Economic levels and labor conditions

Private enterprise was generally scarce in this period. There was not yet a working class as we know it, mainly because laborers did not perceive themselves to be part of a general group within society. We can say, however, that laborers included those working in home-style cottage industries (mainly women) and in small industries for armaments. Others in the same conditions of dependence might include young farm hands and tenant farmers. Harsh conditions in those years had reduced many to extreme poverty.

Labor conditions inside factories were precarious. Workers endured extended work hours that pushed them to their physical limits. There was a total absence of safety standards, while workers received hunger wages exasperated by the glut of cheap labor. Labor contracts were inexistent, and employers did not think twice about exploiting women and children to meet their production goals. Meanwhile, crowded living conditions in Turin's slums, where the majority of the workers lived, linked with the bad sanitary conditions set the stage for frequent epidemics, high infant and child mortality, and a lowering of life expectancy (35 years, in Turin).[8]

Who protected the workers? How did they assert their rights? No one advocated for workers and, young as most of them were, they had no understanding of their rights. There would be no labor movement as such until the 1870s, and so there was no such thing as collective bargaining whereby workers could seek to better their lot. Socialism was little more than a utopian theory promoted by French philosophers (e.g. François-Noël Babeuf, Claude Saint-Simon, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon and Charles Fourier). A more scientific approach, typical of German theorists, had yet to be proposed (Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels would only publish *Das Kapital* in 1867, and it would not appear in Italian until 1886). Such social theory did not resonate in Italy.

However, having said that there were no advocates for workers' rights in the mid-nineteenth century Piedmont, it is fair to say that worker unrest was non-existent. Social philosophers had little impact on the working people of Turin. In the whole of Italy, furthermore, we can ascertain no consistent influence on the part of social theorists. No grass-roots political party existed and, in fact, there was no popular interest in political power. The masses are called to shed their blood in time of war and to fulfill the political designs of the free-market middle class, but most accepted this as their fate without so much as a protest.[9]

Political and religious tensions

Policy-making was in the hands of a very elite group of Turin's professionals and semi-professionals. They proved to be somewhat more competent than the traditional ruling class, although they were much less tactful. To effect political and administrative reform, they often engaged in bullying their colleagues, employees and the lower social classes. Many became increasingly anti-clerical as they embraced the possibility of Italian unification.

Anti-clericalism, in fact, became a qualifying element in the drive towards a unified Italy. Their perception that the papacy stood in the way of a united kingdom under Turin's royal family induced them to legislate against the local church. With time the differences between the anti-clerical liberals and the Catholic party became extreme. The rising political class saw the interests of temporal power for the Holy See as interfering with Italian yearnings of national unity. What would become known as the Roman Question after the 1860s was only remotely considered in the 1840s, but eventually the break between faith and culture would pose a grave problem of conscience for Catholics in later decades.

Political developments in Turin after 1845 would see the transfer of leadership from the aristocracy to the well-to-do of the middle class. This entrepreneurial class would prepare for a new economic turning point in the city that would help to carry the country to unity. In so doing, they would create the context for Don Bosco's activity.

Economic shift

The shift that took place between 1845 and 1870 was from pre-industrialization (artisans' crafts, cottage industries) to the first mid-sized businesses in the textiles sector and the mechanical sector. This created new jobs and new opportunities, particularly in home-building, public works, as well as a more scientific approach to farming.

Commerce expanded from contained regional trading to the beginnings of a national network. This was made possible through the first railway promoted by the government of Turin in 1843. The project followed a three-year study that proposed to link the port at Genoa with the capital Turin and the royal residence of Moncalieri, with strategies to continue the line on to connect with Milan, the capital of Lombardy. Construction on the Turin-Moncalieri line began in 1845 and was complete in 1848, creating great enthusiasm on the part of the public. With this feat, the spread of the railway system was assured. The line between Turin and Genoa was completed in 1854, and inaugurated by King Victor Emmanuel II. The railway system facilitated the transport of goods and enhanced trade, but also brought a notable increase in bureaucracy that had an impact on how government itself functioned in Turin. Planning, implementation, evaluation, analysis and time-management were the new virtues learned from railway development. Whatever the benefits and the drawbacks, the railway dramatically demonstrated the will of Turin to modernize.

Turin was on the rise. From the beginning of the Restoration, Turin's importance as a political and administrative center was always on the rise. The proportion of employees engaged in public administration rose dramatically, doubling in number between 1802 and 1815. Their number continued to grow throughout the Restoration even as the population of the city mushroomed.[10] From a population of 84,230 inhabitants in 1814, the city increased to 122,424 in 1830, and again to 136,849 in 1848.[11] Beginning in 1848, Turin took the lead in the movement to unify Italy as a monarchy under the House of Savoy. At the time of unification in 1861, Turin's population was tallied at 204,715 inhabitants.[12]

The city was no longer able to sustain such a population or support its growth. At the center of a new State, civic and national leaders (often the same men dealing with both realities) were forced to face what they considered a dramatic backwardness in many newly annexed regions of the kingdom. The debt incurred after a decade of war, linked with repeated agricultural crises, hampered government at every turn. The new Kingdom of Italy (and therefore Turin the capital) must sustain new public works and foster private enterprise, but this soon became overwhelming. Turin, proudly the center

of the new nation, had arrived at a precarious development.

The cost of living rose dramatically, as did taxes on such things as the milling of wheat. The job market dried up as Turin faced the loss of many places of work even as the population continued to increase. Instead of attracting skilled workers, Turin in the 1860s began to repel them. At the beginning of the next decade many left for France and for America, while only those too poor to emigrate remained.[13]

It was only at this point that we can trace the emergence of class consciousness. Workers now understood as never before that they were literally blocked from participation in politics. They began to organize to seek better conditions. The content of their claims were clear and concrete: better jobs; more humane working conditions; a greater say in the direction of industry. From all sides there were responses on the workers behalf. The first Catholic trade union was formed in 1871, and mutual aid societies sprung up throughout the city. University faculties, with state support, began to promote the sciences and technology, and the faculty of engineering at Turin became one of the most important in the country. Even so, the workers' challenges startled the Turin's leadership, and when they were not heard, the workers did united in very dramatic and sometimes violent protests that became typical at the end of the century.[14]

The young in Don Bosco's times

Between 1841 and 1860 young people in Turin fell into several different social classes and categories. Young people of this era were not known to organize, although they did congregate most spontaneously. It may even be doubtful whether they would have ever referred to themselves as belonging to these categories, but it may be helpful for us if we subdivide them so as to understand who were the young people of those times.

Privileged youth

Young people that we could call *privileged youth* came from the elite middle-class and noble families of Turin. The number of young people belonging to this category was very small.

These youths did have opportunities for extensive education at levels that today we could describe as primary, secondary and tertiary. For the most part their families oversaw their education directly, entrusting them to the care of private teachers and tutors, at least until they might enter the university (and with royal support, the University of Turin at that time was introducing new faculties and expanding its offerings for the first time in decades).

In terms of career opportunities, *privileged youth* could look forward to a good future as officers in the military forces of the Kingdom of Sardinia, and to positions of trust in public administration, in directing new industries and in the professions.

Sons of the People

The vast majority of citizens of Turin had what we would call today urban and working-class origins. They came from families that in the past had worked hand in hand with the nobility for the good administration and security of society. In the nineteenth century a growing distance developed between the privileged and urban classes however.

The young people who came from the popular class had less opportunities for study than their counterparts in the bourgeois or noble classes. Often they had limited instruction, having learned the rudiments of reading and figure, quite below elementary standards.

For generations the city dwellers of Turin were hardworking and industrious, and the youth of the nineteenth century were formed in a strong work ethic by their elders. Yet, opportunities ofr employment (or semi-employment) became increasingly limited as the city experienced a shift from a traditional economy. Youth in this category might find positions working in the trades and or as artisans if they had had the op-

portunity to serve as apprentices through a family network of training and formation during their early years. Otherwise, they might find employment in the growing service sector, in small and middle industries where working conditions were often inhuman and put them at risk.

Immigrant youth

The number of young people arriving in the city in search of job opportunities became a steady feature of Turin in the middle of the nineteenth century. This growing number of immigrant youth came from rural farm villages and market towns across Piedmont, as well as from mountain villages in Aosta. Many, as we have seen, came from outside of the Kingdom of Sardinia.

These young people arrived in Turin, many as young as 11 or 12 years of age, mainly to find immediate job placement. Opportunities for schooling in the rural regions from which they came had been extremely limited. If there had been a farsighted parish priest, town children might have had the opportunity for something beyond rudimentary instruction,[15] or where more organized towns were able to adhere to Piedmontese legislation and provide schooling up to the third grade.[16] The vast majority, however, were the children of peasant farmers or tenant farmers, and would have had little or no schooling at all. Their young lives in the farming hamlets and villages had followed age-old traditional rhythms, but in the city they were culturally uprooted and linguistically isolated.

Immigrant youth came to the city in search of their first employment (or to *seek their fortune* as the saying went in those days). What concrete opportunities for employment existed for them? They found themselves inserted in a productive machine, in the meanest and dirtiest jobs that everyone else was anxious to avoid at all costs. Immigrant youth took the most difficult and least compensated jobs, often in the construction industry (public buildings, factories, markets, housing in the expanding city of Turin). Others more fortunate who had some skill found employment with artisans in crafts and small trades, while others found placement in commerce (perhaps starting as shop boys and much later possibly moving up to retail).

Immigrant youth, therefore, formed the working class, or better, the underclass of Turin's labor force. More than any others, these young people were destined to certain marginalization. They were deprived of material and moral support, deprived of visible assistance, and made prey to the ups and down of a weak economy and a volatile market.

On the other hand, many immigrant youth had an inner strength that others did not. These young, displaced farmers came from traditional religious families. They mostly maintained that spiritual awareness that they had learned from their families. They had a strong sense of devotion, and this in turn made them gave them an ethical sensitivity that they did not easily surrender. As immigrants, these young people did not lose the religious heritage of their native environments. Even if they found themselves in new cultural circumstances, Turin itself was a city that honored religiosity. The city was not as secularized in the early 1840s as it would become in later decades.[17]

For them, more than other young people, the balance had shifted. They were confronted with changing values. Their "crisis" was not religious but one of uprooting. This would bring about a slow, deep transformation of convictions, of practices and of religious sentiment unless they found someone who could help them make sense of their new situation. They were in need of a new evangelization and catechesis – something that Don Bosco made a priority in his outreach to them.

Young offenders

Turin in the 1840s to 1860s had a small minority of young people who had run afoul of the law. These young offenders were those who may have served time in Turin's inhuman prisons, which did not reform them but hardened them further. The citizens of Turin referred to such young people by various nicknames such as *the destroyers, thieves, the wasters*, or most commonly, *the barabbases*. The phenomenon of law-

lessness among criminal youth became known as *la barabberia*.

The young who were caught in this situation banded together in roving and ferocious gangs. They were clever mobsters and could be seen around the town squares and plazas that served as the outdoor markets (such as *Porta Palazzo*, which was a huge agricultural and craft market that opened on a daily basis on the north side of the city). The gangs made efforts to remain unseen by the general population, but they were, in fact, quite powerful and dangerous.

Gang members were more than simply troubled. They were practiced in intimidation and violence. Still, only a minority of Turinese young people were in this condition as the *traviati*. They lived on the margins, often in and out of prison; they were true juvenile delinquents.

Don Bosco himself approached many of these young people. Encouraged by Don Cafasso, he dedicated his early apostolic efforts to troubled youth, including those in the prisons of the capital city.[18] Their sad plight convinced him of the importance of intervening in the life of young people *before* they became at risk.[19]

Youth as protagonists

Young people in nineteenth-century Turin did not normally affiliate with groups. Nor did they organize in any political sense. Political or religious groups were reserved for adults and few young people gave much thought to them. There were no collective behaviors, no group projects, and no sense of belonging to a class (as in a school group), much less any type of youth movement.

While young people did join enthusiastically in the service of the patriotic ideals, however, in that moment in history, they remained absent, as young people, in the first attempts to socially or politically organize the working class.[20]

This seems to contradict the agenda of the leaders of the *Risorgimento*, such as Giuseppe Mazzini, who early in the movement organized a political society that he dubbed *Giovane Italia* – Young Italy. He believed that Italy would become a unified republic through a popular uprising, whereby Italians would realize their mission (and therefore their duty) to unite Italy for the good of Western Civilization. For years he sought to instill revolutionary patriotism though his political journals, public lectures, and a network of secret societies. His influence on the young Italians that flooded Turin in the middle of the century was negligible.[21] The fact of the matter was that the youth of Turin were not politicized.

Were young people politically active? The sons and daughters of Turin's upper middle class at the end of the Restoration and at the beginning of the *Risorgimento* did not take much interest in politics. The few young men who did enter into politics were touched by patriotic reforms, much as their fathers were. However, they had no sense of belonging to a new generation.

As regards the sons of the common people, these young people were far from politicized. Those who might have had some inclinations in this line were, in fact, cut out of political play. In many ways, they were just as culturally marginalized as their immigrant counterparts.

Conclusion: Don Bosco's young people

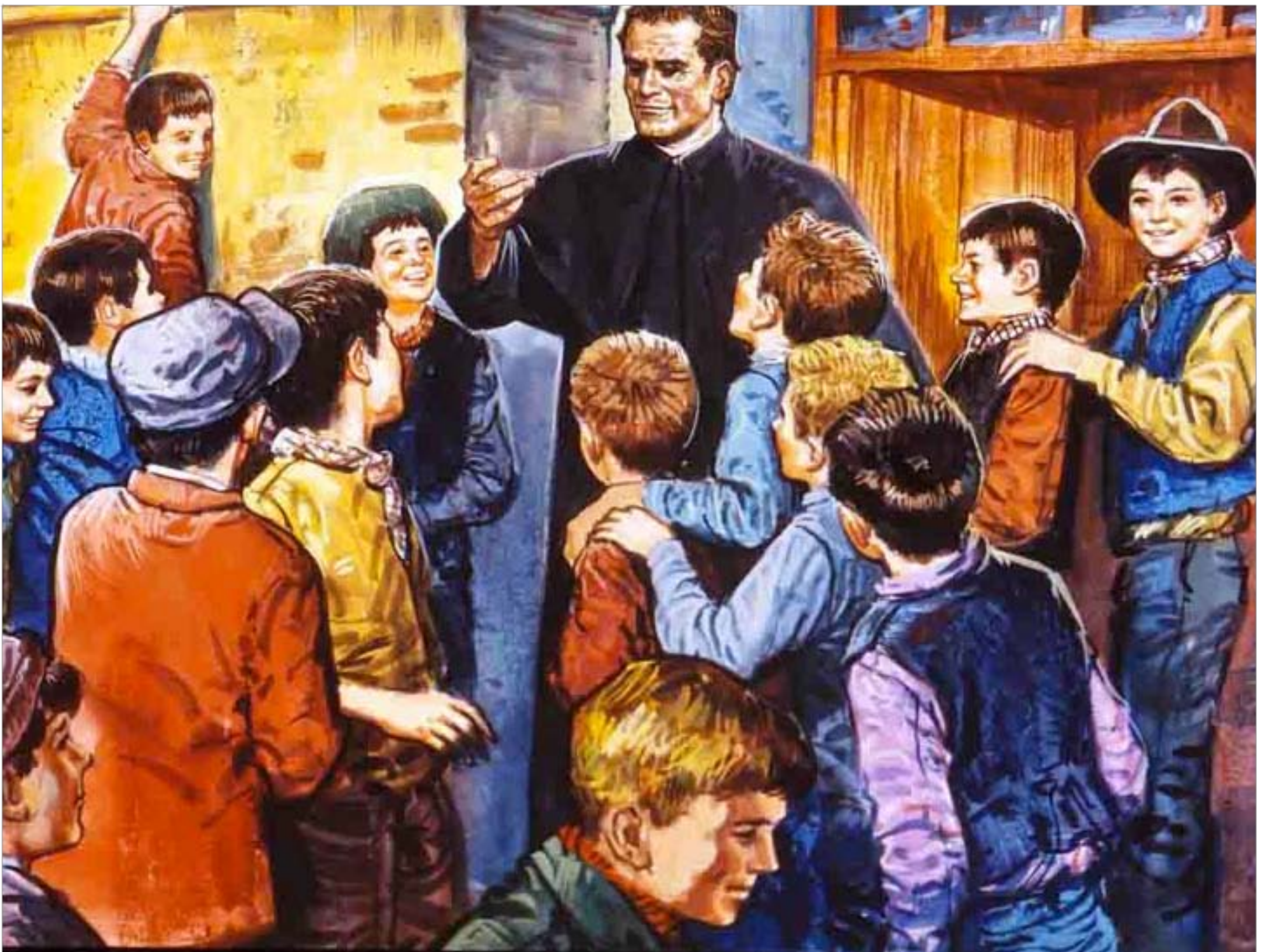
Don Bosco made great efforts to mobilize his contemporaries, both as members of the Church and as members of a changing society, to work on behalf of the young people of his times – that "portion of human society that is the most delicate and the most precious, on which so many hopes for a happy future are placed" are often the most at risk and therefore, the most "in need of a helping hand that can take care of them, and therefore cultivate in them a love for virtue so that they may keep far away from vice."[22] He spoke often of poor and abandoned youth, and he dedicated his life and work to them, just as he invited others to do the same, so that the young might become "honest

citizens and good Christians."

It was obvious to him that the State could not attend to the needs of the people, much less to the needs of the young, for in that crucial period the government was most concerned with survival. And although many of Turin's priests made pastoral outreach their priority, suppressions of religious orders and the exile of the archbishop made it difficult for the Church to respond to the pressing needs of the rising generation.

Under these circumstances, Don Bosco felt the need to give a response that included social assistance and the promotion of youth in addition to his ministerial duties as a priest. To his consolation, he found the young to be responsive. They were poor but hope-filled. For his part, Don Bosco worked to provide the young with more opportunities along a continuum from basic training to professional education, from spiritual guidance to daily bread, from work to leisure, from social and political formation to emotional and affective security.

When facing youth problems, Don Bosco's interventions were comprehensive. He educated and advocated on behalf of the young of the common people – particularly those who were the poorest and most abandoned. They were the center of his concern, and every one of his educative interventions incorporated religious goals, social aims and political dimensions so that Don Bosco's young people could develop in the most wholesome way into *honest citizens and good Christians*!



Endnotes

1. Cf. Anthony L. Cardoza, and Geoffrey W. Symcox, *Storia di Torino*; traduzione di Valentina Besi, Cinzia Di Barbara, e Francesca Salvadori (Torino: Giulio Einaudi editore, 2006), 155-157.

2. Cf. Alain Pillepich, *Napoleone e gli italiani;* traduzione di Renato Riccardi; edizione a cura di Vittorio Criscuolo (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2005), 169-172.

3. Arthur J. Lenti, *Don Bosco, History and Spirit,* vol. 2: *Birth and Early Development of Don Bosco's Oratory* (Roma: LAS, 2007), 8.

4. Lenti offers a very complete picture of the social conditions of Turin in the above-cited second volume of his seven-volume opus, relying on first-hand testimony and city archives to describe the critical situation of Turin during the middle nineteenth century. I will present data from other sources as well.

5. Cf. Giancarlo Milanesi, "I giovani oggi e possibilità educative nello stile di Don Bosco," in *Il sistema educativo di Don Bosco tra pedagogia antica e nuova*; Atti del Convegno Europeo Salesiano sul Sistema Educativo di Don Bosco (Torino-Leumann: Elledici, 1974), 144.

6. Arthur J. Lenti, *Don Bosco, History and Spirit,* vol. 2: *Birth and Early Development of Don Bosco's Oratory* (Roma: LAS, 2007), 9.

7. Among the refugees were such figures as Gabriele Rosa (1812-1897) and Silvio Pellico (1789-1854), whose book *Le mie prigioni* (published 1831) told the story of his imprisonment in the Spielberg fortress. The book greatly influenced public opinion in Italy to opposed Austrian, Spanish and French occupation of the peninsula.

8. Cf. Arthur J. Lenti, *Don Bosco, History and Spirit,* vol. 2: *Birth and Early Development of Don Bosco's Oratory* (Roma: LAS, 2007), 9.

9. Cf. Giancarlo Milanesi, "I giovani oggi e possibilità educative nello stile di Don Bosco," in *Il sistema educativo di Don Bosco tra pedagogia antica e nuova*; Atti del Convegno Europeo Salesiano sul Sistema Educativo di Don Bosco (Torino-Leumann: Elledici, 1974), 145.

10. Cf. Anthony L. Cardoza, and Geoffrey W. Symcox, *Storia di Torino*; traduzione di Valentina Besi, Cinzia Di Barbara, e Francesca Salvadori (Torino: Giulio Einaudi editore, 2006), 172.

11. Cf. Arthur J. Lenti, *Don Bosco, History and Spirit,* vol. 2: *Birth and Early Development of Don Bosco's Oratory* (Roma: LAS, 2007), 7.

12. Cf. Anthony L. Cardoza, and Geoffrey W. Symcox, *Storia di Torino*; traduzione di Valentina Besi, Cinzia Di Barbara, e Francesca Salvadori (Torino: Giulio Einaudi editore, 2006), 282 (Tabella I).

13. Cf. Giancarlo Milanesi, "I giovani oggi e possibilità educative nello stile di Don Bosco," in *Il sistema educativo di Don Bosco tra pedagogia antica e nuova*; Atti del Convegno Europeo Salesiano sul Sistema Educativo di Don Bosco (Torino-Leumann: Elledici, 1974), 146.

14. Cf. Anthony L. Cardoza, and Geoffrey W. Symcox, *Storia di Torino*; traduzione di Valentina Besi, Cinzia Di Barbara, e Francesca Salvadori (Torino: Giulio Einaudi editore, 2006), 211-212; Giancarlo Milanesi, "I giovani oggi e possibilità educative nello stile di Don Bosco," in *Il sistema educativo di Don Bosco tra pedagogia antica e nuova*; Atti del Convegno Europeo Salesiano sul Sistema Educativo di Don Bosco (Torino-Leumann: Elledici, 1974), 146.

15. Cf. Giovanni Bosco, *Vite di Giovani: Le biografie di Domenico Savio, Michele Magone e Francesco Besucco*; Saggio introduttivo e note storiche a cura di Aldo Giraudo (Roma: LAS, 2012), 51-53 ("Vita del giovanetto Savio Domenico", capitolo 6).

16. On 4 October 1848, with the passage of Law #759, the so-called *Legge Boncompagni*, the Kingdom of Sardinia put education under the control of the state. The bill's author, Carlo Boncompagni, organized the Superior Council of Public Instruction, and made schooling obligatory up to third grade, but also offered provisions for elementary, middle and secondary instruction. Cf. *Compact Storia d'Italia: Cronologia 1815-1990*, a cura di Vincenzo Ceppellini, e Paolo Boroli (Novara: Istituto Geografico DeAgostini, 1991), 101; Giovanni Bosco, *Vite di Giovani: Le biografie di Domenico Savio, Michele Magone e Francesco Besucco*; Saggio introduttivo e note storiche a cura di Aldo Giraudo (Roma: LAS, 2012), 116 (footnote 9).

17. Cf. Milanesi, 147.

18. Cf. Giovanni Bosco, *Memorie dell'Oratorio di S. Francesco di Sales dal 1815 al 1855*; saggio introduttivo e note storiche a cura di Aldo Giraudo (Roma: LAS, 2011), 126-127.

19. Cf. Milanesi, 147; Arthur J. Lenti, *Don Bosco, History and Spirit,* vol. 2: *Birth and Early Development of Don Bosco's Oratory* (Roma: LAS, 2007), 34-35, 41.

20. Cf. Milanesi, 148.

21. Giuseppe Mazzini founded *Giovane Italia*, not on Italian soil but in Marseilles in the autumn of 1831; he attempted to revitalize it in London. He wanted it to be a public reality, not a clandestine sect. However, as a society, *Giovane Italia* was more expressive than practical, and never grew into the popular uprising that Mazzini had envisioned. Cf. Lucy Riall, *Garibaldi: Invention of a Hero* (London: Yale University Press, 2007), 29-31, 34-36; E. E. Y. Hales, *Mazzini and the Secret Societies: The Making of a Myth* (New York: P. J. Kennedy & Sons, 1956), 62, 66-67. Giovanni Belardelli, *Mazzini* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2010), 31-60.

22. From a page written by the newly ordained Don Bosco in late autumn of 1841, quoted in Giovanni Battista Lemoyne, *Memorie biografiche di Don Giovanni Bosco*, (S. Benigno Canavese: Suola Tipografica e Libraria Salesiana, 1901), 2:45.

Suggestions for Use of this Guide

With the Young

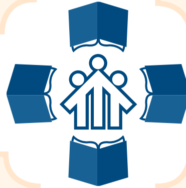
Gather Young People to celebrate their connection to the Salesian Mission.

- Give the leaders of your youth the opportunity to offer a retreat or day of reflection for other young people.
- Invite the young into an evening of prayer reflecting upon the social realities of Don Bosco in his times and help them to discover his approach to educating and evangelizing the young of his times

Community Days

During the Christms Breal:...

- Take time as a community to compare the demographics and social reality of the young people in your ministry and compare them to the setting and realities of Don Bosco's time.
- List and discuss the people, events, and schools of pedagogy which have shaped your own style of educating.



Coooperators

At the Chrismas Season:

- Invite a Salesian Religious Community to share a meal and an evening with the Cooperators to share together the various influences on the education and mission for those gathered.
- Share a resource for studying the educational styles of young people in this generation.

Colleagues

This is a month of holidays and parties. It is also an opportunity to take some time for study. Invite your colleagues into a shared experience of study. Choose a resource for Catholic education, a study of methodologies for reaching young people in our faith communities today, and other such resources.

- Refer to such volumes as:
- The Godbearing Life: The Art of Soul-tending by Kenda Creasy Dean
- You Lost me: Why Young Christians are Leaving the Church and Rethinking Faith, by David Kinnaman.

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