



JUNE 8, 2025

2. IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF DON BOSCO

2.2 Don Bosco's Childhood and Early Adolescence

Colle Don Bosco

"The Mother of Jesus was there" Jn 2,1

(travel to Colle Don Bosco – prayer in pullman)

Regina Coeli

Entrustment *(alternating sides)*

Guide: We entrust our life to Mary, our Mother and guide so that she can help us to joyfully sing of God's love for us, to live our vocation with commitment, renewed in faith, filled with hope, in love with Jesus, eager to communicate with passion and coherence the beauty of the Gospel to the new generations:

O Mary Help of Christians,
we entrust our journey to you
of total donation to God.
Teach us to sing with joy and gratitude
our Magnificat to the Lord.

Make us attentive to the voice of the Spirit
because we know how to live with humility,
charity, simplicity, and trust in our daily life.

Like You, we desire to abandon ourselves to the Father
to continue to live chaste, poor, and obedient

and to be, with our life
transparency of God's love
and reflection of your maternal goodness
on the example of Mother Mazzarello
for the young people entrusted to us. Amen.



PRAYER

The Maternal Presence of Mamma Margaret and Mary



Guide: John Bosco had the good fortune to be born into a family where the presence of his mother in his upbringing helped him to grow integrally. Mama Margaret instilled the virtue of hope in young Johnny Bosco through her unwavering faith and constant encouragement. With him we walk in his early years. Like for John, God accompanies us, takes us by the hand and envelops us with his love, with the maternal mediation of Mamma Margaret whose example showed us that even in difficult times, there is always reason for hope.

In the early years of Johnny's life, spent in his village between Castelnuovo, Becchi, Morialdo, Capriglio and Moncucco, the foundations of his human and Christian personality were laid; Johnny valued the presence of all the people with whom he lived in his native region. We too, following his example, want to be a meaningful presence for young people. With this song we thank God for the life of Don Bosco.

Psalm 138 "I will Praise You with My Whole Heart"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ctraZfPcZgM>

I will praise You with my whole heart;
Before the gods I will sing praises to You.

I will worship toward Your holy temple,
And praise Your name For Your lovingkindness and Your truth;
For You have magnified Your word above all Your name.
In the day when I cried out, You answered me,
And made me bold with strength in my soul.

All the kings of the earth shall praise You, O Lord,
When they hear the words of Your mouth.

Yes, they shall sing of the ways of the Lord,
For great is the glory of the Lord.

Though the Lord is on high, Yet He regards the lowly;
But the proud He knows from afar.

Though I walk in the midst of trouble, You will revive me;
You will stretch out Your hand against the wrath of my enemies,
And Your right hand will save me.

The Lord will perfect that which concerns me;
Your mercy, O Lord, endures forever;
Do not forsake the works of Your hands.

(pause)

Mt 11,25-27

At that time Jesus said, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this is what you were pleased to do. "All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

Guide: Let us allow our hearts to be open to gratitude, make space for silence and listening, and simply "be" with God. Let us accept what the Lord asks of us and let us be directed to the conversion of mind, heart and life.

(pause)

Guide: You called us from the womb to proclaim the wonders of your love. Together we pray:

Lord, we thank you that you have chosen St. John Bosco in a prodigious way. Like him, you have called us from the womb to proclaim the wonders of your love. We give you heartfelt thanks for your presence in our lives. Amen

Our Father

Song: Hymn to Mary

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8IOdUJRyfPM>

As I kneel before You,
as I bow my head in prayer,
take this day, make it Yours
and fill me with Your love.

Refrain

Ave Maria, Gratia Plena,
Dominus Tecum, Benedicta Tu.

All I have I give You,
every dream and wish are Yours,
Mother of Christ, Mother of mine,
present them to my Lord. (Refrain)



VISIT COLLE DON BOSCO

(A guided visit to the key places will take place.)



MASS (*Shrine of Mary Help of Christians*)



ADDITIONAL READING

Cf in resources "Here Don Bosco lived" pp. 19 - 33

GUIDED TOUR cf site Piedmont to Discover - Colle Don Bosco

Colle Don Bosco



During the 1800s, Piedmont was the birthplace of some of the best-known Social Saints, and among them one cannot forget St. John Bosco, founder of the Salesian order. Halfway between Turin and Asti, nestled in the Asti hills, is the grandiose *Colle Don Bosco* complex, built on the site where Don Bosco was born on August 16, 1815.

Shrine to St. John Bosco

Don Bosco was born on the Biglione farmstead, located in Becchi, a small hamlet of Morialdo near Castelnovo. His father worked there as a sharecropper and had a small lodging there where he already lived with his first wife, Margherita Cagliero, who died in 1811. Also in those poor rooms he continued to live with his second wife, Margherita Occhiena, by whom he had two sons, Giuseppe and Giovanni, who were joined by Antonio, born of his first marriage.

The Biglione farmstead no longer exists today. In a dilapidated state, it was torn down between 1957 and 1958 to make way for the large basilica that now towers over the hill and, on clear days, is visible from afar with its majestic dome. The idea of building a large basilica dedicated to Don Bosco, canonized in 1934, had

already been conceived in the 1930s, but was only realized in the 1960s thanks to the efforts of the Salesians.

The complex consists of two overlapping churches: the foundation stone was laid on June 11, 1961, and on August 16, 1965, for the 150th anniversary of Don Bosco's birth, there was the solemn inauguration, although the complex was not yet fully completed. In fact, the upper church was completed in the early 1980s and it was here, in 1988, that Pope John Paul II beatified the young Chilean Laura Vicuña, an example of Salesian youth.

Lower Basilica

From the large square there is side access to the lower church, consecrated in 1965. At the high altar a large painting by the Salesian, Caffaro Rore, with Don Bosco at Becchi surrounded by his boys, is very striking. In autumn, and particularly for the Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary, Don Bosco used to organize walks to Becchi starting from the Valdocco complex in Turin, the heart of the Salesian oratory. Highlighted in the painting are two banners representing the Eucharist and Mary, central elements of Salesian spirituality.



A painting representing St. Francis de Sales, the inspirer and patron of the Salesians, stands out in the right transept. Behind the high altar, there is a relic of Don Bosco to indicate the place where he was born, and several paintings narrate the events of the saint's childhood: the marriage of his father Francis and Mamma Margaret, John's baptism, his father's untimely death following a bad bout of pneumonia, and the family's move from the Biglione farmstead to the poor barn hastily arranged in order to live there.

Side altars, beautiful stained glass windows depict saints associated with Salesian and Italian traditions: St. Cecilia, patron saint of musicians, underscoring the educational value that music has held and still holds for the Salesians; St. Mary Mazzarello, foundress with Don Bosco, of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians; St. John the Baptist; St. Louis Gonzaga; St. Catherine and St. Francis of

Assisi, patron saints of Italy; St. John Bosco and St. John the Evangelist; and finally the young St. Dominic Savio, protector of expectant mothers, who also lived in this area. Note the large organ with 2,500 pipes, made by the Tamburini Firm. On the way out, one can still admire a life-size photograph of Leonardo da Vinci's, *The Last Supper*.

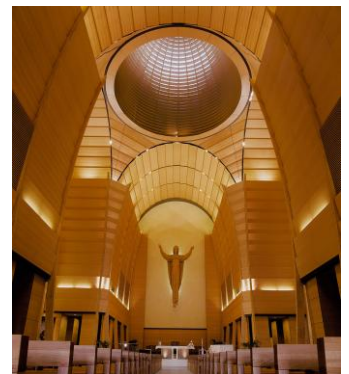
The Statue of Don Bosco



Climbing the grand staircase to the upper church, consecrated in 1984, one is greeted by a bronze statue of Don Bosco, a gift from Italian teachers in 1929 for Don Bosco's beatification. Above the doorway to the church is a fresco by Bogani commemorating Salesian missionary activity around the world.

Upper Basilica

Upon entering the church, one feels as if wrapped in a big embrace: the interior is totally lined with beech wood panels, added during the 1999/2000 renovations to overcome heating and echo problems. The warm cladding follows a curvilinear pattern and envelops the worshipper, inviting him or her to pray and be enveloped in the divine embrace. It is reminiscent of a great ark that, reconnecting with Noah's, invites one to be welcomed and guided by Jesus in life's moments of difficulty. Here, then, at the high altar is the monumental lime-wood statue of the Risen Christ: made by Studio Demetz of Ortisei, it measures 8 m high, the head alone measures 1.10 m, the width of the arms is a full 6 m, and the weight is 3,000 kg. The Risen Christ welcomes visitors and conveys a sense of the joy of the resurrection.



On the side walls stand six large canvases by Mario Bogani that chronicle the existence of Don Bosco. These are multi-layered paintings showing scenes related to a certain theme in the Saint's life. The first painting recounts the 9-year-old dream, where, under Mary's guidance, young John learns that he will befriend

boys not through violence and force, but through meekness and love. This dream would mark Don Bosco's life and choices, and subsequent paintings show its fulfillment. In the next painting, Don Bosco is carried in triumph by the boys of the oratory created with so much effort and with the help of Providence. He is then seen with Mother Maria Mazzarello, foundress with Don Bosco, of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. Another painting shows the churches founded by Don Bosco, two in Turin and one in Rome. The penultimate painting is dedicated to the first Salesian missionaries who spread the Gospel particularly in South America and Japan.

Looking toward the exit, the last painting tells the episode of the disciples of Emmaus, an invitation to the faithful to spread the Word of God just as his disciples did.

Also in the upper church very beautiful are the stained-glass windows that highlight Salesian spirituality: the centrality of the consecrated Host and the figure of Mary.

In the left transept stands out the imposing organ consisting of no less than 3328 pipes and made by the Pinchi Firm of Foligno. Along the walls of the aisles, the church displays, the first of its kind in the world, the fourteen wooden panels of the *Via Lucis*, the work of the artist Giovanni Dragoni of Rome. They represent Christ's appearances from the Resurrection to Pentecost, highlighting the grace of the light that comes from the Risen One.

Historical monuments



Leaving the church, one heads toward the buildings surrounded by meadows and trees. On the left, is the meadow seen by young John in his 9-year-old dream, remembered by a pillar, and just beyond is the fountain where Mother Margaret went to draw water.

Monument dedicated to Mamma Margherita

At right, the statue of Mamma Margaret recalls the loving, yet firm educational role played by Don Bosco's mother in raising her children and as a mother to the boys of the Turin Oratory.



Don Bosco's little house

We then reach the little house purchased by Don Bosco's father in 1817 to store his work tools. After his death it was arranged to house Margaret, his three children and his mother-in-law. It was Becchi's poorest little house, consisting of a stable, kitchen and two small bedrooms on the upper floor. The little house has been rearranged and today it is possible to access a modern part in which photographs, texts and objects allow the visitor to better understand the events that took place in these places and learn more about their protagonists, while at the same time observing the poor rooms in which Don Bosco's family lived.



Monument to John the Juggler



Next to the little house, the monument to John Bosco juggling, recalls the magic games and acrobatics that John used to perform (*with*) to his friends, followed later by prayer and catechism.

The Shrine of Mary Help of Christians and Joseph Bosco's House

Opposite the little house is the small shrine of Mary Help of Christians, built between 1915 and 1918 to commemorate the institution of the feast of Mary Help of Christians in 1815 by Pope Pius VII and the centenary of Don Bosco's birth. The shrine was built thanks to donations from boys from all over the world, memorialized in the national coats of arms depicted under the eaves of the roof, to ask for the end of World War I.



Joseph Bosco's house



Next to the shrine, brother Joseph Bosco's house can be visited, where there was a room reserved for Don Bosco during his visits and another room arranged as a chapel.

Toward Murialdo

Along the way, one encounters the fourteen pillars of the Youth Biblical Way, which tell the story of young men mentioned in the Bible. A little further on, on the right, a plaque on an exposed brick farmhouse reminds us that St. Dominic Savio lived there for a few years, who also attended the nearby small Church of St. Peter with his father. It was at that church that little John received his first lessons in Latin taught by Don Calosso.

The priest had met John on the road between the Becchi and Buttigliera d'Asti and immediately recognized his deep intelligence and great potential. In the distance can be seen the rolling and sometimes wild hills of the Monferrato Asti region covered with trees, from which small villages peep out. The bell tower of the Church of Buttigliera d'Asti, the highest in Monferrato, where John Bosco received his confirmation, stands out. A few kilometers away is Capriglio, the birthplace of Mamma Margherita, where John as a child attended elementary school for some time. In a hamlet of the village, the woman's birth house still exists.

