



JUNE 9, 2025

2. IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF DON BOSCO

2.5 Don Bosco's Adult Life – Valdocco

2.5.1 Chapel of St. Francis de Sales



***"Filled the jars with water and filled them to the brim
you left the best wine for the end." Jn 2,7-10***

VALDOCO

VISIT THE CHAPEL OF ST. FRANCIS DE SALES

(The animators of Progetto Mornese will share about the Chapel of St. Francis de Sales.)



PERSONAL REFLECTION

(After visiting the different places today, the participants will make time to reflect on the following questions.)

- Who did I meet? What did I see? What did I listen to?
- What did Mary tell me most strongly?
- How did I encounter the amphorae: empty, full of water?
- What face of Don Bosco did I discover?
- How has this experience touched my Salesian life?
- In this Jubilee Year of Hope reflect on Don Bosco's 'hoping against hope' (*Romans 4:18*) to offer young people the wholistic educational triad of 'play, prayer, study/learning a trade. What does this mean for me as I follow in his footsteps?



GROUP SHARING

(In the meeting room, the participants in small groups or pairs will freely share their personal experience of today. The sharing will conclude with the Magnificat.)

Magnificat: My Soul Proclaims the Lord my God

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gZbFIMc_qgk

My soul proclaims the Lord my God,
My Spirit sings His praise!
He looks on me, He lifts me up
And gladness fills my days.

All nations now will share my joy
His gifts He has out poured;
His little one He has made great;
I magnify the Lord.

His mercy is forever more
His name I praise again.
His strong right arm puts down the proud
And lifts the lowly high.

He fills the hungry with good things
The rich He sends away;
The promise made to Abraham
Is filled by him each day.
Magnificat, Magnificat,
Magnificat, praise God!
Praise God, praise God,
praise God, Praise God,
Magnificat, praise God.





ADDITIONAL READING

Valdocco

April 12, 1846, Easter of the Resurrection: The Oratory arrives in Valdocco. Don Bosco uses a great deal of care but also a great deal of decision in removing from the Oratory those youngsters and even those helpers who could harm his youngsters. He does not hesitate at one point to remain almost alone with the turmoil of his boys, with an immense amount of work. But he did not want anyone to spoil his goal: honest citizens and good Christians (*S.G.B. Memoirs*, p.185 ff.).

From 1844 to 1846 Don Bosco is chaplain in one of the institutes of the Marquise of Barolo; at the Refuge, in 1844, a real Oratory begins, with its own chapel and other activities; in 1845 the little hospital of St. Philomena opens, occupying the premises of the Oratory. Don Bosco began his pilgrimage: S. Pietro in Vincoli, Molini Dora, Moretta House, Filippi Meadow were the stages of a youthful exodus that would end at Easter 1846. When Don Bosco, evicted by everyone, manages to find in the Lombard Francesco Pinardi the last person who trusts him, and who is willing to rent him a piece of land, Don Bosco in order to make the Oratory asks him, "a small church to gather some boys. Pinardi offers him a house "dug out, provided with steps, with a different floor," that is, to be used to gather young people around an altar. Only after he resolves this fundamental issue does Don Bosco ask to rent the lawn around it for the boys to play on as well (*Memoirs*, p. 139). And the boys, after a long day's work, come to help Don Bosco prepare the Oratory: not to level the lawn, not to draw lines, but to build their church.

So, the Oratory grew, gathering boys who came from all parts of the city, attracted by that priest who "plays with young people" but also by the stories they told among themselves; in the Oratory that Don Bosco founded in Valdocco there was a crowd of 500 boys.

Alone he could not cope with looking after everyone. A government minister, Urbano Rattazzi, will say to him: "If you were to pass away, what would become of your work? Choose yourself some trusted laymen and clergymen, and form a

society with them. “Don Bosco had been thinking about this for some time, but he would not choose adults as helpers, he would aim for the best of his pupils. Michelino Rua, so intelligent and hardworking, would soon lend him a hand. But Don Bosco never stopped thinking about possible expansions as well; important in this regard were the last twenty years of his life, beginning with the construction of the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians. However, this period was also the one of greatest crisis: from 1865 to 1869 the young people of the Oratory were reduced to a sparse number, much of the area set aside for them was occupied by the building of the Basilica and the storage of materials that the construction site required. When the work was finished, Don Bosco realized that he had neglected them. The strip of land next to the basilica, cleared of building material, became the courtyard; in 1880 he would add the 2015 sq. m. plot with a small house attached that would function as the headquarters for several years. To his heirs, along with a myriad of other works, Don Bosco left a fundamental dimension for youth activity, an aspect that had borne fruit but was still much to be explored: the Festive Oratory.

It was a tangible sign of his love for the children, but also a road to beat dense with meaning and potential and problems: character, behavior, spiritual and material. These were problems that had certainly preoccupied Don Bosco when he entrusted in 1884 Don Giuseppe Pavia with the task of director of the Festive Oratory. Pavia had been a companion of the founder in achieving his goals, strong in a blind trust in prayer and Providence; he had joined the Salesian Oratory in 1865, joined the congregation in 1873, and was ordained a priest three years later. Don Pavia was director until 1915, during the years he lived at the Oratory he imparted a more thorough religious education to his boys, restoring a more strictly catechetical method; the explanation of the Gospel after Sunday or festive Mass was for Don Pavia a commitment that he never wanted to yield to others; he almost always spoke in Piedmontese and the young men listened to him open-mouthed, motionless.

Chapel of St. Francis de Sales

The Pinardi Chapel, even after being expanded, it is no longer enough to contain the many boys that would come to pray or for Mass.

Don Bosco decided to build a bigger church dedicated to Saint Francis de Sales. To cover the expenses, he sold a portion of the land, organized lotteries and petitioned benefactors. For the purchase of some furnishings many benefactors also contributed.

The work began on July 20, 1851 and ended on June 20, 1852, the day of its consecration. The bell tower was completed later. The church of St. Francis de Sales for 16 years (*from June 1852 to June 1868*) remained the center of the new religious congregation founded by Don Bosco.

In 1854 Don Bosco's mother, Margherita, gave a boy the tablecloth of the altar to cover the sick, as Turin was hit by a cholera epidemic.

On December 8, 1854 Domenico Savio, in front of at the altar of the Madonna, consecrated himself to her.

Two years later, Domenico Savio, with some of the best boys of the Oratory, founded in front of that altar the Company of the Immaculate.

Michele Magone, the rascal from Carmagnola, and Francesco Besucco, the boy from Argentera in this church testified to the heroic goodness of Domenico Savio.

Here Don Michele Rua celebrated his first Mass.

In the last years of the Mamma Margherita's life, she could be found sitting in the last benches praying the Rosary.

The church was restored in 1959. The chapel of St. Louis is the part less remodeled. The altar is original. The plaster statue of St. Luigi was already acquired by Don Bosco during the time of the first Pinardi Chapel.

