

# Alter Christus

*“As an **alter Christus** (another Christ) the priest is in Christ, for Christ and with Christ... Because he belongs to Christ, the priest is radically at the service of all people: he is the minister of their salvation” (Pope Benedict XVI)*

Monthly bulletin dedicated to all the Priests of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands

## *Don Bosco's Last Counsels*

*By Saint John Bosco*

[From the Book *The Spiritual Writings of Saint John Bosco*]

In 1885, between August 6 and September 30, Don Bosco, who seemed to know that the end of his days was approaching, sent letters which were considerably longer than usual to the five main superiors of the American missions. They were to be his last counsels.

As far as we know, these letters are the last ones which Don Bosco sent to them, except for one other note to Bishop Cagliero of a purely practical

nature. We therefore have before us Don Bosco's last testament for his distant sons. He is concerned with the unity of spirit and action in his family.

### **1- “It Is Not Enough to Know Things: They Have to Be Practiced”**

Mathi, August 14, 1885

My dear Father Tomatis,  
The fact that your letters come so rarely makes me think that you

must be very busy, and I do believe it! However, sending news about yourself to your dear Don Bosco certainly does not deserve to be considered dispensable. "And what shall I write about?" you might ask. Well, you might tell me about the state of your health and that of our confreres, whether the rules of the Congregation are faithfully observed, whether the Exercise for a Holy Death is made regularly and thoroughly. You might let me know how many pupils you have and how promising they are. Are you able to further vocations and

what are the prospects? Is Bishop Ceccarelli always a faithful friend of the Salesians? I shall be waiting for these answers with great pleasure.

Since my life is approaching its end in giant steps, this letter contains the very things I want to recommend in the last days of my exile. They are my testament for you.

My dear Father Tomatis, keep well in mind that you became a Salesian to save your soul; preach and remind all the other confreres of the very same truth.

Remember that it is not enough to know things; we have to practice

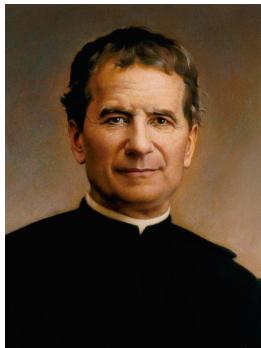
## Author: Saint John Bosco

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St. John Bosco, (born August 16, 1815 - died January 31, 1888. Canonized April 1, 1934. Feast day January 31), was a Catholic priest who was a pioneer in educating the poor and founded the Salesian order. He felt called to the priesthood but lacked the necessary education. He eventually found a sympathetic priest who helped him with some basic education. Bosco left home at the age of 12 and worked odd jobs as a farm labourer until he came into the care of the future saint

Joseph Cafasso, who helped to further his education at the seminary and taught him about the spirituality of St. Francis of Sales.

Bosco was ordained a priest (1841) in Turin and, influenced by Cafasso, began to work to alleviate the plight of poor and neglected boys who came to seek employment in the city. In Turin he and 22 companions founded the Society of St. Francis de Sales (also known as the Salesians of Don Bosco) in 1859. With St. Mary Mazzarello he founded the Daughters of Our Lady Help of Christians (Salesian Sisters of Don Bosco) in 1872, a congregation of nuns dedicated to similar work among girls.



them. May God help us so that the Savior's words "...dicunt enim et non faciunt" (...for they speak and do not act) (Mt 23,3) do not apply to us.

Try to see for yourself what is going on and, in case of transgression or negligence, intervene promptly and don't wait for evil to take hold or to spread.

With exemplary conduct, with charity in words and deeds, and with tolerance for the faults of others you will win many for the Congregation. Always recommend frequent Confession and Communion.

Humility and charity are the virtues that will make you happy in time and in eternity.

Always be the friend, the father of our confreres. Help them as much as you can with their temporal and spiritual matters, and know how to make use of their abilities in everything that is for the glory of God.

Every thought expressed in this letter requires further explanation; you can do this for yourself and for the others.

May God bless you, my ever dear Father Tomatis. Extend a most cordial greeting to all our confreres, friends, and benefactors. Tell them

that I pray for them every morning at Mass, and that I humbly recommend myself to the prayers of all.

May God grant us, at long last, to praise the names of Jesus and Mary in the blessed eternity. Amen.

Shortly, I will write or have someone write and advise you about things of certain importance.

May Mary keep us all steadfast and guide us along the path toward Heaven. Amen.

Your most loving friend in Jesus Christ,

Fr. John Bosco

## 2- “We Want Only Souls”

Turin, September 30, 1885

My dear Father Lasagna,

For many months I have been wanting to write to you, but my tired old hand kept postponing it.

Now, however, it seems that the sun is setting and I want to leave you with some thoughts as the testament of one who has always loved you.

You have followed the Lord's call and consecrated yourself to the Catholic missions. What a wonderful choice! Mary will be your faithful guide. Difficulties and even malevolence on the part of the world will not be wanting, but do not worry—Mary will protect you! Souls are all we want. Try to convey this message loud and clear to our confreres. O Lord, we accept crosses, thorns, and persecutions of any kind provided we can save souls—our own among them.

The time for our spiritual retreats in America is fast approaching. Dwell upon the charity and gentleness of Saint Francis de Sales, whom we have to emulate by exact observance of our rules, constant reading of the Deliberations of the chapter, and

careful meditation on the various regulations of the houses.

Believe me, my dear Father Lasagna, I have known certain confreres who were completely ignorant of these Deliberations of ours, and still others who never read the rules or recommendations concerning their duties.

Another plague which threatens to befall us is forgetfulness or, worse, ignorance of the rubrics of the Divine Office and of the Mass. I am convinced that a spiritual retreat would yield excellent results if it alerted the Salesians to the exact recitation of the Mass and the Divine Office.

Make plans and do not worry about costs provided we obtain some priests for the Church, particularly for the missions.

When you have an opportunity to address our Sisters or our confreres,



assure them that I have received their letters and their greetings and that it gave me much joy and comfort to learn that all have prayed and continued to pray for me.

Courage! Mary blesses and protects our Congregation, and help from Heaven will not be wanting. The number of workers is increasing fast, zeal seems to be intensifying, and material means, though not plentiful, are adequate.

May God bless you, my dear Father Lasagna, together with all our sons and daughters, members and pupils. May Mary guard the Buxareo and Jackson families and our benefactors. May she lead us all safely toward Heaven.

I am here at Valsalice for the spiritual retreats. All are well and send you their regards.

My health is somewhat precarious, but I keep going. May the Lord keep us all in His holy grace.

Your most loving friend,  
Fr. John Bosco

### 3- “The Church is Your Mother”

Turin, August 10, 1885

My dear Father Fagnano,

Before you leave for the great mission of the Patagonian prefecture, where God has been storing abundant harvests for you, I want to speak a few words to you—which may well be the last ones by the friend of your soul.

**Souls are all we want.**  
**Try to convey this**  
**message loud and**  
**clear to our confreres.**  
**O Lord, we accept**  
**crosses, thorns, and**  
**persecutions of any**  
**kind provided we can**  
**save souls—our own**  
**among them.**

In this new sacred ministry you will enjoy greater freedom, since you are away from the confreres appointed to help and protect you from possible dangers, particularly spiritual ones.

Hence you must continually meditate and keep in mind

and heart the great thought that God sees you and He will judge me, you, all our confreres, and all the souls for whom we work.

In your travels, be they short or long, do not concern yourself with temporal gains but only with the glory of God. Do not ever forget that all your efforts must be directed toward the growing needs of your

Church, “*Sed mater tua est ecclesia Dei*,” (Your mother is the Church) says Saint Jerome.

Wherever you go, strive to establish schools and minor seminaries so as to cultivate or at least promote some vocations for the Sisters and the Salesians. On the other hand, see that you reach a good understanding with Bishop Cagliero with regard to these difficult matters.

Read our rules every day, specifically the chapter on piety and my introduction to it, as well as the deliberations of our chapters at different sessions.

Love generously and do your best to support those who work for the faith.

To facilitate the direction of our affairs, I am thinking of appointing a Salesian vicar in America, and I intend to do the same for the Salesians in Europe. However, you will receive letters and instructions about these matters, provided the merciful God will grant me a delay in my failing old age.

I am formally charging you with greeting our Sisters and my Salesian sons and their pupils on my behalf and advising them as to what I have written and what may be for the benefit of their spiritual and temporal well-being.

One more thing: Always keep scrupulously every secret confided to you by the confreres or by the Sisters. Encourage complete frankness in their reports by your guarantee to keep the information contained in them absolutely confidential, as demanded by our rules.

May God bless you, my always beloved

Father Fagnano, and may He bless all the civil authorities and others with whom you will be dealing. May He also bless your projects. Pray for me, all of you whom, God willing, I hope to see here on earth or—with greater probability—to meet with Jesus and Mary in the blessed eternity. Amen.

Your most loving friend in Jesus Christ,

Fr. John Bosco