

# Saint Benedict Center

*The Slaves of the Immaculate Heart of Mary*

To Our Readers:

The great apostle of youth in modern times, Saint John Bosco, whose inspiring and most exciting story is the feature of this issue, may be styled "The Saint of Enthusiasm." But as I present the breathtaking epic to be narrated in the following pages, it is my sad duty to announce to our readers the death of another apostle of enthusiasm, our Superior, Brother Hugh MacIsaac, M.I.C.M., whose last cherished project on earth was to plan this very issue of our magazine *From the Husetops*.

Brother Hugh is the one responsible, after God and our protectress in heaven, the Immaculate Mary, for the restoration of this magazine after twenty-five years of interruption; an interruption caused by the persecution raised against us by the Liberal forces within the Church—the very forces that now seem so successful in effecting the demolition of faith and tradition.



Brother Hugh, M.I.C.M.  
1922-1979

Brother Hugh was also our most effective leader in our apostolate to bring the message of faith to all our cities and towns throughout the United States. One wonders how many hundreds, or even thousands, were waiting to meet him on his departure from this vale of tears in the early morning of July 11th of this year—souls who might owe their eternal salvation to the loving and enthusiastic challenge given to them by Brother Hugh during his long apostolate of over thirty years.

"When I go to heaven," he said recently with his characteristic humor, "after I meet the Holy Family and my patron saint, I'll ask to see Henry." Henry was an  
*(continued inside back cover)*

# from the Husetops

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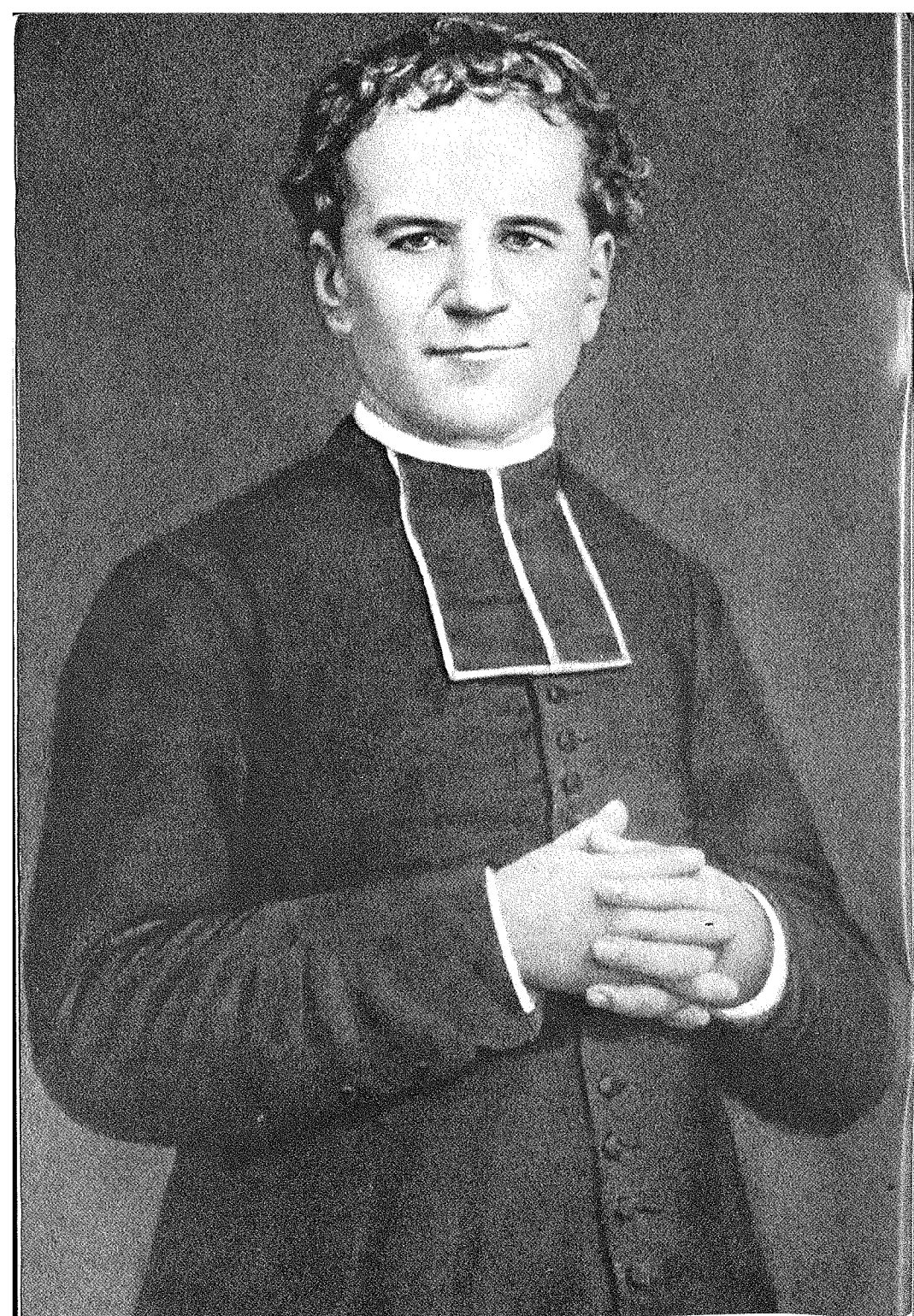
\* From *The Biographical Memoirs of St. John Bosco* by Rev. Giovanni Battista Lemoyne, S.D.B., Salesiana Publishers, 148 Main St., New Rochelle, N.Y. ©1975, Vol. IX, pp. 85-99.

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Don Bosco as a young priest.

# Saint John Bosco

*modern apostle of youth*



IT WAS THE YEAR 1815. The evil times were far from being over. But all in all this was a good year. Napoleon had fallen. Oppressive anti-Church laws were lifted in Italy. The exiled Pope Pius VII was able to return to Rome and, in thanksgiving for deliverance from the Corsican's tyranny, he instituted the Feast of Mary, Help of Christians.

The evils of the times yet to come might soon have effaced the memory of the Feast and its implicit hope from Christian hearts. But She who is their unfailing succor would not permit it. Instead, She raised up a champion to propagate throughout the world devotion to Her as the Help of Christians.

The place was Becchi in the northern Italian state of Piedmont. Mystically the date was also 1815, August 16, to be exact. This was such a great day in that good year, in fact, that we believe the angels might have tolled a thunderous ovation on the church bells of Piedmont, had Napoleon not confiscated every last one for making his cannons. For this was the birthday of one of the greatest and most beloved of modern saints, *Saint John Bosco*.



### The Making of a Saint

No one is born a saint. Heroic sanctity, which is what our Holy Mother the Church honors in her canonized children, must be achieved. It is achieved simply by total and unconditional surrender of the personal will to the Divine Will. The operations of God's graces on the soul fulfill all other qualifying needs. On man's part, one has only to continue perfecting this discipline to the end to win the crown of sainthood.

Anyone, therefore, can become a saint. It is never too late in life to begin, as Saint Augustine's glorious example testifies. More commonly, however, the great saints have been set on the road to heroic sanctity early in life, usually by holy mothers. Our modern apostle of youth was just such a saint.

When Giovanni (John) Melchior Bosco was born, his mother consecrated him to the Blessed Virgin. This more than anything else explains his sure-footedness along the high road of holiness. Saint John said as much himself in advanced years when he remarked that he never undertook any task without Our Lady's guidance.

It is a fact that also tells us something of the rare virtue of his mother, Margherita Bosco. Indeed, this courageous woman, widowed scarcely two years after John's birth and left as the impoverished provider for three children and her aged mother-in-law, played no small part in the making of the saint. True, Mamma Margherita was unlettered, yet in matters of faith there was none wiser. Her patient moral instructions and

pious example were the celebrated school in which John Bosco acquired perhaps his highest wisdom.

"God always sees you." "God knows even your most secret thoughts." These are typical of the oft-repeated aphorisms Margherita dispensed to her children. And for little Giovanni they were all the prompting he needed to conform his every thought, every action, to the Divine Will.

The apostle of youth was himself such a model youth, in fact, that his early years alone are a treasure of hagiography. This is because even as a little boy his own model was Our Lord Jesus Christ. From the age of four, the life of a saint was visibly unfolding. Devotion to duty long before he had any duty. Acts of mortification concealed through well-practiced humility. Works of mercy that no amount of humility could conceal. Long-suffering and patience occasioned by his oldest brother's surliness and jealousy. All were virtues scrupulously practiced from Bosco's earliest age of free will.

### The Dream

Even in childhood John Bosco was already an apostle of youth. One has to marvel at the thought of this tyke assembling his little friends for hymns, prayers, and catechism lessons, repeating the instructions he had received from his mother. And we doubt not that he was a competent

teacher, for God had blessed this child with a brilliant mind and prodigious retention. He once thoroughly amazed a priest by reciting from memory almost in their entirety two lengthy sermons he had heard at a mission.

He was also blessed with remarkable physical prowess. Later, finding that prayers and sermons were not enough attraction for his companions, young Bosco struck on the idea of adding entertainment to his programs, and spent long hours mastering acrobatics, juggling, and magic. Children of Becchi were treated to amazing performances at the one-man show, but only if they would join in the feature act—recitation of the Rosary.

John, the apostle, frequently came home with a bloodied head from playing with tough companions. His mother objected to his associating with ruffians, but was appeased by the boy's disarming logic: "You see, Mamma, when I play with them they are not so nasty; they don't fight and use bad words."

Here was truly a saint in the making. But the apostle apparent in him was shaped by what he called "dreams"—visions that came to him many times in life, guiding him to the monumental apostolate planned for him by the Help of Christians. The first such dream occurred when John was about nine. In it he saw himself near a large courtyard where a boisterous



Don Bosco's birthplace at Becchi.