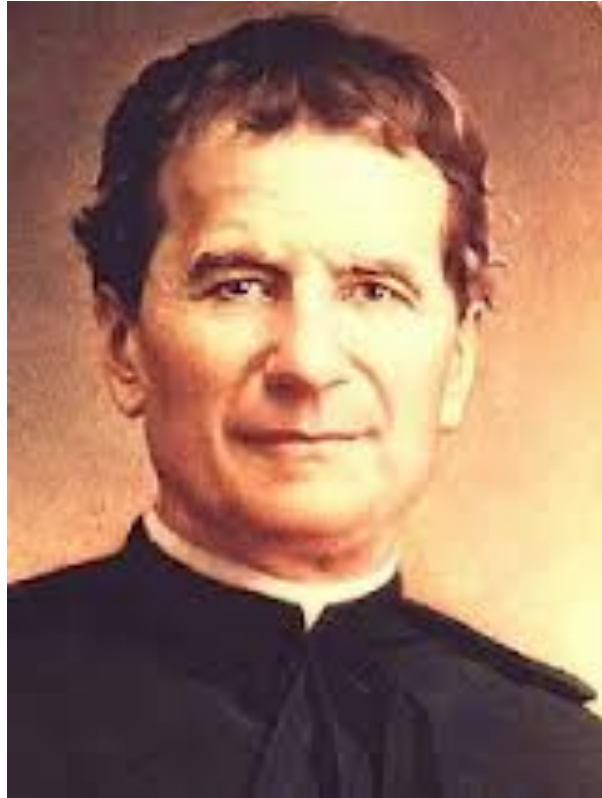


Don Bosco



John Bosco (Italian: *Giovanni Melchiorre Bosco*; 16 August 1815 – 31 January 1888), known as **Don Bosco**, was an Italian Roman Catholic priest, educator and writer of the 19th century. He put into practice the convictions of his religion, dedicating his life to the betterment and education of street children, juvenile delinquents, and other disadvantaged youth. He employed teaching methods based on love rather than punishment, a method known as the Salesian Preventive System. A follower of the spirituality and philosophy of Saint Francis de Sales, Bosco dedicated his works to him when he founded the Salesians of Don Bosco. Together with Maria Domenica Mazzarello, he founded the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, a religious congregation of nuns dedicated to the care and education of poor girls. In 1876 Bosco founded a movement of laity, the Association of Salesian Cooperators, with the same educational mission to the poor. In 1875 he published the *Salesian Bulletin*. The *Bulletin* has remained in continuous publication, and is currently published in 50 different editions and 30 languages. Bosco established a network of organizations and centres to carry on his work. Following his beatification in 1929, he was canonized as a saint in the Roman Catholic Church by Pope Pius XI in 1934.

John Bosco was born on 16 August 1815 Castelnuovo, Italy into a time of great shortage and famine in the Piedmontese countryside. His family were farmhands and his father died of pneumonia when John was only two years old. He had two older brothers, Antonio from his father's first marriage and Giuseppe. His mother Marguerita played an important part in John's education and of his brothers. She had a strong character, a solid devotion and an intense fidelity for her family. She never remarried, and was determined to raise her three sons the best she could on her own. The way she defended her children surrounded by poverty and the spirit of discipline she imparted them greatly influenced Don Bosco's future ministry. Even though she was illiterate she taught her children the catechism which she knew by heart, as well as the power of simple prayers. She even managed to convince Antonio that it was best for John to study; a difficult feat as Antonio wanted John to work on the farm. So from ages 9 to 10 years old, John learned to write and read from a teacher and priest, Giuseppe Lacqua.

Around that age John had a dream that marked all his life:

"I was in front of a group of young boys that were having fun. Some of them were laughing, others were playing, and many were blaspheming. That upset me and I began to shout at them and to hit them to make them quiet. Then a man with a majestic figure and magnificently dressed appeared. He was covered in a white cape and his face was shining so much that one couldn't look in his eyes.

He called me by my name and ordered me to be in charge of the boys and told me: 'Not with the force but with gentleness and charity you should win these boys' friendship. Start right away to teach them the ugliness of the sin and the beauty of the virtue.'

Confused and scared I answered that I was a poor boy unable of speaking of religion. Then the boys stopped fighting and blaspheming and crowded around the character that was talking. I asked: 'Who are you that orders me impossible things?'

'You will make them possible through obedience and the acquisition of science.'

'And how will I be able to acquire the science?'

'I will give you the Maestra under whose direction you will become a wise man.'

'And who are you?'

'I am the Son of the one your mother taught you to greet three times a day.'

In that moment I saw a lady with a majestic look, dressed with a shiny cape as if it was covered by stars. Realising that I was confused, she asked me to go near her and gently took my hand. 'Look,' she said.

I looked and saw that the young boys had disappeared and there were goats, dogs, cats, bears and other animals in their place. 'This is your field of action,' she continued. And added: 'Here you will have to work. Become humble and strong and the change you will see taking place in these animals you will cause it in my children.'

I looked again and instead of the wild animals I saw lambs that were jumping to celebrate this man and his mother. In my dream I started to cry because I didn't know clearly what that meant but the lady put her hand on my head and said: 'You will understand it at the right time.' "

When John was 12 years old he left his mother's house and started to work as a shepherd for the rich family in the area. He attended church on Sundays, impressing the priest with his behaviour and good memory. For one year the priest helped John to progress in reading Latin and spiritual studies, but died only a year later. So John went back with his family and in 1831, at 13 years old, he finished his basic studies walking 20 km every day to the parochial school. In autumn same year, he started secondary school at only 8 km from Castelnuovo and succeeded in doing three courses in one year due to his great intelligence. He was always the first student in his class. During those years John paid for his studies by doing different jobs like baking, tailoring, ironmongery, shoemaking, prestidigitation, juggling; this myriad of skills proved to be very helpful when a few years later he started to take care of the street boys and was able to teach them these same skills.

John knew very clearly that he wanted to be a priest so in 1835 he entered the Seminary of Chiery and six years later at 26 he was ordained priest. He gave his first mass in front of the altar of the Guardian Angel in the San Francisco de Asis Church at Turin. John Bosco was offered several jobs by different rich families of Turin but preferred to study Moral Theology for the next three years in the Ecclesiastical College, where he became familiar with the town and its problems. From 117 thousand people that Turin had, 30 thousands were very poor and John Bosco discovered that many were children who had lost their parents and were living on the streets. Many of them had to steal in order to be able to eat and ended up in prison very young. He realised that in order to help them the traditional methods of parish ministry were inefficient and that it was necessary to try another form of apostolate. He began meeting the boys in shops, offices, market places, visiting them in prisons or hospitals. On 11 December 1841 Don Bosco met a 15 years old boy, Bartolome Garelli, who was beaten up by the sacristan of the San Francisco de Asis Church because he didn't know how to be a proper acolyte. Don Bosco defended the boy, asked him about his life, and found out that his mother had died, he couldn't read or write but wanted to learn and also to know more about the Lord. Don Bosco sat on his knees and prayed for him right then, saying an Ave Maria. Many years later when the Salesian Congregation he founded began expanding outside Italy, Don Bosco once said: 'Everything started with that Ave Maria...'

Don Bosco invited Bartolome to return to the church the following Sunday, bringing friends too in order to start studying. Bartolome returned with 9 boys that became 80 by the spring. Other priests from the church found the boys to be too noisy and did not agree with sharing the space with them every Sunday, so after several complaints, Don Bosco understood that he had to find another place where he could receive his boys anytime. And so the idea of the Oratory of Saint Francis de Sales was born and the struggle to find an affordable place that could be rented began. This struggle for finding the right place and maintaining it lasted for many years in Don Bosco's life because he always had to miraculously come up with the money for rent, every day bread and food for the boys. In some miraculous way he always did.



The Oratory from Turin, Valdocco

The number of the boys was growing and while they were finding a home at the Oratory, they were also learning to read, write and studying the Bible. His wonderful mother Marguerita decided to join him and became a mother for all those children, cooking and looking after them. Don Bosco also created shoemaking, tailoring, ironmongery, mechanics, printing workshops and helped the older boys to find work outside the Oratory. He asked for a contract to be signed and decent working hours because many of the boys had worked 12 and 14 hours a day before that. His efforts to help the boys from prisons by visiting them, becoming their friend and offering them his moral support were little understood by the administration people of Turin and some of them tried for years to sabotage Don Bosco's work. When Don Bosco asked for a permit to take the boys out of prison for a few hours every now and then, Vicar of Turin Michele Cavour asked him to give his own freedom as a guarantee that none of the boys would try to escape - this he did.

The conflicts Don Bosco had with both civil and religious authorities were dramatic. Another person who created difficulties was the anticlerical Justice Minister Urban Rattazi who pushed a bill through the Sardinian legislature to suppress the religious orders but had a change of heart, some sources say before dying, and advised Don Bosco on how to found his Congregation within the existing laws. This way Don Bosco's work could continue after he died and his boys were able to continue their education.

Archbishop of Turin Lorenzo Gastaldi was a longtime friend and was given this title after Don Bosco had proposed to Pope Pius IX his appointment. Gastaldi was anxious not to appear Don Bosco's creation and the increasing fame he was beginning to have through the work from the Oratory didn't always please him. He was zealous to train priests because the seminaries were empty and asked Don Bosco to give up to some of the boys from the Oratory which he refused. Don Bosco felt like a father who was asked to give up his children because even if hoped for some of the boys to become priests one day that was not his way of doing things. The Salesian Congregation was recognized by the Pope, not yet approved but enjoyed a certain independence. However Gastaldi was also Don Bosco's superior, so when an unfortunate anonymous pamphlet publicized their dispute, in spite the fact Don Bosco assured him he was innocent, he removed Don Bosco's rights to be a priest, give a mass and confess. This was extremely painful for Don Bosco who addressed the Pope but the reply he received was that he had to obey his direct superior's will even if he had different plans for his mission. Don Bosco became very ill, everybody feared he was going to die but the boys from the Oratory prayed for him day and night and offered their life in service for his rehabilitation. He recovered miraculously and asked for forgiveness from the Archbishop Gastaldi, recognizing his supreme authority. He was granted the pardon and was free to continue his work. Later it was discovered that he had nothing to do with the pamphlet that had been published.

In 1854 the cholera invaded Europe and Don Bosco asked the older boys from the Oratory to help him take care of the victims from Turin who were many times abandoned due to the danger of infection. He told the boys that he would pray for each of them for protection from Virgin Mary and none of the boys or himself became ill. People began to associate Don Bosco with miracles then and many considered him a Saint. The Pope also recognized Don Bosco's contribution and his request of forming the Salesian Congregation was finally approved on April 13, 1874.

The protector of the Salesian Congregation was Saint Francis de Sales and Don Bosco chose him for his charity and kindness that should inspire every member of the Congregation in their work with children, especially the poor youth, homeless, orphans and those exploited by the Industrial Revolution of that time. The three main pillars of the Salesian Preventive System are: reason, religion and loving-kindness. Don Bosco loved and appreciated each child in such

way that each thought he was his favourite and they were always free to take their decisions to stay or leave the Oratory, follow a different path in life, return to the Oratory where they had a house at any time or continue their education with Don Bosco. Many decided for priesthood like Giovanni Calleri who became Bishop of Patagonia and later Cardinal and Miguel Rua who was the first successor of Don Bosco at the Salesian Congregation. A special place among the students has Dominic Savio, who joined the Oratory at 11, proved to be an exceptional student and expressed his wish to become a priest and proposed himself to become a saint; unfortunately he died when he was 15. In spite the fact that many people thought he had died too soon to be considered for sainthood, he was considered eligible for such singular honour on the basis of his having displayed "heroic virtue" in his everyday life.

Don Bosco died on 31 January 1888 at 72 years old and was canonized on Easter Sunday of 1934. He was given the title of "Father and Teacher of the Youth." At the time of his death there were 58 Salesian houses and 1049 Salesians, today there are more than 1830 Salesian works in 130 countries of the world. His books continue to be a source of inspiration for many people and the official publication of the Salesians, the Salesian Bulletin founded by Don Bosco in 1877 is published in 30 languages for 130 countries nowadays.

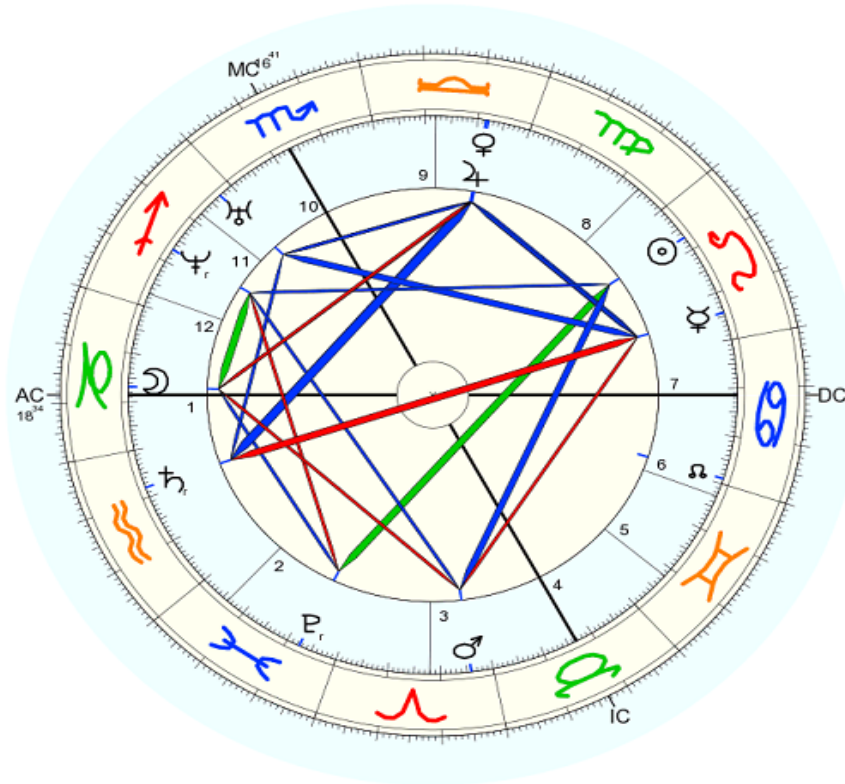


1859, Torino

Astral Chart of Don Bosco

16 August 1815, Castelnuovo, Italy, 5.20 pm

Sun in Leo, Moon in Capricorn, Ascendant in Capricorn



Sun in Leo

Personality Words: *let other forms exist, I rule,* "marks the first major stage in human development with absolute control over the lower nature and over all those who live in its world". I think John Bosco started to become aware of this very early in his life, the dream he had when he was 9 years old delivers a powerful message along these lines and just a few years later, when in Secondary school, John created the Society of Joy, where his schoolmates were invited to play, create, learn and pray. His brave and loving personality allowed him to approach boys who had problems with the law and win their love and respect. He was a great defender of all his children. Sun in the 7th house: he excelled in one-to-one relationships and succeeded to develop a personal relationship with every child he helped as love and wisdom flew through all important unions he formed.

Soul Words: *I am That and That am I,* the control exercised at personality level allows the soul-personality alignment, the identification with the wisdom of the soul. Neptune, the esoteric ruler of Leo is found in the 11th house and the goal of spiritualizing the group associations and of creating true spiritual fellowship manifesting a shared vision was fulfilled.

Moon in Capricorn

Personality Words: *let ambition rule and the door stand wide/* Soul Words: *Lost am I in the light supernal, yet on that light I turn my back.* Don Bosco faced the lower vibrations of the Moon in Capricorn through service, helping so many children that had been deprived by love to achieve stability and prosperity, giving them a chance to escape the prison of their unhappy life – his Moon is the 12th house. He also had to choose between an easier and materialistic orientated life being an intelligent successful student that could have gone for a different career any time. Soon after becoming a priest he was offered to work for rich families of Turin but preferred to work for the poor. When the Salesian Congregation was approved he was offered the title of Monseigneur by the Pope but he preferred to maintain his simple status and clothes of priest. He introduced the Salesian Preventive System and created a network of organizations that benefit masses.

Ascendant in Capricorn

Personality Words: *let ambition rule and the door stand wide*, the strength, stoic patience and constancy of Capricorn were wisely applied for achieving the spiritual purpose that was established, first in terms of self-education and then providing for others.

Soul Words: *Lost am I in the light supernal, yet on that light I turn my back*, refers to enlightenment and self-sacrifice in service, leadership skills and wisdom used to benefit the masses that have characterized the entire life of Don Bosco. Saturn is placed in the 1st house and Don Bosco faced much opposition and blockings from authoritative figures that were cold and judgmental and succeeded to overcome them. He was closely guided into the right direction from a very early age by meeting the right teachers at the right time and by his Soul. Venus is in the 8th house and he beautified the world by demonstrating and teaching how to transform man's darker side.

Ray Profile

Physical – etherical body: Ray 3, there are many paintings and pictures of Don Bosco and they show he had a medium tall, thin but strong body.

Astral – emotional body: Ray 6, he manifested a purified astral body and traits like devotion, idealism, sacrifice, also visionary abilities, as his dreams that revealed him the work he had to do continued all his life.

Mental body: Ray 4, his messages and teachings have a simple lively style, with beautiful descriptions and comparisons.

Personality: Ray 1 – both Leo and Capricorn share this Ray. Don Bosco was self-efficient, had a great initiative and leadership qualities, power to direct and liberate. The Soul guided his personality via this Ray to lead the way and fight conventions making changes possible. He faced the social and materialistic prejudices of the society of that time when poor class children were simply abandoned and the legal system failed to recognize them as victims of an inexistent supportive social system. He made his contemporaries aware of the responsibility they all had towards orphan and homeless children and in one occasion when the Vicar Michele Cavour ordered to shut down the Oratory, Don Bosco addressed directly to King Victor Emmanuel II of Sardinia and asked for help which was very unusual for a priest to do.

Soul: Ray 2, love and wisdom, compassion, inclusiveness and group consciousness inspired his progress and work and were the values that he practiced most and taught others. This is the Ray of teaching by excellence and Don Bosco knew how to intuitively relate to others as Souls, without imposing a pattern but allowing the Soul to manifest. He was an educator that drew his students into greater love and understanding. "Through the power of attractive, magnetic love, and through his well-developed ability to shine the light of the soul upon all psychologically confusing situations, he drew his students out of darkness into light, and, especially, into the students' own light."

Spiritual Path

Initiate: Don Bosco was (and still is) a wise, dynamic leader capable of bringing fairness and justice to the world, who has improved the lives of so many children and proved that with faith, love and self-dedication world service can emerge.

Bibliography: Various on line articles, Wikipedia, *Om – Union through Astrology*, Leoni Rare Hodgson, *The Tapestry of the Gods*, Michael D. Robbins.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vJg0AFBJdGA&list=PL9FEAB64D09A25946> 45 second video in Spanish - Don Bosco explains to the boys that it is easy to be a saint, any of us can be one, we simply have to love and love more, even when it seems difficult or impossible and then the ordinary things become extraordinary.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QgDAcYZNpA8> *Don Bosco*, full film in Spanish. The title of the film in English is *Saint Don Bosco: Mission to Love*, also available to watch in several parts in youtube. Link to Part 1: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mYy2GnFFz7s>