

# Bosco House



**House Feast Day– 31<sup>st</sup> January**  
**Green Educators**

## Who is St John Bosco?

St John Bosco is remembered as a man who dedicated his life to the service of abandoned young people. Over 150 years ago he challenged the way young people were treated in the desperate poverty that existed at that time in the city of Turin, Italy. He was driven by first-hand experience of the effects of dreadful poverty and hunger on the young people he came across, he was determined to change their condition. Others were inspired to follow him in responding to the needs of the young. John Bosco created an order in the Catholic Church, called the Salesians. They were founded in the poverty of a city we consider to be one of the most prosperous in the world today.

Don Bosco was born in a village called 'Becchi' in 1815. When he was only two years of age he lost his father and was brought up by his mother, Margaret. Through a series of events in his youth, not least a very powerful dream he had as a young boy, he learned to become a leader for the young people he grew up with, many of whom were very badly behaved. In order to relate to them he needed to develop certain skills. He learned that by combining entertainment with teaching and praying he could achieve positive results. Entertained by his magical balancing act, the young people would gladly listen to a lesson or pray with John Bosco.

Everyone needs a dream, a vision to inspire them. Don Bosco, when he was very young, had a dream. A Man and a Lady, both of great majesty instructed him to prepare himself for a great battle. The battle appeared to be on behalf of a multitude of poor, unruly and neglected children. He was told in this dream that he had the traits and skills to conquer the unruliness of these children, and make them his friends. This powerful dream continued to be a guiding force throughout his adolescence. It inspired him to become a priest. This involved six years of intense studying. In 1841, just short of his 26th birthday, he was ordained a priest.

Upon becoming a priest, Don Bosco realised how he needed to live out his vocation. The Industrial Revolution was spreading into Northern Italy, there was a great deal of poverty, desolation, turmoil and revolution on the streets of the city. Young people had been abandoned and lived in hopelessness. He was shocked at the conditions they endured and the things they did to enable them to eat, and to survive. This was the cost of the Industrial 'improvement' that would bring us all the high standards we have enjoyed this century. The cost of this progress in human terms was unbearable. John Bosco, the young priest, became completely focussed on his vocation when he entered the prisons. He wrote: "To see so many children, from 12 to 18 years of age, all healthy, strong, intelligent, lacking spiritual and material food, was something that horrified me." In the face of such a situation he made his decision: "I must, by any available means, prevent children ending up here." John Bosco now saw how his dream and the guidance it gave were needed. He knew a new approach was required. He needed to show there were better ways for these healthy intelligent young people to lead their lives.

His followers, the Salesians, became numerous. A phenomenal growth was achieved through a combination of factors, not least John Bosco's determination and his inspiration from his dream.

John Bosco was more than just a dreamer. He knew that education was the key to helping these young people. He sought to teach them (many could only learn after their day's work and not all wanted to), and to get fairer treatment for them with their employers. He looked to help other young people who still slept under bridges and on the streets. Even when they stole from him, as some did, he never gave up hope. He never lost his confidence in youth. John Bosco started technical schools to educate the young people in skilled jobs like printing, bookbinding and mechanics. In those days, these were the skills that would guarantee better conditions and a better future for them. He started the Salesian Missions in South America. He published numerous works. And he continued his work on his system of education, a style which was immediately recognised as an ideal way to improve educational standards and to get the best from the young.

After a life of achieving so much for young people, John Bosco died at dawn on the 31st of January 1888 at the age of 73. When others talked to him of his fantastic achievements, he would always interrupt and say 'I have done nothing by myself. It is Our Lady who has done everything.'