

Saint John Bosco,

You loved and respected all young people, and were committed to education. Pray that we might be inspired by your wisdom and Christ-like compassion to do what is right, particularly during this new year.

You used your gifts and talents for the good of others. Pray that we might also use our gifts and talents to make our world a place where all may experience the fullness of life which Jesus has promised.

Amen.

A thought to take away

Young people throughout the world are our sisters and brothers. Like us, they are young; like us they have dreams and aspirations; like us, they are loved by God. How can we support one another?

An action to complete

What do you know about CAFOD's work with children and young people? Do some research into this and prepare a display or presentation for the class/year group/school, so as to raise awareness of this work.

*Saint John Bosco
Pray for us*



Feast Day

31 January

Birthplace

Becchi, Italy

Born

16 August 1815

Died

31 January 1888

Canonised

1 April 1934 by Pius XI

Patron saint of

young people, especially those living in poverty



*I want you to be
happy, always
happy in the
Lord.*

”

Don Bosco was an educator. (The title "Don" is a term of respect that Italians use for priests.) The Scripture readings chosen for the feast of St John Bosco tell us about his character.

In the first reading from Philippians, we hear, "I want you to be happy, always happy in the Lord... there is no need to worry."

In Matthew's gospel, Jesus tells us, "Anyone who welcomes a little child in my name, welcomes me."

In what ways can I be welcoming to other young people that I meet?

The life of St John Bosco

John Bosco's father died when he was only two years old, and he was brought up by his mother. Many of the young people among whom he lived did not have the benefit of his secure and stable upbringing, and the young John gradually recognised this. He also realised that he had certain skills of leadership, was blessed with many gifts, and young people were drawn to him.

As a young man, he had a dream, where he was told that his many gifts and talents as well as his personality, would assist him in giving some support and hope to these youngsters who felt completely abandoned. John was ordained as a priest in 1841. Through prayer and his experience of seeing so many young people in prison, he decided that he would live out his vocation in the service of the young, doing all he could to give them a chance to make something of their lives.

Don Bosco recognised that education was the key and that the young people needed to have practical skills to enable them to work.

He set up technical schools and taught them skills, like printing, bookbinding and mechanics, as well as giving them opportunities to play and have fun. His attitude to all his students was one of respect and kindness, and he also used his skill as a magician to entertain them! This human, holy man spoke to the youngsters of God's love, and invited them to pray with him. Others recognised the value of, and need for what Don Bosco was doing, and joined him.

This work continues with the Salesian Priests, Sisters and Brothers working in education in all parts of the world, in the spirit of St John Bosco.

St John Bosco is known as the "Father and Teacher of Youth". As an educator, John Bosco went out of his way to reveal the compassionate face of God, especially to those young people who experienced little love in their lives. Sadly, there are still many young people around the world in this position. As Christians, we are challenged to recognise Jesus in them, to welcome them, and to give them the respect which all deserve.

CAFOD's gap year programme: Step into the gap

Like Don Bosco, CAFOD also works with children and young people. One way we do this is through our gap year programme. If you have been inspired by the life of St John Bosco, and want to work with other young people, then you might be interested in Step into the Gap.



Josh taking part in a warm-up by traditional music dancers to attract a crowd to the drama staged by BOCAP.

For ten months, gappers explore their faith and help others to explore theirs while promoting social justice and inspiring others to act for change and make a difference. They are based within a team in the UK, either a school chaplaincy or diocesan youth service, and they work alongside CAFOD throughout the year, with an overseas volunteering section during the year.

Two of our gappers, Josh and Claire, recently visited Liberia. While they were there, they met some of our partners such as the Centre for Justice and Peace Studies, who support the Bong County Awareness Programme (BOCAP). BOCAP uses drama to raise awareness of issues such as HIV and AIDS.

The young people who volunteer after school are able to use their gifts and talents to communicate their message to their audiences, ultimately in their aim of development, and a better Liberia.



Josh says, "A big part of our journey is to take back the stories of the youth of Liberia taking a leading role to the young people we work with in the UK. We hope that they too can look to lead on the issues of global social justice as we are trying to do through the Step into the Gap programme this year."

» Find out more by visiting cafod.org.uk/stepintothegap