

# The Fourth Mission Dream

## Don Bosco's Dreams – the big picture

The Biographical Memoirs list over 150 dreams of St. John Bosco, all transcribed from first-hand reports. The BM is the best source of the collected dreams.

Five of these carry the label 'missionary':

1. The dream of the Patagonian Missions (1871/2)
2. The train journey on the Missions (Aug 30 1883)
3. The Fantastic Highway and the Hall of Glory (Jan 31 1885)
4. The Angels of the Missions (narrated July 2nd 1885)
5. The famous Barcelona Dream: The line from Santiago through Africa to Beijing.

### SOME PRELIMINARIES

There is a question as to the authenticity of

Don Bosco's dreams. Few of the narratives are in Don Bosco's writing. Just a small number of them were reviewed and corrected by him. Most of them are first-hand reports by Salesians after Don Bosco's telling of the dream at a Goodnight. The main editorial work was done by Don Lemoyne, his biographer.. So it is good to have some critical caution along the following lines:

\* the dream narrative may have originated with Don Bosco either immediately, or perhaps a long time after the actual dream.

\* the dream narrative may have originated from a first-hand report after Don Bosco's tell-



Dreaming!

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### Special points of interest:

- Don Bosco told around 150 dreams
- The missionary dreams happened late in life
- The 4th dream seems to apply to Australia-Oceania
- In the dreams we understand Don Bosco's project

## Interpreting Don Bosco's dreams

He claims to be relating true experiences and comes to see them as visitations of the divine. Some dreams could be the expression of an unconscious wish. His cyclical dreams (amongst which the 5 mission dreams) show a deep continual desire to help people. From the perspective of Carl Jung, a famous dream psy-

chologist, Don Bosco's dreams may also open to the future – as is the case with the missionary dreams.

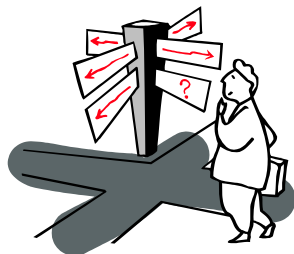
Under Don Cafasso's spiritual direction, Don Bosco came to see his dreams as God's view of things.

## Typology of Don Bosco's dreams

Essentially there are four types: 1. Dream narratives addressing Don Bosco/Salesian Society in their essential vocation and apostolate 1825-45. Pastoral images...animals, youngsters, buildings, churches...

2. Addressing Don Bosco's young charges and concern for their spiritual welfare. This is the largest category around 1850's 60's. The core is moral, religious, virtues, practices. They tend to be clairvoyant.

3. Addressing political or religious persons or events. This is a



Seeking direction through dreams

smaller category concerning the Liberal Revolution, unification of Italy, the taking of Rome. These occurred 1854-74. They are almost apocalyptic in tone.

4. Addressing the Salesian Society in its worldwide vocation and apostolate. This is a large category of dream and the Missionary Dreams stand out for their utopian vision of strange lands. 1870's, 80's

Perhaps there is also a small category of dreams which addresses the Salesians with regard to their perseverance. These represent Don Bosco's fears and concerns.

## The First Missionary Dream

His early mission awareness around 1844, after completing the course at the Convitto and at the time he was considering joining the Oblates (OMI). Don Cafasso directed him away from this. He would have gone to the missions had he joined them!

In one dream he saw a dove over Cagliari's head, surrounded by natives, but this then became a full-blown dream in 1871/2 after Bishop Comboni gave Don Bosco a proposal (which was shared at the 1st Vatican Council) about Africa! He didn't send Salesians to Africa. Instead he dreamt about

a place which in 1874 he came to recognize as Patagonia – when he was formally asked to send the first Salesian missionaries outside Italy to Argentina.

**Don Bosco was inspired by the growth of 19th century missionary Congregations like the Oblates, the Combonians, the Picpus Fathers**

## Context for the Fourth and Fifth Missionary Dreams

In 1876 Don Bosco addressed a large mixed group at the Oratory where he pointed out that he had received “an extraordinary number of requests for new schools, houses and missions...from China, Japan, Australia, Argentina, Paraguay”.

In 1884 in the Yearly Letter he wrote to Salesians, Don Bosco spoke of having received 200 separate requests for new foundations...from India, China, Japan, and from the most distant islands of Oceania (Note: this letter cannot now be found. It is reported by Don Ceria).

The Fourth Dream is a fantastic globe-trotting journey with ‘angel’ scenes symbolising Africa, Asia, Australia-Oceania.

The Fifth Dream is at a hill in the vicinity of his birthplace – a throng of children, and addressed by a maiden leading a flock. She shows him numerous foundations along a line from South America to China



The three angels of Africa, Asia, Australia

## Fourth Dream narrated

The Fourth dream was narrated July 2nd 1885 – maybe at a place called Mathi near Turin. He told it to the General Council in the dining room after supper. The fact of the dream is further substantiated in letters to Count Colle.

There are three scenes in all – the Angel of Arpachstad, the Angel of Ham, and the unnamed Angel of Australia.

The narrator's conclusions: "If I could embalm and preserve about 50 of our present Salesians...in 500 years they would be masters of the world!" (Don Bosco was given to some exaggeration.



The children of the great continents

We don't go around shouting this one to the rooftops!).

"We will always find favour, even in the eyes of evil people because our special apostolate calls forth good will".

"This is important: do not yield to love of ease and shrink from work".

"The Salesian Society will prosper materially if the Salesians endeavour to support and spread the Salesian Bulletin."

## The third scene – Australia-Oceania

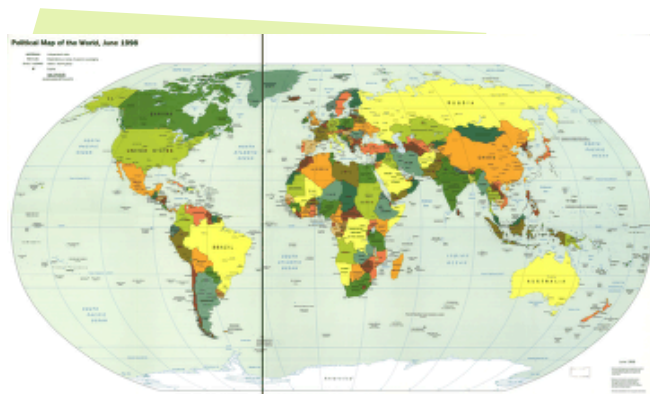
"Finally Don Bosco seemed to find himself in Australia. An Angel was present there too but he had no name. He was walking with the people, urging them and guiding them in a southerly direction. Australia did not appear as a continent but as an archipelago of many islands inhabited by people of different characteristics and features. A great number of children lived in those islands. They were trying to cross over to Don Bosco and to the Salesians with him, but were prevented by the great distances and the stretches of water that lay between us. Yet they were holding their hands out towards us and crying: 'Come and help us! Why do you not

finish the work which your fathers began?' Many of the youngsters after walking some distance gave up. But some of them making their way with great effort through the midst of ferocious wild beasts, joined the Salesians (Don Bosco did not recognize any of those sons of his). Then the youngsters began to sing: 'Benedictus qui venit in nomine domini'.

**The essential text of the third scene of the fourth dream**

## Dream text continued...

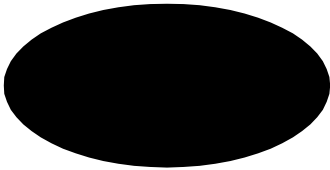
A large cluster of islands could be seen at various distances, but Don Bosco could not pick out any details. He felt, however, that globally speaking this indicated God's intention of entrusting a portion of that evangelical [mission] field to the Salesians, though in future times. Their labours will bear fruit because the Lord will stand by them always provided they will not prove unworthy".



## SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SCENE – AND THE DREAM

Here we have presented the hopes and possibilities for mission. It symbolizes the vocation-mission of the Salesian Society, and is a continuation of Don Bosco's own vocation-mission dreams from his earliest years (age 9 onwards). We can see a 'project' taking place in Don Bosco's own deepest self:

- the primacy of the spiritual and a religion-based salvation.
- an option for the young-at-risk and the poor which inspires the mission and dictates its strategies.
- a work of collaboration involving many different forces
- in the larger perspective of evangelization and civilization it is aimed at the total development of society.



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## DON BOSCO WORLDWIDE

