

CLOSE-UP VIEW OF DON BOSCO
Teresio Bosco
WHEN JOHN BOSCO WAS A FARM-HAND

(Teresio Bosco)

SWORN TESTIMONY OF FARM LABOURER GIORGIO MOGLIA (67 YEARS OF AGE), GIVEN AT THE BEATIFICATION PROCESS OF DON BOSCO
[FROM BEATIFICATION DOCUMENTS, pp 8-10, 48, 605-606, 953]

I knew Fr John Bosco from when I was three years of age and when he was thirteen. This was when he stayed at my parents' house as a farm labourer. We lived in the hamlet of Moglia di Moncucco in the province of Asti. John Bosco boarded with us for about two years, and I was able to speak with him daily; indeed one could say that he and I were always together, both in the fields or in the house, for my mother had entrusted me to his care, and he looked after me willingly. However, I cannot remember what we spoke about, since I was only a toddler.

I do recall my parents speaking about him; and they always spoke of him with great respect. One day in their presence I used the name of God with scant respect, and my mother duly punished me, telling me to watch myself in the future and to be good like young Bosco, who was respectful, prayed sincerely and always recited his night prayers. She bade me look to him as my model.

My mother told me that one day young Bosco and his uncle (my father), had come home from the farm at midday; and that my father had lain down to rest, exhausted from his labours. Just when young Bosco came in the midday Angelus-bell began to ring. He immediately knelt down and recited the Angelus. My father looked on in surprise and said: *Well, well! I am the boss and am dog tired. And my farm hand kneels down to pray!*

Young Bosco answered: *Don't you see how I have gained more for you by my prayer than you by your work? When you pray, two seeds will grow four ears of corn; without prayer four seeds will produce only two! Then, smilingly he added, So if you pray now, instead of two ears of corn you will have four!*

Leading the animals to pasture

Anna my aunt, then single and later Zucca by marriage, used to tell me that in his free time and when it was raining, young Bosco used to gather the local youngsters round him to teach them about their religion and also sing a few hymns.

Later, at the age of fifteen he left our home to continue with his studies. He returned when he was a cleric, and we hardly recognised him. We were all delighted to see him and my parents wanted him to stay

with them. Since his mother was short on accommodation, he did stay with us, and we enjoyed his company for three months during the holidays. During this time we noted that he was always faithful to prayer, study and church attendance.

I can remember when young Bosco came to our home to seek work as a farm labourer. My parents told me how he came from his own home in agreement with his mother, since he was being badly treated by his step-brother. He arrived at our house towards evening and met my father's uncle, Joseph Moglia, who asked him where he was going.

Bosco replied that he was looking for work. My uncle wished him well and bade him goodbye.

When my aunt heard this she begged my uncle to take him in, since he would be able to save her the trouble of driving the cattle to pasture; and she persuaded Joseph Moglia to let him live with the family.

The following week young Bosco went to call his mother. She came and told Moglia that she made no demands, and that he could pay the lad according to his own judgement. Moglia then took the lad in permanently and agreed to feed and clothe him. At the end of the period he showed his satisfaction by giving Bosco's mother thirty *lire*, and the following year he raised it to fifty *lire*.

I still remember that when Bosco was a cleric and stayed with us for three months. He used to remind me to say my prayers and gave me good advice from time to time. One of the things he told me often was that the best thing in the world was to help erring souls find their way back to God.

He also used to tell me that to be disrespectful to parents was to draw down the punishment of God. He told me this when I mentioned to him that a youngster nearby had been cruel to his father.

Plough and book

When my father did the ploughing, young Bosco used to guide the oxen; and when they did not need this guiding he made use of the time to read books.

He used to ask permission from my mother to go to the parish church for confession. Since these requests were frequent, my mother wished to be sure they were genuine, and decided to follow him unobserved. She saw him receive both sacraments: Confession and Holy Communion. As I grew up my mother often exhorted me to imitate young Bosco's good example in the reception of these Sacraments.

He spent two years at our home, and then a year at the parish of Castelnuovo; the following year he went to Chieri to continue his studies.

'My old boss!'

Don Bosco was always deeply grateful to my family for the small service we had been able to render him. In the first years of his Oratory, when he had only about twenty-five boys, he used to bring them every year to our place for an outing. He wanted us to consider his Oratory as our home too whenever we had to journey to Turin. Many times he had me sit with him at table, even in the presence of a number of priests. Once in the company of his priests and a number of other persons, he turned to me and told them: *This is my old boss*, referring to the time when he worked for my father.

I have heard so many people say, *When will they canonise Don Bosco? If they do not canonise him, then who could ever be canonised?*' I heard these remarks even in the Chieri marketplace.

GIORGIO MOGLIA WAS BORN IN 1825, THE SON OF LUIGI AND DOROTEA MOGLIA (AND NEPHEW OF GIUSEPPE MOGLIA). THE FAMILY HAD ACCEPTED YOUNG BOSCO INTO THEIR HOME AS A FARM HAND. DOROTEA MOGLIA WAS EIGHTY-SIX YEARS OLD WHEN DON BOSCO DIED, STILL A LIVELY AND BRIGHT OLD LADY. WHEN FATHER SECONDO MARCHISIO WAS SEEKING INFORMATION ON DON BOSCO'S EARLY YEARS, SHE REPEATED THE DIALOGUE BETWEEN HIM AND HER HUSBAND LUIGI, A DIALOGUE THAT WAS HENCEFORTH TO BE FOUND IN ALL THE BIOGRAPHIES OF DON BOSCO. AT THE BEATIFICATION PROCESS OF DON BOSCO, IN 1908, DOROTEA WAS NO LONGER LIVING; HOWEVER, HER SON GIORGIO, IN HIS SIXTY-SEVENTH YEAR GAVE THE ABOVE TESTIMONY UNDER SOLEMN OATH.