

## John Bosco, priest ((1815-1888))

*Observed 31 January*



Giovanni Melchiorre Bosco was an Italian priest with a passion and gift for education. He dedicated his life to teaching boys, particularly boys in poverty or who had been designated ‘delinquents’. His method (which he both practiced and promulgated in his writings) is called ‘the Preventive System of Education’ and is based on the three components of reason, religion, and kindness. Bosco himself was born into a poor farming family and had to run away from home and support himself from the age of 12 in order to have any schooling. Once he was able to attain an education himself, he immediately turned to helping others. As a young priest, he gathered abandoned boys, whom society had given up on, and taught them and turned many into constructive adults. His education methods attracted many youths, as well as numerous adult volunteers. However, they were viewed with suspicion by many traditional parish priests and government officials. They were repeatedly thrown out of successive buildings, because of the noise of the boys playing games and because priests worried that their own youth would be drawn away. Despite opposition, the movement grew, and in 1859 Bosco (with the blessing of Pope Pius IX) established the Society of St Francis de Sales which grew into the Salesian Society which carried on Bosco’s work. The work in Italy quickly expanded to several countries in Latin America and is now all over the world, including the United States. The mission of the society emphasizes care for the young and poor. The idea that all children deserve kindness and support and can profit from education has brought great benefit to countless people.

*Lessons* Isaiah 59:14-16; Psalm 25: 4-9; Philippians 4:4-9; Mark 13:10-16

*Collect* Compassionate God, you called Juan Bosco to be a teacher and father to the young: Fill us with love like his, that we may give ourselves completely to your service and to the salvation of all; through your Son Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

