

THE MESSAGE OF THE RECTOR MAJOR

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FOUR BOYS AND A DREAM

A tiny piece of paper written on by a 17-year-old boy,
and the most moving and precious moment of our history

Dear friends of Don Bosco's charism and readers of the Salesian Bulletin - the Salesian instrument of communication so dear to Don Bosco himself, its Founder.

Shortly before I began writing these lines, I had celebrated Holy Mass, together with the General Council of the Salesian Congregation (Salesians of Don Bosco), in the "camerette" in Sacred Heart Basilica. The "camerette" are the room and the chapel, which is adorned with a typical altar of the time, where Don Bosco celebrated his last Mass in Rome, on May 17, 1887. He would die in Turin a few months later, on January 31, 1888.

My thoughts flew for a few moments, not so much to that last Mass celebrated by Don Bosco in that room as to the simple, improbable, and unexpected beginnings - with apparently no greater future - of what is today the Salesian Congregation throughout the world. That beginning took place in another little room - in Valdocco - on 26, January 1854.

I wish to speak of and share with you in this "month of Don Bosco" this "miraculous" fruit of the Holy Spirit.

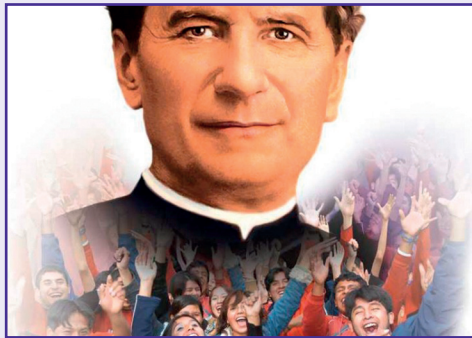
I have in my hands a historical document - a piece of paper that is a mere four inches by two inches - written by a young boy from the

Valdocco Oratory, young Michael Rua. On this tiny piece of paper he wrote the following:

On the evening of January 26, 1854, we gathered in Don Bosco's room: Don Bosco himself, Rocchetti, Artiglia, Cagliero, and Rua; and it was proposed that we engage, with the help of God and of St. Francis de Sales, in an experiment in the practical exercise of charity toward neighbor, to eventually make a promise, and then if it will be deemed possible and opportune, to make a vow of it to the Lord.

From that evening the name Salesians was given to those who chose and would in the future choose to engage in such an exercise.

Of the four, three (Rocchetti, Cagliero, and Rua) became Salesians.



From a miniscule seed

It is amazing that these short minutes have reached us. But the truly amazing and prodigious things are the intuition and vision of this great and holy man, Don Bosco, who had a heart full of educational and evangelizing passion for his boys. The Holy Spirit made that first encounter with four of his boys bear so much fruit that the Salesian Family and Congregation today extend to 136 nations of the world, taking care of the boys, girls, teenagers, and young adults - alfof