

The Exercise for a Happy Death in Don Bosco's educational experience (5/5)

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4. Conclusion

In the epilogue of Francis Besucco's life, Don Bosco makes the core of his message explicit:

I would like both of us to come to a conclusion which will be to our mutual advantage. It is certain that sooner or later death will come for both of us, and it is possible that it will come sooner than we think. It is equally certain that if we don't perform good works during our life we won't be able to reap their fruit at the point of death, nor we can we expect any reward from God. [...] I encourage you, Christian reader, I encourage you to perform good works whilst we have time; our sufferings are of short duration and what we shall enjoy lasts forever. [...] O Lord, help me, help me to persevere in the observance of your precepts during the days of my life so that we can one day go to Heaven to enjoy great happiness for ever and ever. Amen.”[\[1\]](#)

It is on this point, in fact, that Don Bosco's discourses converge. Everything else appears functional: his art of education, his affectionate and creative accompaniment, the advice he offered and the programme of life, Marian devotion and the sacraments, everything is oriented towards the primary object of his thoughts and concerns, the *great business of* eternal salvation.[\[2\]](#)

Thus, in the Turin saint's educational practice, the monthly exercise for a happy death continues a rich spiritual tradition, adapting it to the sensitivity of his young people and with a marked educational concern. In fact, the monthly review of life, the sincere account of it to our confessor-spiritual director, the encouragement to place ourselves in a state of constant conversion, the reconfirmation of the gift of self to God and the systematic formulation of concrete resolutions oriented towards Christian perfection, are its central and constitutive moments. Even the litany for a happy death had no other purpose

than to nourish confidence in God and offer an immediate encouragement to approach the sacraments with special awareness. They were also – as the narrative sources show – an effective psychological tool to make the thought of death familiar, not in a distressing way, but as an incentive to constructively and joyfully value every moment of life in view of the “blessed hope”. The emphasis, in fact, was on virtuous and joyful living, “*servite Domino in laetitia.*”

[1] Bosco, *Il pastorello delle Alpi* , 179-181.

[2] This is how the Life of Dominic Savio concludes: “and like Dominic, when our time comes, see death approach with peace and joy in our hearts. How happy we will be then to meet Jesus Our Saviour who will judge us according to his mercy, and in his goodness lead us to an eternity of happiness. Amen.”, Bosco, *Vita del giovanetto Savio Domenico*, 136.

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