



Don Bosco

To his Filipino Boys
BY REV. OSCAR DELTOUR, C.I.C.M.

My dear Boys,

For many of you this time of the year marks the end of a long vacation. Well Boys, did you enjoy it? I am sure you did and believe me, I enjoyed it myself together with you. I could see you, helping your parents at home and having a lot of fun: camping, playing, swimming, singing, shouting and making all the noise you wanted. That's all right Boys, so long you do not commit sin. Sin is the only thing that can spoil your vacation as it is also the only thing that can spoil your life. You must have experienced it that faithfulness to your four resolutions helped you a lot to stay away from sin.

And now, back again to school. Well, that's not so bad either; don't you think so?. School days are also joyful, at least for those who try their best to do their duty well.

Boys, I would like to introduce to you one of my former boys, Domingo Savio by name. About four months ago, on the 5th, of March, amidst a huge crowd that went to Rome from all parts of the world, His Holiness Pope Pius XII proclaimed him "Blessed" and proposed him as a model to all the boys of the world. It is not without a deeply felt paternal pride that I write you about him for, as I already mentioned it, Domingo was one of MY Boys; he stayed with me at Turin for about three years.

Domingo was twelve years old when I met him for the first time in 1854. After asking him about his studies and his life I told him: "It seems to me that you have the material in you." "Material for what?" inquired Domingo. "To make a coat to offer to God," I said. "All right," answered Domingo, "I will be the material and you will be the tailor; take me with you and when my studies are over, if God wills it, I will be a priest."

One day speaking to my boys, I told them that they should try their best to become saints. Some of them looked at me quite surprised; they probably never had given any thought to such an ideal, believing insisted on three points: first that God wants us to become saints, secondly that it is easy to become a saint and thirdly that an eternity of glory awaits the saints in Heaven. This sermon was as a spark falling on Domingo's heart and enkindling in it an ardent desire to become a saint. For several days he was very serious and silent. His companions noticed it and so did I.

Fearing some illness, I asked what ailed him. "It's nothing bad, Don Bosco," he answered, "it's rather something good." "What do you mean?" "I mean that I want to become a saint. I did not know it was so easy to be a saint. I feel I simply must become a saint; please Don Bosco, will you help me?"

Oh yes, Domingo wanted to become a saint and really he meant it. He kept his ever happy mood and lively manner but at the same time he earnestly put into practice whatever advice I gave him.

In one of my instructions he heard me saying: "Boys, if you want to hold fast to the way that leads to God, remember these three things: Go often to confession, go still more often to Holy Communion and have confidence in your confessor. Domingo grasped the importance of this advice. He wanted his confessor to know him through and through and carefully followed his advice and guidance. At first he went to confession and Communion every two weeks, then once a week and finally he became a daily communicant.

With this state of affairs Domingo was overjoyed. "If I have anything worrying me," he used to say, "all I've got to do is to go and talk matters over with my confessor; he shows me what God's will is, for our Lord says that the voice of the confessor is the voice of God. In Holy Mass and Holy Communion I find all the strength I need to carry out my resolutions." Then he would ask: "What more do I need to make me happy? Nothing in this world, only later to see Jesus face to face Whom I now adore by Faith in the Blessed Sacrament.

Domingo's delight was to spend his leisure time before the Blessed Sacrament. Several times a day he went to visit Him, taking with him as many of his companions as he could get to go.

As his love for Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, so was his love for our



Blessed Mother. The rosary was his favorite prayer and his scapular his shield against the attacks of the devil. Very often he would kneel in front of the image of Mary and pray with childlike simplicity: "O Mary, I am your boy. Obtain for me the grace to die rather than to commit a sin against holy purity."

One day, one of the boys brought with him a magazine in which were some indecent pictures. He was quickly surrounded by other boys anxious to see the dirty drawings. Domingo also ran up, but as soon as he perceived the true nature of the pictures, he grew indignant, took the magazine and tore it to pieces. At this abrupt interruption the others looked at one another in silence; they understood the lesson.

Domingo had many friends; he was so cheerful and humorous that he easily attracted even the less pious ones. These Domingo would advise in his own simple way and induce them to receive the Sacraments more frequently.

I remember how one day during recreation time, a certain man came up to the boys. He spoke to one of them so loudly that those around could not help hearing what he said. In order to attract his audience, he began by telling funny stories; he was soon surrounded by a crowd of boys all hanging on his words. Then this wretch, changing the conversation began to speak against religion, making fun of all that was most holy and speaking disrespectfully of the priests. Some of the boys, unwilling to hear such impieties, yet not daring to contradict him, went away, but a good number of the most thoughtful remained.

Just then Domingo came up. He had no sooner grasped what was happening that he unceremoniously turned to his companions and said: "Come away, boys. Don't you see that this man wants to harm your souls?" The boys, obedient to the advice of a friend whom they respected and loved, dispersed, leaving the devil's envoy to speak to the empty air. The unhappy man, seeing that he was only wasting his time, went away.

All the time Domingo was with me at Turin, his health was rather precarious and he needed special attention. After about three years he caught a persistent cough and the advice of the physician was that he be sent home for some time. It pained him to leave us. He had a presentiment that he would never return again. At the point of leav-

ing, with tears in his eyes he kissed my hand and turning to the boys who bid him farewell he said: "Good bye boys and pray for me! We shall meet in heaven." It was the first of March 1857.

Although his unusual bood-bye had distressed us, we still hoped to see him back among us soon. But it was not to be; Domingo was ripe for Heaven. In a few years he had accomplished a great deal, and gained the crown of the elect. Domingo died as an angel a few days later in the evening of March 9, 1857.

Well Boys, I could have written you much more about Domingo. Shortly after the death of Domingo I prepared an extensive booklet about him; this is available at the Central Office of Don Bosco's Boys' Association. When reading it, do not only say: "How beautiful!" Say rather: "I will try to imitate what I admire in Domingo."

Domingo had to overcome the same difficulties you have and you enjoy the same opportunities he had. What else do you want?

And now a little surprise for you. At the Central Office of Don Bosco's Boys' Association there are a certain number of small pictures of Blessed Domingo with a precious relic attached to it. Ask for one in my name and enclose a self-addressed stamped envelope. By return mail! this singular remembrance of your friend Domingo will be sent to you.

God bless you all!

Affectionately yours,

Juc. Gio. Bosco —