

# 2.6 The Purpose and Strategy of Don Bosco's Communication

## Aim

To expand one's awareness of Don Bosco's active involvement in Social Communications.

## Materials Required

Several copies of the list of questions given in the procedure.

### Procedure

Break the participants up into groups. Ask them to keenly study the list of writings of Don Bosco, printed in the Annexure 7.

- How much of these were:
  - Pastoral communications
  - Salesian Communications
  - Secular Writings
- At which time in Don Bosco's life was he most prolific as a writer?
- What do you think could be Don Bosco's intention/motivation for writing and publishing?

### Input

His purpose and Motivation for Entering Communication:

- His activity as a writer and publisher is seen as a natural consequence of his priestly activity (pastoral), and of his mission as a shepherd and educator (for the glory of God and the salvation of souls, especially the young).
- Among the many activities of the saint, this aspect (the press as an effective means for combating the anti-ecclesial ideologies of that time) includes amongst the greatest concerns and objectives of his apostolic activity"

Don Bosco's Style of Writing

His style of writing was simple and straightforward, quite different from the nineteenth century rhetorical style. He made himself understood even on uncomfortable topics like "History of Italy for Young People". The facsimile edition of his works takes up 37 large volumes. Salesian Historian, Peter Stella has listed his printed works under 1147 titles.

His versatility is also remarkable: apologetics, education, history, devotion, literature, hagiography and even popular treatises on such matters as the then new metric system. He also had a talent for journalism; and he had a remarkable gift for training writers like Lemoyne, Bonettin, Barberis, Francesia, Trione, Cerruti and others, and for enlisting outstanding writers to help him in his projects.

### Don Bosco's Communication Strategy

He drew up a global strategy of communication.

- He had become aware that it would be quite useless to remain isolated on the margins of a changing society. He had to plunge in and spread his ideas peacefully without hurting people's feelings.
- Hence you must bring good people together to do good works and show them how it is possible to do so, but you must also make it known and "give to the good works the maximum publicity".
- To achieve his purpose, it was not sufficient to be just a writer, he became an editor, a publisher, an entrepreneur and scouted and trained writers and organised distribution networks.
- From the outset Don Bosco involved both youngsters and adults in his work, making the best use of initiatives and energy, of selecting and preparing individuals and of involving them in responsibility for specific objectives.

### His Target Audience

- He targeted mainly the working classes and their children who were being misled by the anti-Catholic propaganda of the time E.g. in 1870 the first to cross the Breach of Porta Pia was a cart full of Protestant Bibles drawn by a dog with the name of Pius IX.
- The sum total of all these intentions, designs and strategies was outlined in a circular letter dated 19 March 1885, feast of St. Joseph: Circular to the Salesians for the spread of good Books.

*“With the Catholic Readings, while I desired to instruct all the people, I had in mind to enter their houses and to make known our spirit and to draw the young to a virtuous life, especially with the biographies of Savio, Besuccio and others.*

*With the collection of Italian and Latin classics and the History of Italy and other historical and literary works I wanted to sit by their side in the school and to preserve them from so many errors and passions, which would be fatal to them here and in eternity.*

*I ardently desired as in earlier times to be their companion in the hours of recreation, and I thought of putting together a series of light readings, which I hope will not delay to see the light of day.*

*And lastly with the Salesian Bulletin, among several other goals, I had also this: to keep alive in our young boys, now returned to their families, the love of the spirit of St. Francis de Sales and his teachings, and to make them apostles of other young people. I do not claim to have reached my intended goal. But I will say that it is up to you to co-ordinate it in such a way as to be complete in all its parts. I pray and beseech you therefore not to neglect this most important part of our mission. Begin it not only among the young whom Providence has entrusted to us, but with your words and examples make others apostles of good books”*

## **Review**

1. Don Bosco’s activity as a writer and publisher is seen as a natural consequence of his priestly activity (pastoral), and of his mission as a shepherd and educator.
2. His style of writing was simple and straightforward, quite different from the nineteenth century rhetorical style.
3. He made himself understood even on uncomfortable topics like “History of Italy for Young People”
4. Don Bosco’s target audience was mainly the working classes and their children who were being misled by the anti-Catholic propaganda of the time.

## **Reflection**

- a) What are your impressions of Don Bosco as a communicator? Where would Don Bosco stand as a communicator today?
- b) How have we lived up to Don Bosco’s great desire “not to neglect this most important part of our mission?” What are some steps we should take to make this a reality?

## **Relevant Skills**

Make a list of writings of Don Bosco on the following topics: Catechetics, History and Academic subjects

## **Resources**

BOSCOM-INDIA. ‘SHEPHERDS’ FOR AN INFORMATION AGE. Matunga: Tej Prasarini, 2000.

