

**O'Rourke, Sarah, 1996, *The feminine contribution to Don Bosco's Preventive System of Education (1815-88) and its implications for Salesian Educators at the close of the Twentieth Century.***

### **ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION**

This dissertation focuses on the feminine contribution to Don Bosco's Preventive System of Education (1815-1888) and its implications for Salesian educators as the third millennium dawns. The particular ethos in a Salesian school is linked with the educational method known as *The Preventive System*. Don Bosco (1815-1888) was the exponent of this 'efficacious and attractive pedagogical method which he has left as a precious legacy to be safeguarded and developed.' At the centre of his vision stands pastoral charity of which he says: 'The practice of the Preventive System is wholly based on the words of St. Paul who says: "Love is patient and kind; it bears all things, hopes all things and endures all things."'

Don Bosco's mother Margaret had a deep influence on his pedagogical approach which was very much based on the trilogy of *reason* (the search for the meaning of life); *religion* (the aspiration to a personal rapport with God) and *loving-kindness* (the need of loving and being loved). Education according to Don Bosco's method fosters interaction between human advancement and evangelisation. In his educational programme Don Bosco in line with current thinking opted for total separation of the sexes. He founded the Salesian Congregation [SDB] to educate boys and young men. Mary Mazzarello (1837-1881), together with Don Bosco, founded the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians (Salesian Sisters, FMA) which is the feminine expression of the spirituality and ministry of the Salesian Congregation. In a society, which basically ignored the potential and rights of peasant women, Mary Mazzarello and the early Salesian Sisters understood that education was the key to their empowerment. In creative fidelity they incarnated Don Bosco's Preventive System in the world of women.

Don Bosco and Mary Mazzarello used vocabulary and concepts which may appear void and sentimental today but this must not deter Salesian educators from appreciating the relevance of their method of educating at the close of the twentieth century. They can teach educators 'to integrate the permanent values of tradition with "new solutions" so as to meet in a creative fashion the newly emerging requests and problems.' In an age of rapid technological change the challenge facing Salesian educators is to vivify the attitudes underlying the Preventive System of Education.