January 31st: Memorial of Saint John Bosco, Priest

Gospel text (*Mt* 18,1-5): The disciples came to Jesus and said: «Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?». Then Jesus called a little child, set the child in the midst of the disciples, and said, «I assure you that unless you change and become like little children, you cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever becomes lowly like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven, and whoever receives such a child in my name receives me».

«Unless you change and become like little children, you cannot enter the kingdom of heaven»

Fr. Julio César RAMOS González SDB

(Mendoza, Argentina)

Today, we celebrate the memory of St. John Bosco (1815-1888), presbyter and founder of the Salesian Society (Don Bosco's Salesians).

Jesus' words open a door for us to a vision, old, although at the same time, quite new, of «Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?» (Mt 18:1); a vision that we must today retrieve from the Gospel to convert us. «Unless you change and become like little children», that is, if we do not change direction from the vision of this world of power supremacy, of violent imposition of ideologies, of outrageous abuse of authority, «you cannot enter the kingdom of Heaven» (Mt 18:3). Therefore, whoever becomes "lowly", that is, humble, simple, poor, needy «will be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven» (Mt 18:4).

When he was nine years old St. John Bosco receives his vocation in a dream. While in the midst of a violent childish quarrel, Jesus calls him by his name and tells him: «It is not with blows, but with gentleness and charity that you will make them friends...». And, indeed he learned in his life the method of love!, inviting his followers -later on as an experienced pedagogue- to «establish the child's life on the plane of joy, and hence of love; the love of God will surely follow the love of the master», that is, humble yourself to be able to raise, draw near to be able to assume, become lowly, so that they can become big.

Today, let us ask the Lord to lead us, as St. John Bosco did, and follow his path of patient love and redeeming annihilation of himself, to save mankind, especially youth «the most delicate and valuable part of human society», as the saint pedagogue would have said.