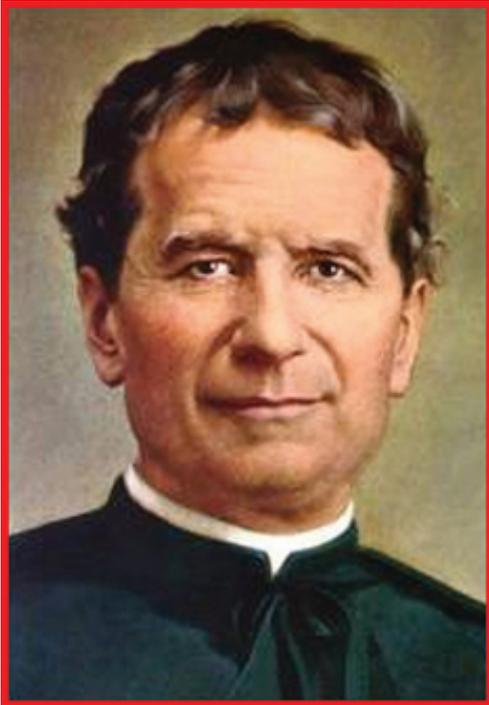




ST. JOHN BOSCO'S VISION OF THE SHIP OF THE CHURCH AND THE TWO COLUMNS IN THE SEA

(Original Source: Biographical Memoirs, Vol. VII, Ch. 18, page 169 ff)
Later reproduced in chapter 40 of the book "FORTY DREAMS OF ST. JOHN BOSCO"



Most of the prophecies of Don Bosco came to him during dreams, but just as in St. Matthew's Gospel, where St. Joseph was given instructions by angels during his dreams, it is clear that Don Bosco's experiences were something much more than the sort of dreams most of us have when asleep.

Most of his dreams were about the direction of both he and his religious order, the Salesians, were to take in the future, and in particular with the boys who lived at his oratory in Turin. He would often speak to them just before they went to bed, sometimes predicting that one of them would die within a certain period, but without saying which boy.

On May 30th, 1862, Don Bosco, during his usual 'Good Night' talk, told his boys and the young priests he was training, about a dream he had dreamt a few nights ago: he actually described it as a parable. Strictly speaking a parable is a general story with a deeper meaning.

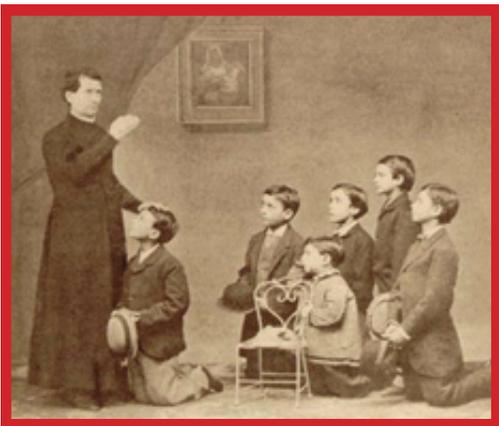
On May 14th, 1862, Don Bosco had the joy of receiving the first religious professions of twenty-two members of the Salesian Society which he had started not long ago. Some days later, on the 30th of May, he revealed the following dream. It was about the battles of the Church against many enemies, the sufferings of the Pope and the final triumph through devotion to the Holy Eucharist and to Our Lady, Help of Christians. What follows, are the words of Don Bosco himself:

DON BOSCO REVEALS HIS DREAM

I want to tell you a dream. It is true that he who is dreaming is not reasoning; anyway I—who would even tell you my sins if I were not afraid that they would make you all run away and make the house tumble down—will tell you this for your spiritual profit. I had the dream some days ago.

THE DREAM

Imagine yourselves to be with me on the seashore, or better, on an isolated rock and not to see any patch of land except what is under your feet. On the whole of that vast sheet of water you see a fleet of countless ships, arranged ready for battle. The prows [front end] of the ships are formed into sharp, spearlike points so that wherever



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they are thrust they pierce and completely destroy. These ships are armed with cannons, with lots of rifles, with incendiary materials [gunpowder, explosives, etc.], with other arms of all kinds, and also with books, and they advance against a ship very much bigger and higher than themselves [the ship of the Catholic Church] and try to ram into it with their prows (prows are battering rams on the front of the ships) or to burn it, or in some way to do it every possible harm.

THE SHIP OF THE CHURCH

As escorts to that majestic fully equipped ship, there are many smaller ships, which receive commands by signals from it and carry out movements to defend themselves from the opposing enemy fleet.

THE TWO COLUMNS

In the midst of the immense expanse of sea, two mighty columns of great height arise a little distance the one from the other. On the top of one, there is the statue of the Immaculate Virgin, from whose feet hangs a large placard with this inscription: Auxilium Christianorum—“Help of Christians”—on the other, which is much higher and bigger, stands a Host of great size proportionate to the column and beneath is another placard with the words: Salus Credentium—“Salvation of the Faithful.”

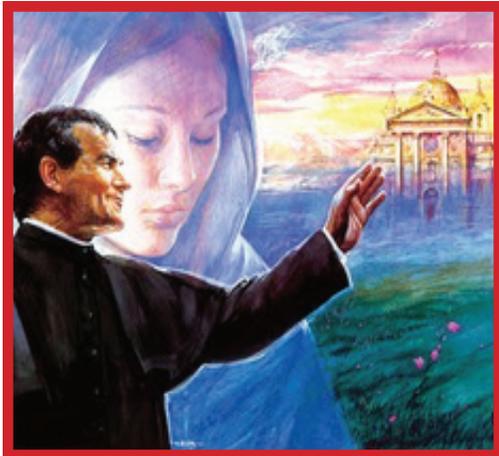
THE HOLY FATHER

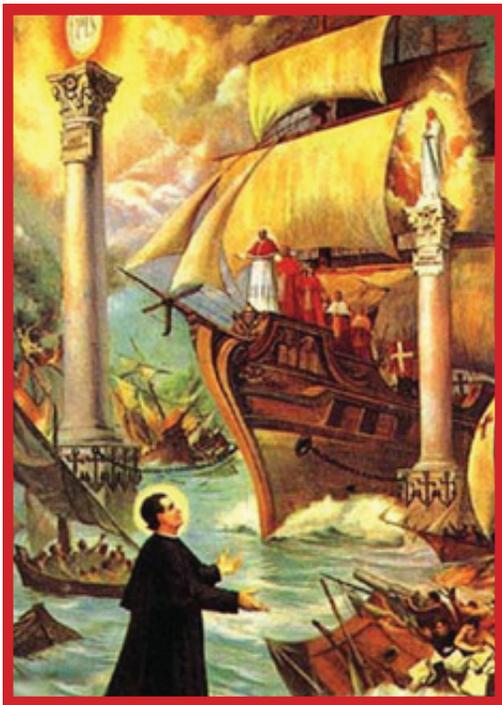
The supreme commander on the big ship is the Sovereign Pontiff, the Pope. He, on seeing the fury of the enemies and the evils among which his faithful find themselves, decided to call around himself the captains of the smaller ships to hold a meeting and decide on what is to be done.

IN CONCLAVE (MEETING)

All the captains come aboard and gather around the Pope. They hold a meeting, but meanwhile the wind and the waves gather into a great storm, so they are sent back to control their own ships.

There comes a short lull [a period of calm]; for a second time the Pope gathers the captains together around him, while the flag-ship sails on its course. But the frightful storm returns.





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The Pope stands at the helm [the 'steering-wheel' of the ship] and all his energies are directed to steering the ship towards those two columns, from the top of which and from every side of which are hanging numerous anchors and big hooks, fastened to chains.

THE BATTLE

All the enemy ships move to attack it, and they try in every way to stop it and to sink it: some with writings, or books, or inflammable materials—of which they are full; others with guns, with rifles and with rams. The battle rages ever more relentlessly.

The enemy prows (prows are battering rams on the front of the ships) thrust violently, but their efforts and the impact of the prows prove useless. They make attempts in vain and waste all their labor and ammunition; the big ship sails safely and smoothly on its way.

Sometimes it happens that, struck by formidable blows from the prows or cannon-ball of enemy ships, the flagship of the Church gets large, deep holes in its sides; but no sooner is the harm done, than a gentle breeze blows from the two columns and the cracks close up and the holes are repaired immediately.

DESTRUCTION OF THE ENEMY

Meanwhile, the guns of the attackers are blown up, the rifles and other arms and prows are broken; many ships are shattered and sink into the sea. Then, the raging enemies strive to fight hand to hand, with fists, with blows, with blasphemy and with curses.

All at once the Pope falls gravely wounded. Immediately, those who are with him run to help him and they lift him up. A second time the Pope is struck, he falls again and dies. A shout of victory and of joy rings out amongst the enemies; and from their ships an unspeakable mockery arises.

A NEW POPE

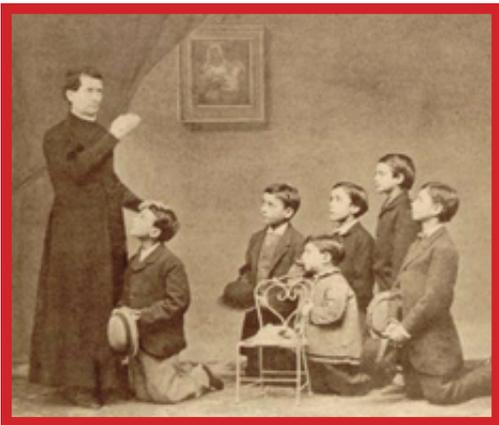
But hardly is the Pope dead than another Pope takes his place. The captains of the smaller ships of the Church, having met together, have elected the Pope so quickly, that the news of the death of the Pope comes together with the news of the election of the successor. The enemies begin to lose courage.

HAVEN OF REST

The new Pope, putting the enemy to rout and overcoming every obstacle, guides the ship right up to the two columns and comes to rest between them; then with a light chain that hangs from the bow, he chains the ship to an anchor on the column on which stands the Host; and with another light chain, which hangs from the stern [the back end of the ship], he fastens it to another anchor hanging from the column on which stands the Immaculate Virgin.



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FINAL DEFEAT OF THE ENEMY

Then a great surprise takes place. Whirlpools appear in the sea. All the ships that, until then, had fought against the Pope's ship are scattered as they try to flee away, but they collide and break to pieces one against another. Some sink and try to sink others. Several small ships, that had fought bravely for the Pope, race to be the first to chain themselves to those two columns.

Many other ships, having retreated through fear of the battle, cautiously watch from far away; the wrecks of the broken ships having been scattered in the whirlpools of the sea, they in their turn sail in good earnest to those two columns, and, having reached them, they chain themselves fast to the hooks hanging down from them and there they remain safe, together with the principal ship, on which is the Pope. Over the sea there reigns a great calm.

DON BOSCO EXPLAINS

At this point Don Bosco asked Don Rua: *"What do you think of the story?"* Don Rua answered: *"It seems to me that the Pope's ship might mean the Church, of which he is the head: the ships, men; the sea, this world. Those who defend the big ship are the good, lovingly attached to the Holy See; the others are her enemies, who try with every kind of weapon to annihilate her. The two columns of salvation seem to be devotion to Mary Most Holy and to the Blessed Sacrament of the Eucharist."*

Don Rua did not speak of the Pope who fell and died, and Don Bosco also was silent about him. He simply added: *"You are right! Only I should correct one expression. The enemy ships are persecutions. The most serious trials for the Church are near at hand. The persecutions which we have seen so far, are almost nothing in the face of that which is to come. The Church's enemies are represented by the ships that tried to sink the principal ship if they could."*

"Only two means are left to save her amidst so much confusion: DEVOTION TO MARY MOST HOLY and FREQUENT COMMUNION, making use of every means and doing our best to practice them and having them practiced everywhere and by everybody."

(Don Bosco did not give any other explanations about this dream)