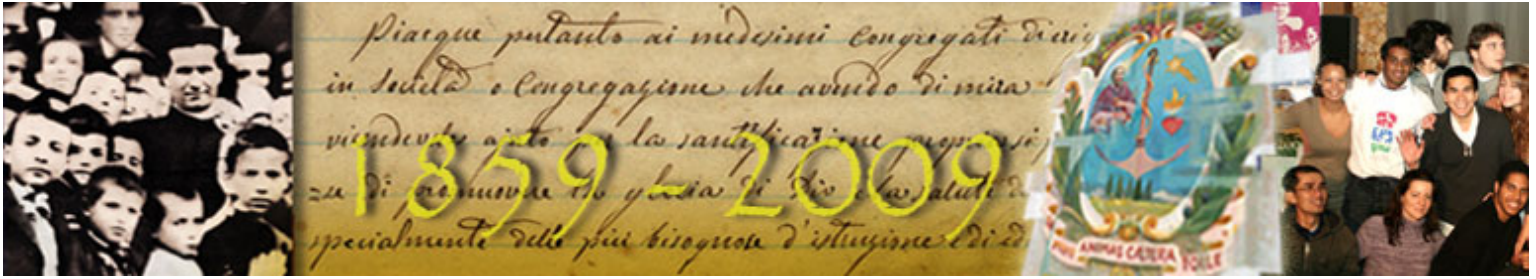


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18/12/2009 - Italy - Honorary Citizen of Turin with Don Bosco



(ANS - Turin) - With the playing of the national anthem and the entry of the Banners of the city of Turin, of the Province and of the Region of Piedmont, in the Red Hall of the Turin City Hall the ceremony began for the conferral of honorary citizenship on Fr Chávez Villanueva, Rector Major of the Salesians and IX successor of Don Bosco.

Prior to the ceremony there had been a simple and cordial meeting in the Office of the Mayor of the city of Turin Sergio Chiamparino, during which the Rector Major had given the first citizen a special plaque.

The ceremony itself was opened by the President of the City Council Giuseppe Castronovo who gave a short biography of Fr Chávez, then spoke about the work of Don Bosco and of the Salesian Family, "a project which in spite of its age is always effective and relevant!" Among those present were the members of the City Council of Turin, the General Council, Mother Yvonne Reungoat, civil and military authorities, a number of Salesians and FMA, lay people and journalists.

This was followed by the address of the City Councillor Gavino Olmeo who in recalling the close links between the Salesian Family and Turin presented and commented on a document from the historical archives of the City on display for the occasion: a letter to the municipal authorities requesting authorisation for the Oratory in the Pinardi property. The document, written by Don Bosco's secretary, explains that there will be boys there and the purpose of the activity: "There are boys without the fundamentals of religion or education, in danger of causing public complaints or of being taken into custody and punished" who are being taught "a love for work, to receive the sacraments, to have respect for the authorities to avoid bad companions." "This document shows," Councillor Olmeo pointed "not only that the city of Turin was the scene of all the early steps of Salesian work, but that the Local Authorities of Turin, the City Council of Turin from the very beginning where immediately in vitally in touch with Don Bosco and, subsequently with his successors."

The Mayor of Turin described how "the Salesian world has contributed to raising and strengthening the social conscience of this city" and how in speaking of the church of Turin one thinks of the social-minded saints." Education, of which the Salesians are promoters ought to re-vitalise the sense of responsibility in every individual, fostering self-confidence. In concluding, Dr Chiamparino made a heartfelt appeal: "I hope that this event will help the strengthen your presence among us, so that the

city may grow and development in its humanity.”

The Mayor then presented the parchment with the decree awarding honorary citizenship.

“An honorary citizenship which I receive as a mark of gratitude to Don Bosco and to the Salesian Congregation,” the Rector Major began in his reply. Recalling the respect which Don Bosco had for the civil authorities, he pointed out how relationships between the Salesians and civil authorities of the city were still today: when it is no longer a question of boys from the valleys or from the outskirts of the city, but young immigrants coming from various countries. “Always used to thinking in terms of education and therefore according to criteria of change and progress, the Salesians have made their presence in the Turin area an unquestioned part of their plans for their work, in this way adapting themselves to the many changes to the nature of the citizen, but at the same time keeping faith with their own aims and their own vocation.”

Listing the various Salesian foundations in the city, which on a daily basis involve about ten thousand young people, Fr Chávez recalled that the Salesian mission has two specific characteristics: “being open to the locality and setting up educational networks” and “the desire to contribute to the formation of people who dedicate their lives, even professionally and long-term, to the ‘public good’, in political or administrative roles for the benefit of the whole of Turin society.”

“Today as in times past , the Salesian Congregation in this city wants to continue to take responsibility for youngsters at risk,” the new citizen of Turin said as he concluded his **reply**.

On ANSchannel there is a short **video** with a summary of the event.

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