

## Session 4: Loving-kindness

*The third pillar. Being with the people in our care, on the same ground they are on.*

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### Welcome back

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Last week we sat with Religion as the engine. Today we move to the third pillar: **Loving-kindness** (*amorevolezza*). For Bosco this isn't sentimentality. It's the disposition of being *with* those in our care, on the same ground they're on. Today's reading comes from the most famous Bosco letter ever written, *Letter from Rome*, 1884, where he names what happens to formation when *amorevolezza* disappears.

Same contract. One specific moment, every week.

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### Opening prayer

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*In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

*St. John Bosco, you took the hardest cases and formed them into men. Help us to take the souls God has placed under our care, our wives, our children, the men we sponsor, and form them with the same patience, the same reason, the same love that you used. Teach us to be present before we are productive, to be patient before we are pleased, and to lead with our hearts before we lead with our authority. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

*St. John Bosco, ora pro nobis.*

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### Today's scene

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Saturday morning. You're sitting in the living room with your kids playing on the rug six feet from you. The 7-year-old is building something with LEGO. The 4-year-old is wearing your old Mass shoes and pretending to be a giant. You have your phone in your hand. You're scrolling. You're answering a Slack message. You're looking up a price on Amazon. You're checking the score.

You are in the same room. You are not with them.

An hour goes by. The 7-year-old gives up on the LEGO and wanders off. The 4-year-old leaves the shoes behind and goes to find her mother. You look up and the room is empty. You think: where did they go? They were right here.

They were. And you weren't. That is *amorevolezza* missing. That is the moment Bosco's about to name.

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### Today's reading

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*From Don Bosco's Letter from Rome, 10 May 1884. Bosco is recounting a dream in which his old pupil Valfré shows him the Oratory as it was in 1870, full of life, before something was lost.*

Then Valfré showed me the boys, all of them with the same faces, the same height, the same age as they had at that time. It seemed to me that I was in the old Oratory at recreation hour. It was a scene all life, all movement, all joy. Some were running, some were jumping, some were getting games going. Over here they were playing leapfrog, over there *barrarotta* and ball. In one spot a circle of boys had gathered around a priest, hanging on his every word as he told a little story. In another spot a cleric was in the middle of a group of boys playing *asino vola* and trades. There was singing and laughing on every side, and everywhere clerics and priests, with boys around them romping happily. You could see that between the boys and the Superiors there reigned the greatest cordiality and confidence.

I was enchanted at this sight, and Valfré said to me:

“Look: familiarity brings affection, and affection brings confidence. This is what opens hearts, and the boys lay everything open without fear before their teachers, their assistants, and their Superiors. They become honest in Confession and outside of Confession, and they make themselves willing in everything that is commanded by the one whose love they are certain of.”

*And from the 1877 treatise, Section II:*

Give them full liberty to jump, to run, to make noise to their hearts' content. Gymnastics, music, recitation, the little theater, walks outside, these are the most effective means for obtaining discipline and for benefiting both morality and health. “Do whatever you like,” that great friend of the young, St. Philip Neri, used to say, “so long as you don't sin.”

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## The concept in plain language

Amorevolezza is being with the people in your care, on the same ground they're on. Not above them. Not in the same room scrolling your phone. With them. Valfré gives us the chain: familiarity, affection, confidence, honesty in Confession, willing obedience. Skip familiarity and the whole chain breaks. Bosco wrote a whole letter from Rome because he saw his own Salesians losing this. We're not above that loss. We have to fight for it every week.

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## Discussion questions

1. Valfré says: *“familiarity brings affection, and affection brings confidence.”* Where in your home is there real familiarity between you and your kids? Where is there only authority and distance?
  2. When you're physically with your kids on a Saturday morning, are you mentally with them? What pulls you away?
  3. When were *you* loved this way as a kid, present, free, on the same ground? Or did you wish you had been?
  4. Father Dalimata's question, applied to Loving-kindness: do you experience God the Father as a Father who is *with* you, on the ground with you, or as one who is *above* you, watching? Where does that image come from?
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## The deeper theological move

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God the Father is not above you watching to see if you mess up. He is with you. The Incarnation is the central statement of Christianity: God put on a body and walked the ground with us. Christ touched lepers. Christ ate fish with his disciples. Christ wept at Lazarus's tomb. That is what amorevolezza looks like coming down from heaven.

The men around this table who experienced their fathers as distant, as watching from above, as "I'll be impressed if you earn it," will tend to image God the Father exactly the same way. Naming Bosco's third pillar today is also naming the kind of Father God actually is: the one who shows up on the floor, on the same rug, with his sleeves rolled up. Loving-kindness in the flesh.

Every man at this table needs a Father before he can be one. This is the session where that work begins in earnest.

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## Check-in: how did last week's commitment land?

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Last week each of us committed to one specific sacramental act modeled visibly: someone saw us do it. Around the table: did you do the visible act? Who saw you? What happened in you, and in them?

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## Live application

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Name one specific moment in the last 7 days where you were physically present but mentally absent. One sentence per man. Just the moment.

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## Monday-morning commitment

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*This week, ONE specific block of full presence. Phone away. Fully with. Doing what THEY love, not what you choose. Name the person and the time.*

**My one specific person:**

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**My one specific block of time this week:**

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**What they love that I'll do with them:**

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## Closing prayer

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*Father, we thank you for the wisdom of your servant John Bosco, and for the brothers around this table. Send us back to our homes this morning ready to be the fathers, the husbands, and the brothers you have called us to be. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

*Sancte Ioannes Bosco, ora pro nobis. Sancte Francisce Salesii, ora pro nobis.*

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*The full 8-week arc, how to bring a moment, and the source translations are in the overview at <https://don-bosco.studiovellum.ai>.*