

Holy Helpers

St. John Bosco

The Juggler Priest

Every Child Is Welcome!



Catholic Sunday School



This book belongs to:

Meet St. John Bosco!

Juggling balls

He made kids laugh!

Big smile

He was always cheerful!

Friends

Every child was welcome!

Black cassock

He was a priest.



St. John Bosco (say **BOSS-ko**) was a priest in Italy who loved children SO much! With juggling, magic tricks and games, he made **every child feel welcome**.

Kids called him "Don Bosco"

Follow Don Bosco!

Let's follow Johnny on his big, happy adventure.



Grigio, the Gray Dog



Friends Around the World



Never-Ending Chestnuts



A Playground for Everyone



Can You Whistle?



Johnny's Big Dream



Johnny Learns Tricks



The Best Show in Town

Story 1

Johnny's Big Dream

📍 Becchi, Italy · 1824



This place is real!



Johnny's home in Becchi

Long ago, on a little farm in Italy, lived a boy named Johnny Bosco. His family was poor, but his mamma, Margaret, filled their home with love. She taught Johnny and his big brothers to pray.

When Johnny was 9, he had a dream. He was in a field full of noisy children, pushing and shouting. Then a shining Man in white said, "Be gentle and kind, Johnny, and they will become your friends!"

Be gentle and kind!



A beautiful Lady with a starry cloak smiled at him. All at once, the noisy children turned into playful little lambs! Johnny woke up and knew: God wanted him to help children.



LET US PRAY

Jesus, help me to be gentle and kind, just like Johnny.

Story 2

Johnny Learns Tricks

📍 Becchi, Italy



One day, Johnny went to the village fair. He saw jugglers, magicians and acrobats on a rope high in the air! Everyone came running to watch. Johnny thought, "If I learn these tricks, children will come, and I can tell them about God!"

Johnny practiced and practiced. He juggled apples.
He learned magic tricks. He walked on a rope tied
between two trees. Wobble, wobble... **bump!** He fell down
lots of times, but he always got up and tried again.



At last, Johnny could juggle, do magic tricks and walk across the rope without falling. **Ta-da!** Now he was ready for his very own show!



LET US PRAY

Dear God, when I fall down, help me get up and try again!

Story 3

The Best Show in Town

📍 Becchi, Italy · Sunday afternoons



On Sunday afternoons, Johnny put on a show in the meadow. Children came running from all over! The ticket for the show wasn't money. It was a prayer! So first, everyone prayed together.



Johnny juggled and did magic tricks. Then he walked across the high rope, step by step, and took a bow! The children laughed and cheered, "Again! Again!"



When everyone was listening, Johnny climbed onto a chair. He told them a story about Jesus, the very same one he had heard in church that morning!

Then they all played games together: tag, races and jump rope! Every child was welcome. Everyone went home happy, and a little closer to God.



LET US PRAY

Dear God, thank You for my talents. Help me use them to make others happy!

Story 4

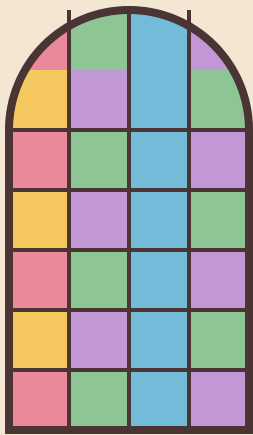
Can You Whistle?

📍 Turin, Italy · 1841



Johnny studied hard for many years, and at last he became a priest! People called him **Don Bosco**, which means “Father Bosco.” In the big city of Turin, he met many boys with no home and nowhere to play.

One morning, a boy named Bartholomew wandered into the church. The fussy church helper shooed him away with a feather duster! "Stop!" called Don Bosco. "He's my friend!"



Stop!
He's my friend!



Don Bosco smiled and asked, “Can you whistle?” Bartholomew laughed. Yes, he could! They became good friends, and the next Sunday, Bartholomew brought his friends, too!

A real photo!



Don Bosco with his boys



LET US PRAY

Jesus, help me to make a new friend feel welcome.

Story 5

A Playground for Everyone

📍 Valdocco, Turin · 1846



A real photo!



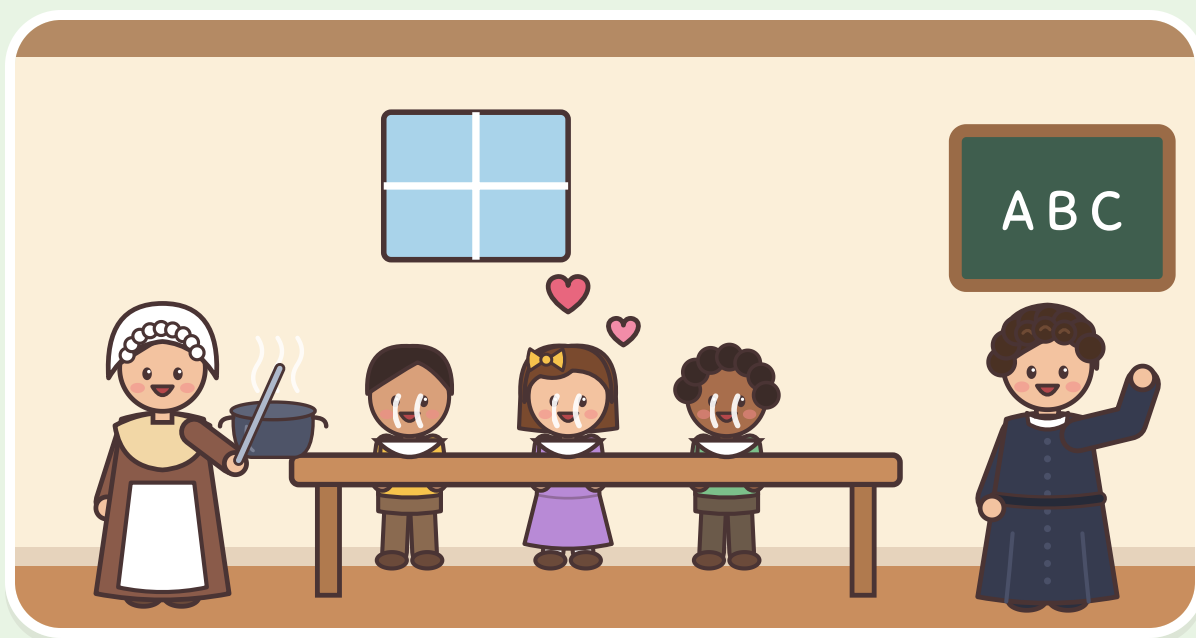
Don Bosco with the Oratory band

Soon there were hundreds of boys! Don Bosco found them a home: a simple shed with a big field. He called it the **Oratory**. Every boy was welcome there.

The Oratory was full of fun! There were games, songs, stilts and even a band. Don Bosco juggled and did magic tricks. He told the boys, "Run, jump and play as much as you like. Just be good!"



Mamma Margaret came to live there, too. She cooked yummy soup and mended torn clothes. Don Bosco started classes, so the boys could learn to read and learn a good job. Now they had a real home!



LET US PRAY

Jesus, help me to invite everyone to play.

Story 6

The Never-Ending Chestnuts

📍 Valdocco, Turin · 1849



One autumn day, Don Bosco promised the boys a treat: roasted chestnuts! But Mamma Margaret had cooked just one small pot. And there were hundreds of hungry boys!

Don Bosco took a little basket and began to fill each boy's cap. He scooped and scooped, and the basket never ran out! Every single boy got chestnuts. God made sure there was enough for everyone!



LET US PRAY

Thank You, God, for always taking care of us!

Story 7

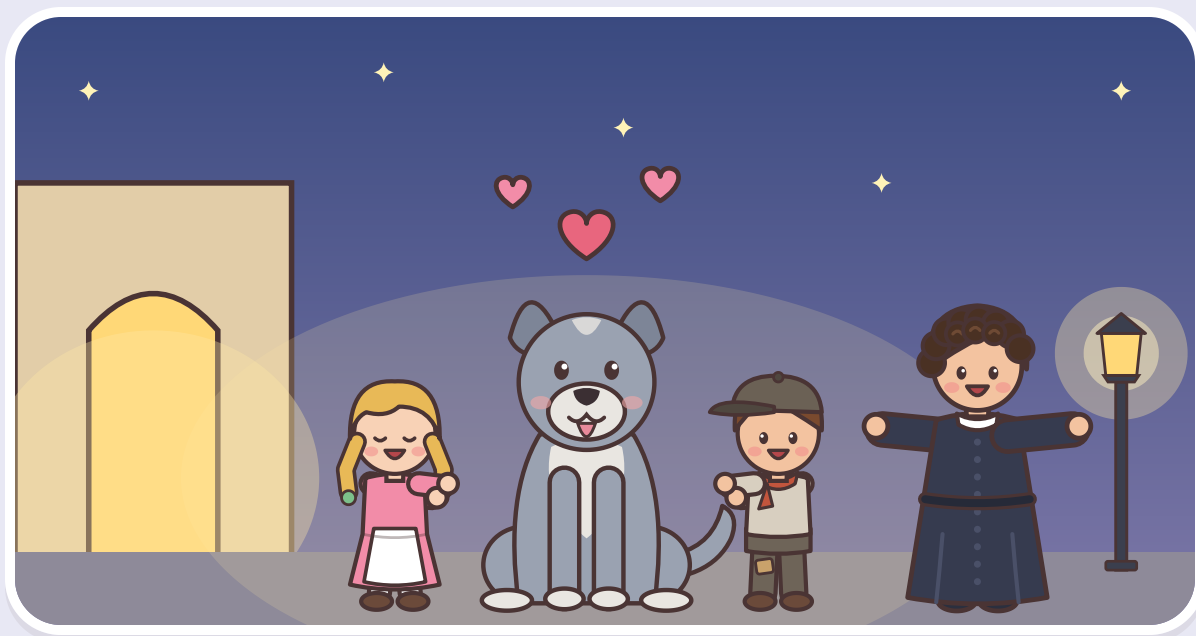
Grigio, the Gray Dog

📍 Turin, Italy · 1850s



Don Bosco often walked home late at night through dark, quiet streets. One night, a big gray dog trotted up and walked right beside him, all the way home!

Don Bosco named him **Grigio** (say GREE-jo), which means “Gray.” Grigio kept him safe on many dark nights. Then he would trot away, and no one knew where he went!



LET US PRAY

Thank You, God, for my guardian angel, who is always by my side.

Story 8

Friends Around the World

📍 Turin, Italy · 1888



This place is real!



Mary Help of Christians,
Turin

Many of Don Bosco's boys grew up to be priests and teachers, just like him. They were called the **Salesians**. One boy, Dominic Savio, even became a saint! Don Bosco also built a beautiful church for Mary.

When Don Bosco was old, Jesus took him home to Heaven.
But his work goes on! Today, his helpers run schools,
clubs and playgrounds for children all around the world.



LET US PRAY

St. John Bosco, help me to be cheerful, do good and
love Jesus!



A Prayer to St. John Bosco

Let's pray it together!

St. John Bosco, friend of children, you made every child feel welcome with your games, your tricks and your big smile. Help me to be cheerful and kind, to play fair, to keep trying when things are hard, and to bring my friends closer to Jesus. Ask Mary, Help of Christians, to watch over me. **Amen.**

A little prayer for little ones

Don Bosco, juggling, full of fun,
you made a friend of everyone.
Help me play and pray like you,
and love Jesus in all I do! **Amen.**

Be Like Don Bosco!

Color in a ball each time you do it!



I can invite someone new to play.



I can keep trying, even when I fall.



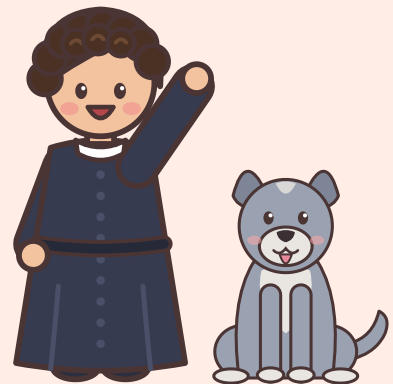
I can share a treat with a friend.



I can play fair and take turns.



I can say a prayer before I play!



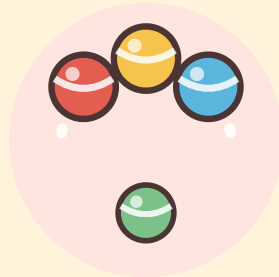
St. John Bosco's Special Day



Every year on January 31, the Church celebrates St. John Bosco, the friend of children. Here are some fun ways to celebrate!



Learn a magic
trick



Try juggling



Share a yummy
treat



Pray for children
everywhere

Color Don Bosco!



Play, pray and be kind!

You can be a joyful helper too!



Don Bosco showed that being good can be lots of fun!
When you play fair, invite everyone in and share God's
love, you are a lot like him. Don Bosco is cheering you on!

Dear Jesus, thank You for St. John Bosco. Help me make every
child feel welcome. Amen.

For Grown-Ups

Where these stories come from. Most are told by Don Bosco himself in his *Memoirs of the Oratory*; they are retold here simply and gently for young children.

1. **Johnny's Big Dream.** Giovanni Bosco was born on August 16, 1815, at Becchi in Piedmont. His father died when he was two; his mother, Margherita Occhiena ("Mamma Margaret," now Venerable), raised him and his brothers. In his dream at nine, a man told him to win the unruly boys "not with blows, but with gentleness and kindness," and a Lady turned wild animals into lambs.
2. **Johnny Learns Tricks.** He watched acrobats and conjurors at village fairs, then practised juggling, sleight of hand and rope-walking at home, falling many times along the way.
3. **The Best Show in Town.** On Sundays he performed for local children on a rope strung between two trees. The price of admission was the rosary; standing on a chair, he repeated the morning's sermon, and games followed.
4. **Can You Whistle?** Ordained in 1841, he met many homeless young workers in Turin. On December 8, 1841, a sacristan drove 16-year-old Bartholomew Garelli out of the sacristy of St. Francis of Assisi; Don Bosco called him back, asked if he could whistle, and began to teach him. This was the start of the Oratory.
5. **A Playground for Everyone.** The Oratory settled in the Pinardi shed at Valdocco on Easter Sunday 1846, with games, music, a band, classes and workshops. Mamma Margaret lived there from 1846 until her death in 1856. He told the boys to enjoy themselves as much as they liked, as long as they did not sin.
6. **The Never-Ending Chestnuts.** On All Souls' Day 1849, witnesses said he filled every boy's cap with roasted chestnuts from one small pot.
7. **Grigio, the Gray Dog.** From the early 1850s, a large grey dog he called Grigio appeared to walk him through dangerous streets at night, protected him more than once, and always left as mysteriously as it came.
8. **Friends Around the World.** He founded the Salesians in 1859 and, with St. Mary Mazzarello, the Salesian Sisters in 1872. The Basilica of Mary Help of Christians was consecrated in 1868. His pupil Dominic Savio was canonized in 1954. Don Bosco died on January 31, 1888, and was canonized in 1934. He is patron of young people and is often called the patron of stage magicians. Salesians now serve the young in over 130 countries.

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St. John Bosco,
pray for us!

Holy Helpers

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