



place where the Salesian Story began was an emotional experience for me. I also thought of my good friend, Fr Hugh, while I shared his song with the gathering of 200 delegates from all over the world.

It was so lovely to see Valdocco being a vibrant Salesian Education Centre at the oratory there, with a co-ed Primary, Secondary and Third Level College all on the same campus. That was something I didn't expect or know. I assumed the oratory would follow in the tradition of Don Bosco's time with boys only. I am proud to say we are matching the same concept of Co-Education in Pallaskenry, and it was so rewarding for me personally to serve as a Principal there for sixteen years and witness how our ethos has touched the lives of our boys and girls.

During the five-day Assembly there was a lot of open discussion regarding proposals, amendments and resolutions concerning the Constitution of Past Pupils and Friends of Don Bosco. I think the details of this will probably be covered by another contribution to the bulletin.

On day three after some more discussion we were given a fabulous guided tour of 'Casa Museo Don Bosco', a newly refurbished museum representing the life of Don Bosco and all his work with young people. The museum has preserved all of Don Bosco's rooms: where he slept, said mass

and started the first publications of Salesian Bulletins. There is also a display of Don Bosco's black coat, infamous hat, alb and cane. It was nice to see the original wooden stand that he stood on to deliver his 'goodnights' to his boys at that time. It was lovely to see, up close, the wonderful centre in Valdocco that transformed the lives of young boys and men by giving them a skill set that was relevant to survival in the vibrant city of Turin.

On day four we were given a lovely tour of Chieri, where Don Bosco lived and worked as a young teenager in order to complete his secondary education. Here he lived with various families and worked hard to cover his accommodation and food costs in order to be educated. It was in Chieri that he learned the skills of tailoring, baking and carpentry and was able to pass on these skills to the boys when he established Valdocco. He was of course a very intelligent and clever young man and completed three years of school in one.

The final part of our trip on this day was to visit Colle Don Bosco and Becchi where Don Bosco began his life and lived his childhood with Mama Margaret and his brothers. The original house has been kept and preserved and it was wonderful to experience how Italian people lived and worked in the 1800s.

My visit to Valdocco, Chieri and Colle Don Bosco was truly inspiring. It is a wish of mine to organise a tour for teachers from Salesian Colleges in Ireland to walk the steps of our Salesian founder and understand the huge sacrifices and challenges he met and had to overcome to achieve what he achieved. No one could predict that a boy born in August 1815, in a poor farmer's stone cottage on the hills of Becchi at the foot of the Alps, could have made such a phenomenal impact on the world. 🙏