



ACTS OF THE SUPERIOR COUNCIL

OF THE SALESIAN SOCIETY

SUMMARY

I. Letter of the Rector Major

Our Poverty To-day.

II. Instructions and norms

The monthly and quarterly retreats.

III. Notifications

Strenna 1969 — Exactness in compiling the statistics.

IV. Activities of the Superior Council and projects of general interest

A) Redimensioning — Redimensioning of the provinces — Course for the Volunteers for Latin America — Solidarity between the works of the Congregation — Second Novitiate — The Generalate — Valdocco, Turin — Lay Missionaries.

B) Projects of general interest.

V. Documents

Love the Church: the duty of the present time (Discourse pronounced by the Holy Father, 18th September, 1968) — Obedience to the Church, the virtue and obligation of all (Discourse pronounced by the Holy Father, 17th October, 1968) — The **Lex orandi** of the Church must be in agreement with faith, tradition and canon law (From the discourse of the Holy Father to the members of the Council for the Sacred Liturgy, 14th October, 1968) — Greetings of the Holy Father to the Salesian Missionaries leaving for Latin America — Letter of the Missionaries leaving for Latin America to the Rector Major.

VI. Necrology (3rd list of 1968)

I. LETTER OF THE RECTOR MAJOR

Turin, Feast of Christ the King, 27th October, 1968

My dearest confreres and sons,

For some time I have been thinking of dwelling with you on a subject of particular and actual interest for the life and mission of our Congregation in the Church of to-day and, even more so, for our own personal life and vocation as religious and as Salesians.

The direct and indirect contacts I have had in these last few months with the provinces and with many confreres, the numerous letters containing observations, remarks and suggestions from various parts of the world, the reports heard in the three inter-provincial continental meetings, all these confirm that I should no longer postpone treating of this subject.

I shall dwell with you, then, on the subject of poverty, convinced that in doing so I shall be fulfilling a precise duty and at the same time fulfilling the wish of many. I hope thereby to deal also with the preoccupation of so many confreres who rightly see in poverty a powerful and irreplaceable support of the destinies of our Congregation, a support that all of us together must firmly maintain. I say "all" because each one of us, even if unconsciously, has his own positive or negative part in defending this rampart of religious life. It has been said in fact that, in the line of defence and conquest of each religious institute, poverty represents the breaking point. And rightly so: only a little reflection is needed, only a superficial examination of church history to realize the repercussions that poverty has on the vital nervous system of a congregation.

In this light we can see the reason for those constantly serious, accurate and, I would say, apocalyptic words of our Father, when confronted with the prospect of a decline in poverty in the Congregation. In this moreover, Don Bosco is on the same wavelength as the great Founders and Fathers of religious orders. St. Ignatius calls poverty « the rampart that protects the religious state ». St. Alphonsus adds that « to touch poverty is to shake the entire edifice of the Congregation ».

Let us all take to heart those frightening words of Don Bosco: « Woe to those houses in which the confreres begin to live like rich men » (*M.B.* IX, 701). « See to it that no one can say: These furnishings are not an evidence of poverty; this table, this suit, this room is not that of a poor man... Whoever gives reasonable grounds for such remarks causes disaster to our Congregation, which must always glory in its poverty » (*M.B.* XVII, 271).

I wish that every one of these words of our Father would be well meditated on in each house and province, and be compared with the situation we meet with to-day.

Poverty: an indisputable virtue

There is, besides, a fact easily established that invites us to bring our vigilant and diligent attention to poverty.

In the Church to-day one hears disputes, which are at times not even plausible, on celibacy, on obedience, on the very nature of our religious life; but concerning the poverty, not only of religious but also of priests and of the whole Church, there is not the least dispute. On the contrary, the accent is strongly placed on the desire that it be practised in the Church, supported as it is by a whole chorus of voices coming from every rank of person in the Church itself and from without. From all sides comes the echo of the Council and the post-conciliar era, of John XXIII and Paul VI.

What is wanted is not just a « Church of the poor » but a « poor Church ». There is a demand for ministers of Christ and apostles who

are truly poor. People want evidence of apostolic works that clearly express and show this poverty, not just an economic organization or any show of power. They deplore loudly that « religious orders lead an existence that is far better off and more comfortable than that of many layfolk who have the burdens of a family and have to work hard » (Fesquet, *Roma si è convertita?*). It has also been said that « Only a Church evangelically poor will be able to evangelize the world of the frightfully poor atomic era ».

This sensitiveness concerning a poverty that one can say is very scarce in the Church and, more still, in religious life to-day, even amongst elements of intemperance and extremism, presents of course positive aspects of consolation and warning at the same time.

Among his many defects the man of to-day has some particular psychological attitudes, which lead him to seek in the Church and in its men authentic values that are coherent with their profession and, as the saying goes, so embodied in themselves that they are clearly evident even to the superficial but demanding modern man. This attitude, as I have said, is verified in regard to our poverty.

We must not, however, ignore a danger in this approach, especially in our environment, viz. that of mere verbalism or what has been defined as the rhetoric of Poverty. A spiritual writer remarks in this regard: « It happens in religious life that those who speak most about poverty are not always the most careful in avoiding wastefulness, useless expenses and costly requirements. Such people are often very difficult to please »; « Poverty, as the Gospel testifies, does not consist merely in the beautiful words of our Lord Himself but in listening to, keeping and putting those words into practice » (Benoit-Lavaud, *Rivista di ascetica e mistica*, 1967, p. 347).

Our duty

Look at these pages, then, dearest confreres, precisely from that angle. I invite you to read them, to make them matter for personal reflection and also — Why not? — the subject of useful dialogue for drawing solid, even if not easy, conclusions.

If the phenomenon of poverty is so alive in our times, awakening interest and preoccupation in all directions, our Congregation must feel the problem as a very determining factor at the very foundation of its life, its spiritual and apostolic activity, and as of greater importance even than problems of discipline, organization, activity, etc.

We may tranquilly affirm that the Congregation was born in poverty, has grown with poverty, and is destined for the poor. To-day we are faced with the phenomenon of deviations and so much yielding and compromise. Therefore the Congregation must view this by no means secondary problem with responsible clearness. It must point out ways and opportune means for a substantial and urgent re-dimensioning to be effected with the collaboration of all, in absolute fidelity to Don Bosco, who was the Father of poor and needy boys and wished his Congregation to be a poor one for poor youth.

Following Christ

Before, however, going on to practical matters, it is necessary to recall together some fundamental ideas, from which there flow logically and coherently some definite inferences that concern our personal and community life, such as the responsibilities of superiors, administrators, apostles, live and active members of the Congregation.

Our poverty has its motives deeply rooted in our consecration to God, taken with our vows to its very limit and making of our entire life an exclusive service to God. Our life of consecration says far better than mere words: « *Ecce nos reliquimus omnia* — Lo, we have left everything » (Matt. 19,27); « *Ego sum vinctus in Domino* — I therefore a prisoner for the Lord » (Ephes. 4,1). We accept in full the words of Paul who says: « *Non estis vestri* — You are not your own » (I Cor. 6,19). And we feel that a religious life that departs from these perspectives would be absurd, a life of no logical explanation and with all the consequences of such a situation.

Let us acknowledge, then, even through vast and sad experience, all the truth of the 19th General Chapter's statement: « Should a Salesian cease to regard both Christ and His Father as the great realities

of his life, then he has lost the source of true joy and of supernatural generosity » (A.G.C. XIX, p. 79).

But our own consecration and the religious state embraced by us lead, according to the expression of *Lumen Gentium*, to a generous and diligent imitation of Christ: « In the Church this same state of life is imitated with particular accuracy and perpetually exemplified... that form of life which He, as the Son of God, accepted in entering this world to do the will of the Father » (L.G. 44). This, of course holds obviously for « the humble life which Christ the Lord elected for Himself » (do. 46). This in fact is what we understand by our consecration, and we intend to conform our whole life to it.

Perfectae Caritatis uses precisely these weighty words: « Poverty voluntarily embraced in imitation of Christ provides a witness which is highly esteemed, especially to-day. Let religious painstakingly cultivate such poverty » (P.C. 13). Here, then, is the centre and foundation of our poverty, the following of Christ, to whom we are voluntarily vowed: the poor Christ, our example, our model, our ideal. All this however, not on a merely platonic, rhetorical plane, but as something real and vital.

Let us also repeat with Francis: « *Nudus nudum sequar* — I wish to be the faithful follower of the poor Jesus, really poor ». Romano Guardini says: « The stock from which Jesus descended was dethroned and He was far from thinking of restoring it. He had not even the remotest idea of seeking power... Jesus is poor. Not like Socrates, whose poverty brought fame to the philosopher. No, He is poor, really poor » (*Il Signore*, p. 229). And again: « What is characteristic of Christ does not consist in the fact that He renounced all the delicacies of the world to take on privations, but in His liberty...; perfect liberty, serene and sovereign: this constitutes the greatness of the Lord. He is free from the least regret about what He does not have » (do. 258). These profound observations of Guardini should guide us in the evaluation of all the Gospel references to the poor Christ, that we find in *Perfectae Caritatis*. Indeed, from Bethlehem to Nazareth, to Calvary, to the sepulchre put at His disposal by Joseph of Arimathea, Christ saw poverty as a liberation, and hence a life of poverty as a life of liberty.

Poverty makes us free

Liberty is precisely an « oxygenating and dynamic element » of our poverty, a freedom that renders our soul available to God. In self-sufficiency there is no place for God, whereas the one who lives evangelical poverty realizes human insufficiency and the consequent need of God, whom he searches for and finds, freed from the snares and burdens of earthly things.

« The priest », says Courtois, and we may say “ the religious ” « being personally detached from material goods, is not tempted in the whirlpool of action to forget the supernatural means. He reckons with God, he depends on God, and God does not fail him. Since he has no other end than His Kingdom, he is given all the rest over and above. Since he has renounced the spirit of ownership which, according to Olier, is as contrary to the spirit of Christ as it could be, God takes possession of him, speaks through his lips, loves with his heart, and gives Himself through his self-denial » (G. Courtois, *Incontri con Dio*, II, 87).

Poverty is the first corrective to point towards the spiritual goods in a society, of which we are very much part and which runs the risk of becoming enslaved by the multiplication of material goods.

Rightly has it been pointed out that outspoken atheism was born first in rich countries. It is well known that immorality and other evils are preceded by riches and comfort, which cause forgetfulness of the things of heaven. While, then, purely material progress stands the risk of losing the vision and sense of spiritual things, poverty (note well, we do not say “ misery ”) brings into the life of man a sense of proportionate values without degrading and materializing it. All this, needless to say, holds true also for us religious, as daily experience confirms.

Lack of poverty in the individual and in the community fatally damages the religious life in its essential elements, from chastity to piety, from apostolic zeal to community life. It is no exaggeration to say that so many evils and so many disasters in ecclesiastical and religious communities are intimately connected with the breakdown of poverty. This is confirmed by history as well as everyday events and experience.

A central idea of the council

One can understand, therefore, why the Church of the Council, after courageously examining itself in the light of Christ and of history, wished to place the accent on poverty as a cardinal point. Amongst so many references in this regard, we can find it as a central idea in *Lumen Gentium*. There we read in fact: « Just as Christ carried out the work of redemption in poverty and under oppression, so the Church is called to follow the same path in communicating to men the fruits of salvation » (*L.G.* 8).

This statement of purpose finds a more concrete explanation in the words of Paul VI. In *Ecclesiam Suam* he speaks thus to the bishops: « We think that the spirit of poverty... is necessary in order to make us understand so many of our weaknesses and disasters in the past, and likewise what should be our tenor of life, and the better way to announce the religion of Christ to souls. We expect you to tell your pastors and faithful how to give the stamp of poverty to their words and conduct » (56).

The Church, then, without any shadow of doubt, sees in poverty its way, its method, its very life. That is why it wishes to free itself from what Pope John would call « imperial style ». It was precisely this sense of liberation arising from evangelically viewed poverty that made the same Pope John say: « Not without great hope, and to our great comfort, We see the Church today no longer subjected to so many obstacles of a profane nature, as occurred in the past » (*Opening discourse of Vatican Council II*, 11 October, 1962). Paul VI, in confirming this, felt the need to state that « it is necessary that we free the Church from the regal mantle that for many centuries has been thrown over its shoulders ». Speaking to the Roman nobility he could say: « We feel ourselves humanly poor before you; We stand before you now with empty hands ». But he hastened to add, with the accent of joyous victory: « The title with which We present ourselves is only that of spiritual power » (*Discourse to Roman aristocracy*, 14th January, 1964).

A witness expected by the men of our time

It is precisely this that society and the faithful expect from the Church, from its members, from us. Here is a synthesis of this well-grounded expectation:

« The eclipse of God, which has been alarmingly produced in the very bosom of ancient Christianity is in relation to the accumulation of riches and power which, with its thick opaqueness, has destroyed the divine transparency of the Church. A Church humanly powerful and rich can in no way make transparent the transcendent remoteness of the Absolutely Other. On the horizon of atomic humanity God will be able to appear only through the finely sensitive transparency of a poor Church, humble and utterly detached » (González Ruiz, *Povertà evangelica e promozione umana*, p. 110).

« Finally, everything invites us to a poverty that translates itself into a total liberty from earthly powers, however they may express themselves or work out, a poverty detached from the goods of this earth, above all a disinterested poverty that knows how to adapt itself to new conditions, which goes out to the poor, the needy; a poverty which is the disavowal of the primacy of economics and of the capacity of temporal goods to satisfy the heart of man » (Cardinal Montini, *Discorsi*).

This poverty, this « interior liberation » (Paul VI) regulates our right relationship with the things of the world, its techniques, modern comforts, entertainments, etc.

A reality that is not only economic

But let us come more specifically now to our own poverty as consecrated persons, as religious.

We were saying that in the very simple but accurate definition of religious poverty given us by *Perfectae Caritatis* one finds the reason why this virtue has been voluntarily accepted by us: « The imitation of Christ » (P.C. 13). Our poverty, then, is not just an economic and

social reality, something not chosen by ourselves and merely endured like so many other things. No, ours is a poverty deliberately chosen and sought after — but not just in order to be free from the many preoccupations of temporal goods, for that would be a merely stoic poverty.

Let us recall the thought of St. Jerome: « The important thing is not *We have left everything*, for even the philosopher Socrates did that, and many others have despised riches. The important thing is the *to follow Thee* of the apostles and those who believe » (*Homily*). And we may add: the religious, even by his exterior poverty, puts himself in the position of « following Christ more closely ». And for what motive? Because he loves Him, with a love that leads to imitation, union and service.

We have chosen and we love poverty because Jesus loved it. We joyously share in poverty because it has marked all the stages of His life; because, as He has taught, we know that our treasure is in heaven and that the Risen Christ is our true wealth. All this makes us tend all the more eagerly and with greater security towards the possession of eternal goods. In this way our poverty, whilst giving a sign of our love for Christ also expresses our faith in Him, in His promises, in His word; and of this word we give witness to the world of to-day which is more disposed to believe us when faced with our poverty than when it sees even impressive works.

In this regard Cardinal Verdier used to say: « My own long experience has taught me that the people really love not the eloquent apostle, the wise apostle, not even the pious apostle, but the one of whom they can say: He has nothing for himself! The apostle who is truly poor and detached is on the same wavelength as the people and he will perform miracles in their midst ».

Whilst we are working hard and without respite for our daily bread, let us by all means look to the morrow, even provide for it, but without desperate anxiety; rather let us abandon ourselves with faith into the arms of our Father, who feeds even the birds of the air and vests the lilies of the field.

Achievements of solidarity

But this poverty of ours, joyously, lovingly embraced bears other magnificent fruits. With it, whilst we renounce the right to have strictly personal goods at our disposal — thus eliminating all motives of strife, jealousy and anxiety that distress and grieve so many lives in the world — at the same time each one of us contributes his own strength, his personal resources, his activities towards the good of all the brethren, from whom he in turn receives according to his own needs. This is the law of solidarity which acts in two ways: receiving and giving, each one being useful to all and at the same time helped by all.

This in fact is the realization of the old fraternity of the first Christians who « were together and had all things in common » (*Acts* 2,44): a brotherhood that should express itself in a real equality amongst confreres, without any of those discriminations which render brotherly community life void. There should therefore be no difference in the use of things based on whether we are administrators or not, on whether we work at something directly remunerative or exercise a ministry that is not economically profitable. The one and only admissible difference is that accorded because of health and service.

Poverty seen in such a light will overcome the egoistical *mine* and *thine*, which so often poisons and kills charity even in natural families, whereas for us the incentive for the building up of community life lies precisely in true charity.

Love for the poor

Still in relation to us as religious, *Perfectae Caritatis* invites us to reflect on « the poor, whom religious should love with the tenderness of Christ » (*P.C.* 13). That, of course, is quite logical. Through voluntary poverty, in fact, we unite ourselves not only with the poor Christ, but also with all the poor, with whom Jesus wished to identify Himself as a brother. He actually puts Himself in the place of the poor, saying, « You did it to Me! ». All this is not just a moving metaphor,

a sublime fiction, but a reality, a clear identification. He did not say, "Imagine you do it to Me" nor "I shall consider it as done to Myself" but quite definitely « You did it to Me! ».

There is therefore a presence of Christ in the poor as the privileged ones of the Gospel, and because of this the Church of Vatican II has shown all its predilection for them, not just sentimentally or rhetorically, but with understanding and in deed.

This call to look to the poor, to stop alongside them with the heart of the Good Samaritan, is all the more strong and urgent because of the means offered us by modern techniques: The sufferings, misery and needs of millions of our brethren, the young, the old, women, are not only no longer ignored, but they cannot be ignored: they present themselves forcibly to our eyes in all their sorrowful and shocking reality. Henceforth we can say we have a documented and continuous knowledge of them, the one danger being that our eyes may get accustomed to them and, worse still, our hearts become indifferent to the sight of them.

« To-day, in our so-called civilization of opulence, in a world in which men have learned to guide the missile, but have not learned to live as brothers, in a society in which the many pay by famine for the indigestion of the few, misery has assumed fearful dimensions. There are statistic, numbers, episodes that should not let us sleep » (A. Pronzato, *Ma io vi dico*, p. 143).

Volunteers of poverty

We should feel these words as addressed to ourselves who, in the sight of the Church and of society, are the « volunteers of poverty », and, as such, the more qualified « not to sleep », not to cover our eyes and not to plug our ears when confronted with the millions, nay hundreds of millions of brethren who are not merely to be found in the slums of Calcutta, the *favelas* of Rio de Janeiro, or the *barriadas* of Bogotá, etc., but in our own very cities where we habitually work, perhaps in the very alleyway alongside our own house, trying to make us hear their agonizing plea, « I am hungry! ». And one day we shall

again hear that cry of Him who hides Himself in the poor and in every single poor person: « I was hungry! ».

My dear confreres, we are not treating here of demagogic or romantic class distinction; no, we are tryng instead to put ourselves *de facto* in the place where we belong. In one of his homilies St. Basil turns towards the insensitive rich man and utters these pressing and severe accusations: « If one despoils one who is dressed, he is called a thief; if he does not dress the naked when he can, what other name does he deserve? The bread you keep for yourself belongs to the hungry, the cloak you preserve in your wardrobe belongs to the naked, the shoes that rot in your house belong to the barefooted, the silver you have buried belongs to the needy ».

Abbé Pierre, who knows so well and lives as a true Christian and priest the tragic misery of the world, says something that can refer to each of us: « When confronted by whatever human suffering, do something, according to your possibilities, not only to alleviate at once, but also to destroy the causes ».

If, then, it is true that « no one has the right to be happy alone », (Raoul Follerau), if it is true that our poverty is the imitation of Christ, it should lead us to a life positively involved in a confrontation with the poor.

A frank confrontation

I think the first duty is this: to put ourselves courageously face to face with this mass of poor brethren, and I say not only the undernourished and the wretched but all the poor, the workers, the ordinary labourers. It would be interesting, for example, to find ourselves at five in the morning on one of the many workmen's trains which in every part of the world transport hundreds of millions of labourers, employees, teachers, etc., into cities thirty, forty or fifty miles away. And then in the evening, after the day's work, to make the same journey again, tired out, our mind and heart thinking perhaps of our sick child or wife... It would be extremely useful in this way to come

into touch with certain very painful dramas, situations and realities of whose existence we are not even remotely aware.

Let us think also of our own relatives, or perhaps of the parents of our pupils, and the life of sacrifice and labour they submit to for their families, for the children, in order to make ends meet, and yet without thinking themselves heroes: this is the life of millions of men and women who have no vow of poverty or renunciation... As Bishop Huyghe says: « We are speaking of all the poor, not only of those who are deprived of the goods of fortune or of security at their work, but also of all those who are lacking the essential goods of a human and supernatural life such as we possess. Those are poor whose hunger is never sufficiently satisfied, those who are badly housed, those whose conditions of work are continually insecure. Those are poor who are not loved, those whose hearthplace is laid waste or who have never had one, those who are lonely. Those are poor who do not enjoy the esteem of others. Those are poor, finally, who do not possess the light of divine life and do not know that Christ came above all for them and that He stands knocking at the door of their lives.. » (G. Huyghe, *I religiosi oggi e domani*).

Perhaps we speak too much nowadays of « our poverty », « our renunciation », of « our life of sacrifice ». These phrases, by dint of constant repetition, can become a camouflage for a mere worldly mentality and behaviour.

Causes of confusion

Confronted by such a huge number of people who have a really hard life, let us recall honestly that normally we lack for nothing, we have no real preoccupations, we even have a certain amount of comfort. In what way, then, can we call ourselves poor, especially if the tone and style of our life are not a clear « sign » of poverty?

From a sense of respect towards so very many of our brethren who lead a hard life of work and sacrifice, even from a sense of gratitude to Providence which, when all is said and done, permits us a position

which does not know the uncertainties and worries that assail millions of other people, we should feel it a duty to live a life marked by austerity.

I do not wish to be misunderstood. I know well that so many of our communities are not only exemplary in this regard, but not rarely they are content with food that, in quantity and quality, is in no way different from that of very poor people. And here I gladly pay homage to these confreres who, with Salesian simplicity, lead a life of authentic sacrifice. But precisely because there are such confreres, sons of the same Mother, the Congregation, as well as for other reasons, we should all examine well the standard and tone of living in every community.

We are not saying, however, that we must undernourish ourselves just out of homage to so many sad situations or because of the fact that millions of people are dying of hunger. Because of our work we need adequate food and sustenance. But it seems to me that we cannot reconcile with our poverty certain table provisions which are more than abundant, nor those too easy exceptions regarding food without convincing reasons. We cannot accept that our table should be habitually furnished, in quality and quantity, far more amply than that of so many benefactors on whom we call for help, or of visiting guests and friends. This kind of thing produces anything but edification.

All this, I repeat, has nothing to do with healthy, adequate food according to the needs of our work, and these things must be attended to with great care and understanding by the one in charge; but let there be no exaggerations. All extremes must be avoided and also, I would say, those photographs so often reproduced in magazines showing Salesians seated at sumptuous banquets.

I have read with great admiration of Catholic families that once a week go to bed without supper, so that all the members, and especially the young, may know what it feels like to be really hungry. And what is saved in that way is all given to the poor. And here we are dealing with people who have not, like ourselves, made profession of poverty; hence all the more reason why their example should be a strong warning for ourselves.

The virus of comfort

After having hinted at our table, we may now ask: What about those long, comfortable and inactive holidays, which not even well-to-do people allow themselves? Or those journeys of a purely touristic nature, or even those expensive ones made without adequate reasons? What can we say about all this procuring for one's own personal use and satisfaction of motors and vehicles which are not only costly but also entail constant new expenses for maintenance? Why all this frenzied craze to possess more and more things? Can we call all this religious and conciliar poverty?

What shall we say also about the atmosphere of certain places where, instead of a dignified and simple propriety, one finds almost a parade of luxurious furnishings and equipment which, especially nowadays, provokes reactions and comments which are by no means in our favour?

I might as well say with fraternal frankness: to-day the virus of comfort is entering in many ways into our communities; life is becoming worldly, and unconvincing excuses are being sought to justify this; and this, too, even on the part of those who should be on their guard, intervening, or preventing such things.

Here we are indeed on a dangerously steep slope, on which little by little each concession prepares for and encourages the next. Once doubts and remorse are silenced, conscience accomodates itself and finds subtle, even if not really convincing, reasons for abuses and betrayals by quoting the example of this or that confrere, or the perhaps over-prudent silence of those who should correct, etc., etc. Meanwhile the evil spreads, the religious level is lowered, one's spiritual and apostolic sensitivity dulls, worldliness makes great strides and, with it, the comfort and love of ease that lead on fatally to practical laicism.

The ruin of religious life

I know that the reality does not always correspond exactly to the picture I have described, but that does not undermine the soundness of my argument. In any case it is an absolutely true and historically

documented fact that religious communities and institutes have become anemic and have even destroyed themselves, even if slowly, through giving in precisely to a progressive abandonment of poverty in the individual members and communities. Besides, in these very days, the laity, and even more so our boys, are saying the same thing, for they place their faith in our adherence to poverty. They are saying: « How can we believe in you, who are supposed to be men consecrated to God in poverty and to have renounced everything for Christ, if you do not live these Gospel values in a way that can be understood by men in an age in which the external has more value than ever? ».

In a conference on poverty, Father Häring examines the value of service and Gospel witnessing in relation to material goods, and he makes this revealing remark: « A Mercedes is more useful than a little Fiat, it is safer on the street, it takes us to our destination in less time, but it does no greater service to the Gospel. The little Fiat is less convenient, but it renders a higher service of witnessing. At the time of the economic revival in Germany, a learned bishop received a Mercedes as a present. To him it seemed a good thing because it was useful and cost him nothing. But when in an inquiry made amongst all the students of the high schools in the city the question was asked: « What in the Church pleases you and what does not? », Number One on the list of scandals was the bishop's Mercedes. Yes, it was a gift, it was useful, it gave excellent service... but on the list of scandals it held first place. When the bishop heard this, he at once sold the Mercedes and bought a Volkswagen such as even the ordinary workers had. A lot, of course, depends on circumstances. In America, where they are less sensitive, I have nevertheless often heard words of criticism about a bishop who owned two Cadillacs. Also heard criticised was a certain religious who in his ecclesiastical career travelled by Cadillac: he was not rendering the service of witnessing, the typical, characteristic service that we wish to give to the people. But this, as the decree *Perfectae Caritatis* says, depends also on circumstances ».

The examples we have given serve well to lay down criteria for the right use of so many things, from motor-cars to magnetophones,

record-collections, photographic equipment, cinè-cameras, stamp-collections, etc. In recent times we have heard more than once of young men leaving a congregation in which the members live a life of ease and worldly comfort. Modern youth cannot stand compromise and dilly-dallying, still less a practical abandonment of a professed ideal.

All of you, my dearest confreres, will appreciate the many reasons behind these remarks of mine and give them due weight in accepting them.

Poor Salesians for poor youth

Our following of the poor Christ, and those words of Jesus, « You did it to Me! » lead us on to a totally Salesian consideration. They give us a precise reminder of a duty inherited from our Father which has accorded us renewed recognition even to-day by the Church and the Vicar of Christ.

Don Bosco was the son of that marvellous mistress of poverty, Margaret; he was the disciple of Cafasso, also an exemplary master of poverty. Don Bosco, we can say, was poor not only by vocation, but also through his own conviction which arose from a wide and profound knowledge of the history of the ancient and more recent Church, and still more, from an acutely evangelical and supernatural sensitivity. Naturally, then, being so poor himself, Don Bosco wished his congregation to be poor and to dedicate itself to poor youth.

This explicit, precise and absolute intention of his accompanied him throughout his life, without any uncertainty, without relaxation. His own relevant statements in this regard are to be found, one might say, on every page of his Memoirs and in hundreds and hundreds of his conferences, goodnights, sermons and conversations. What a pity that in our Father's time there were none of to-day's technical means of reproduction. Then we too could hear those actual words of his and, more still, note the sad anxiety of our Father at the very fear that his creation, the Congregation, should in time destroy its paternal inheritance.

Don Bosco speaks

Let us re-read at least some of the serious and sad sayings of Don Bosco and take them as addressed to ourselves personally:

« Love Poverty », he wrote in his testamentary letter, « ... Woe to us if those on whom we depend for charity can say that we live a better-off life than they do » (*M.B. XVII*, 271).

« Our Congregation has a happy future prepared for it by Divine Providence, and its glory will endure as long as our rules are faithfully observed. When comforts and riches enter in among us, our Society has run its course » (*do.* 272).

With regard to youth — still in his testamentary letter — he has left written: « The world will accept us always with pleasure as long as our care is devoted to those children who are the poorest and most in danger in society. This is our true wealth which no one shall take from us » (*do.* 272).

In 1874, whilst Don Bosco was conversing familiarly with his sons at the Oratory, someone advanced the idea that in time to come the Salesians would be able to have colleges also for the nobility. « Definitely not » burst out Don Bosco. « Not as long as I live. As far as I am concerned, never! That could ruin us, as it has ruined other illustrious religious orders... To be rich and have access to the homes of the rich makes everyone's mouth water, but if we remain always devoted to poor children, we can be at peace — even if only because one part of the world will pity and tolerate us and another part praise us. No one will be jealous of us... » (*M.B. VII*, 647).

It is beyond discussion, therefore, that the poverty of the Congregation and its vocation for poor youth form the constant will of Don Bosco, who became anxious every time he thought of the future of the Congregation. We now have this inheritance in our hands, each one according to the place assigned to him by Providence in our Family, the responsibility of not betraying that fatherly will, particularly in this historical moment when the whole Church wants to free itself from every dross of power or riches and turns to the poor and humble, in whom she sees and finds again, as her Divine Founder did, the chosen portion of her inheritance.

A call to the Congregation

The recent continental meetings have strongly underlined the actuality and urgency of this obligation. Among the conclusions approved of at the reunion of the Salesian Provincials of Asia at Bangalore (20th-26th February, 1968) we read:

« Our united witness to poverty finds its most Salesian expression in our actual preference for poor youth. The Salesian apostolate is certainly very vast, complex and varied. Poor youth, however, occupy a position of privilege, a special place: Don Bosco felt himself charismatically inspired to work for them.

« Our fidelity to this portion of the Lord's flock especially chosen by Don Bosco hinges on our love for poverty (A.G.C., p. 82). We shall certainly live our poverty better and more manifestly witness to Christ who was poor if, in the various places in which we are established, all can attest that the first place in our works is given to youth who, in those regions, are considered to be poor and abandoned. Let our re-dimensioning keep in mind this vital witness of fidelity to Don Bosco » (A.S.C. 252, pp. 34-35).

And in the conclusions of the meeting at Caracas we read:

« We must not only let our work for the poor be known by means of suitable propaganda, but it is essential that we should go back courageously to our work for poor and abandoned youth; especially in those areas where this witness may have grown dim and the image of the Congregation grown distorted. This witness of ours, in our underdeveloped country, is one of urgency and obliges us to a definite and continual reappraisal of the road we are travelling » (A.S.C. 252, p. 77).

But the 19th General Chapter has already warned us: « Don Bosco and the Church send us by preference to the poor, the under-privileged, the ordinary people, especially so nowadays.. Our fidelity to this privileged part of our vocation will depend in part upon our sense of poverty. It will induce us to prefer *harder work on behalf of the poor* to easier work on behalf of the well-to-do » (A.G.C. XIX, pp. 81-82).

I invite provincials and their consultants, rectors and house councils, and all the confreres, to reflect well on these words just quoted.

In recent years how often invitations and warnings have been issued on this point, and I know that they have been accepted by many. In various provinces, in fact, there is a consoling agitation to render these calls operative. Youth centres are springing up here and there; in many big cities there are encouraging social enterprises and catechism classes in extremely poor and abandoned regions, with the collaboration of the laity.

But I think it is possible, without any meanness regarding personnel and financial help, to strengthen the already existing festive oratories, the charitable institutions and the clubs, so as to enable them to work more efficiently, even more vigorously, taking care of young apprentices and workers. There are also so many other enterprises in favour of poor and needy youth which we can take part in, even alongside those works which perforce are not exclusively occupied with the poor. In so doing we can popularize such works in a conspicuous way that is also intensely Salesian, and at the same time be sure that we have done the right thing.

De Lubac establishes such a reality in these clear statements: « When you choose an ideology, you can never be sure of not being mistaken, at least in part. When you submit to an ideology, you are never sure of having chosen the right party. But when you have chosen the poor, you are always sure — doubly sure — that you have made the right choice, for you have chosen as Jesus would, you have chosen Jesus Himself » (H. de Lubac, *Nuovi paradossi*).

I am aware of the difficulties of various kinds regarding personnel and finance; but it is our definite duty to face up to and overcome them, our duty to make sacrifices in order to materialize activities and works which lack the security of a life that runs on a well-determined track, that is in so many ways easy and comfortable. It is all this that gives to our mission a renewed and actual meaning that is conciliar, ecclesial and exquisitely Salesian. To our young confreres in particular it imparts a spirit of faith and enthusiasm in giving themselves. This giving of self is the most complete aspect of our poverty, for it does not stop at giving something personal to Christ found in the young and the poor, but it donates our whole being.

Our work in the mirror of poverty

Reviewing our worldwide works, one notices with joy that so many of them are set up and operate in exceedingly poor regions, caring for poor and needy boys and youths. The confreres who work there are truly admirable for their spirit of sacrifice in dedicating themselves to this apostolate. In not a few countries we are recognized as religious dedicated to social works in districts well-known for their sad poverty.

But it is also true that we have not a few works that are dedicated to other classes. What can we do about it? For very many obvious reasons one could certainly not think of abandoning such works without further ado, nor can anyone say that the Salesians there are less Salesian than the rest. No, they are there under obedience, trying to be good priests, catechists and apostles among those youths who often suffer from a spiritual and moral poverty that needs the tremendous help of a Christian and Salesian education. The poor in fact are not only those who are deprived of the goods of fortune and security of work, but also those who are without the essential goods of human and supernatural life.

But the trouble is this: there is a danger that these works, because they are basically more comfortable in various ways, may more easily get preferential treatment, being allowed to develop excessively, thus restricting the character of our specific work for poor people. One must therefore ask calmly: What proportion is there in the province between our activities on behalf of poor youth and other works? Are there alongside these latter other activities in favour of poor youth? How many confreres could be spared from such houses in order to work among the poor? How are the works for the poor maintained? What treatment do the oratory, the clubs and social works get regarding personnel, premises, financial help, etc?

The answers to these questions could indicate exactly what position the poor occupy as a focal point of interest in the province and in each house. We should make such an examination, because the danger of tending towards more 'convenient' works is not imaginary.

Through a complexity of causes there has come about perhaps in certain regions of the world an excessive development of works for youths of a higher social level, at the expense of the more popular works which should characterize us as Salesians. Such situations should be well noted in these times when, by mandate of the 19th General Chapter, we are reviewing the works of the Congregation. We must be on our guard against the very natural tendency to let ourselves be carried in our apostolic action on to a higher social plane than that which has been categorically assigned us by Don Bosco.

We should possess a sensitiveness to the signs of the times in order to make the necessary adaptations so that we may work in absolute fidelity to the essential idea of Don Bosco. Nor should we fear to accept or search for new forms, provided they can always serve efficaciously to further that idea.

I don't think it out of place here to point to one activity of the Congregation which corresponds to the constitutional ends of the Congregation, for it takes up the Church's appeal and serves magnificently to nourish in our provinces and communities a spirit of generosity, availability and renunciation strictly bound up with the spirit of poverty. I speak of the missionary apostolate.

This activity is not restricted only to the confreres who leave their own province to give themselves completely to the service of souls in missionary places. Especially to-day our communities should transform themselves into active and dynamic supply lines for the Missions. This was in fact, amongst other things, the wish expressed to me by the Volunteers for Latin America before their departure. Like every other missionary, they ought to consider themselves the representatives of their province and community in the Mission assigned to them. This, however, not so much in order to secure their help but so that their community of origin may share their divine adventure, being aware of and feeling their difficulties, their sacrifices, their apostolic conquests.

In the spirit of *Ad Gentes* how necessary it is therefore that the missionary spirit be re-enkindled among the confreres and among the boys. This should be encouraged not merely by superficial readings mistakenly based on forests and wild animals, but through serious

and systematic information. Let us study the grave and complex problems that the missionaries have to confront, participating like true brothers in their life of extreme poverty, daily renunciation and real fatigue.

A community that lives in such a missionary atmosphere will want to be efficaciously at the side of its missionary brothers, but at the same time it will feel the duty, even the joy, of renunciations and economies in its style of living, so as not to give offence in comparison with the life of sacrifice of its missionary brothers.

Through such an atmosphere of generosity vocations must inevitably blossom forth, especially missionary vocations, which — it is well to remember — cannot flourish in a climate of mediocrity and comfort.

Our Response

Having developed the first part of our argument by treating of the spiritual significance of poverty and its essential connection with Salesian life, it is time now come down to some practical applications.

Here we have as a guide the decree *Perfectae Caritatis* which, even in its briefness, touches on some apt points of greatest importance. It will be well, however, first to make an observation which can help us to understand well the true spirit of this Council document.

It is significant that in the whole text of the decree no reference is made to vows, but it speaks simply of the evangelical counsels. That is by no means accidental.

The problem of religious life is fundamentally that of our habitual voluntary reply to, and then our generous and joyous acceptance of, the call of Jesus *Si vis* ("If you would be perfect..."). Now, it is inconceivable that in his dealings with God a religious should try to give Him a mere minimum of lawful service, for he has committed himself to follow Him by a total donation of his own will.

One can understand then that it is not a mere question of vow or virtue, or of using each time an eye-drop tube in order to measure out to Jesus Christ the proofs of our loving imitation of Him. That would be to involve ourselves in a whole lot of incoherent contradictions.

Perfectae Caritatis does not waste time making subtle and often tight-rope distinctions between vow and virtue; it speaks always of the evangelical counsels, because it feels that these counsels have been embraced through love — and love does not draw fine distinctions or give the least possible to God: love is complete.

Internal and external poverty

That observation illuminates clearly the interesting and practical directives which we find in *Perfectae Caritatis*, and this is the first one:

« Religious poverty requires more than limiting the use of possessions to the consent of superiors; members of the community ought to be poor in both fact and spirit, and have their treasure in heaven » (P.C. 13).

Let us take note at once of those words: « Poor in both fact and spirit ». It is no use bluffing that it is enough to be poor in spirit, to be detached, to have internal poverty, and then we can have all we want, make use of everything, allow ourselves everything. Nothing is more contrary to the meaning and value of authentic religious poverty.

As A. Pronzato says: « There is indeed no spiritual disposition which may not translate itself into actual behaviour, especially concerning the goods of this world. And that comes really from our bodily and social nature » (*Io vi dico*, p. 137). More synthetically, Evelyn says: « There is no state of mind which can exist without expressing itself in a gesture of the body ». Let us recall, too, the Gospel words concerning the tree being known by its fruits.

Don Bosco, in his simple, clear style, used to repeat to his sons: « Don't forget that we are poor, and we should have this spirit of poverty not only in our hearts and in detachment from material things, but show it also externally before the world » (M.B. V, 675). « Our poverty must be factual not just nominal » (M.B. IX, 701).

The spirit of poverty — internal poverty, therefore — is necessary, but its presence must be recognizable by the real and sound poverty which is seen, as Don Bosco says, in action and which embroiders our

daily life. In it our neighbour, whether confrere or extern, can read each time our loving witness to the poor Christ.

In the book already quoted, G. Huyghe puts in evidence this distinction between internal and external poverty. He writes: « Poverty has various aspects: as many, in fact, as the circumstances in which the heart stands the risk of getting attached to what is not God and where love must complete its action of consuming. Its practice is concerned not merely with material goods (poverty in possessions) but also with our own interior sentiments (spiritual poverty). It is very important not to express poverty in simply material terms, otherwise there is the risk of reducing it to a mere financial question and nothing else.

« Equally it should not be limited to its supernatural expression, otherwise there is the risk of its being merely a poverty in intention without embodiment in definite detachment. Material poverty is just the sign of a more complete, spiritual poverty, but it is a visible and necessary sign. Through it, he who is truly poor can say: 'I have nothing, and I care nothing about the goods of this world.' But he must also be able to say in all truth: 'I am nothing and I am capable of nothing'. These three statements are the complementary forms of spiritual poverty » (*I religiosi oggi e domani*, p. 224).

Legalist equivocation

In the text of *Perfectae Caritatis* quoted above we find these further words: « Religious poverty requires more than limiting the use of possessions to the consent of superiors ». These words merit comment.

There are so many things which can easily bring about a mentality destructive of all poverty and of the very spirit itself of the beatitudes: the conditions of modern life, with such great possibilities of comfort and love of ease, so many technical means ever on the increase, our relatives and friends so quick and ready to offer money and gifts, etc.

Certainly we must know how to distinguish between what is of functional use for the effectiveness of our works of apostolate and what is not. But the slopes of equivocation are so smooth, it is so easy

to slip down towards all the comforts, towards indulging in a tone and style of worldly life, that are dangerous and by no means unreal. Perhaps in certain places this kind of thing is already established and one seeks to justify it with arguments that are certainly not tenable.

We must watch out, we must have the courage even to intervene at the right time, but we must still know how to distinguish between what does and ought to serve our work from that which has little or nothing to do with real service or work; what is demanded by true motives of study, health or office, from what is a pure and simple superfluous commodity, an instrument for an easier life. Unfortunately there are those with a legalist mentality who try to maintain the untenable in order to procure for themselves so many things which are not at all necessary or convenient for one who makes profession of poverty, and has recourse to the expedient of permission.

I have used the word 'expedient' because in certain cases it is a matter of sheer contrivance. One may wrongly think in fact that he is squaring himself with conscience by obtaining or, as often happens, wangling or even extorting dispensations and commodities that should not be at all necessary and which the superior cannot in conscience give. This kind of thing creates in the community an atmosphere either of unease or of imitation.

The slope, we have already said, is very slippery, the so-called needs and demands keep on increasing, the pressures put on the superior are intensified, thus leaving to him the full responsibility of deciding and placing him in an unenviable position: Should he give in to everything, he becomes an accomplice to laxity. Should he refuse so often? The superior who is aware of the danger has constantly to curb or forbid, but he realizes too that if he keeps on refusing he runs the risk of irritating the less fervent, perhaps pushing them out...

Maturity and discretion

What is the remedy for this deplorable situation?

So much is said nowadays about maturity and it is rightly remarked that a religious should be a mature person. Such maturity is attained

with the improvement of one's sense of discernment, which corrects and eliminates that legalist mentality, which is so often childish and the very negation of a sincerely religious way of thinking. It is not an easy task and, from the houses of formation, it should continue in the manifestations, conferences and dialogue.

Such maturity leads one to judge before all else in the light of the spirit to see if in reality there are sufficient motives for this particular expense or that particular exemption; whether, therefore, it is well to ask permission for such-and-such an expense, such an object, etc. The superior will grant it with generous understanding, but it is always understood that the demands be reasonable.

In order to get an exact sense of this 'reasonableness' I quote here the first rendering of a passage of *Perfectae Caritatis* which concerns us but which was later simplified in the actual text, leaving however the true spirit intact.

« Religious », it read, « keeping themselves aloof from every desire for temporal things, should ask from their own superiors only those things they truly need either for themselves or for their apostolate. Consequently let them curb expenses and reduce as much as possible all unnecessary gadgets, comforts, and superfluities » (Jeanne d'Arc, O.P., *Vatican II*, p. 419, nota).

From all that has been said we must deduce that the poverty we have professed is not and cannot be, either before God or man, a purely juridical-legal question, but that it is a matter of coherence and of a sound moral and ascetical conscience; better still, the inspiring motive of our poverty, as of our whole consecration, is a love which no legalism can ever substitute.

We cannot identify ourselves with the poor when, as we have already said, in our food, lodging, furnishings, journeys and holidays we allow ourselves requirements that not only the poor but even those who consider themselves anything but poor would never dream of; in that case our poverty, according to the expression of Guardini, « is only the pious make-up of a rich and prosperous life », because we try to reconcile the profession of a poor man with a life of comfort,

a life which in practice lacks for nothing. Such a way of life is not consonant with the spirit of poverty that the Council demands from religious of the Renewal, and it cannot offer to the people any valid and convincing proof to believe in our poverty.

Inconsistency

We have spoken of the legalist spirit with which one can bluff oneself in soothing conscience by the expedient of permission. Now we must hint at another even more serious attitude met with here and there: the attitude of one who, although having contracted clear obligations of poverty and living in a religious community from which he draws all the advantages, exempts himself arbitrarily from those obligations, procuring money in various ways, perhaps abundantly, and disposing of it at pleasure, not wishing to lack anything that will make life more convenient and comfortable and resorting to every means to obtain what he wants.

For a picture of such a religious (hypothetical?), surrounded by comforts and varied objects, which are often costly, it is enough to see all the trunks that accompany him when he changes house: in fine, looking at the whole tenor of his life one can easily see how he, who still calls himself a religious, interprets the poverty to which he has publicly consecrated himself. Such an attitude, sad to say, denotes what I would call an anaesthetized conscience, one that has lost all religious sensitiveness, one that lives a life in obvious and chronic contrast with the profession which he makes as a consecrated religious.

Such an inconsistent and contradictory life, even humanly speaking, is not dignified and it would be humiliating to a man of honour. It would be preferable, then, to face up frankly to the consequences of such a way of life: it is absolutely unjustifiable and it becomes a continual offence to the confreres, to the whole community, which has the right to demand that all its members respect that reasonable equality which is at the basis of religious and community life.

Don't let these words seem too severe: I know that they correspond to the common feeling of almost the whole Salesian body that wishes

to live — to-day even more than yesterday — that poverty which is the source of joy, of faith, of spiritual and apostolic vigour and of so much serene charity.

All this, however, whilst we recall superiors to their duty of preventing with fatherly courage the rise or permanence of such situations, should on the other hand remind all of us that so many abuses and disorders can be avoided, if the responsible superiors know how to provide for the needs and true requirements of the confreres with loving understanding and reasonable liberality: always keeping in mind the age, health, office and service of those concerned.

I say « with reasonable liberality ». The two words are complementary and should never be separated. What is wanted is that sense of liberality taught us by our Father. Sometimes one hears of violent and not unjustified reactions against those who act with mean niggardliness towards the true needs of confreres, whilst they themselves squander huge amounts on expenses that are mistaken, or arbitrary, or not at all necessary, etc. We have to say that at time certain disorders arise from the fact that the one in charge does not provide for things adequately or at the right time, and with that courtesy and tactfulness that renders less painful to the confrere the duty of asking and of depending on others.

But it is also true that liberality must be reasonable, i.e. consonant with our condition as religious and as Salesians. Basically it is always the one problem: the sense of discretion and balance in both confrere and superior, which enables us to give at every moment and circumstance, and in whatever country we live in, that testimony of poverty which forms an essential part of our vocation and which is an irreplaceable premise of our apostolate.

But with a sense of dutiful sincerity I must add further that it is not enough for the superior to be on the look-out, consenting or warning as the case may be. The primary and essential obligation of the superior is that he himself must in the first place give witness of his own poverty in daily life and in the exercise of his office. How paralysing and negative would be the government of a superior who

was not an example to his community in the practice of poverty, disposing of money as though it were his own personal property, running up expenses criticised by all, erecting buildings without previous technical consultation or without permission, granting commodities and comforts that are not conformable to our state. I am thinking, on the other hand, of the force of example of a superior who in his community is seen to be poor among poor brethren, a wise and faithful administrator. « There are some men », says Bergson, « who do not need to talk, it is enough that they exist: their very presence is an appeal ».

The Rector who arbitrarily disposes of the goods of the house, besides infringing poverty, causes other serious consequences. Allowing himself subjective dispensations or interpretations against the rule, he generates that « subjectivism » or relativism concerning the juridical norm, which is certainly not one of the least elements of the crisis of obedience in religious life. St. Ambrose used to say: « The head must know well that he is not dispensed from the laws. And he knows that when he transgresses them he authorises all to think that they have also been dispensed by the authority of his example ».

The health of the confreres

Taking up again the theme of discretion and balance in the use of temporal goods, I wish to make other applications to some cases concerned with Salesian life.

Among the goods we have put at the service of the Church and the Congregation, one of the most precious is certainly that of our health. Without it, in fact, a very great part of the mission to which we are vowed would be blocked. Not for nothing, then, is it said that after the grace of God health is the most precious gift. For this motive our Father, who was personally hard on himself, not allowing himself respite from work or activity, was full of tactful attention for the health of his sons.

At this moment my mind goes out with recognition and admiration towards those many magnificent confreres who, following the example

of the Father, have worn themselves out, or are still doing so, with serene generosity in a life of most varied apostolic activities which are often very hard and lowly but truly precious.

Health is preserved by orderly, calm work, with a regime based on hygiene, adequate rest and healthy food, in fine with all those attentions that serve to help us give the most efficient and lasting service. To take care of one's health, however, does not mean to make an obsession out of it, an ideal; for this in itself can become a real illness. I remember the words of a university professor to a student who fell behind in the examinations, alleging some disorder in his health. The old professor said: « Realize that here we all have some ailment or other, but we carry on working and don't stop. We have to go on working and live with our ailments ». Even in this as in all other situations, it is a question of sensible moderation and discretion.

In this regard the superiors can and must do a lot. In a certain sense the health of the confreres is in their hands. Knowing how to tell or to forestall so often means saving the health, even the life, of a confrere; seeing that the sick confrere is provided with what he needs in a spirit of fatherly affection and understanding; surrounding him with those little attentions in which Don Bosco gave us such admirable example; avoiding always any negligence or meanness which, especially in certain cases, can cause real shock. All this should form part of the exercise of authentic Salesian fatherliness, which is the very first and I would say the most efficacious cure for every ill and every suffering of our confreres.

The goods of the Congregation

Our Congregation, by reason of its mission in the Church, has to do also with material goods, movable and immovable, and the administration of money. With the guidance of *Perfectae Caritatis* it is necessary to say a word also on this subject.

A preliminary but fundamental statement is this: All the material goods of the Congregation, however one calls them, can, because of their purpose, truly be called and kept as sacred, and hence they belong

to no one in particular but to the religious community which is accountable to the superiors and to the Church.

These goods, then, are at the service, and only at the direct or indirect service, of our mission in the Church. Straight away, then, we must distinguish between what serves for our life, e.g. dwellings and relative furniture, and what instead serves our works (schools, oratory, institutes, colleges).

It should be said at once that, especially after the Council directives, the general dwellings and quarters allotted to the Salesians must be quite distinct from the rest. The purposes and advantages of such a distinction and separation are evident. In each case the quarters reserved to us must be in a style of simplicity, and I should say austerity, always within the bounds of propriety and practicality.

There should definitely be no sense of luxury, keeping well in mind that *Perfectae Caritatis* wishes us to avoid not only luxury but even the appearance of it (*P.C.* 13). If our houses, especially in the part destined for the Salesians, were indeed to give such an impression, then they would be a counter-witness to poverty with very many negative consequences.

This norm must be kept in mind everywhere, in well-to-do countries as well as poor ones. We must take into account also the particular sensitivity and the social and economic situation of the environment in which we live. What can we say, then, about certain grandiose, powerful-looking constructions surrounded by sheer poverty, where the dwellings are little more than huts!

And what about our works properly so called? Certainly there are particular demands proper to the activities themselves, there are the requirements of the authorities which have to be respected. Such works must correspond with their functions — more, they must be outstanding for their propriety, order, cleanliness, maintenance, functionality, etc. I say again that even grandiose works are certainly not praiseworthy if they demonstrate indifference and neglect.

All this, however, does not necessarily condone indiscriminate grandeur, superfluity and, worse still, luxury, which must certainly

be avoided. The same authorities appreciate an attitude that provides the pupils with all that is needed for a modern education and instruction, without indulging in expenses which smack of the unnecessary and which make them think we have so many funds we are rich and can squander money.

It is opportune to support these words of mine with the thought of the Prefect of the Congregation of Religious, Cardinal Antoniutti: « Let all be avoided that can generate in the public a false judgment on the riches of the Church; hence let your works be maintained in that simplicity of style, in that moderation of lines and in that austerity of furnishings that one associates with persons who have taken the vow of poverty. Some members of a community expressed to me recently the grief they felt on seeing certain sections of their generalate supplied with carpets, expensive furniture and artistic pictures such as are to be found in a sumptuous worldly residence... ». (Card. Antoniutti: *La vita religiosa nel Post-Concilio*, p. 40).

I wish to say a word also about churches and their decoration. One hears at times here and there that alongside very poor dwellings magnificent churches are constructed, in which huge sums are lavished on marbles, mosaics, precious statues and complicated organs. Certainly it is a grace for the surrounding population when a church that is beautiful, functional and devotional is erected. But here we are talking of something else.

Are we really using well the fruits of people's charity when, for example, we construct an immense church for a most unlikely huge population? It is certainly not in the authentic spirit of the Council and definitely not an intelligent way of seeking the glory of God and the good of souls, when we lavish large amounts on decorative work in a region of extreme poverty. Surely these could be more usefully employed in constructing nearby an oratory for boys or girls, or a social work for poor people who live in the neighbourhood of the church. So many errors, even serious ones, could be avoided, if one had the good sense and humility to consult and to study well before undertaking certain enterprises.

« The common law of labour »

But let us pass on to another point which interests us more closely.

In the brief Council text on poverty we read these words: « In discharging his duty, each religious should regard himself as subject to the common law of labour... making necessary provision for their livelihood and undertakings » (*P.C.* 13).

Not much effort is needed to find in this warning a topic particularly dear to Don Bosco and so close to our spirit.

The Council, then, wishes that we religious, as truly poor people, obey the law of labour (« In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread » - *Gen.* 3,19) in order to support the community and its works. We need to give this testimony to the world of to-day which is so sensitive to this value.

This Council affirmation implies fundamental attitudes concerning the whole of our religious life, attitudes which become clearer through various explanations in the text.

Work then, manual or intellectual, is the witness of our poverty. The world and the Church will recognize us as poor, truly poor, when they see us working. In the 13th century the most splendid testimony of poverty was in begging. In this 20th century of ours the spiritual value of those who are subjected to living on alms is no longer understood. The acceptable witness to-day is that of serious and technically valid work, whether it be manual or intellectual.

Those who are rich live on an income or by the work of others; he is rich who has no need to exert himself in order to live, on the contrary because of the means at his disposal he always has a margin of security which allows him a comfortable life without worries. The poor man, on the other hand, is not the one who dresses in rags so much or who eats his soup from a wooden bowl at the doorstep of a house which is not his own, but rather the one who has to earn his own bread day after day by the sweat of his brow.

Work, glorious livery of the Salesian

All this is for us Salesians a reason for comfort and satisfaction. Work is indeed a great and indisputable heritage left to us by our Father, who gave us, moreover, the example of his whole life.

Let us recall the words of Pius XI which sum up so well this aspect of the fatherly figure of our Founder: « Don Bosco, marvellous worker, marvellous organizer and educator for work »; « A life (that of Don Bosco) which was indeed a real and great martyrdom: a life of colossal work that gave the impression of being a superweight » (*M.B.* XX. 250): « A life so laborious, so recollected, so active and prayerful that proved the great principle of Christian life: *qui laborat orat* (He who works, prays) » (*M.B.* XIX, 83):

And the teachings of the Father came as corollaries of his admirable example. He never tired of recommending work to his sons as the distinctive livery of the Salesian family. Even in our Father's dreams how often this *leit motif* occurs in various forms: « Work, work... idleness is one of the dangers of the Congregation: work and temperance will make it flourish ». And again, on his deathbed, to Mgr. Cagliero: « I recommend you to tell all the Salesians to work with ardour and zeal: work, work! » (*M.B.* XVIII, 477).

The words of the Council, then, give renewed value to the direction pointed out to us by our Father. Let us work, therefore, seriously and with generosity, but always in obedience and a fraternal community of interests.

Sad to say, however, alongside the one who gives without limit, we can find the one who does far less work than he is objectively capable of. Such conduct is certainly not that of a poor man who must earn what is necessary for life by his daily work; it is not the conduct of a brother who feels the duty of adding his contribution of fatigue to that of his brethren. Such cases make us recall the words which Pius XI repeated as uttered by Don Bosco: « Whoever does not know how to work is not a Salesian » (*M.B.* XIX, 157).

There is, of course, also the one who works too much, but in activities of his own making, perhaps contrary to the will of the

superiors, the needs of the community and the apostolate for which he is responsible. This is not the work that the Council and Don Bosco himself demand of us. In order to be truly fruitful for ourselves and for souls our work must be part of the community obedience, a constant and lively expression of our service to the Congregation and our love for the brethren: in this way, whatever be the work that occupies us, it will always bear the chrism of obedience.

Use of talents

We must say, however that the law of labour, by which we must live, implies also a better utilisation of the talents given us by God and a better use of time itself. Talents and time ought to be for us, in fact, dedicated to the mission to which we are vowed.

To use them less well, to waste them, for example to take time away from study or work or even from necessary repose in order to indulge in futile things, or worse still, worldly things, such as spending long hours looking at TV (worse still, if the program is anything but useful or proper): all this is to defraud souls and the community.

And precisely because our talents are at the service of our apostolate, how important it is that they be well utilized also by the responsible superiors, whether in the time of preparation or formation or in that of actual employment. It happens at times in fact that after long years of study, after so much cost and sacrifice spent in specific preparation for some specialisation, the confrere is then employed in activities which do not require such fatiguing and costly preparation.

In relation to the employment of time also, attention should perhaps be drawn to the activities of feastdays or at least to the period of school holidays. The fact that there is a holiday from school cannot of course allow Salesians concessions that are inconsistent with their condition as religious. Feastdays and holidays that are not well employed can expose us to many dangers, and this applies especially to

young vocations. On the other hand, what fine apostolic enterprises can be carried out precisely through the very possibilities offered by the holidays!

Collective poverty

There is still more in the Council warning that concerns us closely regarding the law of labour.

Work, says *Perfectae Caritatis*, ought to help sustain the community and its activities as far as possible. Let us say straight off that this does not mean that every confrere should directly earn his own living (that would be the negation of common life) or that all should necessarily be committed to some financially remunerative work. Those who exercise certain offices or definite functions, or those who are in particular conditions because of studies, health, age, etc., certainly cannot perform any wage-earning work. Nor can anyone think that this is unproductive work without any value — it has indeed great value, for the religious community and for our apostolic and spiritual mission. A community, after all, is not a factory or a commercial business concern, and its activities cannot and must not be valued by purely economic standards.

However, having said that, we must nevertheless add that, precisely because of the law of labour as a witness of poverty, the Council does not merely recommend but wishes and demands that religious « avoid every appearance of luxury, of excessive wealth, and accumulation of possessions » (*P.C.* 13). As you can see, from individual poverty we pass on to that collective poverty that is not less important.

Earlier *Perfectae Caritatis* had already said that « religious should brush aside all undue concern and entrust themselves to the providence of the heavenly Father » (*do.*). And even more clearly: « Depending on the circumstances of their location, communities as such should aim at giving a kind of corporate witness to their own poverty » (*do.*). With these directives the Council confronts us with new perspectives.

In the past, as history confirms, the abbeys and religious orders were great landed-proprietors. While making allowance for the social

situations which determined such facts, we must acknowledge that this was not always good for the faith or for the profit of souls. Now the Council, whilst not suppressing the right of religious institutes to acquire and possess, frames this right in an evangelical spirit which aims at saving them from collective riches and all the dangers that derive from such. The Church, basing itself on long and sad experience, prescribes that religious institutes must not allow wealth to increase in such a way that it becomes a deadly weight. The temptation here is strong and subtle.

Also on this point we must say a fervent Thank-you to Don Bosco, who with characteristic clear-sightedness has been so explicit and so firm. Let us listen to some of his words of direction:

« Avoid the construction or acquisition of buildings which are not strictly necessary for our use. Let there be no re-selling of fields or plots or dwelling-places just for pecuniary gain » (*M.B.* XVII, 526-527). « Do not save money, not even under the specious pretext of getting income for the Society » (*M.B.* XVIII, 1098). « Even what has only the shadow of commerce about it has always been fatal to religious orders » (*M.B.* XVIII, 269).

More solemnly still in his testamentary letter itself in 1884 Don Bosco expressed his will precisely: « Take this as an unvariable principle: Do not save any property of fixed goods, with the exception of the houses and those surroundings that are necessary for the health of the confreres or the wellbeing of the boys. The saving of interest-bearing goods is an insult to Providence which in a marvellous and even prodigious way constantly comes to our help » (*M.B.* XVII, 257-258).

In the Regulations we find condensed in a few lines this fundamental directive which he gave to the Congregation: « As a general rule the Society shall not hold any immovable goods except its houses and their dependencies, and the land necessary for agricultural schools » (*art.* 27). It is well now to recall this point to all, because here and there one notices a tendency to depart from it, seized by the preoccupation of ensuring economic security for certain works.

It is right, then, that I say here and now clearly that the Congregation, looking to its true and superior interests, cannot and must not depart from the wise and precious directives left to it by our Father, directives which have been fully ratified by past experience and are to-day confirmed precisely by the Council itself.

Poverty must not be transformed into economic preoccupations and activities. If our life were thus obsessed it would show « a natural prudences that gives rise to worries about earthly goods; Poverty is instead a disposition of the soul that detaches itself from such goods » (*Regamey*).

This does not mean to say that one should be careless about administration — not at all, for that would be to rob the poor whom we are supposed to serve. It means simply that there must not be an over-prudence and a too minute human calculation in the practice of poverty. It is with this evangelical abandonment to God (as Don Bosco demonstrated clearly) — that excludes amongst other things a revenue department, and certain odious attitudes regarding fees and reductions or indeed any meanness about making necessary expenses for really apostolic works such as the oratory — that we merit the help of Providence on the one hand and at the same time avoid a counter-testimony which to-day especially is so very much felt within the Church itself.

Fellowship with the poor

But the collective poverty to which we are invited by the Council has other no less interesting aspects.

We read in *Perfectae Caritatis*: « Depending on the circumstances of their location, communities as such should aim at giving a kind of corporate witness to their own poverty. Let them willingly contribute something from their own resources to the other needs of the Church, and to the support of the poor, whom religious should love with the tenderness of Christ (cf. *Mt.* 19, 21; 25, 34-46; *Jas.* 2, 15, 16; *Jn.* 3, 17). Provinces and houses of a religious community should share

their resources with one another, those which are better supplied assisting those which suffer need ». (P.C. 13).

As you can see, the Council invites us to charity, that charity which is the soul of poverty and not mere almsgiving; it invites us to get out from the closed walls of our egoism.

This invitation in favour of our needy brethren does not concern those who are well-off; it concerns the religious community that is poor, but it supposes that the sense of Christian charity is alive. That we must translate into action.

There is no need to descend to particulars; every community will know how to find the most suitable ways to correspond with this precise and precious mandate of the Council. I used the word «precious » because the community that opens itself to the needs of its brethren and of that even greater ecclesial community will receive the true riches that are always gained by one who, with the charity of Christ, goes to the aid of his needy brother even if it means sacrifice.

I would like now to quote something which is not just merely a piece of literature.

In the Christian novel « *I Promessi Sposi* » (The Betrothed) there is, among so many other fine things, a lively picture of the poverty of a true Christian in whom charity flourishes. The village tailor, a fine man, one of the best-natured men you could find, supports his little family by his modest work, yet he is happy to give hospitality in his home to Lucy after the liberation. She is surrounded with a thousand attentions. But that is not all. There are festivities in the village on account of the visit of Frederick Cardinal Borromeo. The little family is seated at the humble but cheerful table with Lucy. Then the tailor has a sudden inspiration. « Wait a moment », he says; then he puts together on a plate some of the food from the table, adds some bread, wraps the plate up in a cloth and hands it to his eldest child, sayng: « Take this. » In her other hand he places a little flask of wine and adds: « Go along to the widow Maria; leave her these things and tell her it is to help her a bit to be happy with her children. But be polite, notice, and not as if you are giving alms. Don't tell anyone on the

way, and don't break anything » (Manzoni, *I promessi sposi*, c. XXIV).

Surely every word, every gesture and every nuance in that admirable episode is a lesson on how the poverty of a truly Christian soul translates itself, not into almsgiving, but into a blossoming charity?

Fellowship between the houses

The invitation that the decree makes for a spirit of solidarity between houses « which are better supplied "and" those which suffer need » gives much food for thought. Here, for example, are the reactions of a certain commentator:

« How is it that it became necessary for a Council to recall us to such a thought? After all, it deals with a gesture of equal distribution that is so common and so spontaneous in Christian families — and not only in families, and not only among Christians — something done simply out of fellowship, in a fraternal way, among friends, among neighbours, and above all among the poor, simply to help the one who lacks something, or in some way or other to relieve friends who are in difficulties...

« But how often those who make profession of continually tending towards the fulness of love and who ought to give the world the very image of a community of brothers, have allowed themselves to become imprisoned by juridical rules or harnessed by the laws of book-keeping. So often this very simple helping out does not even occur to them or it seems impossible because of heaven-knows-what false pretexts. Have they not read the warning of St. John (cited also by the Council): « If anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? » (1 Jn. 3,15). One can regret only that this prescription figures here almost like an afterthought (which in fact it *was*) » (Jeanne d'Arc, O.P. *Vatican II*, p. 438).

Unfortunately the lament of the above-mentioned commentator is a reality which we must confess is present even in our own houses.

Invitation to real fellowship

Apart from some praiseworthy examples I would say that deep down in our own communities there is a prevalent insensibility about true fellowship. The causes are manifold and were hitherto explainable. Let me give one by no means uncommon example.

In the very same province an economically privileged house builds, embellishes, spends, whilst another, though also apostolically sound, languishes and declines. Surely, then, it is time to wake up and translate into action the precise and precious warning made to us by the Council.

We must make the principle of fellowship really operative, but in order to do so we must not first call on it for our own advantage but rather preoccupy ourselves in doing something for our brethren who are more in need than ourselves. Let us say likewise how necessary it is to break down that wall of a certain kind of individualism and egoism that makes a Salesian live within the closed circle of his own petty interests without taking part in the life of the community. Not less must we widen the sympathetic collaboration between the houses in a province, between provinces themselves, and between these and general headquarters.

If we look around we notice in the world and in the Church to-day that there is a positive movement to initiate this sense of solidarity and develop it efficiently between the fortunate and the less fortunate. Can we in the Congregation therefore restrict ourselves to an egoistic isolation which obviously ends by being harmful to all?

This solid attitude of charity will, as experience proves, be advantageous not only to the giver; and as for the rest, surely everyone knows that the exercise of effective charity is the fruit of great spiritual richness for both individuals and communities.

I must say with great joy that at the meeting of provincials of Latin America the urgent need for the materialization of this definite order of the Council was strongly felt and very sound conclusions were drawn up. Here they are:

« a) That provincials should endeavour to do away with contrasting differences between houses of the same province.

« b) That each provincial should insist upon houses with larger incomes supporting some social work...

« c) That the feasibility of lending financial help either in a personal specialised way or by scholarships, should be gone into, with candour and charity, at provincial conference level, to assist poorer provinces of the same group or even the more needy provinces of the continent.

« d) That, in imitation of the example of the early Church, every province, in spite of its own straitened circumstances and poverty, should help the Rector Major and the Superior Council to find a solution of their financial problems »: (A.S.C. 252, p. 78).

Such delicacy is consoling but, I repeat, we must make it effective and then it will be a great blessing for our whole family. As you see, we are not treating of a solidarity expressed purely in economic terms, but of something more substantial, noble, truly edifying and enriching. Surely, in every way, the sending of volunteers to Latin America, for example, is an efficacious way of furthering this desired fellowship.

I have pleasure now in telling you (as you will see in another part of these Acts) that the Superior Council has studied in general outline a plan for actuating these principles of fellowship in the Congregation. At the provincial conferences the Regional Superiors will study with the provincials the practical ways of carrying all this out at various levels.

I have full confidence that the provinces, houses and confreres will give their strongly desired contribution of ideas, initiatives and collaboration and will co-operate not only willingly but enthusiastically with this appeal, for many have been awaiting it with lively desire and it will serve to create a permanent *osmosis* of lively charity in the Congregation.

Concerning money

Still on the idea of collective poverty, at this point I think it opportune to recall, in the light of *Perfectae Caritatis*, as well as our

own constitutions and strong traditions, some essential ideas concerning money, its use, etc.

Even money, like every other benefit that Providence send us, ought to be an instrument of service for our mission. I know well that it is easy to agree with this principle but less so to bring it down to practice. Due to so many causes, it is no imaginary danger that money can, in fact, become in different ways a matter of primary interest. The deplorable consequences of such an attitude are obvious to all. In such cases justice itself suffers and scandal is taken even by the laity. Hence our great responsibility and especially of those who, at all levels in the Congregation, have administrative positions or handle money.

Cardinal Antoniutti, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Religious and Secular Institutes, who, because of his office, knows the religious life well, says something worth considering about administration: « Let the administration of the community be entrusted to competent persons who... will know how to avoid, on the one hand, the hazardous risks of forbidden speculations and, on the other, any deplorable negligence in the methods required to render fruitful what is possessed for the common good ».

And then he proceeds to list the requirements and gifts necessary in persons in charge of administration in religious institutes:

« Persons in charge of the administration of religious institutes ought to be prudent, orderly, loyal, conscientious and diligent in giving regular accounts; whose only care for money is in accord with the directions of their own superiors and for the execution not of arbitrary works but of those that come within the scope of the institutes themselves ».

Each adjective and phrase corresponds to worries arising from not infrequent sad experiences, to which not even our family is a stranger. Hence it seems to me most useful to quote further words of Cardinal Antoniutti which can serve as a good examination of conscience:

« Unfortunately it has to be acknowledged that the administration

of certain religious institutes is confided to persons who lack specific preparation for book-keeping, for compiling balance sheets of estimates and expenditure, legacies and income. Documents are not always well kept; there is a carelessness about legacies, sometimes about the dispositions of a will and about pious bequests, whilst the money coming in from dowries and from benefices is not always wisely used. These deficiencies are then sometimes aggravated by ignorance of canonical and civil norms, thus compromising ordinary and extraordinary administration. Recourse has then to be had to some conscientious and competent technical expert. But above all it is necessary that some members of the institute be trained in order to obtain the required diplomas and ensure competency as well as qualifications for a sound administration.

« Religious poverty does not exclude property, but it does exclude profiteering, and exclusive preoccupation with material goods, megalomania in enterprises, to say nothing of irresponsibility in administration.

« The bad administration of some religious institutes is one of the gravest scandals because it generates in the public a severe judgment concerning the evaluation of moral standards.

« Whoever comes into contact with religious, even in material affairs, ought to notice the supernatural spirit that animates them and that excludes every act in contrast with the life of perfection they profess » (*op.cit.* pp. 39-40).

Orderly and responsible administration

I would like to add to this authoritative quotation some positive remarks of my own.

Clear, exact and daily book-keeping entries, sincere and complete administrative accounts presented in good time to the superiors — all these things are not just a formal, unnecessary practice of bureaucracy; they are not merely an elementary professional duty, but primarily they are necessary and indispensable instruments and helps for a sound and serious administration: they can only be undervalued by one who

has no idea of what it means to administer well the goods of others.

Even the auditing and inspections made on the occasion of visitations, far from being signs of distrust, should, on consideration, serve to help and console the one who has the administrative duty, especially when, as often happens, he has the office without having had much specific knowledge or experience.

There is also another point to which I wish to recall attention: I refer to extraordinary expenses, constructions, purchasing or selling of real estate, new works, etc.

Our constitutions and regulations, in line with Canon Law, i.e. with prudence, justice and experience, contain relevant norms which have even recently been clearly recalled. The observance of these directives, amongst other things, will prevent very sad surprises, abuses and serious disorders that provoke confusion and distrust in the confreres when they see at times that those in charge act in practical contempt for those norms that regulate the ordinary life of the Congregation.

On this matter, whilst we urge all to conform to the directives for the various cases that concern the respective competence of house councils and provincial councils, I want to say that the set-up of these councils is not and should not be merely formal: they must be clearly informed in good time, they must be interested in the problems, and their objectively stated opinions cannot be ignored or underestimated and they should be recorded in the minutes.

It cannot be tolerated, then, that responsible superiors, e.g. the Superior Council, come along and find themselves faced with serious decisions already made, that are debatable or downright mistakes or damaging to the Congregation, with engagements for new works already accepted and binding.

Such a way of acting, as we have already hinted, risks a doubly serious damage to the Congregation: often in fact it compromises its own interests, provoking even extremely prejudicial situations which could have been avoided, and at the same time it gives the example of arbitrary abuses of power which set a very sad example to the confreres. But I think I need not insist further on this point. For the rest, you

will surely agree with me on the necessity of this warning which arises not from distrust nor from excessive prudence, no, but, amongst other things, from a wide experience and has as its sole preoccupation the interests of the Congregation in the widest sense of the word.

In the spirit of the Council, which wants religious to be co-responsible and co-interested in the community, I believe it opportune finally to invite the superiors of houses to inform the confreres adequately even about the financial problems and situation. Such information will, moreover, interest the confreres in the life and activities of the house in which they work and be a means of union and true formation for the members of the community.

Our social duties

Allow me one more word concerning our duties of social justice and as citizens.

We all know and we often explain the great social documents of the Church. That is good. These documents must be translated by us into working reality above all in our own sphere. It would be a paradox to speak so much about social justice, about *Populorum Progressio*, if the facts do not correspond with what we say, and arouse cynical and distrustful reactions that reflect badly on the Congregation and the Church itself.

In practice, all those who work for us should always have the correct financial and social treatment required by law and by the very nature of their services. One cannot claim that these good people give up, as we do by our profession, their own rights, especially when they have a family to support and so many problems to face.

Not only this, but such relationships should always be arranged and guided by a deeply Christian, priestly and Salesian feeling: even when, because of the nature of our works, we become in a way employers, we must not forget their special conditions, remembering that in their eyes we are always religious, priests, fathers.

« What can one think », asks a writer, « of the little dishonesties 'for the glory of God' or 'for the good of the Congregation', the

false declarations or the downright refusal to register for social insurance persons who give us service? Recently a woman employed by a community, and not registered for insurance, dared ask for a raise in wages, only to hear this reply: « But surely you can manage without for the love of God! » (G. Huyghe, *Religiosi oggi e domani*, p. 228).

I have already hinted at our duties as citizens and we need not say much on this. In every country where we work we are integrated into a big social community, we enjoy its advantages and services. It is obvious that we should give our contribution towards the common good by a loyal observance of the laws, whether financial, fiscal or pertaining to customs-duties. It is needless to point out what would be the bad impressions resulting from diverse conduct. The good Christian — and the religious — is a Christian *par excellence* and therefore an exemplary citizen: « Give to Caesar... »

Blessed are the poor

My very dear confreres, I have detained you at fair length, but I feel that you yourselves are convinced that the subject merited it. I like to think, then, that the treatment of it, however modest, has shown how extensive are the reflections on poverty and how profoundly they influence our whole life. We can well understand the words of St. Francis of Assisi who, I like to recall, « in a time of triumphalism, at a time when there was a most splendid court at papal Rome, made a non-violent protest but one full of witness to the love of Christ and the Church, and because of it embraced poverty ». Well then did the evangelical « protestor » of love, St. Francis, say to his religious: « As long as poverty holds out, the shanty will stand; but if poverty totters, woe to the shanty! ».

This same thought was very much in Don Bosco's heart: « Comfort will be the end of the Congregation »; « The world will respect us if we are poor and chaste ». This clear convergence of ideas and evaluations on the part of these great servants of the Church, separated by centuries at eventful periods in its history, is for us a warning, an invitation and a comfort brought home to us once again in these days

by the lofty and thoughtful words of the Pope. Our poverty, he says, « is a certificate of evangelical faithfulness: it is the condition, sometimes the indispensable condition, that gives credit to our mission, it is the at times supernatural exercise of that liberty of spirit, which, compared with the chains of wealth, gives strength to the mission of the Apostle » (Discourse of Paul VI at II Latin-American Conference).

What are the conclusions of this long conversation?

Since in these times of confusion and deviation poverty is in fact the true wealth of our Congregation, and in the light of the considerations presented to you in this letter of mine, which should be re-read, with opportune comments and applications, I invite all to make what in certain religious orders is called a *scrutinium paupertatis*, an examen on poverty. To this end, to my letter I adjoin a practical examen of conscience for the provincial councils and the single communities. I suggest to the confreres that they make this examen on the formulary published after the General Chapter: it will be useful on the occasion of the monthly retreat.

Spiritually prepared, it will re-unite us, in the councils and communities, in an efficacious revision of life on poverty on the lines of this examen. Finally let even courageous but positive resolutions be taken by provincials and rectors in the first place.

I shall be glad to know the outcome of this great scrutiny which aims, you will see, at giving to our beloved Congregation that impetus and optimism of which poverty is the integral and actual source and premise.

May the Lord Jesus make each of us, who wish to follow Him generously in His invitation to a life of poverty, feel and relish all the joys of His luminous words: « Blessed are the poor in spirit ».

With my affectionate greetings you have also the assurance of my daily remembrance at the altar. Kindly pray for me also and be sure of my cordial thanks.

Affectionately,

Father Aloysius Ricceri
Rector Major

« SCRUTINIUM PAUPERTATIS »

Examen of conscience on the practice of Poverty

On a provincial level

Is the provincial council regularly and periodically concerned with the progress of the province under the aspect of faithfulness to poverty?

Does the province (or other equivalent body) possess immovable goods beyond those required for the development of our work, and to such an extent that, in a national and regional context, it places us in the category of those who are « rich » or « people of means » or « landed owners »?

Is there actually — or at least under study — a definite and positive programme by which this situation may be done away with as soon as possible, for to-day it is absolutely indefensible and not allowed by our constitutions?

From an objective examination of the works of the province considered as a whole, can one see a clear preference for work for the youth of the poor and needy classes?

Do we have the courage to eliminate quite definitely, even if necessarily gradually, any possible deviations in this area?

In approving building plans and projected works, do we keep in view the duty of witnessing to that collective poverty of which the Council speaks expressly?

In the line of interest and of opportunities for development is first place given perhaps to the so-called well-off houses, leaving the others behind and thus creating or aggravating an unfair inequality of existence and of life and availability between houses of the same province?

Can the administration of the goods of the province serve as an example to the administration of the individual houses in the matter of order, up-to-dateness and careful book-keeping? by its sincere respect for the laws of the state, whether fiscal or social? by its fidelity

to the wishes of benefactors, to the various responsibilities and conditions arising from legacies and gifts? Are the balance-sheets of estimates and expenditure seriously prepared and then diligently examined by the provincial council? Is the annual Rendiconto for the Superior Council drawn up with exactness and sincerity and sent in good time?

Has not perhaps a deficient, disorderly administration made the Congregation lose huge sums?

What technical preparation is given to those charged with the administration of the houses (prefects, rectors)? The lack of such formation is often the causes of serious disorders and loss in our houses.

With due regard to the necessary functioning and efficiency required by their very nature and daily needs, are the provincial offices a clear sign to the province and to externs of an authentically Salesian poverty?

In the life and work of the provincial and his immediate collaborators is there anything that can serve as a pretext for introducing or retaining as authorized certain abuses in the matter of poverty on the part of confreres who notice and judge such things as their food, clothing, furniture, journeys, instruments of social communication, means of transport, motors, air-travel?

In particular is the use of motor vehicles always justified by the real needs of our work (for it can never be for just personal needs), or is there excess in the number and use of even luxurious vehicles, to the scandal of our confreres and externs?

Is there in the province a striking difference between « well-off » and « poor » houses, between those that have an abundance and those which lack what is necessary?

Does the spirit of solidarity wished by the Council (*P.C.* 13) really exist in the houses and among the confreres, viz. that sharing of goods which induces mutual help in time of need? What is being done to make this efficient and practical, to see that this collaboration and fellowship is carried out?

How do we use the talents given by God to the confreres, with regard to possible preparation and specialization? Are we really con-

vinced that to waste them is in a certain sense to fail against poverty, wasting the precious capital of intelligence, work, experience and the money spent on studies?

Are the holidays of the confreres in harmony with authentic poverty, as a necessary time of rest, or are they a manifestation of a worldly style of life (too long, not useful, unduly expensive, too far abroad)? Even regarding excursions we should ask if they are justified by the expense, duration, place, etc.

Are expenses, whether personal or community, made with a view to poverty, i.e. are they well-justified, or do they proceed from a light or misunderstood value of money?

On a local level

Community life requires that there should be an identical practice of poverty in all the members of the house, without distinction of any kind, and keeping in mind the duty of all to show externally and joyfully their condition as the poor of Christ. This, however, will not come about unless the house council fixes some annual meeting for a deep and serene revision of all that regards poverty in the house.

There are two special occasions in the year which more than ever compel the community to live poverty: Lent, which is accepted in a spirit of penance, and Advent, considered as awaiting for Christ, who, « though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that by His poverty you might become rich » (2 Cor. 8, 9).

Can one say that our community really gives a living kind of corporate witness of poverty, e.g.

- in simple and poor dwellings...
- in its moderate and austere way of life...
- in its renunciation of superfluous gadgets...
- in its moderate and reasonable use of entertainment...
- in the useful employment of summer holidays...?

Do we spend money like poor people or must we often lament unnecessary, unjustifiable, superfluous expenses?

Is the house council, and proportionately all the confreres, periodically informed about general expenses and in particular about responsibility concerning the demands of poverty?

Are the confreres informed about the economical state of the house, its expenses, charities?

If the house is mainly occupied with boys belonging to the better-off classes or at any rate able to pay suitable fees, are the superiors in charge anxious to create in a proportionate measure opportunities for free places, reduced fees, study burses, in favour of needy and deserving boys, or to initiate other social enterprises suitable to the local situation?

There enters into this picture of charity also, by reason of justice and the very life of the Congregation, the matter also of the quota to the provincial funds for the houses of formation and the general needs of the province: how is this obligation satisfied?

When the working sections of a houses are different, is there perhaps an evident and possibly offensive inequality between the confreres or their quarters, the equipment or the availability of one or other section in relation to their financial productivity? (One thinks, e.g. of the conditions in which certain oratories have to exist alongside stately and well-equipped institutes.)

Can the confreres see clearly that those who have administrative responsibility do not consider themselves as bosses but only as administrators responsible towards the whole community?

Is there in the community a real and reasonable equality in the way of life of the confreres (clothing, food, etc.)?

(Re: book-keeping, the offices, etc., cfr what is said on a provincial level).

Are the parts of the houses destined for the religious community an indication of our poverty and of real detachment from superfluous good?

Is the community helped to be interested in the great and anguishing problems of hunger, malnutrition, unemployment, illness and calamities that occur locally, regionally or on a world-scale? Does

it study practical ways of converting its interest into working fellowship and Christian participation, with community sacrifices and personal renunciations, by an austere style of life which allows it to give a positive and concrete form to our fellowship?

Regarding the usufruct of economic advantages conceded by local legislation, do we perhaps allow ourselves compromises that are not permitted by justice and sincerity?

Is the treatment of externs — teachers, assistants, servants, etc. — according to state laws, and integrated, if necessary, by the fundamental standards of Christian and social justice taught by the Church?

There is a mark that distinguishes the poor and was characteristic of our Founder: WORK. Is this mark outstanding in our community, in the confreres as a whole and in the individual members?

Are our holidays and free time in general used in harmony with the poverty we profess or have they become a manifestation of wordliness?

Can the appearance of the house be said to be really poor and simple, even though decorous and functional?

Is there especially a sense of poverty in its furnishings for daily use or are these things changed too often and is too expensive furniture bought?

II. INSTRUCTIONS AND NORMS

The monthly and quarterly retreats

For the sake of deepening the religious, personal and community life of the confreres, the 19th General Chapter dedicated particular attention to the monthly, quarterly and annual retreats, studying some practical way to give them their full value in form and substance and finally presenting its deliberations for the monthly and quarterly retreat, and particularly in Article 20, 2 of the regulations.

Before the voting on this article the Rector Major expressed himself thus: « The cry arises from all parts of the Congregation: "Give us more spirituality! Cultivate our spiritual life as priests and religious! Do not let us spend ourselves only in external work!". It is a phenomenon at once positive and consoling. Let us therefore not be put off by difficulties. If we do not pay heed to these appeals, if we do not make the necessary provision, we shall only bring about slow spiritual suicide. The chief concern of the Church and therefore of the Congregation, and it is truer than ever at the present day, is that her apostles be really alive with a true interior life ».

This preoccupation of the General Chapter and of the Rector Major has found a sensitive echo in the provinces and houses and from different parts there have come reports of various enterprises, generous efforts and careful programmes in order to realize fully the Chapter deliberations on the retreats and thus to offer the confreres what they have the right to expect from the Congregation for their religious perfection and for the deepening of their apostolic activity.

It has been noted, however, that here and there a somewhat less correct interpretation has been given to the mind of the General

Chapter, above all by the tendency to change the retreats into days of study and up-dating with round-table conferences and group-discussions, or into occasions for the pastoral and educational programming of house affairs.

It is obvious that these are things of maximum and even indispensable utility, often confirmed by the conciliar and Chapter documents and by the acts of our various departments and the provincial conferences. But on no account may we identify them with the nature and ends of our retreats, which we can describe in these words of the General Chapter: « The religious ought therefore to pledge himself anew every day and to keep his religious commitment ever before his mind by earnest reflection and generous efforts and always under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. To help him in this, there are certain moments and duties in his religious life which permit him to pause awhile in the intimacy of Christ to get his bearings, to purify and nourish his soul then start off afresh. These occasions occur every day in the sacred silence and at meditation and Mass, every week at confession, every month on the day of recollection and at manifestation, every year at the annual retreat » (A.G.C. XIX, p. 90).

Here, then, precisely, is the essence of the retreat: *to pause awhile in the intimacy of Christ to get his bearings, to purify and nourish his soul and then start off afresh.*

It is necessary therefore to put off to another time whatever does not directly have to do with the retreat, so as not to lose or diminish an occasion that is so precious and so particularly necessary for the apostolate of to-day. The pastoral conference also that is referred to in article 152 of the Regulations should be reserved by the rector for another time during the month.

It would be a mistake to dilute the retreats with innovations which, whilst good in themselves, reduce the efficacy of a closed retreat. These enterprises — such as group activities, religious discussions and socio-religious inquiries — have their place in the Church, but not in that of a closed retreat, in which the soul, alone with God, generously meets Him face to face, and is marvellously inspired and strengthened by Him. The world has need of such souls.

In practice, the quarterly retreat must be a day of recollection and meditation, of constructive examination of conscience: a salutary and beneficial pause for the spirit. Hence it is necessary that the superiors responsible see to it that all the confreres can take part in it; the place, the surroundings, the time, the horarium and the preacher should all contribute to favour the atmosphere of recollection and fruitful reflection. To this end the retreat should be planned well ahead and diligently organized. What has been said regarding the quarterly retreat applies analogously to the annual retreat also, of whose importance we are all aware. Then the monthly retreat should be held on a fixed day; the confreres, overcoming all difficulties, should have a minimum of three hours complete tranquillity to dedicate to the interests of their own soul.

III. NOTIFICATIONS

1. *Strenna* 1969

« Let the Eucharistic Mystery involve the whole community of the faithful and claim from each one a very personal and vital homage ».

In the light of these words of Paul VI let us make the Eucharist and our eucharistic life:

- the centre of the educative community
- the soul of our family life
- the source and support of our witnessing and apostolate.

2. *Exactness in sending in statistics*

The Secretary General renews a strong recommendation to those who have charge of preparing the statistics of our works: they are kindly asked to take the greatest care in fulfilling this task with diligent exactness.

This is a serious task requiring necessary inquiries in the offices concerned so that the figures may correspond with the reality. In some cases the contrast between the figures sent in and the actual state of things is only too evident. Careful attention, then, should be given to each item on the forms referring to the correct place for the individual figures.

To-day these inexactitudes are more easily discovered by the more frequent and even scientific use of statistical data so as to have an up-to-date and clear knowledge of the Salesian works and activities. The statistics are important not merely for the archives but because they throw light on the definite situations in the individual areas of apostolate in the Congregation and furnish the elements for important decisions of a practical order. Good statistics are a most useful instrument for organizing our work well, but they require the diligent care of all those responsible so that they may indeed be an effective instrument.

IV. ACTIVITIES OF THE SUPERIOR COUNCIL AND PROJECTS OF GENERAL INTEREST

A. ACTIVITIES OF THE SUPERIOR COUNCIL

The chronicle of the Superior Council in the preceding number of the Acts placed in relief: 1) the continental meetings of provincials which took place respectively at Bangalore, Como and Caracas; and 2) the celebrations for the centenary of the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians.

During the months of July, August and September, the Major Superiors were all present in Turin and, apart from their ordinary routine work, especially the organization of personnel, they turned their attention to the study of general problems of the Congregation, some of which had already been brought up at the continental meetings of provincials. In various commissions, they studied each theme and then brought it forward for the examination and approval of the whole Superior Council. It is not possible to give a complete picture of all the subjects treated nor to present the definite conclusions on each theme. We report here merely those points of information that are of special interest for the Congregation and those that can be, or have already been, carried out at once.

Re-dimensioning

All the provinces (except those of Latin America, which will present their material in June) have sent to Turin in these past months their reports on re-dimensioning: the proposals of the individual confreres, of the houses, provincial councils and provincial commissions. The Central Commission for Re-dimensioning, appointed by the Superior

Council, with representatives from the various regions, met for several weeks at Caselette (Turin) to examine all the material. It then formulated its conclusions for each province.

The superiors have taken note of these conclusions and have directed that they be communicated to the provincials, in order that they, together with the Regional Consultor and with the collaboration of the Provincial Commissions, could formulate a conclusive document of re-dimensioning for each province. Some practical directions were also studied to guide toward the conclusions of this important document, on which will depend the carrying out of the actual re-dimensioning.

Re-dimensioning of provinces

The study for the re-dimensioning of the individual provinces has revealed difficulties arising from various causes evidenced by the experience of the provinces themselves.

Such evidence has induced the Superior Council to clarify, as far as possible, what elements of a geographic, social, religious, economic and structural nature are necessary so that a province can have sufficient guarantee of life and sure apostolic achievement.

These standards will have to be borne in mind in the study of those situations which call for particular attention in the re-dimensioning. Where necessary, a commission will be appointed which, in agreement with the provincials concerned, the provincial councils and the re-dimensioning commissions, will have to study and propose the eventual measures to be taken in order to obtain a proper make-up of the provinces.

Course for volunteers for Latin America

The preparation of the extraordinary expedition of confreres for Latin America required the drawing up of a programme of study for the preparatory course which those who were leaving for Latin America should follow at San Tarcisio, Rome, during September. The Regional Consultors directly concerned prepared a scheme of lectures. The course itself, to which lecturers of special missionary experience

were invited, obtained unanimous satisfaction and concrete results. Elsewhere in these Acts we give the farewell and good wishes of the Pope to our confreres in an audience at Castelgandolfo.

Solidarity between works of the Congregation

In order to further the invitation of Vatican Council II and of the 19th General Chapter and moved by the observations often made on their visits, the superiors have decided to propose and promote enterprises of a continuous and regular character and not just occasional ones. This is in order that there may be developed in all the confreres a spirit of solidarity between the works of the Congregation, nourished by a mentality that is open and sensitive to all needs and free from petty and restricted views that limit the Congregation to one's own house or province.

With the provincial conferences, the Regional Superiors will study the outlines for bringing this venture about, inspired, it has been said, by the Council (*Perfectae Caritatis*, 13) and the 19th General Chapter (A.G.C. XIX - *Our Religious Life To-day*, ch. 3).

Second novitiate

The General Chapter (A.G.C. XIX, *Our Religious Life To-day*, p. 91) entrusted to the Superior Council the task of studying « the possibility of introducing gradually a second novitiate ». In the continental meetings of provincials this task was recalled and the necessity again confirmed of a serious spiritual renewal for the confreres after a period of intensely active apostolate. The superiors have studied the solution of this problem, which presents many difficulties regarding place, duration, foundation, personnel, etc. However, in the light of this study, it is hoped that these difficulties may be overcome; and that in 1969 the first experiments for priests and coadjutors can be made for eventual presentation to the General Chapter. The Regional Consultors, together with the provincials and their councils, are to look into the matter and to collect the suggestions of the various

provinces for a practical fulfilment of the proposal made by the last General Chapter.

The Generalate

The Superior Council has also been actively engaged in trying to realize the wish expressed by the General Chapter for the transfer of the Generalate to Rome.

The site has been acquired and a detailed plan drawn up which the Superior Council has been examining carefully during the past few months. At the moment the formalities are being carried out regarding permission to start building within a comparatively short time.

Valdocco

In relation to the proposed transfer of the Generalate from Turin to Rome, there arises the question of a new arrangement for the house at Valdocco, with the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians and the various communities of confreres and boys.

Basing itself on the re-dimensioning conclusions formulated by the Central and Subalpine provinces, the Superior Council, without as yet committing itself to any immediate or definite decisions, has fixed some lines of possible re-organization for the future: these take into account the needs of the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians and of the places so sacred in Salesian history, the necessity of having at Valdocco works that are truly worthy of the spiritual centre of the Congregation, and the need to create a place for the reception of pilgrims.

Missionary laity

The invitation issued by the Council to all missionary organizations and taken up by the 19th General Chapter, the achievements already effected by other institutions, the ever insistent request for help on the part of our own missions, and at the same time the decrease in priestly and religious vocations, have induced the Superior Council to

consider the possibility that even our Congregation should interest itself in sending layfolk to mission countries. This enterprise should be of vast interest to the Central Office of the Missions, the Youth Apostolate Centre, Co-operators and Past Pupils, as also to the Don Bosco Volunteers.

The Superior Council has studied the purposes and scope that such a movement should have, the best way to seek for the proper people, ways of preparing those chosen, interested zones, finances, responsible organizations, etc.

Even in this sector no definite decisions have yet been made, but after a first study of the problem certain confreres have been detailed to go into it more deeply, to point out practical norms for materializing this important missionary enterprise and to initiate schemes to arouse interest in it and then to prepare the laity for our missionary work.

B. PROJECTS OF GENERAL INTEREST

Many congresses, meetings, courses and study-groups have been in action during the past months. It is impossible to mention all of them, one reason being that we have unfortunately not received at headquarters all the necessary reports on them. We mention here, then, just some of the more important ones of greater general interest.

First place must be given to the « Inter-American Congress of Salesian Past Pupils » held at Bogotá, Colombia, from the 20th to the 24th of August, during the International Eucharistic Congress. All the delegations from the Latin American provinces taking part were most cordially received by the Colombian Federation that organized the congress. Evident on this occasion were the great possibilities open to our past pupils in South America for a really Christian penetration of society and they showed themselves most eager to measure up to them. Unfortunately it had to be acknowledged that the importance of this area of Salesian activity has not yet been fully appreciated as a completion of our educational activity and it has

not been given that availability of persons, means and enterprises that would be necessary in order to give it a sound and apostolic efficacy. The official acts of the congress will be published before long.

Based on the happy results of previous years a course for new rectors was held for the second time at Muzzano, Italy. Present at it were confreres from Italy, Spain, Portugal, Belgium, Yugoslavia and India. The increased number of participants in this enterprise has proved what a fine opportunity this is for a good solid preparation for those who have to assume the responsibility of heading our communities. We would like to bring to the notice of all the confreres the conferences on the religious and Salesian life seen in the light of the Council documents as given by Fr. Aubry and Fr. Marchisio: both of these have been cyclostyled and are obtainable from the Regional Consultor for Italy.

At Lyons on the 12th September there was held the last session of the Commission appointed to draw up the *Ratio Studiorum* for our houses of formation. The final document drawn up by this commission will be sent to the provincials of studentates so that they can take note of the new directives to be followed in the ecclesiastical studies. However, since the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education has not yet officially issued its definitive norms for the reform of ecclesiastical studies, our own *Ratio Studiorum* can only be provisional and tentatively directive.

At Lyons also, on the 10th and 11th September, a session on Salesian studies was held in the presence of Fr. Bellido and Fr. Pianazzi. Observers from the provinces of Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy and Spain took part. The theme for discussion was « The Salesian practices of piety ». Various reports were given, followed by a thorough discussion. The acts of this session will be published shortly and they will show the endeavour of the Congregation to materialize the desire of the 19th General Chapter regarding the necessity to define the principles and practices of Salesian spirituality.

At Verona, from the 12th to the 14th September, there took place the first convention of the directors and teachers of the Salesian

schools of graphic arts. Our coadjutor confreres of Italy were joined by representatives from other provinces of Europe. The meeting was mainly of a technical character and showed, on the one hand, the preparation of so many of our coadjutor confreres and, on the other, the necessity of ever higher qualifications for our schools in the national and international field of the graphic arts.

At Sondrio for the fifth year there was held a course of catechetics for the coadjutor confreres with the purpose of preparing them for the teaching of religion in schools and to give them a qualification for this position recognized by the church authorities. Eighty Salesians attended this course which met with the unanimous satisfaction of the participants.

At Niteroy, Brazil, in July there was a four-week course for the formation of scholastic « orientators ». The first session of this course had been held in 1967 and the last one will take place next January. The lectures were restricted to priests and clerics and were given by the professors of the Don Bosco Faculty of S. João del Rei.

Fr. Michael Mouillard, International Delegate for the Youth Apostolate and Fr. Victorinus Gambino, also of the Centre for the Youth Apostolate, directed during July two courses on catechetical up-dating for the confreres of the provinces of Recife and San Paolo in Brazil. They then went on to visit the individual provincial Youth Apostolate Centres of the provinces of Latin America, contacting the provincials, the youth apostolate delegates and other confreres concerned with the various sections of the youth apostolate. With them they studied the possibilities of increasing and perfecting the apostolic Salesian service for the youth of those regions. Their visit, which has not yet ended, has provided the International Centre at Turin with valuable experiences for the solution of the general problems of the youth apostolate.

Many courses for qualifications in various apostolic activities have been organized for the confreres and for the boys in almost all the provinces. Detailed accounts of these will be published in the localities concerned, but here we mention some of the main ones: courses for professional adaptation, field courses for directors and leaders of

associations, courses for leaders of cinè-forums and apostolic activities (oratories, institutes, liturgy), meetings for catechists, field courses for sports organizers, schools for apostolic formation, up-dating courses in pastoral activity, didactic matters, religion, etc. There were numberless practical activities of apostolate also carried out for the missions, for the suburbs of great cities, to assist boys in holiday-camps, works for the poor, etc. Some of these deserve a more detailed description which might appear in the Salesian Bulletins of the various nations concerned or in the provincial newsletters. All these enterprises are a witness of the zeal of the confreres and of the generous cooperation of the boys. They constitute an element of optimism for our work as educators and point out a line of action which faithfully follows that traced out by Don Bosco, and at the same time they are a sign of positive good-will and enterprise in the cause of renewal.

On Sunday, 22nd September, in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians, there took place the solemn farewell function for our missionaries leaving for Latin America. The Rector Major and the members of the Superior Council concelebrated Holy Mass with the missionary priests. In contrast with previous years a fine new liturgical ceremony was introduced when, after the Gospel, the crucifixes were handed out. As the Rector Major said, this missionary expedition has been the most significant act of homage on the part of the Congregation during the centenary year of the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians and it formed the reply to the repeated anguished appeal of Pope Paul VI for Latin America in this crucial moment of its history.

All those confreres destined for various countries followed a pastoral course at the international institute of San Tarcisio, Rome, to prepare them for the apostolate that awaits them. General themes included « The Missions in the doctrinal and pastoral perspectives of Vatican Council II », youth apostolate, family and parish apostolate, religious sociology, etc. More particular themes concerned Protestantism, the parish, the pastoral side of work and the Christian duty towards the Workers' and Peasants' Movement, with particular reference to Latin America. Further lectures were given on the situation of the Salesian

Congregation in Latin America and on the general outlines of the pastoral directives given by the Latin American hierarchy.

Fittingly we here mention the provinces of origin of these missionaries: Central (10), Zamora, Spain (8), Madrid (5), Novara and Veneto S. Mark (4); 3 each from the provinces of Pugliese, Campano-Calabria, Lombardy, and Valencia, Spain; 2 each from these: Subalpine, Rome, Sicily, Anglo-Irish, Jugoslavia, Barcelona, Cordoba, Seville and San Francisco, U.S.A.; 1 each from Austria, Australia, S. Belgium, N. Belgium, Cechoslovakia, Lyons (France), Liguria, Bilbao (Spain), New Jersey (U.S.A.). These missionaries have been distributed in various countries of Latin America, preference being given to those most urgently in need of the priestly ministry.

Besides the confreres sent to Latin America, three have been sent to the Middle East and three to Central America.

To conclude this summary of the activities of the past few months we would like to mention the great number of pilgrimages there have been to the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians for its centenary. These consisted of boys from our oratories, Co-operators and confreres from all over Europe, and groups of parishioners not only from Salesian parishes but also from quite a number of others.

The centenary multiplied the number of devout clients in the sanctuary of our Madonna and certainly served to stir up love and devotion towards Mary Help of Christians in so many souls, while the Congregation itself realized once again that its spiritual centre and animating force lie at the feet of the Help of Christians.

V. DOCUMENTS

1. Love the Church

Discourse of Pope Paul, 18th September, 1968, Castelgandolfo

Beloved sons and daughters:

At last week's audience, Our message to our guests was: Build the Church! At that point we now open this week's message and say to you: Love the Church! We refer once more to the spirit of the Council — a spirit We would like to see pure and ardent during the years in which we must meditate on and put into practice the many great teachings which have been left to us by the Council. There are some who think that the Council has already been surpassed. These people do not stop to consider what the Church has laid down in solemn session, but as excited reformers, would like to press on further with an eye, not merely for reform but for revolution. And they think that they themselves have the authority to inaugurate such revolution. To this they are the more disposed, the less faithfully they adhere to the life-giving tradition of the Church. They are all the more inspired in proportion as they are less inclined to conform to the authority and discipline of the Church itself. They are all the more plausible insofar as they dally with the mentality and customs which are prevalent today.

Corrosive criticism is now the fashion

A spirit of corrosive criticism has become the fashion in some sectors of Catholic life. There are, for example, periodicals and newspapers which seem to have no other function than to report unpleasant news relating to ecclesiastical circles. Not infrequently they present such items in a one-sided manner, and possibly slightly altered and dramatized in order to add to their interest and sting. Thus they

accustom their readers not to an objective and calm judgment, but on the contrary, to a negative point of view, to a systematic distrust, to a preconceived lack of esteem for persons, for institutions, and for activities pertaining to the Church. Thus they induce their readers and disciples to free themselves from the bonds of respect and solidarity by which every good Catholic and also every honest reader feels himself bound in regard to ecclesiastical community and ecclesial authority. Such actions are not inspired by haste to obtain exact and complete information, or for a desire to impart fraternal correction where it is needed, but by a taste for the sensational, for complacency with an attitude of denunciation and conflict which spurs on certain types of experts in publicity, thereby sowing unrest and intractability in the minds of so many otherwise good Catholics. Indeed, some priests and more than a few fervent young people allow themselves to be affected in their outlook by exactly these means.

Inferiority complex of certain Catholics

A distinguished Protestant University Professor, in a private conversation with Us, referred to this queer mentality as a form of fear — a strange fear of certain Catholics of being regarded as behind the times in the movement of ideas. Thus they are disposed to align themselves with the spirit of the world and to embrace the newest ideas and those which are most opposed to the customary Catholic tradition. « Such an attitude, in my opinion », added the Professor, « is not in accordance with the Spirit of the Gospel ».

What shall we say then of certain recent episodes such as the occupation of Cathedrals, the approval of outrageous films, of collective and concerted protests against Our recent Encyclical, of the propaganda of political violence for social purposes of alignment with and manifestations of anarchy involving worldwide conflict, of intercommunion contrary to the true tenets of ecumenism. Where is there the real adherence and dignity of the true Christian in such matters? Where is the sense of responsibility towards one's own and others' profession of Catholicism? Where is there love of the Church?

Apostolic vocation abandoned

Love of the Church! We still like to think that it is not extinguished in those who call themselves Catholic and who appeal to Christ. If they really love him and really wish to live according to his Gospel, the encounter in charity, and therefore the encounter in the Church which is animated by the Holy Spirit and results from that very intercommunion of those who live by charity, that encounter should always be an actuality and become evident, as it were, by its own intrinsic impulse. It should be evident in a joyous manifestation, but this is often lacking. All the more We desire this love of the Church, the more We grieve to observe how many of these restless Catholics have departed from their lofty apostolic vocation to the service and spread of the Church. Through a bitter spirit of negative and habitual criticism, of which We have spoken, they have become impoverished and sometimes emptied of apostolic love until, in certain cases, they have become harmful and pernicious to the Church of God. The words of Jesus come to our lips: « Inimici hominis domestici eius » (« A man's enemies are those of his own household ». Cfr. *Mtt.* 10,36).

But now We speak to you, faithful sons, and in you We are pleased to see how many wish well to the Church with a humble and open heart, and who respond in thought and deed to Our invitation: Love the Church! The hour has come to love the Church with a strong and renewed heart.

Arbitrary image of the Church

The difficulty which we have to overcome is our spiritual blindness which makes us dwell on the human, historical and visible aspect of the Church. It does not perceive the mystery of the presence of Christ which she proclaims and conceals from the profane eye unenlightened by faith and by a deep understanding of her mystical reality. This external or superficial glance sees the Church composed of imperfect men and institutions which are temporal and limited, while it would

like to see it immediately and totally perfect and above all completely idealized — often according to an arbitrarily conceived image. The concrete and earthly countenance of the Church causes obstacles for a facile and superficial love. The material reality of the Church — that reality which is evident in the framework of ordinary experience — seems to contradict the beauty and sanctity which she contains by her divine charism. But it is exactly at this point that love is proved.

If it is our duty to love our neighbour in whatever guise he may appear, and if our love should be all the greater, the more squalid and suffering he appears, we should remember that the Church is also our neighbour, and she is our neighbour par excellence — composed as she is of our « brethren in faith » (*Gal.* 6,10), to whom we owe an active preferential love. And this fact ought to be so compellingly real to us that the very defects and misfortunes of those who belong to the Church ought to make our charity all the more powerful and solicitous. At least, such will be the case with whoever aims at being a living, healthy and persevering member of the Church. Such is the attitude of good sons and of the Saints.

The Church in process of renewal

We might even go further. This difficulty of having to love the Church in its human reality is today lessened. Today the Church presents a countenance more deserving of admiration than of reproof or pity. Today throughout the Church there may be seen magnificent forces of authenticity, of renewal of Christian vitality and of sanctity. A sanctity less customary and less peripheral, if you wish to compare it with that of other times, but more personal and aware, more communal and more active. Today the Church, in the wake of the Council, is entirely turned towards her own interior reform. Prayers and dogmas enlighten her in turn and give to her spiritual life a sense of truth and fullness in her colloquy with God. Likewise she has an interior depth in individual souls and a harmonious and choral expression in liturgical celebration of the sacramental mysteries. Today

every diocese, every bishop, every episcopal conference, every religious family is in process of reform and authentic intensification of Catholic life. Today every member of the faithful is called to perfection, every lay person to apostolic work, every ecclesiastical group to the responsibility of the ecclesial task. Every conscience and every community is faced with the demands required in missionary expansion. The entire Church is called to a sense of its own unity and catholicity while the arduous but loyal and energetic resumption of ecumenical contacts summons Catholics to their own reform and to a renewed capacity for cordial dialogue with their separated brethren.

Today the Church is turned back to her own origins to feel herself true and living. She is utterly open to respect for and contact with the world, seeking to find in that contact her proper ministerial function of giving light and seasoning for the purpose of saving all. Today the attention of her eschatological pilgrimage renders her poor, free and brave — carried back if you will to her primitive mission of witness to the resurrection of Christ and the source of transcendent hope which pours security and vigour into every honest earthly hope. Today she purifies herself of every undue earthly contamination. She preaches to the world and pours in moral energy and authentic fraternal cooperation and solidarity, the capacity to achieve every truth and every richness of creation, joy of living in order and liberty, in unity and peace.

The duty of the present hour

Love the Church! This, dear sons, is the duty of the present hour. To love her is to esteem her and to be happy to belong to her. It means to obey and serve her, to help her with joy and sacrifice in her arduous mission. It means to know how to reconcile belonging to her visible and mystical company with an honest, generous love for every created reality that surrounds us and possesses us: life, family, society, truth, justice, liberty and goodness.

With all this in mind, dear sons and daughters, we give you Our Apostolic Blessing.

2. Obedience to the Church

Discourse of Pope Paul VI, 16th October, 1968

Beloved Sons and Daughters!

Reflection on the Council, to which We dedicate these informal weekly talks of Ours, coincides with a difficult, or rather an unpopular subject, that of obedience in the Church.

It is a subject compromised, in the first place, by the atmosphere of freedom that modern man breathes. This atmosphere is contrary to limitation and constraint of the spontaneity and autonomy of the human person, and also of associated groups confronted with an exterior authority; it is compromised, in the second place, by the apologia of freedom, in its various aspects of personal freedom, as an exigency of human dignity (cfr. *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 17), of freedom of the sons of God (cfr. *Eccli.* 15,14-15) proclaimed by the Gospel (cfr. *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 41), of freedom of conversion (cfr. *Ad gentes*, n. 13), of freedom of the Church (cfr. *Dign. humanae*, n. 13), of freedom in the Church (cfr. *Lumen Gentium* n. 37 etc.), of religious freedom within civil regimes (cfr. *Dign. humanae*), of freedom of scientific research, of freedom of information, freedom of association, etc. (cfr. *Gaudium et Spes*); an apologia that we find diffused throughout the conciliar documents. How is it possible to speak of obedience after all these affirmations, so much in conformity with the human spirit, the maturity of contemporary psychology, the development of civil society, the intolerance of the rising generations as regards discipline?

The very word « obedience » is no longer tolerated in modern conversation, even where, of necessity, the reality survives: in teaching, in legislation, in hierarchical relations, in military regulations, and so on. The terms « personality », « conscience », « autonomy », « responsibility », « conformity with the common good »... prevail; and, as is known, what our society offers in this connection is not only a change of words, but a deep change of ideas, expressed in facts and events, large and small, now known to everyone.

The negations of the ancient civil and Christian virtue

For obedience entails a double exterior element for the single individual, or for the single group: to listen to another voice than one's own, and to act in conformity with this voice, which rings out in command, which bears witness to an authority, which forces upon the listener a way of thinking and acting of which he is not the author and the reason for which he often does not see. Overestimation of subjective criteria leads to a failure to understand how another extrinsic criterion, authority, is entitled to interfere in the spontaneous and natural expression of a being or a human group. Philosophers of yesterday are still acting as the teachers of those of today, who do not recoil before the extreme consequences of protest, rebellion and even anarchy and nihilism. Some violent applications have been seen just recently. And as if it were not enough to discredit obedience among the rising generations, with more or less radical negations of that ancient civil and Christian virtue, exaggerated and intolerable phenomena win acceptance and multiply: totalitarian oppression, imposed with well developed systems of force and police state legalism, and the imposition of advertising, introduced by the formidable mass media, as is now said, imperceptibly and simultaneously absorbed by docile millions of clients conforming to what they read, hear and see. Should modern man obey in this way? Is not this invasion of voices, ideas, examples, fashions, simultaneous concerted actions a form of slavery, of obedience — unperceived and agreeable if you like —, which diminishes and degrades the autonomy of the personality?

Nature and competence of the ecclesiastical Magisterium

And if we pass from the secular to the religious field, and to be exact to that of our Catholic life, is not it, too, dominated by a dogmatism that chokes freedom of thought and of conscience? How much could be said in this connection, too, and precisely because of the recent repercussions to certain acts of the ecclesiastical magisterium: what is its competence? what is its authority? what is its stability?

We will not speak of this very vast subject, which would require,

in order not to be distorted, a very well-considered and adequate treatment, which is not possible now.

We are anxious now to leave in you, beloved Sons, who by being present at this meeting and listening to these humble words already pay tribute to the Christian virtue of obedience, to leave in you, let us say, a rehabilitated concept of this virtue. We could say so many things about its supreme importance (cfr. St. Th. II-II^{ae}, 104, 3): is not obedience in close relationship with particular and universal order? With the equilibrium and harmony of any society? With the common good? With overcoming individual weakness and foolishness and with the attainment of good collective and social results? What would happen to law, authority, the community, if there were not the cult of obedience? And in the ecclesiastical field, what would happen to unity of faith and of charity, if a concurrence of will, guaranteed by an authorized power, itself obedient to the superior will of God, did not propose and demand harmony of thought and of action? Does not the whole plan of our salvation depend on a free and responsible exercise of obedience? What is sin, if not disobedience to the divine command, and what is our salvation if not humble and joyful adhesion to the merciful plan that Christ has installed for those who obey him, as disciples, as faithful, as witnesses? Could not our Christian profession, our insertion in the Church, our integration, sanctifying and beatifying, in God's will, be seen as based on obedience?

The « fiat » of our daily prayer

Is not the « fiat » that we say every moment in our prayer: « Thy will be done », the most usual and complete act of our obedience to the supreme and intimate divine command? And would it not be easy to determine the happy relationship that exists between true obedience and freedom, conscience, responsibility, personality maturity, moral force, and every other prerogative of human dignity, as well as every honourable and functional position of ours in the Church community, if we just had the patience to recall the legitimate titles,

the exigencies and the limits of obedience, such as Holy Scripture and the authentic doctrine of the Church describes it to us? And how could we speak of peace without referring to the principle that produces, inside and outside us, the order that generates and ensures peace, that is obedience? *Oboedientia et pax*: a formula dear to the venerated Cardinal Baronio, and then to Pope John XXIII, author of the Encyclical *Pacem in terris* (cfr. *Prov.* 21,28).

Yes, there are so many things We could say on this subject. So much has been written about it, even in the last few years, (see, for example, a bibliographic note at the end of Tullo Goffi's study, « *Obbedienza e autonomia personale* », Ancora, Milan, 1967).

« *At the revelation of Jesus Christ, (be) as obedient children* ».

But now We will say only one thing and it is the mystery of obedience in Christ our Lord (cfr. Adam, *Christ our Brother*, II); a mystery radiating from the whole Gospel, a mystery that He our Saviour defines (cfr. *Mt.* 11,25; *Jn.* 6,37; *Mt.* 26,39; *Rom.* 5,19; *Phil.* 2,8, etc.): and a mystery in which we participate, so that from « this fundamental aspect of obedience not only to Christ, but of Christ's obedience communicated to us, springs the Christian sense of obedience » (Lochet).

We could go on, and enjoy the discovery of the equivalence which, at this level, obedience acquires with love. An account has still to be given of the new style, in the identical substance, that obedience acquires in the Church as a result of the teachings of the Council; We ourself mentioned it in Our first Encyclical, *Ecclesiam suam* (A.A.S 1964, p. 657). Let Us seal all this doctrine, this new teaching, this new practice of obedience, with the memory of the exhortation of the Apostle Peter, from whose sepulchre We are now speaking to you, to the first Christians: « At the revelation of Jesus Christ, (be) as obedient children » (*1 Peter* 1,13-14; *Hebr.* 13,17).

And this for your dignity as Christians, for your faithfulness, for your happiness, with Our Apostolic Blessing.

3. Liturgical worship must retain its sacred character

Discourse of Pope Paul to the Members of the Sacred Liturgy Consilium, 14th October, 1968

It is highly proper that the « *lex orandi* » should be in accord with the « *lex credendi* » and should show forth and strengthen the faith of the Christian people. New forms of prayer emanating from you would not be worthy of God's dignity unless they were truly in the context of Catholic teaching; it can easily be understood that they should be outstanding for their majesty, beauty, and simplicity, and they should also be suitable for stirring souls and moving them to devotion if they are fully to respond to the nature and genius of liturgical worship. (Cfr. R. Guardini, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, pp. 43-44).

On the other hand, the liturgical renewal is not to be so interpreted as to reject the sacred patrimony of past ages and rashly to admit any kind of novelty. What the Fathers had in mind in the Ecumenical Council when they promulgated the Liturgical Constitution is quite well known to you: namely, that any innovations should be in keeping with sound tradition, so that « any new forms adopted should in some way grow organically from forms already existing » (no. 23). This wise reform had to be expressed in this way so that the new and the old might be reconciled.

From what We have said, it should be clear that it is extremely important, especially at the present time, that in safeguarding the right kind of renewal, all should have correct ideas about the ecclesial and hierarchical dimension of the Sacred Liturgy. Rites and prayer formulas should not be considered as a private matter, or as a parochial matter, or as a diocesan affair or even as a national affair; they really belong to the universal Church for they are the expression of her living voice of prayer. Hence no one has the right to change these formulas, to introduce new ones, or to substitute others in their place. This is forbidden by the dignity of the sacred liturgy itself which assists man to communicate with God; it is forbidden also by the good of souls and by efficient pastoral activity which is placed in jeopardy by this kind

of action. On this point, it might be helpful to recall that norm of the Liturgical Constitution by force of which « regulation of the sacred Liturgy depends solely upon the authority of the Church » (no. 22, § 1; cfr. n. 33).

Since We are speaking to you about norms, which ought to be the precursor of your work, We cannot pass over in silence some ways of acting which We have noticed in various parts of the Church and which are causing Us no small grief and anxiety.

This refers in the first place to that frame of mind which takes amiss anything emanating from ecclesiastical authority or legitimately prescribed. It has happened in liturgical matters that even Episcopal Conferences have sometimes followed their own ideas more than they should. It has also happened that experiments have been made in an arbitrary fashion, and rites introduced which are clearly repugnant to norms established by the Church. Anyone can see that this type of action is not only a grave offence against the conscience of the Christian faithful; it is also injurious to the carrying out of an orderly liturgical renewal which requires from all prudence, vigilance, and especially discipline.

A much greater source of anxiety to Us is the style of action of those who maintain that liturgical worship should shed its sacred character. They therefore foolishly think that sacred furnishings and objects should not be used, but in their place we should substitute ordinary common things in daily use. Some even go so far as to dispense with the place consecrated for celebration. It must be said that people who hold such opinions are perverting not only the spirit of the sacred liturgy but the very idea of the Catholic religion (Cfr. L. Bouyer, *La vie de la Liturgie*, Ed. du Cerf, p. 324).

Importance of liturgical signs

When dealing with rites, formulas and liturgical functions in their revised and simplified form, care must be taken not to go further than is permitted; and not enough attention is being paid to the great importance which should be attached to liturgical « signs ». This almost

certainly has the result of lessening the force and efficacy of the sacred liturgy. In fact, it is one thing to remove from the sacred rites whatever appears to-day to be superfluous or obsolete or of no further utility; it is quite another thing to deprive the liturgy of those signs and that beauty which, when contained within proper limits, are necessary to Christian people if they are rightly to perceive hidden things and truths which lie concealed beneath the veil of external rites.

Since this is the case, yours is a most important and mighty task, beloved sons; you must ensure that the sacred liturgy display the splendour of its countenance before mankind and at the same time show its efficacy in fostering the spiritual life of society. Nor is this all. You must take care that, as time passes by, there shall be no slackening of that zeal and fervour for liturgical renewal which to-day inflames the people of God in such salutary fashion.

It is best to proceed gradually in this matter because the work which you are undertaking requires of you careful advance preparation of the faithful. Therefore new rites should be proposed at the time and in the manner that seems most likely to have them more easily understood and accepted.

Finally We want to place before you something which we most earnestly recommend to your special attention. Take great care that your labours do not depart too much from the usage and institutions of the Roman tradition where the liturgy had its origin in Latin, and therein found its growth and reached its highest peak.

In recommending this to you We are impelled not so much by reasons of history or geography nor by any desire to increase authority; rather are we inclined to it by the careful consideration of theological teaching and of the very constitution of the Church which, in this dear City has the centre of unity and the fortress of the Catholic faith.

On this point, instead of using Our own words, you may hear the words of two men who are well-known as outstanding promoters of the Liturgy.

The first of them, Fr. Gabriel M. Brasó, of the Benedictine Order, has this to say: « He who does not feel himself to be a Roman will find it difficult to be fully imbued with the breath and spirit of the liturgy.

The spirit of Rome (*Romanitas*) safely protects the incorruptible genuineness of the liturgical spirit. Deviations in the field or on the frontiers of the liturgy, as also in patterns of thought and in the usages of Christian life, have their primary cause in this fact: lack of the Roman spirit (*Romanitas*). He has a very narrow-minded outlook who, as a result of misplaced patriotism, considers Rome to be a rival, looks upon her norms as incomprehensible and judges her laws to be a manifestation of an insensate love of power.

The spirit of Rome (*Romanitas*) is the foundation-stone of our catholicity » (Gabriele M. Brasó, *Liturgia e Spiritualità*, Ed. Liturgiche, pp. 307-308).

The second testimony which We wish to offer comes from a man who has won a wide reputation as a student of Liturgy. We refer to E. Bishop who speaks thus in his book about the special genius of the Roman rite: « The Roman form is not lacking in its virtues. These virtues seem to be more necessary and more valuable since the religious history of Europe at different times allows us to perceive the losses which followed from its neglect » (*Le Génie du Rit Romain*, by E. Bishop, pp. 66-67).

Therefore, beloved sons, let not Rome inspire you with feelings of diffidence or fear. On the contrary, it knows how to receive your labours with a willing heart, how to judge them wisely and how to make them truly and lastingly Catholic, not for her own glory but for that of the Church and for the glory of Christ our Redeemer.

These are the norms which We are pleased to give you in virtue of Our Apostolic office and prompted by conscience. May God grant you an abundance of heavenly grace to enable you to fulfil them promptly and faithfully as a pledge of which We impart to you one and all the Apostolic Blessing.

4. Words of the Holy Father to the Salesian Missionaries leaving for Latin America.

In a general audience given on the 18th September last, the Holy Father spoke to various special groups and addressed his farewell

and good wishes to the Salesian Missionaries leaving for South America in these words:

« Our fatherly greetings turn now with lively affection to the group of Salesian priests about to leave for the missions of Latin America.

Welcome, dearest sons! Your visit recalls to Our mind most pleasant echoes of those unforgettable days which we lived not so long ago during our journey to the International Eucharistic Congress at Bogotá. And at the same time We receive this proof of your generous undertaking on behalf of that great continent which you propose to enter with generous resolutions, without listening to the voice of flesh or blood, but only to that of God who calls you there and of the souls who are calling for your help.

As Salesians in Latin America you will receive in trust a most precious heritage left to you by your predecessors, who knew how to create in those regions an incomparable patrimony of works, activities and experiences of which the sons of Don Bosco can justly be proud.

To-day you are called upon to make that work fruitful even in the midst of the tremendous difficulties the Church is meeting in that continent. May the grace of God accompany you in this lofty task which is full of arduous labours but also of holy consolations. To this end We shall pray for you and in pledge of those heavenly helps We impart to you now Our Apostolic Blessing.

5. Letter addressed to the Rector Major by the Missionaries leaving for Latin America

To Very Rev. Fr. Ricceri and the Major Superiors.

Beloved Fathers,

At the moment in which we are preparing to leave our country in order to go and live the gospel in different nations of Latin America, we are happy to express our joy at having lived together at Rome in discussion and prayer, which are the first-fruits of our new apostolic life.

While we thank you for the affection with which you have followed

us in the past, we feel we need to ask you now in a special way for all your friendship on which we shall rely for the future.

We have experienced the great utility of the course of preparation, in which we have taken part with joy, and we maintain that it is indispensable that similar courses be organized even in future in a more complete and stable form.

At a distance of only a few days after the Eucharistic Congress at Bogota, where the visit of the Holy Father brought home to all the preoccupations of those immense populations that await the bread of the body and that of the spirit, we feel small in front of the task that awaits us.

Whilst we are aware that we shall find there those other confreres who for long years have been giving themselves without reserve to the building up of the Church, we like to think that ours is not going to be a pure and simple separation from our present community of confreres and Christians, the boys of our colleges, the youths and grown-ups in our parishes and oratories of our places of origin.

Our parting, we believe, is not simply an individual one, and should not be so either! We remain Salesians of the house, the province and of the whole Congregation, which should identify with us as we leave, happy at this gesture made in view of the universal Church in order to be at the service of one of the zones of major pastoral urgency, Latin America.

For us it will be a supreme consolation in the difficulties we shall encounter to feel united with our province of origin, with our brothers far away who understand and sustain us with their prayers, their sympathy, possibly with other helps and with their own Christian life lived in a missionary spirit.

For the rest, our common task of building up the Church will be objectively the strongest link uniting us and those who remain behind in Christ, who is ever at work throughout the world.

Rome, 18th September, 1968.

International Institute of San Tarcisio, near the Catacombs.

In Don Bosco, (Signatures)

VI. DECEASED SALESIANS

Fr. Theodore Andreas

* 9.9.1901, † Chetpet-North Arcot India 8.1.1968, age 66, 39 profession, 31 priesthood.

He left for India as a missionary immediately after his priestly ordination at Benediktbeuern, and there he exercised his mission as a parish priest, with the sole exception of the time spent as a prisoner during the war. He was a great missionary and a zealous priest, with a special predilection for the poor and for children. For 16 years he engaged in a marvellously fruitful apostolate in the mission of Vellore, putting up buildings and notable works, but especially for the poor and the lepers.

Fr. Charles Baruffaldi

* 27.2.1879, † Montevideo Uruguay 31.8.1968, age 89, 69 profession 63 priesthood, 25 rector.

He left for South America at the age of 17 and passed more than 70 years in the houses of Uruguay and Paraguay, always prompt to obedience, even when at 70 he was sent to Terra del Fuoco to found our most southernly agricultural school. Struck down by blindness, more than ever there radiated from him patience, charity, and understanding for others, and a kind of fear of disturbing anyone; he adhered very strictly to the community life. His whole Salesian life was one of serenity and simplicity amid great difficulties.

Coad. Ephrem Bertan

* 14.1.1923, † Santo Domingo Dominican Republic 29.6.1968, age 45, 28, profession.

After some years of religious life he left for the Dominican Republic where he exercised his Salesian apostolate as band- and choir-

master at Moca and San Domingo. For three years he was at the head of the Salesian school for needy boys in the Sacred Heart parish in one of the poorest suburbs. His love of the Congregation, his spirit of generosity, his indefatigable spirit of work were all characteristic means he had of gaining the hearts of all.

Fr. John Baptist Biglino

* 9.12.1899, † Richelmy-Turin, 24.8.1968, age 68, 48 profession, 40 priesthood.

He regarded teaching with the earnest passion and lively interest of an authentic son of Don Bosco, wishing always to be a teacher-educator of a large crowd of boys, especially in our schools of St. John the Evangelist and Richelmy at Turin. Struck down by cardiac troubles, he passed his last year in enforced rest, purified by suffering, patience and resignation.

Fr. Martin Bogucki

* 10.11.1888, † New Rochelle U.S.A. 27.3.1968, age 79, 56 profession, 49 priesthood, 6 rector.

He arrived in the United States immediately after World War I and worked for many years in the house at Ramsey, N.J. His priestly zeal and his great humility made him welcome to all. He was due this year to celebrate his sacerdotal golden jubilee.

Fr. Joseph Maria Capote

* 7.12.1884, † Rota, Spain 12.6.1968, age 83, 41 profession, 33 priesthood.

Chaplain of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians at Rota, he never neglected his external apostolate, running adult classes, and he so succeeded in winning the affection of all that, even in his lifetime one of the streets of the city was named after him. Of a sturdy nature, he practised sacrifice and abnegation, leaving the example of a simple life characterized by a total donation of himself without limits and without pretence. As a good son of Don Bosco, he loved Mary Help of Christians deeply. Many past pupils greatly mourn his passing.

Fr. Joseph Paul Casagrande

* 5.11.1897, † St. Isidore Argentina 28.8.1968, age 70, 53 profession, 46 priesthood, 3 rector.

A zealous priest, he dedicated himself entirely to teaching. He was greatly appreciated by his pupils who loved and esteemed him for his great spirit of preparation, generosity and understanding. He wrote a good deal on catechesis and liturgy, and contributed 18 books to the Salesian Theatrical Anthology. He was assistant to various religious associations, in which he multiplied the zeal of an already intense apostolate.

Fr. Benjamin Chinnici

* 10.2.1909, † Catania Sicily 30.9.1968, age 59, 43 profession, 34 priesthood.

His obvious piety, his habitual serenity and his exactness in carrying out the duties given to him, especially in nearly 30 years of administration in our houses, attracted the esteem and good-will of the confreres and of the families of the pupils and of all those who had the good fortune of knowing him. He has left a gap in the Congregation, but also the example of a true son of Don Bosco.

Fr. Martin Dokudowiec

* 2.10.1908, † Szczecin-Wielgowo Poland 23.5.1968, age 59, 39 profession, 29 priesthood.

As a priest he had a great heart and was the friend of all, treating everyone with great delicacy, showing these gifts especially as chaplain to a hospital and as parish priest. His death was greatly lamented by his confreres and parishioners.

Fr. Joseph Dryzalowski

* 14.3.1908, † London England 27.9.1968, age 60, 40 profession, 30 priesthood.

Fr. Mario Forgione

* 30.7.1902, † Campinas Brasil 26.7.1968, age 66, 47 profession, 39 priesthood, 24 rector.

Recently he was Vice-provincial of Campo Grande, Mato Grosso. His end came suddenly with a pulmonary oedema. He spent his whole life among the boys, appreciated as an authentic Salesian, teacher, musician, and the moving spirit behind all kinds of activities. He was a deeply good priest, kind and understanding, and is mourned especially

by the past pupils. Admirable in him was his ability to adapt himself to modern times, seeking always to understand the new generations.

Subdeacon Francis Franco

* 7.5.1940, † Candelario Spain, 23.6.1968, age 28, 10 profession.

He died in performing an act of supreme charity, trying to save a boy from the river: he was found with his hands crossed over his breast in an attitude of prayer. Of very fine spirit and a sincere, simple and good character, he had suffered much in following out his vocation. Five days before his unexpected death he had written some beautiful verses in which he foresaw his death on a path of blood.

Fr. Peter Galizzi

* 19.4.1887, † Bethlehem Palestine 8.7.1968, age 81, 58 profession, 47 priesthood, 3 rector.

Fr. Galizzi was a veteran of the Middle East province, in which he worked since 1916. A fervent religious, a pious and zealous priest, an indefatigable worker, he dedicated his last years to the ministry of confessions, conspicuous for his clear doctrine and fatherly understanding. In the life of the community he was an element of union and serenity, giving an outstanding example of the spirit of sacrifice and fortitude.

Fr. George Heeb

* 6.5.1882, † Bensheim Germany 13.9.1968, age 86, 68 profession, 60 priesthood.

He was the oldest Salesian in the Munich province and belonged to that band of young men trained in Italy in the houses of Penango and Ivrea who later formed the corner-stones of the Congregation in the nations of Northern Europe. Characteristic of him was his great attachment to the ministry of confessions, where he was greatly appreciated by all, spending long hours there apart from his ordinary duties.

Fr. Sigismund Jedrzejak

* 9.10.1911, † Dobrze Miasto Poland 7.7.1968, age 56, 33 profession, 20 priesthood.

He was a Salesian who was always smiling and ever active. With

his open and cordial character he knew how to win the affection and confidence of the numerous bands of boys formed by him to a Christian life in the years he taught in our school at Rozanystok. For some years he was a parish priest at Rogiedle.

Fr. Ivo Albert Junkes

* 10.7.1924, † Porto Alegre Brazil 13.6.1968, age 43, 23 profession, 15 priesthood, 3 rector.

He fell at the breach, overcome by labour like a worthy son of Don Bosco. He was a Salesian priest wholly dedicated to the good of others in a spirit of simplicity, piety, humility, and indefatigable labour. Without any regard for himself, he was good and generous towards all and won the sympathy of the confreres and of the friends of the Salesian work. His long illness sublimated a life wholly sacrificed for love of the Congregation.

Fr. Oswald Krause

* 31.7.1904, † Rudesheim Germany 9.7.1968, age 64, 45 profession, 37 priesthood.

He began his priestly life among the high-school students at Bamberg and the bishop appointed him president of all the youth associations of that city. Later there was confided to his care the souls of the protestant community at Kassel and the teaching of religion. During the war, with apostolic zeal he cared for refugees, especially foreigners. At Hess-Lichtenau he constructed a church to Christ the King and at

Furstenhagen a chapel to Mary Help of Christians, which became a centre of marian devotion even for protestants.

Coad. Benito La Spada

* 16.6.1941 † Palermo Italy 21.8.1968, age 27, 8 profession.

He was a confrere of outstanding intellectual gifts, an excellent and exemplary religious, generous in work and a fine designer in typography. He died tragically through drowning.

Fr. Mario Maestri

* 23.8.1915, † Rome, 23.8.1968, age 53, 34 profession, 22 priesthood.

In the suffering that kept him bedridden for 18 months, his spirit was refined and consumed by a total oblation to God. His death found

him prepared to be, according to the motto of his First Mass, a burning light in the house of God.

Fr. Justin Miranda

* 27.7.1893, † Madrid Spain 17.6.1968, age 75, 57 profession, 48 priesthood.

In his Salesian life he carried out various offices of responsibility in the houses of Andalusia and the Canary Islands, showing always a fine and delicate tact in his social and human relationships. He was a luminous example of serene and unwearying labour, was most faithful to the religious life and deeply fond of the Congregation. He edified all by the way he bore with Christian resignation the troublesome illness that afflicted his last years.

Coad. Anthony Narciso

* 23.6.1902, † Pescara Italy 15.8.1968, age 66, 41 profession.

He entered Ivrea as an aspirant at the age of 22 and from there went to China, where for a while he was with Bishop Versiglia and then in various houses, leaving everywhere cherished memories of his piety and fidelity to Don Bosco, until, worn out and physically exhausted, he had to return to Italy, where he showed himself always precise and active in the duties assigned him by obedience.

Fr. Joseph Ochoa

* 18.3.1900, † La Plata Argentina 24.7.1968, age 68, 50 profession, 42 priesthood, 20 rector.

He never spared himself in his life of consecrated service to God and souls, his apostolate being almost entirely parochial and with a truly exceptional dynamism. He built six chapels, two churches and three homes for the aged and for infants; in each of the parishes where he worked, he left about twenty religious, beneficial and social associations. A lover of music he formed polyphonic choirs to give added solemnity to the religious functions. He left behind him the example of an unconditional donation of himself to the cause of God and of general fidelity to his Salesian vocation.

Coad. Hyacinth Perilla

* 3.6.1913, † Bogotá Colombia 21.8.1968, age 55, 32 profession.

The first 20 years of his religious life were spent as tailoring craftsman and assistant of the sons of lepers. Struck down by articular arthritis, he gave an admirable example of humility, poverty and patience, whilst his infirmity reduced his body to inaction. The last years were greatly painful but borne with resignation while he stayed in the novitiate house and then in the theologate. He forced himself to live the vocation of a Salesian coadjutor in sanctified work and then in a more complete submission to the divine will that purified him in his suffering.

Coad. Magino Portella

* 5.3.1902, † Bilbao Spain 28.8.1968, age 66, 45 profession.

Characteristic of this dear confreres was his great spirit of sacrifice. In the difficult post-war years he journeyed day and night seeking for whatever was necessary for our numerous boarding pupils. His simple and deep piety was edifying. He knew how to combine at the cost of some strength his many different occupations with an active participation in community life, and especially in the practices of piety.

Coad. Simon Preciado

* 28.10.1887, † Tena Colombia 10.8.1968, age 80, 48 profession.

He passed almost his whole Salesian life as cook in various houses, especially at Ibaguè and Bogotá, distinguished by his simplicity, obedience and great spirit of sacrifice and work. Even in his last years, in spite of his age, he diligently accomplished much useful work for the house.

Fr. Joseph Puertas

* 23.9.1886, † Valencia Spain 28.8.1968, age 81, 59 profession, 50 priesthood, 15 rector, 6 provincial.

He developed a fruitful Salesian work in various places and nations as Rector and Provincial and as promoter and founder of the house at Deusto-Bilbao. In his long years of Salesian life he was always distinguished for his great spirit of work, his profound piety and his strong attachment to things Salesian. He spent his last years with our Archbishop Mgr. Marcellinus Olaechea, still exercising the ministry of

confessions and giving religion classes right up to the last few months before his death.

Coad. Paul Richard

* 2.9.1894, † Marseilles France 3.7.1968, age 73, 49 profession.

For more than 45 years he spent his energies on behalf of the apprentices of our school at Marseilles as tailoring craftmaster and music master. He was a confrere of great self-denial and goodness, leaving behind him the example of great fidelity to the religious and Salesian life.

Fr. Angelo Rochard

* 5.6.1882, † Gradignan France 21.8.1968, age 86, 67 profession, 59 priesthood, 26 rector.

For more than 20 years he gave himself completely to the apostolate as parish priest and rector in our works in North America, in Algeria and Tunisia. He was outstanding for his love of Salesian assisting which he practised above all in the playground, even when no longer young. Another characteristic was his affability: he was a man of few words but a most agreeable companion.

Fr. James Salustio

* 15.3.1921, † Miramar Argentine 24.7.1968, age 47, 31 profession, 20 priesthood, 6 rector.

Faithful to his religious duties he consecrated his life to teaching and parish work. Gifted with great sensitivity, he knew how to approach the needy in order to bring help and comfort. His death occurred whilst he was fulfilling a work of exquisite charity, affectionately attending the sick and the aged.

Fr. Michael Smetek

* 9.9.1904, † Luskowko Poland 14.9.1968, age 64, 45 profession, 34 priesthood.

Simplicity of heart, humility and deep piety: these were his characteristic virtues. In spite of his illness he was always serene. He was always anxious to serve his confreres and was very tolerant of their human weaknesses. He was a constant worker right to the last days of his life.

Fr. Aloysius Trifari

* 3.12.1897, † Birmingham U.S.A. 23.6.1968, age 70, 45 profession, 40 priesthood, 33 rector.

He was much esteemed by all as a preacher and writer, but also as a humble and zealous religious. Parish priest in our parishes in New York, Port Chester and Elizabeth he was subsequently sent to the difficult mission in Birmingham City, where he made himself esteemed and loved by the poor, especially by the negroes and the few white Catholics of that great industrial city during these years of social agitation.

Fr. Charles George Trojan

* 7.11.1913, †Cologne Germany 26.8.1968, age 54, 36 profession, 27 priesthood.

Born in Saxony of protestant parents, he attended a Catholic school and received the grace of conversion. God called him then to the Congregation, where he distinguished himself by his serenity of spirit and constant cheerfulness. A wound sustained during the war caused him great suffering, which he bore with generous resignation and patience.

Fr. Francis Tsuchiya

* 6.9.1931, † Tokyo Japan 15.7.1968, age 36, 16 profession, 8 priesthood.

He was the first in his family to come to know and embrace Christianity and in a short while he drew his whole family after him. He looked upon his priesthood as an act of gratitude to God for the great gift of Faith and as a service towards his fellow-countrymen to draw them towards it. In his priestly ministry and in his Salesian work, which he carried out with sacrifice and apostolic dedication, he knew how to capture the trust, esteem and veneration of so many who came into contact with him.

Mgr. Joseph de la Cruz Turcios Barabona

* 1.9.1884, † San José de Costa Rica, 12.7.1968, age 83, 58 profession, 40 priesthood, 9 rector, 4 auxiliary bishop, 15 Archbishop of Tegucigalpa; on account of his advanced age he resigned his see 6 years ago.

An adult vocation, he brought to the Congregation a character that was already formed by labour and sacrifice. He became a Salesian at

29, a priest at 34, and was the apostle of the festive oratories, to which he consecrated the years and all the energies of his priestly life. His apostolate was exercised in various republics of Central America, attracting everywhere great admiration by his fine organizing ability and open cheerfulness. Most sensitive to the problems of youth, he gave great impulse to its various associations, being much admired not only for his organizing ability but also and above all for the Christian formation which he knew so well how to instil into the youths. His apostolic work as archbishop did not prevent him from continuing to be the father of the poor, and especially to needy youth. His characteristics were: a most gentle heart, affable and sympathetic features, a sharp and active sensitiveness for the problems of poor people, and an almost natural ability to adapt to every situation. His death was felt as a national loss.

3° elenco 1968

N.	COGNOME E NOME	DATA DI NASCITA	ISPETTORIA	LOCALITÀ E DATA DI MORTE	ETÀ
89	Sac. ANDREAS Teodoro	9.9.1901	Madras	Chetpet (India)	8.1.1968 66
90	Sac. BARUFFALDI Carlo	27.2.1879	Uruguay	Montevideo	31.8.1968 89
91	Coad. BERTAN Efreem	14.1.1923	Antille	Santo Domingo	29.6.1968 45
92	Sac. BIGLINO Giov. Batt.	9.12.1899	Subalpina	Torino-Richelmy	24.8.1968 68
93	Sac. BOGUCKI Martino	10.11.1888	New Rochelle	New R. (USA)	27.3.1968 79
94	Sac. CAPOTE Giuseppe M ^a .	7.12.1884	Sevilla	Rota (Spagna)	12.6.1968 83
95	Sac. CASAGRANDE Gius. P.	5.11.1897	Bs. Aires	S. Isidro (Argentina)	28.8.1968 70
96	Sac. CHINNICI Beniamino	10.2.1909	Sicula	Catania (Italia)	30.9.1968 59
97	Sac. DOKUDOWIEC Martino	2.10.1908	Lodz (Polonia)	Szczecin-Wielgowo	23.5.1968 59
98	Sac. DRYZALOWSKI Gius.	14.3.1908	Inglese	Londra	27.9.1968 60
99	Sac. FORGIONE Mario	30.7.1902	Campo Gr.	Campania (Brasil)	26.7.1968 66
100	Sudd. FRANCO Francesco	7.5.1940	Zamora	Candelario (Spagna)	23.6.1968 28
101	Sac. GALIZZI Pietro	19.4.1887	Medio Oriente	Berlemme	8.7.1968 81
102	Sac. HEEB Giorgio	6.5.1882	Munchen	Bensheim (Germania)	13.9.1968 86
103	Sac. JEDRZEJAK Sigismondo	9.10.1911	Lodz	Dobre Miasto (Polonia)	7.7.1968 56
104	Sac. JUNKES Ivo Alberto	10.7.1924	Porto Alegre	P. Alegre (Brasil)	13.6.1968 43
105	Sac. KRAUSE Osvaldo	31.7.1904	Koln	Rudesheim (Germania)	9.7.1968 64
106	Coad. LA SPADA Benito	16.6.1941	Sicula	Palermo (Italia)	21.8.1968 27
107	Sac. MAESTRI Mario	23.8.1915	Adriatica	Roma	23.8.1968 53
108	Sac. MIRANDA Giusto	27.5.1893	Cordoba (Sp.)	Madrid (Spagna)	17.6.1968 75
109	Coad. NARCISO Antonio	23.6.1902	Campano-Cal.	Pescara (Italia)	15.8.1968 66
110	Sac. OCHOA Giuseppe	18.3.1900	La Plata	La Plata (Arg.)	24.7.1968 68
111	Coad. PERILLA Giacinto	3.6.1913	Bogotá	Bogotá (Colombia)	21.8.1968 55
112	Coad. PORTELLA Magino	5.3.1902	Bilbao	Bilbao (Spagna)	28.8.1968 66
113	Coad. PRECIADO Simone	28.10.1887	Bogotá	Tena (Colombia)	1.8.1968 80
114	Sac. PUERTAS Giuseppe	23.9.1886	Valencia	Valencia (Spagna)	28.8.1968 81
115	Coad. RICHARD Paolo	2.9.1894	Lyon	Marseille (Francia)	3.7.1968 73
116	Sac. ROCHARD Angelo	5.6.1882	Lyon	Gradignan (Francia)	21.8.1968 86
117	Sac. SALUSTIO Giacomo R.	15.3.1921	La Plata	Miramar (Argentina)	24.7.1968 47
118	Sac. SMETEK Michele	9.9.1904	Lodz	Luszkowko (Polonia)	14.9.1968 64
119	Sac. TRIFARI Luigi	3.12.1897	New Rochelle	Birmingham (USA)	23.6.1968 70
120	Sac. TROJAN Carlo G.	7.11.1913	Koln	Koln-Mulheim (Ger.)	26.8.1968 54
121	Sac. TSUCHIYA Francesco	6.9.1931	Giappone	Tokyo	15.7.1968 36
122	Mons. TURCIOS Giuseppe	1.9.1884	Am. Cen.	S. José de Costa Rica	12.7.1968 83

