



# ACTS OF THE SUPERIOR COUNCIL

## OF THE SALESIAN SOCIETY

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## I. LETTER OF THE RECTOR MAJOR

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Turin, 24th May, 1969

*My dear confreres and sons,*

I am happy to take time to treat with you of an event which is rightly the centre of our thoughts and the focus of the activities and interests of the whole Congregation, an event on which our common hopes centre, even if understandably tinged somewhat with a certain sense of anxiety. You will have guessed immediately that I intend to speak of our Special General Chapter and of all the preparatory work attendant upon it.

We are all convinced that we are here dealing with an event that surpasses by far the ordinary life of the Congregation. It is enough merely to consider the fact that it is a quite exceptional happening, unique not only in the history of our own Congregation, but in that of all religious families. It is no exaggeration therefore to state that this Chapter (and its adequate preparation) is bound up with the very life of the Congregation in the proximate future and with its vital place in the Church and in the world along the path assigned to it by Divine Providence. We can safely say that we are dealing with an historical event, or rather with a unique and decisive appointment to which the Church invites the Congregation, and it is up to every one of us to keep that appointment.

Do you recall the words of Paul VI to the members of the 19th General Chapter? After stating that « the Salesians represent one of the most noteworthy, most beneficent, most exemplary and promising facts of Catholicism of the last and of this present century », he added verbatim: « And please God it will be so in those yet to come ». It is true that the words of the Pontiff express a wish, but they also contain a warning which should make us reflect.

The Special Chapter, towards which we are all working, should be held precisely to ensure that the high praise of the Pope and of the Church for the Salesians of the first hundred years may be well merited also by those of the future. Hence you will not be surprised that I speak again on this subject, since by the will of the Church of the Council each one of us is called, according to his abilities, to give his own responsible contribution towards the happy outcome of this extraordinary undertaking.

### **All involved in the Special Chapter**

Thanks be to God, from news received up to date, I can at once say that in all the provinces there is consoling evidence of diligent preparation for the First Special Provincial Chapter. This shows a general awareness that the success of the Special Chapter is bound up in great part with the active participation of all the confreres in the various phases of study and preparation. This it is that has inspired and animated the accurate and methodical work done first at community level and then in the preparatory commissions — a work of progressive sensitization, opportunely documented, with reports and studies made by qualified confreres.

More ample news regarding preparations for the General Chapter can be found in a special section prepared by the Central Office for Coordination. This will appear regularly in the *Acts of the Superior Council*. Here, however, I would like to thank those Provincial Chapters which, at the time they were held, wished to express to myself and the Superiors their filial affection and above all their common sentiments of love and fidelity regarding Don Bosco.

Everything makes me hope that the draft-outlines that will be sent by the Provincial Chapters will constitute a very rich and significant basis for the programme of preparations we have still to cover before the Special General Chapter.

We are all aware that this task in which we are engaged is exceptionally vast and complex. It has to deal with problems that concern the

very life of the Congregation and our personal response to God, to the Church and to modern society. Hence it is not surprising that there should exist also shadows, doubts and perplexities, and that consequently, when confronted by the variety of opinions and susceptibilities, tensions can also arise. However, precisely in view of all these real and serious difficulties, it seems to me that we must keep well in mind certain principles and directives that can help smooth our way, enable us to see clearly and to walk securely along the right path of the preparatory programme we have to undertake, in order to arrive happily at our goal.

It has been said by someone who has acquired great experience of Special Chapters that their success is largely conditioned by their preparation. I also am convinced of this, and the considerations that follow are the witness of my concern.

## Two key-points of renewal

We have heard a thousand times that the Special Chapter has as its scope to study the « renewal » of the Congregation, that « appropriate renewal » referred to by the Council and by post-conciliar documents. By now there should be no doubt about the meaning of this term; yet sometimes, for various reasons, it is found to be interpreted in quite different, even opposite, onesided, radical, minimalist ways, as the case may be. This happens especially because of the emotional element that often confronts the problem of renewal; and from this, as we have hinted, there arise inevitably subjective or limited views, and from these again, unfortunately, also ideological and practical extremes.

Speaking of *Perfectae Caritatis*, Fr. Yves Congar, after affirming that it constitutes the basic foundation and « summa » of the religious life, adds: « We should refer back to it each time that we are confronted with or have to explain any topic whatsoever that refers to the religious life. We cannot talk about renewal of the religious life without keeping this decree continually in mind, for that is precisely its very core » (*Rinnovamento della Vita Religiosa*: Various authors, Vallecchi).

Now, the « appropriate renewal », spoken of by the decree, urges a constant return to the sources of very form of Christian life and to the original spirit of the Institutes, with, at the same time, an adaptation of the Institutes themselves to the changed conditions of the times (*P.C.*, 2; *E.S.* II, 1).

This twofold directive — due regard to the needs of to-day and, *inseparably united*, a renewal of contact with the original spirit — is the guiding-line along which we must then proceed, if we wish to bring about the renewal of the Congregation.

Albeit in another way, Fr. Tillard insists on this clear and basic principle, saying: « It is necessary to keep in constant alignment the movement towards the source from which flows the lifeblood of religion, and the movement towards the world of to-day. From this arises a situation of tension — disturbing yet always on the search — into which religious life is plunged by this twofold movement » (*Op. cit.*).

Fr. Congar is also anxious to clarify this twofold principle, saying: « A reform is not a “revolution”, for it respects continuity; nor is it even a “restoration”, for it does not seek to re-establish what was there before ». And he continues: « If I seek only conformity to the present situation, there will never be reform. If I just want things to be different, that too will not be reform. I must not preserve a mere dull fidelity, adapted only to the present shape of things. It is necessary that my fidelity should take into account the future also, whilst leaning on its origins: in short, I must take into account both the past and the future! » (in *La Croix*, 24-10-1968).

One cannot stress sufficiently that our renewal must rest simultaneously on those two equally essential points. Even if it may seem paradoxical, in order to be authentic and fruitful our fidelity must be aimed at the past and the present.

### **Return to the sources**

In reality, the incessant return to the sources of all Christian life means going back to the Gospel. That is the original kernel of the

religious spirit, the inspiring source of prayer, doctrine and apostolate. It is the text for religious formation. A religious is born from the Gospel, matures in the Gospel, works on the Gospel, is a man of the Gospel. Only by looking at the Gospel can one carry out that following of Christ which is the supreme rule of all religious life.

But the Holy Spirit has inspired different ways and means of carrying out the following of Christ, giving rise to various religious institutes founded by men particularly docile to His action (cf. *L. G.*, 43).

Our own Congregation, raised by the Holy Spirit, founded by our beloved Father and recognized by the Church, has its own mission, its own "charism", spirit and style. All this is a heritage that the Church and the Council wish us to fully recognize, something to be clearly identified in its enduring essentiality. It must not be wasted or be allowed to become rusty through the passing of time; but like new and fresh blood it must constantly nourish the Congregation on its march through history.

Quite obvious, then, should be the importance of the knowledge and study of our origins, of Don Bosco, of his method of work, his way of thinking, his characteristic spirit. We must distinguish also between what appeared in him to be merely accidental and passing, as the result of his adaptability to the actual times in which he happened to live; and, on the other hand, what was a consistent idea projected into the future in order to carry out his mission, beyond his own particular circumstances and lifetime.

It would be unthinkable for us to proceed towards the renewal of our Congregation without referring back to our origins, without in fact steeping ourselves in all that concerns them. How could we seriously and conscientiously discuss the mind of Don Bosco, our mission in the Church and in society, the Salesian spirit, and the constitutions, which are the palpable expression of all these, without first doing such research? Even a mere student, without our preoccupations and responsibility concerning vitally important decisions and directions, would feel it his duty to make such a study, even for the sake of mere historical truth. In my opinion, therefore, no confidence should be

placed in anyone desiring to propose revisions and reforms in the Congregation, who has not first prepared himself by such previous study.

I heartily applaud those many confreres who feel the need and duty of briefing themselves, by a serious study of various phases in our history, regarding either our original set-up or the succeeding generations, before taking part in reports and proposals on the various themes to be treated of in the General Chapter. This shows a sense of responsibility and a consciousness of the vital importance of the matter in hand and of the consequences to which one exposes the Congregation, if we try to solve problems without having first evaluated them in all their various aspects.

### **Know Don Bosco: an essential duty**

I take this occasion to enlarge on this appeal, extending it even far beyond the General Chapter. We are Salesians, spiritual sons of Saint John Bosco. In order, then, to be truly and fully Salesian, obviously it is not enough just to be professed and to be doing Salesian work or to live in a Salesian community. In order really to be true and observant sons of Don Bosco, and not just call ourselves "Salesians", we must know our Father, his character, his mind, his characteristics, his unique spirit, his pedagogy. From this knowledge will come appreciation, true evaluation and love itself for all that Don Bosco means and represents for the Congregation and the Church.

We must admit it: If here and there it is noticed in our communities that Don Bosco seems less present in the life and activities of some who are called his sons, by no means the last reason lies in the fact that they do not bother to acquire an adequate and intimate knowledge of him who is our common Father, the Founder of the three great Salesians families, the great and humble servant of the Church.

The invitation to know and study Don Bosco is certainly neither parochialism nor triumphalism — it is merely to recall an elementary



and consistent duty urged on each religious institute by the Church and the Council.

Through our Salesian vocation we are called to be men of the Gospel, but according to the grace of our Founder; we must link up with the Gospel through the person of Don Bosco; we must, as one author puts it, participate in the « shock » caused by the encounter between Founder and Gospel. « Life is marked from the start. The tree lives from its roots » (Paul VI, 7-3-1969).

Yet how is all this possible without knowing — not merely superficially or in an amateurish way — the patrimony that lies in the person, the life, the thought of Don Bosco, the true and vital source of our special Salesian vocation? Your own intelligence and, more still, your sincere and authentic love for Don Bosco and for your vocation itself will draw sound conclusions from these words of mine.

But let us return to our theme.

### **Open to the signs of the times**

The other key-point of our renewal is « adaptation to the present times ». Here there is involved a need of the Church itself. The Church, in fact, « cannot refuse to take into consideration her association with the world, an association that is in fact one of opposition to the world and yet one of penetration of the world, of permeating it through the Gospel » (E. Ancilli, *Vita religiosa e Concilio Vaticano*).

The difficulty lies in discerning between what to reject and what to adopt. However, this does not authorize us to shirk the problem. On the contrary, it invites us towards a humble research, towards a living combination of both modern values and those which are old and permanent. In such research let us keep well in mind that « adaptation » cannot be just an indiscriminate approach to the world that makes us adopt all its ways of thinking and living.

Religious life cannot and must not take the world as its criterion. Let us bear in mind how easy it is for us to be mistaken in trying to adapt ourselves to a world that is in itself ambiguous.

Adaptation cannot be translated into a « sharing of what of itself cannot be shared. Rather it is an approaching, armed with the standards of God, in order to see reality as God sees it, and to love as God loves — with that love, namely, that knows how to approach the world in order to elevate and enrich it, without allowing itself to be influenced by its spirit » (Molinari: Commentary on *Perfectae Caritatis*).

As I said earlier, we are dealing with a necessary undertaking, one of extreme delicacy, since it concerns our whole life in its asceticism and discipline, formation and government, apostolate and collaboration. It has to do with a renewal « of such vastness that it cannot be restricted merely to just some sections. Association with the modern world, relationships between religious themselves, religious practices directly concerning prayer, activities and common life — these are things that cannot be isolated. Renewal in any one sector requires modification also in the others ».

Because of the tremendous vastness and complexity of the problems involved, because of the delicacy and difficulties in evaluating and making vital decisions, renewal requires of all of us — but especially of those who have the responsibility of preparing and presenting the proposals and directives — a compendium of convictions and attitudes that should be for us a safe guide in all our work on behalf of the Congregation. Let us point out some of these.

### **Extremes are not constructive**

First of all, in regard to the Special Chapter let us seek incessantly in all our activities to maintain great serenity combined with a constant sense of balance.

As we learn only too sadly from daily experience, extremes are never fruitful of true good. Hence let me say to those who consider themselves progressives: Beware lest your attitude become merely a mania for novelty — just for the sake of novelty! To the so-called conservatives I say: Beware lest your attachment to the past become a mere sterile and unreasonable stubbornness.

Progressives and conservatives alike « can be only very slightly moved by the impulse of the Holy Spirit; they can instead be much deceived unawares by their own temperament and by their own subconscious experiences » (*Rivista di Ascetica e Mistica*, Nov. 1965).

Pascal would aptly say about such persons: « Wrong is never done so fully and so happily as when under pretext of a principle of conscience...! » (*Pensieri*, p. 895).

I would like to add another observation. The terms « progressive » and « conservative » do not indicate attitudes meant to be opposed; rather, they should be integrated, for there is no progress without tradition, and no tradition without progress. Openness to the signs of the times does not compromise the truth to which we should always be witnesses.

More explicitly, it is beyond discussion that certain changes there must be and they will have to be carried out, but this has nothing to do with any mania for unreasonable innovations. Changes are justified only « when they concern great and obvious utility ».

On the other hand, however, it is not lawful to deny the necessity of changes, merely because we do not wish to modify our own way of living. Even if unconsciously, beneath a show of love for tradition other motives can hide: renewal is inconvenient, it doesn't fit in with our own mental habits, it obliges us to a different style of life... and so we deny the necessity for it.

### **Study and experience: complementary forces**

Finally, it seems to me that the thought I expressed during a rather tense moment to the members of the 19th General Chapter still holds good: « No one of us has a monopoly of truth and no one of us has to hand the solutions of all problems [neither the progressive, nor the conservative]. Truth is a mosaic, which is the result of a vast number of small elements brought together by the attentive and concentrated study of many artists. To recognize fully that no one has the monopoly of truth is indeed true humility and true understanding » (*A.G.C. XIX*, p. 314).

No one has everything, no one is complete, no one can say everything about any subject. The man of study, for instance, can certainly make a most valuable contribution to our renewal by his learning; but let us say at once that by learning we do not mean an even profound knowledge of certain departmental subjects, still less can one speak of being learned simply because he has read many books and certain periodicals. For us, and not for us alone, true learning is a deep study of many subjects, a well considered comparing of opinions and theses, before coming to any conclusion.

But can even authentic learning, the sacred sciences and their auxiliary subjects, that are so greatly appreciated to-day, by themselves give the last and definitive word concerning our renewal?

Precisely concerning such subjects of primary importance as these the Council and the post-conciliar documents are anxious that they should be pastoral. This is only right since they are to serve not a non-existent world, but man as he is to-day, man as an individual, a member of ecclesial society and a citizen of the earth. Very well then, the renewal towards which we are working is to be an intensely « human » affair, meant to serve men and to be carried out by men living in the world of Salesian reality. How, then, can the mere man of study surrounded by his books, even though he be rich in true culture, have the decisive say in our renewal?

Clearly, the theologian, the historian and the sociologist are men of value in the working out of the apostolate, but they need to be complemented by those who experience the reality of work, of a family, of a parish, of a school. So, too, in our renewal we do need the opinions of men of study, but these must obviously be integrated with those of the others who are thoroughly involved in living out the various functions, experience and practice of Salesian reality.

### **A relationship rich in charity**

And here let us say something about the relationship between young and old, for here too it would be unrealistic to believe that either the young or the old have the exclusive formula for renewal.

Quite true, the old are inclined to prudence; they love the past, seeing in it the golden thread of sound tradition; the skein of their own life is fast unwinding, and they easily notice imprudence, intemperance and deviations. Their attitude can be explained psychologically and at times it resolves itself into either a tranquil acquiescence or else a self-righteous defence of the *status quo*.

On the other side we find the young who chafe at the leash and protest — an echo of the deep torment that racks the present period of transition and crisis. In the name of action they hoist the flag of super-activity, action for action's sake, without definite aims. They are ready to make their own every last article of any « advanced » periodical, discussing everything, accusing everything, including the structures of the Church, celibacy, religious and Salesian life, the meaning of the vows, the exercise of our apostolate. Alas, an uncontrolled extremism!

But alongside these extremes one can also find elements that are very sound. For example, take the young person who does not repudiate sound, living tradition, but cannot bear wishy-washy customs that seem to lie under layers of dust; he looks ahead, into the distance, towards a future not without risks, but rich also in promise. He complains that the human element has placed a brake on the fulfilment of the desires of the Council and of the 19th General Chapter. His tension, however, is animated by a preoccupation about authenticity; he senses, even if not clearly, that the Council has dynamically opened up new vistas for the Church and for the Congregation and so he waits, with a certain feeling of impatience, for things to happen.

Before this obviously incomplete but sufficiently indicative picture, what can we say? Once more, simply: No one has all the answers! Some things are of value, others are useless — and this can apply equally to the old and the young.

What then? The conclusion is obvious: only a knowledge of one's limits that comes from maturity; only the understanding of the positive values that are to be found in the attitudes of my « opponent »; only an exchange of ideas and evaluations between young and old, together with mutual esteem and charity, can transform the natural tension between the generations into a valuable source of energy for the

Congregation. In this way we can avoid Scylla, without rushing into Charybdis, and thus render an invaluable service to the Congregation.

As a conclusion to these remarks a witty saying attributed to Pope John will be both pleasant and useful: During the Council, worried because the older men wished to concede nothing to the younger ones, who wished to change everything, a group of prelates asked Pope John's advice. This was his wise reply: « Tell the old ones that the world will continue after them; tell the young that it existed before them! ». No comment needed!

Let us, then, strive for a spirit of collaboration; let us unite, let us make ourselves receptive to one another, thus giving precious service to the Congregation.

#### **« Let us wait for one another »**

But as I have already said, this attitude inevitably supposes and postulates a sincere sense of humility, an honest and intelligent sense of one's own limits, and consequently an absence of any presumptuous air of pessimistic prophecy; it demands respect for others, even when they do not think as we do.

Cardinal Garrone speaks precisely of certain calls to prophesying, that are « not all fraudulent, even though many are imaginary. We must therefore keep our eyes open: God does not multiply prophets and one needs time in order to test the value of their message ». One might add that there is need also to take note of the style, tone, methods of work and, above all, of the life of such " prophets ", to see whether they lend credit to the goodness of their message.

Indeed one can be rather perplexed when faced with certain forms of dogmatism, certain peremptory statements, certain violent alternatives on the part of some people, regarding renewal. This all the more so, when coming from those who are obviously unprepared or indeed without that experience of life, which is an irreplaceable component for serious treatment of the problems of renewal; or coming from those who set no good example of religious life.

One's perplexity, moreover, is increased when one is confronted with certain methods equivalent to psychological pressure, that tend to force assent at all costs to one's own opinions, even when these are derived from rather bold and very debatable theories.

My dear confreres, I ardently implore that no one in our family should follow this path, for it is the wrong one, full of dangers, harmful beyond doubt.

It is quite obvious that the clearness and sincerity, with which we have the right and duty to assert what in conscience we believe to correspond with the good of the Congregation, cannot and must not be divorced from respect for all the individual confreres, from circumspection and a reflective mind, that bases each judgment on concrete situations, so that, in a vision as complete as possible, they may be evaluated from all angles, both negative and positive.

If we disregard such criteria, among other things we run the risk of starting something that will give results that are the very opposite of what is desired. Indeed there is a psychological mechanism of defence that tends to cause even ideas, proposals and observations, that are completely or partially sound, to be rejected as a whole if, when presented, they are, as it were, suffocated by a whole lot of sharp judgments, facile condemnations, or an overbearing tone. Yet one must also say that, when ideas are imposed in this way, they end up by provoking completely opposite reactions, for each extreme fatally produces yet another.

Opportune are the words of Cardinal Döpfner, when he calls for what he terms patience, but has nothing to do with immobility; rather, it is a wise understanding, i.e. humility and charity combined. Here are his actual words, full of human and Christian wisdom:

« Let us wait for one another, with that patience of God that is manifest in Christ: let those in front wait for those who need more time; let those who appreciate what has already been accomplished be disposed to welcome what is new. Speaking of "patience" may seem a cheap pretext for not taking the necessary steps, whereas the greatest danger to-day seems to be precisely an impatience that is the fruit of *zeal without charity* » (*Pastoral letter*, 1968).

Patient and respectful humility towards others finds its roots and strength in the purity of our motives, and it is not out of place to speak here of purity of intention. Ancient and modern history teach us that human pride is multiform and subtle; and even without notice it can insinuate itself into the very folds of our soul. Long ago St. Augustine warned: « It is easy to mistake subjective truth for the real Truth ». There is constant need to verify things before God and the Congregation: ours must be constantly a sincere and serene search for the good of the Congregation. To ensure this « sincere search for the good of the Congregation » in all our observations, let us always ask ourselves if our zeal is, as the Archbishop of Munich said, *with or without charity*. The possible absence of charity (and it can assume many forms) in our preparation for the Special Chapter should make us seriously doubt the goodness of our work and its constructive efficacy. St. Francis de Sales observes that violence — which is the same as lack of charity — no matter under what form, can never be a weapon of charity.

### **Avoid irritation!**

Perhaps it will be useful to come down to more practical applications regarding this subject.

I like to think that you are convinced that the Superiors desire the collaboration of all the confreres — a collaboration given with full liberty and, for that very reason, with a high sense of responsibility. The programme of preparations for the Chapter demands this and promotes it in so many ways, in the various phases of its work. We gratefully welcome, then, every form of collaboration, and give great attention and sincere evaluation to all suggestions, remarks and observations. The official programme provides that either individual confreres or groups can send to the Provincial Chapter or directly to the Central Office for Coordination their proposals, study-schemes and other documents.

In this very area, however, I must say that there have arrived from



various parts of the Congregation certain apprehensions, perplexities and even criticisms from not a few confreres, some of whom are well qualified, open and sensitive to the real needs of renewal; and one cannot say that their reactions are entirely unfounded. These confreres refer to the fact that circulars emanating from individuals or groups are being distributed, urging certain changes. However, they are not being sent to the Provincial Preparatory Commission, nor to the Central Commission, but practically to the whole Congregation. Outside of the special set-up in which they were thought out and drawn up, such writings often cause confusion and alarm or strong reactions, instead of being instruments of constructive clarification.

My dear confreres and sons, I want to assure you that all ideas, proposals and suggestions will be received and weighed according to their merits. Further guarantee of this are the pre-capitular Central Commissions, whose set-up is vast and composite — as you can see for yourself in another part of these *Acts*. Confreres from all the continents, priests and coadjutors, make up these commissions, men of great learning in many different fields and rich in experience, alongside younger ones too. They deserve all our confidence.

But let us avoid transforming our preparation for the Special Chapter, from something that can be very valuable and decisive, into something quite different, something that could definitely wipe out the very attainment of the purposes proposed. These purposes may well be summed up in a few words: to give renewed life to the Congregation, a life that is youthfully fresh and dynamic, a life ever richly fruitful in its authentic vocation, such as Don Bosco assigned to it.

### **Love and understand the Congregation to renew it**

It has been said that the desire for the renewal of the Congregation is a sign of sincere love for it. It is not just a mere rhetorical figure of speech to say that the Congregation is our Mother. Precisely because we are her sons, we love her positively; and this should make us desire to free her from any sclerosis that may have set in over the years; we wish to rejuvenate her by restoring her overtaxed energies;

we want to give back to her the enthusiasm and the ardour of her early youth.

But this practical love can never express itself in contempt for the Congregation for its past — remote or proximate — contempt for the men who accompanied her in her birth and development, for all those norms and standards that have guided her in the past and still hold good.

A sure sign of love is an understanding of the one loved. Since then we love the Congregation — and if anyone doesn't, then he is *de facto* outside of our family — we understand that if to-day we see so many things under new and more sensitive aspects, responding to social and psychological situations and evolutions, together with change of customs and the occurrence of new things even in the Church, then that does not in fact authorize us to condemn a past that responded definitely to situations vastly different from our own. A mother who has spent so much time in weaving cloth by hand is surely not going to be unkindly condemned by a loving and intelligent son just because of modern automation!

This love, then, which makes for understanding, will take into account that the Congregation is a *sui generis* entity: it is not a philanthropic society, nor a political one, nor is it a workmen's cooperative, a syndicate, an industrial or commercial society. The Congregation has eminently supernatural, apostolic and religious aims: we in the Congregation, united by the bond of charity, wish to work and to live our consecration in an apostolate characterized by the spirit of Don Bosco.

The changes, transformations and criteria of renewal must respect and keep these realities in mind: love must respond to the needs of the thing loved. The Church has entrusted us with the task of renewing the religious life in the Salesian Congregation: we are not asked to create another Congregation, or even to change it into any other kind of organization for good or apostolate.

It is well, then, that in our work we make use of other helpful knowledge that takes into account the human and social realities in which we have to live. Let us also study seriously those documents

which are obviously the best qualified to enlighten us on the not easy path of renewal. Who would be so bold as to think that he can do without them?

It is also indispensable that we allow ourselves to be guided indeed by the signs of the times and by all those helps that can come from scientific and technical sources, but, above all, it is the voice of Christ and the Church, and fidelity to the "charism" and spirit of the Founder that should guide us. Let us recall, too, that Don Bosco often repeated that he conceived and developed the Congregation as a clear inspiration from on high and with the extraordinarily loving assistance of Mary Help of Christians.

Such thoughts come spontaneously to mind when we are confronted by certain writings being circulated here and there, in which the inspiration, motivation and suggestions are taken totally from authors whose authority we do not wish to dispute, but which completely or almost totally exclude the voice of the Church, the Council, the ordinary magisterium of the Pope. It is the Holy Father who has offered, and continues to give, the most authoritative interpretation and application of the Council. And, lastly, these things are so contrary to the mind and words of Don Bosco, of which we certainly have an abundance.

### **All efforts vain without true conversion**

Before concluding this letter, in order to ensure that all our preparatory work for the Special Chapter has a firm foundation and clear objective, I wish to recall to the minds of all what is the key-point of the whole decree *Perfectae Caritatis*, viz., that renewal must not be merely superficial (cf. 18). The solution of all our problems, whether general or particular, lies in the spirit that must animate the decisions that will have to be taken. This tells us that the problem of the adaptation of the Congregation is a profound reality and essentially one of « conversion » — a thought often repeated by Paul VI on many occasions. To be faithful to Christ and to the Church in the modern world, and in consequence to Don Bosco, our Father and Founder,

we are invited to « conversion ». This action should frequently lead to a real right-about-face of traditional positions, to a new mentality and sensibility in the fields of knowledge, life, formation and apostolate.

All this, however, cannot come about without an adequate preparation of the spirit; but it is the only way to be truly faithful to our Father and to the Church of to-day.

The Council and then the Pope, as we have already said, have placed this principle clearly in evidence: without spiritual and interior renewal, « even the most desirable changes made on behalf of contemporary needs will fail of their purpose » (*P.C.* 2).

The techniques, consultations, auxiliary sciences, programmes, and therefore the new structures, the new methods, etc., we must certainly put into action; but all this even valuable work will in practice come to nothing, if the soul is missing. Hence I repeat that we are not being called upon to create any sort of new organization, even for a good purpose, but to renew the spirit and apostolic life of the souls consecrated in the family of Don Bosco — the souls of the Salesians of to-day and of tomorrow — and what will lead to that end is above all the intensification of the interior life.

Von Balthasar affirms that in order to cure anything, the critic must first have love: « All the great saints, endowed as they were with true love, were reformers. But not all the reformers were saints, and hence some of them destroyed more than they constructed ».

If in the Congregation, as individuals or as communities, we take intense care of the interior life, prayer, union with God, the spirit of sacrifice, love of neighbour, love of the Church and Don Bosco, then our religious vitality will efficaciously solve the problems of adaptation that the present times demand. Organisms that are alive easily adapt themselves; when there is no true life, there can be no true adaptation.

### **Our task has need of a soul**

As you see, definitely and basically, the problem that confronts us in the Special Chapter is one that is essentially spiritual. On this account let us remember that without the intervention of God, who is

the true « constructor of our house », we labour in vain. Let us, then, intensify our prayer, for there is no more efficacious way to secure the active presence of God in all our attempts to renew the edifice of our beloved Congregation.

Pray, therefore! I note with pleasure that in many provinces special note is being taken of this and the confreres are being urged to accompany the work of the Special Chapter with prayer that is living, authentic and enriched by charity and suffering.

Pray! Yet even this word seems at times to come under discussion in our days. I have read with sorrow what a journalist says at the conclusion of a large inquiry into the crisis and religious ferment in various countries of Europe. He says that more than once on encountering religious and priests, who were intensely interested in the problems of renewal in the Church, he found that they seemed to be at a loss when it came to speaking about sanctity, and were uncomfortable when the conversation was about prayer.

Whilst we do not wish to take this statement as a general fact, still less as applicable to our own family, nevertheless it can be a warning for us all, and all the more so since far more authoritative appeals have been heard in the Church than that of this journalist.

Let us listen, for example, to the words of Cardinal Garrone:

« What is the level of prayer in the Church? Those who are responsible for delivering drinking water in a city never lose sight of the deep layer from which the springs gush forth. Those who bear the weight of the Church are deeply distressed to see, from so many signs, the decline of prayer in priests carried away by action, having lost the habit of Eucharistic adoration, of prayer, even of the breviary. What will become of the faithful, if their pastors are in this state? What can be hoped for from the researches in progress, from the new structures, if the inquiry is not nourished with prayer and has not yielded the solutions required? The religious communities that are trying to renew themselves must be certain that their problems, which require the study of elements of every kind, will never be solved, if the atmosphere in which their work is carried out is not the supernatural atmosphere of faith and prayer.

« The Church feels the need of prophets to point out her way. But it is more necessary for her to feel the need of holiness. She must look to the models who, in the course of the centuries, have won her trust more by holiness than by exterior deeds. Then she will have nothing to fear. Then she will not run the risk of failing to recognize the value of patient investigations, observations and studies, but she will not confuse technical instruments with spiritual forces and, more or less, the end with the means. Then, above all, having established herself permanently in truth, she will draw new hope from it » (*Osservatore Romano*, Engl. edition, 10-4-1969).

My dear confreres, I invite you to meditate on those enlightened words of warning. They should serve to persuade us that in our filial contact with God we will find all the energy that is needed in such a difficult and delicate task as our renewal. We shall never obtain it merely from human techniques and knowledge, nor from all our own most praiseworthy ingenuity. Our renewal is not a simple desk problem. Prayer will give us security and comfort in the difficulties and doubts that we will encounter on the path still ahead; prayer will increase our charity, for God is love. And since God is also truth, prayer will ensure concord even amid the variety of attitudes in our sincere search for all that will truly give renewed vigour to our beloved Congregation.

### **With the same spirit as Don Bosco's first sons**

United in prayer and charity, we shall feel united to our Father. All of us, old and young, coadjutors and priests, men of study and missionaries, staff of houses of formation and those in training, we shall all draw close to our Father with the same sentiments as those first confreres of ours, more than a century ago, at the dawn of the Congregation.

Do you remember those words? They sound like an oath: « In whatever place he may find himself, even if all our companions were to be dispersed, even if there were only two left, even if only one

remained, each one of us will strive to promote this pious Society and to observe its rules as far as possible » (*M.B.* VI, 630). « To promote our Congregation », i.e. to help it to develop, as Paul VI has urged us — but according to the mind of the Church and as Don Bosco would wish.

Let, then, the firm will of those who saw the birth of the Congregation be ours also. To our lot it falls to be, in a certain sense, the builders and collaborators in the re-birth of the Congregation, for this is basically the meaning of renewal. In this vital action to which we have the privilege of being called by the Church, let us all feel that sense of *devotion*, of *fidelity* and of *love* towards Don Bosco that animated our first confreres. Then indeed there will be success: the Virgin Help of Christians who guided the steps of our Father at the birth and progress of the Congregation, will be for us also our Guide and Mistress in our work.

Whilst greeting you affectionately, I ask you to pray each day for me and for all my intentions and needs. I never forget you. May God bless and comfort you.

Father Aloysius Ricceri  
*Rector Major*

## II. SPECIAL GENERAL CHAPTER

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### *Communications and information from the Central Office for Coordination*

#### **1. The preparation for the First Special Provincial Chapter**

The news received from the provinces regarding the preparation for the First Special Provincial Chapter enables us to give the confreres a synthetic but sufficiently clear view of the work done throughout the Congregation. In this report we follow the order of tasks and objectives proposed by the programme of preparations for the General Chapter for the period January-May, 1969.

##### *A. Work of arousing the interest and participation of the confreres*

Widespread satisfaction was expressed at the Rector Major's initiative in wishing to start the preparations for the Chapter with a personal letter to each confrere, asking for the active participation of each one with regard to ideas and proposals for that « renewal in fidelity » that the Church demands to-day.

In all the provinces, as soon as the official communication re: the Special General Chapter arrived, the Provincial Council met in order to study how to set the work on foot in the various houses and at a provincial level.

Everywhere a Provincial Preparatory Commission was first of all set up. In some cases the members were nominated directly by the Provincial after hearing his Council. In other provinces consultations



and suggestions were invited for its composition as a representative body. In other cases the members of the Preparatory Commission were elected by the confreres.

In order to present the general themes of the Special Chapter to the confreres and to request and facilitate effective collaboration from each one, it was thought opportune in many provinces to send to the houses the members of the Preparatory Commission or other qualified confreres to start discussions in the councils-of-action, spontaneous groups or with the entire community. Almost everywhere provincial meetings were then held, sometimes inter-provincial gatherings for various categories, e.g. Rectors, teachers, coadjutors, clerics, departmental heads, etc.

As the work gradually got under way and the problems were spotlighted, various types of public-opinion polls were held at all levels, and not a few provinces prepared ample questionnaires.

Some provinces have likewise noted the collaboration of the Provincial Delegates in organizing ample opinion-polls among Cooperators, past and present pupils, and those persons, such as the diocesan clergy, other religious and laity, who are our collaborators, know our activities, or live in places where our influence should be felt. Their replies, even before being examined at provincial and central level, have often given reason for reflection and for renewed zeal at the local level where they were formulated. Where, through lack of time, all this has not been possible, it will be done later.

The replies, proposals and remarks of the confreres contributed efficaciously to the work of the Provincial Commissions, which in each province were subdivided into sub-commissions for the study of each of the principal themes, and in each case they tried to keep the confreres informed of the progress of their work.

In those provinces that periodically publish newsletters in the cause of unity among the confreres, special numbers were printed or duplicated giving notices, further queries, minutes of commission meetings, directives, etc. In other provinces a special information service was started for the houses and individual confreres.

For the deeper study of each theme under discussion these publi-

cations also gave bibliographies, titles of Salesian and other religious works, documents of episcopal conferences, etc.

At the conclusion of this work, in some provinces, before the Special Provincial Chapter was held, there were gatherings of confreres of one or more sessions in order to give ample opportunity for discussion.

### *B. Spiritual preparation for the Chapter*

In various ways in almost every province it was emphasized that the renewal expected is primarily, as the Rector Major has written, « interior, spiritual, apostolic, founded on our conformity to Christ, on faithfulness to both the essential charism of Don Bosco and the signs of the times » (A.C.S. 254, p. 6).

As a result of this, in various provinces there were special days of retreat and prayer for the confreres, and the interest of the boys was also aroused, whilst special prayers were requested from cloistered communities. In other cases, as part of the spiritual preparation, most of the monthly and quarterly retreats were oriented towards this.

### *C. Clarification of themes; Study Commissions*

From the very outset the general themes presented in the A.S.C. were recognized as extremely rich in content, with very many theological, historical, juridical and functional implications.

Because of this, commissions of study were everywhere set up, either in individual houses or at provincial level. Many confreres formed spontaneous groups for deep study, and in some cases even non-Salesians were called in as experts for the sake of greater information re: our problems and needs. The work in general was conducted with a sense of responsibility and diligence and with really satisfying results, in spite of the objective difficulties which at present beset our Salesian life and Congregation.

Almost everywhere the pre-capitular commissions and sub-commissions, charged with deeper study of the general themes, held their meetings methodically, keeping contact with the confreres and distribu-

ting to them the minutes, results and documents of their own meetings.

In some provinces the proposals and observations of the confreres regarding each point of the single themes were drawn up in schematic form, clearly, systematically and anonymously, so that the Chapter Commissions could consult them quite easily. Others preferred to present the proposals, together with the number of confreres supporting each, as a supplementary document.

The fruit of all this laborious effort of the commissions were the draft reports on the four themes presented for study and discussion to the Provincial Chapter. These draft reports, in the majority of cases, were placed sufficiently in advance at the disposition of the members of the Provincial Chapter, so that they would be the better prepared for it.

Quite a number of these pre-capitular draft reports have been kindly sent to this Central Office for our information, and we think we can affirm quite truthfully that they are proof of valuable work in every respect: content, documentation and technical presentation.

#### *D. The elections*

There were few difficulties presented to this Central Office regarding the elections for the Provincial Chapters and they concerned technical points and procedure.

The traditional system allowed for the election of the delegates of the single houses to be held without inconvenience, together with the extensions concerning non-regular houses as noted in A.S.C. 255, p. 4.

The enlarging of the Provincial Chapter, making it more representative, has been welcomed with great pleasure.

For the election of the delegates of the confreres from the provincial lists, it is possible that in very extensive provinces there could be hitches. Some remarks on some particular aspects of the new formula and its practical application have been received. However, the information we have in hand leads us to give a substantially posi-

tive judgment concerning the experiment, on which nevertheless only the General Chapter will be able to pronounce authoritatively.

All the provinces elected the delegates according to the method indicated in A.S.C. 255 and sent the official list of chapter members around in good time.

In many provinces a special committee of elected chapter members drew up a form of Regulation for the Provincial Chapter, sending a copy to each member elected to the Chapter. This was done in order that each could send back in good time his observations or suggestions for modification, thus enabling these to be included in a definitive text of the Regulation to be approved at the beginning of the Provincial Chapter.

On reading such Regulations it has become clearer than ever that the term « Special » has been in every way most apt for these first Chapters, desired by the programme of preparations. Of these we shall give news in the next number of the *Acts*.

## **2. The Central Pre-capitular Commissions**

At the beginning of March the Superior Council dealt with the problem of the composition of the Central Pre-capitular Commissions provided for in the programme of preparations for the Special General Chapter (A.S.C. 254, p. 11, pag. 9).

On the basis of the notices and information sent by the Provincials with their Councils to the Regional Consultors, an attempt was made to form commissions which would meet a twofold need: a vast international representation and at the same time one of such competence as to ensure the efficiency and quality of the work on hand.

An immediate start was made in requesting the consent of the confreres concerned and of their provincials. In view of the fact that the work of the commissions will take place in successive and rather long phases, both the confreres nominated and their provinces are making no light sacrifice in giving this service to the Congregation. Their presence

testifies to the lively sense of responsibility and consciousness of the pre-eminent interest that the preparations for the Special General Chapter assumes to-day.

Five commissions have been set up, one for each of the General Themes and the fifth for the review of the Constitutions and Regulations. All five will meet for the first phase of the work from June 30th until about August 20th at Rome, in our Instituto S. Tarcisio, which has been kindly placed at their disposal.

### CENTRAL PRE-CAPITULAR COMMISSIONS

#### *1st Commission: « Nature and End of the Salesian Congregation »*

Fr. Walter Bini	<i>S. Paolo</i>
Fr. Serge Chistè	<i>P.A.S.</i>
Fr. Francis Desramaut	<i>Lyons</i>
Fr. John Grehan	<i>Buenos Ayres</i>
Fr. Michael Kramer	<i>Munich</i>
Fr. Thaddeus Manfredonia	<i>Naples</i>
Fr. Paul Natali	<i>Genoa</i>
Coad. Mario Seren-Thà	<i>Central</i>
Cleric Francis Moloney	<i>Chadstone</i>

#### *2nd Commission: « Life consecrated to God in the Salesian Congregation »*

Fr. Alexander Cussianovich	<i>Lima</i>
Fr. Henry Da Rold	<i>Ancona</i>
Fr. Anthony Javierre	<i>P.A.S.</i>
Coad. Lucian Osés	<i>Barcelona</i>
Fr. Jaime Rodriguez	<i>Bogotá</i>
Fr. Joseph Thekedathu	<i>Madras</i>
Fr. Francis Valabek	<i>Bratislava</i>
Cleric Henry Baca	<i>Buenos Ayres</i>

*3rd Commission: « Formation to a consecrated life in the Salesian Congregation »*

Fr. Dominic Amoroso	<i>Catania</i>
Fr. Peter Broccardo	<i>P.A.S.</i>
Coad. Charles Gamba	<i>Central</i>
Fr. Gerard Grieb	<i>Vienna</i>
Fr. Alexander Rada	<i>Santiago</i>
Fr. John Rennkamp	<i>Cologne</i>
Fr. Thomas Swanzey	<i>London</i>
Fr. Felician Ugalde	<i>Valencia</i>
Cleric Raymond Iribertegui	<i>Caracas</i>

*4th Commission: « Structure and Government of the Congregation »*

Fr. John Caetano	<i>Lisbon</i>
Fr. Alfred Cogliandro	<i>Manila</i>
Fr. Michael Delgado	<i>Caracas</i>
Fr. Felix Dominguez	<i>Zamora</i>
Coad. Peter Gallo	<i>Rome</i>
Fr. Maurice Quartier	<i>Brusselles</i>
Fr. Pius Scilligo	<i>P.A.S.</i>
Fr. Gennaro Sesto	<i>New Rochelle</i>
Cleric Giancarlo Manieri	<i>Ancona</i>

*5th Commission: « Revision of the Constitutions and Regulations »*

Fr. Joseph Aubry	<i>Lubumbashi</i>
Fr. Gonzalo Garcia	<i>Mexico</i>
Fr. George Gozzelino	<i>P.A.S.</i>
Fr. Leopold Kasperlik	<i>Krakow</i>
Fr. Julius Perello	<i>Quito</i>
Fr. Augustine Pugliese	<i>Rome</i>
Fr. Peter Stella	<i>P.A.S.</i>
Cleric Gianmario Colombo	<i>Milan</i>

### III. INSTRUCTIONS AND NORMS

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#### **1. Guide-lines regarding the timing of the conferring of Holy Orders**

In accordance with the spirit of the Instruction « *Renovationis Causam* » it is thought best that the conferring of Holy Orders should not be arranged in a rigid fashion, with each candidate obliged to move on to the next Order after a pre-arranged period of time, but that each ordinand should select freely the moment of his own ordination.

The choice of ordination is subject to the following principles:

1) In conformity with Canon Law and any eventual privileges there is for every Order a fixed period of time before the expiry of which it may not be conferred.

2) The Studentate of Theology will determine in the course of the year certain days for the conferring of Holy Orders, and each candidate will choose freely one of these days for his own ordination.

These new guide-lines will be fully explained separately so that the Studentates of Theology may provide for their application. Their scope is to eliminate every form of moral pressure and to encourage a more personal and conscious sense of responsibility in proceeding to Holy Orders.

#### **2. Students of Philosophy in the P.A.S.**

From the commencement of the next academic year only Priests will be accepted as students in the Faculty of Philosophy of the P.A.S. The clerics enrolled up to 1959 will be able to complete their course of studies.

## IV. NOTIFICATIONS

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### **1. Extension of temporary vows for a third three-year period**

The Rector Major requested from the Sacred Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes « the faculty to extend the temporary vows of religious who are his subjects for three years, beyond the six-year period allowed by the Constitutions ».

The Sacred Congregation has granted this faculty to the Rector Major until the next General Chapter.

Those Provincials who think it opportune can apply to the Rector Major in each individual case, specifying the motivations of their request.

### **2. Nomination of Bishop**

Mgr. Alexander Obelar has been elected as Titular Bishop of Montemarano and Vicar Apostolic of Chaco Paraguayo.

### **3. Nomination of Provincials**

Fr. Alexander Machuy to the Province of Hongkong

Fr. John-Baptist Colombini to the Province of Bang-Kok (Thailand)

Fr. Emilio Vallebuona to the Province of Lima (Perù).

Fr. Joseph Vaccaro to the Province of Cordoba (Argentina).



## V. ACTIVITIES OF THE SUPERIOR COUNCIL AND PROJECTS OF GENERAL INTEREST

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During the first three months of 1969 all the members of the Superior Council were in Turin, and a full study was made of some important problems regarding the present situation in the life of the Congregation.

The Council members, divided into four commissions, drew up various reports on four groups of topics, which were afterwards studied in plenary sessions of the Council. Because of the complexity of the problems and the great variety of situations it was not always possible to arrive at a final solution, but general indications about the path to be followed were worked out. It seems useful to give a quick summary of the main arguments discussed so that the Confreres may know what is going on, and be able to devote their own thought to what is very deeply of concern for our life and for our apostolic work.

\* \* \*

The commission responsible for themes concerning religious life suggested that the Superior Council study practical ways of putting into effect the Rector Major's circular on poverty. The regional consultors have been given a programme to provide both at provincial and local levels for a more thorough application of the principles and norms stressed by the Rector Major in this important document.

An attentive study of the Holy See's Instruction « *Renovationis Causam* » provided the opportunity for taking a fresh look at all the stages and factors involved in the curriculum of formation. The Superior Council gave particular attention to the changes that can be made quickly and before the General Chapter; and has provided a few clarifications towards a genuine interpretation of the document; the regional consultors will examine with the superiors concerned the best means of putting these into effect in accordance with the relevant local requirements.

To-day the problem of vocations is very keenly felt, and was considered in the light of the most recent statistics. These provide us with serious food for thought and a thorough examination of conscience. Special attention was directed towards a diagnosis of the reasons for the falling off in applications to novitiate and for the losses during the post-novitiate years of formation.

Because the situations in the various countries where our Congregation is spread are so varied, it was recognized as necessary that the problem of vocations be faced seriously and urgently, at all levels, in the individual Provinces.

Once the reasons for the present crisis have been exactly determined for each environment, it will be easier to suggest the remedies to be applied to the different situations.

For its work of directing and fostering the life of the Congregation, especially during this period of preparation for the Special General Chapter, the Superior Council needs a thorough and penetrating knowledge of the spiritual life of the Confreres. For this purpose a calm assessment of the situation has been made, which both notes the deficiencies and defects either peculiar to our Congregation or expressive of some more general unrest, and provides reliable indications of the possibilities and ways of making our *aggiornamento* a reality. From a study of the Salesian life to-day it is clear that the spiritual life is the first condition and indispensable premise for any renewal of our structures and activities, and that we must give the Confreres a renewed enthusiasm and confidence in the mission of our Congregation to-day.

\* \* \*

The Commission responsible for studying the problems of the Studentates of Philosophy and Theology carried out its work in two ways.

First of all the concrete situations of the Studentates of the Congregation were examined, with special attention to those where there were new material arrangements, experimental collaboration with other religious, or where one needed to consider other reasons of local impor-

tance. For each house a way towards the solution of its problems, to be further determined later in conjunction with the Provincial Conferences and the staffs of the Houses of formation, was outlined.

From the detailed examination of the situations in the Studentates, the Commission turned to the study of a few problems of more general interest. In this way were considered the interdependence of secular studies and ecclesiastical formation in the studentates of philosophy, the uncertainties of the present situation with all it entails for the reform of ecclesiastical studies, the difficulties when numbers are too small or too large in a house of formation, the situation of personnel during the triennium, the need to make the pastoral practice more efficient and better organized, the age of entry to novitiate and its effect on the drawing up of our curriculum of formation, etc., etc.

The results to date in carrying out the five-year plan for the personnel in Houses of Formation were considered with special attention: many Confreres have been sent on for specialized studies for this purpose; but it is clear that, on the whole, not all the provinces have corresponded sufficiently with this basic commitment to provide for the better preparation of our personnel.

As mentioned elsewhere in the « Acts », certain decisions were made regarding promotion to Holy Orders in the Studentates of Theology.

\* \* \*

The third commission was concerned with certain activities and enterprises of special interest for the Congregation to-day.

Having noted the intensive work in all Provinces in preparation for the General Chapter, 5 pre-capitular central commissions were established, comprising members whose duty it will be to classify and work through the material sent in by the Provincial Chapters and to draw out of it the initial schemes for the Special XX General Chapter. The meeting of these 5 commissions has been fixed for the period extending from June 30th to August 23rd, and some general criteria for their proceedings have been laid down. Details will be found under

the heading devoted to the Special General Chapter from this issue of the « Acts of the Council » onwards.

Among other things the third commission considered the latest developments towards a renewal of structures with respect to those Provinces which, as far as their part of the work is concerned, have brought this task to a conclusion.

The final documents, the result of work at local, provincial, and central levels, have been sent, together with a letter of the Rector Major, contained among the documents in this issue of the *Acts*, to the Provinces of Spain and Portugal and to those of the Provincial Conferences presided over by Fr. Tohill.

The finishing touches are being put to the final documents for the other European Provinces, and those for Latin America will be drawn up when Fr. Garnero and Fr. Castillo, the regional consultants, return. In this way this work, which was expressly called for by the XIX General Chapter, will be completed within the year.

In accordance with the findings of the XIX General Chapter the third Commission studied and presented, and the Superior Council approved a new movement called « Terra Nuova ». Our Congregation is promoting this movement in order to prepare and enthuse lay volunteers, particularly those coming from our own associations, to work in Community Social Service Groups and on the Missions. The missionary character of our Congregation, the ever increasing needs of our Missions, and the apostolic spirit that our system of education wishes to impart to the young ensure that this movement is something in full accord with the special vocation of our Congregation.

\* \* \*

The fourth Commission worked out some guide-lines for the adjustment of various works of ours which will have to be adapted to new apostolic requirements in the years immediately ahead in accordance with the plan for the re-shaping of the Central Province.

The character to be given in the Congregation to Visitatorias and regional Delegations, for which up to now no precise form has been provided, was also studied.

## VI. DOCUMENTS

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### 1. Extension of temporary vows for a third triennium

SACRED CONGREGATION  
FOR RELIGIOUS  
AND SECULAR INSTITUTES  
N. 2513/59

Most Holy Father,

The Rector Major of the Salesian Society of St. John Bosco begs Your Holiness for the faculty to extend the temporary Vows of religious subject to him for three years, beyond the six-year period allowed by the Constitutions, for the motives given.

That..., etc.

Vigore facultatum a Summo Pontifice tributarum, Sacra Congregatio pro Religiosis et Institutis saecularibus, attentis expositis, annuit pro gratia iuxta preces usque ad proximum Capitulum Generale, servatis ceteris servandis.

Contrariis quibuslibet non obstantibus.

Datum Romae, die 13 martii 1969.

(L. ✠ S.)

D. M. Huot, s.m.m.  
Subs.

C. Addivinola Ad. a Studiis.

### 2. Letter of the Rector Major to the Confreres presenting the conclusions of the Reshaping

*Dear Confreres,*

The present document, addressed to all of you, presents you with the conclusions of operation « *Reshaping* ».

It is the fruit of extensive and all-pervading collaboration, and its edited form gathers together and synthesizes the observations and proposals brought forward in the Houses, the Provincial Commissions for Reshaping, the Provincial Councils, the Central Commission for Reshaping, and the Superior Council: for the study of our Reshaping has gone through these successive stages.

This is the first time that all the Confreres and command posts of the Congregation have been involved in a general examination of conscience and in a serious reflection on our life and works in the light of the criteria and directives provided by the XIX General Chapter.

Hence, there is no cause for surprise if the complex proceedings have met with uncertainties, technical hitches, the lack, on occasions, of a clear view of the objectives to be reached and of the road to follow. But, certainly, in many ways, they have been most useful. Above all they have served to develop within the Congregation that feeling of corresponsibility, which is to-day especially necessary in every religious and apostolic community.

These documents represent, after their approval by the Superior Council, not just a conclusion to the work that led up to them, but also an obligatory reference point for future action.

The remarks, observations and directives contained in them must, therefore, guide the Provincial, his Council and the entire Province in putting into effect the work and the plan of action of the Province.

I desire to express my thanks to all the Confreres, in a special way to the members of the Commissions, for their collaboration in this first general examination; and ask Our Lord to render fruitful your efforts to bring into effect these directives and deliberations.

I call upon Mary Help of Christians to bless each one of you; may our Father Don Bosco be with you always.

Father Aloysius Ricceri  
*Rector Major*

### 1. **Be in the world, but not of it**

*From the Holy Father's discourse, 17 February, 1969*

In the first place we must recall some dynamic ideas, which are travelling through the whole Church to-day, and which are upsetting ecclesiastics particularly. The first of these ideas concerns the figure of the priest. He is nearly always considered from the outside, in his sociological position, in the framework of contemporary society, which, as everyone knows, is completely in movement, completely in transformation.

The priest, remaining in his place, has seen himself abandoned by his traditional community; in many places there is emptiness around him; in others the pastoral clientele has changed; it is difficult to approach them, difficult to understand them, difficult to interest them in religious matters, difficult to reassemble them in a friendly, faithful, praying community.

The priest, then, has begun to ask himself what he is doing in a world so different from the world he used to assist. Who is listening to him? And how can he make himself be heard? He felt he was a strange social phenomenon, anachronistic, helpless, useless, even ridiculous. And then the new, dynamic idea came to him: he must do something, he must go all out to draw near to the people again, to understand them, evangelize them. The idea, in itself, is an excellent one; and we have seen it germinate from the charity in the desolate heart of the priest, who felt excluded from the historical, social and human world in which he should have been the central figure, the

teacher and pastor; and in which, on the contrary, he has become an outsider, lonely, superfluous and mocked.

The incongruity and the suffering of this fate have become intolerable. The priest has sought inspiration and energy in the depth and essence of his vocation. We must move, he said, and take up the « mission » again; and he sometimes said so to the detriment even of the celebration of divine worship and the normal administration of the Sacraments.

The idea, We say, is excellent and the sign of a noble priestly conscience. The priest is not for himself, he is for others; the priest must go in pursuit of men to turn them into faithful, and not just wait for men to come to him; if his church is empty, he will have to « go out into the streets and lanes of the city » in search of poor people, and again « into the highways and the hedge-rows », and induce these guests, picked up at random, to come in (cfr. *Luke* 14,21-23). This apostolic urgency is weighing on the hearts of so many priests, whose churches have become deserted. And when it is so, how can we fail to admire them? how can we fail to support them?

### *Perfect the traditional forms of apostolate*

But let us be careful, keeping in mind the experimental and positive character of the apostolate. In the first place: it is not always like this. There are still communities of faithful overflowing with people and eager for normal observance: why should we leave them? why change the method of ministry for them, when the latter is still authentic, valid and magnificently fruitful? Would we not be wronging the fidelity of so many good Christians to embark on adventures the outcome of which is uncertain?

And, in the second place, when it is sufficient to open a new church and welcome with loving care the people who flock there of their own accord eager for the divine Word and for sacramental grace, why should we think up strange new forms of apostolate the success of which is doubtful and perhaps shortlived? Would it not be better to perfect the traditional forms and make them bloom again, as the



Council teaches us, with pastoral realism, new beauty and new effectiveness, before trying out others, which are often arbitrary and of doubtful outcome, or restricted to particular groups, separated from the communion of the faithful?

Oh! we will not forget the words of Jesus, who bids us leave the ninety-nine sheep that are in safety to go in search of the one lost sheep (cfr. *Luke* 15,4); and especially if the proportion, as happens in certain situations to-day, were reversed, that is, one sheep in the fold and ninety-nine lost. But the principle of unity and of the completeness of our flock, the principle of pastoral love and of our responsibility towards souls and their inestimable value, will always give us guidance.

We must be careful. The need, nay the duty, of an efficacious mission inserted in the reality of social life, may produce other drawbacks, such as that of depreciating the sacramental and liturgical ministry, as if it were a curb and an obstacle as regards the direct evangelization of the modern world; or the attempt, rather widespread to-day, to make the priest a man like any other, in dress, in secular profession, in going to places of entertainment, in worldly experience, in social and political commitment, in the formation of a family of his own with renunciation of holy celibacy.

People say this is an attempt to integrate the priest into society. Is this the way to understand the masterly words of Jesus, who wants us in the world, but not of the world? Did He not call and choose his disciples, those who were to extend and continue the announcement of the kingdom of God, distinguishing them, in fact separating them from the ordinary way of life, and asking them to leave everything to follow Him alone?

The whole Gospel speaks of this qualification, this « specialization » of the disciples who were afterwards to act as apostles. Jesus took them away, not without their radical sacrifice, from their everyday occupations, from their legitimate and normal interests, from their assimilation in the social setting, from their sacrosanct affections; and He wished them to be dedicated to himself, with the complete gift of themselves, committing themselves for ever, and although this response was to be a

free and spontaneous one, He expected it to be one of total renunciation, and heroic immolation.

Let us listen again to the list of what we must relinquish from the lips of Jesus himself: « *Omnis, qui reliquerit domum, vel fratres aut sorores, aut patrem aut matrem, aut uxorem, aut filios, aut agros propter nomen meum...* » (Mt. 19,29). And the disciples were aware of this personal and paradoxical condition of theirs; Peter says: « *Ecce nos reliquimus omnia, et secuti sumus Te* » (ib. 27).

Can the disciple, the apostle, the priest, the authentic minister of the Gospel be a man socially like other men? He can indeed be poor, like others, a brother, for others; a servant, of others; a victim, for others; but at the same time he is endowed with a lofty and very special function: « *Vos estis sal terrae... Vos estis lux mundi?* ». And it is clear, if we have the concept of the organic composition of the body of the Church; St. Paul could not be more explicit in this connection: « *Corpus non est unum membrum, sed multa... Quod si essent omnia unum membrum, ubi corpus? Nunc autem multa quidem membra unum autem corpus...* » (I Cor. 12,14-21 ss.).

The diversity of functions is a constitutional principle in the Church of God; and it concerns firstly the ministerial priesthood: let us take care not to lose this specific function out of a mistaken intention of assimilation, of « democratization », as is said to-day, in the society around us: « If salt loses its taste, what is there left to give taste to it? There is no more to be done with it, but throw it out of doors for men to tread it under foot » (Mt. 5,13). These are words of the Lord, which must make us reflect on the discernment necessary in the application of the formula quoted: *to be in the world, but not of the world*.

The lack of this discernment, of which ecclesiastical education, ascetic tradition, canon law have spoken to us so much, may lead to just the opposite effect from the one we had hoped to obtain when we imprudently abandoned it: effectiveness, renewal, modernity. In this way, in fact, the efficacy of the priest's presence and action in the world may be wiped out; that very efficacy which we hoped to obtain when we imprudently reacted to the separation of the priest from the

rest of society. Wiped out, in the esteem and confidence of the people, and by the practical necessity of dedicating to secular occupations and human affections: time, heart, freedom, superiority of spirit (cfr. *I Cor.* 2,15), which the priestly ministry alone wished to keep for itself.

### *Generous intentions and mistaken promptings*

We repeat, venerated and beloved brothers, we must be careful. This desire to insert the priest in the social setting in which his life and his ministry take place, is good in itself, but from being a generous intention to emerge from the shell of a crystallized and privileged condition, it may become a very grave error which may paralyze the priestly vocation in its most intimate, its most charismatic, its most fruitful aspects; and it may suddenly demolish the edifice of pastoral functionality.

As it may also expose good priests, young ones particularly, to the influences of the most questionable and dangerous movements of thought fashionable in the world, it may therefore make them vulnerable from the outside and expose them to supine acceptance of other people's ideas at their face value. Ideological and practical gregariousness has become contagious.

### *Authority in the Church*

We must be careful. Another dynamic idea, which is also basically praiseworthy, but often intemperate in its formulation and explosive in its application to problems is that of the so-called « structures ». It is not very clear what meaning this term is given in ecclesiastical language, especially when one wishes to have some due regard for the work of Christ, for the Church as she is, in her constitutional plan, her doctrinal heritage, her traditional formulation, the instrument and sacrament of salvation. But a formula prevails: the structures must be changed. Is this possible? Is it permissible? Is it useful?

It seems to Us that sometimes the unrealistic dream of an invisible Church, or the crazy hope of being able to eliminate the difficulties and the materiality of the Church-as-institution, to preserve a pure Christianity, of vague and free conception, or the rash utopia of conjur-

ing up a Church of one's own invention, prevent people from reflecting on the superficiality of this ambition, particularly if it is proposed to begin the change of structures with the destruction, not the reform, of those that exist, and if the initiative lacks the authority and experience for such a grave operation.

Under the transparent veil of an abstract nominalism, destructive novelties are sometimes put forward, without taking into account two things that wisdom and prudence should recommend to us: one, that the modernization of the structures, or let us rather say, of ecclesiastical legislation is already underway; but for it to be healthy and vital and promoted by the joint responsibility of those who have the knowledge and those who have the authority, calls for study and patience, which We Ourselves are the first to try to promote, especially with the revision of the Code of Canon Law; two, that the structures, now contested, are often far from being contrary to the effects that people aim at obtaining by changing them. Anyone who knows the Church from inside, is aware of this; and while regretting certain undeniable defects, sees that love, obedience, confidence, zeal may very well breathe new life into the trunk, like that of a gnarled olive-tree, gnarled of the old structures, causing it to burst into a new vegetation of genuine Christian vitality.

But no matter: people would like to change the structures, and many of them, when they say this, are thinking of the vexation of authority in the Church. They wish to abolish it, and they cannot: they wish to trace its source to the community; and they are violating a constitutional character of the Church, which Christ willed to be apostolic; they wish it to be service, and this is all right provided it is the rightful service of the pastoral authority; they wish to ignore it but how can a Christianity remain authentic without a magisterium, without a ministry, without the unity and authority derived from Christ? (cfr. *Gal.* 1,8-9; *2 Cor.* 1,24; *2 Cor.* 10,5; etc.; St. Ignatius of A., *to the Magnesii*, c. IV). Authority in the Church! For him who feels its heavy weight, and does not covet the honour, it is not easy to make its apologia! Let it be enough now for Us to have made this modest defence of it.

*Unity of faith, charity, discipline*

Our discourse is becoming long without Our having spoken to you of what We are most anxious to speak: the renewal of the tissue of the relationships within our Church. We would like the diocese of Rome to excel, once more, in charity (cfr. St. Ign. of A., *ad Rom.*, Prologue); and We praise and encourage those of you who are working to give solidity to our Roman community, to give it an impulse of friendship, goodness, concord, mutual esteem and confidence, willing collaboration. We wish there to be no divisions among you (*I Cor.* 1,10); there may be difference of practical views, diversity of free opinions, variety of scientific research, multiplicity of pastoral initiatives, novelty of good institutions, and so on; but at the same time and above all there must prevail among us unity of faith, of charity, of discipline.

Notice, please, dear friends, how the style of Our ecclesiastical government aims at being pastoral, that is, aims at being guided by duty and charity, open to understanding and indulgence, demanding in sincerity and in zeal, but fatherly and brotherly and humble in sentiment and in its forms. From this point of view, if the Lord helps Us, We would like to be loved. Thus you recognize Us and help Us. And likewise you, old priests or priests holding some responsible office, try to understand your confreres, those whose duty it is to work for you, young priests particularly. And the latter, our dear young priests, let them know that they are loved and esteemed: and let them by all means use the dialogue to establish sincere and trusting relations with their Superiors, without, however, taking away from him who rules the responsibility and the freedom of making decisions, and without depriving themselves of the merit of obedience.

It is in a study of common obedience that the redeeming mystery of Christ's obedience is fulfilled and celebrated among us. Let us set up the new Church institutions that the Council prescribed: the Priest's Council and the Pastoral Commission; let us give diocesan problems our joint interest and a renewal and generous activity; and in order that we may all be able to celebrate and live again the pas-

chal mystery with fullness of faith and gladness, let our Lent programme be, in a word, charity, in its inward charism of grace and love, and in its outward practice of service for every need of our brothers and of society, for the necessities of the poor particularly, for the problems of workers and students, in a word, for the cause of Christ.

May Our Apostolic Blessing support you in doing so.

## **2. The difficult relationship between youth and adults to-day**

*From the discourse of Paul VI, 10 February, 1969.*

We would like to pause over some points which are near to Our heart at this moment.

First of all, We would like to call your attention to the wide-spread and disconcerting problem of the restlessness and contestation that characterize the world of youth in general and the world of the School in particular, and which makes all relations between youth and adults so difficult.

### *A mission of service*

It is not difficult to discern in this phenomenon a reflection of the crisis of authority which troubles the modern world. In such a climate, the School and its dignity cannot but be threatened. Through the temptuous attitude of a certain section of youth to-day with regard to this it is possible to understand the sceptical and critical, if not contemptuous attitude of a certain section of youth to-day with regard to those who have the delicate task of teaching and educating them. Never before as to-day has the teacher been faced with the duty of safeguarding this authentic and fundamental value of his position as a teacher and educator, without losing heart and giving in to discouragement, but giving his task all the conscious force of a mission of service which it needs.

Nevertheless, it seems to Us that the current agitation of youth, even in its various and often disconcerting manifestations, contains, in the minds of the better students, also those ferments of demands which could be useful and fruitful, if they were to find in adults a greater confidence and understanding. It cannot be denied that many problems that young people often pose with much violence and bitterness, are real problems. Young people cannot be called unjust in their complaints against certain excessive and unreasonable forms of authoritarianism, in their desire to feel themselves more active and to some degree responsible elements in the social life of our society, nor in their aspirations for a greater participation in the life of the School and thus for a greater opportunity for positive student initiative. The current phenomenon, therefore, should be studied with attention, with firmness, with humility and patience. Without condescending to the excesses and intemperance and without abdicating their specific educative task, adults must be able to create a fraternal dialogue with youth, a dialogue inspired by charity and understanding. Only by seriously and serenely listening to their proposals can we ask young people to keep their demands within the limits of reason, and thus usefully and constructively channel the rich patrimony of their energies.

### *Collaboration of parents*

There is another problem which We would like to emphasize.

As Catholic teachers, within the framework of a renewal of the scholastic structures, you cannot avoid taking into account the necessary relation between the School and the family for an educative continuity. The family, having as its purpose the procreation and education of its children, possesses, in virtue of this, a natural priority, and by consequence, a priority of right and duty in the educative field with regard to society. The family must not and cannot give up this right. It is therefore necessary that along with the teachers and the students, the family must also be present in the school and must be responsible for the educative orientation of the scholastic community. Unfortunately, up to the present, in Italy, the family has been practi-

cally absent from the school. The conscious collaboration of parents has not always been demanded; and even when the problem of the relations between the two institutions has been raised, it has been formulated more on the level of practical or purely cultural interests rather than on the level of educative interests. We hope that your Union will effectively call the attention of families and responsible authorities to this problem. And if this exchange of vital energies can come about also on the level of the Christian concept of life, then the results will take on a particular importance for the common good; because the formation of man, the citizen and the Christian, will be promoted in a more interior and more unified way.

### *The contribution of the Christian educator*

But the basic problem for your effective Catholic presence in the School will always remain that of a witness to your faith; a genuine faith, a lively faith, a known, loved and lived faith, as the Vatican Council demands of every layman in the sphere of his profession for the Christian animation of society. From this comes the importance of your personal spiritual formation, which integrates, deepens, and revitalizes your cultural formation. A teacher can never be considered equal to his responsibilities if, although culturally prepared, he limits his work to teaching *per se*, and if he felt less dedicated to that vaster and more profound work of education. And who, then, better than the Catholic Teacher can carry out this task? Enlightened by the faith, he alone will be capable of fully understanding the personal dignity of his students, and consequently the value, the sanctity, and the responsibility of his educational mission. At a time when, because of the scholastic expansion, the number of teachers is rapidly increasing, the need for truly capable and Christian educators is, in Our opinion, the most compelling need of the Italian School to-day. We think, therefore, that this formation constitutes the precious and original contribution that the Catholic teacher can offer the school to-day.



### 3. The mission of youth in the world of to-day

*Discourse of Paul VI, 30 March, 1969.*

Youth, dearly beloved sons and daughters, friends!

Our words to-day are directed to you with a particular intention. To you who listen. Yes, there is a body of youth that still listens to the Church's voice. It listens, not so much because it is brought to this Chair of Peter by habit, by obedience or by the crowds, but rather because a hope leads it here, the hope of a revelation, of some insight, a flash of light that may illuminate the whole landscape of life, show us where we are and where we ought to be heading, in a word, that will help us to get our bearings. Tell Us, dearly beloved young ones, do you not notice this need for clarity in yourselves, this necessity of knowing whether there be some scope, some value, some goal capable of giving meaning and direction to our life, and if so, what it is?

#### *Overflowing vivacity*

In youth to-day, as everybody knows and as you yourselves have perhaps experienced, there is great inquietude; forces and aspirations of great liveliness explode in exuberant, sometimes violent ways. They are always against something: against other's ways of living and thinking, against the habits of yesterday, against the laws in force to-day, against institutions inherited from the past. An overpowering need for new things, for originality, for liberty, is driving the youthful soul on, and nowadays often driving it into rebellious ways.

Young people's vitality is finding expression in a negative manner, almost as if it took pleasure in the disorders that it can provoke and the problems that it can create, rather than in the positive side of its tumultuous intervention in the social framework, which public opinion describes as the established order. Youth movements challenge this state of things, and the conviction and vigour with which they do so is as great as their unconcern and unawareness in regard to what, in the order of practicality and wisdom, ought to replace what they wish to tear down. That is where the great problem of this time of ideological and social disturbance lies. But that is not what We wish to speak about to-day, and We have only referred to it in order that you

may know that the Church has her eyes open too, and with loving and tremulous vigilance she watches over and thinks about this great phenomenon of youthful agitation; in her heart are many things to say and many things to do about it.

. *A mission to fulfil*

The present moment is all taken up with celebration of the Easter mystery, and We are here engaged in evoking an occurrence in the Gospel which all of you know well: Jesus' entry into Jerusalem among festive shouts and cries, into the swirl of that immense crowd that had come up to the holy City to celebrate the Passover, and which acclaimed him Son of David (*Matth.* 21,9) and King of Israel (*Jn.* 12,13), that is to say, the Messiah, the mysterious Personage who had been foretold by the Prophets, had been awaited for centuries, and was invested with authority and power to reveal and accomplish the marvelous destinies of the chosen people.

This moment has some secret to reveal to us too, some event to announce, some renewal to set going; but We will only communicate one sole thought to you. It is a thought in which We have condensed very many of Our reflections and which seems to Us to have some prophetic value. It concerns all believers, but you young people especially — so listen carefully. The thought is this: It is for you young people of to-day to reveal to the world that Christ, the true Christ, the Christ ever living in the Church which preaches him, personifies him and communicates him, that Christ, We repeat and affirm, is the Saviour of the world.

It is up to you young people, dearly beloved sons and daughters, dear friends. You have a mission. You have a function to perform in our society, which is flowing with wealth, energies and marvels, but is also much astray in regard to the ends to pursue; which is so proud of itself and so discontented with itself; which is so cultivated and intelligent and so worn away by doubt and so blind upon the good roads of its happiness; which is so greatly organized and so greatly threatened by its very organization; which is so full of expectations

and anxieties, but at heart so lacks confidence, is so sceptical and desperate; which is so refined in all its aspects, and is also so subject to passion, and so corrupt.

You are children of our time, highly sensitive to its language, its genius, its spirit. But you are also, We believe, pure, free from its contaminations; you, adolescents, you maturing young men and women, who are so prodigiously beautiful, delightfully untouched, so determinedly simple, logical and upright; you are joyful and lively, free and docile; you are not hardened, but accept the wisdom of your families. You have grown up in the faith and in prayer; in a word, you are Christ's pupils. Yes, you have the mission of announcing the true Messiah to our world of to-day, the true Messiah, the authentic Christ, the indispensable Saviour. You have to show the people of our time Jesus' luminous countenance, the profound mystery of his incomparable humanity. That face is the face of the Son of God, and it is the face of the Son of man. He is the prototype of humanity, the Master, the Brother, the leader. He is the Prophet, in whom all may still trust; and, through a tragic yet most sweet drama, which we cannot avoid, he is the man of sorrow, the victim of every kind of human iniquity. He is the Redeemer; he is Love which sacrificed itself though innocent; he is Life in himself, he is death for our sake; and, to say the last word, he is the Risen One, for our salvation, « propter justificationem nostram » (*Rom.* 4,25).

But, you will say to Us, this message is the one meant for the apostles, the ministers of the Gospel, the masters of the Church. Yes, this is their specific office, their ministry. But to-day, in this hour, this is also your message! This is the novelty of our time; this is the sign of the springtime of the present age; this is the act of trust that the Church makes in Catholic Laity! Which it makes to you young people especially! Remember what the Council told us: « Young people exert influence of highest importance in modern society... Their heightened influence in society demands a correspondingly active apostolate from them... Even children have apostolic work to do... » (*Apostolicam actuositatem*, 12).

*Christian Witness*

But, you will reply, how can we ever carry out such a delicate, difficult and unpopular task? Yes, you are right to take account of the difficulties of testifying on behalf of Christianity in our society. But just listen to Us again. Do you young people like easy things or hard things? Does your sympathy go out towards the weak, the fearful, the opportunists, the base cowards? Or does it go out to the strong, the brave and the heroic? Do you want your Christian vocation to-day to make you timid, retiring, and egoistical, or full of conscious energy, and daring love? Was it not a fault in a certain kind of education which mistook weakness for goodness, human respect for piety, and private interest for Christian faith?

And so, what is asked of you? Miracles? Extravagant and sensational actions? No. You are asked to be what you are: young and Catholic. We say to you, with a German writer: « Christian, be Christian! ». But be a true, a genuine one, a dynamic one, one full of ardour, of imagination, of love. That is, of that Christian youthfulness that for a century now the Church has been rousing, recruiting, and blessing.

Something else, before We conclude. Christian testimony, the kind We have just been talking about, is a personal act. It needs to rise freely and consciously from the depth of our own hearts. But it is also a collective thing. You are not alone. Be united. You are many; and, be friends; agree together. You form a chorus, a team. And the Church is with you, with her associations, with her sense of community, with her loving concern and aid.

And Christ the Lord inspires your unified effort; as he did in the Gospel, he certainly takes pleasure in your choral and prophetic homage. That homage will perhaps not spare Christ the drama of his ever present passion; but at any rate the world will know, for its condemnation and for its hope, that suffering of Christ, his Passion, is the suffering of our common and indispensable Saviour.

#### 4. To suffer and Love with the Church

*From the Pope's discourse, 2 April, 1969.*

Beloved sons, understand us (cfr. 2 Cor. 7,2). In this mysterious liturgy, the Church is overcome with immense grief. She remembers, she repeats in her rites, she relives in her feelings, the Passion of Christ. She herself is conscious of it, suffers from it, weeps at it. Do not disturb her mourning, do not distract her thought, do not mock her remorse, do not consider her anguish madness. You, too, surround the cry of her pain with your silence; pity her; honour her with participation in her noble, spiritual affliction.

To this invitation, which everyone of the faithful hears re-echoing in his heart at this great and bitter moment, « dies magna et amara valde », as the liturgy sobs with lyrical emotion, we can add two considerations.

The first one, as is our habit at these informal weekly meetings, brings us back to the teachings of the Council. It has been rightly pointed out that a wave of serenity and optimism has spread through the Church and the world from the Council; a consoling and positive Christianity acceptable and amiable, Christianity friendly to life, to men, even to earthly values, to our society, to our history. We might almost see in the Council the intention to make Christianity acceptable and amiable, an indulgent, open Christianity, free from all mediaeval rigorism and from any pessimistic interpretation regarding men, their customs, their transformations and their exigencies. This is true. But let us be careful. The Council did not forget that the Cross is at the centre of Christianity. It, too, was strictly faithful to the words of St. Paul: « Lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power »: « Ut non evacuetur crux Christi » (I Cor. 1,17); it, too, like the Apostle, said to itself: « I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified » (I Cor. 2,2). We could recall how the great theological, mystical and ascetical lines of the association of the faithful with the Passion of the Lord are to be found throughout the pages of the conciliar documents (see, for example, those of the great dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, nn. 7, 8, 11,

34, 49...); let this quotation suffice: « 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... » (*ib.* n. 8).

### *Courage and hope*

And here a second consideration, derived from the first, occurs to Our mind. It is the relationship there is between Christ suffering and his Church, between the Head and the Mystical Body, between the Gospel of the Passion of the Lord and the painful history of the Church. The Passion of the Lord, let Us say very briefly, is reflected in the Church not only through the witness she bears to it in her preaching and in her doctrine; not only through the imitation which the heroic and magnanimous example of Christ reflects on Christians and induces them to follow him (cfr. Abelard); not only through sacramental communication, which applies to every member of the faithful mystical assimilation with the death and the resurrection of the Lord (cfr. *Rom.* 6,3); but it is somehow renewed, reproduced, repeated. This takes place not so much in every individual follower of Christ (cfr. *Col.* 1,24; « In my flesh », St. Paul writes, « I complete what is lacking in Christ's afflictions »), but in the whole Church, considered as a community, as the ensemble of Christ's members, as his life prolonged in history; and therefore it is perpetuated.

It is perpetuated, and it is still going on. And at the recurrence of Easter, more than at any other moment, the Church becomes aware of her sorrows, savours them, suffers them, accepts them humbly, and tries to hallow them, and to draw from them the certificate of her identity in Christ, Lord and Master, of her love eager to mingle her own pains with those of the Crucifix (cfr. the recurring theme of *Stabat Mater*), and to convert her humiliations and defeats into merits of penitence, purification and redemption; of greater virtue, of greater courage, of greater hope.

### *The Lord is testing us*

Is this so? Is the Church suffering to-day? Sons, beloved Sons! Yes, to-day the Church is undergoing great suffering! Is it possible? After the Council? Yes, after the Council! The Lord is testing us. The Church is suffering, as you know, from the oppressive lack of legitimate freedom in so many countries of the world. She is suffering at the abandonment by so many Catholics of the fidelity that her century-old tradition would deserve and her pastoral effort, full of understanding and love, should obtain. She is suffering above all because of the restless, critical, unruly and destructive rebellion of so many of her sons, her dearest sons — priests, teachers, laymen, dedicated to the service and witness of Christ dwelling in the living Church, against her intimate and indispensable communion, against her institutional existence, against her canon law, her tradition, her interior cohesion; against her authority, the irreplaceable, principle of truth, unity, charity; against her very requirements of holiness and sacrifice (cfr. Boyer, *La décomposition du catholicisme*, 1968); she is suffering at the defection and scandal of certain ecclesiastics and religious, who are crucifying the Church to-day.

Beloved Sons, do not refuse us your loyalty and your prayer. Do not let yourselves be seized with fear, discouragement, scepticism, far less with the mimesis that to-day, under the influence of the media of social information, is wreaking havoc among so many weak and impressionable spirits, and sometimes also among young, strong spirits. But suffer and love with the Church.

### **5. Recall to interior unity in the Church**

*From the Holy Father's discourse on Maundy Thursday, 3 April, 1969.*

There is so much talk of unity in the world. Human history, in spite of ruptures, struggles and inequalities which divide mankind, is moving towards unity. Will it get there, or will its striving towards

world harmony prove to have been a vain effort? And if mankind did arrive at that goal, will it turn out to be a good thing, or a misfortune, because of the « one dimension » that it might take on, in other words, because of the loss of its free and manifold modes of expression? Humanity needs to unite itself in solidarity and love. And where shall we find the type and fount of such things?

There is talk of pluralism in Christian denominations; and when will such unity be possible to be said to be effected and perfected, if not when it is unanimous in confessing a single faith, which is the indispensable condition for participation in one and the same eucharistic communion?

### *Centrifugal Tendencies*

There is talk of renewal in the doctrine and in the conscience of the Church of God; but how can the living and true Church be authentic and persistent if the complex structure that forms it and defines it a spiritual and social « mystical body », is to-day so often and so gravely corroded by dissent and challenge and by forgetfulness of its hierarchical structure, and is countered in its divine and indispensable constituent charism, its pastoral authority? How can it claim to be a Church, that is a united people, even though locally broken up and historically and legitimately diversified, when a practically schismatic ferment is dividing it, subdividing it and breaking it into groups which are more than anything else zealous for arbitrary and fundamentally egoistical autonomy, masked by Christian pluralism or liberty of conscience? How will it be able to be built up by activity that would like to be called apostolic, when this is deliberately led by centrifugal tendencies and when it develops, not the mentality of communitarian love, but rather that of partisan polemics, or when it prefers dangerous and equivocal sympathies, which need to be met with unyielding reserve, as against friendships founded on fundamental principles, marked by indulgence towards mutual defects and needing concurrence and collaboration.



### *The Spirit of Charity*

There is still talk of the Church, of the catholic Church, our own: but can we say to ourselves that in her members, in her institutions and her work she is truly living by a sincere spirit of union and charity, which makes her worthy to celebrate our most holy daily Mass without hypocrisy and without the unfeelingness of habit? Have we not amongst us those « *schismatics* », those « *dissensions* » sadly denounced in St. Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, which is the lesson chosen for our instruction to-day? (1 *Cor.* 1,10; 12,25; 11,18).

We still need always to build up that charity, that virtuous unity of sentiments and relationships which the Eucharistic will elevate, in the testamentary words of Christ (cfr. *Jn.* 13,34-35; 17,21 etc.).

And at this moment which comes just before our communion with Christ, who unifies us, his followers and members, let us renew our inward manner of thinking and acting (cfr. *Eph.* 4,23); let us renounce the spirit of emulation, rivalry and discord the subtle temptation to speak ill amongst ourselves who are brethren; and, if need be, let us expand our souls to forgiveness for whoever may have done us wrong, and let us promise reconciliation with whomever we have to restore relationships of human intercourse (cfr. *Matth.* 5,23): how can we approach the Christian feast of charity and unity unless we have this peace in our hearts?

And let us ask Christ Jesus for a grace to-day: that he may give his Church, this Church of Rome called « to preside over charity » (St. Ignatius, *Epist. ad Romanos*. Inscript. ed. Funk, *Patres Apostolici*, page 222), to preserve and perfect her still in her own interior unity, as the Passover of the Lord demands. So may it be.

## VIII. DECEASED SALESIANS

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### *Fr. Egisto Amati*

\* in Monte Grimano (Pesaro - Italy) 5-1-1895, † in Buenos Aires (Argentina) 30-1-1969 aged 74 yrs, 55 of profession and 44 of priesthood. He was Rector for 24 yrs.

With modesty and personal sacrifice he was always the silent catalyst of the works entrusted to him. He made of music, singing and drama genuine helps in his educative mission. In so many years as Rector, he was the kindly and thoughtfully attentive Father of the Salesians and boys who loved him sincerely.

In his last ten years he was highly regarded as a confessor until in 1966 aphasia reduced him to absolute silence, which he accepted with peaceful resignation.

### *Coad. Charles Čepelka*

\* in Czechoslovakia, † in Moravec (Moravia - Czechoslovakia) 17-6-1968 after 19 yrs of profession (all other biographical details are missing).

### *Fr. Joseph Chelodi*

\* in Bolzano (Italy) 22-4-1888, † Benediktbeuern (Oberbayern - Germany) 19-12-1968 aged 80 yrs, 45 of profession and 39 of priesthood.

He asked to be admitted to our Congregation after returning from the first world war. He made his novitiate at Ensdorf, did his theological studies in Turin and worked in various Houses in Germany. Loved and esteemed as a confessor, he knew how to win the friendship of all who knew him. They appreciated his goodness and solid piety.

### *Fr. Patrick Collins*

\* in Moyoane (Kerry - Ireland) 18.5.1916, † in Dublin Ireland) 27.3.1969 aged 52 yrs, 32 of profession and 20 of priesthood. He was Rector for 6 yrs.

The sudden death of this good confrere, just when he was at the peak of his apostolic achievement with his fine gifts of mind and heart, was a very painful loss for the Province. A cultured, friendly, peace-

loving man, well known for his talks on radio and television, highly esteemed by the Irish government for his advancement of the agricultural sciences, he was also held in high regard by the Confreres and pupils for whom he worked so hard.

*Fr. Paul Colussi*

\* in Casarsa della Delizia (Udine - Italy) 13.11.1878, † in Estoril (Portugal) 18.2.1969 aged 90 yrs, 72 of profession and 66 of priesthood. He was Rector for 13 yrs.

He worked for many years in Portugal which he loved as his second homeland. He was a pillar of strength to the Portuguese Salesian work because of the work he achieved and the example of his religious life as an indefatigable worker, his keen interest in the Houses of formation, and his observance of the Holy Rule even in its least details.

*Fr. Francis Della Torre*

\* in Pralboino (Brescia - Italy) 22.6.1912, † in Milano (Italy) 24.1.1969 aged 56 yrs, 39 of profession and 28 of priesthood. He was Rector for 20 yrs.

Fr. Della Torre possessed a lively mind, a serene and open character, a keen and delicate religious sense, and entered eagerly into relations with others and the burning problems of our time, particularly in the world of young people and workers. He gave to the Congregation a complete and unequivocal love of Don Bosco and his inspired and generous commitment to the undertakings most typical of the Salesian apostolate in our times.

We owe to him the foundation of the « Don Bosco Social Works » in Sesto San Giovanni (Milan) and the « Home for Re-education » in Arese, called for by Cardinal Montini, who loved this house and its Rector as genuine manifestations of Salesian education at its best.

In his last years he was Rector of the worker's hostel in Milan and spiritual director of the University students. Everyone loved him because he loved everyone: he was cut off after repeated heart attacks, because he refused to give up his work for the young.

*Fr. Oscar Egger*

\* in Neu Ulm (Bavaria - Germany) 11.3.1886, † in Turin (Mother House) 11.4.1969 aged 83 yrs, 56 of profession and 49 of priesthood.

When he was 21 yrs old he came from his beloved Bavaria to Italy as an aspirant and remained there until his death: since 1919 his long life was entirely dedicated to the cure of souls in the Parish of Mary Help of Christians in Turin. His priesthood knew neither rest nor holiday. He was ready and on call at any hour of the day or night. His confessional was much frequented by the faithful, the Confreres and secular priests because of his wisdom, his deep spiritual sense, and the simple fervour of his words of direction. He was a good man, humble, frendly, incapable of evil, ever radiating the healing light of priestly charity.

*Fr. Joseph Giovine*

\* in Nizza Monferrato (Italy) 9.2.1892, † in Alexandria (Italy) 24.1.1969 aged 76 yrs, 58 of profession and 49 of priesthood. He was Rector for 1 yr.

He spent his Salesian life first at Borgo S. Martino and then, from 1933, in Alessandria. He was a simple soul, a lover of small Salesian practices, good, hard-working, pious zealous, always ready to hear confessions or give advice to young people, secular priests, and persons from every walk of life who came to him from all parts.

Although blind and paralysed in his declining years, he continued to hear confessions and receive his numerous visitors. All venerated him as the ideal model priest living in continual, generous self-giving for the good of souls.

*Coad. Joseph Holik*

\* in Vieména (Moravia - Czechoslovakia) 17.11.1885, † in Moravec (Czechoslovakia) 2.8.1968 aged 82 yrs and 36 of profession.

*Fr. Michael Jubász*

\* in Tardos (Hungary) 19.6.1915, † in Szolnok (Hungary) 8.3.1969 aged 53 yrs, 36 of profession and 26 priesthood.

He came from a very good family which gave two sons to God in the Salesian Society. He shone for his intelligence, goodness of heart, and versatility. He spent almost all his priestly life in parishes, and showed himself a zealous, enterprising pastor. The clergy found in him a sincere friend, a serene and strong support. The faithful, and young people in particular, found him a loving shepherd and guide after the heart of Don Bosco.

*Fr. Joseph Krauter*

\* in Homburg (Bavaria - Germany) 14.1.1905, † in Regensburg (Germany) 27.2.1969 aged 64 yrs, 38 of profession and 30 of priesthood.

He was a humble and pious priest. By his constantly joyful and good disposition he won the affection of the confreres and boys. The souls entrusted to him as catechist were very close to his heart, and no sacrifice was too great for him. His last years were marked by sickness and sufferings that prepared him for his meeting with God.

*Coad. John Kulikowski*

\* in Pawlowicze (U.S.S.R.) 28.5.1913, † in Lodz (Poland) 18.2.1969 aged 55 yrs, 31 of profession.

He joined the Congregation as a mature man. He fulfilled various duties, and was always happy to help the confreres in any way. As infirmarian his charity was outstanding. He was very faithful to the practices of piety, and shone for humility and his great love of the Congregation.

*Fr. Jerome Mapelli*

\* in Arona (Novara - Italy) 9.8.1905, † in Intra (Italy) 28.1.1969 aged 63 yrs, 46 of profession and 35 of priesthood.

He was an open-hearted, lively and friendly priest, and worked always with youthful enthusiasm, leaving wherever he went the grateful and lasting memory of his generous, indefatigable work, his optimism, and his simple, upright goodness of heart.

The funeral was a clear demonstration of the affection and esteem with which so many past-pupils and friends regarded him.

*Coad. Arlindo Marton*

\* 18.2.1896, † in Lorena (Brazil) 18.12.1968 aged 72 yrs, and 53 of profession.

He entered the Congregation when he was very young, taught agriculture for many years in Cachoeira do Campo (Minas Gerais), and then returned to the state of S. Paulo where he worked in various Houses. He was an example in everything he did, in the humility and poverty of his life, in his love for Salesian ways.

*Fr. Edmund Poli*

\* in Marseille (France) 19.2.1896, † in Lyon (France) 13.3.1969 aged 73 yrs, 46 of profession and 39 priesthood.

He was already quite old when he entered the Congregation after having been a faithful friend of the « Patonage S. Joseph » in Marseille. He spent 28 yrs in the teaching apostolate. He was a confrere of great humility and friendly and warm in his dealings. He spent his last years as a highly valued confessor of the boys.

*Fr. Antony Querol*

\* in Saló (Barcelona - Spain) 12.1.1879, † in Barcelona (Spain) 31.3.1969 aged 90 yrs, 66 of profession and 58 of priesthood.

He was the oldest Salesian in the Province. He had a great love for vocations, which he cultivated both by his personal action and by the interest he took in the Cooperators, for whom he was responsible in Barcelona. Despite his age he always kept up a friendly relationship with the boys in the playground.

*Fr. Paul Scelsi*

\* in Collesano (Palermo - Italy) 29.9.1873, † in Messina (Italy) 1.2.1969 aged 95 yrs, 79 of profession and 70 of priesthood. He was Rector for 21 yrs.

He was the second Salesian from Sicily and was formed first in our college at Randazzo, and then under the capable guidance of Fr. Bonetti. He gave all the years of his long life to teaching, educating, forming whole generations of boys and candidates for the priesthood. Good, learned, pious, he was always esteemed and sought after by others, and considered a saint. His outstanding qualities were sweetness and humility.

*Fr. Adalbert Šilar*

\* in Cermná (Czechoslovakia) 3.1.1910, † in Prague (Czechoslovakia) 1.5.1965 aged 55 yrs, 29 of profession.

*Fr. Maximus Tognetti*

\* in Vira Gambarogno (Ticino - Switzerland) 25.11.1883, † in Maroggia (Switzerland) 31.1.1969 aged 85 yrs, 63 of profession and 51 of priesthood.

He was a missionary in Patagonia and Rio Negro in the old days of the Salesian missionary expansion and his name belongs with that of Cagliari, Fagnano, Manachino and others. After 30 yrs of untiring work, complete exhaustion obliged him to painful inaction for more than

30 yrs. His was a silent sacrifice of prayer and loving acceptance of the will of God. His constant motto was: « As God wills ».

*Fr. Dominic Viani (otherwise: Fr. Charles Rivas)*

\* in Morlupo (Rome - Italy) 4.8.1911, † in Bogotá (Columbia) 19.2.1969 aged 57 yrs, 35 of profession and 30 of priesthood. He was Rector for 15 yrs.

He died tragically in a street accident on Ash Wednesday after spending the morning in distributing ashes to the faithful and in hearing the boy's confessions.

The funeral was a triumphant witness to the esteem he enjoyed among Salesians, pupils, the people and the civil authorities. He had been Rector and professor in various Houses of formation and seminaries. His characteristic virtue was charity towards all, in all circumstances, without any holding back in the gift of himself, and with Salesian cheerfulness.

*Fr. John Vtipil*

\* in Krouna (Bohemia - Czechoslovakia) 12.7.1901, † in Kardasova Recipe (Czechoslovakia) 4.8.1968 aged 67 yrs, 40 of profession and 32 of priesthood. He was Rector for 6 yrs.

*Coad. George Wheeler*

\* in Battersea (London - England) 13.3.1884, † in Cape Town (S. Africa) 26.2.1969 aged 84 yrs and 37 of profession.

This excellent coadjutor entered the Congregation when he was already fifty years old, abandoning a successful career in the world. He spent almost the whole of his Salesian life in the bookshop and in assisting the young. Always faithful to his duty, he gave a shining example of sanctified work.

*Fr. Titus Zeman*

\* in Vajnory (Bratislava - Czechoslovakia) 4.1.1915, † there 8.1.1969 aged 54 yrs, 36 of profession and 28 of priesthood.

He was an enthusiastic and enterprising Salesian, as is shown by his zeal in preserving the vocations of young Salesians in very difficult times. He was the victim and martyr of his own spirit of enterprise, but accepted his death with joy. « Even if I were to lose my life — he would say — I would not consider it wasted, if I knew that even just one of those I have helped had become a priest to take my place ».

## 2° Elenco 1969

N.	COGNOME E NOME	LUOGO DI NASCITA	DATA DI NASC. E MORTE		ETÀ	LUOGO DI M.	ISP.
62	Sac. AMATI Egisto	Monte Grimano (I)	5.1.1895	30.1.1969	74	Buenos Aires (RA)	BA
63	Coad. ČEPELKA Carlo	....	...	17.6.1968		Moravec (CS)	Bo
64	Sac. CHELODI Giuseppe	Bolzano (I)	22.4.1888	19.12.1968	80	Benediktbeuern (D)	Mü
65	Sac. COLLINS Patrizio	Moyoane (EIR)	18.5.1916	27.3.1969	52	Dublin (EIR)	Ig
66	Sac. COLUSSI Paolo	Casarsa della Delizia (I)	13.11.1878	18.2.1969	90	Estoril (P)	Pt
67	Sac. DELLA TORRE Franc.	Pralboino (I)	22.6.1912	24.1.1969	56	Milano (I)	Lo
68	Sac. EGGER Oscar	Neu Ulm (D)	11.3.1886	11.4.1969	83	Torino (I)	Cn
69	Sac. GIOVINE Giuseppe	Nizza Monferrato (I)	9.2.1892	24.1.1969	76	Alessandria (I)	No
70	Coad. HOLIK Giuseppe	Vieména (CS)	17.11.1885	2.8.1968	82	Moravec (CS)	Bo
71	Sac. JUHASZ Michele	Tardos (H)	19.6.1915	8.3.1969	53	Szolnok (U)	Un
72	Sac. KRAUTER Giuseppe	Homburg (D)	14.1.1905	27.2.1969	64	Regensburg (D)	Mü
73	Coad. KULIKOWSKI Giovanni	Pawlowicze (SU)	28.5.1913	18.2.1969	55	Łódź (PL)	Ló
74	Sac. MAPELLI Girolamo	Arona (I)	9.8.1905	28.1.1969	63	Intra (I)	No
75	Coad. MARTON Arlindo	...	18.2.1896	18.12.1968	72	Lorena (BR)	SP
76	Sac. POLI Edmondo	Marseille (F)	19.2.1896	13.3.1969	73	Lyon (F)	Ly
77	Sac. QUEROL Antonio	Saló (E)	12.1.1879	31.3.1969	90	Barcelona (E)	Bn
78	Sac. SCELLI Paolo	Collesano (I)	29.9.1873	1.2.1969	95	Messina (I)	Sc
79	Coad. ŠILAR Adalberto	Čermná (CS)	3.1.1910	1.5.1965	55	Praga (CS)	Bo
80	Sac. TOGNETTI Massimo	Vira Gambargno (CH)	25.11.1883	31.1.1969	85	Maroggia (CH)	No
81	Sac. VIANI Domenico	Morlupo (I)	4.8.1911	19.2.1969	57	Bogotá (CO)	Bg
82	Sac. VTÍPIL Giovanni	Krouna (CS)	12.7.1901	4.8.1968	67	Kardašova Řečice (CS)	Bo
83	Coad. WHEELER Giorgio	Battersea (GB)	13.3.1884	26.2.1969	84	Cape Town (ZA)	Ig
84	Sac. ZEMAN Tito	Vajnory (CS)	4.1.1915	8.1.1969	54	Vajnory (CS)	Sl