



ACTS OF THE SUPERIOR COUNCIL

OF THE SALESIAN SOCIETY

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S.G.S. - ROMA

I. LETTER OF RECTOR MAJOR

Rome, January 1974

My dear confrères and sons,

I write to you still full of vivid memories of my recent travels abroad. The opportunity of meeting hundreds of confrères was indeed a great comfort to me.

You know of course that I attended the highly successful Latin-American Congress of Past Pupils; and took advantage of the occasion (with various members of my Council) to meet the Provincials of the Pacific-Caribbean zone.

The agenda had been drawn up by the Provincials themselves from current problems shared by all, and although it was a tiring week it was a fruitful one. A comforting feature remarked on by everybody was the spirit of Salesian brotherliness, calm frankness, and the all-pervading community prayer that inspired us throughout.

Without going into details I can certainly say that the meeting was of great benefit to all and will produce excellent results for the provinces concerned. It is worth adding that the experience of this kind of gathering is particularly important for the Superior Council for planning the general set-up and organization of similar meetings scheduled for the future.

Confrères in three continents

My travels took in provinces in three continents: Latin-America and The United States (where I opened the large tech-

nical school at Boston); Australia (closing the celebrations for fifty years of Salesian work); and Thailand and Vietnam.

In all places I was able to meet great numbers of confrères gathered together for the occasion, provincial councils and rectors, and many other groups belonging to our Salesian Family.

It would not be possible to detail in these pages all that happened in each province (and for such information I refer you to our news channels). But I think certain points of very special interest should be noted here.

I was deeply moved and consoled when I visited the Mexican mission. Salesian confrères and Sisters, under the gallant leadership of our Bishop Braulio are sacrificing themselves in an apostolate that is rich in results. The Christian communities are indeed making a grand response.

When I went to Managua (you will recall that a year ago it was almost totally destroyed by an earthquake) I was able to see for myself not only the magnitude of the tragedy, but also the many human and social problems that have resulted therefrom. I could see how the Salesians and Daughters of Mary Help of Christians had promptly hastened to the aid of the many thousands of victims; and I witnessed their present intelligent and efficient efforts, as instanced by the professional training given to young men and women up to thirty years of age, whose only hope (destitute as they are) lies in the work of their hands.

In Vietnam I officially opened the new house of formation for our students of philosophy and theology. You will not miss the significance of this. While in various parts of the world seminaries and houses of formation are almost empty, this stricken country needs a new one! And many wonderful people have helped the Salesians to build it. Vocations are many. In 1952 the Salesians were two in number (confrères from China). They now number 112 and are practically all Vietnamese. And the numbers keep growing: there are nineteen

novices this year. The average age of the confrères is less than thirty years.

I wanted my presence to be an earnest of the recognition the Congregation has for the older confrères, nearly all of whom came from the Chinese Province years ago. They are pioneers — men of great faith. With untold sacrifices and with God's help they have created this extraordinary and consoling wonder. I also wanted to encourage the fervent young band of Vietnamese Salesians, whose training treads the path of their elder confrères.

You can realise how these visits have comforted me and brought me new hope. Of course I am also aware of the many difficult problems. One of these stands out in a special way and I want to devote this letter to it. I am more than ever confirmed in my belief (not that I ever really needed convincing) that this matter is urgent and involves the whole Congregation: the problem of the « workers in the vineyard ».

« Send us more Salesians »

The joy I had in meeting so many Salesians was nearly always blurred by the fact that their numbers were so inadequate for the urgent needs of the moment and the vast development and consolidation the apostolate envisaged.

The plain fact is that, in the face of the work needing to be done, there is a depressing shortage of men, often to an extent that is overwhelmingly discouraging. My ears still ring with the sad request so often made: "We are short of men: send us more Salesians."

When I think of these dear confrères, often advanced in years and run-down in health yet so generously multiplying their efforts, I cannot allow their cry to go unheeded — both for their sake and the sake of the multitude of souls depending on them.

I hope many of you will offer your services right here

and now to our men on the missions. True, many provinces have not great numbers of confrères; but we know from experience that practical gestures of solidarity towards more needy provinces always bear fruit. There are confrères who entered the Congregation because they were attracted by the missionary ideal. Surely it would do good to all to help them realise their goal. I feel sure my invitation will be taken up by some generous and feeling souls — both on the part of the confrères who volunteer and the local superiors who must face losing good men.

The centenary celebrations of our missions are close on us. Surely our best way to celebrate would be to reawaken our missionary fervour and translate it into practical action. The Special General Chapter lists this as a most important element in our renewal.

However, the problem of the missions, viewed broadly, will not be solved by volunteers answering the Rector Major's call. Its roots go much deeper: it is, in the final analysis, the vital question of vocations — a distress the Congregation shares with the Church herself.

Tidings sad and joyous

Before developing this theme I wish to recommend to your prayers two of our Salesian bishops who died recently: Bishop Borgatti of Viedma (Argentina) and Bishop Boric of Punta Arenas (Chile). I hope to be able to send you their mortuary letters soon. For the moment I must limit myself to begging your good prayers for these two worthy sons of Don Bosco who served their dioceses so faithfully.

Now the joyful tidings: two new Salesian bishops — Bishop Abraham Alangimattathil for the new diocese of Kohima-Impal (India); and Bishop Matthew Baroi for the diocese of Krishnagar, where he was already Administrator Apostolic. Their burdens are not light, so let us renew our good wishes and prayers.

And now the theme that lies so close to the hearts of all of us.

THE CRUCIAL PROBLEM OF VOCATIONS

Many reasons urge me to speak of this matter, and they all come to the same thing. What follows is said in frank sincerity: I speak as a father to his grown-up sons and brothers.

It is no secret to any of us that the Church and the Congregation are suffering a dearth of vocations that is very noticeable and often frightening. Here are some facts regarding our Congregation. Since 1967 our novice intake has steadily diminished. This current year, when measured against our peak year shows a drop of 50% — and even these low numbers are mainly bolstered by the contributions of a few particular provinces only. Our annual statistics show that various other provinces are well down in novices — and some have none at all. This state of affairs cannot leave us at ease or indifferent.

True, this is something that is happening everywhere, and the causes (which do not all depend on us) are varied and complex. But, as Cardinal Garrone has said, the matter is one of life and death; so we cannot shrug our shoulders and say it can't be helped.

Remedy-searching with the Church

During the last days of November the "International Vocation-Congress" was held at Rome. It was the result of four years of practical researching and consultation carried out in every part of the world; and it included specialists, delegates from episcopal conferences and Superiors General (men and women). In the light of extensive findings and experiences of the episcopal conferences, the members pooled their ideas in a profound study of the serious problem of vocations.

All this goes to show exactly what the Holy Father and the Congress both affirmed: the Church has no intention to sit back thumb-twiddling as though nothing can be done. On the contrary, it rejects out of hand any attitude of acquiescence. Accepting today's realities and using the experience of the last few years, the Church now offers us well-studied and efficient methods (being quite prepared to break new ground) for the fostering and developing of new vocations.

This must be our line of action too — for various and obvious reasons.

Above all we must be convinced that the Holy Spirit will assist the Church to find the vocations she stands in need of. (And the Congregation, being a living part of the Church, naturally shares her life.)

It is worth remembering too that Don Bosco had to contend with times and circumstances that were far from favourable to vocations. Yet he was able to inspire and develop no end of vocations for the diocese and other institutes. To the objection that today things are far more difficult than in Don Bosco's time one could reply that even in these days generous youngsters are to be found who are apostolic and deeply spiritual. And indeed there are several religious institutes, especially missionaries, who are getting many excellent vocations, and in places where we maintain they are not to be had.

We get the vocations we deserve

If these findings and considerations ring true (and I myself believe they do), then it behoves us all to tackle the problem with complete intellectual honesty. We must not limit our examination to external family and social reasons (these are too often merely negative); rather, our first concern must be a courageous appraisal of ourselves as individual Salesians and as Salesian communities. We have to eschew the facile phrase, the com-

monplace argument, that is so full of excuses and dulls our personal and community conscience. The problem is one that interests and involves every one of us, as individuals and as communities, no matter what our status. My own lengthy and extensive experience has crystallized in recent years and leads me to pretty well agree with the statement that a community gets the vocations it deserves. My reason is that, although a vocation is not man's work, nevertheless grace acts by means of man. We see this happening every day.

Here I must make a preliminary clarification. Our diminution is not, and cannot be, the only motive prompting this letter — that would be an extremely short-sighted approach. The vocation apostolate constitutes for us an essential part of our renewal programme and our fidelity to our Salesianity and mission.

These motives urge me to dilate somewhat on certain notions that derive from the Church's magisterium, from the SGC and from our genuine long-standing traditions. We shall consider today's thinking on "vocation apostolate"; the close bond between the Salesian mission and vocational activity; the role of the aspirantate in vocation development, and possible corresponding (or "parallel") ways.

It is plain that the vocation problem engages our attention and efforts certainly because of our critical need, but even more so because of our mission to youth and our responsibility as Salesian educators according to the spirit of Don Bosco.

It is my sincere hope that these ideas will contribute to the renewal programme we are pledged to, according to the guidelines of the Special General Chapter.

1. THE VOCATION APOSTOLATE TODAY

Our mission binds us to a total service that "covers all the true requirements and real needs of youth, in body, heart and soul. An integral formation requires as much as possible an

integral service" (1) that will guide the young person to Christian and human maturity so that he may continually increase his self-donation to God and his neighbour, and achieve "an ideal that constitutes the best expression of self-giving either in family life or a closer service of God" (2).

This "integral service to the young" is the very purpose of our mission.

I wanted to draw attention to this principle to make it clear right at the outset that the vocation apostolate (in its own right) has a place in our mission. One could go further and say that it *is* our mission, for it cannot be separated from our work for youth. As the Special General Chapter says, "This is the crown of all pastoral work among the young." (3)

Today it is self-evident that the apostolate is either vocational or it is nothing.

It is indeed an important and delicate requirement in our educative mission.

Our education inadequate

One may ask why there is the present vocation crisis in nearly every country. There are many causes, theological, psychological — all generally valid and not to be ignored; but I shall not go into them just now. Rather shall I adduce a cause that seems to get to the heart of the matter: our youth education has been inadequate; it has not been an integral education, at all levels, human, religious, Christian and social; we have not given our youngsters that help and direction necessary for the development of their whole personality while they are pursuing their life's aim according to the will of God and their own proper talents.

(1) SGC n. 353.

(2) *Ibid.*, n. 354.

(3) *Ibid.*, n. 374.

Let us forget for the moment the responsibilities of other people (I refer to social changes, special circumstances, new customs, ideologies, etc.) and concentrate on where we Salesian educators have been found wanting. This may be painful: but it will show us where the remedy is to be applied.

There is but one conclusion: we have to be seriously, consistently, utterly faithful to our mission so as to achieve what Don Bosco wants of us — education with all its Salesian overtones.

The meaning of vocation apostolate

All the foregoing makes it clear that when I speak of vocation promotion or apostolate, and when I urge that you put your heart into it, I certainly do not mean to reduce the apostolate to a mere series of devices for "vocation-fishing" just for the satisfaction of keeping our houses of formation full. The matter is wider, deeper and more substantial than that.

The vocation apostolate "consists in the action of the Christian community, organized by the hierarchy, with the aim that every Christian from his early childhood may develop his fundamental vocation to holiness and to the apostolate that issues from his Baptism. Thus he may be able to discover his own personal vocation and find the necessary conditions for maturity and perseverance." (4).

Seeing that we are dealing with a theological reality (our collaborating in God's action that at the same time deeply influences the destiny and life of man) it is necessary to bear in mind those theological premises that give this vocation work its true meaning. I enumerate three of them.

First, *the action of God*. Every vocation in the Church

(4) CONFERENZA EPISCOPALE ITALIANA, *La preparazione al sacerdozio ministeriale* 1972, pag. 313.

comes from God. The Spirit appoints to each one his special charism. The calling to the ministry or consecrated life is an act of predilection: it is not man's decision or choice. "You did not choose me, but I chose you." (5).

Secondly, *the needs of the Church*. Vocations are for the Church, so that she may achieve her sacramental mission of saving the world. "God will not allow his Church to lack ministers," the Council assures us, referring to priestly vocations. (6)

"We must not minimize the difficulties of the present or the future," wrote the French bishops recently, "but the Church was sent to this world of ours in order to call it to salvation. It is for the world that the Church needs the vocations of all Christians, especially vocations to the ministry and the consecrated life. Throughout all today's difficulties, uncertainties and questionings God is present in his Church and in the world. In our world so full of hope and restlessness God continues his call so that the Church may serve the world he loves." (7)

Finally, *all vocations are complementary*. The purpose of charisms is "the renewal and building up of the Church." (8) The Church must grow and expand and achieve its destiny of being the community "of every creature."

The present-day theology of vocations gives great importance to this ecclesial purpose of all vocations, and it was emphasized too by the Council. All individual vocations converge in a self-completing inter-relation so as to do their part for the Church's one great mission. (9) Indeed, regarding this latter vocation-service, we must not forget that "vocations do not

(5) Jn. XV, 16.

(6) *Optatam Totius*, n. 6.

(7) CONFÉRENCE EPISCOPALE FRANÇAISE, *L'Esprit, le sens et les moyens d'une pastorale des vocations*. In *Vocation*, n. 257 (1972), pag. 20 & 9.

(8) *Lumen Gentium*, n. 12.

(9) Cf. *Ad Gentes*, n. 15; *Lumen Gentium*, n. 32-33.

compete with one another but combine their work within the Church and among men.”(10)

Objectives of vocation apostolate

Once we have posited these theological premises, we may delve deeper and scrutinize the main objectives of the vocation apostolate. Here are two of them.

The baptism-vocation must “come alive.” The first objective of the vocation apostolate (in common with the general apostolate) is to have the Christian cultivate and live his fundamental vocation with conviction — his vocation to the faith, to be one of “God’s people.” “All the elect the Father predestined to become conformed to the image of his Son... He planned to assemble in the Holy Church all those who would believe in Christ.”(11) This summons is our most sublime and fundamental calling. There is no greater one.

“The outstanding cause of human dignity lies in man’s call to communion with God. From the very circumstance of his origin man is already invited to converse with God.”(12) “The ultimate vocation of man is in fact one and divine”(13): to enter into the Paschal Mystery via the Church. This is another way of saying to enter into close communion with God and attain redintegration and glorification once and for all.

Baptism and membership of the Church mean holiness.(14).

What matters is that the Church be built up by the holiness of its members, the whole Christ living and present in the world. The task of all Christians (each according to his own state) is to strive daily to follow and imitate Christ. They

(10) CEF, *o.c.*, pag. 8.

(11) *Lumen Gentium*, n. 2.

(12) *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 19.

(13) *Ibid.*, n. 22.

(14) Cf. *Lumen Gentium*, n. 39.

must "follow in his footsteps and mould themselves in his image, seeking the will of the Father in all things, devoting themselves with all their being to the glory of God and the service of their neighbour." (15)

For a baptized Christian to "identify" in such a way is inconceivable without sharing in Christ's mission. The Special General Chapter says, "Every baptized and confirmed person becomes a 'Christian' and receives his mission of contributing to the 'sacramental' function of the Church — that is, of bearing witness, as a sign of the mystery of Christ, and of serving as an instrument of his communication to man." (16)

This is the basic aim of every apostolate, and, in practice, of the vocations apostolate: to help every Christian to live Christ's mission, to make him aware that by baptism he has assumed responsibility to further and spread the Kingdom of God, to be holy and build up the Church.

Helping each vocation to develop

The Special General Chapter continues: "However, all this is not expressed in a uniform manner, but according to a variety of different concrete vocations. The Church is a living reality and its functions are complex. It is animated by the Holy Spirit who appoints to each his special function in the Church: "first apostles, second prophets, third teachers." (18)

Each member has his own place in the organism and performs his own function so that the body will develop, strengthen and reach perfection. The Holy Spirit "distributes special graces among the faithful of every rank. By these gifts he makes them fit and ready to undertake the various tasks or offices

(15) *Ibid.*, n. 40.

(16) SGC n. 109.

(17) *Ibid.*

(18) 1 Cor., XII, 28.

advantageous for the renewal and upbuilding of the Church.” (19) The vocation to the priesthood or consecrated life thus fits into this wider area of the Christian vocation that has its roots in the sacrament of Baptism. (20)

Unfortunately many of us have often forgotten this. We have expected to find specific vocations where there was no clear awareness of the Christian vocation.

The vocation apostolate must be seen fundamentally as part of the general apostolate, with this difference, that it needs to be directed into a particular channel. There is no such thing as a “generic Christian.” Every person, at some specific time in his life, is called by God to fulfil some particular task in the Church, and he needs to find out what exactly it is.

This is precisely what the vocation apostolate aims to do: help each one to discover his personal vocation and perfect it.

Some characteristics of the vocation apostolate

From what has been said we can draw certain important conclusions. First of all, the vocation apostolate takes on the aspect of an *educative service we owe to the young*. Indeed Christian vocational guidance is a pedagogical service that the young person has a right to expect from us (naturally with the proviso that his personal destiny is ultimately his own concern). (21) We should render wretched service to a youngster if we developed his character and talents and left it at that, so that, for want of being directed into his own particular niche, his qualities remained useless and unproductive for the Church and society. In the second place, the *vocation apostolate includes all vocations*. The Christian educator has the duty to see “that all the faithful are led individually to develop their own specific vocations accord-

(19) *Lumen Gentium*, n. 12.

(20) Cf. *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis*, n. 5

(21) *Populorum Progressio*, n. 15.

ing to the Gospel and in the light of the Holy Spirit.” (22) Hence the vocation apostolate is concerned with all vocations, and cannot be reduced to priestly or religious vocations, and certainly not to mere “candidate-foraging” for one’s own Institute. A change of mind is indicated here (23) so that we can eventually accept the principle cheerfully that “all of us are responsible for all vocations.”

Finally, the vocation apostolate is a *specific action that favours sacred vocations*. We have established that youth apostolate properly understood is already a vocation apostolate, in that it makes the youth aware of God’s personal call, leads him to embrace his baptismal vocation generously, and inspires him to throw himself into the mission of the Church. It remains to add that this general apostolate must culminate in specific action in favour of vocations to the priesthood and the consecrated life.

One of Christ’s first concerns was to single out certain men from the crowds who followed him. These were to be the trained souls who would witness to his mission and carry it far and wide: they were his disciples and apostles. They received from him an invitation that was clear, explicit and deeply personal: “Come, follow me.” These Jesus cherished and trained with special care. Our way of acting should be modelled on Christ’s.

God gave his Church the task of calling suitable candidates, (24) and the Church must see to it that “in the People of God here on earth labourers are not lacking.” (25)

The whole ecclesial community is involved in the care and guidance of vocations: “The duty of increasing priestly vocations belongs to the whole Christian community,” we read in “*Optatam*

(22) *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, n. 6.

(23) *Ibid.*, *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 52.

(24) Cf. *Optatam Totius*, n. 2.

(25) *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, n. 11.

Totius" (26); and Christians must achieve a "spiritual climate" so that their lives, sensitivities, prayer and moral education are all imbued with rich supernatural values.

Let us all look to the example of Don Bosco. He was able to create the perfect climate that brought forth priestly and religious vocations in abundance.

2. WHAT THE CONGREGATION MUST DO

Vocational guidance thus takes pride of place in our Salesian mission. If the Congregation is to remain "Salesian" (that is, the Congregation founded by Don Bosco for the education of youth), guidance and promotion of vocations must be carried out in a big way.

We have seen that the vocation apostolate has a twofold dimension: generically it helps the baptism vocation "come alive," and specifically it favours "sacred vocations." Both these dimensions deeply concern our Congregation.

Seeing that the "vocation apostolate enlivens the Baptismal vocation," it comes to be identified with our own Salesian mission. The Special General Chapter says, "Our Society, which has received the specific mission of evangelizing youth is called to realise this vocation work within the Church. In a particular way it has the mission of helping youths to define their own position and to discover their own roles in the human community and in the Church." (27) And going a step further, caring for vocations to the priesthood and consecrated life is just as essential to our mission, and is indeed the main aim of our Congregation. This statement is well supported by our Salesian documents.

The true Salesian must necessarily be involved in vocation work

Our Constitutions make no bones about this significant work: "Let us seek to encourage the growth of lay, religious

(26) *Optatam Totius*, n. 2.

(27) SGC n. 662.

and priestly vocations to the apostolic life. Such work enriches the whole Church.”(28) The members of the Special General Chapter, too, showed their awareness of its importance; and various documents of the Chapter bear witness to their interest and study.(29) The Chapter calls the vocation apostolate a “privileged sector of Salesian action”(30) and insists that “this characteristic of our work must remain.”(31) It views the Salesian as urgently bent on augmenting the Body of Christ, concerned about the “pressing problems regarding priestly and religious vocations, the inspiring of layfolk to involve themselves in the apostolate and in work for the missions.”(32) It further adds that “an essential element of our pastoral activity and its natural consequence is the promotion and care of possible religious and priestly vocations and youth leaders. This is one of the more immediate and responsible services we can offer.”(33) It goes on to say: “Salesians should take special care to help in the formation of those the Lord has called to a total consecration to himself for an apostolic mission.”(34) And again, “Our schools will take the greatest care to seek and guide good vocations to the priesthood and religious life from among the half million boys who attend them.”(35)

The Chapter merely echoed the vocation aspect and the charisma of Don Bosco, who was convinced that he had received this mission from God. The Biographical Memoirs describe how

(28) *Const.*, n. 12. Cf. also *Const.*, n. 24, 29, 107; & *Reg.* n. 72. Also Letter of Father Ricaldone « *Formazione del personale salesiano* », in *ASC* n. 78 (1936), (well worth reading).

(29) *Document I*: n. 50, 61-65, 99. *Document II*, n. 220-223, 235-236, 250, 258. *Document IV*, n. 374, 382, 397; especially *Document XIII*, n. 662, 673-684.

(30) *SGC*, n. 65.

(31) *Ibid.*, n. 50.

(32) *Ibid.*, n. 99.

(33) *Ibid.*, n. 397.

(34) *Ibid.*, n. 662.

(35) *Ibid.*, n. 382.

the sorry social and religious atmosphere of Don Bosco's times was so antagonistic towards vocations, and goes on to add these words (which have always impressed me): "Priestly vocations among the young were practically at rock-bottom... To fill up the vocation gap seemed a task that was humanly impossible. But Don Bosco felt that God had entrusted him with the mission of supplying this desperate need in the Church, and did not hesitate." (36) These words are not a biographer's imaginative wanderings. We have them confirmed by Don Bosco himself four years before his death in a precious document we could call his paternal will and testament: "God called our humble Congregation to promote ecclesiastical vocations... Let us recall that we present the Church with a great treasure when we find a good vocation." (37)

In one of his circular letters Don Rua spoke with intense feeling of his responsibility to the Congregation, exhorting all Salesians to works ardently for vocations. I feel the same zealous conviction that Don Rua had, and consider it my duty to "bring all my thoughts and energies to bear on caring for vocations. Without this concern our Congregation will languish and would not be doing the work of our Founder." (38) I repeat here what I said to the Chapter members: "I am utterly convinced that the peak of the Salesian community's pastoral activities has to be vocational guidance." (39)

The community's responsibility

One of the great finds of the Special General Chapter was the value and importance of the community. It maintains that "the mission is confided principally to the community."

(36) MB, 5, 388-389.

(37) *Ibid.*, 17, 262.

(38) MICHAEL RUA, *Lettere Circolari*, pag. 187.

(39) *Relazione generale sullo stato della Congregazione*, CGS Roma 1971, pag. 107.

The mission of the Congregation "is entrusted not to the individual but to the whole Congregation and to its provincial and local communities." (40) The community that is responsible for vocations (41) is not just the universal Church, or the diocese, or the local Churches, or the parishes. It extends also to religious communities at all levels, to Christian families, educative communities and apostolic associations. It must be insisted that every community is a "sacrament of the universal Church" and hence receives a call and must answer it.

The community is the suitable ground, the seedbed where plantlings thrive. Using these principles, today's thinking affirms that a vocation cannot develop and mature without the community. The community element belongs to the very nature of a sacred vocation; its birth, its growth, its purpose, its fruitful performance — all depend on the community. The community cannot stand aloof: the call is addressed continuously to the community by the very fact that it is a community.

Many Provincial Chapters have shown a good understanding of the foregoing and have gone into the matter accordingly. The Provinces as such and all the local communities, conscious of being trustees of the mission of both Church and Congregation, have risen to the occasion. Whether vocations were plentiful or scarce, whether a crisis existed or not, or whether the task was difficult or easy, made no difference to them.

Each community has to make a genuine effort to revitalize itself (for this is a "must" if vocations are to be had) and work out a detailed programme for the vocation apostolate.

The first condition for this is to be community-conscious and desire to build up the community at all costs; and this includes the religious community and the educative community (42) (the latter embracing lay collaborators, pupils and parents). (43)

(40) SGC, n. 29.

(41) *Optatam Totius*, n. 2.

(42) SGC, n. 357.

(43) Cf. *Ibid.*, Document 8 *The community of brotherhood*.

"In this way an atmosphere is created in which vocations can grow." (44)

Every Salesian is responsible

All Superiors ought to feel involved by the Council's call. "Christus Deus" reminds them that "they should foster priestly and religious vocations as much as possible and take a special interest in missionary vocations." (45) Their special task is to inspire and co-ordinate.

Remember the words of Pope John: "The problem of ecclesiastical and religious vocations is a daily concern for the Pope." (46) Please God all in authority may feel this way. May their concern elicit, as it did for Pope John, "earnest and fervent prayer from the longing depths of their souls" (47) that the vocation apostolate be given its rightful importance. It needs our hearts, our minds and our strength.

The Council then turns to all educators, insisting that they "strive to educate the young people confided to them so as to enable them to discover God's calling and follow it generously." (48) We are all in this category — priests, brothers, young and old, superiors and non-superiors — for we are all educators.

Priests have a special responsibility, for "this is part of their actual priestly mission." (49) "As educators in the faith, priests must see to it that the faithful are led individually in the Holy Spirit to develop their own vocation as required by the

(44) Cf. *Ibid.*, n. 507.

(45) *Christus Dominus*, n. 15.

(46) *Optatam Totius*, n. 2. note 3.

(47) *Ibid.*

(48) *Optatam Totius*, n. 2; cf. *Perfectae Caritatis* n. 24; *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, n. 11.

(49) *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, n. 11.

Gospel.” (50) It is hard to see how our consciences can rest easy if our pastoral ministry lacks this aim and the driving urge to achieve it.

Brothers, as Salesians and Religious are just as much involved in the vocation apostolate as priests. I mention them specially to emphasise the fact that the lay vocation is every bit as important, valuable and attractive today (indeed moreso) as when Don Bosco conceived and introduced it. Rethinking has greatly enhanced the value of the layman in the Church and society, and this offers the Salesian lay vocation greater possibilities and a wider field of action. To quote the Special General Chapter: “In promoting vocations, let us not forget our own vocations — Salesian priests and Brothers; and they should be given equal importance.” (51) It is fundamental that our Brothers bear witness.

Specialists are needed

There is no lack of desire or will to throw oneself into this interesting and necessary work; but often people baulk at it through fear of not going the right way about this delicate task. They feel inadequately prepared; they would like to have a more solid background in theology, psychology, pedagogy and so forth. Some lose heart when their efforts are not successful; others are bewildered when they come up against certain complex situations or meet with opposition. Others again work enthusiastically but not always according to judgements and methods that are sound and well-chosen. They push on in a confused, hit-and-miss sort of way, sometimes off the track altogether, with no idea of the Church's directives today or the safe tenets of pastoral theology and sound psycho-pedagogy. Hence the need

(50) *Ibid.*, n. 6.

(51) SGC, n. 692.

for specialists and vocational services that are well organized: so we must turn to our provinces and houses and make use of our competent delegates, promoters and directors (and indeed these will often be the very ones in charge of the vocation apostolate). Then there are our various services, centres and trained staffs, all organized for promotion, guidance and vocational work.

Terminology varies according to time and place. The important thing is to clarify the specific functions of such persons or groups: whipping up awareness, interest and involvement, undertaking formation, organization of projects and activities, co-ordination, aid, information, study and reflection — in fine, everything that goes to make up the methodology and ascetics of vocation promotion.

It would be a bad mistake, however, to conclude that these people are the only ones responsible for vocations, and that communities and individuals may therefore off-load their personal responsibility. These trained people are not meant to shoulder our labours. They are not expected to work in direct contact with the young. Their mission is to act as delegates and animate the apostolate of the communities and individual confrères and give them every possible help.

According to the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, these organizations should have the following aims.

- To stir up vocation interest in every pastoral activity.
- To study the most efficient activities and try them out
- this to be carried out to suit the different circumstances, places and persons, especially, the different age levels.

These activities consist mainly in:

- prayer (always the chief means);
- appraisal of conditions;
- training of responsible personnel;
- spreading solid theological knowledge regarding vocations, the ministry, the consecrated life;

- employing more apt means of communication;
- contacts with selected youth groups;
- perfecting personal and group methods of study and guidance, with vocations in view;
- ways and means of supporting and keeping in touch with the better youngsters until their possible entry into a formation centre. (52)

To achieve these ends we should employ everything useful that modern psychological and sociological findings have to offer. (53)

3. Planning for vocation activities

God is the prime mover in the field of vocations; but, far from excluding man's help, God expects his solicitous, generous and intelligent collaboration, a collaboration preceded by reflection, study and prayer. We need to analyse the situation, discover what is necessary, fix our targets, decide what methods to adopt and propose ways and means.

Through the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, the Holy See has asked the episcopal conferences to carry out a wide consultation and deep study of vocations, and to elaborate national plans that meet the specific religious and social conditions of each nation. These plans are to be based on the teachings and pastoral norms of Vatican II and subsequent documents, and their results are to be checked regularly. (54)

This certainly brings home to us the necessity that each Salesian Province or Region look to its own special conditions of life, and work out practical lines of action for the vocation apostolate.

(52) Cf. *Encl. 3, letter n. 418/70/153*, 10.3.1971, pag. 19-20 (rioneoed).

(53) *Optatam Totius*, n. 2.

(54) CARD. G. GARRONE, *Lettera ai Presidenti delle Conferenze Episcopali*, 10.3.71.

A few norms for planning

— Our planning should *keep in mind the joint apostolate* and work in harmony with its organization and all facets of ecclesial action. We must not play a lone hand. We have to take cognizance of the various doctrinal, spiritual, psychopedagogical and organizing aspects. This planning has to form an integral part of our youth apostolate. (55)

— *Our planning must be down-to-earth* and eschew all that is airy-fairy. There is no getting away from the fact that we move about in an ambient that leaves much to be desired (social, political, cultural and religious problems, especially among the young). We have to acknowledge the more urgent on-the-spot needs of the Church and the Congregation, and harvest what material, human and institutional means are available. These are the realities we must start with; and when they are very unfavourable we are going to make slow progress. The first hurdles have to be overcome, greater sacrifices and dedication will be needed, together with a deep faith when faced with the prospects of no immediate results. Nevertheless it would be useless and harmful to work any other way.

— *Our planning must be practical.* We cannot be satisfied with mere analyses and general principles and conclusions. Real solutions are wanted; guidelines and goals have to be mapped out; and they must be clear, progressive and adapted to the various situations.

— *Our planning requires regular checking.* This should be done on the personal, local and provincial level and should not be limited to immediate results and numbers (which will generally not be forthcoming for some time, anyway). Rather should we examine what real efforts have been made, the enthusiasm, the difficulties that have cropped up and ways to improve the procedure.

— *Our planning must be ecclesial.* It must be in step with the Church, not narrow and hide-bound, not behind closed doors; but wide open and ready to collaborate with other efforts the Church is making in the diocese or country.

— *Our planning must be Salesian.* It must be imbued with Don Bosco's charisma, which is a gift of the Holy Spirit for the enrichment of the Church. Hence it should have the following traits.

— It will fit in with the principles of our Preventive System: our sacramental and Marian pedagogy, joyousness, optimism with the boys, our presence among them that educates and makes for inter-personal relations. (56)

— It will show a natural preference for vocation work among the pupils in our schools, colleges, youth centres, clubs, parishes, etc.

— It will envisage co-ordination and collaboration with the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.

— It will engage the rest of the Salesian Family in this vocation work: Co-operators, Don Bosco Voluntaries, Past Pupils, and all who are within the Salesian sphere of influence (pupils, parents, teachers, people in Salesian parishes, The Association of Mary Help of Christians, and other apostolic movements dependant on us). (57)

Our Salesian way and the Preventive System

All our educative activities (and hence our vocation apostolate) is based on the Preventive System. We should feel the need of re-examining it and giving it a new pride of place among us. (58) This was Don Bosco's contribution, his "little grain

(56) Cf. *Ibid.*, n. 363.

(57) Cf. *Ibid.*, n. 357.

(58) The European Convention on the Preventive System is being held at this very time here at the Generalate (31 Dec. to 5 Jan.). It is organized

of sand to help in educating the young" (59); and "educating" for Don Bosco meant educating the whole person. "For an educator, the good of his pupils means everything, and so he is ready to put up with all hardships and fatigues to attain his end: their social, moral and scientific education." (60) The result of this integral education is that the young assume their proper place in Church and society. Don Bosco puts it simply: "The people educated according to this system are useful citizens and good Christians; they hold respectable positions and lead good lives." (61)

Don Bosco owed his success to the fact that his heart grieved for these abandoned and bewildered youngsters, for their waywardness that could compromise them in the next life. So he never let up in his work of education and guidance; he was a true martyr to the cause.

The Preventive System gives great importance to *human formation* (physical, psychic, intellectual and social), *Christian formation* (moral, spiritual, liturgical, sacramental), and *vocational guidance*. (62)

Paging through the Biographical Memoirs we see that Don Bosco made use of, and bequeathed to us, all the resources that our modern vocation apostolate demands. "Let us practise the Preventive System," he said, "and we shall have vocations in abundance." (63)

We could list these resources thus: an accurate and progressive catechesis, a deep and active liturgical, sacramental and spiritual life, optimism, joyousness and the witness of the educator

by the Commission for Youth Apostolate in collaboration with the Higher Institute of Pedagogy of the Salesian Pontifical University. I look forward eagerly to its possible follow-up in other continents.

(59) MB, 13, 918-923.

(60) *Ibid.*, 13, 922.

(61) *Ibid.*, 13, 922-923.

(62) *Ibid.*, 13, 918-922.

(63) *Ibid.*, 17, 262.

(that is, his active presence among the boys, his obvious virtue, his total dedication to the pupils, and his respect for their personality and freedom). Other corollaries naturally follow: sharing ideals, participation in apostolic work, encouraging formation and activity groups, the conviction that there is no substitute for prayer, and so on.

Let us examine these means. After all, if we really want to work we must know what tools to use and how to use them.

An active and progressive catechesis

Catechetics well presented will keep the Christian's conscience ever alert to his baptismal state. It puts him in close and personal contact with the Word who unites and animates his Church; it keeps him involved in achieving the Church's mission according to his personal vocation. (64) To catechize and evangelize mean to announce the living person of Christ, to help people meet him and experience the powerful attraction and fascination and infinite kindness of this most complete Person — the only one who can obtain from the young a response that cannot be gainsaid .

Our catechesis will respect the growing-up process and will clearly and adequately present the different vocations the Holy Spirit inspires in the Church. The youngster may then search out his own personal vocation whereby he may serve God and man.

We should fail sadly and render a disservice to our pupils if our catechesis did not fulfil this requirement. It would be like describing the beauties and riches of a land to our boys and leaving them to drift about in a sea of confusion with the risk of never reaching it.

(64) Cf. *Italian Episcopal Conference: Il rinnovamento della catechesi*, pag. 33.

In our pastoral teaching we have ample opportunity to instruct our pupils, their parents, our past pupils, Co-operators and parishioners on the basic points of vocation; and they are opportunities we should take full advantage of: religion classes, sermons, hearing confessions, giving spiritual direction, talks and conferences. Other excellent occasions are the preparation and administering of baptism, matrimony, holy orders and religious professions.

Sacred vocations

In presenting to our charges the various vocations we shall of course be enthusiastic and objective in pointing out the spiritual excellence of each. And when we treat of sacred vocations it is only natural that we should evince a special care and interest in them. This method will save us from the error of tub-thumping like a hard-sell TV advertisement. We need to be quite concerned about the way these vocations are spoken of, and the reasons are obvious: people find it hard to understand their significance, and there is much ignorance about them. Also in recent times people have valued them less, partly because the married and lay state have been doctrinally upgraded. And the inherent renunciation in sacred vocations is another difficulty.

Let it not be laid at our door that that someone has missed following the Lord "more closely" simply because he did not know of something we should have taught him about vocations. If a young person knows the path there is always the chance that God may invite him to walk along it.

Deeply spiritual life

No Church directive, no principle of the vocation apostolate forbids Religious to publicize and encourage esteem for their

own Religious Family, provided this be done prudently, (65) without competitiveness, and within the bounds of that universality we keep referring to.

We should show scant justice or gratitude to the Holy Spirit who raised up Don Bosco, if we neglected to make him known by the practical witness of our lives and by word of mouth. It is the will of the Holy Spirit that the Salesian charisma be conserved in the Church, and it is our duty to make it known through Don Bosco and his Congregation.

Don Bosco, saint of giant stature, colossus of holiness, tireless in activity, prodigal in his work for poor youth, great-hearted sharer of the hopes, perplexities and joys of youth — this “other Christ” has inspired and still inspires thousands of young people to consecrate their lives to the service of the poor.

And we must publicize the Salesian charisma through the Congregation. There should be no triumphalism — nor should there be false humility. Our attitude is that of people who know they have made an excellent choice and wish to share it with others. We simply take a page from the Gospel, “that (people) may see (our) good works” and be drawn to collaborate with us in our style of life, to “give glory to (our) Father who is in heaven.” (66)

Youth involvement in the apostolate

Most people today live in a worldly atmosphere of materialism and neo-paganism: hence it is well-nigh impossible for youngsters to hear God’s voice. “The turmoil of life, the vacuum left by rejected traditions, the often harmful pressures of our environment — all these things make interior silence a problem. It is more

(65) *Perfectae Caritatis*, n. 24.

(66) Matt. V, 16.

and more difficult for our consciences to hear the voice of the Lord.” (67)

This situation has to be corrected as soon as possible — purified and spiritualized, so that our young people can appreciate supernatural values and see earthly things and events in the light of faith.

This is Don Bosco’s pedagogy, and we know it is based on the sacraments, friendship with Christ (i.e., the life of grace), and devotion to Our Lady. These three realities of religion are not over-popular these days — even among some Religious; nevertheless, not only do I mention them, but I emphasise them with my firmest conviction and want you to give them your attention. Dear confrères, let us re-assess them, practising them according to Vatican II improvements, and allotting them an even higher level of importance. They have no substitute in our Salesian pedagogy, or in any apostolate for that matter. They are the “pillars that must support an educative building”, (68) and they are a most efficacious means for promoting vocations.

Every time Don Bosco proposed his “strategy campaign” for vocations (and he did it very frequently, speaking and writing to rectors, missionaries, parish priests — indeed to all) he always gave pride of place to “approaching the sacraments frequently.” (69) In a conference to his Salesians he said: “As far as we are concerned, the frequentation of the sacraments is the very basis for vocations. This must always be our solid and holy foundation.” And to show there was no question of mere ritualism and that it was essential to have freedom, good preparation and true practical principles, he added, “making sure that confessions and communions are well made.” (70)

(67) Card. G. GARRONE, *La Chiesa*, LDC 1972, pag. 141.

(68) *MB*, 13, 921.

(69) *Ibid.*, 12, 88.

(70) *Ibid.*, 14, 44.

Importance of spiritual direction

Confession and spiritual direction are the best means to help young people open up to God's influence.

Vocations do not mature of themselves: they need help; and this is where "pastoral dialogue" comes in. Paul VI has rightly said: "Spiritual direction is going out of fashion; but it is necessary, and we must hold on to it with respect. It has nothing whatsoever in common with a domineering attitude. It is a matter of counsel, friendship, opening up the heart, and (something we must teach the young) self-examination... How many vocations are born at the sight of the poor, at the sight of the abandoned, at the sight of so much good to be done. And the one to point out these things and explain them to the young is the priest who befriends them, is their companion and brother, and who talks to them and directs their souls." (71)

These talks between priest and youngster are vitally important and have a definite influence on his Christian and human development. We cannot insist enough on these intimate, private and sacred contacts. It is indeed a serious matter.

Spiritual direction enhances many other means too — in a way it epitomizes them and often takes their place. A suitable atmosphere for vocations means an atmosphere of real Christian living that is mature and responsible and capable of a truly dedicated choice; and to create this, these means play an especially important role: retreats, days of recollection, special times of enlightenment during prayer or listening to the Word of God. Don Bosco was well convinced of their importance and we know how diligently he used them.

No substitute for prayer

Another key point. The normal way, the main way the Holy Spirit's call comes is through the good example of a vocation

(71) *Paul VI to members of IV World Vocation-Congress.*

well-lived. "Where we see a priest or a group of priests giving true witness of faith, piety, fidelity, zeal; where a religious community is dedicated to its sacred duties, lives together in complete harmony, is open to the world without being swamped by a worldly spirit, and is obviously faithful to the Gospel counsels — it is almost impossible that there should not be vocations." (72)

The example of everyone

"The example of good priests, the value of good works seen in religious institutes, these have a considerable influence — I would say an overwhelming influence. It is through a priest that Christ says "Come, follow me" to his future minister. And it is the same with religious vocations." (73)

The example of the community

"A community that does not live generously according to the Gospel will be a community short of vocations. But wherever daily sacrifices keep the faith vigorous and maintain a deep love of God, priestly vocations continue to be numerous." (74) "It can be said without a doubt that what matters for people today is personal example, and especially the good example of a group of people." (75)

These are statements that must set us thinking.

The message par excellence

I repeat that the community is the normal channel for God's call, and the Special General Chapter document on "Evange-

(72) Mons. CARRARO, *Una pastorale delle vocazioni rinnovate*, in *Atti della XII Assemblea generale CISM*, Roma 1972, pag. 65.

(73) Paul VI: *World Vocation-Week Message*, (in *Teachings of Paul VI*, 8 (1970).

(74) PAUL VI, *op. cit.*, pag. 191.

(75) Cf. CEF, *op. cit.*, pag. 11.

lization and Catechesis" bears this out convincingly: "Communities united fraternally in charity and pledged to the service of all men and united by their faith in the Eucharist, become in the eyes of the world the supreme message, which brings with it an evangelization power that man can only resist with difficulty... The strong attraction and conviction radiated by Don Bosco and his community at the Oratory were the fruits of an exceptional witness on the part of both Salesians and boys." (76)

This is our own history, factual and genuine. Thank God it repeats itself in many communities today; and I am sure that a universal effort would extend it to the whole Congregation. The best vocational guidance we can give, the best recommendation for our Congregation, the most convincing invitation to embrace our life, is our own example. (77)

We are all aware of what this involves. Let us really make the effort, personally and as communities, and God's help will not be wanting.

Harmful example

It is all-important to rid ourselves of certain very harmful things that frequently work their way into our lives: the soft and easy life, lack of respect for things ecclesiastical and religious, insensitivity to the problems of other people, the habit of bitter and destructive criticism, compromising between God and the world (with its corollary, superficial piety), dodging our duty under specious pretexts, and "worldly" attitudes.

The antidote for this travesty of the priestly and religious life is to live the evangelical counsels. The vocation crisis according to Paul VI is a crisis of credibility. Certain young people no longer believe in the values of the consecrated life because

(76) SGC, nos. 294 & 295.

(77) Cf. *Perfectae Caritatis*, n. 24.

they see the opposite of what is taught. It is up to us to restore its credibility by our practical lives.

It is the same with our Salesian life. Perhaps it is time we gave renewed importance to virtues such as the family spirit, hard work, bold apostolic creativity, the fight for purity, devotion to Mary, loyalty to the Pope.

The problem of identity comes in here — priestly, religious and Salesian identity. This has played a great part in defections and fall-off in vocations both in the Church generally and in our own Congregation. Fortunately the difficulty seems to be working towards a solution today, thanks to the recent deep studies made by the Church and Religious Congregations, and the common effort for renewal. Certainly there is no lack of clear teaching and practical guidelines. It is a case of studying these documents with interest and enthusiasm.

Youth involvement in the apostolate

This is a necessary step to take. In this way a youngster begins to practise his Christian vocation and identifies himself with the Church's mission. By gradually putting him in direct contact with the material and moral needs of his peers and people in general, we help him gather experience in his own personal Christian life; he discovers Christ in others; he feels more responsible in his mission; and if well directed by his educator, he dedicates himself more and more to developing the grace of his Baptism and Confirmation.

This is the place for group dynamics. Group work has a value all its own in spurring on vocations, especially when it aims at formation and social and apostolic service. Modern psychology finds in these groups possibilities and resources that are of tremendous help in the self-education of the young and their development towards maturity. We must give them special attention and help.

This is exactly what Don Bosco's sodality groups were — they formed characters, stirred up zeal for apostolic work; they were a schooling process for convinced Christians; they turned out young apostles and priestly vocations.

Indeed the sodalities have a history rich in vocation. We read in the Biographical Memoirs, "By means of the Sodalities Don Bosco unobtrusively drew to the Congregation young lads in whom there was high hope. The novitiate was not a new world for them — they arrived already well prepared by the training of the sodalities." (78)

For some years many of our houses have replaced the sodalities with modern "group-work"; but in lots of cases they have not functioned efficiently. This may be due to untrained leaders, unsuitable times for meeting, or possibly vague notions about structures and aims .

Similar movements have been set afoot lately both within and outside our houses, their aim being to promote the apostolic formation of boys, youths and young adults.

This valuable educative and pastoral means must undergo a regular, honest and sincere appraisal so as to use it in the new modern style without losing any of the content and purpose it had in the mind of Don Bosco. (79)

No substitute for prayer

Last but certainly not least we come to prayer. Prayer is so important that without it all the other means are useless. A vocation is a mysterious right God reserves for himself. All vocations come from him; and this great and only "caller" calls with complete liberty. Yet God wills the mediation of the Church: not only does the Church call in the name of God; she also asks him for vocations.

(78) MB, 11, 226.

(79) Cf. SGC, n. 357, 366, 368.

Christ's vocation programme was twofold: he saw the need and scarcity ("The harvest is plentiful but the labourers are few"), and he indicated one single way to meet the problem — prayer ("Pray the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest").

It is in prayer and meditation that God's call is heard and understood; (80) it is only this contact with God that can elicit an assent that is decisive and without conditions.

As I have mentioned in another letter, (81) there is no doubt in my mind about two things: first, amongst the various causes of loss of vocation, the main one, always present, is lack of prayer. And secondly, prayer is absolutely necessary if our mission is to be realized (and mission implies vocations).

It has been rightly observed that the crisis in vocations has coincided with a general falling-off in piety both in the Church and in Religious Congregations; and this has brought with it a consequent diminution in prayer. I put the greatest importance on this relationship between prayer and vocations. We too are undergoing the greatest vocation crisis we have ever had. These last years have shown us for the first time in our history a graph of the Congregation that not only did not rise or even remain stationary, but actually fell.

I know our interest and preoccupation should not lie in numbers; but they are a pointer — we are aware of the spiritual and religious problems that accompany defections and a falling intake of novices.

We must pray to God every day, humbly, intensely, explicitly; we must all pray together; we must storm heaven on such occasions as World Days of Prayer that are set aside for vocations, seminaries, missions; contemplative vocations. We have to go further: take ourselves in hand and immerse ourselves in prayer so as to learn the will of God.

(80) Cf. *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, n. 11.

(81) Cf. *Letter on prayer*, in ASC (Jan. 1973).

4. THE ASPIRANTATE - NEW EXPERIMENTS

It is not enough to awaken the keen desire in a young man to give himself to Christ's mission and to bring him to the point of considering the possibility of a divine call to total consecration. It is not sufficient to discover in him the inclination, the desire, the talents that are reckoned as signs of a vocation.

A possible or incipient vocation has the need and the right to be helped along its journey to confirmation and maturity. This is a difficult, complex and delicate process — moreso when it concerns pre-adolescents and adolescents. Sometimes their plans for life are mere wishful thinking.

A seed is a possibility yet to be realized. If it be neglected, it may yet develop by itself; but it may also die. It is the same with a vocation. It is a dynamic reality; it is born and it develops — but it can also fail to develop. It is patent that it needs to be cared for, and certain means and structures are required so that it may mature.

This could be considered the most delicate part of the vocation apostolate — a job for an artist.

Aspirantes are still valid

An important word on aspirantates. I know that for some years they have been highly criticized and have been in a parlous state. The result is often confusion and discouragement. It is well known that many accusations are laid at the door of the aspirantate. I list a few.

— They mass-produce standardized, depersonalized types, lacking in "human" formation, and with a load of frustrations such as infantilism, idealization, and lack of initiative, responsibility and objective criticism.

— They favour an other-world spiritually, life being artificial and enclosed, not participating in strong Christian experiences.

— They breed class-consciousness and a sense of being a privileged group, as a results of being trained into an easy, comfortable clericalism without social relations.

— They cause serious temperamental deficiencies because of the segregated life that hinders integration and arrests the psychological development of the young.

It could be granted that in certain respect these accusations could be valid in occasional circumstances and practical situations; but one may well doubt their accuracy and authenticity. They are over-generalizations and have become universal catch-cries; and they display an impressive mental laziness.

It is all-important to make an honest examination as to whether the educative defects attributed to aspirantates are inherent in them as such, or rather whether they are common to many other pedagogical or educative institutions for the young. The answer does not do away with the faults; but it does throw light on the attitude we should take — we should not rush in with ill-considered decisions that do nothing to right the wrong but rather create worse ones.

Destruction is not the answer

In many places the first consequence of these uncritical judgments has been to eliminate the aspirantate or reduce it to an "ordinary college." This decision is too facile a solution to be valid. Destruction is not the answer. Destruction creates nothing.

Cardinal Gonzalez Martin, in a recent pastoral letter, has written about a similar institution, the diocesan seminary: "In the years following the Council the imagination baulks at how much has been written, said, done or permitted regarding the seminary. If an historian were to summarize it all, it would amount to a documentation so complex as to set our heads spinning — and in some cases it would fill us with remorse and shame.

Side by side with praiseworthy efforts at renewal we find witless proposals that unfortunately have considerable influence in many places. This sort of thing, together with other causes, has had an alarming effect: the ever-growing crisis in priestly vocations.” (82)

The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, studying these matters from its excellent vantage point, has come up with some thought-provoking reflections. Cardinal Garrone writes, “The only safe course in these troublous times is to cling to the means the Church judges necessary, constantly trying to perfect and update them according to the thought of the Council. If there are some non-seminary vocations, they are exceptions.” (83)

Much the same may be said of our aspirantates. Uncritically damned, they have disappeared in one way or another. Nothing positive or constructive has replaced what has been destroyed.

The loss of aspirantates has meant the loss of many valid and positive elements. It would show a distressing disregard for facts to overlook the many benefits both Church and Congregations have gained from aspirantates and minor seminaries. They have promoted enormous numbers of vocations; they have enriched the world with legions of genuine apostles, missionaries, saints, noted scholars, and fine social reformers. It has yet to be seen whether so much excellent yield will be forthcoming without the help of this kind of basic vocational education.

Renewal is the answer

I am certainly not advocating that we should hold on to the traditional aspirantate or minor seminary regardless. But I do maintain above all that our criticism should be just, calm

(82) Card. MARCELLO GONZÁLEZ MARTÍN, *Un seminario nuevo y libre* (pastoral letter). Toledo 1973.

(83) Card. G. GARRONE, Toledo 1973, *op. cit.*, pag. 142.

and objective; that we eliminate anything that hinders the efficient running of the aspirantate, and insist on a high standard in accordance with its scope and importance. Renewal is the answer.

The overall picture of Vatican II is renewal, not destruction; and this is assuredly the Church's practical directive for the minor seminary. In "*Ratio Fundamentalis*" we read, "The Council has certainly established that it be completely renewed, but has also declared that it is still valid for our times, and suitable for cultivating the seeds of a vocation." (84) In drawing up their National Plans for the vocation apostolate, many Episcopal Conferences have recognized this. Anyone who follows up this matter will note that in books, reviews and conventions there is now an authoritative and responsible call from the People of God and from scholars (even including "the opposition" of a few years back) to recognize its validity; and its reinstatement and improvement are forecast. Naturally this does not preclude other ways as well.

Cardinal Gonzalez Martin has written the following about the seminary (which we call the "aspirantate"): "Statements like the following are just not true: 'Minor seminaries are not needed'; 'The important thing is to form good Christians and vocations will follow'; 'Pupils in a minor seminary must live the same way as those in other colleges and institutes'; 'There is no point in favouring a life of special piety'; 'One shouldn't speak to them of the priestly vocation till they are grown up,' etc. This is a distressing mistake to make: a mistake, because it is not the thinking of the Church; distressing, because it is scotching the opportunity of using legitimate means to offer more priests to the Church." (85)

Thus it is not a case of shutting off roads. Rather should the existing ways be levelled out and widened to make them

(84) *Ratio Fundamentalis*, note 60.

(85) Card. GONZÁLEZ MARTÍN, *op. cit.*

more speedy and efficient; and new roads should be opened up that answer to needs and conditions when and where they occur.

The Church not only validates this one particular way, but gives it special pre-eminence. No one must permit its destruction, for it is a support and inspiration for other ways. (86)

We are on safe ground here. The Church, on the basis of secular experience, recommends certain types of formative institutes such as aspirantates, convinced that if they undergo adequate renewal they will be pre-eminently suitable.

Our Special General Chapter was in step with this when it asserted: "The aspirantate, as an environment characterized by an intense vocational guidance, is still a valid form to help the young to discover their own vocation and respond to it with a well-informed awareness." (87)

Our Regulations too have summarized the Council's directive: "The aspirantate is a centre for vocational guidance (and should be sufficiently open and maintain family contacts) where young men who show an aptitude towards the religious and priestly life are helped to understand more easily where their calling lies, and then correspond with it." (88)

On the other hand, the Regulations recognize and extend to each Province exact responsibilities in the vocation field: "Let each Province establish within its own limits the criteria, methods and organization for the training of vocations." (89)

New aspirantate parallels

A recent document states that while the Church recommends minor seminaries, she does not oppose the "simultaneous" trying out of other methods suited to foster vocations, "provided the

(86) Cf. *Ratio Fundamental*is, n. 12.

(87) SGC, n. 662.

(88) Regs. n. 73.

(89) *Ibid.*, n. 72.

minor seminaries do not suffer thereby; and these new experiments must be organized with prudence, to suit the aims of sacred vocations, and not be a mere covering excuse for giving up the minor seminary.” (90)

The word “simultaneous” is worth noting. The mind of the Church is clear: by all means use the new methods; but in such a way that they do not substitute, but complete and help, the aspirantate (which after all has stood the test of time).

Up to a few years ago young vocations were directed, practically, without exception, to the aspirantate (or “minor seminary” or “apostolic school”). Today there are other forms being tried out in parallel with these — some of a permanent nature, others temporary, and differently organized according to the circumstances of the local Church. (91) These institutions carry the explicit recognition of the Church (92); and the Special General Chapter has also referred to them, taking a positive attitude and recognizing the principle of plurality in the training of vocations. In the document dealing with “Formation to the Salesian Life” we read: “The following can be suitable and sufficient environments to help attain vocation maturity... the family, the school, associations and youth groups of a formative and apostolic character.” But the proviso it posits is all-important: “Provided a young man finds the right conditions and assistance.” (93) This is absolutely essential. These environments cannot be rated suitable for helping vocations if the young men do not actually receive the spiritual, cultural and Salesian help they need. It stands to reason, then, that not every school, group or community is suited to impart the formation required for the calm, free choice of a vocation.

Our aim should be to make every community a genuine

(90) *Ratio Fundamentalis*, note 60.

(91) Cf. *Optatam Totius*, n. 3; *Renovationis Causam*, n. 4, 10-12; *Ratio Fundamentalis*, n. 11-17.

(92) Cf. *Optatam Totius* & *Ratio Fundamentalis*.

(93) SGC, n. 662.

centre, capable of imparting to its young men three necessary elements:

— a suitable *environment of psychological freedom* that will neutralize the negative pressure of the sociological context in which we live. The world pours forth its flood of suggestions and inducements in one direction only, and this is a great hindrance to a free religious choice;

— *the example of good Salesians*. To form and guide young men, members of a community must, by their good religious life, their presence, and the way they act, relate to them personally, and help them work out their life plans by enlightening them in a practical and personal way;

— *meeting other young people* who have the same ideals. This will enrich them humanly, socially and spiritually, and will prove a great help in their inevitable conflicts and crises as they clarify and develop their vocations.

Just as the suppression or non-existence of such initiatives "would gravely compromise the future," (94) so also the choice of one or other of the above methods and the creation of other new ones cannot be a light decision. They cannot be looked on as matters of indifference or valid for all places everywhere. Less still should we start up new ventures, allowing ourselves to be led by the nose by pressures from within or without, or by a mania for getting rid of all that smacks of the past, just for the sake of trying out something new.

It is a distressing experience to witness the anguish of some Providences who jettisoned their aspirantates and substituted them with other methods considered better in every way. Surely elementary prudence demanded that nothing valid should be abolished until there was something more valid to take its place!

We must examine seriously whether what we wish to introduce can give us the necessary guarantees. Let us get busy

(94) CEF, *op. cit.*, pag. 17.

and see that these institutions are really capable of genuinely helping vocations, that those in charge are themselves excellent examples of good vocations and are well able to pass on to the candidates that cultural, human and spiritual nourishment to which they have every right.

Forging ahead with Don Bosco's determination

I cannot dwell on the practicalities of renewal in our vocation apostolate and our aspirantates, nor the detailed examination of other possible forms which can accompany them. This is the task of the Provinces themselves. But I beg that it be done calmly and with a deep sense of responsibility. Our motto for 1974 (bidding us intensify the vocation apostolate) will spur us on.

I invite every Provincial and Rector, with their councils, the delegates of the youth and vocation apostolates, the staffs of the houses of formation, to deepen their knowledge of the Church's doctrine and directives regarding vocations. Let everything be based on the documents of the Council and the hierarchy, the Special General Chapter and the magisterium of the Congregation (especially as promulgated in the Rector Major's letters).

I beg you to give serious attention to the actual situation in your own Provinces or Regions; try to examine what each member can do to feel responsibly involved; then go ahead courageously and put the resultant findings into practice.

For many Provinces the wheels were set rolling by the deliberations of their Special Provincial Chapters. Others have yet to make a start.

There are Provinces where the job has been tackled intelligently, confidently, wisely and courageously, and results are already in evidence. They confirm the wisdom of the measures taken and are a beacon of hope for us all.

Go ahead then dear confrères with the faith and determi-

nation of Don Bosco. Your love of the Congregation will spur you on.

May 1974 be for you a year that is genuinely "holy," a year of fervent and fruitful activity in the Salesian apostolate; and may your community enjoy that spiritual conversion and reconciliation with God and neighbour as proposed by Paul VI for the fast-approaching Holy Year celebrations.

You are always in my prayers. Please pray also for me.

Father LOUIS RICCERI,
Rector Major

III. COMMUNICATIONS

1. Rector Major's motto for 1974

Continuing in the tradition of Don Bosco the Rector Major has given the Salesian Family its motto for 1974. This year it bids us diligently seek and foster apostolic vocations for the Church and our Salesian Family.

In fidelity to the teaching and example of Don Bosco, all members of the Salesian Family must perfect their educative activities

- *by guiding and forming apostolic vocations for the Church;*
- *by sacrificing themselves in helping those called to the priestly and consecrated life;*
- *by fostering and increasing Salesian vocations in obedience to the mandate that Don Bosco's charism be continued in the Church.*

The Rector Major's letter in this issue develops this important matter at length; and he also spoke of it in his "Letter to the Salesian Family" which was duly forwarded to the Provincials and Salesian Bulletin Offices. To quote from the letter: "You can see that the motto is worded so as to interest and involve every member of the Salesian Family, no matter what his or her personal status may be. There is a place and a job for everybody in this holy crusade. It only remains to accept the invitation, plan something practical, and (as Don Bosco used say) 'roll up our sleeves and get working.' What I have in mind is that each branch of our Salesian Family should study the motto, not be afraid of new ideas, and come up with practical and workable plans according to the particular circumstances and opportunities of each."

Father Dho, Councillor for Youth Apostolate, has issued a commentary on the motto.

2. Salesian Bishops

Two Salesian bishops died recently; they had both laboured in the extreme south of Latin America. *Bishop Vladimir Boric*, who for twenty-four years directed the diocese of Punta Arenas, Chile; and *Bishop Joseph Borgatti*, who was in charge of the diocese of Viedma for more than twenty years.

The Holy Father recently appointed two new Salesian bishops: *Bishop Matthew Baroi* to Krishnagar (where he had been Administrator Apostolic, "sede vacante"); and *Bishop Hector Jaramillo Duque* as Prefect Apostolic of Ariari, Colombia (he had been vice-Provincial of Bogotá).

At present the number of Salesian bishops now living stands at fifty-seven. The Salesian Congregation feels great joy in having given these sons as bishops to the Church.

"*Salesian geography has changed on the missions*," said Father Ricceri in his letter to the Salesian Family. "These changes are quite significant", he continued. "I refer to certain missionary dioceses that were originally confided to the Salesians. Now in 1973 they are well developed and have been passed on to the diocesan clergy; and there are other missionary territories so vast that they had to be divided, made into new dioceses, and put in the care of Salesian bishops. Such has happened in India with Kohima- Impal and Tura. These changes mean that the work of our Salesian missionaries has borne good fruit; and this is a great comfort to us. Let us thank God for all this fine progress. He has indeed blessed his sons."

Commemorative services have been recently held for three outstanding Salesian bishops.

Cardinal Augustus Hlond, Primate of Poland was commemorated at Rome on 22 October on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of his death. The function took place at the Chancellory Apostolic in the presence of fourteen cardinals, innumerable archbishops, and the Rector Major. The Salesian Archbishop of Poznam, His Grace Anthony Baraniak (who had been Cardinal Hlond's secretary), addressed the assembly and spoke of the late cardinal's Salesian formation, his pastoral activity, his difficulties during the War, and his unremitting efforts to organize the Church in Poland in the post-war period.

Bishop Louis Versiglia, "martyr" of Shiu Chow, was commemorated last October in his diocese of origin, Ortona, Alessandria, Italy, the occasion being the centenary of his birth. He was the central figure of "Mission Sunday" in all the parishes of the diocese; a pamphlet entitled "Louis Versiglia, bishop and martyr" was widely distributed; and many missionaries (including Salesians) were invited to the parishes for the occasion.

Bishop Louis Olivares, bishop of Nepi and Sutri was also honoured in his diocese on 25 November on the occasion of the centenary of his birth. The commemoration was organized by Bishop Rosina and presided over by Cardinal Taglia; and Father Tohill with many other Salesians was present. The people too took a lively part in the proceedings. They recalled that their bishop, on his appointment to Nepi, had said, "I have espoused my diocese and will spend myself in loving it."

3. The 103rd Missionary Expedition

On 3 September 1973 the Councillor for the Missions, Father Bernard Tohill, presided at the farewell ceremony for the missionaries. Following the now century-old tradition, this took place at the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians, Turin; and 48 Salesians were farewelled — 29, priests, 10 Brothers and 9 clerics.

Nationalities: Italy 12; Spain 10; Poland 7; Ireland 6; Belgium 3; Philippines 2; France 2; USA 2; Argentina, Brazil, Costa Rica, India: one each. Some of these are countries that usually receive rather than give missionaries. It is simply a case of the places with more personnel helping out the new missions which are more desperate for personnel.

Provinces supplying the missionaries: Madrid 8; Ireland 6; Crackow, Poland 4; Central Italy 3; Lodz, Poland 3; North Belgium 3; Philippines 2; Lyons, France 2; Belo Horizonte, Bombay, Buenos Aires, Calcutta, Central America, Chile, Gauhati, The Generalate, Ligure, Lombarda, New Rochelle, San Francisco, Siculo, Southern Italy, Verona: one each.

Destination: Latin America 30 (Antilles, Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador, Mexico, Paraguay, Uruguay, Venezuela); Africa 13 (Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, The Ivory Coast, Swaziland, Zaire); Asia 5 (India, Philippines, Thailand, Timor).

4. World Congress of Salesian Brothers

Many Salesian news-sheets have issued studies and commentaries on the Rector Major's letter of 5-8-73 in which he announced the Brothers' Congress. These last months have seen theory pass into action.

First of all the various commissions have been formed at regional, inter-provincial and provincial levels; and now the local communities have settled down to work, following the guide-lines of these commissions: whipping up interest, distributing informative material, fact-finding, researching, and praying.

In some Provinces the commission members travel round the houses or invite the confrères from nearby houses to a talk about the Congress, in order to get ideas and co-ordinate various projects. Some places have organized "pre-Congresses", with all the Brothers participating.

Roneoed sheets for public and private reading have circulated widely and have served as a link for information and ideas. Many local communities have organized gatherings and study sessions; and in other places the various themes the Congress will be handling have been assigned to local communities to work on and write up reports.

Some Provinces have collected data by questionnaires and opinion-polls conducted among Brothers, priests, clerics and even layfolk who work in the houses — and sometimes also Brothers who have left the Congregation.

Individual Salesians with special training have been appointed to organize study and research on particular themes; and some studentates are having group discussions led by their teachers.

Last, but certainly not least — prayer. A prayer to Father Philip Rinaldi has been composed. (The mission of the Salesian Brother was a very special concern of his.) One country has been promised the prayers of 197 contemplative religious communities.

Each Salesian community will find its own particular form of daily prayer and functions of various kinds.

So the wheels are rolling. We have begun (to quote the Rector Major) "that deep study of the concept of the Salesian Brother. It is an important element in our programme of renewal."

5. Course for Novice-masters

The Commission for Salesian Formation has organized a course for novice-masters to be held at the Rome "Salesianum" from 2 March to 5 April. (The text of the Rector Major's letter on the Course is to be found in the Documents section of this issue, page 63.) The letter and its enclosure state what the Course aims at and how it hopes to accomplish its aims.

6. Convention for Professors of Dogmatic Theology

The Commission for Salesian Formation and the Theology Faculty of the Salesian Pontifical University (UPS) have announced a "Convention of Professors of Dogmatic Theology" for those who are teaching in our Salesian theologates. This will be held at the UPS, Rome, From 2-5 January. About sixty professors will attend from the studentates affiliated with the UPS and will study the problems relevant to their difficult mission.

The Convention will be opened by the Rector Major and will begin with three addresses; these will be followed by group discussions and a general assembly. The addresses will deal with the following: "Theology in dialogue with our times", "How to teach theology today" and "Theology and Salesian Formation." Speakers will be two professors from Roman Universities and Father Egidius Viganò.

The professors will spend a day drawing up a "ratio studiorum" for our Salesian students of theology. Research in our studentates has produced a document containing a number of proposals for the whole Congregation, and the professors will put the finishing touches to this.

Besides these practical objectives, the Salesian professors want to get to know each other better, to flex their theological muscles,

and to find practical means for ever better collaboration and exchange of ideas.

7. Activities of the « Study Centre for the History of the Salesian Missions »

This Centre was set up in 1973 by the Rector Major and put under the direction of Father Raphael Farina, Dean of the Theology Faculty in Rome. It is now in full swing, has a nucleus of workers to start with, has clarified the confines of its tasks, enlisted Salesian help throughout the world, and is busily engaged in the achievement of its aims.

The first task is to organize a "Central Archives of the Salesian Missions" for all the relative material published or unpublished. To this end the following aids have been prepared: a provisional outline of the history of the Salesian missions, and an index of the documents now in the General Archives of the Generalate. A number of Salesian missions are also at work studying and codifying their historical archives.

Another project is the drafting of a series of strictly accurate monographs that will go to make up a complete "History of the Salesian Missions." The first ones are already being written, and others are in the research stage.

The Centre is also getting together a miscellany of short essays (about fifteen pages each) on different aspects of the Salesian missions: historical, ethnographical, linguistical, economic, geographical, pastoral, etc.

Other projects in view are: a collection of "Diaries and Memoirs" of ethnological and historical significance; a critical edition of Don Bosco's missionary writings, the collation and publication of the letters of our first missionaries (SDB and FMA), and the publication of a series of profiles of Salesian missionaries.

Taken all in all this is a gigantic programme. The first stage is to be completed in 1975, the centenary year of our missions.

"This project fulfils a much-felt need", said Father Farina, "— the handing down to posterity of a documented account of the immense work that our missionaries (often hidden and forgotten) have achieved

in announcing the Gospel. And it will help us know the Congregation better and hence love it the more. 'Mission work is a mark of our Society' (Const. 15)."

8. The Courses of On-going Formation

The first four-month course of on-going formation began at the Salesianum on 20 of October last. This venture was recommended by the Special General Chapter (no. 555 b) and expressly desired by the Rector Major, who is following it with deep interest both personally and through the Councillor for Formation and his Commission.

In a letter to the Provincials last April the Rector Major explained its aims, pointing out that "the deeper appreciation of the values of our Salesian, religious and priestly life according to Vatican II was a present-day necessity, and would be well catered for by organizing a course of on-going formation."

He goes on to say that the efficacy of these courses should not be limited to the person who actually does them. The courses should train capable men who will return and straight away undertake the work of on-going formation in their own Provinces and local communities, deepening and spreading a greater appreciation of Gospel and Salesian values, and inspiring the confrères to accept this work enthusiastically; they could also organize for other Provinces and Regions courses similar to the one they did at Rome.

The Rome courses will not be run as exercises that are academic or mainly intellectual: rather will they be a series of profound spiritual experiences and special insights into renewal and personal training and betterment; they will offer an "intense and happy experience of Salesian life."

The programme will be flexible and adjust itself according to circumstances so that the participants will get the best out of them according to their needs and enlightened suggestions.

Each course has a limited number of members: the purpose of the exercise suggests about thirty-five. Father Iginio Capitano and Father Jesús Carilla have been put in charge and are availing themselves of a fine choice of highly qualified lecturers from various study centres both Salesian and non-Salesian.

The first course (attended by confrères mostly from Italy and Spain) concludes in mid-February. The second Course (9 March to the first week of July 1974) will be mainly for the Provinces of Latin-America; and the third Course, beginning in October, chiefly for Salesians from the Far East.

The Rector Major has urged Provincials to send confrères to these Courses. In his letter of April last he wrote, "This is a matter of the utmost importance. Your Province should not and must not be deprived of its benefit, even if it has to suffer momentary hardship."

9. Brotherly Solidarity (11th instalment)

a) PROVINCES WHO HAVE CONTRIBUTED

EUROPE

England	Lire	1,500.000
Germany North		4,410.000
Central Italy		5,863.000
Southen Italy		969.000
Novarese		7,000.000
Romana		50.000
Veneta San Marco		465.000
Bequest from a confrère		3,195.000

ASIA

Madras	200.000
Calcutta (from Burma)	50.000

THE AMERICAS

Brazil Campo Grande	200.000
Brazil San Paulo	1,815.000
USA San Francisco	155.000

AUSTRALIA

203.400

Total received from 10-9-73 to 18-12-73

25,895,400

<i>Plus cash in hand</i>	146.694
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<i>Monies available as at 18-12-73</i>	26,042.094
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b) DISTRIBUTION OF MONIES

EUROPE

Jugoslavia, Zagreb: for the house of formation	Lire 600.000
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ASIA

India, Calcutta: for the poor — Liluah parish	600.000
India, Calcutta: to the Provincial for teaching aids	1,000.000
India, Madras: to the Archbishop for the new church of Don Bosco	100.000
Macau: for the leprosarium of Coloane	500.000
Thailandia, Surat Thani: for the inmates of an institution	1,000.000

AFRICA

Ethiopia: to Mgr. Worku for the drought victims	2,000.000
Gabon, Libreville: for minor seminary — work and adjustments	2,000.000

SOUTH AMERICA

Brazil, Manaus: for travelling expenses for two missionaries	652.300
Brazil, Manaus: two study bursaries for students of theology	2,000.000
Brazil, Campo Grande: bursary for priest doing a course in missiology	1,000.000
Brazil, San Paulo: large shelter shed for Lorena youth centre	1,000.000
Ecuador, Taisha: for an electricity generating plant	4,410.000
Guatemala, San Pedro Carchá: for hospital expenses for a missionary	869.240

Haiti: for the new aspirantate	3,000.000
Paraguay, for three bursaries	1,815,000
Paraguay, Chaco: for agricultural machinery	2,000.000
Uruguay: two bursaries for the priesthood	1,000.000
<i>Total monies disbursed from 10-9-73 to 18-12-73</i>	25,546.540
<i>Cash in hand</i>	495.554
<i>Grand total</i>	26,042.094
c) GENERAL SUMMARY OF BROTHERLY SOLIDARITY	
<i>Monies received up to 18-12-73</i>	225,914.037
<i>Monies distributed up to 18-12-73</i>	225,418.483
<i>Cash in hand</i>	495.554

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

From 1 October to 14 January the Regional Councillors were visiting their respective regions; and during the same period the Rector Major and Councillors from three Commissions were also abroad meeting confrères in many distant countries, including the eleven Provincials gathered together from the Pacific-Caribbean Region.

1. The Rector Major's journey

The purpose of the Rector Major's journey was to be present at a number of important events (including anniversaries); and things so transpired as to make it a series of cordial meetings with the Salesian Family in three continents. Various Salesian publications and the Rector Major himself at the beginning of his letter have given details of this journey, so a few brief items will suffice here.

Father Ricceri left Rome 1 October and returned 12 November. His first stop was Mexico City, where he attended the meeting of Provincials and the Fourth Latin-American Congress of Past Pupils. (Each is briefly alluded to below.) He interrupted his stay twice to visit the confrères at Managua (still suffering the aftermath of the earthquake) and the flourishing Salesian mission in Mexico.

From Mexico Father Ricceri then travelled to the United States and was able to meet many confrères during his stay from 22 to 30 October. He opened the new Don Bosco Technical School Complex and visited West Haverstraw, where the Salesians have a Retreat House and have built an exact replica of the Becchi cottage in homage to Don Bosco.

Then followed a week in Australia where Father Ricceri closed the Golden Jubilee celebrations of Salesian work in the island continent.

The return journey took in brief visits to Thailand and Vietnam where the Salesian work is making encouraging progress.

The true significance of this journey lies not so much in the individual places visited as in the fact that the successor of Don Bosco was able to meet the Salesian Family on a world scale.

2. Salesian Provincials meet

“At suitable times the Rector Major and some members of the Superior Council will hold meetings with the Provincials of the various Regions to see how the General Chapter directives are being carried out.”

The meeting of Provincials at Mexico City from 2 to 12 October was in fulfilment of this prescription and was the first of its kind. It included the Rector Major, the Superiors of three Commissions (Fathers Viganò, Raineri and Dho), the Regional Superior (Father Henriquez), and the eleven Provincials of the Pacific-Caribbean Region.

The convention lasted ten crowded days and opened with an address by the Rector Major on “The Provincial Today.” Then the Provincials presented and discussed their Province Reports, which were written up under five headings: the rediscovery of the “sense of God” in the Congregation; directing our mission back to the young and the working classes; community-consciousness; the Salesian Family; unity and decentralization.

Each theme was given a whole day: the school-apostolate in Latin America, the vocation-apostolate, the Salesian Family, etc. Other important local matters were also dealt with, with a view to a common line of action.

“The beauty of this kind of gathering”, said Father Henriquez at the end, “was that every Provincial was able to air his problems, and have them discussed competently and as completely as time allowed.”

3. Fourth Latin-American Congress of Past Pupils

The Congress of Past Pupils was held from 10 to 14 October and gave its full attention to the pressing needs of the moment, its theme being “The Past Pupils’ Commitment to Justice in Latin-America.”

Those present included the Rector Major, Father Raineri (Councillor in charge of the Past Pupils sector), other members of the Superior Council, the World President of the Past Pupils (Barrister Taboada Lago), the World Delegate (Father Humbert Bastasi), and a hundred or so Past Pupil Delegates (representing 22 National Federations, 250 local Unions, and the millions of past pupils of Latin-America). Another 300 persons, including past pupils without voting rights, various observers (even from Europe) and a number of "just friends" completed the picture.

The "Commitment to Justice" theme was debated by three teams under three headings: "Greater unity for a greater commitment", "Urgent need of training for commitment", and "The most pressing needs of Latin-America." The three reports were then presented; then the committees sat severally and conjointly and finally formulated and approved the conclusions. Some dozens of proposals emerged: three foolscap sheets of suggestions for greater justice.

On the final day the Rector Major and the World President promulgated the new "Statutes of the Past Pupils of Don Bosco" for a three-year trial. (Father Raineri's "Foreward" and the first chapter of the Statutes are printed in the Documents section of this issue, page 67.)

The Congress concluded with the announcement that the next Congress would be held in Panama in five years' time, when the Past Pupils would see what progress had been made with the 1973 Mexico proposals.

4. Visits of Superior Councillors

A report on the visits of the Regional Superiors is not possible at the time of writing, as they are still abroad.

However, the three Commission Councillors are back at the Generalate. After their work in Mexico City they travelled to various South American countries to meet the confrères and confer with the Provincials and their Councils. Matters discussed were in reference to each Councillor's particular Commission.

Father Egidius Viganò visited San Domingo, Haiti, Venezuela, Ecuador, Peru, Chile and Brazil. He was particularly anxious to

make contact with the young men in formation and convened a meeting for them separately, giving them a chance to speak and ask questions.

Father Juvenal Dho went to Colombia, Venezuela and the Antilles. He wanted to ascertain the thinking of the Provinces on the Salesian youth-mission; what had been accomplished in the youth apostolate in the different local situations; how the matter of vocations was shaping, and what practical steps were being taken to meet the problem. At Bogotá he spent four days with all the delegates of the youth-apostolate of the zone.

Father John Raineri, after visiting both Mexican Provinces, visited the confrères in Guatemala, Panama, Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Chile, Argentina, Uruguay and Brazil. He discussed with the Provincials and their helpers what progress had been made in carrying out the directives of the Special General Chapter regarding the Co-operators, Past Pupils, parishes, Salesian Bulletin, Salesian publishing houses, and other matters belonging to social communications.

5. Activities at the Generalate

The various Commissions have carried on what work was possible during the absence of their respective Councillors.

The FORMATION COMMISSION went ahead with the first "*Course of On-going Formation*" and carried on preparations for such projects as the "*Convention of Professors of Dogmatic Theology*", the "*Course for Master of Novices*" and the "*World Congress of Salesian Brothers*." (These are written up in the Communications section of this issue, page 47.) The Commission consultants have also helped with the drafting of the prayer manual, "*The Salesian Community at Prayer*", which was published last December in Italy for Italian communities. (It is offered as a possible model for other countries.)

The COMMISSION FOR YOUTH APOSTOLATE is now complete with the arrival of Father Stephen Wiera, who will be mainly occupied with "*Evangelization and Catechetics*." The activities of the Commission are fourfold: *information, study, action and representation* (i.e., providing representatives at important conventions, etc.).

Information. In the last few months a *paper on sexual education* has been completed and presented to the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education. A résumé of the paper and of the relevant teachings of the General Chapters XIX and XX has been forwarded to all Provincials.

Study. The different sections of the Commission are collecting data from the minutes of the Provincial Councils and sorting out problems and trends in the various Regions and Provincial Conferences. In February a world consultation will be held at Rome to study the theme, "*The School and the Salesian Mission.*" A questionnaire on the subject has been sent to all the Regions of the Congregation.

Action. At the time of writing the "*European Convention on the Preventive System*" (spoken of in the Oct.-Dec. No. 272 issue, page 47) is in full swing. Follow-ups are expected in the various Regions. Also in preparation is an "*Updating Course for Provincial Delegates of Youth Apostolate, Schools and Vocations.*" Regional follow-ups are recommended for this too.

On 1 November there was a meeting of School Delegates of the Italian Provinces. Matters discussed were "*Evangelization and Catechetics*", "*Sharing School Government with Externs*", and the practical experiences of the various Provinces.

The COMMISSION FOR ADULT APOSTOLATE is at the moment busy organizing the "*Secretariate for Social Communications*" as directed by the Special General Chapter.

From 17 to 20 January the international committee for the editing of the new "*Regulations for Salesian Co-operators*" will meet to examine the many observations and proposals made by the Co-operators through the Provincial Councils. The final draft will be approved by the Rector Major and his Council.

The last few months have seen the first numbers of "*Co-operators*", a roneoed publication forming a link between the Centre and the National and Provincial Councils throughout the world.

The Past Pupils are preparing their Committee elections for the Confederation. This is the first time the Past Pupils have autonomously elected the members of the six Federation Groups in the various parts of the world. From the lengthy list of candidates ten will be voted in to form the Confederation Committee together with

the six members already elected. From these sixteen members (all elected by ballot) the Rector Major will choose the new World President. A new office is mooted: Councillor for non-Christian Past Pupils.

The COMMISSION FOR THE MISSIONS has seen to the 103rd. Missionary Expedition (v. Communications, this issue, page 49.) A start has been made on the first practical contacts and projects in regard to the Centenary of the Salesian Missions to be held in 1975.

The last few months have indeed been busy months of contacts and interchange at all levels between the Superior Council and the confrères — all in the line of conciliar renewal and fidelity to Don Bosco.

V. DOCUMENTS

1. Course for Novice-masters

The Rector Major has forwarded to all Provincials (and for the information of Novice-masters) a document dated at Rome 24-9-73. The following is the text of the letter and its enclosure.

a) RECTOR MAJOR'S LETTER

The Congregation is very much aware that urgent steps should be taken regarding formation, and among the more difficult matters is the novitiate, as it is the most important stage in the Salesian apprenticeship of our new trainees.

The work done during the novitiate year needs a thorough and complete overhaul; and the obvious ones to do the re-thinking are the novice-masters themselves.

I have thought much about this important and urgent matter and have asked the Formation Commission (Dicastero della Formazione) to map out and organize a course for all the novice-masters of the Congregation.

This is not an "up-dating course". Its aim is mutual discussion and a deep examination of the common basic elements in the formation of our novices — in the light of the ecclesial and capitular documents that introduce new notions that have to be carried out.

It is to the interest of every Province that the young confrères throughout the world be genuine Salesians for our modern times, and that they be able to harmonize within themselves the unity of our vocation with the social and cultural differences of their various countries.

This foregathering of novice-masters of vast and varied experience will be of great mutual help and a valuable opportunity for all concerned, for we are living in a period of transition, uncertainty and perplexity. Practical experience engenders wisdom, points out

ways that are safe, and reinforces our Salesian fidelity — features that today are more than ever necessary for our vocation.

The Course will also be a part of the centenary celebrations of the approval of our Constitutions by Pius IX on 3 April 1874. This centenary invites us all to steep ourselves in the new Constitutions drawn up by the Special General Chapter in accordance with the directives of Vatican II — and this touches the novice-masters in a special way. (At a future date I plan to speak of this matter to all the members of the Congregation.)

I am sure you will give this venture all the importance it deserves and will arrange for your novice-masters to attend. The Course begins on 2 March.

Enclosed are details of what the Course hopes to achieve and how it intends to set about it.

May God's blessing be on our efforts and may Mary Help of Christians give us her motherly assistance.

Yours in union of prayer.

Father LOUIS RICCERI

b) ENCLOSURE WITH THE RECTOR MAJOR'S LETTER

Aim of the course.

These days of study and recollection will afford our novice-masters a spiritual and community experience, and an opportunity for solid thinking. This should greatly help them in:

— assimilating and appreciating the "formation-renewal" proposed by the SGC and obligatory for the Congregation;

— discussing their experiences regarding methods, procedures and structures, and closely examining these in the light of the norms of the Church, our Salesian formative aims, and pedagogical principles;

— carrying out a thorough overhaul and conversion of their own personal and psychological attitudes, so as to be better able to establish authentic formative relationships with the novices (which, after all, is the only way to pass on formative apostolic, religious and Salesian values effectively).

Details of the programme

To achieve these aims the programme will be spread over a period of a month and will cover three basic topics.

a) A doctrinal examination of the content of Salesian formation (lectures, private reading, group research, etc.).

(i) General information on the Congregation today.

— Main lines of the SGC.

— What the SGC envisaged regarding formation. Document XIII of SGC. New Constitutions ch. 13-14. New Regulations ch. 11. The spirit of Salesian formation. Organizational structures of formation.

— How to study Don Bosco. Study of certain chosen texts.

— The Salesian spirit.

— Theology and ascetics of apostolic action. The apostle is a man of faith; apostolic ascetics.

— Theology and spiritual principles of community life. Today's Salesian requirements.

— Today's problems regarding prayer formation.

— Theology and spiritual principles. Salesian consecration today. Problem of fidelity.

N.B. - The above programme mainly follows the various relevant chapters of the new Holy Rule.

b) Methodological examination on how to guide the formative community of the novitiate in its structuring; and how to direct and assist each novice towards a spiritual life that is apostolic, religious and Salesian; examination of formation structures and methods (by means of lectures, discussion of experiences, group-work on drawing up formative plans, etc.).

— Novitiate house (suitable locality). Novitiate community. Formation staff.

— What the principles of renewal expect of the novice-master; his personality; his duties.

— Novices: norms for acceptance; how to conduct aspirantship; how the novices participate in their own formation. Spiritual direction.

— Daily and weekly programme of the novices. Harmonizing the components of formation: prayer, study, work, apostolate. What studies should be done.

— Division and general run of the novitiate year. Experiences. Profession (meaning of temporary vows).

c) A month of spiritual effort and involvement, and living in communion. The liturgy, group discussion of the Word of God, personal prayer, revision of life, groups for reflecting and training in interpersonal relationships — all these will be used to stimulate a personal interior renewal.

The first week will be mainly devoted to getting to know each other; understanding and clarifying the practical aims of the Course; and organizing the subsequent reflections — having recourse to all available helps (cf. a) and c).

With the practical formation-experience of each and a roughly drafted programme to begin with, the course should prove a fine experience in collaboration and researching and learning suitable attitudes for interpersonal and group relationships.

With appropriate meetings and activities this personal formation of the masters will be a living force throughout the whole course.

Organization

— Participants: The present novice-masters.

— Date: Arrival: Saturday, 2 March 1974. Conclusion: Friday, 5 April 1974, after the celebration of the centenary of the Constitutions. Venue: Casa Generalizia Salesiana - Via della Pisana 1111 00163 Roma.

— Information and correspondence: The Secretary, Formation Commission, Generalate. (Segretariato Dicastero Formazione).

2. From the new « Statutes of the Past Pupils of Don Bosco »

The new Statutes, which could be called the "charter of renewal of the Past Pupils", were promulgated at Mexico City last October. Father Raineri's "Foreward" speaks of the history, the principles and the new elements in the document. What follows is the "Foreward" and the first chapter (Article 1) of the Statutes.

a) FOREWARD TO THE NEW STATUTES

(i) *Historical outline*

The "Past Pupils of Don Bosco Movement" claims to be the first among similar movements to be founded. Already in 1870 Don Bosco had blessed the first nucleus which had spontaneously gathered round him; and in 1888, the year of his death, the first Associations were started.

In 1911 Blessed Don Rua saw the birth of the first National Federations, and in 1920 these were united under an International President.

In 1954 thirty-two National Presidents were present for the festivities on the occasion of the canonization of St. Dominic Savio. They formed the Guard of Honour for the remains of Don Bosco's young pupil and there and then decided to formulate a set of statutes so as to draw the Federations and the Salesians closer together, to increase their fidelity to the spirit of Don Bosco and to spread it throughout the world. In 1956 these Statutes were promulgated on the occasion of the Inter-American Congress at Buenos Aires.

Vatican II and the XIX General Chapter saw the first beginnings of renewal, and the 1965 European Congress produced improved Statutes that were promulgated next year in the "camerette" of Don Bosco, Turin.

The 1970 World Congress presented a number of requests to the Special General Chapter of the Salesians (1971), and these were adopted and made obligatory for Salesian communities at all levels. The new Statutes codify these requests (SGC 750-751).

(ii) *Underlying principles*

The new Statutes begin by affirming certain principles; these are then translated into statutory articles and structural changes.

Their main purpose is to carry out the "ecclesial spirit" (GE 2) by reminding the past pupils who are Christians of their commitments as laity in the Church. They also affirm their openness to all creeds and the values they possess, by the very fact that the Past Pupil Movement includes individual members and groups who are non-Catholic and non-Christian. These members have full rights, and purpose to live, defend and spread the human values received in their Salesian education.

Furthermore, whilst declaring that the Association as such eschews party politics, they nevertheless remind all of the necessity of forming an individual and collective "social and political conscience" that should lead the past pupils to be committed to achieve justice in the world. In this way they can carry out today what Don Bosco wanted of his boys: "to be good Christians and honest citizens."

The Statutes certify that the Past Pupils belong to the Salesian Family by right of their Salesian education. Such an assertion is only a starting point for a closer collaboration with the Salesians, an ever greater fidelity to the Salesian spirit and a continuance of the Salesian formation received — even to the point of taking on enterprises proper to the Salesian mission (not only on behalf of the past pupils themselves, especially the younger ones; but also for needy youngsters and the working classes). In these cases (and there are quite a few) they belong to the Salesian Family in the strict sense.

Because of their origin, the Past Pupils are the most obvious candidates to become Salesian Co-operators and thus enjoy a more direct commitment and in a context directly intended by Don Bosco.

(iii) New elements

These are the principles that inform the new Statutes, as can be seen by examining some of the prescriptions. The need to affirm the lay character and the responsible autonomy of the Association had to harmonize with the need to preserve that "Salesianity" which expresses the traditional family spirit in its relations with the Congregation. And so the system of election was modified, as was also the structure of the Committee, and the choice of the World President by the Rector Major (the choice is now made by him from among the members of the Confederation Committee elected by the World Council). For the same reasons the office of Secretary General and

Treasurer were created, the work of each member of the Confederation defined, and their number increased to include six representatives elected by the "National Federation Groups."

The new "Council of Consultors" is a wise help for the Committee, and the Election Commission ensures democratic elections.

In the relations between Salesians and Past Pupils, fidelity to Don Bosco is reaffirmed in the person of the Rector Major. Representatives of the National Federations are appointed to make the collaboration between Federations easier, to create a link with the Confederation Committee, and to help the Salesian Regional Superior by having a Past Pupil close at hand to represent all the Federations of his region.

The task of the Delegates at all levels takes on more clearly the character of spiritual incentive; they are the responsible links between the Salesian communities and the past pupils (towards whom the communities have jointly and severally definite responsibilities prescribed by the Special General Chapter).

This change of outlook in the Past Pupils carries with it as a logical consequence the duty of continuing and perfecting in their lives the formation received in their Salesian education; also the onus of readying themselves for responsible action and direction at the various levels.

The open doors of Vatican II and the necessity of collaboration in order to defend Gospel and human values demand that the Past Pupils work together with other organizations that have aims similar to their own. Nor must we forget the reaffirming of World Solidarity among all Past Pupils.

The Statutes are followed by an appendix containing directives for the application, interpretation and integration of the statutory articles.

The promulgation of the Statutes "ad experimentum" for three years imposes on the National Federations the obligation to modify or draft their own Regulations to satisfy the principles of unity contained in the Statutes and the variations their local circumstances require. With a symbolic gesture the new Statutes are being promulgated jointly by the Rector Major (who with his letter dated 1970 stated that the Past Pupils enjoyed the central interest of the

Congregation) and by the President of the Confederation, Dr. José Maria Taboada Lago, who served the Confederation with wonderful dedication during the time when the 1970 World Congress and the Special General Chapter prepared the renewal now indicated in the new Statutes.

Rome, 8 September 1973.

Father JOHN RAINERI

b) STATUTES OF WORLD CONFEDERATION OF PAST PUPILS OF DON BOSCO

Chapter 1 — The Past Pupils of Don Bosco

a) The Past Pupils of Don Bosco are all those who have frequented a school, a youth centre, or any other Salesian work. They belong to the Salesian Family on account of their Salesian education.

b) This education and the attraction they feel for Don Bosco bring them together into a "Movement" that has its origin in the bond of friendship that unites the past pupils with their educators and with each another, and in the need to preserve and develop the basic principles of their training and translate them into genuine life commitments.

c) To this end local associations arise and are imbued with the spirit of Don Bosco and the desire to "dialogue"; they are linked together in an organized structure to form the World Confederation of the Past Pupils of Don Bosco.

d) This Confederation is a single entity and is composed of many Federation of Past Pupils — without any distinction of race or creed. As a lay association it has its own distinctive personality and responsible autonomy; and it preserves close and continual union with the Salesian Congregation so as to maintain fidelity to the spirit of Don Bosco.

e) The members of the Confederation recognize in the Rector Major the true representative of Don Bosco and acknowledge him

as their guide; they desire the assistance of the Salesians to carry on their spiritual training and make it decisive and adequate; they participate in the mission of the Congregation and pledge themselves to bear witness to the love of God for all (especially the young and poor), and to spread the spirit of Don Bosco throughout the world.

f) This sharing of interests and labour has its confirmation in tradition and more than a century of happy experience; it is in step with the theology of the laity as expressed by the Council; and it is in tune with the image of the Past Pupils as envisaged by the Special General Council. The fundamental operative principle of the associations is that all decisions must be taken in agreement with the Salesians (according to the family style of the educative community). This is characteristic of the Movement of Past Pupils of Don Bosco.

VI. FROM THE PROVINCIAL NEWSLETTERS

The Provincial Newsletters have jumped to fifty-four. (This count is based on the number of Provinces who have forwarded at least one issue to the Generalate, and means that three out of every four Provinces now circulate Newsletters.) Many of them arrive regularly and show noticeable improvement in editing and graphics — though in some, certain elementary data are missing, such as place and date of issue, etc. Enquiries show that the confrères are pleased to have the Newsletters and find them interesting and useful.

Again our gratitude to the Provincials who forward copies to the Generalate; and once more our humble request to those who have not yet got round to forwarding them: please let us have copies for the Rector Major, for any interested Superiors, and for the Salesian Press Office (Ufficio Stampa Salesiano).

1. A way to work for vocations (Province of Barcelona)

The Rector of the aspirantate of Gerona, Father Michael Echamendi, has offered these practical ideas to the confrères of his Province (Newsletter, Nov. 1973, p. 21).

The question of vocations today is a difficult, delicate and elusive subject. I plan to address all communities on this theme.

At present we have 142 aspirants at Gerona. Gone are the days when we used to see 100 students enter the aspirantate and 40 of them reach the novitiate. This was a result of the old system when a Salesian would travel the country "collecting" candidates. Such a method may have been valid in the 40's and 50's; it was no longer so in the 60's; and a serious study in the last twelve years has proved it useless today.

I tentatively propose the following plan for vocations.

1. As individuals and as communities we must live our vocation with enthusiasm. This is the only way to get others to enthuse.

2. A better Christian education for the younger boys is needed. We usually put our top teachers in the senior classrooms and overlook the fact that our youngsters of thirteen and fourteen years of age are already atheists, or at least have by now rejected religion.

3. During the first term of the school year, find out what lads are likely to have a vocation to the consecrated life (school tasks, days of recollection and discreet enquires will be pointers). Don't worry about numbers, even if they are well down. It is important that the whole community know which lads show a greater Christian sensitivity; which lads are ready to dedicate themselves to an authentically Christian life; which ones are capable of dedicating their lives to others.

4. Concentrate on this "little flock" by means of personal chats and entrusting them with apostolic responsibilities that put them on their mettle.

Don't be in a hurry. When the community works and prays for vocations to continue its work, grace will work wonders.

2. Golden Jubilee put to pastoral use (Province of Peru)

The Salesians of Huancayo conduct an elementary school, lower and middle high school for boarders and dayboys, a youth centre, a parish and other activities. Recently they made use of the celebrations of the 50th anniversary of their foundation to do some efficacious pastoral work that comprised the whole Salesian Family (Newsletter, Sept. 1973, pp. 9-10).

During the week 9-16 September the Salesians and Daughters of Mary Help of Christians joined in celebrating the Golden Jubilee of their work in Huancayo. Sunday was dedicated to Mary Help of Christians. Her new church was blessed, and in the evening there was a procession thither of the youngsters from the Salesian Youth Centres.

Monday was a day of thanksgiving and there were various activities for the smaller fry. In the evening there was a fund-raising entertainment for a social project the Salesians planned to launch in the city.

Tuesday was vocation day, with a variety of activities for the next age-group. The scouts and cubs put on a special show in the afternoon.

Wednesday was remembrance day: a pilgrimage of the Salesian Family to the cemetery; also a radio broadcast by friends of the Salesian work.

Thursday: family day. The school's new machinery shops and museum were opened, with practical demonstrations.

Friday, youth day, witnessed a students' march-past before an assembly of dignitaries; then a solemn session of the City Council. In the evening a concert in the hall.

Saturday was given over to happiness and fun and included a chess tournament, games, and an entertainment in the evening.

The closing day was marked by an agape provided by the Past Pupils and attended by the bishop. In the evening all joined in a Mass of thanksgiving.

3. A course for Superiors and those working in formation (English Province)

An interesting course for Superiors and those working in formation is being organized in the English Province. (It will also include their next-door neighbours of the Irish Province.) It is scheduled for 24-30 March 1974 and will be held at Savio House, Ingersley (Provincial's letter, 17 October 1973).

Title of the course: What is happening in Religious Communities today.

Theme: This is a course which will consider some of the "new" elements which have been introduced into some religious communities since the Council; what benefits were hoped for; what success has resulted; and what judgements have now been arrived at. It will also consider some of the possibilities which are now open to religious community living, and how these can help our life-style.

Whether we agree with other groups' experiments or not, whether we wish to integrate some of the suggestions into our own country's life-style or not, is not a concern of the course. Rather the aim

of the course is informative — what is being done; what other Salesians are doing.

The following are some of the main points that will be covered.

Community Life — experiments around the world.

Prayer — some of its more recent forms — an evaluation.

Apostolate — individual and community; group discernment.

Organization — recent rethinking; the place and role of the Superior.

Spiritual Direction.

4. The Holy Year - Eucharist and the Community (Province of Lyons)

Some thoughts from a letter of Father Michael Mouillard to his confrères (Newsletter, Lyons, France, November 1973, p. 1).

The work following our various Provincial Chapters (studying the apostolic community and the praying community) seems to me to be exactly in step with the Holy Year.

Introducing the Holy Year, Cardinal Marty placed the emphasis on prayer, meditation, and especially on the celebration of the Eucharist, the Sacrament of reconciliation. We could well ask ourselves whether our community builds up its life round the Eucharist, whether it finds unity in the Eucharist. Sometimes confrères refrain from celebration through fear of being hypocritical. "When we are in full agreement and genuine sharers one with another, then we can come together and truly celebrate our unity."

True. Without faith the Eucharist is psychologically reduced to an act of friendship. But without looking upon the Eucharist as something magic, I believe it should first and foremost express the *effort* made by each individual and the community to arrive at unity. It does not have to express perfect unity straight away: the Eucharist helps us to attain it.

Therefore our prayer must achieve a more genuine Eucharist; and our sharing together make for a true missionary effort. This must be our part in the questings and efforts of the Holy Year.

5. « Thank you, Father Provincial »

A Provincial who was obliged for health reasons to relinquish office before the completion of the six-year period was addressed in a concelebration with the following sentiments. They are a true picture of the man concerned and summarize the ideal characteristics desirable in anyone in authority.

Thank you for your uprightness and forthright honesty. You always used the yes and no of the Gospel without equivocation or mental reservation.

Thank you for your kindly understanding, which always brought you close to us.

Thank you for being a father without paternalism, a brother without back-slapping, an optimist without rose-coloured spectacles, a realist without the death-wish.

Thank you for lifting up the confidence of our young Salesians without toadying to them; and for your respect and gratitude to the old without falsely playing up the good old days.

Thank you for working for unity in community and province without sacrificing truth; for your dialoguing in deeds instead of mere words; for accepting calmly and without hullabaloo the pain you must have felt when the Provincial Chapter rejected projects that were close to your heart.

Thank you for your deep concern for the poorer youngsters and your support for every project on their behalf.

Thank you for being unscathed by the building-craze and money-grubbing; for suffering the consequences in patient silence; for honestly recognizing your limitations and seeking help from others with sincerity and not from diplomacy.

Thank you for not thinking you were indispensable and for not playing the hero by hanging on to the bitter end.

Thank you for not exploiting your confrères, but hearing, understanding, respecting and loving them.

Thank you for being so profoundly Salesian in the way you have rendered service, in your apostolic choices, in the fine spirit you have created in the province, and in your simple and friendly relations with us all.

6. Community bidding-prayers (Province of Buenos Aires)

The following fine prayers, inspired by the Salesian Constitutions, have been proposed to the confrères (Newsletter, September 1973, p. 15).

God has called us to live in common and given us brothers to love. Let us pray that our vows may be translated into acts of love for God and our neighbour.

Let us pray that our chastity may truly free us to be ever ready to love as brothers in the Holy Spirit...

Let us pray that our poverty may be a sign of brotherly love and mutual giving of what we are and have...

Let us pray that our obedience make us all of one purpose in searching out the will of God and putting it into practice...

Lord, help us to live our lives in true communion. May we thus find help to remain faithful to the Gospel values our religious profession has pledged us to pursue. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

7. News in brief

After a period in hibernation the *Ecuador Salesian Bulletin* resumes publication this month (January 1974). It will be printed bi-monthly by the Don Bosco Printing Press of Cuenca (Newsletter, November 1973, p. 5).

The *Salesian Pastoral Centre* of La Plata (Argentina) has prepared a number of cassettes (90 mins.) of conferences, articles and addresses from recent publications. Themes include theology, religious and priestly life and catechetics. These should be useful for meditations, days of recollection, gatherings, etc. The first series comprises twelve subjects. Confrères may obtain these recorded cassettes from the Centre, or they may forward their own cassettes to be recorded (Newsletter, Bahia Blanca, August 1973, p. 10).

Salesians help Belfast youngsters

Three Salesians toiled hard during the holidays for some of the children from bomb-weary Belfast. The Summer Recreational Scheme started with a swing when five or six hundred excited youngsters invaded a local elementary school. The programme included a great variety of indoor and outdoor games, singing, and painting in the art room (most of the "masterpieces" depicted the daily tragedies of Belfast). Other entertainments were a Fancy Dress Show, Bonny Baby Competition (well attended by proud brothers, sisters, mothers and lots of grannies), and a Pet Show (with its usual share of high adventure). The Belfast Educational Authority sponsored the scheme, supplying a minibus and petrol, a double-decker bus for outings, and free use of canoes and swimming pool. The day's activities depended on the mood of the children, the troubled times in the city, and of course the weather (Newsletter of Irish Province, September 1973, pp. 7 & 8).

VII. PONTIFICAL MAGISTERIUM

1. Vocations are God's work

Twice recently the Pope spoke to special groups assembled in Rome on the subjects of vocations and preparation for the priesthood.

a) TODAY MORE THAN EVER CHRIST SAYS, « FOLLOW ME »

On 21 November The Holy Father met the « Study Convention for Ecclesiastical Vocations ». He emphasised the importance of presenting to the young the priestly ideal in all its fullness. Below is the more significant part of his address.

(Translation taken from the English edition of the Osservatore Romano dated 6 December 1973).

Allow us to propose to you some reflections and indications, with a view to the future work in store for you; even if they are not new to your knowledge and experience of the matter, they will confirm in you, however, the watchful concern with which we follow your valuable work within the Church.

It seems to us that the first task to be carried out is to drive home more deeply to the faithful the value and the indispensability of the priestly ministry in the plan of salvation. It is necessary to react against a widespread attitude which tends to belittle the importance of the priest's presence on the grounds that the Council has given such new value to the common priesthood of the faithful. This would mean failure to understand the plan of God, who, on the contrary, willed to call his believers to the Church and save them by making them a people with a hierarchical organization. This indispensable necessity is seen to be even more evident today, both because of the spiritual conditions of the modern world, which tends more and more to become secularized and to lose the sense of the sacred, and with a view to the increased commitment of the Church in the service of mankind. In the long run this service could not be ensured without the sanctifying virtue and the pastoral activity of those who were made "stewards entrusted with the mysteries of God" (1 Cor. 4, 1).

We certainly recognize the many serious difficulties you have to cope with to overcome the present crisis of vocations, which has vast and deep roots. They are difficulties which may have given rise, in some cases, to the temptation of doubt or discouragement about the real possibility, in a world so poisoned with materialism and hedonism, of opening the ears of the young to the voice of Christ, who says to them, today as yesterday, nay more than yesterday: "Come and follow me".

Here, then, is our second recommendation: work confidently! Have confidence in God because vocations are, more than man's work, mainly God's work, and we must in no way doubt that God wishes to provide for the needs of his Church, which He has promised to assist until the end of time (cf. Mt. 28, 20). Have confidence also in the young, whose generosity is no less today than it was yesterday.

Why the shortage

We think that the shortage of vocations does, in fact, depend on family and social environment, which makes the conscience of the new generations refractory to the stimulus of Christ's call. We also believe, however, in the immense wealth of energies latent in the young people of our time, so open to the great ideals of justice, so eager for authenticity, so ready to devote themselves to their brothers. If we find them so sensitive to the sight of humanity suffering because of injustice, hunger and violence, how can we resign ourselves to thinking that they cannot be equally sensitive to the problem of a mankind that demands no less forcefully the presence of God and the distribution of his grace through the priestly ministry? We are of the opinion, therefore, that there are still many young souls capable of embracing magnanimously and faithfully the ideal of an existence consecrated to Christ and to souls to the point of heroism.

But how are we to present this ideal? We answer that it must be presented to the young, who are generous and strong by nature, in all its completeness, not hiding or softpedalling the severe demands it entails, but illustrating properly their high significance and their supernatural value. We must in fact believe that this formula exerts a greater attraction on young souls than a formula that is more acceptable by human standards and apparently easier, in which, however, there is the danger of falsifying the specifically and essentially spiritual nature of priestly service. It is not, therefore, by presenting the ecclesiastical state as easier that access to the priesthood will be made more de-

sirable. It is not in this direction that we should turn to promote vocations numerically and qualitatively, even in the Church's need at the present time.

Attention to seminaries

But the problem of vocations is not limited, as you well know, to the phase of recruiting candidates for the priesthood. A whole series of efforts and care are also necessary, in order that the seed placed by God in the youth's soul may reach maturity, and above all bear fruit and be persevering.

Here our subject brings us to the seminaries, to which you will have to devote particular attention. It will be necessary to work energetically to raise their spiritual level and to make them become, as they have always been in the Church, really privileged places of piety, study and discipline. Every effort must be made to dispel that atmosphere of conformity with the world, of a slackening of the spirit of prayer and of love for the Cross, which unfortunately is creeping into not a few of them, if we do not wish to see every more generous effort compromised in this delicate and vital area of the Church.

b) IN IMITATION OF CHRIST — SELFLESS IN HIS SELF-GIVING FOR OTHERS

On 10 October 1973 Pope Paul VI visited the German-Hungarian College on the occasion of the fourth centenary of its foundation. He spoke to the students and professors on priestly formation today.

The following extract is taken from the end of the Holy Father's discourse.

(Translation from the English edition of the Osservatore Romano dated 1 November 1973).

It is true that, to meet the new requirements of the times, your College cannot cling to norms adapted to life a few centuries ago, but having the opposite effect in today's atmosphere. The young men preparing for the priesthood today have needs and demands that it would be rash not to take into due account. The II Vatican Council, aware of the "extreme importance of priestly formation", because "the wished-for renewal of the whole Church depends in large measure on the ministry of priests" had already laid down the lines for a renewed ecclesiastical pedagogy. We are aware of the difficulties of this enterprise, which calls for responsible educators, endowed with wise discernment and prudent equilibrium. It must be remembered, however, that in priestly

formation there are norms that remain substantially unchanged through the centuries, and will keep all their value tomorrow as they do today, because they stem from the very nature of Holy Orders.

In this connection, allow us, dear young people, to clarify some points which, if misunderstood, could have fatal consequences for the Church.

In the formation of candidates for the priesthood greater opening to the problems of society and modern man is necessary today. This is legitimate provided people do not fall into the opposite exaggeration. If the priest must live in the world, he must not be of the world. Consequently, if excessive separation is harmful, no less so is the tendency to suppress all differentiation from it, as unfortunately often happens, in language, way of acting and so on, with the intention of being nearer to the world. Let us have no illusions: if the priest is not able to maintain that distinction which is necessary to be the man of God, the minister of Christ, the witness to a transcendent and spiritual life, he gradually becomes the salt without taste, of which Jesus speaks in the Gospel.

Real freedom

It is also pointed out today that the values of freedom, personality, responsibility are more and more appreciated. For an effective updating of educational methods in seminaries, it is rightly demanded, therefore, that an atmosphere of greater freedom and responsibility should be established, since the latter are the indispensable conditions for the development of the personality of the candidate for the priesthood. This does not justify, however, the attitude of those who would like every structure to be suppressed, every regulation to be abolished, and full freedom left to personal initiative, confident in a natural goodness that ignores original sin and its consequences. Certainly, the young man must be educated to freedom; but real freedom is a conquest, to reach which man, and far more so the candidate to the priesthood, also needs external help. Just as excessive passivity is harmful in the pupil, so likewise is the claim of those who wish to educate themselves without any help from the educator. As the Council admonishes, therefore, "the discipline required by seminary life should not be regarded merely as a strong support of community life and of charity. For it is a necessary part of the whole training programme designed to provide self-mastery, and to foster solid maturity of personality," (*Decree Op-tatam totius*, n. 11) .

Today stress is also strongly laid on the life of the priest as a life

of service, following the example of Christ, "a man for others," according to a happy and well-known expression. It must be specified, however, that the service of the priest who wishes to remain faithful to himself, is a service that is exquisitely and essentially spiritual. It is necessary to keep this well in mind today, against the multiple tendencies to secularize priestly service, reducing it to a function that is mainly philanthropical and social. It is in the area of souls, their relations with God and their inner relations with their fellowmen that the specific function of the Catholic priest is to be found.

These, beloved sons, are some of the sentiments that today's happy circumstance inspires in us. Continue to progress ceaselessly in that indispensable formation, Christian and priestly, apostolic and cultural, that the Church expects from you.

2. Living the Holy Year

In the last three months Pope Paul has spoken again and again about the Holy Year. Among his references are fifteen lengthy addresses; and at times he touched a very personal note — as on 10 November last, when speaking on the jubilee celebrations in Rome.

"Who tells you this?" the Holy Father asked. "A poor and insignificant man. I tremble, brothers and sons, I tremble when I speak, because I feel I am saying something that is far above me, things that I have not sufficiently borne witness to and served, things that would call for a prophetic voice in keeping with the power and lyricism of their reality. On the contrary, I am telling you them like this..."

I am deeply conscious of my inadequacy, the overwhelming difference between the tremendous message I have to impart and my poor incapacity in announcing it and living up to it myself. But it is my duty to speak; I may not be silent."

The touching personal involvement of the Pope prompted the following remark in one of the dailies: "This Holy Year looks like being something really big, judging from the Pope's feeling references to it."

The following excerpts have been chosen as a help to our communities in their diocesan celebration of the Holy Year.

a) THE TIME HAS ALREADY COME

We have already spoken several times about the Holy Year, but there still remains a great deal to say. Today we will just consider this forthcoming event in connection with time, history, and the divine plan

that is fulfilled at certain moments. Have you ever noticed how often Jesus speaks of the coming hour as of a very important circumstance? He says, for example, to the Samaritan woman: "the time is coming, nay, has already come, when true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth..." (Jn. 4, 23; 2, 4; 17, 1; Rom. 13, 11; etc.). That is, the succession of time sometimes has not just a chronological significance, but takes on a prophetic sense, indicates the fulfilment of a divine plan. The clock of time marks the coincidence of a precious instant for the descent of a transcendent Presence among men or an invisible Action of the Spirit, which takes on the shape of a material fact.

It is not unusual to find in Holy Scripture the announcement of some surprising hour of this kind. Let us read again a well-known quotation of a similar oracle, familiar to everyone because, uttered by the prophet Joel in the Old Testament, it echoes in Peter's inspired speech in the New Testament to document the mystery of Pentecost: "I will pour out my spirit upon all mankind, and your sons and daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams..." (Joel 3, 28; Acts 2, 17-18).

Now we think that the Holy Year may be, in God's plans, a time of grace for souls, for the Church, for the world. It may be; it is a hypothesis, a wish, a hope, the fulfilment of which, just because of its supernatural character, surpasses our competence. The Lord must be its artificer, our inept longing aspiration is unable to do so.

(From address at general audience 26 September. Translation from English edition of the Osservatore Romano dated 4 October 1973).

b) THE ACCEPTABLE TIME

In the first place the Pope invited those present to deep reflection, in order to grasp the real meaning of the Holy Year. We must meditate and concentrate on the focal point that we are called consciously to reflect upon. The Holy Year, with its practices of religion, penance and piety, forces us to make some effort to understand time, the measure of our existence.

We speak of *tempus acceptabile*, as happens at other times in the liturgy. There are propitious times, there are happy moments, there are periods more suitable than others to attain our full personality and the very purpose for which life is given to us. The Holy Year is one of these happy moments, a moment in which we assess the value of religion for us, the value of faith, the value of being Christians. It is a moment in which we reflect on the awareness that we are Christians,

that we are baptized, that we are Catholics. We ask ourselves what effect Christianity has on our lives both in the present fleeting moment, and in the course of time in which we live, are consumed and are hastened towards our destiny. The Holy Year is the moment in which we are called to decide what we want to be, to define ourselves, to tell ourselves what we are, not as Registry Office statistics but in real fact.

All that is very difficult, and therefore calls for a preparation: the diocesan Holy Year which is being inaugurated. It enables us to approach this process of spiritual, philosophical, existential and social thought with some clarity of soul and with some decisive resolutions that have already taken form.

The propitious moment has come and I am here this evening to tell you sons of the Church, sons of this age: 'Look, a period, a moment, is approaching, that is really favourable. It is perhaps the moment that will decide our personal fate and our eternal destiny, a moment of supreme responsibility; of supreme good fortune if we seize it, of supreme misfortune if it should chance to pass unnoticed or find us deaf to its message.

(Some thoughts from the Holy Father's address in the Basilica of St. John Lateran on the occasion of the opening of jubilee celebrations in Rome. Taken from the English edition of the Osservatore Romano dated 29 November 1973).

c) THE HOLY YEAR MEANS A CHANGE OF HEART

This coming Holy Year should be characterized by the seriousness of its celebration, both individual and collective; a seriousness all the more necessary, the more superficial the usual course of the common experience of our life is today. The trend of the latter is that everything is easy, everything is momentary, everything is exterior. The psychology of the cinema. We are trying, on the contrary, to arrive at strong, constant, interior moments of the spirit. There is an extremely common word, which expresses very well this programmatic aspiration of ours; namely, we wish to reach the heart of the matter.

What then is the heart? Our question is posed in the religious and moral perspective, which is extended to the psychological and ideal one. What is the meaning of this term so much in use?

God sees the heart

We are tempted to adopt the definition of St. Augustine, which identifies the meaning of the word heart with the Ego: "...cor meum,

ubi ego sum quicumque sum" (Conf. X, 3). And we are confirmed in choosing this pregnant sense, indicative of the sentimental, intellectual and particularly the operative personality of man, by biblical language, which prescind from the purely physiological significance of this organ to indicate what is living, genetic, operating, moral, responsible and spiritual in man. The heart is the interior cell of human psychology; it is the source of man's instincts, thoughts, and above all, his actions. Of what is good and what is bad: let us recall the words of Jesus the Master: "For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander. These are what defile a man" (Mt. 15, 19-20).

What a sad introspection! And what makes it grave is the warning in the Bible that God sees clearly our heart, this secret hiding-place of our moral reality. "Man looks on the outward appearance," Holy Scripture says, "but the Lord looks on the heart" (1 Kings 16-7); he searches our mind (Jer 17, 10).

We could bring forward many other striking quotations about the penetration of God's judging eye into the most secret recess of our hearts; but now we are anxious to observe how God's judgment is passed on this inner life of ours, thus thrown open. Christ has no time for hypocrisy, make-believe virtue, formal and lying justice. The Gospel is full of the Lord's expressions of intolerance for a pseudo-observance of religion, unconnected with the truth of the good and the sincerity of love. We should reread chapter XIII of St. Matthew to feel again the force of Christ's invectives against the cunning factions of two social groups, the Pharisees and the Scribes of that time, a symbol for all times, in order to tremble about the fundamental necessity of a real relationship with God, sincerity of heart, expressed by consistency of thought, words and deeds. We must, therefore, go back to the study of that word which has now entered current use, "metanoia," which means interior conversion, the change of heart of which we have spoken on other occasions. We cannot pass over in silence our painful amazement at the indulgence, and 'more, the publicity and propaganda, so ignobly widespread today, for what upsets and defiles minds, with pornography, immoral shows and licentious exhibitions. Where is human "ecology"?

Need of courage

In order to celebrate the Holy Year well, action at the deepest and most jealously protected level of our moral psychology is necessary. We must be courageous and bold in our resolve to bring renewal and pacification to bear on the very core of our personal conscience.

(From address to general audience 7 November. Translation taken from the English edition of the *Osservatore Romano* dated 15 November 1973).

d) THE HOLY YEAR MEANS RECONCILIATION WITH GOD

The Holy Year aims first and foremost at reconciling men with God, us believers in the first place, and then as many men as can be induced to this salvific and beatifying meeting.

It will do us good to recall a striking and synthetic text of St. Paul: "If any one is in Christ (that is, a real Christian), he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. So we (apostles) are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We beseech you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God" (11 Cor. 5, 17-20).

The complete synthesis

In these words the whole conception of our moral life is understood, and the whole doctrinal synthesis of redemption and salvation is expressed.

That is, our human existence is born, lives, unfolds itself and wanes in an existential and moral relationship with God. Here is all the wisdom of life, here the philosophy of truth, here the theology of our destiny. We are born creatures of God; we are dependent on Him ontologically; and, whether we like it or not, we are answerable to Him. We are made in this way. Intelligence, will-power, freedom, heart, love and sorrow, time and work, human and social relations, life, in short, has a derivation determined in various ways, and has a purpose, also defined in various ways, in relation to God.

Strong opposition

This "Weltanschauung," this conception of the world, is certainly strongly opposed today. People do not want to admit the existence of God, they prefer to outrage their own reason with the absurd aphorism of the "death of God," rather than train their minds to seek and experience divine light. Atheism seems to be triumphant. Religion has no longer any reason for existing? Sin does not exist?... Oh! we are saturat-

ed with these ideologies. But we are always convinced, by the grace of God, that God exists, like the sun; and that everything comes to us from Him and goes from us to Him. And you who are listening to us, wise and believing sons, you are certainly equally persuaded, with us, of this.

We understand then how urgent, modern and strategic the advent of this Holy Year is. It must confirm for us, within and without, the sovereign existence of God, and the economy of God, that is the plan — a plan of infinite Love — established by Him, to make us attentive disciples, faithful servants, but above all, happy sons. We all feel, some in one way, others in another, that our correspondence with this plan, with this plan of natural and supernatural relations, has been, and still is, imperfect. Perhaps it has been hostile and faithless. We feel we are sinners.

Ungrateful sons

Here another immense page, a dramatic, painful and humiliating one, that of our sin, opens up before us. We have broken the dutiful and vital relations that sustained us in God. We have never equalled with the completeness of our response, with the totality of our love, the Love that God offers us. We are ungrateful, we are debtors! In fact we would be lost if Christ had not come to save us. And so? So now there is the pressing necessity to become reconciled with God: “reconciliamini Deo!”.

And here is the amazing good fortune! Reconciliation is possible! This is the announcement that the Holy Year echoes in the world and in our conscience: it is possible!

(*From address to general audience 31 October. Translation taken from the English edition of the Osservatore Romano dated 8 November 1973*).

e) THE HOLY YEAR MEANS RECONCILIATION WITH OUR BROTHERS

Reconciliation. What does it mean? To whom and what does it refer?

Becoming aware

Let us note at once that it presupposes a rupture, for which we must make amends and find a remedy. It presupposes a disorder, a conflict, an enmity, a separation, a solitude, an interruption in the

harmony of a plan that calls for wholeness, a perfection that corrects and overcomes a selfish isolation of ours and establishes a circulation of love in us and around us.

Are we aware of this need of reconciliation? This is an important point. It represents a great innovation in human consciousness. In the first place, in the consciousness of man in regard to himself: is not he who, aware of himself, perceives together with his own tyrannical selfishness, also his own narrow existence, his independence of others, his isolation, his inadequacy, is not he more of a man, really a man? In the second place in regard to social consciousness. The need of others is engraved on our very being. No one is sufficient unto himself. How is each one to integrate himself in relationship with others? In conflict, or in order? Lastly, and especially, in regard to religious consciousness, which marks the peak of our awareness of our position in the world of Being and in the respective destiny in store for us.

Let us reflect carefully, and let us realize that we need to be reconciled on this triple front, the solipsistic, the social and the religious one. We are not, of ourselves, surrounded by a perfect order; there comes to us from every side the sting of deficiency, reproach, remorse, danger. A psychological analysis would lead us far away. Let us stop for the present with a mere mention of the three aspects (the three fronts, we said) that our conscience tells us as being in need of reconciliation.

The law of love

The first one, that of our inner restlessness, owing to the fact that we feel ourselves living and at the same time failing, not self-sufficient, full of energies and deficiencies, tormented by our insatiable egoism, which is a proof at the same time of our right to live and our subjective poverty. Where and how to find peace, integration, balance, the fullness of our personality? The answer is at hand: love is our inner peace. The question then arises: what love? We will not answer this question now; we will say only that to be happy it is necessary to learn "the art of loving." It is an art in which nature itself is a master, if listened to carefully and interpreted according to the great and sovereign law of love, as taught us by Christ: love God, love your neighbour, with the strict and vital applications that this law entails. If we really learned to love as we should, would not our personal life, and consequently our collective life be transformed into peace and happiness? The Holy Year will also have to include in its programme this fundamental aim: love, to restore love, real, pure, strong, Christian love.

The painful reality of war

And what shall we say about social reconciliation? Oh! what a chapter with its thousand pages! We will just say that reconciliation, that is peace, becomes more and more every day an urgent necessity, an increasing necessity. Did we not all hope, after the last world war, that at last peace would be achieved for ever? Has not the world made really grandiose efforts to give peace a constitutional place in the development of civilization? To make peoples safe for themselves, brothers for others? But the atrocious and dreadful experience of these years recalls us to a sad reality: war is still possible! The production and sale of armaments shows us, rather, that it is easier and more disastrous than before. Even today we are experiencing a painful event of war, and not the only one. We are humiliated and frightened.

Is it possible that this is an incurable disease of mankind? We answer: no; Christ, our peace (Eph. 2, 14), makes the impossible possible (cf. Lk. 18, 27). If we follow his Gospel the union of justice and peace can be realized; certainly not to be crystalized in the immobility of a history that is, on the contrary, in continual development; but it is possible! It can be reborn!

At all levels

This is what we set for the Holy Year to study: reconciliation, at all levels, the family, community, national, ecclesial, ecumenical levels. And also at the social level. This is our originality; we believe that this political eschatology, this moral parousia, is a Christian duty, whatever may be the degree of its actual application in the historical situation. Love, justice, peace, are living and good ideals, full of social energy which we must not change into hatred and conflict, in order to aim at that concrete peace that will realize in wisdom and goodness Christ's words: "you are all brothers" (Mt. 23, 8).

The first task of the Holy Year

And now another immense task for the Holy Year which will certainly prefer to assign priority to the third pacification, the religious one, which in fact has the first place. We mean the re-establishment of the relationship of truth and grace with the heavenly Father for each of us, for the whole Church, and, please God, for the world. This is the first inevitable task of the Holy Year: to re-establish peace between

ourselves and God in the meditated and lived experience of the incomparable word of reconciliation, so dear to St. Paul. But this would call for a separate lecture, and so we will be content to entrust it to your memory, now and for the coming Holy Year. Reconciliation with God.

(From address to general audience 17 October. Translation taken from the English edition of the Osservatore Romano dated 25 October 1973).

f) THE HOLY YEAR MEANS RECONCILIATION WITH THE CHURCH

A point that particularly interests, our pastoral and apostolic spirit is reconciliation in the Church with the sons of the Church who, without declaring a canonical, official break with the Church are nevertheless in an abnormal state with regard to her. They wish to be still in communion with the Church, and God grant it were really so, but they wish to adopt an attitude of criticism, contestation, free examination and even freer polemics. Some people defend this ambiguous position with arguments that are plausible in themselves, that is, with the intention of correcting certain deplorable, or questionable aspects of the Church, or of promoting her culture and spirituality, or of bringing her into line with the changes of the times; but they claim these functions with such arbitrariness and such radicalism that, unawares, perhaps, they offend and even interrupt that communion, not only "institutional," but also spiritual, with which they wish to remain united. They themselves cut off the branch of the vital plant that sustained them; and then, realizing the harm they have done, they appeal to the pluralism of theological interpretations (which, provided there is essential and authentic adherence to the faith of the Church, should be not only permitted, but fostered), heedless of the fact that in this way they create doctrines of their own, to suit themselves, and of doubtful conformity with the norm and the objectivity of faith itself, when they are not actually contrary to it.

To win back the erring

This phenomenon, which is spreading like an epidemic in the cultural spheres of our ecclesial communion, gives us great pain, tempered only by a feeling of greater charity towards those who are the cause of it. And our sorrow increases when we observe how easily groups, described as religious and spiritual, are formed, but which are isolated and autocephalous, and which often, to flaunt their initiation into a more spiritual and exquisite conception of Christianity, tend to become anti-ecclesial, and

slide, almost by unconscious gravitation, towards sociological and political expressions in which, unfortunately, the religious spirit is replaced by humanism, and what humanism! How can we win back these sons who are embarking on such dangerous paths, how can we re-establish with them a relationship of joyful and harmonious communion?

Return to authenticity

We would like the season of reflection and fervour, for which we are preparing, to produce the following purpose and effect: the increase of an authentic "sensus Ecclesiae."

Sons and Brothers, friends near and far away, all men: may this hour of reflection, reformation and clear-sightedness school us in the mystery and the reality of Christ's Church: the revelation of God-Love the salvation of humanity.

(From address to general audience 28 November. Translation taken from the English edition of the Osservatore Romano dated 6 December 1973).

VIII. NECROLOGY

Brother Amadeus Aigner

* Grassau (Germany) 25-3-1885; † Schwandorf (Germany) 21-8-1973; 89 years of age; 44 prof.

A qualified carpenter and an artist, he became a Salesian at forty-three years of age. In his application for admittance we find these words: "I think this Congregation will give me the opportunity of serving God, in my poor way, for the rest of my life — for my own salvation and that of others. God's will be done." Thus was his life; and indeed this application stands as his spiritual testament. This doyen of our German-speaking Brothers was able to apply all his experience and fine talents to his new field of activity.

Father George Arend

* Burg-Gaillenreuth/Ofr. (Germany) 23-1-06; † Kitzbül (Tyrol-Austria) 23-9-73 67 years of age; 41 prof.; 38 priest.

A cheerful soul and a lover of music. He organized bands in several houses and brought them to a fine musical standard. His kindly nature won him many friends among the young, the past pupils and the Co-operators; and among his admirers he could count many soldiers (whose chaplain he had been during the Second World War) .

Brother Clement Benzi

* Ponzzone (Alessandria-Italy) 12-11-1893; † The Oratory, Turin 29-8-73; 79 years of age; 62 prof.

His Salesian vocation was marked by fidelity, steady progress and perseverance. For twentyfive years he taught in various Salesian Houses; then he kept the books at Valdocco and wrote them up with methodical precision and punctuality. The end of his consecrated life was crowned with suffering and prayer. It was his constant wish to die on a feast of Our Lady; and the Lord granted him his request, calling him on the Feast of Our Lady of Guardia.

Brother Sante Borboni

* Rome (Italy) 1-11-06; † Don Bosco Boystown, Rome, 8-9-73; 66 years of age; 42 prof.

Orphaned at six years of age, he had a difficult childhood at various colleges in Rome. After his military service he became a Salesian and worked humbly and docilely in many houses of the Roman Province. He gave courteous and kind service to two Salesian bishops (Bp. Munerati and Bp. Rotolo). He was a gentlemanly Religious, faithful, cheerful and serene.

Bishop Vladimir Boric

* Punta Arenas (Chile) 23-4-05; † Santiago (Chile) 29-8-73; 68 years of age; 51 prof.; 43 priest; 6 rector; 24 bishop.

The Church in Chile mourns the loss of a zealous pastor who was able to achieve renewal in the diocese of Punta Arenas without the building up of tensions. He promoted the permanent diaconate, courses of theology for the laity, an updated catechesis, and flourishing Christian communities. All his efforts were imbued with the Salesian spirit; his pedagogical activities were keen and subtle; he had a deep understanding of human nature; he was profoundly interested in theatre and the printed word; he set up a radio station, and founded (and directed for a year) "El amigo de la Familia," an informative diocesan weekly programme. A true missionary, he brought an authentic Christian civilization to his diocese (the world's southernmost). During the Council he provided a quantity of Punta Arena's first wheat crop and it was used to make the hosts for the concluding Mass of Vatican II.

Father Philip Brady

* Lara (Cavan-Ireland) 22-3-19; † Dunfermline (Scotland) 21-8-73; 54 years of age; 35 prof.; 25 priest.

This exemplary confrère died suddenly whilst taking a few days' holiday at our house in Scotland. The first years of his Salesian activities were spent in the classroom; and then he rendered diligent service to various convents in London. This quiet and retiring priest will be remembered for his fidelity and holiness; and the number of Salesians and nuns at his obsequies said much for the high esteem in which he was held.

Brother Francis Brioschi

* Ornago (Milan-Italy) 2-11-1900; † Bagnolo (Italy) 2-5-73; 72 years of age; 40 prof.

One of the excellent late vocations from Ivrea, he came to the Salesians in his thirties and after his novitiate went to the Patagonian mission. After twenty years of sterling work as infirmarian and bursar's assistant, failing health obliged him to return to Turin, where he then gave his humble and patient services as waiting-room attendant for Father Ziggotti and later Father Ricceri. As his health deteriorated, he was admitted as a patient to the hospital at Bagnolo where he prepared himself to meet his Maker, bearing his sufferings in a spirit of faith and prayer.

Brother Ramón Capra

* Tortosa (Tarragona-Spain) 24-8-1884; † General Pirán (Argentina) 23-8-73; 89 years of age; 67 prof.

He accompanied Monsignor Fagnano to Punta Arenas in 1910 and spent thirty-eight years in Patagonia as carpenter, bandmaster and excellent Salesian assistant (indeed his "educative presence" summarizes his whole Salesian life). Whether working or teaching or simply living his exemplary religious life, he was always the true educator.

Father Michael Cardell

* Ciadadela (Balears-Spain) 22-2-05; † Barcelona (Spain) 24-9-73; 68 years of age; 51 prof.; 41 priest.

Most of his Salesian life was spent in the college of San Juan Bosco in Barcelona (31 years); and it was here that a sudden heart attack called him to his Master. All recognized in him a deep sense of responsibility and dedication to the young. He gave of his best as confessor, teacher and secretary as long his health held out. He died as he had lived, quietly and unobtrusively.

Father Louis Chessa

* Osilo (Sassari-Italy) 18-12-13; † Brescia (Italy) 2-8-73; 59 years of age; 40 prof.; 31 priest.

He worked as a young priest at Gaeta, Penango and Ivrea. His

deep culture, his sympathy for people in trouble, his love of all that was wholesome and beautiful, all fitted him for higher responsibilities in life. But God was to try his servant in a different way. He suffered the loss of his faculties, and his Gethsemani vigil was a hospital sick-room for the rest of his life; yet he was able to write to his Provincial that he found true happiness even in that condition. For those who are disappointed and have lost hope Father Chessa is a comforting beacon of faith and confidence.

Brother Charles Danni

* San Grato-Villanova Mondovì (Cuneo-Italy) 30-10-16; † Quito (Ecuador) 3-11-73; 57 years of age; 39 prof.

He was noted for his deep devotion to the Holy Eucharist and Our Blessed Lady, his love of work and his sincere Salesianity. For many years he directed the Salesian bookshop in Quito. His deepest interests lay in the young and needy, and he was generous in the time and effort he put into the work of the Oratory. He offered up his approaching death for the aspirants and future vocations.

Father Bruno Dehlert

* Stabigotten (Ostpreussen-Germany) 12-10-10; † Waldwinkel (Germany) 26-4-72; 61 years of age; 39 prof.; 31 priest.

It was at his uncle's first Mass that Bruno decided to become a Salesian priest. After his novitiate he went to Peru and returned to Germany for theology, where he was conscripted and taken prisoner in Africa during World War II. In 1946 he received permission to visit his mother in East Prussia and was obliged to remain in the Eastern Zone. For twelve years he did zealous priestly work in Poland till 1958, when he was able to return to the missions in Bolivia; but a heart attack obliged him to return home in 1970. Father Dehlert won the esteem and love of the young by his serenity, his well-balanced character, his knowledge of languages and his qualities as an educator.

Father Caesar Del Grosso

* Grignasco Sesia (Novara-Italy) 5-5-07; † Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) 29-8-73; 66 years of age; 44 prof.; 35 priest.

Various houses in Manaus, Recife and Belo Horizonte bear witness to his solid vocation as Salesian, priest and teacher. He was the first to work amidst the unspeakable difficulties of the Rio de Janeiro shantytown of Mount Jacarezinho.

Father Alfred Crosta

* Cerreto Sannita (Benevento-Italy) 11-1-04; † Faido (Switzerland) 15-8-73; 69 years of age; 51 prof.; 44 priest; 3 rector.

Whilst still a child Alfred lost his father. From the seminary he passed on to our aspirantate at Genzano and felt the call of the missions. He was ordained in the Middle East mission and did great work for some thirty years in various houses there. His final years were spent in various parishes in Italy and in the Salesian parish in Cinecittà, Rome. He had an open nature and was frank, dynamic, reasonable, self-sacrificing and zealous.

Brother Paul Doldi

* Ombriano (Cremona-Italy) 4-9-04; † St. Callixtus (Rome) 22-10-73; 69 years of age; 41 prof.

His Salesian life was spent partly as a missionary in China and partly helping at the Catacombs of St. Callixtus in Rome. He was an exemplary and hard-working Religious. One saw in him grace triumphing over natural ability, and this surely accounted for his success in tasks that seemed beyond his resources.

Brother James Ferrari

* Milan (Italy) 22-7-08; † Tokyo (Japan) 3-8-73; 65 years of age; 38 prof.

His Salesian life was spent in Japan, where many houses display the results of his talent as a decorator. He felt very much his inability to be ordained a priest, but realised he was a true missionary also as a Brother. He had the knack of making contact with people, especially the young, and was able to pass on to them Christ's message in a truly telling way. His unfulfilled yearning for ordination made his life's work all the more fruitful: he spent himself utterly in furthering The Kingdom in this far-away land.

Father Joseph Ferrero

* Turin (Italy) 13-2-11; † Chieri (Turin-Italy) 1-11-73; 62 years of age; 45 prof.; 37 priest; 18 rector.

He was deeply conscious of the youth problem in the built-up areas; and all his life he put his heart and soul into the Oratory, even when he was teaching theology at Chieri; and he radiated kindness, understanding and the open cheerfulness of the Salesian Oratory. During his rectorship he made it obvious that for him charity was more important than projects. After the obsequies, a youngster said to the Provincial: "Please send us another Rector as good as Father Ferrero."

Father Peter Garnero

* El Trébol (Santa Fe-Argentina) 21-1-09; † Campinas (Brazil) 31-5-73; 64 years of age; 47 prof.; 39 priest; 9 rector; 16 provincial; 6 member of Superior Council.

He died on the Feast of the Visitation — a fitting day for this good Salesian so devoted to Mary. He really had the gift of drawing youngsters to God. From his early priesthood he was given heavy responsibilities: novice-master, rector, provincial, and finally member of the Superior Council; and all were struck by his kindness, friendliness and deep piety. Quite a few religious owe their perseverance to his human and supernatural kindness, imbued as it was with confidence in Mary Help of Christians and Don Bosco. Father Garnero was a deeply spiritual Salesian, with his feet planted firmly on the ground: in this he witnessed to the credibility of the Salesian way of life and gained the confidence and esteem of all.

Father Joseph Geder

* Rogascevi (Slovenia-Yugoslavia) 17-2-01; † Hong Kong 10-11-72; 71 years of age; 52 prof.; 43 priest; 11 rector.

He spent his long missionary life in China, arriving in Hong Kong 3 December 1929 and spending some days there. This delay caused him to miss being the companion of Bishop Versiglia (who substituted Father Caravario for him) on that tragically glorious 25 February of 1930. The Lord substituted this quick martyrdom for a slow one, for he worked for many years through the difficulties of roving bandits, the Sino-Japanese war and the Communist take-over. Truly he was all things

to all men, making himself generously available for all kinds of work, ranging from the important labours of the apostolate to the mending of watches, taps and locks. During the last two years of his life this man of many languages suffered the loss of memory and faculties. In this second childhood his confrères cared for him with wonderful charity and affection, despite the added problem of communication (for towards the end he spoke only Jugo-Slav). Father Geder died of pneumonia.

Father Louis Grimaldos

* Cerinza (Boyacá-Colombia) 18-2-1894; † Agua de Dios (Bolombia) 1-6-71; 77 years of age; 45 prof.; 41 priest.

Many Houses and innumerable youngsters benefited from his tireless work as priest and teacher. All recall his kindness, his religious spirit and his love of the Congregation. His last years were spent caring for the lepers; and no matter how ill he was, he always managed to struggle through his daily Mass. God called him well-prepared in the lazaret of Agua de Dios.

Father Victor Grusovin

* Gorizia (Italy) 13-6-03; † Genova (Italy) 5-7-73; 70 years of age; 54 prof.; 45 priest.

He used his great talents of mind and heart in educating and teaching the young. He was a zealous parish priest, updated and wise; and part of his apostolate was caring for the sick on the train to Lourdes. Although in indifferent health, he was a tireless worker; and with his lively manner and clear mind he was a gifted speaker. He was well-versed in liturgy, music and school-legislation: and this lent special weight to his advice. Even after many years his past pupils kept visiting him.

Claric John Korelc

* Novo Mesto (Slovenia-Yugoslavia) 14-3-54; † Zelimlje (Yugoslavia) 19-8-73; 19 years of age; 1 prof.

God called his servant unexpectedly and in his prime of life. Indeed he was well prepared, having renewed his vows just the week before, re-affirming his consecration to Christ and his attachment to Don Bosco.

Father Themistocles La Leta

* Ragusa Ibla (Syracuse-Italy) 2-2-81; † Beirut (Lebanon) 30-9-73; 92 years of age; 70 prof.; 60 priest; 23 rector.

As Prefect of Studies and later as Rector, he was held in high regard by religious and civil authorities and revered by the young. Even in old age he was a regular assistant and confessor. For him the Holy Rule was all-important, and its neglect caused him great distress. His was a simply piety, and he died serenely, calling on Mary.

Father Julian Malec

* Miedziana Góra (Poland) 27-10-19; † Lublin (Poland) 31-8-73; 53 years of age; 27 prof.; 21 priest.

His whole Salesian and priestly life was an example to all, especially during his serious and painful illness.

Father Jesús Marcellán

* Peralta de Alcofea (Huesca-Spain) 1-1-1899; † Salamanca (Spain) 18-7-73; 74 years of age; 56 prof.; 47 priest; 13 rector.

He was noted for his piety, composure and punctuality. He was often called on to preach Retreats and was especially generous and available for the apostolate of the confessional. He loved to talk of the Congregation and was able to keep the boys fascinated by his tricks of sleight-of-hand. For eighteen difficult years he managed the economy of the Province, years which saw the construction of the seminaries of Arévalo and Guadalajara as well as the theologate of Salamanca. He was unable to work during his last years owing to an apoplectic seizure, the effects of which he bore with patience until called by the Lord.

Father Joseph Marchisio

* Montà d'Alba (Cuneo-Italy) 18-10-20; † Rome 18-5-73; 52 years of age; 35 prof.; 25 priest; 11 rector.

He died just before his silver jubilee. He worked as secretary to the Catechist General in Turin; then held positions of responsibility in the houses of formation at Monteortone, Castellammare, Bollengo, Crocetta and Testaccio. He was big-hearted, talented, faithful to the Vatican

Council and Don Bosco, and a tireless worker. These qualities, with his deep humanity, endeared him to all, despite his rather shy nature. He accepted his premature death with calm abandonment to the will of God.

Father Alphonsus Martin

* Allendorf (Germany) 28-9-03; † Cologne (Germany) 21-7-73; 69 years of age; 46 prof.; 39 priest; 16 rector; 6 provincial.

He was a member of the diocesan council of Fulda. His life evinced a Christian joyousness that was greatly appreciated by his confrères and was also a great help during some awkward moments in the XIX General Chapter. His conduct during the tragedy of World War II and the ensuing problems of a restless Church was an inspiration to all of faith in God and Mary Help of Christians. During the nightly air-raids he used recite the rosary with his parishioners. His last two years were spent at the Provincial House where he edified all by his devotion to the community, his cheerfulness and his prayerful life.

Father Louis Matteazzi

* Grantorto (Padua-Italy) 16-12-15; † Bogotá (Colombia) 6-7-71; 55 years of age; 33 prof.; 25 priest.

From the time of his ordination he gave his life to the lepers. His genial and cheerful character was ready to tackle anything. He was a friend to all, especially the lowly. A zealous confessor, he took no account of time or distance when it was a case of helping the sick. A sudden illness cut short his joyous preparation for his silver jubilee. His remains were taken from Bogotá to Agua de Dios, where he had worked so well and where the parishioners were profuse in their gratitude.

Father Victor Merlo

* Turin (Italy) 26-3-12; † Turin-S. Paolo 20-9-73; 61 years of age; 44 prof.; 33 priest.

He went to Thailand in his early years, and on his return to Italy for ordination was prevented from leaving the country by the outbreak of war. He taught at Colle Don Bosco, Cumiano and Lombriasco and eventually returned to Thailand; but only for two years,

since ill health obliged him to come back to Italy. Thus began his Calvary which lasted till the Lord called him to himself.

Father John Montaldo.

* Larvego-Campomorone (Genoa-Italy) 23-1-1887; † Vallecrosia (Imperia-Italy) 13-8-73; 86 years of age; 68 prof.; 58 priest; 4 rector.

A Salesian after the heart of Don Rua. He gave of his best to the young and was ever in their midst as their teacher and adviser. He had a robust and exuberant temperament, was understanding, loyal, generous, and open to *aggiornamento* in the Church. His dedication was often quite heroic; and his deep faith made death a serene transition to the loving presence of the Father.

Father Joseph Muzio

* Frassineto Po (Alessandria-Italy) 1-2-1888; † Rome (Italy) 11-3-73; 85 years of age; 61 prof.; 58 priest; 8 rector.

He was welcomed into the Congregation by Don Rua himself. His penetrating mind was always in quest of truth; and this he loved, defended and passed on to his students in lecture-hall and conventions. He was both a thinker and a man of action and deeply versed in the teachings of St. Thomas and Rosmini. He was a consultor for catechetics in the Vicariate and contributed to philosophy reviews, founding and directing the "Bollettino Rosminiano." An exemplary religious, he was esteemed by all for his kindly nature and prudent spiritual direction.

Father Alexander (Sándor) Nagy

* Perbete (Hungary) 12-3-1885; † Pannonhalma (Hungary) 20-8-73; 88 years of age; 58 prof.; 53 priest; 6 rector.

He came from a large country family who really lived the faith. A chance copy of the Salesian Bulletin enlightened him regarding opportunities for late vocations at Cavaglià, and repairing thither he swore lealty forever to Don Bosco. He was plagued with arthritis for twenty years, but nothing hindered his insatiable desire for work. He spent eight painful years bedridden or in a wheelchair, lost in prayer and meditation, sanctifying his sufferings and offering them for the perseverance of the thinning ranks of his compatriots.

Brother Joseph Naranjo

* Nabón (Ecuador) 28-8-1877; † Manta (Ecuador) 29-8-73; 96 years of age; 69 prof.

He was the doyen of the Province, having entered the Congregation in the XIX century. Close on seventy years of Salesian life left the clear characteristics of deep love for Mary and Don Bosco and a well-proved generosity in accepting the different duties obedience required of him. He had a way with the very young, whom he cared for and taught for many long years.

Brother Francis Nogueiras

* Casasnovas (Orense-Spain) 19-6-1886; † Patagones (Argentina) 2-7-73; 87 years of age; 61 prof.

A humble, simple, unpretentious Salesian, he treated all with respect, kindness and delicacy, and always showed his gratitude for any kindnesses, no matter how small. A man of simple piety, he easily adapted himself to the changes of Vatican II. In teaching his bootmaker's trade, he had a way of winning over and instructing youngsters who were often illiterate and difficult. In his last years he played the role of genial old grandfather to the philosophy students; and they saw in him a sign of the unity of the Congregation.

Father Peter Nuila

* S. Salvador (El Salvador) 31-12-22; † S. Salvador 19-2-73; 50 years of age; 31 prof.; 21 priest; 1 rector.

Degreed in letters, he used his talents to good effect as teacher, educator and prefect of studies in various houses. He had a passion for orderliness and discipline and this was sometimes a cause of misunderstandings. He went willingly wherever obedience bade; in his poverty he was satisfied with the minimum necessities, often wearing second-hand clothing. He was indeed a faithful Salesian.

Father Julius Parazzini

* Montegridolfo (Forlì-Italy) 23-3-1889; † Faenza (Ravenna-Italy) 17-10-73; 84 years of age; 66 prof.; 54 priest; 27 rector; 6 provincial.

A fine priest and educator. Many houses remember him as a gentle, generous and understanding Rector. During the war he turned the Institute at Faenza into a public hospital and generously opened the doors to all in need of shelter and material or moral help. It was in this very house that this saintly Salesian died, after willingly putting up with years of sufferings.

Father Siro A. Pérez

* Miono (Santander-Spain) 13-6-03; † Buenos Aires (Argentina) 1-9-73; 70 years of age; 52 prof.; 44 priest; 16 rector.

He had an insatiable love of study and strove to pass this on to his many pupils. As a spiritual counsellor he was much appreciated in many communities. He was a man of culture and kindness, and had great success in teaching history, literature, liturgy and plainsong. He had a fine tenor voice and unstintingly used his many excellent qualities with true Salesian dedication in his priestly work.

Father Hector van der Putte

* Gentbrugge (Belgium) 22-12-1890; † Korbeek-Lo (Belgium) 7-4-73; 82 years of age; 40 prof.; 35 priest.

Ordained at forty-nine years of age, he lived his remaining 34 years as an exemplary and fervent priest, with no time for compromise. He never flagged in his work for the Co-operators, the sick, and in the confessional: he was indeed a man of prayer. He loved the Congregation and had the knack of instilling in his many friends a genuine love for Our Blessed Lady and Don Bosco.

Father Anthony Rossi

* Calvenzano (Bergamo-Italy) 6-1-02; † Turin, Mother House 14-10-73; 71 years of age; 45 prof.; 37 priest.

After the difficulties of military service he entered Ivrea and received the cassock from the Servant of God, Father Philip Rinaldi. He worked as cleric and priest in Venezuela and fulfilled his many duties generously and zealously (assistant, teacher, confessor, infirmarian). Health problems obliged him to return to Italy, and he used what little strength he had as confessor in various houses of the Central Province until in 1950 he

had to enter hospital (Piossasco, then Bagnolo). He died calmly at the Mother House, Turin.

Father Gabriel Ruiz

* Tacámbaro (Mexico) 6-10-34; † Hermosillo, Sonora (Mexico) 19-8-73; 39 years of age; 20 prof.; 10 priest.

A generous and constant worker and a zealous priest (especially with the sick), he placed no limits to his dedicated service to his neighbour. He patiently endured a long illness that affected his nervous system. He met his death in a car accident.

Father Vincent Salzano

* S. Paulo (Brazil) 27-6-1899; † S. Justo (Argentina) 29-9-73; 74 years of age; 57 prof.; 48 priest.

A good and holy priest who loved Don Bosco. He taught singing and was perhaps a bit of a dreamer with his poetry and music. His later years were dedicated to the confessional and pulpit.

Father Joseph Schuler

* Neukirch-Baden (Germany) 30-1-1898; † Konstanz (Germany) 18-10-73; 75 years of age; 45 prof.; 38 priest; 18 rector.

He was a late vocation and used his fine talents as educator, administrator and parish priest in positions of great responsibility. He witnessed the complete destruction of the youth hostel at München during World War II, and as Rector he had the task of rebuilding it. One could well apply to him the words of Charles Carretto: "Love is no problem for the man who lives love." This kindly Salesian will be long remembered by his many friends.

Brother Joseph Seutzger

* Paulushofen-Oberpfalz (Germany) 14-2-1895; † Mannheim (Germany) 18-10-73; 78 years of age; 46 prof.

A late and truly genuine vocation, he came to Don Bosco at thirty-nine years of age after long consideration. After working in Australia

for twentyfive years he returned to Germany and (at München and Mannheim) gave his generous services for a further twenty years in the garden and refectory. He was "faithful in small things" and his cheerfulness and serenity earned him the affection of his confrères. His simple piety was a spur to young and old.

Father Francis Skubala

* Iljasevci (Slovenia-Yugoslavia) 1-9-04; † Ljubljana-Rakovnik (Yugoslavia) 25-2-73; 68 years of age; 50 prof.; 40 priest; 8 rector.

This good Salesian had Don Bosco's thirst for souls. His early priesthood was spent in various oratories in Slovenia and Croatia; then he was appointed spiritual director in the diocesan seminaries (which also housed our own clerics); and finally his work was to keep track of the Catholics scattered among the Orthodox and Mahometan population, in order to help and encourage them.

Brother Salvatore Soler

* Carcagente (Valencia-Spain) 24-3-06; † Oviedo (Spain) 9-8-73; 67 years of age; 15 prof.

He became a Salesian in his fifties, after having to leave the Franciscans for reasons of health. His previous business experience in the world fitted him well for his accurate and painstaking duties as buyer. He always believed in being well prepared for any possible emergencies. He had a great love for the boys, and indeed had engaged in youth apostolate before entering Religion.

Father John Svirnelis

* Skleriai (Lithuania) 12-2-13; † Frascati-Rome (Italy) 30-1-73; 69 years of age; 38 prof.; 27 priest.

Despite his delicate health which frequently kept him bedridden, he was a zealous and tireless apostle and worked thirty-one years in India. Obligated to return to Italy, he never forgot his missionary companions, and continued his help for them till the end of his life, keeping in constant touch with his many benefactors. From the poor in India he had come to love poverty, and this was noted in him even during his last years of suffering.

Father Alfred Tenorio

* Vitoria (Pernambuco-Brazil) 24-7-1898; † Recife (Brazil) 9-9-73; 75 years of age; 51 prof.; 44 priest.

A science teacher of note, he patiently worked at the difficult task of equipping the school laboratory. When the classroom got beyond his strength he spent his free time in the flower and vegetable gardens. He had the faculty of critical appraisal, but always in cheerful good humour. He truly loved Don Bosco.

Father Charles Valenzuela

* Santiago (Chile) 29-5-02; † there 2-8-73; 71 years of age; 52 prof.; 44 priest; 3 rector.

He was killed in a car accident whilst visiting his sister. He was well known for his apostolate of the confessional where he used to the full his profound spiritual culture. His great preoccupation was for the renewal of his own spiritual life and that of the community.

Father Joseph Vesco

* Turin (Italy) 25-6-1880; † Cumiana (Italy) 21-5-73; 92 years of age; 52 prof.; 70 priest; 19 rector.

He entered the Congregation during the First World War already a priest (he had been economer and organist at the seminary at Mondovì). His long life was spent in houses of formation, first as an efficient administrator and then as an understanding and fatherly rector. He showed talent and sensitivity in his life-long love of music; and his motets and recreational music were of high quality. As music-master he had great success. He was a man of deep interior life, exemplary poverty, simplicity, meekness and serenity, and was loved by all.

4° elenco 1973

- 128 Coad. AIGNER Amedeo † Ens Dorf (Germania) 1973 a 88 a.
129 Sac. AREND Giorgio † Kitzbühel (Austria) 1973 a 67 a.
130 Coad. BENZI Clemente † Torino (Italia) 1973 a 79 a.
131 Coad. BORBONI Sante † Roma (Italia) 1973 a 66 a.
132 Mons. BORIČ Vladimiro † Santiago (Cile) 1973 a 68 a. Fu per 24 a.
Vescovo di Punta Arenas.
133 Sac. BRADY Filippo † Dunfermline (Inghilterra) 1973 a 54 a.
134 Coad. BRIOSCHI Francesco † Bagnolo (Italia) 1973 a 72 a.
135 Coad. CAPRA Raimondo † General Pirán (Argentina) 1973 a 89 a.
136 Sac. CARDELL Michele † Barcelona (Spagna) 1973 a 68 a.
137 Sac. CHESSA Luigi † Brescia (Italia) 1973 a 59 a.
138 Coad. DANNI Carlo † Quito (Equatore) 1973 a 57 a.
139 Sac. DEL GROSSO CESARE † Rio de Janeiro (Brasile) 1973 a 66 a.
140 Sac. DI CROSTA Alfredo † Faido (Svizzera) 1973 a 69 a.
141 Coad. DOLDI Paolo † a Roma (Italia) 1973 a 69 a.
142 Sac. FERNANDEZ Epifanio † Raliang (India) 1973 a 37 a.
143 Coad. FERRARI Giacomo † Tokyo (Giappone) 1973 a 65 a.
144 Sac. FERRERO Giuseppe † Chieri (Italia) 1973 a 62 a.
145 Sac. GARNERO Pietro † Campinas (Brasile) 1973 a 64 a. Fu per 16 a.
Ispettore e per 6 a. membro del Consiglio Superiore.
146 Sac. GEDER Giuseppe † Rogaševci (Jugoslavia) 1972 a 71 a.
147 Sac. GRIMALDOS Luigi † Agua de Dios (Colombia) 1971 a 77 a.
148 Sac. GRUSOVIN Vittorio † Genova (Italia) 1973 a 70 a.
149 Ch. KORELC Giovanni † Zelimlje (Jugoslavia) 1973 a 19 a.
150 Sac. LA LETA Temistocle † Beirut (Libano) 1973 a 70 a.
151 Sac. MALEC Giuliano † Lublin (Polonia) 1973 a 53 a.
152 Sac. MARCELLAN Gesù † Salamanca (Spagna) 1973 a 74 a.
153 Sac. MARCHISIO Giuseppe † Roma (Italia) 1973 a 52 a.
154 Sac. MARTIN Alfonso † Colonia (Germania) 1973 a 69 a. Fu per 6 a.
Ispettore.
155 Sac. MATTEAZZI Luigi † Bogotá (Colombia) 1971 a 55 a.
156 Sac. MERLO Vittorio † Torino (Italia) 1973 a 61 a.
157 Sac. MONTALDO Giovanni † Vallecrosia (Italia) 1973 a 86 a.
158 Sac. MUZIO Giuseppe † Roma (Italia) 1973 a 85 a.
159 Sac. NAGY Alessandro † Pannonhalma (Ungheria) 1973 a 88 a.
160 Coad. NARANJO Giuseppe † Manta (Equatore) 1973 a 96 a.
161 Coad. NOGUEIRAS Francesco † Patagones (Argentina) 1973 a 61 a.
162 Sac. NUILA Pietro † S. Salvador (El Salvador) 1973 a 50 a.
163 Sac. PARAZZINI Giulio † Faenza (Italia) 1973 a 84 a. Fu per 6 Ispettore.
164 Sac. PEREZ Siro A. † Buenos Aires (Argentina) 1973 a 70 a.

- 165 Sac. PUTTE Ettore van de † Korbek-Lo (Belgio) 1973 a 82 a.
- 166 Sac. ROSSI Antonio † Torino (Italia) 1973 a 71 a.
- 167 Sac. RUIZ Gabriele † Guadalajara (Messico) 1973 a 38 a.
- 168 Sac. SCHULER Giuseppe † Konstanz (Germania) 1973 a 75 a.
- 169 Coad. SEUFZGER Giuseppe † Mannheim (Germania) 1973 a 78 a.
- 170 Sac. SKUHALA Francesco † Rakovnik (Jugoslavia) 1973 a 68 a.
- 171 Coad. SOLER Salvatore † Oviedo (Spagna) 1973 a 67 a.
- 172 Sac. SVIRNELIS Giovanni † Frascati (Italia) 1973 a 60 a.
- 173 Sac. TENORIO Alfredo † Recife (Brasile) 1973 a 75 a.
- 174 Sac. VALENZUELA Carlo † Santiago (Cile) 1973 a 71 a.
- 175 Sac. VESCO Giuseppe † Cumiana (Italia) 1973 a 92 a.



