



ACTS OF THE SUPERIOR COUNCIL

OF THE SALESIAN SOCIETY

SUMMARY

I. Letter of the Rector Major (page 3)

« WORK AND SELF-RESTRAINT »: THE ANSWER TO UPWARD SOCIAL MOBILITY

The dream of Don Bosco - searching questions for the 70's.

1. **Work and self-restraint, the inseparables** — 2. **Work, a school and prie-dieu**: a mission carried out joyfully; when work replaces prayer — 3. **The teaching of the SGC** — 4. **Invitation to an honest assessment**: the field of battle; practical references in the Regulations — 5. **Time, an asset and a liability**: assisting; how to waste time — 6. **The aim of our work: evangelization**: spare time need not be wasted time; conclusion.

II. Instructions and norms (not in this number)

III. Communications (page 44)

1. The Rector Major's strenna for 1975 — 2. Three documents of the Superior Council — 3. The Delegation of Vietnam — 4. Appointments — 5. Two deceased Salesian bishops. — 6. Activities in support of the Salesian Missions Centenary — 7. The World Congress of Salesian Brothers — 8. Youth Formation Course for Latin America — 9. The spread of On-going Formation Courses — 10. Course for Missionaries — 11. Solidarity Fund.

IV. Activities of the Superior Council and matters of general interest (page 54)

V. Documents (page 58)

1. The First Years of Salesian Training — 2. Aids for the PC'75 — 3. The Erection of the Delegation of Vietnam — 4. Confrères leaving the priesthood.

VI. From the Provincial Newsletters (page 93)

1. Two schemes from the Pacific-Caribbean Region — 2. Official plaudits in Thailand — 3. Average age 34.25 — 4. Courses for radio and TV announcers.

VII. Pontifical Magisterium (page 97)

1. Missions Day and the Holy Year — 2. The snares of secularism.

VIII. Obituaries (page 106)

Third list for 1974 (page 115)

S. G. S. - ROMA

I. LETTER OF THE RECTOR MAJOR

« WORK AND SELF-RESTRAINT »: THE ANSWER TO UPWARD SOCIAL MOBILITY

Rome, October, 1974

My dear confrères and sons,

I have been taking a close look at the situations that obtain today in the Congregation and I would like to draw your attention to a many-sided phenomenon that has serious implication for our vocation: the adoption of middle-class standards of life.

In defence of the Salesian values that are at stake, not to mention the religious and Christian ones, the Special General Chapter declares uncompromising war on the soft and easy life (v. Orange Book, p. 433). And we are all invited (note the words) "to renew in ourselves that assiduous and enterprising spirit of work" inculcated by Don Bosco. (IBID., *op. cit.*) In other words it is a summons to put into effect the renewal to which we are bound in the spirit of "work and temperance" left to us by Don Bosco. This was to be the distinctive sign of the precious legacy he made to the Congregation. And more: it was to be the absolute condition for the progress, indeed, for the very survival of the Congregation.

In the face of the climate created even among ourselves by the ideas and attitudes of today (at least, under certain circumstances), I see very clearly the wisdom of what the Special

General Chapter had to say, and likewise the vital importance of the subject I am going to deal with.

I would like you to bear with me while we make some reflections together as Salesians. I hope that these considerations will serve to point and clarify certain values to which our consecrated life as sons of Don Bosco, in these days of change and uncertainty, is inseparably bound; and also to pin-point ideas and attitudes that strike at the roots of our way of life.

The dream of Don Bosco

I think that we all remember the dream that Don Bosco had at Lanzo and related to the confrères on the 18th September, 1876, as part of the summing-up of the themes of their retreat. (*BM*, 12, 463-9).

The dreams of Don Bosco contain a marvellous spiritual doctrine, and it would be very harmful to the Congregation to have them lost through ignorance or sheer neglect.

And this brings me to a point of wide relevance. It has been remarked, with sadness, that many confrères, especially the young, know very little about Don Bosco. Some, it is said, have not even read a short life of the saint. I say to all those who can and should be concerned with this state of affairs that this is no secondary consideration in the formation of the Salesian.

Ignorance of Don Bosco, inconceivable in a Salesian, can explain certain aberrations and distortions of his spirit and method that have occurred in our houses.

I know that in some places there is concern about this, and that practical steps are being taken to educate the confrères to the knowledge of Don Bosco and the spiritual riches that have their source in him.

So I applaud these efforts in the fervent hope that they are only the beginning and that they will not be halted before the

inevitable difficulties: this is a matter of vital interest to the Congregation.

And now for the dream of Don Bosco.

Escutcheon, pass-word, badge

In the third part of this dream, the mysterious guide who accompanied Don Bosco invited him to look at the endless plain that surrounded him. There were immense crowds of boys converging on him from every point of the compass under the guidance of Salesians.

Whilst he was gazing in wonder at this marvellous sight, the mysterious personage said: "Look at it all and think for a moment. You won't understand now what I have to say to you, but listen carefully: all that you have seen is the harvest prepared for the Salesians. You see how immense it is? The huge field in which you stand is the field where the Salesians must work. The Salesians that you see are the workers in that vineyard of the Lord's. There are many labourers, and you know them. Now the horizons are widening under your very eyes and people are appearing whom you don't know yet; and this means that the Salesians will work in this field not only in this century, but also in the next and in centuries to come. But do you know what conditions must exist for this to come about? I shall tell you.

Look: you must have these words spelled out: '*Work and self-restraint will make the Salesian Congregation flourish.*' They are to your escutcheon, your pass-word, your badge. You will explain them, repeat them, again and again. Have a book printed to explain them, and make it clearly understood that work and self-restraint are the heritage that you leave to the Congregation, a heritage that will be its glory."

Don Bosco nodded his assent to the word of the guide, who added, "So you are quite persuaded? You have grasped it thoroughly? This is the heritage you will leave to your sons; and

tell them bluntly that, as long they correspond, they will attract followers from north, south, east and west." (IBID., 466-7).

"As long as they correspond . . ." The mysterious guide does not expand the point, but clearly he means it to be taken that the future of the Congregation is conditional, and is, in fact, a problem of fidelity. From the insistence of the guide ("You must have these words spelled out . . . You will explain them, repeat them, again and again . . . So you are quite persuaded? You have grasped it thoroughly? . . . tell them bluntly . . ."), you can judge of the supreme importance of this subject for the life of the Congregation.

Searching questions for the 70's

Don Bosco did not have time to write the book as suggested, but he has done something much better: he has written in into his own life, stamped it into the minds of his sons, instilled it into the life and action of the Congregation. In the past this has been, after the grace of God, the leading factor in the prodigious development of our work; and it still represents, paradoxically enough with all that has happened over the years, a strikingly relevant scheme of life, as we are coming to realize more and more.

In the face of this reality, the question we have to ask ourselves, with a humble and courageous sincerity, is this: "Have we, the Salesians of the 70's, been faithful to the programme left to us by Don Bosco? Or are we perhaps squandering the precious inheritance that has been jealously guarded, unstintingly built up and faithfully passed on to us by our predecessors?"

These are the questions that each one — individual, community, newly professed, seasoned worker — must in conscience find an answer to at this precariously balanced point in the life of the Society, and, having found the answer, he must assume responsibility for it.

The following pages are meant to be no more than an aid

towards this, offered for personal reflection or consideration by the community. It is a matter that involves a set of values essential to our genuine renewal, to our mission in the Church and to our survival as a Congregation. For this reason, I press you with all urgency to bend your mind to these pages, as sons of our mother, the Congregation, whose vitally important interests, dependent as they are on our own attitudes and quality of life, are very much in play.

1. WORK AND SELF-RESTRAINT, THE INSEPARABLES

To understand better what is contained in our spiritual tradition summed up in the binomial expression 'work and temperance', given us by Don Bosco as a motto, as our Congregation's style of life, we must lay hold of his concept of the two virtues as a single entity: they form an indivisible whole.

The expression — pardon the coinage — 'anti-middle-classism', implying the outright rejection of every form of naturalism and enervating hedonism, and of a life conforming to the standards of the consumer society, which snuffs out the vision of better and higher thing — this expression, I say, seems to be a good definition of the negative aspect of the 'indivisible whole' mentioned above. The positive aspect consists essentially in a complete, constant and practical devotion to one's apostolic mission.

"The Salesian does not seek penance in itself . . . His whole life is a mortification and penance: his asceticism and his action are interlocking. His ascesis is identified with the love he shows for others in meeting the demands they make upon him, because there is no love without sacrifice". (JOSEPH AUBRY: *Lo spirito salesiano*, 75). Looking for an easy life is only a sign, a symptom of the weakening sense of mission in someone who, vocationally, "is consecrated to the good of his pupils", and so "must be ready

to face any inconvenience, any fatigue . . ." (*Il Sistema Preventivo*, Chapter III). The life of ease simply advertizes the fading away of the zeal of apostolic love in a man who is supposed to be "prepared to suffer cold and heat, hunger and thirst, weariness and contempt whenever the glory of God and the salvation of souls is at stake." (*Constitutions*, 1966, art. 188).

Don Bosco has pioneered all this himself. For this he gave his life moment by moment; and this he has transfused into the Congregation as a legacy to his sons.

It is hardly to be wondered at, then, that this formidable labourer in the Lord's vineyard should have wished to create a Congregation characterized by work, seeing that he was able to erect a whole ascesis, a mystique, an educational system on the basis of work carried out for love and with love.

"Sleeves rolled up and models of frugality"

"As Don Bosco, son of the people, had gone out with his attractive personality to restore children to their true dignity, so the Salesian Congregation, assuming that same personality and responding to similar needs, directed its efforts towards the working classes and, for that matter, the whole of society, to make its contribution to progress and social justice. Don Bosco confronted a society that regarded religious as useless and idle creatures with the image of the Salesian at work beside the man in the street, and particularly side by side with the needy." (PIETRO STELLA, *Don Bosco*, II, 369-70).

Is it in this framework that we can understand what Don Bosco had in mind when he founded a congregation of religious "with their sleeves up", who were also to be "models of frugality" (*BM*, 4, 192). A working-class vocation required, if it was to be any sort of witness at all, a working-class style of life: frugality and hard work. If "the motto of the Congregation, work and self-restraint, was a call to the members for the observance of an individual asceticism, from the point of view of pub-

lic opinion it assumed the significance of apostolic witness." (PIETRO STELLA, *op. cit.*, 373).

What we are doing, in fact, is to return to our origins, to the circumstances and motivations that led Don Bosco to found his congregation and to characterize it with the particular style of life corresponding to the needs of the mission entrusted to him by God. Now, I think that this reference to our origins must be a recurrent feature of our lives: it should be for us a fruitful source of reflection and inspiration. It is also a standard against which we can judge of the genuineness of our own vocation and the fidelity of our response as individuals and as members of a community.

2. WORK, A SCHOOL AND PRIE-DIEU

According to the mind of Don Bosco, however, this life of joyful austerity and intense activity is not just something "ad extra", so to speak: that is, there are other values involved besides that of external witness.

Not that I want to minimize the value of work as an act of witness. At the 2nd Vatican Council it was accepted as part of religious poverty and was proposed to all religious in the fulfilment of their duties as obedience "to the common law of labour". They are invited to procure in this way the "necessary provisions for their livelihood and undertakings." (*Perfectae caritatis*, 13c) What I want to stress here is that, for Don Bosco, work was not merely this, but still more an educational medium and a form of spirituality.

Life for us is our duty, our work, and our mission

Don Bosco, the saint of boundless joy, who showed his boys that the life of sanctity was "being very happy" (*BM*, 5, 356), was not an accommodating saint. Life for him was a very serious

affair. In his infancy and adolescence he made very early contact with the hardships of life. For him, it was no pastime, and certainly no amusement, but a serious obligation, a 'duty', in the full sense of a term that he held sacred.

Work meant "fulfilling the duties of one's state of life, whether they consist in studying or in learning an art or trade." (Rules for the house attached to the Oratory, in *BM*, vol. 4, 553, Translation ed. D. Borgatello.) Work was a task, a mission that God had entrusted to man, hence it was a "duty". Speaking to the boys, he said: "Man is born to work." (*IBID.*) "The man who does not work has no right to eat." (*BM*, 3, 354) Again: "He who does not do the work that he is supposed to do, steals from God and from those over him." (*BM*, Translation ed. D. Borgatello, 4, 553).

Partly because of his temperament and partly through his profound conviction, Don Bosco held sluggards and parasites in abhorrence, and he detested laziness, holding it to be the "fatal source of all vices" (*Il Giovane Provveduto*, 45), and the epitome of the evasion of duty. He wanted his boys to get used to work, because, as he said again and again: "He who does not accustom himself to work in his youth will become an idler, to the shame of his parents and his country, and perhaps suffer the irreparable loss of his soul." (*BM*, Translation ed. D. Borgatello, 4, 553.)

"He did not rest himself, and he kept everyone else on the move"

For Salesians, Don Bosco's recommendations on work present various facets. It is not only the discharging of a duty, but it is the realization of a mission of salvation received from God. It is collaboration with Him in the work of the Redemption, a tuning-in to His wave-length to maintain a continuous-action programme in the world, the feeling of being constantly spurred on by His love. (Cf. *II Cor.* 5, 14).

Don Ceria could well write: "Inflamed with his zeal, Don

Bosco never rested and he never let others rest either" (EUGENIO CERIA, *Annali della Società Salesiana*, 1, 722).

Work: a mission carried out with joy

Don Caviglia, having pointed out that "ninety per cent" of Don Bosco's talks to the confrères are on "work, temperance and poverty", adds: "austerity of life, then, would seem to be opposed to happiness." (ALBERT CAVIGLIA, *Don Bosco*, 93.) Yet nothing could be more foreign to the spirit of Don Bosco than work done under compulsion or even suffered as something unavoidable: this is work seen as a penalty for sin, work unredeemed by the cross of Christ. For him personally work was not a hard grind, but a passion.

Don Caviglia continues: "Austerity is implicit in our daily round, in the will to sacrifice, the spirit of detachment, the whole tenor of our life: we work, we take our knocks, we cheerfully do without, because it is all a matter of the heart. The spirit is so attuned to high ideals, so strongly disposed to disregard the unnecessary, that we achieve the maximum freedom of action."

The secret of this "servire Domino in laetitia" as Don Caviglia has pointed out, lies in the heart: it is the love that enters into our dealings with God and with our brothers, into the relations between superior and subject, between educator and pupil. It is a real dictatorship of love that does not impose its law from outside, but from within the heart, prompting us to discharge our duties spontaneously, generously and joyfully: in a word, to do our job with love, with all diligence, using all our resources of initiative and creativity.

With the spirit attuned to high ideals

The second aspect of this secret of Salesian joy, even in an austere and demanding life, is the one alluded to by Don Caviglia when he talks about the spirit being attuned to high ideals.

The man who is fired by high ideals — and this goes for revolutionaries, as well — is ready to sacrifice himself, to renounce everything in order to pursue those ideals; and this readiness for anything that is demanded is with him for as long as the ideals remain fresh and unsullied, for as long as he has no doubts at all about their value.

The day these ideals cloud over and their validity begins to be questioned, the Salesian's availability for any duty is diminished and he lapses into a way of life that is flatly "middle-class". This is the sure sign that his ideals are on the wane.

The rhythm of intense, enthusiastic work that Don Bosco imparted to his Congregation is nothing more than the visible reflection of his own high ideals infused into his followers: deep faith, a sincere love for the souls of the young, the calm assurance of being on the path traced out by God.

Inspired by these ideals, the Salesians "became accustomed to killing the pain of the thorns, which often sank in deep, with the anodyne of faith and slogging work as a member of a dedicated team. In spite of inexperience and lack of qualifications, the Salesian Society drove ahead with great enthusiasm. And this derived largely from the quiet assurance of having God on their side, an assurance that, with Don Bosco, stemmed from the certainty of being firmly grafted on to the vine of the Church; and his calmness was infectious." (PIETRO STELLA, *op. cit.*, II, 383).

With the generosity of "I'll do it"

In the family setting, as the demarcation-line between 'mine' and 'thine' becomes blurred over into 'ours', there is also a broadening of the concept of 'duty'. 'Duty' is not just what is imposed by obedience to the rule or to a Superior, but it is what a given situation requires of us as members of a team. Let us get this point perfectly clear: "Oh, it's none of my business!" is pretty well a profanity in a Salesian community; and contrasts sharply with: "I'll do it", which sums up the whole spirit of

willingness to take things on: and this is being a real Salesian. "I've no idea what there is in it for me", adds Don Caviglia cannily, "but it's certainly a major triumph for the Congregation, which has grown entirely on the strength of its "I'll do it" attitude, that is, by dint of self-sacrifice: there is no other explanation for the spread of the missions." (ALBET CAVIGLIA, *Conferences*, 62).

Don Bosco wanted to forge religious who would be disposed to make sacrifices "not of health, nor of money, nor of mortifications or penances, nor of extraordinary abstentions from food — but of THE WILL." Religious who would be ready "now to climb into the pulpit, and then to go down to the kitchen; now to take a class and then to sweep; now to teach catechism or to pray in church, and then to assist in the recreation; now to study quietly in their cells, then to go for a walk with the boys; now to command and then to obey." (*BM*, 7, 47) In this sort of school, "there is nothing entrusted to the layman that the priest or cleric would not turn his hand to: they would simply be following the example of their Father who, when necessary, could be a tailor, carpenter, choir-master, juggler, proof-reader, preacher, writer, confessor, priest. It all added up to an interior disposition of availability coupled to a versatility where the keen observer could discern a spirit of abnegation carried to its furthest limits.", writes Don Ceria, "a tradition the like of which was not to be found anywhere else." (EUGENIO CERIA, *op. cit.*, 1, 724).

"Nevertheless", adds Don Ceria, Don Bosco feared "that, as increasing numbers of members brought a greater division of labour, a drift toward the easy life would set in". With this in mind he wrote the following grave warning — indeed, it almost amounts to a threat: "When ease and convenience begin to get a grip among us, then our Society will have had its day." (*IBID.*, 724-5).

If we are sincere, we must admit that his fears were in no way unfounded. With the necessary division of labour, there is now emerging to an ever-increasing extent the demand for a spe-

cific qualification; but that should not militate against the Salesian's versatility, or, more important still, against his availability whenever the need arises. When the indifference of "That's no business of mine" becomes the rule in our communities, the Congregation will be well on its way, as Don Bosco warns us, to its decline.

In communion with the confrères

The term 'communion' is not to be understood as discounting all activities whatsoever carried on outside the community (although Don Bosco did not conceal his preference for communal activity), but rather as excluding any form of individualism.

Don Bosco's conception of his Congregation was strongly unitary. His ideas on this are very clearly expressed in a conference given to the confrères in March, 1869, after the Holy See had given definitive approval to the Congregation. (*BM*, 9, 571-6).

Don Bosco took the evangelical concept of the common life as the basic principle for his own foundation ("How good and how pleasant it is, when brothers live in unity!" *Ps.* 132/3). Hence, the requirement of living "in unity", which, in the final analysis, means living "in one place, in one spirit and with one end in view" (*BM*, 9, 573).

After the approval of the Constitutions, Don Bosco filled in the outlines of his thought on the triangle 'rule — superior — community' as it affected the unity of life which was to be fostered within the Congregation. In the conference for Rectors held in January, 1876, he said: "If you want to work with all good will but outside the framework of the Rule, each one will work, and perhaps work well, but it will be an individual effort and not a collective one. Now the good that is expected to derive from the religious orders lies precisely in the fact that they work collectively... If we depart from the strict requirements of the Rule and continue to work, then one will go over there, the other come over here, doing good work, mind you, but

individually. This is the start of relaxation." (BM, 12, 80-1).

It should not be difficult, in the light of what has been said, to home in on the fundamental nucleus of Don Bosco's thought. For him, it is not just a matter of the Congregation's having a profoundly unitary structure: it has to WORK that way as well, along the lines traced by God, expressed by the Rule, and embodied by the Superior. For further evidence of his aversion to individual working, we have: "the spectre of individualism", the "quaerere quae sua sunt", and "the first pang of the death throes of religious Congregations". (BM, 12, 468).

Don Bosco wanted the action of his sons to be entirely personalized: the robot-Salesian or pharisaical legalism were right outside his line of thought. He wanted his Salesians to be sons and brothers; he wanted them to have a lively sense of the problems and interests of the religious family to which they belonged, he wanted them to share in full its ideals and mission. So he wanted them to carry out the task assigned to them, plying all their personal resources with love and dedication, and ready to give a generous helping hand to any brother in need.

Individualism is the complete antithesis of all this: its manifestation is a sure sign of a fading sense of family, it is symptomatic of a progressive drifting away from one's own religious community, the abandonment of one's ideals and mission. Individualism leads the religious to the pursuit of his own egoistic interests independently of the community he belongs to, or — worse still — to the manipulation of it for his own ends.

The prevalence of such individualism in our communities would certainly mean curtains for the Congregation.

In intimate union with God

Make no mistake about it: the Salesian life, in the mind of Don Bosco, was not possible without a deep spiritual life: a spiritual life that was not tacked on to the work-life but was all one with it; or, rather, that found concrete expression in work.

Nothing else but a deep spiritual life can provide an adequate driving force for a life that is intense, generous, absolutely disinterested, the deliberately chosen way of externalising a total dedication to the young.

It cannot be denied that all too often we have failed to understand both the theoretical and practical implication of the stern demands of our spiritual tradition and reduced it to a twisted, sterile cliché. It is easier to imitate Don Bosco in his feverish activity than in his intimate union with God. We plunge into an all-action routine without bothering to ensure that it flows from a well-nourished interior life.

We have to realize that, if the spiritual life of the idlers and the self-seekers is suspect, as a Salesian thing, then just as suspect is the work of the spiritually shallow.

If we are not working for God, we must be working for ourselves. And if we are working solely or mostly for ourselves, besides doing a work that is spiritually sterile ("Without me, you can do nothing"), we shall work for just as long as we enjoy success or find personal satisfaction in our work; then, in accordance with the law of quick personal returns, small spiritual profits, we shall turn to that very accommodating ideal of maximum returns for minimum effort. We shall look for all sorts of compensations in coping with our difficulties and in swallowing the disappointments that inevitably attend upon work carried out in this way.

If the phenomenon of upward mobility is too complex to allow of reduction to this single cause, we cannot deny that this is, in fact, the cause in many cases of dereliction of serious obligations to our mission. And what have we instead? A string of completely individualistic activities offering any number of highly questionable aspects.

We cannot deny that our work today as Christian educators is much more arduous and frustrating. Well, then, we have just so much more need of the profound sense of God that draws sus-

tenance from contact with him to see us through to the fulfilment of our vocation.

It has been stated by someone whose views command respect that, without the vital contact with God, without His presence in our lives, it is a difficult thing under present-day conditions to keep one's faith intact. How is it possible for anyone to pass on the Good News from the Lord if he himself, for one spurious reason or the other, has no contact with God and does not even bother about it? There is no other source of evangelical action. The Special General Chapter knew what it was about when it stated: "To help people both young and old to encounter Christ through the Salesian communities, it is necessary to have encountered him personally first of all." (*Orange Book*, 306)

We must have the courage to face the truth and ask ourselves: in the course of our working day, how much time do we really spend in direct contact with God? How often do we use the more prolonged periods of prayer as breathing-spaces in which to recover from the lassitude and nervous tension that are the inevitable bi-products of modern life and of the work we do?

When work replaces prayer

In this matter the Constitutions and Regulations offer us good advice and practical guide-lines, the fruit of years of experience not only in the Congregation but in the Church as a whole. To reject, or at any rate neutralize such invaluable aids amounts to a form of spiritual and apostolic suicide.

The effects would be still more serious if this rejection or disregard took place at community level. In this case, there would be every reason for calling to account the superiors of the house, because they are responsible in this very field of creating the conditions in which Salesians "may have life, and have it more abundantly".

We Italians have every reason for calling the superiors of a community "animatori". In fact, it is a matter of the true Chri-

stian life. The Constitutions do not demand any form of formalistic observance of vapid and barren practices of piety, but what they do ask is that the Salesians should have the spiritual provisions that are absolutely necessary not only for the religious or the apostle, but for anyone at all who believes.

To deny this reality with some pseudo-argumentation or to ignore it in practice — this is distasteful, but it must be said — is to stand opposed to the Word of God and the Gospel, to Church and Council, to the Congregation and Don Bosco (who never for a moment dreamed of eliminating the sustenance of prayer from the lives of his sons, so that they dropped from exhaustion in a frenzy of activity bearing no resemblance whatever to the apostolate as he meant it to be).

I know, I hear it said too often: these Salesians cannot pray, they cannot come together for prayer, because they are working flat out all the time. I would like to say in all sincerity that, judging from what I have seen on more than one occasion, this simply is not the case. The ones who give up or neglect prayer are not always weighed down by extra-heavy work-loads; on the contrary, I know some first-class Salesians, tireless workers, true apostles, who can find time for prayer without straining themselves.

There is perhaps another explanation for this flight from prayer, and this has to be said to keep the record straight, without indulgence in vain illusions: sometimes it is a matter of plain laziness. Generally speaking it needs more effort to pray than to bury oneself in external work (this is what Chautard says, and he knows what he is talking about). But it must also be said that not infrequently laziness is engendered by a sickly, atrophied faith. A feeble faith certainly cannot sustain prayer: faith and prayer vary in direct proportion.

Then we have not the courage to admit that such a situation exists at all, and from there it is but a short step to theorizing about the uselessness or impossibility of prayer, which is a

more serious and obvious manifestation of a faith that is languishing, even moribund. In this case the only remedy is a 'conversion' in depth, which involves a review of our current thinking with the object of giving faith a chance to reassert itself.

When work is too absorbing

However, I acknowledge that cases can arise where prayer really is crowded out of a Salesian's life by pressure of work. To the confrères who are affected in this way, I should like to speak frankly, without fear of expressing a merely personal opinion.

A multiplicity of activities, even though they are in line with what is required by obedience, cannot be allowed to overwhelm a Salesian, crushing out his soul, which is one of those he has to save. Work must not, like Saturn, devour its children. St Charles Borromeo, who could hardly be accused of living in a state of cosy, self-centred inertia, had this to say to the priests of his time (and we all know what they were like): "Do not give yourself to other things so completely that there is nothing left for yourself; in fact, you must keep in mind the souls that you guide, but without forgetting yourself" (*Acta Ecclesiae Mediae*, 1559, 1177-8). Looking at it the other way, as a Protestant Pastor says: "Prayer is action, since it gives an opening to the only really effective action, which is the realization of the word of God." This Word-Action, he adds, is realized "when I listen to it, take it seriously, and set it moving across the world through my life of obedience." (S. RIGAUD, in *Vie Spirituelle*, October, 1968, 165).

There are two cases, then: either the work really is too much, and needs to be scaled down and evened out; or the work is badly organized and distributed. What is wanted here is a restructuring of the duty-roster so that the Salesian is not robbed of his sacrosanct right to time dedicated to prayer, which is certainly as inviolable as his right to food, rest and study. (Cf. *Reg.* 53) It was not by chance that the Special General Chapter laid

down in art. 53 of the Regulations: "Each community at the beginning of the year, taking into consideration the various works on hand, shall fix a time-table in such a way as to secure for the confrères their right to time for prayer."

I should like to round off this point with an observation that I found in a work written by a scientist and scholar on the crises of ideology of priests and religious today. The author is a layman who has made a thorough study of over 700 of these cases. At the end of his synthesis, he concludes the work with this unexpected question: "Would it not be fitting to remind ecclesiastics, and laymen as well, of the Grand Absentee of our age: prayer?" And he goes on: "Alexis Carrel pointed out that the fall of the great civilizations has always been adumbrated by the loss of the sense of the sacred and of prayer. Could it be that we have now reached the eve of the break-up of our own civilization?" (MARCEL ECK, *L'uomo prete*, 145).

We may not accept the writer's vision, which is rather pessimistic, but such a question put by a man of his calibre should give us something to think about. On the other hand, it is a source of encouragement for the future to see how many souls there are (and this includes a great number of our own confrères all over the world) who, even in our own troubled times, are living witnesses to the necessity of prayer. They don't make a great song and dance about it, but they work away for their fellow-men without stint; and they cannot do without prayer, because "prayer is life and breath", both for themselves and for those they work for.

3. THE TEACHING OF THE SPECIAL GENERAL CHAPTER

Let us take a look at what the SGC has to say about work. From a quick survey, it is immediately obvious that the accent of renewal in this line falls heavily on the faithful continuity of our tradition. In the new Constitutions, undoubtedly the best thing to come out of the SGC, we find a little compendium of our tra-

dition in the matter. Article 42 states: "(persevere in) 'Work and temperance and the congregation will flourish'", and then goes on: "On the other hand seek comfortable surroundings and a life of ease and we shall cease to exist. The Salesian gives himself to his mission with a ceaseless energy. For these reasons, work in the apostolate for us has a mystic value: it has a divine quality and is urgent. To achieve the end we should be ready to suffer cold and heat, hunger and thirst, fatigue and rejection whenever the glory of God and the salvation of souls requires it."

A contribution to the construction of the world

The Acts, then, after declaring that, for the Salesian, work is the complete gift of himself to his apostolic task and "is at one and the same time a mystical asceticism (in plain language, the acceptance of every sacrifice to further the work of God), and an obligation of consecration in joyous freedom", concludes: "This attitude puts the Salesians in sympathy with the man of today, who is conscious of being 'homo faber', transformer of the world, and actor in history. With his labour, as a workman of the kingdom, he undertakes to do his part to animate in a Christian manner this movement (sic)" (*Orange Book*, 97). It is the briefest of sketches, but it will serve to set our field of operations into the vast context of human labours and of the Church's contribution to the construction of the world so that "in this way the work of building up the earthly city can always have its foundation in the Lord and can tend toward Him." (*LG*, 46).

It was, however, when it came to deal with the high-voltage question of poverty that the SGC really began to turn up new facets, especially with regard to our mission.

Work and solidarity with the poor

Article 87 of the Constitutions declares: "Untiring and self-sacrificing work is a characteristic left us by Don Bosco and is a concrete expression of our poverty. In our daily toil we aim to

be one with the poor, who live by the sweat of their brow and we bear witness to the world of today that work has a human and Christian value."

The theme of 'work-temperance', understood as a witness to solidarity with the poor, which was the way Don Bosco and his early helpers lived, tended to become a little submerged in the old Constitutions. Now it has been brought up into full view because it "is especially expressive of real witness to poverty in a generous service" (*Orange Book*, 593).

It must be first of all a *personal witness*, through "a way of life *on the personal level* that is simple and austere, which refuses those comforts and conveniences that are commonly associated with the middle class; . . . and he (the Salesian) is ready to share in some way that insecurity which accompanies the life of the really poor". This witness is also to be borne through "tireless work, that takes on the appearance of total commitment to the mission." (*op. cit.*, 605).

Then there is his *collective witness*, which in practice means living "*in an austere style of common life*: we must feel that we are closer to the poor by being frugal in food, by refusing all that is superfluous, and by aiming at functional simplicity in our building." (*op. cit.*, 606) This should be a source of joy, of liberation from the slavery of things, and of complete openness to love of our neighbour. The process of true liberation generates its own energies — and who knows how much can be produced by a Congregation whose members train young people to look on life as a serious undertaking, as service, as WORK? This again must be approached in the right way; certainly not as something to be suffered as a punishment or haggled over as a bargaining point, but as a task embraced as an instrument of liberation and social reconstruction, as a wellspring of human progress, as a personal contribution to the building-up of a more humane, more fraternal community.

These are the prospects opened up for us by SGC with re-

gard to the spiritual heritage left to us by Don Bosco. It is by no means a matter of pretentious rhetoric. Not at all. We are dealing here with a life-ideal set up for us by the God who yesterday called Don Bosco and today calls us to carry through the same mission of the salvation of youth.

They can hardly fail to be impressed by "such a witness in the midst of a world that presents the acquisition of money, the satisfaction of the senses and nosing ahead in the rat-race as the normal signs of success." (JOSEPH LECUYER: *Report to the General Superiors on 'Evangelization and the religious life'*, 1974) We have to nourish these grand ideals, which enable us to see the way our mission in the world should go; only these are capable of refloating us off the shoals and sand-banks of the middle-class life so that we can get back on our course with all sails set.

4. INVITATION TO AN HONEST ASSESSMENT

A renewal is always something of a conversion; and a conversion implies a frank assessment of what *is* compared to what ought to be. It needs a clear grasp of a situation that has become muddled up, and a strong resolve to do something about it.

I think, dear confrères, that this whole letter can present an opportunity for making this honest comparison. The question is: seen in the light of our vocation and our tradition, what is in fact our daily life; and then what should it, and could it be? But what I have to say now is meant to be a help in surveying the darker corners of our fidelity.

The fears of Don Bosco

Here again Don Bosco can be of great help to us. Of course, what he shows us how to identify is not so much the evil itself, which lies at a deeper level, but the symptoms. But if the symp-

toms are discernible, there is no doubt about the cause; and the honest recognition of them, in itself a sign that the malady is taking a turn for the better, permits prompt corrective action to be taken.

In a talk with his sons on the evening of the 14th of August, 1876, shortly after the final approval of the Constitutions, Don Bosco was discussing the ruin of religious congregations, and he mentioned some of the causes: "The first . . . is idleness, not working enough. The second . . . is the departure from simplicity and to much food and drink. The third . . . shall we call it egoism, the spirit of reform, murmuring? It is all the same to me." He concluded: "Always remember that if divisions creep in amongst us, things will not go well with the Congregation. United in one single spirit we shall do ten times as much and work better." (*BM*, 12, 383-4).

In the September of the same year, when he was preaching the closing sermon of the annual retreat, Don Bosco brought the matter up again in his account of the dream of the four nails. These represent the four scourges of religious congregations. Each of the nails had one of the inscriptions: "Their god is their stomach"; "They are doing their own thing, not Jesus Christ's"; "Their tongues spit poison"; "They live for their armchair and slippers" (*BM*, 12, 466-7). A comparison with the preceding paragraph will reveal the resemblance.

But Don Bosco treats more fully elsewhere of the dangers that face the Congregation in the famous dream of the mantle (at San Benigno on the 10th September, 1881: cf. *BM*, 15, 183-7). This letter is not the place to make a detailed analysis, but it will suit our present purposes to try, from Don Bosco's description of the syndrome, to penetrate the mysterious malady that threatens the Salesian Society.

Fundamentally, it is a crisis of faith, an eclipse of the sense of God, with a corresponding acceptance of a concept that is entirely horizontal and hedonistic, bound up with the pursuit of self-

interest ("What is on earth is good enough for us"; "They are all out for themselves and not for Jesus Christ"). The rest of the symptoms are only the spin-offs of a life lived without reference to fundamentals. The are:

- distaste for prayer ("negligence of the things of God");
- sensuality ("concupiscence of the eyes", "licentiousness, "gluttony", etc.);
- the easy life ("indolence", "sleep", "bed", "money" etc.);
- pride and self-seeking ("pride of life", and the absolute negation of obedience). (*BM*, 15, 183-7).

All things considered, it is impressive to note how the various manifestations of the ills described by Don Bosco correspond very closely with our present-day definition of "middle-classism". This fact should make us think seriously: allowing for the extraordinary nature of the dream, it is still a lesson, a warning, transmitted to all generations by our father Don Bosco, who was undoubtedly inspired by the Spirit of God.

The scene of the struggle

At the back of the move into the middle class, then, is a crisis of values, which for us is a crisis of faith. It is here that we have bring about a profound renewal if we are to take the remedy to the seat of the disease. Conversely, once faith has re-established itself, it sets up, so to speak, an electron-bombardment of our interior attitudes; and, given the deep integration that exists amongst our various parts, there is an inter-action between our faith and our life: faith renews life, the renewed life strengthens faith.

So, to wage war successfully on upward mobility, we must first of all re-discover our sense of mission-vocation, and THAT means a change of attitude at depth.

Now for the second aspect of the matter. Let us pick our way through it, keeping to the practice rather than the theory.

You have seen how Don Bosco presses home his warnings about a number of fatal flaws in the Congregation: eating, drinking, dress, sleep, and all of it extremely topical.

There are certain interpretations of the religious life that are professedly liberalizing but are really permissive, because they distort the following of Christ or drain it of its real content. Then there are the enticements of the consumer society, which, ever more cunning and aggressive, whet the appetite for comforts and pleasures and luxuries, even in the poor countries. In this sort of milieu, it is hardly surprising that, in the religious life itself, it is easy to adopt standards and styles that are in strident contrast with our consecration, not to mention our profession of poverty.

And the consequences of all this? Our work in the Church is turned topsy-turvy and twisted out of all recognition. The very ones who, by their austerity and detachment from worldly goods, should be the shock-troops in the struggle with a society that has for its ideals the comfortable life and material pleasures, are in practice seen to be tagging along with that society's hedonism.

The most important thing here is to have clear ideas about the fundamental realities of the religious life, which can only be a translation into practice of the teachings of Christ. One constant theme of these teachings is 'renunciation', the complete break with the ideas and attitudes of a world entirely taken up with material interests.

The perennial need for asceticism

"If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me." "For whoever would save his life will lose it." "... the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and men of violence take it by force." "Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction

... For the gate is narrow and the way is hard, that leads to life." "If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and throw it away." This is tough talking: hardly the formula for a life that dodges every form of renunciation. All these quotations point the same way: the comfortable life is simply not on.

Now surely the words that Jesus addressed to all Christians have lost none of their pertinence, especially for those who have left everything to follow Him closely: and we have done just that. In all reason, there is no escaping from these conclusions.

We would be seriously wrong to think that nowadays we no longer have any need of what our Fathers called asceticism and mortification. "Perhaps never before", says Fr Voillaume, "has asceticism been so badly needed as today." And then he adds: "It holds good at any time, for instance, that we must practice self-discipline in the use of drink, television, and amusements that excite the sensual appetites." (RENÉ VOILLAUME, *La vita religiosa nel mondo attuale*, 221).

The same writer, discussing the compromises, more or less covert, that religious can yield to, makes some very telling points. He says: "They allow themselves any number of little compensations that they shrink from acknowledging to themselves: it happens with shows, reading-matter, riotous imaginings, with friendships in which they seek emotional compensations that are not without a certain ambivalence; and finally it shows in materialistic attitudes. Attention must be paid to these attitudes, because the temptation to materialistic excesses comes to a head at the age when, normally, there is a desire to have children." (IBID., 178).

What we have to do, then, is to make our revision of life, using the Gospel, sound modern doctrine, and especially the advice of Don Bosco. And we must not be afraid of getting down to the details of what is involved in the virtue of temperance, which, as we have seen, has much more to it than meets the eye at first glance.

The practical requirements of the Regulations

Certain articles of the new Regulations need to be reread and digested. It should be noted, in passing, that the Regulations represent the interpretation and practical application of the Constitutions. Instead of toning them down, or, worse still, disregarding them, we have to put them into practice, recognizing the authentic values that they contain. To cut down the Regulations or toss them off lightly would be tantamount to emptying the Constitutions of their contents, accepting all these splendid principles in theory but fighting shy of the logical consequences in the practice of them. I'll give a few examples.

Article 36 is a firm reminder of the moral obligations of confrères and superiors with regard the use of radio, television, and the rest of the mass media.

Article 39 draws the distinction between openness to one's neighbour, and the indiscriminate admittance of people from outside the community, which has the right and the need to enjoy the privacy that is proper to religious.

Article 50 speaks of doing something definite about community mortification. I would like you to take a steady look at article 61 as well. This makes specific and very practical suggestions, couched in the clearest of terms, about the practice of temperance as part of our authentic tradition.

Then there is no. 62, which is about the use of money, and no. 70 on the use of transport. But I think the one that is of special importance is article 71: "The community, whether local or provincial, should periodically examine its own state of poverty." This really is a salutary provision, and should be made operative for the good of the community and of the individual member.

My dear confrères, let us not underestimate the importance of these practical suggestions. Don Bosco used to say that the big things are made up of the little things. Self-restraint, auste-

urity, mortification . . . they all mount up to become the one treasure, evangelical, religious, and profoundly human.

A certain scientist has something worth-while to say about this, and I was much impressed by his words. He is a Nobel Prize winner, and not usually preoccupied with religious matters. Having taken today's young people to task for demanding pleasure instead of searching for happiness, he describes the deficiencies of a "life without pain, a life of pleasure"; it "has no hills and no dales, it is like a plain with no light and no shade, and is therefore boring". And that's not all. The writer-scientist, Konrad Lorenz, concludes, with the historians, that the decadence of rulers and subjects can be attributed to affluence and the lack of something to struggle with.

It is a voice that, from a different viewpoint, confirms the wisdom contained in the call of the Gospel to asceticism, and underlines the depth of realism and insight in the warning of our Father mentioned above: "When the easy life takes root among us, our Society will have finished its course." (*BM*, 17, 272).

5. TIME, AN ASSET AND A LIABILITY

In a life devoted to self-discipline and work for the Kingdom, time is naturally seen as an extremely valuable commodity. We have only to look at the intensity with which Don Bosco filled every moment of his day: "Life is too short", he used to say, "we have to do what little we can before death takes us by surprise." (*BM*, 11, 409) "It is necessary to aim at more than we can manage, then there is some chance, perhaps, that we shall do all we can." (*BM*, 12, 383).

Fill in time "right up to the brim"

In the spirit of our Father, we should be able to repeat every day, not with our lips but with our lives, this beautiful prayer of Michel Quoist:

"There is no need to waste time, fritter it away, kill it.
Lord, time is a gift from You,
but a perishable gift that cannot be kept.
Lord, I have time, I have my time,
all the time You give me.
The years of my life, the days of my years,
the hours of my days: they are all mine.
It is for me to fill them, serenely, without fretting,
but to fill them all, right up to the brim, to offer them to You,
so that You can make their tasteless water
into rich wine,
as you did long ago at Cana for the human nuptials.

(MICHEL QUOIST, *Pregchiere*, 10)

What is difficult is not so much filling in the few moments that are solemn or exciting or extraordinary: it is turning all the rest to good account, the ordinary, the humdrum, in fact, most of the time.

Craving for the unusual

In this age of ours, completely under the spell of the mass media as we are, we have lost our sense of wonder in the normal, and, in this state, we bid fair to lose interest in life itself. Our malady is a craving for the unusual and the exceptional. Millions, who are steadily building society by doing their obscure daily duty, are much less news-worthy than a gang of kidnappers or the lunacies of a cellophane goddess or of a song trying to climb the charts.

With a distorted vision of reality such as this, we run the risk of living in a constant state of flight from daily life, which is seen as normal, and therefore dull, and we stand an excellent chance of being caged in by restlessness and dissatisfaction, always on the hunt for something to break the monotony of our day. And so we find ourselves chronically addicted to the puerility of wait-

ing for life to start, with the risk, strange to say, that life will never start.

The Salesian service called « assisting »

A word on assisting is indicated here. This, the most characteristic of Salesian occupations, is (or should be) part of the Salesians' daily service to youth, their "presence among the young."

The Salesian educator is there with the boys as their friend, breaking down the barriers of superiority, age, culture: he talks to them, plays with them, discusses, corrects. This is one of the key constituents of the educational method of Don Bosco and our Family.

It's quite true: to be there among the boys at this time and that time during the day is demanding — it can be a real hair-shirt — demanding in patience, perseverance, and in a sincere love for the young. And it is perhaps here that we have been falling down, with the result that, in some places, the boys have been left alone, deprived of the presence of their educators, with consequences that are certainly not positive.

I know well enough that such negligence is occasionally justified in the name of certain theories. But the best Salesian tradition and experience, based on hard fact, bears out the wisdom of Don Bosco in what he wrote to his Salesians at Rome in 1884. I have the impression that much of the advice of our Father could usefully be repeated today in our various fields of activity, where we seem to be losing the sense of the Salesian identity.

I would invite you, dear confrères, to read that letter again: it appears in the appendix to the new Constitutions. You will find most valuable advice on Christian and Salesian educational theory; and it will convince you of the enormous educative influence, in the richest sense of the word, that the Salesians exert by their intelligent, friendly and pastoral presence, with nothing of Orwell's Big Brother about it, among the youngsters of today.

Many ways of wasting time

The full exploitation of the time available in a day, and assisting is one of many items, demands heroism. It is easy to see, then, why we yield to the temptation to waste our time in one way or the other. And there are so many ways of doing it.

First, taking it easy

The first way is to be work-shy. Quite frankly, I don't think that danger exists in the Congregation today. From what I have seen for myself and from the reports I have received from all over the world, I can state, with considerable admiration and at times with some apprehension, that the Salesians are formidable workers and that this is the image they present to the world. They press on even when, for reasons of health, they ought to ease up a little in their intense round of activities. On the missions and in the schools, in the parishes and the youth-centres . . . if there is any danger, it is from too much work.

Unfortunately, however there may be the exceptions, who, protected by the men in the front line, find various excuses for coasting commodiously along, doing just what they want. This sort of anomaly is thrown up when the confrère is not motivated by charity, which leads us to do from love what others do from the necessity of earning a living. This explains the phenomenon of what may be called "the religious functionary", who downs tools when his hours are up and promptly retires to attend to his own things, completely impervious to the call of community needs and fraternal charity.

It is obviously a form of unjustifiable egotism, evidence of an absolute lack of family sense: the fellow lives in the community and enjoys what it has to offer, not as an active member, but as a stranger.

Second, travels and studies

I wish to make what seems to me to be an apposite remark about this business of work and time: time that is not 'ours', but is at the disposal of the mission we have embraced and of the community we serve. Dealing with the operational trend-lines for the renewal of Salesian poverty, the SGC "recommends . . . that . . . amongst our plans for readjustment in the next six years, a primary place must (sic) be found for the cultural, professional and pastoral qualification of our confrères, who constitute our only riches". (*Orange Book*, 618.) The same SGC, however, on the subject of the administration of temporal goods, affirms that the Salesians "will act as custodians of the goods of the Church and will not allow any arbitrary or personal use of them", and recalls "that what they are administering is the precious fruit of the work of the confrères and a tangible sign of that providence which, through the generosity and sacrifices — sometimes beyond all calculation — of our benefactors enables us to carry on". (*Ibid.* 726.) These are words that the confrères, whatever their line may be, should never forget.

If the Congregation is facing considerable financial burdens (and what is involved here is the labours of the other members of the student's Province), it is certainly not to enable the student to follow his personal bent without any reference at all to the needs of the community or to the openings that are available; or that he can waste time and money on pseudo-cultural travel, or indulge in the luxury of degrees taking years of study that could have been devoted to something much more valuable. Ours is a poor family: this must be kept in mind. And our studies are all part of the mission to which we are sent.

Third, self-service 'charisms'

Don Bosco, as we have heard, enumerating the negative items in the life and future of the Congregation, speaks of those who

"love and seek their own thing, and not Jesus Christ's". I think a word or two on this would not be out of place. It may be the case today that we are palming off our desire for personal success as self-fulfilment, or even as the expression of our charisms.

We have to remember that charisms (given that we are dealing with true charisms, and not with self-will or caprice) are in the service of the mission, and that the discerning of them and the right use of them are entrusted to the "superior, with the help of the community" and not to the individual (cf. *Const.*, no. 97).

The fact is that Christian self-fulfilment is simply the perfect fulfilling of the will of God. It is a process of allowing ourselves to be shot through with the love of the Father, which breaks the barriers of our egoism and makes us capable of a perfect gift to God and to our brothers. This gift, stifled by the presence of sin within us, can start to be effective only through close participation in the pascal mystery. For anyone who entertains a programme of self-fulfilment apart from what is proposed by faith, there is the natural tendency to self-seeking and the pursuit of his own success rather than doing the will of God. In such a case it can happen that a confrère, who is engaged on our mission and finds the going laborious, with few perks for the ego and the nagging necessity of working with his brothers, resorts, for various specious reasons, to evasive tactics and branches out into private enterprise.

With such considerations as these in mind, the question that arises is: instead of objecting to certain types of work on the grounds of the validity of the apostolate, would it not be more to the point to object to our own incapacity, inertia and actual counter-witness? So, our work for youth is abandoned, for example, and replaced by the formation of small groups, preferably with a strong female element. This is done without real necessity, without authorization from the competent parties, often without adequate preparation. The results? Often extreme-

ly questionable. And the cost? One casualty, among others, is the community and religious life, which falls foul of conflicting duties and time-tables. This situation is all the more serious when confrères in formation are affected.

In this way, the young people we are responsible for are abandoned whilst we seek out a more congenial apostolate outside, less onerous and yielding more job-satisfaction. We may even abandon the humble, the little ones, the poor people deprived of culture, faith, and motor-cars, to attend to a group where the 'in' things are discussed: under-development, hunger in the world, sex, political involvement, and all this regardless of places, times, persons, situations . . . We are eager to collaborate with everyone, except our own brothers; we jump at the first opportunity to offer our services, provided they are sufficiently 'way out; but just dare to ask us to do the smallest job for the community, and see how many difficulties and excuses we can find.

The tale of such evasions could go on indefinitely, but I think that what has been said already is enough for a serious examination of conscience. Dear confrères, we must be convinced that any apostolate not in line with our mission, not blessed by the cordial 'Amen' of our community (which all too often has to accept a *fait accompli* for the sake of peace in the house), is not the will of God. As such, it will be something or other, but it will no longer constitute an apostolate. The apostle is sent by God; but in these deplorable cases, it is the individual who sends himself, and represents himself: which is a sad state of affairs.

Fourth, spiritless work

I would say quite bluntly: it can well be that some of us finish up with a work that is entirely profane; I'm referring to the confrères who work, certainly, and at times work hard: BUT THEY ARE NOT EVANGELIZING. For example, they conduct their classes, competently, but in such a way that the faith

never comes across: an atheist could do it just as well. To teach in this way shows that they could never have developed the sense of what it means to be a religious. A similar attitude to his work in a non-religious is understandable enough, but it is nothing less than scandalous in a man that has publicly made his religious profession, and in the Salesian Congregation.

The secular mentality today can also penetrate into other types of activity that are supposed to be specifically religious. There is, for instance, the 'lay' catechesis, in which those who take part are introduced to an ideology that is purely humanistic but dressed up as Christianity. And to do this, no scruples at all are entertained on the part of the 'catechists' about mutilating and counterfeiting the Word of God and turning it to their own ends, so as to form false consciences.

Not even the liturgical celebrations have escaped these contaminations. For some the celebration, instead of being the place to meet Christ and their brothers in Christ, is just a pally get-together or a discussion forum, where it has not already deteriorated into a platform for polemics or confrontation. You do not have to delve very far into the profundities of the mystery that is celebrated in the liturgy to see the dangerously misleading absurdities of such celebrations. But there is something of still greater moment on this subject, which concerns individuals as much as communities.

6. THE AIM OF OUR WORK: EVANGELIZATION

I think that everyone will agree, at least in principle, that our whole work is directed towards evangelization, which for us means education and Christian formation. To reach this goal, of course, a number of factors have to be taken into account — places, persons, age, social class, etc. — since they are part of "education to the Gospel." This ought not, however, to induce us to close or retrench our work of general education or character-

training, such as cultural and social activities: which, unfortunately, has sometimes happened. This side-tracking phenomenon would rob our mission of all significance, and it has its causes. Here is something of an ideological one: the essential mission of the Church today, and therefore our mission, is "the liberation of man from the evils of this world". Very true: but the Church on the universal plane and the Congregation at SGC level claim that the two fields of action are not mutually exclusive but must blend harmoniously. Apropos of this, the SGC quotes the felicitous formula of the General Catechetical Directory: "to evangelize is to civilize and to civilize is to evangelize" (*Orange Book*, 276).

The next question is: what do we have to do in our individual works to convert the ideal into reality, given the present-day requirements and, in particular, the needs of the young? It is as well to recall that the SGC made evangelization and catechesis central to our mission: it was not by chance that two documents, the third (Evangelization and catechesis) and fourth (Pastoral renewal), were devoted to it.

Today there is a lot of talk, and for good reason, about courageous ventures, renewal in depth, new experiments, the qualification and requalification of Salesians. All well and good! But is it not precisely in the sectors under discussion that we have to renew, up-date ourselves and put ourselves in the vanguard?

I invite you to reread documents 3 and 4 with their 'guidelines for action': it is along these lines that we have advance with courage and constructive creativity, if we wish to make Christ a reality for the new generation. The readjustment, an operation that has so often been misinterpreted, must set its sights on creating the conditions in which the Congregation will be equal to the mandate of evangelization that is woven into its fabric.

I shall pass on to you now three powerful ideas that will serve as a stimulus for the generation of the urgently needed evangelical 'New Look' in our apostolic activities.

1. "For the Salesian, the existence of young people living without Christ, and a Christ unable to find a welcome among young people, is not just a cause for regret, but is also a challenge and incentive to renew himself and to discover new ways and take any risks in order to proclaim efficaciously the salvation of God . . ." (*Ibid.*, 306).

2. "Our work of renewal should follow the lines marked out for us by the Church, and we must carry it out in the practical way expressed by Don Bosco in these simple words: 'Make upright citizens and good Christians' ". (*Ibid.*, 316).

3. "... Salesians ... will consider the religious education of youth as the first apostolic activity of the Salesian apostolate; it asks therefore for a rethinking and for a reorganization of all Salesian works so that they may have as their main purpose the formation of the man of faith". (*Blue Book*, 187, quoted in the *Orange Book*, 279).

What importance do we attach to catechetics?

As a matter of immediate practicality in the field of catechetics, we can ask ourselves a few questions to enable us to evaluate the situation in our various circumstances.

What importance do we attach to catechetics at the provincial and local level? What stage have the deliberations of the Special Provincial Chapter reached in this matter? What positive steps have been taken to make catechetics an effective instrument of evangelization? Who is it entrusted to in the various works? What remote and immediate preparations are made for it? What modern methods and aids are used? What scheme has the Province afoot for the up-to-date preparation of men for this job?

And further: what part do the Word of God and the Eucharist play in our formation of the young and of the souls in general that are our responsibility?

I know, and it is a source of great consolation, that in many

places intelligent and generous work is going on to provide the nourishment that is so badly needed. I wish it were like that everywhere.

Woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel!

I don't see how you can possibly call a community 'Salesian' where, through negligence or, worse still, false educational ideologies, the people we are supposed to be working for are left without the nutriment of the Word of God, of the Blessed Eucharist, of the sacrament of reconciliation. I think of our Father, who, wherever he was, in the Oratory, in the train, in the street, with the powerful or with convicts, could always spread the Gospel. With Don Bosco we should take to heart the words of St Paul: "And how terrible it would be for me if I did not preach the gospel!"

I am not unaware of the difficulties that hinder our work of evangelization today. For example, the question is asked: what do you do when you have thousands of boys whose schooling consists of part-time attendance so tightly scheduled that the sessions follow on with hardly a breathing-space in between? Well, I would answer that with another question: given that the object of our mission is not class or games but teaching the Gospel, how much Christian life can get through to these swarms of boys who are in contact with our work for only a few hours before being crowded out by the next shift?

I don't think we can duck this question. In each case we have to ask ourselves: what can we do in these situations to make a concrete reality of the mission to which we have consecrated our lives?

The presence of laymen who have been suitably prepared and who realize that they are collaborators in a work of Christian and Salesian education certainly eases the problem. But we have to look after them, and at the right level, these co-workers who, thanks be to God, are available.

Consideration for parents, who in many ways become collaborators, also helps to make the work a better-integrated effort.

It is also plain to see that the few hours spent in the classroom are quite inadequate if we are to provide Christian education of the effectiveness demanded by present-day conditions.

The supplementary activities of cultural value, such as extra-mural activities, are of the greatest importance in any real educational work of a pastoral nature. As you know, in many countries these activities are obligatory for the schools and form part of the teachers' duties.

I would like to say this, dear confrères: in many cases, we no longer take boarders; and, what's more, school hours are confined to the morning, leaving the whole of the afternoon free. So, freed from the duties of teaching and assisting, what is done for the day-boys in the line of educational and religious activities in the afternoons? What about youth centres and boys' clubs? How is all this free time used apostolically? Again, many countries have the long week-end, with Saturdays as well as Sundays completely free. What do the Salesians do about their apostolate? Honest and realistic answers must be given to these questions.

I know that there are any number of works that are, in fact, being done by confrères on these two days. But it would be a very sad thing to have to report that there are Salesians who spend the time as a middle-class leisure week-end.

How many souls in need of the good Samaritan are left abandoned? How many confrères, already up to their necks in work, are looking for a helping hand on these days? And how can their appeal be left unheeded?

Free time does not mean wasted time

Obviously, even Salesians have to have their moments of relaxation. Don Bosco, the realist saint, alive to human needs, knew that the taut bow can snap. But when his men took a rest,

he did not want them to be idle, carried along spinelessly by the prevailing current. He wanted them to have 'active repose': rather, a change of occupation than a state of vacuity.

Better than abstract description for conveying the idea of what Don Bosco meant by the use of spare time is the account of the highly original and imaginative walks that he used to organize for his boys in the autumn. They were a mixture of apostolate, adventure, cultural enrichment, in which the boys were alternately actors and spectators; and underneath it all was the serene happiness that Don Bosco could infuse into anything he touched.

Free time for the Salesian, then, must not be time wasted. I am thinking, for example, of how the holidays can be enriched by courses for extra qualifications or refresher courses in the various fields of interest to the confrère. I know that not a few Provinces have organized very successful courses offering a good choice of material, which have proved to be most useful and have elicited general satisfaction. So let us see many more of these.

But holidays become time lost when there is a break not only from our daily occupations, but also from our daily duties as religious.

Today, when we absorb secularism and relativism into the subconscious as easily as we breathe, we can just as easily slip into the tendency to treat rest and relaxation as time for free-wheeling, as a parenthesis (big or small, what's the difference?), and sometimes as a complete hiatus with our consecration and the duties that *always* accompany it and admit of no break of any sort.

Dear confrères, I would like you to realize the deep contradiction that this attitude denotes. The religious life has become a dead weight and is made tolerable only by a periodic escape into the lost paradise of the 'world', which cannot be renounced. In this situation, the identity of the religious has

lost definition and he is living, whether he is conscious of it or not, a double life.

And now for the holidays that only the real bourgeoisie can take: first, they must be of a decent length; then, of course, one must see a bit of life as lived by the other, the better half; inevitably this means some travelling around, but then there's no lack of funds; and we all agree how important dialogue is: think of all the people one would never dream of meeting in the ordinary run of things. As for the evening's entertainment, well, one has to be broad-minded: if it turns out to be a little scurrilous or salacious, you know what to avoid next time . . . you see, we are Christians, and religious as well.

Such is the mentality that spawns the desire for social contacts with women, an exercise that strongly resembles, even when the prospects are at their rosiest, the antics of a high-wire acrobat who is so sure of himself that he does not use a net. Hence also the reading of books, periodicals and papers that are anything but sober and constructive. These finish up by fatally blunting the moral sense, or, at the very least, developing attitudes and sensibilities that entertain values quite contrary to those inherent in religious profession or Christian witness.

I hope and pray that these hypothetical situations always remain that way, and that every Salesian feels day by day that "consecration to God is a singular dignity that involves a total commitment. It is impossible to live in mediocrity or compromise; otherwise it amounts to renouncing the total gift and reneguing on the practice of perfect chastity for the love of God. The end-product is a colourless celibacy". (RENÉ VOILLAUME, *La vita religiosa nel mondo attuale*, 178).

We are full-time Salesians

Dear Confrères, we are indeed full-time Salesians. The obligations we took on when we offered our whole heart to Christ are with us every moment of our life.

And it is precisely this gift lived without parentheses or reservations or looking back, seen clearly and interpreted radically, that will make all the time put at our disposal by God a happy time and a constructive one for ourselves and our brothers.

Conclusion

As you have seen, the subject of this letter, summed up in the two words 'work' and 'self-restraint', has shown many facets and been the source of some reflections on the fundamental values of our life as Salesians "consecrated for a specific mission". These values mean that each one of us adopts certain attitudes that, in a certain sense, are the distinctive mark of our identity, as Don Bosco left it to us. This identity we wish to remain intact and unsullied to continue for generations to come the work assigned to the Congregation by Providence.

To this end, I invite you to look back over the pages, even as a community, to make a practical examination: it will be a good thing for everyone.

And, to spur us on to the task, let us look not only at the Salesians who have gone before us but also at the marvellous example of our present confrères, the great and the lowly, many of them very old men. In all sorts of situations, heroically, silently, they live the words repeated by our Father to Don Fagnano for the benefit of his sons in any age: "Constantly remind all our Salesians of the motto we have adopted: 'work and temperance'. With these weapons we shall be able to conquer everything and everybody". (EUGENIO CERIA, *Epistolario*, Letter to Mons. Fagnano, dated 14.10.1877).

I send you my fraternal greetings, which I would give you personally if I could.

Let us pray for each other.

FR. LUIGI RICCI
Rector Major

III. COMMUNICATIONS

1. Rector Major's strenna for 1975

For 1975, which will see the celebration of the Holy Year and the opening of the Centenary of the Salesian Missions, the Rector Major, by way of inspiration for the double event, has given the following strenna:

**In the light of the Centenary of the Salesian Missions,
the Family of Don Bosco,
responding to the invitation of the Pope for the Holy Year,
binds itself to make 1975 the year of**

CONVERSION TO GOD,

**discovering anew the values of the Salesian and Christian
vocation;**

RECONCILIATION WITH OUR BROTHERS

in the communion of faith, love and apostolic action;

EVANGELISATION

**drawing inspiration from the great mission
given to Don Bosco by Our Lady, Help of Christians.**

To promote these values of "conversion, reconciliation and evangelization," the Rector Major sent out in September, along with the Strenna, a "Letter to the Salesian Family." Copies were sent to Provincials, to editors of the "Bulletin" and to other interested people.

2. Three directives from the Superior Council

In the summer session, the Superior Council issued three directives.

Dated 24th July, 1974, a document entitled "*Le prime tappe della formazione salesiana*" (The first steps in Salesian formation) was sent to Provincials and Formation Teams. Prepared by the Formation Department, and approved by the Rector Major and his Council, it contains directions and advice on the immediate preparation for the novitiate, the novitiate itself and the period of temporary vows.

On the 27th July, 1974, the Rector Major sent the Provincials a letter on a subject that is, as he says, a most painful business: "*I confratelli che lasciano non solo la Congregazione ma anche il sacerdozio*".

On the 28th July, 1974, a short document was issued containing "facts and suggestions for the Provincial Chapters of 1975" ("*Precisazioni e orientamenti per i Capitoli Ispettoriali 1975*"). The Regionals sent it to their Provincials with a letter suggesting applications for each Region.

These documents are given here in full in the appropriate section.

3. The new Delegation of Vietnam

The Rector Major has issued a decree to form a Special Delegation from the Salesian houses in Vietnam.

See "Documents" for details.

4. Appointments

Appointed by the Rector Major:

Provincials:

English Province, Fr. BERNARD HIGGINS.

Province of Bogotá, Colombia, Fr. MARIO JIMENEZ.

Thai Province, Fr. MICHAEL PRAPHON.

Peruvian Province, Fr. JORGE SOSA.

Province of Hong Kong, Fr. JOHN WAN.

Delegate:

Delegation of Vietnam, LUIGI MASSIMINO.

Rector Magnifico:

Università Pontificia Salesiana, Fr. PIETRO BRAIDO.

5. Deaths of two Salesians bishops

On 31st May Bishop Mauricio Magliano, Bishop of Rio Gallegos, died at Pico Truncado, Argentina. There is an obituary in this number.

On 14th August Mons. Antonio De Almeida Lustosa, former Archbishop of Fortaleza, died at Carpina, Pernambuco, Brazil. He was 88 years old and had been a priest for 60 years. He was in episcopal office from 1924 to 1963.

6. The latest developments in the Salesian Missionary Centenary

For the centenary year of the Salesian missions a number of ideas are being worked out for the Family celebration of this important event.

We are going to examine the past with the object of extracting some useful lessons for the future and renewing our commitment to spreading the Good News.

The Rector Major will be writing about the Centenary in next January's letter, but here is a rough sketch of what is going on.

There are three fields of action: cultural, pastoral, and internal. **CULTURAL** The Missions' History Centre (Centro Studi di Storia delle Missioni Salesiane), which was set up by the Rector Major in 1973 in the Faculty of Theology at the U.P.S. (olim PAS), is preparing a series of scientific works. Some of these are nearly ready for publication.

Specifically: "Miscellanea di studi missiologici, storici, etc." for the period 1875-1975: a reference work in 2 volumes;

"Gli inizi delle Missioni salesiane in Argentina": 2 vols.

"Bibliografia generale delle Missioni salesiane";

“Indice bibliografico del Bollettino Salesiano”; also anthologies of writings, and biographies of outstanding figures.

There is to be a Theological Institute at Shillong, in India, and, all being well, a Chair of Missiology at the U.P.S. Some existing Missionary Museum will be refurbished.

PASTORAL: Items — An On-going Formation Course at the Pisana for missionaries only;

— a “Spirituality Week” for the whole Salesian Family, dedicated to the missionary theme;

— a meeting of Salesian missionary bishops for an exchange of ideas on better co-operation amongst Congregation, bishops and missionaries;

— the promotion of centres for the preparation of missionary catechists;

— the Centenary Missionary Expedition, intended to demonstrate the solidarity of the Congregation with the Missions. It will also have the aim of helping existing missions that have an urgent need, and of creating a new presence, not so much in the geographical sense as in the way of a fresh pastoral approach.

INTERNAL — This concerns the youth apostolate, the Cooperators and Past Pupils, and all the confrères, especially the younger ones. At the Centre mentioned above various items:

— the Poster Competition (see the last number of the Acts);

— documentary films in colour made by teams of Salesians in Asia, Africa and South America;

— a commemorative volume, which is an account in word and picture of the Salesian missions yesterday and today, appearing in five languages;

— a history of the Salesian missions in Italian;

— a collection of short missionary profiles.

Material will be sent out from the Centre to be used as required in the Provinces, with the detailed application to be left to the men on the spot. This is where traditional Salesian initiative and resourcefulness will have full scope.

There is one year to go before the anniversary, which will be commemorated by the Rector Major in November, 1975 at Turin. One year, then, in which to show how much we owe to the missionaries and their work.

7. The World Congress of Salesian Brothers

With the Congress taking place in August next year, preparations are taking on a more urgent look.

REGIONAL CONVENTIONS

A useful assortment of ideas is expected to pour in from the Regional and Inter-Provincial Conventions, which have been going on from last July. A plea here from the Central Commission: please send in your report for processing.

THE DELEGATES TO THE WORLD CONGRESS

Yet another plea from the Central Commission: this time for the names of the Provincial and Regional Delegates to the World Congress and their Substitutes, elected in accordance with the instructions contained in Doc. CMSC 021, dated 15th April, 1973.

THE NEXT MEETING OF THE CENTRAL COMMISSION

To be held on the 26th October, 1974, at the Generalate to study the organization of the World Congress in detail. The following items are on the agenda: rules, programme and time-table, assignment of duties for the preparation and running of the Congress, provision of hard-wear and soft-wear, languages (verbal and written translations).

There will be other meetings of the Commissions.

SUGGESTIONS AND PROPOSALS

If the Preparatory Commissions for the Provincial Congresses, or, for that matter, individual confrères have any suggestions to make for the better running of the Congress, the Central Commission will be pleased to receive them.

A FIRST RECKONING

A quick sizing-up of the work done so far suggests that all over the Salesian world some impetus has been given to the process of re-establishing the Salesian Brother, which is taking place, as presaged by the Rector Major, "through a closer fidelity to Don Bosco's plan and deepening of our sense of community as Salesians."

This will be helped along by the World Congress, but the individual Provinces have yet to finish their tasks. Expedition and much prayer are indicated.

8. The Second Course of the Youth Apostolate in Latin America

At Chosica, Peru, from the 5th to 24th August, with 63 Salesians attending, mostly Provincial Delegates for the Youth Apostolate, Vocational and Scholastic.

The object was to provide a short-term answer to the need for better preparation to tackle the problem of evangelization today. It was presided over by Fr. Giovenale Dho, who also did a teaching stint. In 132 hours of lectures and seminars, six university teachers worked away at the problems of youth, which had been divided into ten disciplines.

The course — the second since the one held in 1969 — was concerned chiefly with the situation facing youth in South America today. To quote: "We Salesians of South America are carrying out our youth apostolate in a period of transformation on the South American continent. The outstanding features of the situation are, fundamentally, dubious national viability and a very broad-based population-pyramid. All our pastoral work must take off from this reality of history if we are not to lose sight of the whole pattern..."

9. More and more On-going Formation Courses

At Rome and in other parts of the Salesian world, Continuous Formation Courses are going ahead steadily, as decreed by the Special General Chapter.

At the Salesianum, Rome, the third four-monthly course will be held from the 19th October to the end of February. It is meant chiefly for confrères of the English-speaking Region, and the numbers will be made up to 35 from the other Regions. Other courses at the Salesianum for Missionaries and Co-operators are being planned at the moment.

Meanwhile in the Regions, similar courses are being arranged. In July-August there was one in Guatemala for 38 Salesian Brothers from the Pacific-Caribbean Region. In the same Region a Centre for On-going Formation has been formed (see p. 93: VI - From the Provincial Newsletters).

Two enterprises have been started in Spain. At Salamanca there is a course going on for Salesian Brothers, lasting for three years, chiefly in theological training. The other is the On-going Formation Course at the Marti-Codolar Institute in Barcelona, where there are also courses in the Youth Apostolate.

Preliminary studies are also being made for similar courses in the Italian, Argentine, Uruguayan and Paraguayan Provinces.

It is an interesting point that a number of confrères who have been through the courses held at the Salesianum in Rome are involved in these other courses in different parts of the world. In fact, the Salesianum courses are for training future organizers of similar courses.

10. The Salesian Missionary Course for the expedition of 1974

Held at the Generalate from 8th September to 7th October, 1974. The course was organized by the Counsellor for the Missions and was run by Fr. Antonio Altarejos. Fifteen or so members of the 104th missionary expedition took part.

The course consisted of: *morning*, lectures in Missiology held at the Spanish College in Rome; *afternoon*, practical talks on Salesian affairs given by the Director and experts at the Pisana. *Included were*: an audience with the Pope and a visit to the Colle Don Bosco. It was rounded off by the Farewell Ceremony in Turin.

11. Fraternal solidarity (14th report)

The Fund is now approaching the target of 300 million lire, which is a sign that the confrères are taking it seriously. Cf. the Constitutions, art. 84: "In generous solidarity and brotherhood we share what we have with the houses and provinces of the Congregation and try to alleviate the needs of the Church and of the world."

A provincial from Asia writes: "By contributing to the Solidarity Fund, we feel that we are sharing responsibility for the work, needs, sufferings, joys and efforts of our confrères who are worse off than we are."

Sometimes it is large-scale disasters that spark off the generosity of the confrères. Here is a missionary from South America, himself in need of aid, writing last April: "The news from Africa about the extreme hunger and misery of thousands of our brothers there is heart-rending. Please pass on this money, which was collected for my own mission, to those most in need. This is aid to Christ dwelling in those poor people, aid given by the poor to their brothers who are poorer still."

a) PROVINCES THAT HAVE CONTRIBUTED

ITALY

Ligurian	Lire	1.000.000
Roman		3.500.000
Sicilian		670.000
Venice, St. Mark		5.150.000

AFRICA

Central	1.000.000
---------	-----------

AMERICA

Antilles	1.876.500
Argentina, Bahia Blanca	2.600.000
Bolivia	680.000
Brazil, Porto Alegre	1.500.000
Central	1.995.000

Ecuador	202.000
Mexico, Guadalajara	107.200
U.S., New Rochelle	2.722.510
U.S., San Francisco	665.000

ASIA

Japan	1.396.500
India, Madras	850.000
Middle East	270.000

<i>Total received, 10th June - 12th September, 1974</i>	<i>26.184.710</i>
---	-------------------

<i>Balance b/f</i>	<i>1.366.789</i>
--------------------	------------------

<i>Total as at 12 September, 1974</i>	<i>27.551.499</i>
---------------------------------------	-------------------

b) DISTRIBUTION

EUROPE

Italy, Codigoro: equipment for a poor parish	200.000
Jugoslavia, to Ljubljana Prov. from the Province of St. Mark	500.000
Jugoslavia, Zagreb: bursary for a Course of On-going Formation (C.O.F.)	500.000
Jugoslavia, Ljubljana: ditto.	500.000
Poland, North: ditto.	500.000
Poland, South: ditto.	500.000

ASIA

Bangladesh: to Card. Rossi for flood victims	2.000.000
Philippines: bursary for C.O.F.	500.000
Japan: mission chapel equipment	250.000
India, Gauhati: for agricultural development at Maligaon.	1.000.000
India, Gauhati: bursary for a Master of Novices Course (M.N.C.)	135.000
India, Madras: to the Archbishop (from Japanese Prov.)	400.000
India, Madras: bursary for M.N.C.	135.000

India, Madras: new dispensary	1.500.000
India, Madras: repairs to the mission-house at Arni	2.000.000
Korea, South: bursary for M.N.C.	135.000
Thailand: ditto.	135.000
Vietnam: ditto:	135.000
Central Province: bursary for M.N.C.	135.000

AMERICA

Bolivia: bursary for C.O.F.	500.000
Bolivia: (from Central African Prov.)	1.000.000
Brazil, Manaus: promotion of vocations and social works in parish of S. José Obrero	500.000
Brazil, Humaitá: hospital treatment for a missionary.	489.000
Chile: 5 bursaries C.O.F. & M.N.C.	2.135.000
Colombia, Contratación: leprosarium	2.000.000
Colombia, Bogotá: bursary C.O.F.	500.000
Ecuador, Mendez-Limón: electrical generator for a mission	1.500.000
Guatemala: Social Work	1.500.000
Nicaragua, Managua: tools for the Youth Centre	1.000.000
Paraguay, Asunción: despatch of material to the Technical School	1.000.000
Paraguay, bursary for C.O.F.	500.000
Uruguay: bursary for M.N.C.	135.000
Perú, Lima: equipment for the Catechetical Centre	1.000.000
Uruguay: (from Bahía Blanca Prov.)	2.600.000

<i>Total, 10 June - 12 September, 1974</i>	27.519.000
<i>Balance c/d</i>	32.499
<i>Total</i>	<u>27.551.499</u>

c) CASH FLOW OF FUND

<i>Receipts</i>	281.317.368
<i>Disbursements</i>	281.284.869
<i>Fund as at 12th September</i>	<u>32.499</u>

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

In July, August and September the Superior Council was in session, and there was equally intense activity at Departmental level. The following will give some idea of what has been going on.

1. Council Meetings

In July the items were as follows: Departments and Regional reports on the fact-finding meeting of last spring;

the appointment of new Provincials and the confirmation of the election of the new Rectors;

the coming visitation of the Far East, the Provincial Chapters of 1975, the meetings at Continental level with the Provincials, etc.

The following are the most important of the matters discussed:

the erection in Vietnam of a Delegation dependent on the Rector Major;

the World Congress of Salesian Brothers;

new openings for the Missions' Office and Salesian Catechetical Centre, Madrid;

the Generalate after its settling-in period in Rome;

training young Salesians;

publicity for the Centenary of our Missions, etc.

The documentation of all this will be found in the appropriate section of this number.

2. Other activities of the Rector Major and his Council

At the beginning of September, the Rector Major and the Regional, Fr. Ter Schure, went to the celebrations of the fortieth anniversary of the work in Berlin. At the end of the month, Fr. Fiora was

present at the National Council meeting of the Italian Past Pupils held at Selargius.

The Salesian Formation Department has prepared a document on "The first stages of Salesian Formation." (see Section V).

Fr. Egidio Viganò took part in meetings of the Provincial Council and of the Rectors to discuss the problems connected with personnel training.

Fr. Joseph Aubry has published a commentary on the new Constitutions. Although not official, it is a notable contribution. (J. Aubry: *Una via che conduce all'amore*, LDC).

The Councillor for the Youth Apostolate, Fr. Giovenale Dho, presided over the Second Course in the Youth Apostolate for South America, which was held in Lima, Peru, in August.

He also presided at a three-day meeting for the Superiors of the Spanish aspirantates, and in September at a similar one in Italy. The themes were: what an aspirantate is supposed to be; its vocational slant; training.

The Department of the Adult Apostolate collaborated in the preparation of "The Agreement between the Salesians and the F.M.A. on the Salesian Co-operators" ("Convenzione fra i Salesiani e le Figlie di Maria Ausiliatrice sui Cooperatori Salesiani"), which has been approved for three years by the respective Major Superiors.

In September there was a meeting at the Pisana of the Steering Committee, who are working on the programme for the European Congress of the Salesian Past Pupils.

The Councillor, Fr. Giovanni Raineri, went to Freiburg at the end of August for the Salesian Talks, which this year were on "The Co-operator in the world today." He also took part in the meeting with the President of the Past Pupils for Switzerland, who are engaged in fighting the policy of expelling foreigners.

The Missions' Department organized the annual Salesian Missionary Course in preparation for the Missionary Expedition of 1974. Councillor Bernard Tohill went to Poland to meet the young confrères there, whose contribution to the Salesian Missions is unexpectedly large. He then went to Bishop Worku, Salesian, of Adigrat, Ethiopia, to explore the possibilities of starting Salesian work for the impoverished youth of a country that has recently suffered from widespread natural disasters.

Some Regionals have left Rome for short meetings with their confrères. In August Fr. Antonio Mélida attended the Regional Congress of Co-operators and met the Provincials of the Region at Tibidabo in Barcelona.

Fr. Ter Schure finished his visitation of the Dutch Province, and paid flying visits to North Germany, Belgium and Ljubljana. In Germany he and the local superiors studied a problem affecting the whole Region: the necessity of employing an ever-increasing number of lay assistants in our schools and hostels. The teachers as such slot in well enough with our style and general ethos; but the ones who accept a wider range of responsibilities, such as counselling and assisting, run into considerable difficulties in assimilating and practising our system. The preparation of these people, which is an urgent necessity in the other Provinces as well, has become the subject of an intense study.

At Brussels Fr. Ter Schure presided at the funeral rites of the first Salesian priest in Rwanda, who had been killed in a motor-accident at the early age of 34. Then he attended the commemoration of the 10th anniversary of the Youth Today Movement.

In August Fr. Henriquez went to Bogotá and Lima to meet the new Provincials, then to Quito, Caracas and, in September, to Mexico for meetings with communities.

3. Programme for the coming months

The 30th September sees the start of a new round of visits in various parts of the world. Among them are:

Hong Kong, 3-9 October: the Superiors (the Rector Major, the four Departmental Heads, Fr. Williams) meet the Provincials of the Far East.

Korea, Japan, Philippines, 9 - about 20 October: the Rector Major, Frs. Viganò, Raineri and Dho hold meetings.

Perú, November: Fr. Gaetano Scrivo, the Vicar General, will preach the annual retreat for the Provincials of the Atlantic Region.

Vietnam, India, Israel, 20 October - beginning of November: Fr. Viganò, finishing up at Cremisan.

Thailand, India till the end of October: Fr. Raineri.

Rome, Salesianum, 30th October - 5th November: Fr. Raineri will preside at the Study Week for the training of Co-operators, with Salesians and qualified Co-operators taking part. The object is to deepen the spiritual life of the lay Salesian.

Thailand, Vietnam, Hong Kong, Japan, Philippines, United States, Ireland, and Great Britain: Fr. Dho.

Hong Kong, Burma, Gaubati in India: Fr. Tohill.

Quito: 12-14 November: Fr. Ruggiero Pilla, the Economist General, will preside at the meeting of the Provincial Economers of the two Americas. It is on administration.

The movements of the Regionals within their own Regions:

Ligurian Province: Fr. Fiora on canonical visitation.

Northern France, probably northern Belgium: Fr. Ter Schure.

Uruguayan Province: Fr. Vecchi.

Philippines: Fr. Williams.

Chile, Colombia: Fr. Henriquez on canonical visitations.

Barcelona: Don Mélida will take part in the 10th National Assembly of Past Pupils.

V. DOCUMENTS

1. The first few years of Salesian training

Policies and instructions approved by the Superior Council, 24th July, 1974.

LETTER OF PRESENTATION FROM THE RECTOR MAJOR

To the Provincials and their Council, members of the Provincial Commissions for Formation, the Novice-masters, and those concerned with pre-novitiate, novitiate, and post-novitiate training.

Dear Confrères, a problem that really worries me these days is that of Personnel Training. Article 106 of the Constitutions loads the Provinces with responsibilities demanding sound judgement and great discretion. Each Province must see what its discussions have produced and decide on a course of action by the end of this year.

Provincials and confrères involved in formation have asked for guide-lines. To meet these requests much work has been put in and this paper is the result of it. It is my pleasure to present it to you.

It contains some directives on the initial stages of personnel training. I think it will be a great help for every Province in handling the complex responsibilities that go with decentralization.

I ought to point out — and this is important — that this document is based on the official documents of the Church and the Congregation, and on experience.

It has been inspired by the policies and general mind of the Council, the documents of the Magisterium and of our own Special General Chapter. It is the result of the combined efforts of many confrères: the Formation Department, all the Provinces consulted by it, superiors from different training communities, and particularly the 38 Novice-masters who met at the Generalate from the 4th March to the 4th April last for an intensive spate of meetings. The Superior Council also wanted to contribute and turn to best account

all that had been put into it. They examined, discussed and completed the text, and approved the draft as you have it. This approbation sets an official seal on the document "for the good of the whole Society," because we "are concerned with the unity, growth, and the development of the entire Society." (Const 131).

The contents revolve around the Novitiate and the stages that immediately precede and follow it. Its importance derives from the nature of basic training today.

The present process of decentralization in the Congregation undoubtedly demands a dynamic that is multiform yet balanced. It is a matter of urgency that the Provinces take over their new responsibilities courageously and competently. I invite you to reread my letter of last October (cf. Acts, no. 272, October-December, 1973). In it I stressed that "it is necessary that the diversities of plurality should be subsumed harmoniously into the centripetal movement towards unity." (That is, it is fine having diversity; but there must be a common trend toward the centre, towards unity.)

Each Province, in so far as it embodies the one vocation, must be the Congregation... No Province can be truly loyal to its members if it fails to take them beyond itself and into the unity of the world organization."

When we come to think about the identity that we share in our Salesian vocation, we see straight away the necessity of conveying a sense of Salesian consecration, and of strengthening it in the younger men, since this is what constitutes the unity of the Congregation and makes it a union of men with different social and cultural backgrounds. Now, this unity will be built up through training courses, provided all over the Salesian world, that can put the right stress on whatever binds us together.

The Novitiate is there precisely to foster the values that are proper to the religious vocation. It cannot form part of a current course of studies, nor a grounding in pastoral techniques. What it IS supposed to do is to concentrate on the unity of the Salesian vocation, and keep the cultural diversities firmly in their place.

If, to cope with the new situations, new novitiates are required in the Congregation, we must recognize the urgency of the need for a more effective "Salesian identity." There is no antithesis between

our differences of culture and a clearly defined vocation common to us all, and there should not be any imbalance, either. But if the case arises that the development of the local genius is being overdone or that the formation facilities are basically not up to it, then we must be able to restore to the Novitiate its capacity for turning out Salesians. We can't have a fragmentation that undermines the whole set-up!

We moan about falling numbers of vocation and go to great lengths to invite youngsters in to join the ranks with Don Bosco. Fine! But what's the use of having a crowd of vocations if they are not going to be genuine Salesian vocations and if we cannot keep them because of the superficiality of the training we give them?

These indications of strategy and tactics that I am presenting here are meant to impart some degree of enlightenment and unity of approach to the training programmes so that their effectiveness may be assured.

I am quite sure that they will give added depth to the transformation process in the life of young Salesian.

Dear confrères, let us remember that Don Bosco taught us to be competent in our teaching methods. Let us ask Our Lady, Help of Christians, to help us in the delicate task of formation, which is basic to the future of the Congregation. With best wishes from

F. LUIGI RICCI

INTRODUCTION

Phases in the training process

"The different phases of formation should be linked one with the other," says paragraph 691 of the Orange Book. In the Constitutions three necessary phases are given for a candidate to be finally incorporated in the Congregation:

Preparation for the novitiate,
Novitiate,
Period of temporary vows (Const. 108).

These directives are concerned only with the immediate preparation for the novitiate, the novitiate itself, and the period immediately after the novitiate.

Common basic training

This document is for future clerics and brothers alike: "each in his own way, all share in a full and identical manner IN THE SAME SALESIAN RELIGIOUS VOCATION." (Orange Book, 660; cf. 146; Const. 103; Reg. 81).

In practice, however, there will be differences in the basic training. It is necessary to know and cultivate the personal vocation of each candidate, developing his individual bent so that the full, harmonious development of his personality as a man and as a religious may be assured. (Cf. Orange Book 660).

This assumes that every novice will get a clear picture of what he is supposed to be and do as a Salesian at least before profession. Then he will be in a position to plan his subsequent training to the best advantage in the various fields of his choice: religious, scientific, professional, technical, etc. Section 660 in the Orange Book is worth quoting here: "for the brothers it is a matter very often of building up, or of even creating a formation procedure..."

1. IMMEDIATE PREPARATION FOR THE NOVITIATE

Official source texts:

— Holy See: Ren. Causam: 4; 10-II; 11; 12.

— Sal. Cong.: Const. 108, 109; Reg. 72, 73; Orange Book 693, 662, 665.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

1.1.1 Preparation for the novitiate, in the comprehensive sense used by the SGC, involves a number of activities and obligations that cover the whole field of vocational training and various types of aspirantate.

Here we are dealing with the definite period of time that immediately precedes the novitiate and requires a more precise preparation. This is the phase called "Postulato" in the "Renovationis Causam."

1.1.2 The provision of a stage of immediate preparation for the Salesian novitiate is founded on articles 108, 109 and 110 of the Constitutions. The SGC did not want to use the term 'Postulato' because it wanted to avoid certain implications of a juridical and structural nature: cf. Orange Book 662. However, articles 109 and 110 of the Constitutions do require a specific preparation for the novitiate, indicating what is needed in the way of general atmosphere, objectives, methods and a suitable place.

Comparing these articles with the recommendations of 'Renovationis Causam,' we have: "Preparation for the novitiate is all the more necessary as the world grows more and more resistant to Christians values... It follows that all Religious Families must attach importance to this preparation ... even when the 'Postulato' does not apply." (RC 4)

1.1.3 Experience teaches that the omission of a period of immediate preparation has bad effects on the novitiate training and reduces the chances of giving Salesian formation.

The proper structuring of this preparation involves the inclusion of much that is new in the Congregation, especially since the changes that have been tried out in the vocations' apostolate, and since the numbers of aspirants in the Provinces began to drop off.

1.1.4 The SGC did not fix any particular structure for this preparatory period. It is a matter of urgency, then, for the Provinces to think seriously about how to tackle the problem and how to check up on its effectiveness.

1.2 The nature of the immediate preparation to the Novitiate

1.2.1 It is logical to keep a steady eye on what is required in the novitiate itself, which is dealt with in the second part of this document.

The Novitiate is the beginning of the religious life (cf. RC 13), and comprises three dimensions:

— the personal encounter with God within a given plan of evangelical life;

- a deliberate break with the spirit of the world;
- a presence in the world, embodying apostolic obedience to God.

Further: the period immediately preceding the noviciate must be a preparation for the Salesian community life (cf. RC 12, I - II): which means something different from what has gone before. At this stage there is a maturing process within terms of reference more definite than those of the aspirantate proper, with its wider prospects and more general interests.

1.2.2 Each Province must prepare a framework that retains the characteristics of this stage as mentioned above, and at the same time is adaptable to persons and places. It must be clear-cut and offer to candidates, who have formally expressed their desire to enter the Congregation, the opportunity for weighing up and seeing round their decision to enter the noviciate.

1.2.3 For the candidates who live in an aspirantate, this final stage can coincide with the last year of studies, but it must have an atmosphere and programme of its own.

1.2.4 The immediate preparation for the noviciate is necessary everywhere: it will therefore have to be planned as an official stage, so to speak, which is to constitute a well defined, though general, initiation to life in the Congregation.

1.3 *Objectives of the immediate preparation to the noviciate*

1.3.1 Since it is the noviciate that is the immediate goal in view, every effort should be made to round off the personality of the candidate culturally, psychologically and spiritually. The Constitutions clearly require (art. 109) that the candidate should be put "in the possibility of discerning his own particular vocation in life and of maturing" to the extent of being able "to reach a decision in full awareness of what he is doing" in becoming a Salesian religious.

1.3.2 "Only those candidates," according to Constitutions 110, "who give evidence of the qualities and the maturity considered

necessary for the Salesian life are admitted to the novitiate.” Hence the following conditions and criteria must be met before admission:

1.3.3 Of suitable personality. Knowledge of family background: it must be physically and psychologically sound and morally good.

— Fit enough physically and sane:

before the novitiate, there must be a medical check-up;

the determination of his state of mind must be made under optimum conditions, above all through personal contact with the candidate and in accordance with the spirit of section 673 of the Orange Book.

— Of adequate intellectual capacity and sound judgement.

— Of sexual and emotional maturity proportionate to age:

of sufficient sexual self-control to enable him to enter the novitiate in a state of interior calm;

conduct in the presence of women sufficiently well ordered to permit of a clear choice of celibacy (for these two points cf. 10-11, and the recent “Orientamenti educativi per la formazione al celibato sacerdotale” of the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 11 April, 1974);

— Able to live the community life, to work in a group, knowing how to accept his own limitations and those of others: sense of responsibility, loyalty and generosity;

spirit of work (intellectual and manual) and of temperance.

1.3.4 Of suitable Cristian development. — Able, in accordance with his age, to judge persons and events in the light of the Word of God.

— A sacramental and prayer-life of sufficient depth and regularity.

— A certain experience of spiritual direction.

— A life of Christian joy with some sense of apostolate.

1.3.5 Of sufficient capability for the Salesian life. — Capacity for doing some sort of job in the Salesian life.

— Deliberate choice of his way of life, after consultation with his confessor.

1.3.6 The immediate preparation for the novitiate does not mean that the candidate has to be able to satisfy all the requirements

of the novitiate immediately. But he must be considered capable of making the grade as he goes along (RC 4).

1.4 *Ways and means*

1.4.1 It is very important to bear in mind that 'Renovationis Causam' insists on advancing the age of candidates for admission to the religious life: "It must be admitted that the age of acceptance into the novitiate will have to be higher than it has been hitherto" (RC 4).

Each Province, then, will need to find its own answer to the requirements of art. 80 of the new Regulations.

1.4.2 Normally this preparation is made outside the novitiate house itself (cf. RC 12, III). The candidates are entrusted to the care of experts in personnel training, who exercise their responsibility in conjunction with the novice master (cf. RC 12, IV). This is done "ordinarily ... in close contact with one of our communities" (Const. 109), which will have been approved by the Provincial and his Council as suitable for the purpose.

1.4.3 Especially in the case where the preparatory period coincides with the last year of the aspirantate, it may be considered advisable, in the case of particular need, for the candidate to spend some time outside the aspirantate, if he needs this to help him to mature (RC 4; 12, III).

Contact with his own family plays no small part in the candidate's formation.

It is as well to recall here what the SGC has to say about about this in section 693 of the Orange Book.

1.4.4 There are many different ways of arranging the first stage. It is up to each Province to make the arrangements that best fit its situation. And the more intractable society is towards Christian values, the tougher the programme will have to be.

All this is URGENT.

1.4.5 With regard to the duration of the first stage: ordinarily, one year and not less than six months (cf. RC 12, II).

2. The Noviciate

2.1 *Conditions and criteria for admission*

2.1.1 The preparation described above is needed to ensure that the candidate is properly equipped for admission.

2.1.2 To admit a candidate to the noviciate, the conditions given in nos. 1.32, 1.33, 1.34, 1.35, 1.36 have to be met, and compare the Orange Book 695 on admission to first profession.

2.2 *Aims and essential content of the Salesian noviciate. Official sources: Holy See: RC 4, 5, 13-I, 13-II, 15, 31, 32.*

Congregation: Const. art. 101, and more particularly 110 and 111 (inspired by RC 4 and 32-II). Reg. 74 and 76 (apostolate); 77-78 (studies). Orange Book 670 and 695 (criteria for admission to profession, responsibility for entry into the Congregation).

2.2.1 *Specific aims of the Salesian noviciate.*

2.2.1.1 — To enable the Society to be morally certain about the candidate's vocation, judging from:

his various capacities (physical, intellectual, moral, spiritual, practical),

his motivation.

Likewise to enable the candidate to be morally certain about his vocation with the Society.

2.2.1.2 — To introduce the candidate to the theory and practice of the consecrated apostolic life of a Salesian as spiritual experience, comprising the mentality, virtues and interior dispositions of the true Salesian.

The development of the more directly intellectual and pastoral side can for the most part be left to the subsequent years of training.

2.2.1.3 — To help the candidate to make the total dedication of himself to God in the Salesian Society, deliberately and freely, at his first temporary profession, and with a view to perpetual profession.

The ideal to be proposed is: to serve Christ in youth, totally,

according to the Salesian spirit and the common life. This ideal is drawn from our two basic works: the Gospel and the Constitutions (cf. Const. 101). What follows in the next five sections has to happen if the above is to be realized.

2.2.2.1 God, to whom the Salesian consecrates himself and his mission.

Aim: to deepen the candidate's knowledge of the three Divine Persons and his intimacy with them; to sharpen his sense of abandonment to their love, praise and service. This comes about chiefly through the following:

- hearing and meditating on the Word of God;
- celebration of the Eucharist, the Office and the Sacrament of Reconciliation;
- the 'liturgy of life,' especially the apostolic life;
- education to docility to the Holy Spirit, and union with Christ (cf. Const. 63);
- a strong, filial devotion to Mary (cf. Const. 65).

2.2.2.2 The young people to whom we have dedicated our lives and mission.

Aim: to give the candidate a working knowledge of modern society and what is needed to procure its salvation. To get him used to carrying the major burdens of today's youth, especially the poor, in the sense of "Give me souls." To exercise him, through contacts in an apostolic context, in being a "sign(s) of and bearer(s) of the love of God for young people" (Const. 2).

And all has to be done in the spirit of participation in the mission of the Church and in close co-operation with local apostolic action.

2.2.2.3 Community.

Aim: to give the candidate the experience of sharing with his brothers. To develop the qualities that go with community life and action: community sense, affability, patience, willingness to 'muck in', cheerfulness, awareness that this is a communion of fellow-Christians and fellow-Salesians.

2.2.2.4 The Evangelical Counsels and total commitment.

Aim: to enable the candidate to explore the deeper implications of, and practise, chastity, poverty and obedience as means to the end of serving God, his brothers in religion and the apostolate. (Cf. Const. 70-72).

To impart the sense of the complete break that is implicit in the act of self-surrender to God.

2.2.2.5 Following Don Bosco.

Aim: the study and experience of Don Bosco, the Salesian spirit, the local Salesian work, the Salesian Family in the full sense of the term; to develop the feel for the Salesian way and a sense of belonging.

2.3 *Setting up the noviciate*

2.3.1 Responsibility of the Province. The noviciate of a Province incorporates its candidates into a congregation that is world-wide. So the merely provincial product will not serve the purpose; and the noviciate has the tricky job of striking a balance between the local variant and the unity of the Salesian vocation in its historical development.

Besides attending to the unity of the Congregation, the Province, in setting up a noviciate, has the serious responsibility of providing the men and material that are suitable for the task in hand. (cf. 3.3.4).

2.3.2 The need for the greatest care in organizing a noviciate has the sanction of the Constitutions:

— the Rector Major himself sets up the noviciate with the consent of his Council (Const. 110);

— the novice-master is appointed by the Provincial with the consent of his Council and the approval of the Rector Major (Const. 112); this approval is required for every three-year period of office.

2.3.3 The basics. The large variety of types of noviciate precludes the fixing of any standard pattern of development, but three main types can be distinguished:

— completely separate;

— co-existing with another formation group (for example, post-noviciate);

— co-existing (in various ways) with a Salesian work (e.g., a school or parish).

The basic requirement for the siting and structuring of a noviciate is that it can produce the right sort of men.

2.3.4 Specific requirements. Therefore what is wanted is:

2.3.4.1 Salesian community. See articles 111, 100 and 105 of the Constitutions, especially 111.

2.3.4.2 Openings for apostolic work. The community must offer opportunities for a real work of the Salesian apostolate (cf. Orange Book 670 and Reg. 74), that will do no harm to the nature of the noviciate nor to that of the work undertaken.

2.3.4.3 The staff. The formation of novices demands constant attention and dedication on the part of the staff.

The staff has to be of the right size and calibre. At least three members of the House Council must belong to the staff.

In the noviciates that are separate the Master of Novices should be the Rector as well. In the other cases, the Provincial and his Council must see to it that the Novice Master, whether he is Rector or not, must be in a position to run the noviciate properly.

2.4 *Studies during the noviciate*

Official source texts. Holy See: RC 15, IV (five themes covered) and 29 (orientation of studies).

Congregation: Const. 101: the Gospel, centre of all formation. Reg. 77: three sectors: Christ (RC 29, I), religious life, Const. and Don Bosco; art. 78: Salesian spirituality and the history of the Society; art. 90: training in general: education, youth apostolate and catechetics.

2.4.1 *General principles deduced from the above.*

2.4.1.1 Studies are not pursued for their intrinsic interest, nor for any specific qualification, but simply in relation to the noviciate training.

2.4.1.2 Consequently these studies, serious though they may be, are not directed towards the acquisition of new ideas as such, but rather towards an enlightened faith, the deepening of convictions and the enrichment of noviciate life. This affects:

- the choice of subjects,
- the choice of instructors,
- the method of instruction.

2.4.1.3 Preparation for exams and other qualifications is excluded, because they do not meet the stated requirements. A check-up on the study programme is indicated to insure that there is stimulation without overloading on the intellectual-scholastic side.

2.4.1.4 The novice master and staff must take care that the studies have real-life value for the novices: knowledge of self, relations with God and with others, prayer, apostolate, practice of the vows, sense of belonging to the Church and the Congregation.

2.4.1.5 For the choice of instructors, serious consideration must be given to art. 104 of the Constitutions.

2.4.1.6 Considerations for planning and method:

- the cultural level of the novices;
- the general scheme of studies in the Province;
- the importance of the active method.

2.4.2 *Planning guide.*

2.4.2.1 Bible studies, especially the Gospel, to put the novice in close touch with the person of Christ:

- the mysteries of Christ, the community, the apostolate, in themselves, and also
- in their personal application for the 'putting on' of Christ.

2.4.2.2 Theological and spiritual studies (with special reference to Vatican II) to enable the novice to see how his life fits in with Christian life in general:

- Christ: the theology of the mystery of Christ in the Father's designs for the world today;

— Church: the theology of the mystery of the Church in its mission to men;

— the Christian: the theology of the spiritual life of the baptized Christian and apostolic action;

— the 'worshipping' Christian: the theology of the liturgical life and prayer in general;

— the consecrated Christian: the theology and spirituality of consecrated life in the Church.

2.4.2.3 Salesian studies to enable the novice to integrate easily with the Congregation:

— Life and spirituality of Don Bosco;

— History of the Congregation; the great Salesians; the Salesian Family;

— the Salesian spirit and spirituality;

— Constitutions and Regulations; the Acts of the SGC;

— Italian (as the key to Salesian sources).

2.4.2.4 Pastoral studies to enable the novice to manage his own essays in the apostolate:

— teaching theory (preventive method);

— catechetics.

2.4.2.5 Studies in the humanities and general culture (cf. nos. 2.4.2.1 - 2.4.2.4 above):

— psychology;

— sociology;

— group dynamics;

— national, social and religious problems;

— use of the mass media.

N.B. The educational programme outlined above is in itself a training in self-control and renunciation, since it has to form part of a balanced time-table.

2.5. *Apostolic practice during the noviciate*

Official source texts: Holy See: RC 5, 13, 15, 25 and 31.
Congregation: Const. 111; Reg. 76; Orange Book 670.

2.5.1 *The aims of practice in the apostolate.*

2.5.1.1 *Apostolic activities* in this context must be seen as a genuine apostolate, on a sufficient scale, "the better to enable them (the novices) to find out ... what the religious vocation means in practice..." (RC 5). A middle course has to be steered between another year of tirocinium at one extreme and complete "isolation from real Salesian life" (Orange Book 670) at the other.

2.5.1.2 *Apostolic spirituality.* The great thing in all this is to put the novice in the way of understanding the vital link between contemplation and action through actually living it, so that the underlying unity spoken of in article 48 of the Constitutions becomes a reality. (Also cf. Orange Book 127).

2.5.1.3 *Salesian savoir-faire:* fitness for the Salesian apostolic life (RC 25, I; Reg. 76); experience of the Salesian method of education (RC 5; Orange Book 670); maturity to make a firm decision on a Salesian vocation (RC 5).

2.5.1.4 *Mature personality.* (RC 25, I; Reg. 76). The candidate needs:

- adjustment to the community through group activity (RC 25, I);
- gradual growth in knowledge of the capabilities and limitations of himself and of others, and an acceptance of the situation (RC 31, II and III);
- strengthening of his will (RC 25, I);
- development of personal responsibility (RC 25, I);
- a grasp of what it is to be poor and to have to work (RC 25, I).

2.5.2 *The time to be given to the exercises.*

2.5.2.1 General criteria. The novice master and his staff fix the time to be spent, having considered the following;

- the overall needs of the novitiate;
- the capabilities of the novices;
- the environment;
- the training value of the apostolic works.

2.5.2.2 Two ways of carrying out the exercises:

- as a regular thing during the year;
- as something outside the ordinary time-table, and requiring a period of intensive activity: see art. 76 of the Regulations.

2.5.3 *Other conditions and modes of procedure.*

2.5.3.1 *Choosing the exercises:*

- preferably forming part of the work of a Salesian community;
- in any case, constituting a valid Salesian experience as to content and style;
- with the novices in a subordinate role.

2.5.3.2 *Ways of doing the exercises:*

- the novice master is responsible at all times (RC 23, III; reg. 76);
- the novices work as a team rather than individually;
- the exercises are planned with the novices and the interested members of the community where they are to take place;
- they are preceded by an adequate preparation, under the guidance of an experienced Salesian (preferably one of the novitiate staff), and they are subject to a regular review;
- they are carried out gradually and continuously.

3. THE IMMEDIATE POST-NOVITIATE PERIOD

— *Official source texts:* Vatican Council II: PC 18; OT 4-12; 19-20. Holy See: ET 30-41.

Congregation: Const. 114-117; Reg. 81-92; Orange Book 673-688; 695; 697.

3.1 *Introduction*

3.1.1 After the noviciate the third phase of training begins. This is longer and more complex: the Constitutions call it the "period of temporary vows" (art. 108), the time when "the process of spiritual development with perpetual profession in view" (Const. 114) is completed.

Those candidates "who do not give hope of ever being admitted to perpetual profession, should not be allowed to renew their temporary vows." (Orange Book, 697).

Ordinarily it lasts for a total of six years: it cannot be less than three and may be extended to nine (Const. 117).

3.1.2 This whole phase is described only in general terms by the SGC, and needs to "be developed by the various provinces in agreement with the norms of the local churches and the needs of the various countries" (Orange Book 658).

During the period of temporary vows the tirocinium takes place. This has an important function of its own, having an "educational and pastoral character" (Const. 116), and providing the young Salesian with "his first opportunity of getting to grips with Salesian work." (Reg. 88).

3.1.3 It is important to provide a proper run-up to the tirocinium with an intermediate stage between it and the noviciate. The conciliary decree *Perfectae Caritatis* requires that the newly professed "should not be assigned to apostolic works immediately after the noviciate" (PC 18). And our own Regulations lay down that, before the tirocinium, there should be an adequate period of training in teaching or youth work, theoretical and practical (cf. art. 88).

Here we are dealing precisely with this intermediate stage.

3.1.4 In fact there are in the Congregation today a number of ways of arranging this training period, lasting from a minimum of one year to a maximum of four or five years, according to the curricula that have to be completed before the start of the tirocinium.

3.1.5 The noviciate is only an initiation, important though it

is, and has to be followed up by all the rest (cf. RC 4; Orange Book 691). The first of these follow-up periods is the immediate post-novitiate, and each Province must make definite provisions for it.

We offer some guidance on this at three levels: persons, structures, and content.

3.2 *Persons: training staff and young confrères*

3.2.1 The training staff for the post-novitiate should be chosen with great care (Reg. 89; cf. Orange Book 672);

— spiritual men, with a deep faith and Salesian sense;

— men of affability, who can converse with the young;

— competent men, or at least well-informed, on the problems that exercise the young; and they should believe in the necessity of continuing the work of the novitiate.

3.2.2 There should be liaison between the novice-master and the post-novitiate men to ensure continuity of training.

3.2.3 The young confrères, singly and collectively, should share the responsibility for running the community, as given in Reg. 83 and 85; also cf. Orange Book 555.

3.2.4 Every young member should be looked after and helped: Reg. 84 and 86.

3.3 *Structures*

3.3.1 It is vitally important to form a community that is a training unit in a true Salesian environment: family spirit, enthusiasm, a wisely selected range of external contacts.

3.3.2 Three types of structure seem to be workable:

— the studentate (Reg. 81);

— an autonomous community suited to the needs of young confrères attending external study courses;

— groups of young confrères living in an active community whilst attending external courses. In this case, it is necessary to have

someone whose specific responsibility it is to look after the students (and not a vague community action with no one really responsible). Moreover, they must form part of the community, and not merely physically or as parasites or as fringe groups.

3.3.3 A sudden and violent change of régime for the post-novice group must be avoided, because this may cause a falling away from peak form, psychologically and spiritually speaking.

3.3.4 A number of conditions have to be present together if proper training is to be given: someone responsible and capable, community life, serious instruction, salesianity ... Such conditions cannot always be met by each Province. In certain cases it will be necessary for Provinces with a common social and cultural background (cf. Orange Book 679, b) to merge their resources.

3.3.5 Environmental factors will also have to be considered: place and space enough to live decently; facilities for a community life in religion: chapel, library facilities, technical training facilities ...

3.3.6 Every community must study ways of applying art. 87 of the Regulations with regard to admission to profession.

3.4 *Content*

The general lines are determined by the definitive commitment of the Society. It must be borne in mind that the following aspects are always present together and everything must be Salesian-oriented.

3.4.1 *Salesian personality development* (Const. 100, 102, 105; Reg. 83, 86). Work on the following qualities:

3.4.1.1 discipline - freedom - personal responsibility (e.g., personal time-table, use of TV etc., regularity, deportment ...);

3.4.1.2 relation with the community (e.g., geniality, care of the house, looking after the sick and elderly, spirit of initiative, acceptance of things, ability to get on with people ...).

3.4.2 Salesian spiritual formation (Const. 114, cf. 117; 59-67; Orange Book 605, 621, 607).

The object here is to complete “the process of spiritual development with perpetual profession in view” (Const. 114). Basilically: to nurture the sense of consecration to God through the young. This presupposes:

3.4.2.1 a genuine prayer and sacramental life, as indicated in Const. 59-67 and Reg. 44-49 and 53; in particular, a continuance of the noviciate-training in meditation, personal and communal, and in the use of the sacrament of reconciliation; and full participation in the Days of Recollection.

3.4.2.2 The spirit of work and renunciation (“work and self-restraint”), with insistence on serious intellectual work as the chief form of renunciation.

3.4.2.3 Loyal practice of the vows, and especially the rejection of the middle-class life (Orange Book 605, 621) and the acceptance of a hard life of poverty; this practice should be the object of personal examination and community reflection (Orange Book 607).

3.4.2.4 Education to the ‘apostolic sense’ as main-spring of the day’s activities. It is worth pointing out here that serious study is supremely important in a course of training for a future apostolate.

3.4.2.5 Deep reflection on the Salesian vocation; a continuation, therefore, of the course in Salesian culture (see the appended bibliography).

3.4.3 *Intellectual formation* (Const. 103; Reg. 81, 88, 90).

3.4.3.1 Training in the discipline of study, without dilettantism (method, atmosphere).

3.4.3.2 Reg. 81 provides for general formation:

— philosophy, theology: according to the programme laid down by the Province;

— teacher-training for the apostolate (Reg. 88, 90): psychology, sociology, teaching theory and practice, religious education, catechetics, preventive system;

— scientific, technical and professional: to be integrated with the above (Cont. 103; Reg. 81).

3.4.3.4 The study of languages is to be encouraged, especially Italian, which is the *lingua franca* among all Salesians: for use at international gatherings, in contacts with the Superiors, in reading documents.

3.4.3.4 Seeing that the teachers are the key men at this stage, they should be carefully selected and well prepared (cf. 3.2.1), and they should always be conscious of their responsibility for transmitting Salesian values (cf. the report of Fr. E. Viganò to the Convention of teachers of dogmatic theology, held at the UPS, Rome, 2 January, 1974, *Bollettino d'informazione della Facoltà di Teologia*, n. 2).

3.4.4 *Training for the Salesian apostolate* (Const. 116).

3.4.4.1 Each one should be found some suitable work in the apostolate.

3.4.4.2 These activities must have value as training: good preparation is needed, and later a check-up should be made with the help of a competent Salesian.

3.4.4.3 Opportunities for outside contacts should be arranged so as to ensure gradation and balance.

3.4.4.4 During the holidays, which are often wasted when they could and should be utilized for training purposes, experience in the apostolate should be provided.

4. APPENDIX: PROGRAMME OF SALESIAN CULTURE

What a Salesian should know before his perpetual profession (cf. Reg. 77-78).

4.1 *The facts*

4.1.1 Don Bosco (Reg. 77): life and works; a founder inspired by God; the apostle and man of spirituality; Don Bosco and St. Francis of Sales.

4.1.2 *The Congregation* (Reg. 77):

- history and development;
- history of the Salesians missions;
- the great Salesians: our saints and servants of God (St. Dominic Savio, Blessed Michael Rua, Fr. Andrew Beltrami, Fr. Philip Rinaldi, Bro. Simon Srugi ...); the great missionaries: Cagliero, Fagnano, Costamagna, Mathias, Cimatti; any typical Salesian;
- the present: the Congregation in the Church; types of work; the relevance of our work.

4.1.3 *The Salesian Family*:

- the past: history of the FMA, of the Co-operators and Past Pupils;
- the present: the FMA, the Volontarie di Don Bosco and other institutions, the Past Pupils.

4.1.4 *In the homeland*:

- history and present situation of the Congregation and the Salesian Family in the various Provinces and countries;
- outstanding Salesians.

4.2 *Values*

4.2.1 *Our mission* (Const. 1-39):

- the Salesian charism in the Church (cf. Const. Sect I);
- those we work for (cf. Const. Sect II);
- what we work for (cf. Const. Sect. III);
- principal works (cf. Const. Sect. IV);
- collaboration with the local Church and civic bodies (cf. Const. Sect. V).

4.2.2 *Our spirit* (Const. VI - Reg. 76):

- at the centre: “pastoral love” (cf. Const. 40);
- derived from the Gospel (Const. 41);
- expressed in:
 - our work (Const. 42-44);
 - our relations with others (Const. 45-47);

our relations with God and the saints: spirituality of action (Const. 48, 67), use of the Sacraments (Const. 23, 61-62), devotion to the Blessed Virgin (Const. 21c, 65);

— summary: Salesian sanctity.

Aspect to emphasise: centrality of the Eucharist, membership of the Mystical Body, Marian spirituality.

4.2.3 *Our method* (see Const. 16, 25; Reg. 88, 90): the preventive system of Don Bosco and its present-day applications.

4.2.4 *Our communion and consecration* (Const. 34-38; 50-98):

- the Salesian community; the fraternal life of co-responsibility;
- the Salesian priest and the Salesian brother;
- our consecration as “religious and apostles” (Const. 68);
- the evangelical counsels in the life of the Salesian.

4.2.5 *Our organization* (Const. Sect. V):

- juridical situation of the Congregation in the Church;
- principles of its organization (Const. 123-127);
- structures at top level;
- structures at Provincial level;
- structures at local level.

4.3 Sources

4.3.1 *Salesian writings*:

- for the study of Don Bosco and the Congregation;
- method of research (recommended reading of the sources; guidelines for interpretation);
- Salesian authors (esp. Lemoyne, Amadei, Ceria, Caviglia ...);
- Salesian bibliography.

N.B. There follows a suggested allocation of the literature for the various stages of training:

4.3.2 *Pre-noviciate*: life of Don Bosco; the extent, scope etc. of the Congregation.

4.3.3 *Novitiate proper:*

- serious study of Don Bosco (4.1.1); some of the Biog. Mem's;
- introduction to the subjects indicated in nos. 4.1.2, 4.1.3, 4.1.4, 4.2.3, based on the Constitutions, Regulations, and Acts of the SGC.

4.3.4 *Post-novitiate:* the following are merely suggestions for the guidance of the responsible superiors. Two phases are envisaged:

first: the themes in nos. 4.1.1, 4.1.2, 4.1.3, 4.1.4, 4.3.1;

second: nos 4.2.1, 4.2.2, 4.2.3, 4.2.4, 4.2.5.

4.3.5 *The year preceding perpetual profession:* 4.1.1, 4.2.2, 4.2.4.

4.4 *Essential bibliography in Italian*

4.4.1 *Source material*

S. GIOVANNI BOSCO: *Memorie dell'Oratorio 1815-1855*, Ediz. Ceria - SEI, 1946.

S. GIOVANNI BOSCO: *Vita del giovanetto Savio Domenico*, Torino 1859.

S. GIOVANNI BOSCO: *Epistolario*, Ediz. Ceria, 4 volumi, Torino SEI 1955.

DON GIOV. BONETTI: *Cinque lustri di storia dell'Oratorio salesiano...*, Torino 1892, 744 pp.

LEMOYNE, AMADEI, CERIA: *Memorie Biografiche*, San Benigno Canavese e Torino, 20 volumi, 1898-1948.

4.4.2 *History of Don Bosco and the Congregation*

Una vita di Don Bosco: LEMOYNE (1911-13); SALOTTI (1929); AMADEI (1929); AUFRAY (1929); CERIA (1949); HENRI BOSCO (1964).

Una vita di Don Rua: AMADEI (tre volumi, 1931-34) AUFRAY (1932); CERIA (1949).

E. CERIA: *Annali della Società Salesian*, Torino SEI, 4 volumi 1941-51.

M. WIRTH: *Don Bosco e i Salesian. 150 anni di storia*. Torino LDC, 1970.

M. MOLINERIS: *Don Bosco inedito*. Colle Don Bosco 1974, 485 pp.

UFFICIO STAMPA Direz. Generale Opere Don Bosco: *Don Bosco nel mond*, Torino, 1^a Ediz. 1956, 3^a Ediz. 1964.

4.4.3 *Various studies of Don Bosco and the Salesian vocation*

— EUGENIO CERIA: *Don Bosco con Dio*, Colle Don Bosco 1947.

— F. DESRAMAUT: *Don Bosco e la vita spirituale*, Torino LDC 1968.

— P. STELLA: *Don Bosco nella storia della religiosità cattolica*, PAS-Verlag, Vol. I, 1968; Vol. II, 1969.

— P. BRAIDO: *Religiosi nuovi per il mondo del lavoro*, Roma 1961.

— J. AUBRY: *Una via che conduce all'amore*. Commento delle Costituzioni rinnovate. Torino LDC 1974.

4.4.4 *Don Bosco, the educator, and his method*

— A. CAVIGLIA: *Savio Domenico e Don Bosco*, Torino SEI 1943, 609 pp.

— P. RICALDONE: *Don Bosco educatore*, 2 vol. Colle Don Bosco, 1951-52.

— P. BRAIDO: *Il sistema preventivo di Don Bosco*, PAS-Verlag, 2^a Ediz. 1964 (edizione breve: *Don Bosco*, Brescia, La Scuola, 1969).

— AA.VV.: *Il metodo preventivo* (Settimana di studio).

4.4.5 *The Salesian Family*

— E. CERIA: *I Cooperatori Salesian. Un po' di storia*. Torino SEI, 1952.

— J. AUBRY: *Una vocazione concreta nella Chiesa: Cooperatore Salesiano*, Roma, Ufficio Naz. Cooperatori Salesiani, 1972, 221 pp.

— *Nuovo Regolamento dei Cooperatori Salesiani*, Roma, 1974; Commento di Don Mario Midali, 1974.

— *Costituzioni e Regolamenti delle Volontarie di Don Bosco*, Roma 1971, (Tre volumetti di Studi a cura di Don S. Maggio).

— *La Famiglia Salesiana riflette sulla sua vocazione*, Torino LDC 1973.

2. Focus on problems facing the Provincial Chapters '75

1. Nature of the PC'75s

1.1 According to art 178 of the Constitutions, the Provincial Chapter should be called every 3 years. The Chapters in question fall into this category.

1.2 Again, in accordance with no. 761.10 & 12 of the Acts of the SGC, the Provincial Chapters '75 have definite aims that are common to all the Provinces, although they may treat of other business as well (See Const. 177).

2. Aims of the PC'75s

2.1 These aims are: to see how far the recommendations of the Special Provincial Chapter have been put into effect, and hence to judge how the recommendations of the SGC on renewal are working out in the Province.

2.2 It follows that it is quite futile for the PC'75 to be reduced to a second run-through of the SPC. There is a double risk.

2.2.1 It would be a waste of an opportunity for honest thinking and straight talking: in fact, a massive waste of time.

2.2.2 Then the whole process of renewal would become utterly discredited in the eyes of the confrères, by now saturated with fine theories and disgruntled at continued failure to get something positive off the ground.

We are at the critical stage now where one good, solid step forward will be worth a hundred steps on paper.

3. *Methods*

3.1 The PC'75 may decide to confine its attention to the three, four or five areas that seem to be the most important, instead of dealing with everything enacted in the SPC. If this is done, the choice of agenda can be made by the Provincial and his Council, and/or an ad hoc committee meeting before the Chapter.

Specimen priority areas would be: renewal of prayer life in the Salesian community; new forms of youth apostolate; pastoral work in the schools; the training system, etc.

One thing, however, cannot be omitted from the proceedings, and that is, the changes and general reshuffling mentioned in the Act of the SGC, no. 398. However the SPC decided to set about it, this is a priority area and cannot be shelved.

3.2 The lines of action and resolutions of the SPC should be worked up for the PC'75 either by the Provincial and his Council or by an ad hoc committee.

3.3 These should decide on the key-men or key-groups (e.g. formation teams, delegates for particular sectors, consultative bodies, etc.) who, at the SPC, were made responsible for executing the policies mentioned in the last paragraph.

3.4 They should also examine the difficulties or resistance encountered in the course of getting things moving after the SPC.

3.5 And how far the objectives set for the SGC renewal have been reached.

3.6 It is then a matter of making definite proposals for proceeding with the renewal process for the next period in the light of what will have emerged from 3.4 and 3.5.

4. *The report of the Provincial and his Council on PC'75*

4.1 In Document 20 — 'Post-capitular Programme' — we read at no. 761.12: "At a convenient time the Rector Major and some members of the Superior Council will arrange meetings with the Provincials of the different regions to take stock of the progress

that has been made in the implementation of the directives of the General Chapter. Before this meeting takes place the Provincials must send to the Superior Council a report prepared by them and their Council and approved by the Provincial Chapter, setting out how the decrees of the Special General Chapter are being applied in their Provinces."

4.2 There are a number of ways of combining the report with the work of the PC (cf. no. 2 above). Here are some suggestions:

4.2.1 The report can be prepared as indicated in no. 3 of the present document and submitted to the PC'75 for discussion and modification. The separate parts will be voted on first, and then there will be a vote for the whole package.

4.2.2 The second possibility is that Provincial and his Council base the report on the ebb and flow of discussion in the PC and submit it for approval, first piecemeal and then as a whole, as the work of the Chapter proceeds.

4.2.3 A third alternative is for the Provincial and his Council to consider the Acts of the Chapter itself as the report. The voting figures should be included.

3. The erection of Vietnam as a Special Delegation

The Rector Major has issued these two documents, dated 12th July, 1974.

a) DECREE OF ERECTION

The Rector Major, whereas

— for various reasons of a geographical, historical, social, political, cultural, etc. nature, the ends for which the Delegation of Vietnam was constituted part of the Province of Hong Kong have not been achieved;

— the Delegation of Vietnam is at present independent of the Province of Hong Kong with regard to finances, vocations, supply of personnel and the general lines of the apostolate;

— the differences and the distances separating the two countries do not permit the formation of a true Provincial Community, as required by article 162 of the Constitutions;

— for all these reasons it is undesirable to maintain the present situation; the Salesian work in Vietnam has not yet developed far enough to be erected into a Vice-province;

— in view of the result of the consultation between the confrères of the Vietnam Delegation and the Provincial and Provincial Council of Hong Kong, and

— a favourable vote having been obtained from the Superior Council, which has studied the problem with great care,

— has decided to constitute the Salesian houses of Vietnam a *Special Delegation* directly dependent on the Rector Major, according to the prescription and conditions to be determined in due course.

b) THE JURIDICAL STATUS OF THE DELEGATE FOR VIETNAM

1. *Designation*: he is appointed by the Rector Major with his Council (cf. Const. 166).

2. *Powers*: he governs the Delegation on behalf of and with powers delegated by the Rector Major, with whom he is expected to keep in close contact through the Regional Councillor. He should keep the Regional well informed on how the Delegation is faring and seek his advice in difficult cases.

3. *Competence*:

a) *General principle*: the delegate's competence is similar to a Provincial's. He will therefore exercise all the powers proper to a Provincial, except those which are expressly limited or excluded, either from the nature of the Delegation itself or because it is specified below.

b) *the Delegation Council*: this is set up as a Council composed of four members, appointed by the Rector Major with his Council from a short list prepared by the Delegate after consultation with the members of the Delegation. This Council operates along the same lines as a Provincial Council, and must be consulted in all

those cases where the Constitutions and Regulations require the vote or the opinion of the Provincial Council.

c) *Admissions*: the Delegate, with a favourable vote from his Council, may admit candidates to the novitiate, and can also dismiss them; further, he can admit candidates to profession, either temporary or perpetual and to Orders. He must always have the consent of his Council.

4. *Some limitations.*

a) Rectors are appointed by the Rector Major with his Council, after consulting the Delegate, who in turn will have consulted the confrères.

b) The decisions set out in articles 187 and 189 of the Constitutions must be submitted to the Regional Superior for approval.

4. **Confrères who leave the priesthood**

The Rector Major has sent the following letter, dated 27.7.1974, to Provincials about "our brothers who leave not only the Congregation but the priesthood as well."

Dear Fr. Provincial,

I wish to discuss with you a subject that gives me great pain: I mean our brothers who leave not only the Congregation but the priesthood as well.

Unfortunately, these cases are no longer the rare events they were not so long ago. They happen through a combination of causes that affect certain people.

Clearly, with our pastoral responsibility we cannot stand by idle in the face of this serious phenomenon which our Congregation has not been spared.

So what do we do? There are obviously no specific remedies for the malady, and sometimes it is happy release for the community and the person. But I think that there are certain things to be

taken into consideration and acted upon, so that we can say, in all conscience, that we have done all we can to avoid these misfortunes.

In practice I should say that a general preventive measure is to make sure that there is a strong spiritual life in the community and the individual confrères. This needs patience and perseverance, but the spiritual life is as important to our vocation as air and blood to our bodies: without it we find very great difficulty in overcoming the hazards that confront us with a subtlety and blatancy unknown in other times.

This seems to me to be a fundamental point: for confirmation, you just have to look at the sad petitions put in by so many of these confrères. I won't go into details here, but I do not hesitate to repeat: only by establishing and maintaining real spirituality can we hope to offer the confrères adequate support to face the strains and difficulties of life today.

But there is more to it than a filial relationship with God expressed in community and personal prayer: there must be fraternal charity in pulling together to perform the duties of our consecrated life.

I think that whatever labours each Provincial puts into his task will be an invaluable service to the Province. Here I want to stress the absolute necessity of personal contact between the Provincial and every single confrère. If such contact is to create a climate of confidence, friendship and trust, the Provincial must make his stay with the community long enough. Frequent flying visits to deal with this problem and the other do nothing for such contacts, which require a calm assessment of the situation on the part of the Provincial. I know that the Provincial has a hundred and one problems on his mind. True; but the problem on the Provincial's plate that has absolutely top priority is that of his men. Other matters can be delegated to others, but who, apart from the Provincial, is going to study and solve the problems of the Salesian? But surely there's a Rector in the house? Of course there is; and goodness only knows how often he himself needs this contact and help. I repeat: the Provincial bears a very heavy burden, but I cannot stress too heavily that his absolute priority is the interests of the confrère, who are the chief assets of the Province.

If any further confirmation is required, I may add that I have had all this personally from the confrères themselves, who have shown how much they appreciate the good that is done by visitations carried out calmly, with individual interviews and participation in the various acts of community life.

For the rest, I would point out that the direction of the Provincial Community — and this comes out strongly in the Constitutions, Regulations and the Orange Book — is essentially pastoral. It is not chiefly about administration and business, but directly or indirectly about souls.

It is of the greatest importance, then, that the Council should be a generator of pastoral plans for the Provincial Community, providing the objectives to aim at and the ways to achieve them. One cannot help wondering if certain frustrations, failures and desertions are not evidence of a lack of a well-defined pastoral policy.

I acknowledge the difficulties that can crop up here and there in putting all this into effect, but together we need to face the fact that there is simply no other way of asserting the highest values and interests. We have to get our teeth stuck into it decisively and courageously; even though results are not immediately forthcoming, it is quite certain that the work will be richly blessed.

I leave it to you and your Council to see what practical steps can be taken along these lines in the Province.

Then there are the cases where, in spite of everything, deep personal crises suddenly come to a head and there is no way of fielding the situation. In such cases, the question is: was it really unforeseen? Surely eruption-point was reached only after a considerable period of agonizing with all sorts of warning-signals going unheeded. What can one say to this except to reiterate to Provincials and Rectors how important it is to keep a brotherly eye on the confrères? This means trying to understand them, helping them over the difficult periods, keeping them out of situations which, for one reason or the other, could become embarrassing or equivocal, and pulling them up when undesirable elements creep into their conduct or activities.

It happens all too often that there is a fine old traffic in criticism of a certain confrère going on among the community, but no

one, certainly not the Superior, bothers to tell the man himself! And when he's gone, they wonder why.

But even when the crisis is really serious, it is the Superior's duty to do his utmost to avoid the making of precipitate decisions. So we talk things over patiently with the confrère and invite him to reflect and pray; then there should be every opportunity for a spiritual retreat under the guidance of a suitable mentor.

In short, as I said before, we must be in a position to say that everything has been done — especially in the way of timely preventative action — that it is our serious duty to do. What I recommend for priests also goes for confrères who are asking for a dispensation from their vows, especially perpetual ones. I often feel that, given the proper attention in time, a number of these confrères would have been saved for the Congregation.

For priests seeking laicization, I would like it to be known that the Holy See turns down some requests because the reasons given are not good enough.

Which all goes to confirm, I think, what I have been saying in this letter, and invites us all to reflection.

Whilst we are on this point, here is a recommendation. When the Provincial has done all he can and he has to forward the details of the case, he should make sure that there is a full account of what he has done, either personally or through others, to help the confrères to overcome the crisis. We are Fathers and Pastors dealing with our confrères: we cannot be mere functionaries requiring a signature on the dotted line.

There is another matter often connected with the subject under discussion: that is the status known technically as 'absentia a domo.'

First let us be quite clear about the limitations placed on this concession when it is granted to the Provincial by the Rector Major: it applies only to priests.

But this permission in the mind of the Church is granted FOR THE GREATER GOOD OF THE APPLICANT. And so, according to the provisions of the Holy See, the confrère, who is absent but still a Salesian, should receive spiritual help from his Superiors, who must maintain contact with him for that purpose.

Now, I don't see how absence from the house, with all it

implies, especially in certain highly dubious situations which are already compromised anyway, can possibly offer a solution that is for the *greater good* of the confrère, at least in certain types of spiritual crisis. And I don't know any comforting examples of men returning from this limbo.

But this means that such an absence cannot go on indefinitely. Well, what sense is there in it? (Note that Provincial grants it for one year only in each case). There are situations here that are quite irregular, and, unfortunately they reflect badly on the confrères and the communities. I know that one cannot generalize, but it is as well to remember the purposes for which the Church grants these exceptions, whilst trying to prevent abuses.

And now we are back again on the subject of the vocations crisis and its root causes. We complain about the scarcity of vocations. But what about our own witness, individual and collective? This, after all, is one of the critical sectors in the business. If our witness is a murky affair, or seriously lacking, or — worse still — entirely negative, and admirably adapted to creating painful crises for the members of the community, it will hardly contribute much to attracting vocations. Youngsters are generous, but they are very demanding when it comes to credibility and sincerity.

Finally I want to draw your attention to a danger stemming from the scarcity of Vocations. There may be a temptation to widen the mesh to allow through candidates with various deficiencies.

This would be a serious mistake and a source of great harm to the Province and the Congregation. Today more than ever the screening must be very stringent. The Province will not be revitalized by large numbers entering in job lots, but by the careful training of men who are suited to the vocation.

But it is quite useless to make a first-class personnel selection at the outset if these same people are to be neglected during the training period. At this moment in the Congregation's history this is a really vital point. It has been discussed in all the meetings of Provincials; the standards to be set have been clarified and worked over. We deviate from these standards at the risk of wrecking, in one way or the other, vocations that were perfectly good at the start. A check must be made to see if this is happening in the

Province. There are reports of young confrères in training being placed in situations in which nothing is being done for them. It is a grave responsibility.

Today more than ever our young men have need of solid formation, which is subordinated to an overall plan. The community entrusted with its working-out will set the genuine Salesian stamp to it, largely through the presence of trained instructors, who will see to it that their products measure up to the needs of our mission today.

I invite you to think over the contents of this letter with your Council. I think you will find it useful for the apostolate in the Province and, above all, of service to the confrères.

I would like to receive your ideas and suggestions on the subject.

May the Lord help us and strengthen us in our common work.

FR. LUIGI RICCERI

VI. FROM THE PROVINCIAL NEWSLETTERS

Publication of an item in this news-exchange section (cf. Orange Book 763, 3b) does not necessarily imply a value-judgement on the part of the Superior Council.

1. Two enterprises in the Pacific-Caribbean Region

A "Regional Continuous Formation Centre" and a "Salesian Reflection Group" have been set up in the Region. See Central American PN, July '74, p. 13.

The Continuous Formation Centre: this lively organization provides training in salesianità and important services in this field. It will operate in Quito, the first course to run from December, 1974, to January, 1975, and another from July to September, 1975.

Salesian Reflection Group: this is a sort of 'think-tank' on Salesian themes, which will then be used for discussion at meetings held for the purpose, with a view to publication.

The group will study the life of Don Bosco to find leads on Salesian life today; the lives of the outstanding members of the Salesian family will be presented in a new light and in a way available to Latin-American youth. One of its activities will be the translation and adaptation of studies carried out in other Regions.

The Director of the Centre and Co-ordinator of the Group will be Fr. Peraza.

2. Thailand Province — a bright spot in a sombre landscape

The ILO (International Labour Organization), in a recent report on "The Technical School in Thailand," painted a generally bleak scene, but made an exception of the Don Bosco School in Bangkok.

Here is a summary of the report given in the Thai Newsletter (July, 1974).

Broadly speaking, very few of the pupils turned out by the technical schools in Thailand go on to become specialized operatives in industry; and those who do make it want to get into a white-collar job as soon as possible. The result is that precious little use is made of technical-school training.

It is different, however, at the Don Bosco Technical School, where the pupils who pass out with their diplomas go into industry as specialized technicians. This is due to a number of factors that are difficult to reproduce in other schools.

To begin with, the Don Bosco School selects its pupils. They must be poor orphans, and they must be willing to work. If their status is wrong, they are not admitted; and if they don't knuckle down to work, they don't stay. In spite of these requirements, the number of applications always far exceeds the number of places.

Secondly, besides the instruction in trade theory and practice required by the law, the School creates the work-situation, in which the pupils are engaged in actual production organized on a semi-commercial basis, with the orders being accepted by the head-master as part of a regular contract.

Thirdly, the instructors are Past Pupils of the School who have already had industrial experience. Fourthly, the members of the staff bring an exceptionally high degree of personal dedication to their task, and they try to pass on to their pupils the spirit of work. If visitors pass through their work-shop, the boys are not distracted. And if some are called away from their benches to talk with the visitors, they go straight back to their work.

Many firms in Thailand demand a guarantee in hard cash that their new employees will not indulge in absenteeism or other evasive action; but not with the boys from the Don Bosco School, because word has got about that the Salesian boys are "very good at their job and want to work."

Next, there is efficient machine-maintenance: when a machine breaks down, the instructors and the pupils repair it together. In patent contrast with the government institutions, at the Don Bosco School the water-supply, plumbing and drains actually work.

And finally, the School continues to maintain close contact with its past pupils. Furthermore, it welcomes suggestions from its customers for the improvement of its work.

3. Bilbao Province — average age 34 years, 3 months

The average age of the confrères of the Bilbao Province will doubtless be the object of envy in not a few Provinces (PN for June, 1974, p. 12).

At the time of the General Chapter there was a calculation made of the average age of the Society. It worked out at 42 years.

In the age groupings, our Province was in the first group with the average age at under 35.

The most recent calculation was made for the Provincial's report to the Superior Council, and it stands at 34.25.

4. Province of Buenos Aires — Courses for radio and TV announcers

Since 1968 the Higher Institute for Social Communications, "Cosal," has been operating at the Provincial House in Buenos Aires under the direction of José Calvo, S.D.B. There follows a résumé of the account of his work published in the Buenos Aires PN for June, 1974, pp. 12-14.

In 1970 the Cosal Institute was recognized by the competent department of government and its students can now obtain the professional qualification for the Federal Broadcasting Committee. This year the course has been extended from two to three years. Included in the course are: Spanish morphology, syntax and phonology, the phonetics of the principal (European) languages (except Russian) — English, French, German and Italian, practical training in the techniques of radio, TV and film-dubbing. There is also an introductory

course in the philosophy of communications and a course of theology extending over the three years.

In 1969 the Institute awarded its first five announcers' diplomas, and the numbers increase each year. Today 65% of the total number of qualified announcers working professionally in the country are accounted for by the Institute. It is equipped with a complete wireless studio, where the students practise their techniques and also record programmes for commercials. There is a television studio with limited resources, but enough to give the students experience with closed circuit TV. The Institute is supported solely by the fees of the students, who gain experience in handling money by collaborating in the administration through a committee set up for the purpose.

The object of the Cosal Institute is to introduce into the world of the mass media a band of competent professionals who will not be afraid of being Christians.

VII. PONTIFICAL MAGISTERIUM

1. World Mission Day 1974 in view of the Holy Year

In his message for "World Mission Day 1974," Paul VI reminds us that, if we are to become really missions-conscious, we must undergo a radical spiritual renewal (from "L'Osservatore Romano," Weekly Edition, 15th August, 1974).

Introduction

Once again, in the light of the mystery of Pentecost, which signalled the beginning of the mission activity of the Church, we wish to announce Annual Mission Day next October.

This celebration is set like a jewel in the crown of Holy Year, which proposes, with its theme of renewal and reconciliation in Christ, an objective of universal dimensions. But this is achieved only to the extent that mankind knows and recognises Christ. As an action which makes Christ known to the peoples and aims at renewing and reconciling them with him and in him, evangelization means extending the range and degree of knowledge and acceptance of his Person and his Message. It broadens the vista of reconciliation in justice and charity.

As we disclosed in the Bull, *Apostolorum Limina*, declaring Holy Year 1975, these fundamental reasons for the Jubilee demand, as a necessary consequence, a more vigorous apostolic and mission activity of the Church: "It is therefore necessary that during the Holy Year, a noble commitment be again aroused in promoting evangelization, which is unquestionably, considered as the first point to be achieved in the total picture of such activity. In fact, 'sent by God to men to be the universal sacrament of salvation,' the pilgrim Church is missionary by its very nature. Indeed as it renews itself along its historic path, it prepares to welcome and deepen in faith the Gospel of Jesus Christ, Son of God, and from it give the salvific announcement with the word and the testimony of life."

If, when declaring the Holy Year, we have asserted that "it must reflect the Catholic character of the vocation to the Gospel," and that "it must give world dimensions to the heart of the Church," what better occasion is there actually to carry out a similar purpose than in the celebration of Mission Day, called by its first promoters "the true feast of apostolicity, the great day of Catholicism"? (cf. Letter of Cardinal Van Rossum, former Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, dated 8 August, 1927).

Missionary significance of conversion and reconciliation

Conversion, as required by baptism, does not present only the negative aspect of removing and taking away sin, but also and especially a positive aspect — as is confirmed by its etymological derivation — of turning towards and approaching God and, in the name of God, one's neighbour. For a true Christian, glorification of God, love for him and the coming of his Kingdom are the principal objective of life, in perfect harmony with the basic requests of the *Our Father*. At this time, it is truly thanks to the Church's missionary activity that "God is fully glorified when men in a conscious and whole-hearted manner welcome the work of salvation it has fulfilled in Christ. Thus, thanks to it, God's plan is being realised. Christ consecrated himself to it in a spirit of obedience and love for the glory of the Father who had sent him, so that all mankind may form a single People of God, may reunite in the only Body of Christ, and be built-up in the only Temple of the Holy Spirit. And this, while reflecting fraternal harmony, is a response to the intimate desire of all men" (Decr. *Ad Gentes*, 7).

This universal brotherhood, since we are members of the same family together with Jesus Christ, as an older brother, under the very same Father who is in heaven, calls for a conversion, an openness, a drawing close to all of our brothers. And conversion obliges us, in the first place, to know them, since we must love them and likewise share with them the good things of a material as well as of a moral and spiritual kind. One cannot, in fact, conceive of a family in which some members starve and others have everything; in which some live exposed to the elements and others in comfortable homes; in which some have never heard of Jesus Christ and others

have at hand all the means of salvation possessed by the Church. If we form a single family with all men, brotherly love obliges us also to reconcile with brothers of all races, languages, cultures and living conditions. To our "account" there are truly many sins of omission and injustice, for which we should ask forgiveness from our neighbour.

Reconciliation with our brothers includes the redress of such lack of justice and charity, besides constituting the clearest sign of our reconciliation with God: "If we love one another, God abides in us" (1 Jo 4, 7; cf. also Mt 4. 25).

The necessity and importance of a renewal of missionary forms

This concern for all men when we feel their problems as our own, when we are profoundly aware that "every man is our brother," this keen desire to make amends for the selfishness of our countries and ourselves — these are all essential elements for planning, in a genuinely evangelical sense, a pastoral effort of conversion and reconciliation which necessarily flows towards a renewal in the entire Church.

The formation of an authentic missionary consciousness must rest upon a deep-rooted spiritual renewal: before preaching the Gospel, it must needs be lived! It is the life of a Christian or community that formulates its missionary announcement (cf. *Act* 3, 44; 5, 14). If one has not first personally proved to himself that Christ is the Saviour, he will hardly feel the necessity of making it known to others. Since Catholicism — as Our Predecessor Pius XII says in his Encyclical *Fidei Donum* — it "the principal mark of the true Church" (AAS 49, 1957, p. 237), this Catholicism, which means universal missionary spirit, should be a principal element in the pastoral work of the individual Churches, in which subsists, alive and working, the very being of the Church, and should itself shape the whole pastoral action which it intends to renew. "Nor must it be forgotten," adds the same Encyclical, "that this spiritual missionary fervour, stimulated in your dioceses, is a token of renewed religious vitality with which they will be kindled... If, then, supernatural life consists in charity and is increased by the commitment to give

of oneself, we can rightly state that the Catholic life of any country whatever is measured by the sacrifices that it spontaneously assumes and sustains by mission work" (ibid., p. 243).

This principle finds confirmation in Vatican Council II: "The grace of renewal cannot develop in the communities if every one of them does not broaden the extent of its charity to the ends of the earth, showing for those who are far away the same concern it has for those who are their own members" (Decr. *Ad Gentes*, 37).

Necessity and urgency of evangelization

Our incorporation into the life itself of the Christ, begun in Baptism, growing with Confirmation and perfected in the Eucharist, commits us totally to the divine plan of salvation which he came to accomplish on earth. Yes, it is true that God "wants all men to be saved and to arrive at knowledge of the truth" (1 *Tim* 2, 4). But this plan, revealed in a progressive way and reaching its culmination in Christ "mediator and fullness of all Revelation" (Dogm. Const. *Dei Verbum*, 7), presents two specific characteristics. The salvific plan is extended not only to some men or some groups of men, but to all men and all peoples. On the other hand, "the call to faith and the response of the believer do not come about in an isolated fashion and exclusive of any reciprocal tie," but in the bosom of a people "that acknowledged him in the truth and faithfully served him" (Dogm. Const. *Lumen Gentium*, 9, cf. Decr. *Ad Gentes*, 2).

This People of God, the communitarian subject of the faith and supernatural life, is the Church, to whose keeping the Revelation has been entrusted, not to be safeguarded underground but placed at the disposal of all men (cf. Decr. *Ad Gentes*, 1, 29, 35; Decr. *Apost. Actuosa*, 2; Dogm. Const. *Lumen Gentium*, 13). We hope and trust that, during the Holy Year, all the faithful and all the communities will take cognizance of this universal missionary commitment, which, deriving from the very missionary nature of the Catholic Church, is also proper to all the Churches and local communities, as well as to each and every Christian.

We consider, furthermore, that the Holy Spirit, which always works in perfect harmony with the salvific plan of the Father and

the essentially missionary nature of the Church, at the same time performs a converging two-fold movement. On one side, it urges the non-Christian peoples towards the Church, and, on the other, infuses the souls of the baptised with the missionary spirit, Christ from heaven — the Council states — through the Spirit “works unceasingly in the world, in order to lead men to the Church” (Dogm. Const. *Lumen Gentium*, 48). “The Holy Spirit unifies the entire Church, animating the ecclesial institutions and instilling the same missionary spirit in the hearts of the faithful, which he was charged to do by Christ Himself” (Decr. *Ad Gentes*, 4).

Now is the time

The work of evangelization, besides being necessary, is urgent: first of all, because of divine charity, which is the supreme reason which motivates it, and then also as a reply to the great spiritual need of the present-day world. *Caritas Christi urget nos* (2 Cor 4, 4). From the time that St. Paul expressed that precept, the religious panorama in the world presents characteristics that worry and sadden us. The growth of the missionary activity of the Church is too slow. It is customary to say by way of excuse that the Church should imitate the patience of God. This is true: God is patient because he is eternal; God has his hour, nor can we in our anxiety profess to advance God’s hour. We do, however, forget that it is we, with our guilty selfishness, our indolence and lack of missionary zeal, who force, so to speak, God to show himself patient, almost as if maintaining the pace that we ourselves wish to keep.

God is love, and, as such, he earnestly wishes to communicate with men. Perhaps these words did not flow from the Heart of Christ, burning like volcanic lava: “I am come to send fire on the earth, and how I wish that it were already blazing”? (*Lk* 12, 49). Similarly, today’s world, by the signs of our times, turns to the Church to hasten to its aid and to respond fully to its increasing disquiet and aspirations, like the Macedonian of St. Paul’s vision: “Come to Macedonia and help us!” (cf. *Acts* 16, 9-10). Those of us who are sons of the Church can and must reply as did the Apostle of the Gentiles and repeat with him; “For though I preach

the gospel, I have nothing of which to glory for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!" (1 Cor 9, 16).

(Here the Pope declares that the Pontifical Mission Works are "an effective instrument for aiding evangelization," then he concludes):

We would like to terminate our Message by repeating the prayer we read in the liturgy of the feast of the Patron Saint of Missions, St. Francis Xavier: "O Lord, let your Church find her joy in the evangelisation of all peoples."

2. The insidious danger of secularism

The greatest temptation of today is to stop at the 'horizontal' whilst denying that there is any such thing as the 'vertical,' or just ignoring it. Religious are also liable to be caught up in it, and the Pope had this to say about it in a general audience held 17th July, 1974:

In the school of the Council, a school that should leave its imprint on the Cristian life of our time, we are educated to look at the world in which we live with optimism, respect and sympathy; we believers, we Christians, we members of the Church. And by world we mean here the real life of mankind, as it is, as it could and should be, without for that reason hiding from our eyes its ailments and its needs. On the contrary these negative aspects of the human scene should be an incentive to approach it more closely, to serve it more, because love is at the basis of our Christian conception of the world. Love can discover a reason for its interest where good exists, to recognize it and enjoy it; and where evil exists, to treat it and find a remedy for it.

This is a great "maturation" of Christian conscience and of the general attitude of the Church in time and in society. We will do well to conform our mentality with this view, which we can say is, in a certain sense, a new one, with regard to the evaluation of the existential panorama by which we are surrounded, without thereby losing the deep and real sense of good and evil that is in

the dramatic situation of our lives, and without departing from the discipline of the Gospel and the Cross, which must guide to salvation our pilgrim path on earth.

Secular and civil progress

This view entails many consequences, among which we will note one now. First, the recognition, of a relative but real autonomy of the secular world, that is, the world in which religion, or rather the Church, does not exercise any direct authority; second, the recognition of the "values" of this same secular world, the qualities, virtues, works, institutions, in which it abounds and to which it has given a prodigious development, in our times, with scientific studies and politico-social organizations; third, we will have no difficulty in recognizing that great advantages can be derived from modern culture for better adherence to and a more effective profession of our faith.

Let no one, therefore, believe that we are opposed on principle to secular and civil progress in the world. Let no one accuse us of religious "integralism," in the sense of wishing the natural world to be directly subordinated to the religious sphere in doctrine and practice. Let no one judge us as alien to everyday life, out-of-date as regards the evolution of history, an anachronistic supporter of the past, blind and hostile to the civilization of the future.

Let us bless the Lord, who, from the very first page of the Bible, taught us — with the satisfaction that the Creator showed for his work, judging it "good" (cf. Gen 1, 21, 25) — admiration for the cosmos, for everything that is, reflecting in its existence and essential composition the power, the wisdom of God, the planner, the creator, the supporter of everything.

And let us bless the Lord for the subsequent revelation of goodness, presence and love, which He deigned to offer mankind with the mysterious plan of salvation and with the intervention of God's own Word in the tragic and glorious history of man, and then with a supernatural animation of the Spirit, through which a "new creature" is to emerge from the plan of redemption (cf. Rom 8, 21; 2 Cor 5, 17).

But let us be careful, beloved brothers and sons!

Complete view of the truth

Let this optimism not betray us! Once more: let not the view of a truth make us forget the complete view of truth. What are we referring to now? We are referring to the most dangerous temptation of our time, the temptation to limit ourselves to the "horizontal" sphere, as is said nowadays, neglecting, forgetting, and finally deying the "vertical" sphere; fixing our attention on the visible, experimental, temporal and human field, while abdicating our vocation for the kingdom of God, which is invisible, ineffable, eternal and superhuman. Modern atheism has its most seductive and dangerous origin in this choice, exclusively positive for things of this world, and radically negative for religious and specifically Christian things.

You certainly know the expressions, proudly concrete and unhappily totalitarian, at which this aberration of modern thought has arrived. It affirms with aggressive virulence that "man is the supreme being for man" (Marx), that anthropology must replace theology (Feuerbach), that mankind is to be put in the place of the supreme Being (Comte), that "God is dead" for modern man (W. Hamilton, etc.). Religion has no longer a *raison d'être*, for these prophets of materialism, positivism, and social phenomenism.

That trend of thought that claims for purely earthly and human values their reality and their legitimate and rightful cultivation, is called secularization today. So far so good. But let us repeat: let us be careful. If this trend is isolated and breaks loose from the philosophical and religious foundations that are indispensable in the construction of the whole truth, of real Reality, it advances along a line where balance is impossible. It at once falls under the pull of a negative gravitation; from secularization it tends to become secularism, from the distinction of particular positive values it tends to lead to denial of every other philosophical and religious value. Thus it is swallowed up, in its fatal slide, by agnosticism, laicism, atheism, where thought lacks absolute and transcendent principles, and must either renounce a logical and objective system of truth, or replace it with alienating substitutes of weak philosophies or formidable revolutionary voluntarism: *stat pro ratione voluntas*.

Allow us to repeat: let us be careful. The danger that we ourselves, already raised to the level of Christian wisdom and to

the firmness of faith, may be swept away towards this horizontalism, victims of the fascinating weakness of secularism, derived from an imprudent and yielding secularization, this danger exists and presses hard on persons and movements that would seek to promote justice in the world and man's liberation from so many sufferings. The danger of considering valid the formula that limits adherence to Christ to the fact that He is "for others" (cf. Bonhoeffer), as if that were enough to recognize in Him the teacher and saviour, without proclaiming the mystery of his divinity. The danger of attributing absolute and exclusive rights to partial values. The danger of accepting social formulas which, for example, by erecting the class struggle into a system, inevitably transform it into class hatred, and class hatred into a possible inhuman exercise of class power (cf. *Gulag Archipelago*), with the eventual inability, for a follower of Christ to assign to the love of God the first place in moral dynamics, and to establish on this love an inexhaustible and pressing love for his neighbour, for the man in need of elevation and equality. And so on. There would be a great deal more to say; but let it be enough for us now to recall a sentence from a great teacher of our civilization, St. Benedict: "Nihil amor Christi praeponere," put nothing before Christ's love.

VIII. OBITUARIES

Fr. Jacobus van Brakel

* Zwolle, Netherlands: 25.6.1913. † Nijmegen, Netherlands: 14.1.1974. 60 years of age; 36 prof.; 28 priest; 7 Rector.

He left for the missions soon after ordination. First in Cuba and then in Mexico, he worked tirelessly for the good of religion and the people. For health reasons he returned to the Netherlands, where he worked for Spanish immigrants. On the 14th of last January he was saying grace with the community: "May the King of eternal glory lead us to the banquet of everlasting life," when he collapsed and died from angina pectoris.

Bro. Felix Bürger

* Birawa, Upper Silesia, Poland. 29.8.1881. † Lima, Perú: 25.7.1974. 92 years of age, 66 prof.

He lived his 66 years of Salesian life in work and prayer. Whilst he could still be of use to others, he went on working. And when he became too old for the active life, he spent his time in prayer and reading. An insatiable reader, he preferred to read about the Congregation.

Bro. Victor Clitheroe

* Siam, India: 4.8.1895. † Cape Town, South Africa: 12.6.1974. 78 years of age; 54 prof.

Except for three years of teaching at San Benigno, he spent his Salesian life at the Institute in Cape Town, where he did outstanding work as head of the printing department. He was a great personality, open, simple and exemplary. He had a great attachment to Don Bosco and a happy spirit that made him well loved by everyone, especially the boys. Cardinal McCann himself presided at the funeral, and a large number of past pupils were there as a last token of their gratitude.

Fr. Natale Dottino

* Turin, Italy: 25.12.1887. † Modena, Italy: 29.6.1974. 86 years of age, 70 prof.; 61 priest; 34 rector.

A long life spent in faithfully carrying out the commitments that he had entered into as a youngster, once for all, and without grumbling. He was a self-possessed man who cultivated friendship as a form of apostolate. He was a good teacher and for many years superior, putting his considerable abilities at the service of the community. He was in harness to within two days of his death.

Fr. Rufino Encinas

* Gejeuelo del Barro, Salamanca, Spain: 22.5.1909. † Deusto-Bilbao, Spain: 28.2.1974. 64 years old, 42 prof.; 32 priest; 22 rector; 6 vice-provincial.

His outstanding characteristics were his kindness (just before he died, he was able to say that he had never wittingly harmed anyone) and his total commitment to the Congregation. For many years he was Rector in various houses, had charge of the Co-operators and vocations, for which he had offered his life. His end was sudden, but it was a long time coming, and painful. He had a malignant tumour that was his Calvary. He wanted to die, and yet he had a great desire to continue working.

Bro. Joseph Ferrari

* Pittsfield, Massachusetts, U.S.A.: 10.7.1940. † Newton, U.S.A.: 26.4.1974. 33 years of age; 14 prof.

He was known by all as 'Brother Rey,' and was an artist by temperament and ability. His gifts he used well, especially for the boys, with whom he was the real Salesian. He went suddenly, but not before the confrères had come to know of the vicious head-aches he had carried about with him with Christian fortitude.

Fr. Francesco Ferrarino

* Grazzano, Asti, Italy: 21.3.1914. † Madrid, Spain: 24.2.1974. 61 years old; 43 prof.; 33 priest.

He brought to his work as educator and priest a complete dedication, leaving in the houses where he had worked an example of kindness,

understanding and readiness for anything. He worked steadily and unobtrusively as spiritual guide in the confessional. A malignant tumour interrupted his exemplary life.

Fr. Joaquim França

* Queluz, Sao Paolo, Brazil: 13.11.1896. † Sao José dos Campos, Brazil: 26.6.1974. 77 years old; 58 prof.; 50 priest; 32 rector.

While he was still a young priest, God placed on his shoulders the heavy cross of infirmity, which kept him on a limited round of activities for 47 years till his death. He poured great effort into spreading devotion to our Lady and Don Bosco in the town, and ran a lively Co-operators' Centre. Death overtook him while his confrères and friends were preparing to celebrate his golden jubilee of ordination. His body rests alongside that of the Servant of God Fr. Rudolph Komorek.

Fr. Bernard Gaffney

* Newcastle-on-Tyne, England: 4.9.1901. † Sliema, Malta: 5.6.1974. 72 years old; 45 prof.; 37 priest.

He came to the Congregation as a late vocation. He taught music and history, and for three years taught English at Quito. On his return to England, his services as confessor in Spanish proved to be very useful. For the last four years of his life he was priest-in-charge of the Salesian church of St. Patrick's at Sliema. He died suddenly, after only two days of illness.

Mons. Mauricio Magliano

* S. Isidro, Buenos Aires, Argentina: 22.1.1920. † Pico Truncado, Argentina: 31.5.1974. 54 years old; 36 prof.; 25 priest; 6 rector; 13 Bishop of Rio Gallegos, Argentina.

As Rector and Parish Priest of Rio Gallegos he had shown great capabilities as pastor and organizer, and when Rio Gallegos was made into a diocese in 1961 he was appointed bishop. He laboured diligently and selflessly for his flock scattered over the 100,000 sq. miles of his diocese. He worked with the parish-priests, the Salesians and the Salesian Sisters, organizing Eucharistic and Marian congresses in their houses and

meetings of superiors and boys. He preached unity, peace and faith to all. He was loved and respected by everyone for his warmth and understanding, and for his constant concern for the poor and the lowly. God called him to his reward while he was going round his diocese. His unexpected death caused deep grief everywhere.

Fr. Teodoro Mattiel

* Villanova, Motta di Livenza, Treviso, Italy: 10.1.1913. † Pordenone, Italy: 15.5.1974. 61 years old; 42 prof.; 32 priest.

His put his lively disposition generously at the disposal of Don Bosco in his preaching, teaching and work for the Past Pupils. He retained a lively awareness of the long sacrifices made by his mother for his sake, and he was always attentive to her needs in her widowhood.

Fr. Janko Mernik

* Galusak, Slovenia, Yugoslavia: 1.3.1914. † Ramos Mejía, Argentina: 12.5.1974. 60 years old; 39 prof.; 30 priest.

As a young priest he was teacher and assistant, and he worked very hard for orphan boys and indigent families. After four years in concentration camps, he was sent to the Province of Buenos Aires to look after the many Slovenian immigrants who lived there. He spent most of his life at Ramos Mejía, working for his fellow-countrymen, especially the young, for whom he procured schooling and jobs. He organized the magnificent Ateneo Don Bosco, which the people hold in high regard. He was responsible for inspiring and guiding many vocations to the priesthood and the religious life, the fruit of his own example of a life spent for others.

Fr. Michele Molineris

* Bibiana, Turin, Italy: 28.1.1909. † Chieri, Turin, Italy: 12.7.1974. 65 years old; 48 prof.; 38 priest.

He did much careful research on the life of Don Bosco, and for twenty years he was editor of the magazine "Il tempio di Don Bosco," in which he published his material to supplement that of the Memorie.

He later gathered the material into separate volumes on, e.g., the charism, the miracles of Don Bosco. He had another two volumes ready for publication on Dominic Savio. Poor health had robbed him of the fulfilment of his missionary ambitions, but he made up for it by living his Salesian vocation with great fidelity: work, as health permitted, good example, cheerfulness, union with God in suffering and prayer.

Fr. Virginio Mondini

* Cislago, Varese, Italy: 21.3.1908. † Parma, Italy: 25.12.1973. 65 years old; 48 prof.; 36 priest.

He did administrative work for a number of years, and was attentive to the needs of the confrères and exact in performing his duties. When ill health forced him into inactivity, he accepted it with faith and resignation. Among his qualities were: simplicity of soul, strong spirituality, a deep love of the liturgy, devotion to Mary, loyalty to the Pope, to the Magisterium and to the Congregation.

Fr. Cesare Moretti

* Sarezzo, Brescia, Italy: 19.12.1942. † Gavardo, Brescia, Italy: 18.4.1974. 31 years old; 14 prof.; 4 priest.

Even as an aspirant he made his mark for his ability to liven up the liturgy on feast-days. This he carried over to his work among the students of philosophy at Canlubang. As a teacher he was greatly appreciated for his ease of communication. His life ended tragically in a motor accident, which cut short the bright prospect for our work in the Philippines.

Fr. Luigi Pirondini

* Gonzaga, Mantua, Italy: 5.10.1920. † Genoa, Italy: 10.8.1974. 53 years old; 37 prof.; 27 priest.

A man of sensibility and refinement, he was always available on call for his priestly services. As a teacher and educator, he worked constantly for the good of the boys, for whom he made heavy sacrifices. When it came to working for qualifications, he was as ready and

enthusiastic as ever to spend himself in bringing Christ to his brothers. And, in the grip of the illness that was killing him, he continued to spread the Good News, offering up his sufferings for the advance of the Kingdom.

Fr. Felix Radman

* Drvenik, Croatia, Yugoslavia: 10.2.1892. † Prvič-Luka, Croatia: 23.7.1974. 82 years old; 57 prof.; 50 priest.

He was a good friend, a man of great simplicity. Most punctual in everything — work, practices of piety, the common life, he was a zealous priest with a vocation that could not be shaken. His death was sudden, but with a long life of preparation to precede it.

Bro. Luigi Riva

* Monza, Milan, Italy: 9.7.1905. † Valsalice, Turin, Italy: 19.6.1974. 68 years of age; 40 prof.

At home he was brought up to be generous and considerate towards the poor. After qualifying as an accountant, he spent a few years as a bank-clerk. Then one of his sisters became a nun, and he decided to enter our house at Ivrea as a clerical aspirant. He was then 25. However, he chose to become a Brother, and for more than 40 years he worked in the administration of several of our houses, where he completed his office routines with speed and precision. In the end, laid low by the pains of asthma and a weak heart, he offered to God a sacrifice of prayer and patience. He was all Don Bosco wanted of a Brother: poor, hard-working, a man of prayer.

Fr. Clement Rushton

* Birkenhead, Cheshire, England: 28.4.1901. † Colne, England: 14.5.1974. 73 years of age; 47 prof.; 38 priest.

He entered the Congregation as a late vocation, aged 26. He was a kind and simple man. Having a flair for administration, he was bursar in several houses. His services in the confessional were much in demand. He was at Malta for a while as military chaplain. He died suddenly at Colne in the house of the Salesian Sisters, where for four years he had been chaplain and spiritual director.

Fr. Mario Ruzzon

* Ca'Bianco, Chioggia, Venice, Italy: 24.8.1906. † Trieste, Italy: 8.7.1974. 67 years old; 49 prof.; 40 priest; 9 rector.

His apostolate was among the poor people of our centres and parishes, preferring the suffering and the sick. He was a zealous priest, a great worker, always ready and generous, and he won the friendship of everyone with his simple style.

Bro. Carlo Salamanca

* Tenza, Boyacá, Colombia: 12.8.1912. † Medellín, Colombia: 14.8.1974. 62 years old; 39 prof.

This confrère, who died suddenly, was cooking with great efficiency to within 3 years of his end. For 20 years the community of the Sufragio at Medellín has benefited from his example of industry and calm spirituality. The crowd that attended his funeral was witness enough to the great affection in which he was held.

Bro. José Santana

* Felizberto Caldeira, Minas Gerais, Brazil: 19.3.1917. † Missione Salesiana Sagrada Familia, Marauia, Rio Negro, Brazil: 7.6.1974. 57 years of age; 29 prof.

As farm assistant and sacristan in the houses where he worked, he brought to life the words of his request for admission to the noviciate: "...With the help of God and the protection of Mary, I want to be a holy Salesian." And indeed he had a great spirit of sacrifice and a tender devotion to Mary.

Fr. Paul Schindelholz

* Courtelle, Jura Bernois, Switzerland: 6.10.1908. † Lyons, France: 16.4.1974. 65 years of age; 39 prof.; 31 priest.

He was a late vocation. His grip on good health had always been tenuous, and World War II wrecked his nervous system. So for 20 years he had to forego his active work with the young, except for the rare periods of improvement in his health: a peculiarly poignant cross for a Salesian. His own deep spiritual life and the help he received from his confrères at Lyons helped him to bear his trials. Soon after Easter he was called home with a heart-attack.

Bro. Fernando Sibrian

* San Juan Opico, La Libertad, El Salvador: 27.4.1912. † Quezaltenango, Guatemala: 31.7.1974. 62 years old; 25 prof.

He spent most of his Salesian life in the house at Quezaltenango, where he taught music and art. It was a life dedicated to making his pupils good Christians. He died suddenly and unexpectedly after a very short illness, which cut him off in the midst of his activity.

Fr. Nicola Stanziani

* Mirabello Sannitico, Campobasso, Italy: 26.4.1905. † Vomero, Naples, Italy: 24.8.1974. 69 years old; 51 prof.; 43 priest; 9 rector.

He was faithful to the Rule, an exemplary religious and a great optimist. His dominating personality was used for drawing to God anyone who made friends with him, which was no difficult accomplishment, or who sought his help as a priest. His uncertain health did not keep him away from his work. Even the period of excruciating pain leading up to his death he did not waste: he made it his duty to present a cheerful face to the world, whilst he offered up his sufferings as a holocaust for vocations.

Fr. Józef Szlek

* Sietesz, Leopoli, Poland: 24.9.1913; † there: 2.6.1974. 60 years of age; 39 prof.; 28 priest.

He is remembered by his confrères as a zealous, hard-working priest. He was a good musician. As parish priest for many years he was well loved by the people, especially the young. An aneurism accounted for him at last.

Fr. Ferdinand Thébault

* Rennes, Ille et Vilaine, France: 6.4.1888. † Giel-Putanges, France: 29.4.1974. 86 years of age; 66 prof.; 52 priest; 9 rector.

A teacher for many years and parish-priest at St. Jean Bosco in Paris, he was outstanding for his unquenchable apostolic zeal. He was exemplary in his spirituality, mortification and contempt for comfort. His was a strong will that was expressed in the tough programme he imposed on himself and in his diligence in training the boys to be real men.

Fr. Nicola Vitone

* Sepino, Campobasso, Italy: 11.3.1913. † Rome, Italy: 10.6.1974. 61 years old; 45 prof.; 35 priest.

Mindful of the teaching of Don Bosco, his great desire was to be a priest, always and everywhere a priest. His spirituality had a luminous quality: and the rosary was his favourite prayer. He taught our own students at Turin, Padua, Messina, and Castellammare, where he was able to exercise his rare musical talent. Held in high regard in the world of the arts, he taught at the Conservatorio at Bari, and recently had accepted the chair for new forms of liturgical music at the Pontificio Istituto Superiore di Musica Sacra. With a grounding in the disciplines of traditional music, he brought to the music of the renewed liturgy the lyrical and artistic genius of polyphony and Gregorian chant. His memory will live on in the Church and the liturgy, in his own community, among the boys and in the world of music.

3° Elenco 1974

- 78 Sac. BRAKEL Giacomo van † Nimega (Olanda) 1974 a 60 a.
- 79 Coad. BÜRGER Felice † Lima (Perù) 1974 a 92 a.
- 80 Coad. CLITHEROE Vittore † Cape Town (Sud Africa) 1974 a 78 a.
- 81 Sac. DOTTINO Natale † Modena (Italia) 1974 a 86 a.
- 82 Sac. ENCINAS Ruffino † Deusto - Bilbao (Spagna) 1974 a 64 a.
- 83 Coad. FERRARI Giuseppe † Newton (USA) 1974 a 33 a.
- 84 Sac. FERRARINO Francesco † Courgnè (Torino - Italia) 1974 a 60 a.
- 85 Sac. FRANCA Giacomo (Santiago) † Madrid (Spagna) 1974 a 61 a.
- 86 Sac. FRANÇA Gioachino † S. Josè Dos Campos (Brasile) 1974 a 77 a.
- 87 Sac. GAFFNEY Bernardo † Sliema (Malta) 1974 a 72 a.
- 88 Mons. MAGLIANO Maurizio † Pico Truncado (Argentina) 1974 a 54 a.
- 89 Sac. MATTIEL Teodoro † Pordenone (Italia) 1974 a 61 a.
- 90 Sac. MERNIK Giovanni † Ramos Mejia (Argentina) 1974 a 60 a.
- 91 Sac. MOLINERIS Michele † Chieri (Torino - Italia) 1974 a 65 a.
- 92 Sac. MONDINI Virginio † Parma (Italia) 1973 a 65 a.
- 93 Sac. MORETTI Cesare † Gavardo (Brescia - Italia) 1974 a 31 a.
- 94 Sac. PIRONDINI Luigi † Genova - Sampierdarena (Italia) 1974 a 53 a.
- 95 Sac. RADMAN Felice † Prvič - Luka (Croazia) 1974 a 82 a.
- 96 Coad. RIVA Luigi † Torino (Italia) 1974 a 68 a.
- 97 Sac. RUSHTON Clemente † Colne (Gran Bretagna) 1974 a 73 a.
- 98 Sac. RUZZON Mario † Trieste (Italia) 1974 a 67 a.
- 99 Coad. SALAMANCA Carlo † Medellín (Colombia) 1974 a 62 a.
- 100 Coad. SANTANA Giuseppe † Marauia (Rio Negro, Brasile) 1974 a 57 a.
- 101 Sac. SCHINDELHOLZ Paolo † Lyon (Francia) 1974 a 65 a.
- 102 Coad. SIBRIAN Fernando † Quezaltenango (Guatemala) 1974 a 62 a.
- 103 Sac. STANZIANI Nicola † Napoli - Vomero (Italia) 1974 a 69 a.
- 104 Sac. SZLEK Giuseppe † Sietesz (Leopoli - Polonia) 1974 a 60 a.
- 105 Sac. THEBAULT Ferdinando † Giel - Putanges (Francia) 1974 a 86 a.
- 106 Sac. VITONE Nicola † Roma (Italia) 1974 a 61 a.

