



# acts

**of the general council**

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**year LXVII january-march 1986**

**N. 316**

**official organ  
of animation  
and communication  
for the  
salesian congregation**

**Roma  
Direzione Generale  
Opere Don Bosco**





# acts

**of the General Council  
of the Salesian Society  
of St John Bosco**

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OFFICIAL ORGAN OF ANIMATION AND COMMUNICATION FOR THE SALESIAN CONGREGATION

## N. 316

**Year LXVII  
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1. LETTER OF THE RECTOR MAJOR	1.1 Fr Egidio VIGANÒ <b>Vatican II, still a powerful force at the present day</b>	3
2. GUIDELINES AND POLICIES	2.1 Fr Paul NATALI <b>The "Ratio" (2nd edition, 1985)</b> 2.2 Fr Juan E. VECCHI <b>The Educative and Pastoral Plan</b>	30 41
3. RULINGS AND DIRECTIVES	None in this issue	
4. ACTIVITIES OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL	4.1 Chronicle of the Rector Major 4.2 Chronicle of the General Council 4.3 Activities of the Councillors	50 50 52
5. DOCUMENTS AND NEWS ITEMS	5.1 2nd World Congress of Salesian Coop- erators. <i>Concluding address of the Rector Major</i> 5.2 Intervention of Rector Major at Extra- ordinary Synod of Bishops 5.3 Missionary departures 5.4 Deceased confreres	63 73 75 77



## 1. LETTER OF THE RECTOR MAJOR

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### **VATICAN II — STILL A POWERFUL FORCE AT THE PRESENT DAY**

Introduction. - Pentecostal atmosphere. - Twenty years of accelerated history. - The prophetic ministry of two Popes. - Why the crisis? - Relaunching the Council. - Pastoral originality. - Centrality of the Mystery. - Guarding the identity. - Commitment to sanctity. - Communion and pluriformity. - A gift for the young. - Conclusion.

Vatican City, 8 December 1985

*My dear confreres,*

I am writing to you from the Extraordinary Synod of Bishops. I am thinking of you, of our Family, and of young people.

The Synod has discerned so many rich facets of life, so many lines of action, so many hopes for the future, that I cannot fail to speak of them to you for the benefit of our common sanctification and apostolate.

This time I took part in the synodal meetings in company with the FMA Superior General, Mother Marinella Castagno, and some of our own well-deserving confreres: two Cardinals (Castillo and Obando), three Archbishops (Gottardi, Rivera-Damas and Santos), and one of the experts working with the special Secretary, Fr Luigi Bogliolo. There were eight of us in all! Several times we met together to exchange impressions and assessments and to share the joy of expressing at a highly responsible level of service the great ideal of love for the Church cherished by our father Don Bosco.

## **Pentecostal atmosphere**

The Synodal Fathers detected with joy and gratitude the fresh air of a pentecostal atmosphere due to the special presence of the Spirit of the Lord. It was felt in an intense manner with deep satisfaction and not without an element of surprise. Bishops of so many nations, of different colours, from so many cultural backgrounds and different social, political and pastoral situations, while expressing widely varying (and sometimes conflicting) problems and preoccupations, reached a wonderful convergence on great vital principles and on the basic criteria proposed by Vatican II for our changed times.

The Church is not a widow, making a weary earthly pilgrimage in sorrow and mourning: She is the ever youthful Spouse of the Holy Spirit from whom She receives timely rejuvenation, joy of heart and energy of maternal fertility.

The experience of this synodal atmosphere had the effect of widening our mental horizons and giving us a keener ecclesial awareness; it made for a surer assessment of the more urgent priorities, and for tackling problems with the wisdom of one who starts from the standpoint of concern for the universal Church. It was as though one was looking at man, his problems and his history from an observation point above human level.

For anyone who had been present at the Council itself, this Synod was a genuine and close-packed realization of its pentecostal dimension for the present day: with the same advent perspective; the same committed hope; with the very same feeling of being launched into a previously unknown orbit, with the exciting objective of evangelizing the



newly emerging cultures in humanity's present era.

Some of the great protagonists of the Council, now getting on in years, spoke strongly and lucidly of the prophetic significance of Vatican II, and of its vitality because of the powerful influx of the Holy Spirit in this closing period of the twentieth century: a vitality which is not fenced in by our problems but rises above the human events of a few score of years to show forth today's Church as a treasury of miracles open to present and future horizons, and to invite her members to pass from fear and anxiety to joy and hope.

One of these Council witnesses, Cardinal Marty, was led to exclaim with emotion: "in my old age I entrust the great treasure of Vatican II to those who are younger!"

The Holy Father too recalled that to have taken part in the Council had been an extraordinary grace from God which had made the participants take on a sacred commitment: that of dedicating their lives to making it known and put into practice. And I thought to myself that his pontificate will be characterized precisely by this vast purpose, even though it may not always be well understood.

### **Twenty years of accelerated history**

The Synod was convoked to mark the twentieth anniversary of the ending of Vatican II. Nowadays twenty years are a long time. It is said that time has accelerated to such an extent that five or ten years correspond to a century of times gone by. And so humanity's problems have changed a great deal since the Council. Some would have it that we are

in an entirely new situation, and even awaiting...  
Vatican III.

As regards the "new situation" there is a certain amount of truth in this: there are new problems, further progress, the maturing and development of values then only in embryo, different ways of looking at things from an ecclesial point of view, tremendous scientific conquests. But unfortunately there is also a good deal which is superficial: the considering, for instance, of a pentecostal event as though it were a mere human happening. The vision is lacking of what the celebration of an Ecumenical Council means in the course of history; a specific consideration of the eschatological aspect of the Church united in Council is overlooked; the great leap forward made by Vatican II is not sufficiently analysed: it was not merely a short-term event of five years, but rather the courageous launching of the Church into a new orbit, an orbit of great length to be traversed, and one intended to accompany and enlighten man's future starting from the present time.

The Holy Spirit, the creative genius and inexhaustible source of the Church's youth, does not sow seed to let it perish, but cares for it and fosters its growth to full maturity. In the case of a Council it will be only after many decades (and not a bare two) that it will be possible to perceive and appreciate the true value of how great a gift God made to the world in Vatican II.

It became clear during the Synod that the Bishops are unanimously convinced of the fully contemporary nature of Vatican II with the present day, without excluding its human limitations or the innovations subsequently made as a result of pastoral experience and reflection. After twenty years

the "pentecostal" aspect of Vatican II is fully alive and appears as a salvific event still at the sprouting stage, but heading well for a promising growth.

### **The prophetic ministry of two Popes**

In this context it is pleasant to recall the two great Popes who were responsible for the Council: John XXIII who conceived the idea of the Council and began it, and Paul VI who saw it through to an end and then began its practical application.

The pastoral heart of Pope John shines through his famous opening address of 11 October 1962, in which he emphasized the urgency of making a "leap forward" so as to render present and incisive the patrimony of faith at a turning point in history.

The acute discernment of Paul VI, on the other hand, remains for ever engraved in his memorable concluding address of 7 December 1965 on the "humanistic" turning of the Council: the Church (true, and not untrue to herself) turned towards man, in whose countenance must be recognized the face of Christ, Son of the Father and Son of Man; a humanism therefore which becomes christianity: an authentic theocentric christianity, but one which can "make it clear that to know God one must know Man".

This orbit of Pope John and of Paul VI, which expresses the renewing thrust of the whole Council is what is running through the Church at the present day and will continue to do so tomorrow.

To want to follow a different path, therefore, would be to leave this orbit and show little ecclesial vision. One might say that the two great Popes of Vatican II sum up in their very names the conciliar

merits which characterize them: the name "John" recalls the intimacy of pastoral love, and the name "Paul" brings to mind sharpness of reflection on the truth of salvation and intrepid courage in proclaiming it.

The merit of both is interpreted and continued with vigour and fidelity by their present successor who has made an eloquent combination in the programmatic name of "John-Paul" (composed through the happy intuition of Pope Luciani) of the characteristics of the two great architects and guides of the Council.

We have a Successor of Peter who guides us in the correct orbit, traced out by what the Spirit has said to the Churches.

### **Why the crisis?**

Assessments of the last twenty years have highlighted many positive aspects of growth in the Church. They are well known and I do not intend to list them here. We have lived a progressive experience of them through the General Chapters which enabled us to draw up our renewed Rule of life.

I had the opportunity of making a contribution to the Synod in the name of the Union of Superiors General, for the purpose of making known that we consider the sum of the positive aspects much more significant than the negative ones, though we certainly feel the heavy weight of more than a few problematic elements.<sup>1</sup>

I think it useful nevertheless, so as to discern where change is needed, to offer for your reflection some negative points mentioned by the Episcopal

<sup>1</sup> cf. AGC, this issue, p. 00.



Conferences of the five continents.

There was presented in the assembly a panorama intimately linked with the social and cultural vicissitudes of the different countries. Two fundamental observations, on which there was unanimous agreement and which must be kept in mind, are: first, the grave postconciliar problems that the Church has lived through in these twenty years do not derive from the Council, and are in fact so many proofs that the latter was timely and indispensable; and second, that the crisis that has been experienced is not a sign of the twilight of the Church and of its mission (even though it were to involve the decline of western civilization), but on the contrary is the dawn of a new historical beginning.

A listing of the difficulties, setbacks, double-talk, deviations, dangers and other problems that have arisen in these years proved useful to the Synod for a more realistic formulation of proposals for future commitment.

I choose some of the points, which can serve for us too as material for an examination of conscience.

— A superficial knowledge of Vatican II has done harm to its application: a too “journalistic” reading of the Council documents, their use in a reductive manner or out of context, a subjective approach to adapt the text to one’s own mentality (progressive, or diehard conservative) which has resulted in the manipulation of the genuine objective meaning. Basically this implies a subtle lack of conversion of mentality to the precise renewing vision of the Council.

— Certain attitudes of rationalist sufficiency in

various influential people who, although being sympathetic to Vatican II, have obscured its values. Such attitudes can be detected at two levels. The first prescind from "Faith" as regards human future, and in practice identifies Revelation with the signs of the times, forgetting the aspect of mystery and sacrament of the Church. The second prescind from the teaching of the Church and of Tradition in reading the Word of God, without attending to the intimate and indissoluble linkage between Revelation, Tradition, and Magisterium. Such attitudes have led to grave difficulties among the People of God through ideological plagiarism and arbitrary interpretations.

— An inferiority complex in face of the secularizing process has opened the doors to secularism. The values of secularization have been perceived and judged from the aspect of one who wants to appear "up to date"; little by little its authenticity has been distorted and there has been a dangerous levelling down of faith and morals. There has been spiritual obtuseness and lack of courage in discerning the urgent nature of evangelical challenge. This has led to a lowering of christian morality on an ever greater scale; the anxiety about feeling up to date rather than bearing witness to truth; and the loss of the identity of their specific vocations and roles in the case of priests, consecrated persons and the laity.

— Forgetfulness of the fundamental vocation of all men to holiness has weakened the consciousness of its indispensability. In the mystery of the incarnation the Lord has taught that true love is inseparable from kenosis (i.e. from the emptying of oneself). As well as this he proclaimed by his Pass-

over that without the Cross there is no victory over evil. In the last twenty years, in the vicissitudes of the Church's presence in the world, it has been made visibly evident in many nations that the redemptive mission is inseparable from persecution and suffering. Sanctity must be rethought as the objective of all pastoral work: a goal which cannot be reached without a concrete ascetical methodology and a Calvary.

— A loss of the sense of the sacred and of the dense theology of the liturgy has had a negative effect on the true "sacramental" dimension of the Church. This is a grave defect with consequences of two kinds. The first is an obscuring of the expressive character and artistic dignity of symbols, in so far as celebrations have been trivialized, and with them signs, vestments, music and texts; wrongly exploited too has been the delicate nature of the sacred for opening up the spirit to transcendence and to a vital participation in the salvific events of Jesus Christ. Such arbitrary attitudes have compromised the public and official aspect of the liturgy as an action of the whole Church. The second defect is that of giving attention almost exclusively to the external renewal of the symbolic aspect, to the introduction of new signs, to a proper concern for a more objective liturgical inculturation, to the improvement of ritual components, as though everything consisted in these alone. Unfortunately the indispensable priority has not always been given to the aspect of introduction to mystery (= mistagogy) which is proper to the liturgy, to its sense of adoration, to the reactualization of the sacrifice of the Cross, to the unique character of the priesthood of Christ who, now risen again, is pre-

sent in the celebration through men, rites and things, and who now carries out personally true mediation between God and man. All this carries with it the grave danger of leaving mystery on the margin, of presenting a Church emptied of Christ, of reducing the Eucharist to a symbolic banquet of simple human brotherhood.

The consideration of these negative aspects are enough by themselves to make us feel a call to return to Vatican II with greater attention and fidelity, looking upon its content as a prophetic light given to the Church, precisely for this time of transformation which will be long. To provide a positive reaction to the unfortunate happenings of the past twenty years, the Synod invites us to dust off the Council documents and read them once again in the organic unity of their overall significance.

### **Relaunching the Council**

There were three complementary aspects to the work of the Synod: it recalled to mind the event of the Council itself; it carried out an evaluation of the positive and negative elements that had come to light in these twenty years; and there was the noble and well-defined proposal to relaunch a more practical awareness of the Council's content. The Bishops propose to us new objectives to reach as a further and growing realization of the Council.

After these twenty years a new season is opening, one which is less stormy and more favourable. The promulgation of the new Code of Canon Law is itself an indication of greater clarity and more concrete practical guidelines.

The Code ensures a wise methodology; it de-



mands a certain Discipline (with a capital letter so as not to distort the deep pastoral significance); it overturns to some extent the preceptive canonical nature of the earlier Code; it appears as a normative guide permeated by the ecclesiology of Vatican II.

But the practical relaunching of the Council implies a prerequisite condition: study of the texts and a deep assimilation of the Council. Study of the documents must be systematic and not of pieces taken from here and there at random; it should be based on the fundamental principles of the four Constitutions; and it is indispensable that the "letter" be never separated from the "spirit".

The "spirit" of the Council is of wider amplitude and more incisive than the material significance of the texts; but it is neither an arbitrary interpretation nor a subjective futurist vision. It consists in an overall orientation, in a pastoral sensitivity which proceeds objectively from the various components belonging to the conciliar event (even to a wider extent than from the texts themselves); but it must nevertheless be deducible from the letter of the documents, and so it must be said that one cannot speak of the "spirit" without underlying support in the "letter". As Cardinal Danneels said: "The assertions in the text are to be read in the spirit of the Council; but this spirit cannot be perceived without a careful reading of the texts. In other words, there must be neither a merely legalistic interpretation, nor a vague appeal to a spirit to be superimposed on it so as to wring out the genuine meaning".

The Synod expressed the hope that the Apostolic See would promote, for the use of all the particular Churches, a "Compendium of synthetic state-

ments of Catholic doctrine" (about faith and morals) to serve as a basis for all other catechisms for the faithful. Insistently it recommended that care be taken in the matter of formation of candidates for the ministries so that they acquire a doctrinal mentality explicitly in harmony with the conciliar principles. It insisted on the responsibility of the Bishops as authentic teachers of the faith. It reminded theologians of their duty to deepen their study and to expound the doctrine "of the Church", and not theories which weaken its patrimony and prescind from its teaching function. It reminded everyone that in the Council itself was witnessed a wonderful communion among all its members (Fathers of different mentalities, and expert theologians of various schools of thought) which made freedom converge in unity and allowed unity to be expressed in a lawful pluriformity.

In the Synod it was also recalled, quoting the famous expression of a certain philosopher, that just as God did not create the best world possible, so we must not think that Vatican II is the best Council possible and already foresaw the signs of the times that would become evident in the future. It is a clear and accepted fact that it had its limits of various kinds. What in fact the Synod was asserting was that innovations appearing in later years find in the Council evangelical criteria for their discernment which still preserve their prophetic timeliness at the present day and are fully modern. It is a question of its pastoral outlook, an expression of wisdom at this epoch-making turning point.

### **"Pastoral" originality**

Vatican II has restored depth, fresh originality, realism of historical dialogue, search for harmonious interdisciplinary relationships, and a concern about methodological capacity in the "pastoral" dimension of the teaching of the Church, "whose character", said Pope John, "is pre-eminently pastoral".

The importance of this aspect of the teaching role and of the presentation of the doctrine of faith was recalled more than once during the Synod.

Such insistent emphasis upended a too static and abstract manner of considering the truths of faith and provoked a qualitative leap in the efforts of theologians, perhaps also with some dangerous exaggerations by excess or defect, but all directed to the giving of greater emphasis to the salvific character of revealed truth.

"*Gaudium et Spes*" is called a "pastoral constitution", because "while resting on doctrinal principles it seeks to set forth the relation of the Church to the world and to the men of today".<sup>2</sup> It is not the text of this Constitution alone, but rather the whole Council that rediscovered the originality of the pastoral character. Let us read once again the clear assertion of Pope John in defining the scope of Vatican II: "Our duty is not only to guard this precious treasure (of Catholic doctrine), as if we were concerned only with antiquity, but to dedicate ourselves with an earnest will and without fear to that work which our era demands of us: ...the christian, Catholic and apostolic spirit of the whole world expects *a step forward* towards a doctrinal penetration and a formation of consciousness in faithful and perfect conformity to the authentic doctrine

<sup>2</sup> cf. GS, note 1

which, however, should be studied and *expounded through the methods of research and through the literary forms of modern thought*. The substance of the ancient doctrine of the deposit of faith is one thing, and the way in which it is presented is another. And it is the latter that must be taken into great consideration with patience if necessary, everything being measured in the forms and proportions of a magisterium which is predominantly pastoral in character".<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Address of 11  
October 1962

In this there is a very courageous vision of a concrete and delicate renewal.

There is no insinuation of any disagreement or difference of level between "doctrine" and "pastoral" aspects, as though the one tended to exclude the other; what is affirmed rather is a mutual and complementary interaction, on account of which doctrine must be presented as the actual saving truth, and the pastoral application as an approach to the world and a dialogue with man: a dialogue which must not be superficial or sentimental but given substance by doctrine and dogmatic strength. The pastoral originality proclaimed by the Council not only does not prescind from dogma but expresses its true significance, confirming its indispensable nature and its incidence in life. Dogma in fact, precisely because it is the truth of a salvific event, must be understood and loved also by present-day man: it is a gift of God specifically for him. A doctrine developed without a pastoral perspective would betray its own nature of truth for man and its necessity for his salvation.

On the other hand, pastoral applications do not change dogma and still less do they prescind from it; they continually feed on it, they contemplate and assimilate it, they rejuvenate it. The basic intention



of Vatican II was precisely this: to take another look at the doctrinal deposit of the Church so as to rethink from a pastoral point of view the truths of salvation at this cultural turning point which calls for a new evangelization.

Such original aspects render the whole Council particularly up to date; they do not present it as merely defining orthodoxy, but rather as an extraordinary means of dialogue and prophecy. It is the great gift of the Holy Spirit to our century, presenting the doctrine of faith in a new and more useful form to a world in evolution; it repropose the integrity of the Catholic deposit, reclothing it with novel and incisive characteristics; it does not define this or that truth, but seeks a method for presenting to the man of the present day the whole of the patrimony of faith. The Council made no new dogmatic definition, nor did it condemn any new error.

As was said so wisely by Cardinal Garrone, the Council brought out the most genuine characteristic of the christian faith, that of presenting itself with a constant element of novelty: "*nihil novi et omnia nova*" (everything is new, even though the Council made no new definition!)

This is the great renewal proclaimed by the "pastoral" character of Vatican II.

This aspect has some important consequences for us. Our vocation is one totally permeated by pastoral charity, which makes us evangelizers of the young in the field of education.

Education forms part of the vast world of culture where, unfortunately, there is at the present day a serious break and separation from the Gospel. Education demands of its very nature a fair number of pedagogical qualifications and a constant and intelligent attention to the evolution of

culture. But if we want to educate by evangelizing, or in other words through "pastoral" work, we must also meet the multiple demands of a "new" evangelization. Such demands are in fact indicated by Vatican II which looks forward to pastoral activity made up of precision in faith, security and fidelity of doctrine, awareness of the present-day situation, a sense of dialogue and skill in communication.

### **Centrality of the "Mystery"**

The first and deepest concern of the Synod was to give absolute priority to the conciliar vision of the Church as "mystery".

In the last twenty years some ideological interpretations have flourished, together with certain superficial and popular attitudes which have pretended in one way or another to supplant the genuine nature and historical mission of the Church as the People of God. The Synod heard evidence from zones afflicted by secularization, from continents where the process of liberation is the great concern, and from regions more sensitive to the process of inculturation.

Seen as a really grave danger was the presentation of the Church as though emptied of the mystery of Christ, the living centre in which shines and whence is diffused the fullness of love of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Christ is the true light of the nations ("Lumen gentium"!); his Passover stands at the centre of the liturgy celebrated by the pilgrim Church in history to grow as his Body; his incarnation binds the divine and human in intimate and definitive fashion.

The priority of the mystery, thus strongly reaffirmed, did not lead the Synod to give preference to a vertical transcendence to the detriment of the line of the Council which celebrates the presence and service of the Church in the world. Quite the contrary! In fact the deeper consideration of the mystery of Christ demands a still clearer and more generous concern of the Church for man, his needs, his difficulties, his depressing experiences and his anxieties. But the mystery requires a kind of presence and a missionary method, which is not to be confused with historical plans of thinkers and politicians, nor put forward as an immanent alternative to any human activity or profession (neither cultural, nor economic nor political). It is not a question of a simply temporal mission, with only a horizontal perspective; it is rather a case of a most original "pastoral" insertion, which is an initiative of God for the overall salvation of man.

The more the Church is concerned about man, the more she must act according to the peculiar mission which flows from her pastoral charity.

The decisive turning towards man carries with it the complex problems of the incarnation which could even give rise to deviations. Hence the indispensable daily care which the faithful must take of the pastoral identity strictly consistent with an action of the Church.

### **Guarding the identity**

To ensure this verification and grow constantly in it, it is indispensable to drink frequently from the source of the mystery. There are two channels for this purpose: the Word of God and the Liturgy.

Hence the importance of being an assiduous listener, especially to the Word of God according to the conciliar indications given in "Dei Verbum" concerning divine revelation and its transmission through the centuries. To this Word is due the "obedience of faith".<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> cf. Rom 16,26

Here should be remembered the fundamental importance of Tradition and the indispensable role of the Magisterium given as a gift by Christ to his Church to ensure the authentic nature of her interpretation: not above the Word itself, but at its service. "It is clear therefore", says the Council, "that in the supremely wise arrangement of God, sacred Tradition, sacred Scripture and the Magisterium of the Church are so connected and associated that one of them cannot stand without the others. Working together, each in its own way under the action of the one Holy Spirit, they all contribute effectively to the salvation of souls".<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> DV 10

With regard to the Liturgy, it has to be said that the Eucharist is its supreme expression. Every day it generates the Church as the Body of Christ in history. It is the inexhaustible source of authentic pastoral charity.

In addition the sacrament of Penance represents the constant effort at rectification and conversion. It is not possible to preserve the christian identity, grow in it, and carry out genuinely pastoral activity in the world without temporal distortions, unless there is a constant comparison with Christ in a personal participation in the sacrament of conversion and reconciliation.

Unless there is this constant approach to the sources of the Word of God and the Liturgy one grows weary and the originality proper to the mis-

sion of the Church becomes too easily warped and twisted.

Not without reason has the Synod put as the heading of both its "Message" and its "Final Report": "The Church, under the guidance of the Word of God and with the celebration of the mysteries of Christ, inserts herself into the world to save it."

### **Commitment to sanctity**

The importance given by the Synod to the "mystery" of the Church automatically required greater attention to the "sacramental" nature of the Church itself: the mystery becomes a sacrament in the People of God, in each one of us. In the daily events of our daily life we must give expression to the riches of the love of charity which Christ brought to the world. The celebration of the seven sacraments and of all the liturgy must transform us into "sacraments of salvation" for all men. What Christ is for the world, all his disciples must be in the daily life of each one.

This is why the Synod has made so urgently a strong appeal for holiness: the mystery must become sacrament in the holiness of christians. There is a great need to salvage the concept of sanctity or holiness, bringing it back into the events of every day. The concrete significance of Baptism as a call to sanctity for all men needs clarification;<sup>6</sup> holiness should be considered as something normal for christians, rather than as a heroic exception.

At the present time the application of Vatican II calls vehemently for an authentic commitment to sanctity; the world needs witness to the saving pres-

<sup>6</sup> LG chap. 5

ence of God, to the fact that there is no substitute for the sacred, to the central position of adoration and the contemplative dimension, to the need of prayer, to the importance of conversion and penance, to the values of self-donation and sacrifice, to the ideals of charity and justice, to divine transcendence in one's daily human tasks, to the inseparability of the mystery of the cross from the creation and incarnation.

This burning appeal to holiness in daily life, which is the vocation and task of all the faithful, has need of models: the classical ones of yesterday and the living ones of today.

The figures of Mary, of the Apostles, the Martyrs, Virgins and Confessors in different states of life, must be looked at again as models of conduct for the present day. In difficult times, in periods of change and transformation and in view of the future to be built, it is more to the point for Christians to be able to bear witness to a sanctity for the new times than to get involved in short-lived enthusiasm for temporal fashions and projects.

In this regard the Synod gives particular emphasis to the urgent role which must be played by members of Institutes of consecrated life. All the People of God expect to see clearly in them, without any secular watering down, "outstanding and striking testimony that the world cannot be transfigured and offered to God without the spirit of the beatitudes".<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> LG 31

We must accept, dear confreres, this appeal of the Synod, remembering that the proclamation of the beatitudes is "a special mission of Religious in the Church of the present day", as an invitation to bear sincere and courageous public witness (without any half-measures) to the gospel plan we have

professed as Salesians of Don Bosco.

We already know, clearly and with certainty, what the Church asks of us today. The Spirit of God, who has given to our period in history the precious gift of the Council and who has visited us and been with us during the intense work of the last three General Chapters, asks us through this Extraordinary Synod to dedicate ourselves with all our strength to the daily living out of what we have promised. Let us read carefully once again the circular letter on "Don Bosco, Saint", written to commemorate the golden jubilee of his canonization.<sup>8</sup> It will do us good.

The Church gives us the clear indication that this is the path we must follow: there is no other way for us.

I am deeply convinced that only if we dedicate ourselves sincerely and constantly to such a task will the charism of Don Bosco make sense for young people at the present day. I often thought during the Synod that the only way for us to open true and fruitful horizons for our vocation is by remaining loyal to the Church on this point.

### **Communion and pluriformity**

In exploring the mystery of the Church, the Synod attributed central and fundamental importance to the reality of "communion", a theme derived from the mystery of the Trinity and from the ecclesial doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ. Although communion carries with it institutional aspects and human organizational criteria, it is not primarily the task of sociology but more properly that of theology to indicate its various contents and

<sup>8</sup> AGC 310 Oct-Dec. 1983

determine its precise consequences. It was along this line that was examined the peculiar and non-typical manner in which collegiality is practised in the Church, its projection into Bishops' Conferences, the criteria of participation, of shared responsibility, of decentralization and subsidiarity. In a comparison of the universal Church with particular Churches the theological principle was picked out and clarified of the variety and pluriformity in communion in the one Church of Christ, without running the risk of a disruptive pluralism.

This point is worth emphasizing, because in it is reflected (albeit only partially and analogically) the decentralized and pluriform life of our Congregation, present now in the various cultures of the different continents.

The approach to a consideration of the relationships between the particular Churches and the universal Church is from the aspect of the unity of the mystery present in the Catholic Church: one only Christ, a single Spirit, one Baptism, one Eucharist, a single College of Bishops in hierarchical communion with the Pope. But this unity is lived in a pluriformity of charismata, in a diversity of ministries, in a multiplicity of persons, in the variety of places where communities celebrate the liturgy, in the pastoral differences between the different ways in which individual Bishops guide communities of widely varying cultures.

A measure of the authenticity of a particular Church can be found in the values of unity proper to the universal Church: "The one universal Church is truly present in all the particular Churches", says the synodal text, "and the latter are formed according to the image of the universal Church, in such a way that the Catholic Church,



<sup>9</sup> Final Report, II, C,  
2

which is one and unique, exists in the particular Churches and starts from them".<sup>9</sup>

Ecclesial pluriformity, a sign of a rich vitality, is built on values of unity and uniqueness proper to the ministry of Christ present in the Catholic Church, founded on the ministry of Christ and the Apostles.

Pluralism, on the other hand, starts from an opposite point of view (i.e. from the particular to the universal), and carries with it the danger of distortions, separations, provincialism and nationalism even to the extent of schism. The centrifugal aspect of pluralism would start from cultural differences and use them as a yardstick for adapting the values of unity present in the universal Church, even to the extent of changing their content.

From the indispensable process of "inculturation" must be excluded both a simple adaptation to the world, as though the signs of the times coincided with Revelation, and a diehard unchanging conformity as though the deposit of faith were identified with the cultural form in which it had been expressed up to now. In pastoral activity the Church seeks always a communion which is living and faithful, remaining open to all human values, so as to assume them and defend them in every nation.

In the ecclesial communion the ministerial and charismatic differences do not indicate a greater or less degree of dignity, but rather a particular and demanding function of service and witness; and the differences in form and rites strengthen and embellish unity by the variety and multiple contributions of human cultures, understood as the harmonious gathering of peoples in the one Family of God.

At this turning point in the history of humanity,

the great challenge for the inculturation of the faith, is to be able to penetrate the vital cultural nuclei starting from the unity of the Gospel, and bearing in mind the accelerated pace of history; they foster the "emergence of an immense series of new problems, calling for a new endeavour of analysis and synthesis".<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> GS 5

More urgent than ever is the pastoral creativity of a "new evangelization", able to overcome the growing distances between human civilization and christian faith, impregnating all cultures with the Gospel, without becoming a slave to any of them.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> cf. EN 20

In the light of these criteria of the Council recalled by the Synod, we can better understand and put into practice what our own Constitutions tell us: "The principle of unity in the Congregation is the charism of our Founder, which of its richness gives rise to different ways of living the one salesian vocation. Formation is therefore one in its essential content and diversified in its concrete expressions; it accepts and develops whatever is true, noble and just in the various cultures".<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> C 100

### **A gift for the young**

Young people were strongly present to the Synod, not only for the interest they showed in it and on account of the long and moving prayer vigils in which they took part for the happy outcome of this ecclesial event, but also because frequently the Synod members and the Holy Father himself referred to them as the best bearers of the grace of Vatican II towards the third millennium.

In his intervention in the assembly, Cardinal Edward Pironio noted the happy coincidence of the

Synod with the International Youth Year. The Synod therefore had perforce to direct its gaze by preference to the young. They are the principal protagonists, said the Cardinal, of the desired construction of the new civilization of truth and love.

Some of the Bishops pointed out that in various regions there are young people who do not know the Church and are not attracted to it because it does not appear to them as the "Body of Christ": they have a liking for Jesus as though in opposition to the Church. In very many regions there is the grave danger of an insufficient evangelization of the new generations; and yet youth forms the great numerical majority among many peoples.

It was also noted that spiritual and apostolic movements have arisen which have in fact attracted young people and that, if these are properly inserted into the pastoral activity of the particular Churches, they open up new horizons of hope.

In its concluding document the Synod explicitly asserts: "The Council considers youth as the hope of the Church (cf. GE 2). This Synod turns to them with predilection and great trust; it expects much from their generous dedication; it exhorts them with great intensity to play an active part in the Church's mission, assuming and promoting with industrious energy the Council's legacy".<sup>13</sup>

There, dear confreres, you have an appeal of the Synod which we must consider addressed in a particular way to us who are called to be "missionaries of the young". We feel ourselves challenged to become valid transmitters of the Council's riches to today's youth.

Let us widen our pastoral horizons and direct the attention and ideals of the young towards the great themes of Vatican II, as they have been re-

<sup>13</sup> Final Report, II, C,  
6

launched by the Synod. We must first understand and deepen our knowledge of the pentecostal significance of the Council, so as to transmit it to them: this is the great orbit in which the Church must move in the next decades. At the dawn of a new historical era, the Council is the great prophecy of the Church which, in the Spirit, becomes the Mother and Mistress of a new evangelization for humanity. These are not just so many high-sounding words, but the great "grace" given by the Lord to our century for a new christian beginning.

If Don Bosco were among us today he would feel great joy, and would concentrate all his pastoral charity, his pedagogical brilliance and his tireless spirit of initiative in this great ecclesial enterprise among young people. We are the heirs of his mission. Let us set to work with goodwill to carry it out.

We recall the words of the ancient prophet: "He (the Lord) gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength. Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted; but they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint".<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Is 40,29-31

— I want to conclude these reflections by turning our minds and hearts to Mary Help of Christians, Mother of the Church.

Vatican II ended on 8 December, Feast of the Immaculate Conception; this extraordinary Synod ended on the same day, and the day moreover when we call to mind the first anniversary of the promulgation of our Constitutions, renewed according to the mind of Vatican II.

8 December is a memorable date as regards both the beginning of our mission and so many other initiatives and gifts for our Family.

May this letter which has been put together and written in the climate of the Feast of the Immacolata serve to emphasize for all of us the Marian aspect of both the Council and this Synod; may it help us to see in the respective documents an appeal of Mary, Spouse of the Holy Spirit and Queen of the Apostles, who invites us to relaunch after the mind of the Council the charisma of Don Bosco among the youth of today, in a Church which, in the light of the Word of God and by celebrating the mysteries of Christ, inserts itself in the world to save it.

Let us repeat with the Pope the beautiful prayer he recited on 8th December of this year in the Piazza di Spagna: "To you, O Mother, we confide with great trust the fruits and results of the Synod! Through your intercession render its message efficacious for souls, so that its aims may be realized and the conciliar renewal may be rediscovered with loyalty, explored with fidelity, realized with courage, presented and diffused with enthusiasm and credibility".<sup>15</sup>

May this prayer, dear confreres, be translated into action through all of us: the young are expecting from us the gift of the Council!

Cordial greetings and best wishes to you all.

Affectionately in Don Bosco,

*Don F. Viganò*

<sup>15</sup> Oss. Rom. (English edtn) 17 Dec. 1985

## 2. GUIDELINES AND POLICIES

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### 2.1 THE “RATIO” (SECOND EDITION, 1985)

Fr Paul NATALI

*Councillor General for Formation*

The “Formation of Salesians of Don Bosco” (FSDB - “Ratio Fundamental Institutionis et Studiorum”) has been published in a second edition, promulgated by the Rector Major on 8 December 1985, together with the “Criteria and Norms for Salesian Vocation Discernment. Admissions”.

It may be opportune to indicate the reasons for this new edition, which appears hardly four years after the first one, and its more important aspects.

#### 1. The reasons for the revision

There were two motives for the deep and wide-ranging revision of the “Ratio”: in the first place the promulgation of the new Code of Canon Law, and of the Constitutions and Regulations of our Society; and secondly the observations and comments coming from the whole Congregation after the experience of recent years.

The principal reason for the revision is found in the very nature of the “Ratio”, which is described in the General Regulations in the following terms: “The ‘Ratio’ sets out in an organic and instructive way the complexus of principles and norms concerning formation which are found in the Constitutions, general Regulations and other documents of the Church and of the Congregation” (R 87). This description makes clear the strict relationship existing between our document and the fundamental normative texts of the Church and

the Congregation. The most recent revision of the text of the Constitutions and Regulations, made by the GC22, and the promulgation of the Code of Canon Law, made on 25 January 1983, necessitated the updating of the "Ratio" which draws from them its principles and norms; the same documents naturally provide the criteria and fundamental contents for the revised edition too.

There has also been an effective contribution coming from the collaboration provided by various sectors directly interested in formative activity, consultants and meetings for the study of themes related to salesian formation; these have offered comments and suggestions, convinced of both the substantial validity of the text and of the need to bring it up to date and perfect it.

## **2. The more important aspects of the revision**

The Constitutions are at the basis of the principal innovations and arrangement of this second edition of the "Ratio", which maintains a fundamental continuity with the first. The following indications may make more immediately understandable the revised text and the variations which have been introduced.

### **2.1 *A strongly motivated series of norms based on the nature of vocation***

Formation is a process strongly motivated by the apostolic and religious nature of the salesian vocation. It determines objectives, structures, methods and functions. This is affirmed by art. 97 of the Constitutions: "The religious and apostolic nature of the salesian calling dictates the specific direction our formation must take, a direction necessary for the life and unity of the Congregation".

Can 646 endorses this perspective: speaking of the novitiate, which is precisely the structure where the religious experience begins, it presents it as designed "to give the novices a greater understanding of their divine vocation, and of their vocation to the institute concerned. During the novitiate the novices are to ex-

perience the manner of life of the institute and form their minds and hearts in its spirit". The structure is therefore shaped and orientated by the fundamentals of the specific vocation.

This criterion, which already underlay the composition of the "Ratio/1981", was favourably accepted by the Congregation and is retained in the 1985 edition.

It is in fact demanded by the very nature of the document (R 87), in which principles and norms are to be linked together in an "organic" manner, i.e. one in which the former provide a foundation for the latter and the latter receive in turn from the former their human, religious and salesian significance. They must be not merely indicated but developed in an "instructive" way, i.e. in such a way that they can be better understood in their force and authority.

This is also demanded by our educative tradition which takes its inspiration from the preventive system: it emphasizes dialogue, exchange and motivation, starting from interior forces directed towards a plan of life. It becomes possible therefore for the young person in formation to live obedience to the norms in freedom.

## *2.2 A formation process centred on vocational identity*

The "Ratio/1985" presents a formation process centred on salesian vocational identity, on its constituent elements and on "ongoing formation" as a personal and continuing attitude which is a response to the Lord's call.

The Holy Spirit calls the salesian and endows him with a special grace of unity to enable him to live the dynamism of apostolic action and the fullness of religious life in a single movement of love of God and of his neighbour.

The "Ratio" takes up and develops the constituent and inseparable elements of this identity: the apostolic mission, the fraternal community and the practice of the evangelical counsels, together with the different forms (priestly, diaconal and lay) in which it may be lived.

These elements, the emphasizing of certain aspects of them,



their unity and mutual relationships are specified in accordance with the definitions of the Constitutions. It can be seen that the point of view is a little different from that adopted in the "Ratio/1981" which indicated the aspects of formation in the three dimensions, religious, apostolic and salesian, all interacting in the unity of a single experience.

From vocational identity, which is both gift and commitment, the formation process begins, and it constantly refers back to it: formation tends precisely to make real in the individual and in the community the gift of this very identity. It pervades the whole text and gives to it its characteristic of unity. It becomes the privileged criterion for identifying the aptitudes that must be possessed, and the attitudes and virtues to be assimilated (cf. chap 3).

Just as it is at the origin of the unity of life for the salesian, so also it is at the origin of the structural unity of the plan for his formation.

### *2.3 A formation process which promotes more efficaciously the unity of life for the salesian*

Salesian apostolic consecration is a unitary experience of life which derives not from an abstract concept but from the witness of a model, the life of Don Bosco. To be formed according to his spirit means to harmonize in vital unity (C 102) human maturing, intellectual preparation, deepening of consecrated life, and insertion into apostolic work. The formation process is unitary in character, always globally and dynamically present in each of its elements, which communicate with each other in a mutual exchange of interest. To compromise the objective of any one phase would render the whole process uncertain and unbalanced; there would be something lacking in personal commitment which would be an obstacle to the assimilation of certain values; there would be a risk of incompleteness, of a lack of internal harmony in the individual, and of his mission being rendered inefficacious.

The cultural elements too which emerge from experience of the salesian vocation are attained and arranged in a single entity

which, as is said in R 82, preserves a “balance between serious and scientific reflection and the religious and apostolic dimensions of our way of life”.

“The salesian vocation demands a pastoral and pedagogical mentality which becomes operative only in force of a unified concept” (FSDB 211). This mentality is called for by the unity of the person and of the existence of the salesian; by the unique nature of his vocational objective; by the nature of the educative and pastoral practice which is proper to his mission; from the period in history in which he lives and works. It is a mentality born of an active synthesis of the specific contents of the disciplines of faith, of philosophy, of the human sciences and of education, in which each group is autonomous and necessary, but no single one by itself is sufficient.

#### *2.4 A formation plan with greater structural unity*

It will be seen that the “Ratio/85” presents a formation plan with greater structural unity; in it intellectual formation is better integrated into the overall formation process.

The specific nature of the individual disciplines is made more precise, but so also are their possible relationships in view of the purpose to be achieved.

It is in this context that has to be seen and judged the placing of “intellectual formation” in the Part dealing with “formation in general” as a section and integrating component. In the same context must be seen and assessed the functional unity of what is said about the individual phases, their objectives and the formative experience corresponding to what is called for from each by the way the studies are arranged.

The formative phase is thus presented in a way which makes more evident its unity and organic nature, and its component elements are better integrated among themselves and recognized for their useful character.

Appendix I transfers the curriculum of studies to the end of the text. The double listing in the 1981 edition, one within the text and

another more ample one in the Appendix, has been eliminated. A single list is given with the following characteristics:

- with the passage from one phase to another, the various disciplines reveal their unity and a homogeneous progression in view of the objective to be achieved;

- the curricula are only indicative, but nearer than they were before to what is considered essential and never to be omitted, while allowing for well studied variations suggested by the local cultural environment;

- no aids are indicated: they would soon be rendered out of date by scientific progress, and could in any case be considered as subjective to the extent that every choice is subjective, even though not without value.

## 2.5 *A formative plan in which unity and pluriformity are better and more surely integrated*

In this case too, taking a lead from C 100, we go back to the identity and charism of the Founder, which is the principle of unity but is at the same time at the origin of the “different ways of living the one salesian vocation” (C 100). From this follows a formation which is therefore “one in its essential content and diversified in its concrete expressions” (C 100). To it applies the fundamental and explicit criterion laid down by the Constitutions: to accept everything true, noble and just, contained in the various cultures.

As well as this central and basic criterion, there are others linked with the unity and plurality of the formation process; these give it dynamism and preserve relationships, positive tensions and balance in constant harmony.

## 2.6 *A greater emphasis on the methodological aspect*

The “Ratio/1985” insists more on methodological aspects than did its predecessor.

The Constitutions, in art. 98, 99, make a brief reference to some points concerning method: the centrality of personal ex-

perience, because formation is achieved only by experiencing the worth of the vocation, and the description of experience itself as a vital awareness, different from simple intellectual knowledge. It is obtained through contact with reality, in direct commitment to work, in the relationships which it presupposes and produces, as one "lives and works for the common mission" (C 99).

The methodological aspect of the "Ratio" sets out along these lines and is developed to a much greater extent than was the case in the preceding edition. It is clear in chap. 3 where, in dependence on chap. 2, are set out in a more precise and better ordered way the "values and attitudes" to be absorbed and developed, and where are indicated (even though in a rather general way) the "activities" through which, under certain conditions, experience can be gained. It is found especially in chap. 4, which refers to practical methods, workers, environments and conditions for the assimilation of essential vocational values. Also in Part III, which ranges from one period to another and one phase to another in bringing about a progressive growth of the salesian educator and shepherd of the young, constant attention is given to method and to its greater practical development.

Attention to and concern for a concrete methodology was also asked for by the Rector Major in a passage from his opening address to the GC22: "Our attention and zeal, and the accompanying difficulties too, will now be transferred to the clarification and deeper understanding of basic principles, to the findings of a concrete way of putting them into practice which will be both more in harmony with our charismatic character and at the same time sensitive and exacting" (GC22, 19).

### *2.7 Some important contents that have been amplified, renewed or given greater emphasis*

The "Ratio/1985" renews and amplifies some important contents of the 1981 editio. Among other things, it gives special attention to prayer, to initial formation, and to the specific formation of the salesian priest, deacon and brother.

— *Personal and community prayer*, with its specific forms stemming from our charism and tradition and renewed by the acceptance of the Church's guidelines, was deliberately placed in the Constitutions by the GC22 at the conclusion of the salesian's plan of consecrated life, so as to indicate that it is through prayer that the plan is given life and realized. Not everything follows from it, but on it everything depends.

This option, the conclusions of the study-congress on "Liturgy and music in salesian formation" (Rome, 1984), and the many comments received, have led to a rather wide-ranging revision of the contents. What was formerly present only in part has been integrated and re-ordered according to relative importance, and emphasis has been placed on relationships, so that the life of the salesian gains the richness of a specific prayer and prayer becomes an efficacious feature of his whole life.

Prayer is presented too as an irreplaceable dynamic element of the vocational experience. Prayer animates the whole life of the confrere and the community, in such a way that without it the direct relationships with people and reality (from which is born vocational experience) lose their essential fullness, because the perception is lacking of the mystery which allows one to experience them as they truly are and to live them authentically.

— The "Ratio" takes account of the option made by the Constitutions and ensures that more space and greater consideration is given to *initial formation*. This is considered a privileged stage because:

- it ensures the presence of the "spirit" and "common feeling", on the basis of which all that follows must be undertaken, willed and realized;
- it creates the ability to make a critical "overall" judgement based on criteria of science and faith. The lack of this capacity for reflection and discernment would lead to the mechanical repetition of what was done in the past or the non-critical acceptance of prejudices in line with the mood of the moment;

- it produces the personal conditions enabling the individual to engage in practical work in such a way as to make of it a natural environment for the process of his own formation.

— *The different forms of the one salesian vocation* (priest, deacon, brother) constitute a permanent perspective specifying the experience of the essential values of the vocation itself: the mission, community life, experience of the evangelical counsels, prayer and the spiritual life, are all lived in a salesian manner, but in each case according to the appropriate dimensions.

Attention to the salesian identity and to the forms in which it is expressed has led to an amplification and more precise statement of the content, obligations and structures of the "Specific Formation". The theme and its demands considered in chap. 2 (the chapter of the identity), which is the foundation on which the whole "Ratio" develops, are taken up again in greater detail in chap. 10. Objectives, formative experience, priority areas and degrees of experience itself, intellectual formation linked with it and the curricula it calls for, are all elements to which more attention has been given and are now presented in a more complete and satisfactory fashion.

— To these principal themes others could be added, e.g. a more deeply thought out presence of the means of social communication, and emphasis on instruments or facts of a cultural nature, which have been common in our environments from the time of Don Bosco and are useful for personal formation and the education of the young: theatre, music, sport.

### **3. The second edition of "Criteria and Norms for Salesian Vocation Discernment"**

Connected with the second edition of the "Ratio" is the revised text of the "Criteria and Norms for Salesian Vocation Discernment. Admissions", which is a commentary on chap. 7 of the "Ratio"

itself and appears in a guise which in a certain sense is more direct-ive and exact.

In the revision suggestions were followed for an arrangement that would be more positive and pedagogical, and for a text written in a conversational style; some important points previously omitted have been included, and some others have been eliminated as being no longer sound or relevant, but everything has been retained that was considered essential from a salesian point of view, as having been transmitted by charismatic tradition from Don Bosco to the present day.

#### **4. The task of the Provinces**

The second edition of the 'Ratio' and of the 'Criteria and Norms' "implies a double task for the provinces", wrote the Rector Major in his presentation of the new text: "that of revising the formation section of the provincial directory, and that of a careful daily application of the revised norms". They will be helped in this task by what is said in Appendix 2 concerning the contents and their verification which, according to the Ratio itself should be carried out "at regular intervals".

#### **Conclusion**

The work of indexing the contributions that come in connection with the revision of the "Ratio", of itself produced the impression that the salesians (and more particularly those involved in the experience of the initial formation) had reacted with interest, as though they were dealing with a matter close to their heart; their comments were useful and showed a large convergence of ideas.

The "Ratio" came through as something dynamic, born from the history of salesian life itself, from its reverberations, from the desire to be motivated and organized with a view to formation.

Following the initial plan of Don Bosco himself, the Congreg-

ation has lived it with fidelity and consequently has renewed itself, adapted and qualified itself to meet changing situations; it has agreed on lines of formation which are consistent but at the same time adaptable, with an aspect of unity that enables them to be recognized always and everywhere as salesian, and at the same time sufficiently pluriform to be capable of modification to meet different cultures that may appear with the passage of time.

It may be useful to recall what Fr Philip Rinaldi wrote about our Constitutions: "Our Society had to be able to adapt itself, as it carried out its charitable work, to the needs of the times and the customs of different places; it had to be progressive, always new and up to date, while preserving its particular physiognomy of being an educator of the young by means of the preventive system based on gentleness and fatherly kindness... Our Constitutions, by modifying from time to time the way they deal with secondary matters, will not only remain as fresh as when they first saw the light, but will become ever more efficacious sources of good" (ASC 23, Jan. 1924, p. 187).

In our efforts to be faithful in unity and creative in pluriformity, we hope that this may prove true also of the humble contribution of the new edition of the "Ratio". This will be the most convincing test of the salesian quality of a document which, in order to achieve its objective, needs (as the Rector Major writes in his presentation) "zeal and intelligence" on the part of all. It is a contribution to the renewal of our Society in the formation sector, an attempt to write the "fair copy" for our own times, which Don Bosco incessantly asked his disciples and those who would come after him to produce, as long as the Lord would want the Congregation to continue to be at the service of the young.



## 2.2 THE EDUCATIVE AND PASTORAL PLAN

Fr Juan E. VECCHI

*Councillor General for Youth Pastoral Work*

### 1. A "norm" for every Province

Article 4 of the General Regulations requires that:

— "Each provincial community should draw up its educative and pastoral plan... to respond to the youth situation and to the condition in poor areas.

— A local plan should also be drawn up with the involvement of all the members of the pastoral and educative community and in harmony with that of the province, for the purpose of directing all initiatives to the task of evangelization."

What had been a series of practical directives given by the GC21 (cf. GC21 30c, 105a, 127b, 132, 134, 140, 142a) has now become a "norm". What was the object of laborious reflection and discussion is now considered an indispensable instrument for guaranteeing in our work the pastoral quality associated with our identity. It is intimately connected with two other requirements of the Regulations concerning pastoral work:

— the specific preparation of personnel for the various pastoral tasks (R 10);

— the work of animation, supported by a reformulation of the role of the religious community (R 5) and sustained by the relevant structures, particularly at provincial level (R 157,5).

Plan, qualification, animation (councils, teams) are all correlated realities which can dispose communities for the giving of a response more in keeping with the needs of the evangelization of young people.

The experience of the past six years in this respect is satisfactory. The drawing up of such plans has had a positive influence in three senses: community, pastoral and salesian.

In fact those communities which after an inevitable shaky start made a real effort to rethink and reorganize their activity, have derived great benefit from so doing: the plan has fostered the exchange of views and assessments and has brought about especially a new awareness of the motives and preferences inherent in our calling, and in this way has given new vigour to community life. The plan makes the community.

Educative activities have acquired a greater clarity as regards their objectives, a more accurate purpose (no longer instrumental but substantial), and above all there is a greater practical convergence among them, founded on a common frame of reference.

The necessity of reformulating our interventions so as to make them more adequate for present-day youth conditions, has made the confreres go back to the sources which gave rise to our particular style. The need to make a plan has led to a deeper study of the preventive system and the original experience of Don Bosco.

## **2. Nature of the educative and pastoral plan**

The Youth Pastoral Department, by means of the various aids it has produced, has presented the basic elements to be incorporated in any plan which wants to call itself salesian. These elements make explicit how the traits of pastoral identity indicated by the Constitutions are to be applied in practice. There is no need for us to spend time on this point. It is sufficient to read the texts concerned. But the fact that the plan is an indication contained in the General Regulations and which must be drawn up alongside those relating to other sectors of salesian life (formation, community life) calls for some clarification.

The first clarification concerns the nature of the plan. From the single block of articles of the Regulations which speak of the plan (R 4-10), it is clear that it is to be understood as a document in

which the province formulates the criteria, guidelines, synthesis of content and method, and the practical lines of action which it proposes to follow in the evangelization and christian formation of the young and the rest of the faithful entrusted to our care.

Some consequences of all this are immediately evident: the plan is not primarily concerned with the quantitative development of any work (extension or siting), but with the evangelizing and educative quality of our presence, wherever it may be.

It is also clear that everything concerning the young people and others entrusted to us must find expression and unification in the plan, even when for organizational purposes it refers to different roles (e.g. missionary commitment, social communication). If this is not done, the whole unifying purpose of the plan (evangelization, education, pastoral work for vocations, etc.) will be frustrated. The aids already provide for and recommend this fusion in accordance with the needs felt by all who are engaged in pastoral work at the present day: to foster the unity of the subject, the activity and the purpose for which it is carried out.

### 3. The areas or dimensions of the plan

What we have said will become still clearer if we consider the aspects which, according to the Constitutions and Regulations, the plan should motivate, illustrate and translate into practical terms.

The first reality for which the plan must provide valid guidelines for every presence of ours is expressed in art. 5 of the Regulations: "The application of the plan requires that in all our works and setting we *establish the educative and pastoral community*, whose animating nucleus is the salesian community". This is a practical indication of what is called for by art. 47 of the Constitutions: "We bring about in our works the educative and pastoral community which involves young people and adults, parents and educators, in a family atmosphere, so that it can become a living experience of Church and a revelation of God's plan for us.

"In this community lay people associated with our work make

a contribution all their own, because of their experience and pattern of life.

"We welcome and encourage their collaboration, and we give them the opportunity to get a deeper knowledge of the salesian spirit and the practice of the preventive system.

"We foster the spiritual growth of each of them, and to those who may be so inclined we suggest a closer sharing of our mission in the Salesian Family."

Three questions therefore should find a response in the plan:

- how the salesians propose to involve actively the other people who take part in the educative and pastoral work;

- how they will carry out their work of evangelical animation (as regards content, criteria and activities);

- how they will provide (as regards content and application) for the professional and christian formation of adults who work with us.

Article 6 of the Regulations points to a second aspect of the plan, applying the indications given in art. 32-33 of the Constitutions: *the educative dimension*. At the present time this is seen as being in particular need of rethinking and re-formulation. In fact in some places it could prove to be of no avail at all if it does not stem from certain fundamental values, and be expressed in language and activities which are meaningful for young people. Some ideas are provided by way of example in art. 6 itself, but wider considerations are needed according to the situation concerned.

Then there is the perspective which Reg. 7 calls the "central nucleus" of the plan' the *programme of education to the faith* which should translate into practical terms what is said in art. 34,36 of the Constitutions about our pastoral identity: "For us evangelizing and catechizing are the fundamental characteristics of our mission" (C 34).

The contexts in which the proclamation of the faith and education in it take place are widely divergent. They range from

societies in which there is a strong christian religious feeling among people in general to others in which the majority of the youngsters with whom we come in contact belong to non-christian religions. We have to think up ways by which we can proclaim the faith, instil it and bring it to maturity, trying to make Christ the word of life for those who hear us. In drawing up our plan we must consider too how we can avoid that what we say goes in at one ear and out at the other, and how we can concentrate our efforts by using our experience in the adoption of a common approach by all the community.

Art. 8 of the Regulations calls also for the realization of another aspect which the Constitutions present as characteristic of our educative pastoral service: the *animation of groups and movements* for formation and for apostolic and social action (cf. C 35).

Each provincial plan must indicate how, in harmony with the guidelines of the local Church and the prevailing youth condition, it is intended to pursue this dimension of our pastoral work. Exhaustive explanations in this regard can be found in Aid 9 of the Department: "The Salesian Plan for Group Activity", and they dispense us from further comment at this point.

Finally Reg. 9 requires the explicit including in the plan of "the vocational guidance of young people", and thus translates into a pastoral norm the articles 6,28,37 of the Constitutions. Suggestions for criteria, content and activities in this regard can be found in numerous documents emanating from the local Churches, and there is also a synthesis in the Documents of the GC21 (nn. 106-119) and they are contained in the Department's Aid entitled "Outlines for Provincial Vocation Plan". The latter gathers together what the Congregation has learned through significant experience, community animation and support structures.

The GC22 asked that special attention be given to the presentation and fostering of the vocation of the Salesian Brother. This should be kept in mind when this dimension of the plan is being prepared or brought up to date (cf. GC22, 9).

These various aspects or dimensions (community, education, evangelization, group experience, pastoral work for vocations) should be set within the characteristics and possibilities of each initiative or environment: school, oratory or youth centre, parish, trade school, group movement or association. They need not be formally expressed in a different chapter for each, but the perspectives indicated must be present as regards both guidelines and practice.

#### 4. Points of reference

Art. 4 of the General Regulations lists some points which must underlie the drawing up of the plan: "based on the preventive system" and "to respond to the youth situation and to the conditions in poor areas". The first of these takes up art. 38-40 of the Constitutions. The preventive system, as well as being the inspiring principle, is a "synthesis of contents and of methods" (GC21, 80). It therefore has a word to say not only as regards the attitudes of the educator-apostle but also in what concerns the very concept of youth pastoral work. It is our "way of handing on the gospel message, and of working with and through the young for their salvation" (C 20). It constitutes the root of our pastoral identity.

For this to be a point of reference in drawing up the plan, it will be desirable in the first place to refresh the minds of the confreres and of all the adults who are actively involved in our works, by putting to them once again the motivating principles and characteristic resources of the system. Wherever this has been done as the first step, there has followed automatically the desire to translate the extraordinary experience of Don Bosco into present-day terms.

It means too that the practical directives and guidelines must take their inspiration from the preventive system by explicit insertion in the plan.

But there is also a second point of reference: *the youth situation and the conditions in poor areas*. To this refer Const. 41 and Reg. 2: "Our apostolic activity is carried out in a variety of ways,

which depend in the first place upon the actual needs of those for whom we are working". This reference is often invoked in discussions about the siting of our works. But it is also of interest to point it out when dealing with works already well established, and there is question of improving our educative and evangelizing plan in order to make it more adequate for the youth mentality and the environments in which we are working.

## 5. Who draws up the plan

Reg. 4, in referring to the provincial plan, places the responsibility on "each provincial community". This may appear to be a too generic expression, but beneath it lie some very precise indications on which insistence was laid at the time of the GC21 and in the years that followed it, i.e. the need for actively involving everyone in the measure of each individual's competence, the freedom of the province to use to the best advantage its various animating structures (council, teams, rectors' meetings, provincial chapter, special commissions), and the animating, directive and decision-making role of those who guide the province.

The educative plan is a "mandatory" text, which has to guide pastoral practice. It is desirable therefore that the process of drawing it up should follow a process analogous to that used for other documents of a similar kind.

A special word needs to be said about the responsibility of the provincial chapter as regards the formulation and approval of the educative pastoral plan of the province. Such a responsibility is included among the series of indications given in the Constitutions and Regulations. The Constitutions in fact entrust to the provincial chapter the task of deciding "on what pertains to the good running of the province" (C 171,1), and still more specifically: "to inquire into suitable means for promoting the religious and pastoral life of the provincial community" (C 171,2).

The General Regulations render this very practical when they ask the provincial chapter to "suggest ideas and criteria for the

planning and reorganization of the works of the province" (R 167,3). From all this and by analogy with what is said about the directory (C 171,4), it is clear that

- the provincial chapter not only can but must concern itself to some extent with the educative pastoral project; this is desirable in any case from the criteria of participation and shared responsibility that should underlie all the work of its formulation;

- the concrete manner in which the provincial chapter will take part in the drawing up and approval of the plan is not specifically indicated; it is left to be decided therefore by each province which will avail itself of its various organisms according to its own possibilities and convenience (council, teams, rectors' meetings and other special gatherings).

In accordance with what has been said, the provincial chapter could choose some of the following methods:

- lay down lines and criteria to be used by certain organisms, delegated for the purpose, in drawing up the text of the plan;

- study a draft text prepared by a team in advance, and make any modifications to it that may be thought necessary;

- approve a text which may have already reached its final version, and which is presented for this purpose by the provincial and his council.

There is no norm which prescribes that the provincial plan be sent to the General Council for its approval, given the nature of the document. But to provide a more accurate knowledge of the pastoral work of the provinces, to promote subsequent dialogue between the provinces and the Department, and for the purpose of gathering together the experience of the Congregation, it is desirable that each province furnish the Councillor General for Youth Pastoral Work with some copies of its plan.

The responsibility for the local plan, referred to in the same art. 4 of the General Regulations, is assigned to the local community (R 5) in the terms of art. C 47, i.e. to the educative and pastoral community. The religious community, through its various roles and



organs, must see to it that "in a family spirit the young people, their parents and other collaborators also take part, according to their different roles" (R 5). R 184 refers to this when it enumerates among the principal tasks of the assembly of the confreres: "to participate in the elaboration of the educative and pastoral plan" (R 184,4).

## 6. Conclusion

The Report of the Rector Major to the GC22 speaks of the number of provinces which had drawn up their plan during the previous six years, and of the advantages that had accrued to the province and the Congregation as a result: an awareness of our pastoral identity, adaptation to the youth situation, the convergence of all activities on the objective of evangelization and an understanding by the whole community of the challenges and demands it presents at the present day, and educational updating (cf. RRM 170-181).

The plan therefore should not be considered as a mere technical complication adding nothing to creativity, but precisely as a community expression of the latter. It is the practical application of art. 44 of the Constitutions: "The apostolic mandate which the Church entrusts to us is taken up and put into effect in the first place by the provincial and local communities. The members have complementary functions and each one of their tasks is important. They are aware that pastoral objectives are achieved through unity and joint brotherly responsibility. The provincial and the rector, as promoters of dialogue and teamwork, guide the community in pastoral discernment, so that it may accomplish its apostolic plan in unity and fidelity."

Many vital concerns are involved in the community implementation of the pastoral plan: shared responsibility, unity, fidelity, and the provision of adequate responses. Even though the path of involvement, preparation of the plan and its subsequent realization is not free from difficulties, it is expedient that it be embarked upon at once and with determination.

## 4. ACTIVITIES OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL

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### 4.1 Chronicle of the Rector Major

From 21-23 October the Rector Major spent some time with the newly elected Superiors of the Combonian Missionaries who gathered at our own Generalate to spend a few days of reflection together and have the possibility of various meetings at General Council level.

He was present at the 2nd World Congress of the Salesian Cooperators which took place from 28 October - 4 November. On 1 November he made a trip to Frascati to open a meeting of the DBV Superiors and those in charge formation from all over Europe.

On the 8th of the same month he left Rome with other members of the General Council (Frs Natali, Vecchi, Cuevas and Britschu) for Lyons for a combined visit to the three French-speaking provinces of Europe. He returned to Rome on 11 November and remained at the Generalate until the 22nd when he went with the members of his Council to Catania for the celebration of the annual Feast of the Rector Major.

He returned immediately afterwards to Rome to take part in the Extraordinary Synod of Bishops (24 November - 8 December).

### 4.2 Chronicle of the General Council

After three months of laborious work involving many journeys and visits of animation to the communities, all the Councillors were back in Rome at the end of October for the plenary session of the Council, which began on 5 November and continued until 10 January 1986.

As happens in every plenary session, some meetings of the Council were dedicated to the study of particular problems concerning communities and confreres: these included the appointment of members of provincial councils, the opening of new houses and activities, and the approval of plans for pastoral development or building programmes in various provinces.

But most of the meetings were concerned with priority themes related to the animation of the Congregation, and with the implementing of some tasks mandated by the Constitutions. We give below a synthesis of the Council's work.

1. *An examination of the reports on the Extraordinary Visitations carried out by the respective Regional Councillors to the Provinces of Medellin (Colombia), Recife (Brazil), Manila (Philip-*

pines), Wroclaw (Poland), and Ancona (Italy): the report of the Visitor and the observations made by the Councillors provided guidelines for the indications subsequently sent by the Rector Major to the provincials and confreres of the provinces concerned.

2. *Appointment of Provincials*: after studying the results of consultations carried out in the respective provinces and after a serious process of discernment, the General Council gave its consent to the appointment of six new provincials.

3. *Preparations for 1988*: a further examination was made of some initiatives to be promoted at world level for the centenary of 1988. In particular it was decided to set up a "Central Commission '88" (to which provincial and local commissions can refer) which will see to the preparation and coordination of initiatives at world level.

4. *General criteria for the preparation and carrying out of the "combined visits"*: with reference to the priorities laid down by the GC22 for the present six-year period, and in the light of experience of the previous six years, some criteria were decided on concerning both the process of preparation and the manner of carrying out the combined visits which will take place in 1986 and 1987.

5. *Regulations of the Salesian Cooperators*. Through the post-capitular commission which followed the World Congress of the Cooperators, the Rector Major and his Council received the Regulations of the Association, revised with the help of contributions from the whole Association. The Rector Major and Council, following the norms of the Regulations themselves, have carried out an attentive work of revision to render the text suitable for sending to the competent Roman Congregation with a view to definitive approval.

6. *The commentary on the Constitutions*. As is already known, the GC22 asked the Rector Major to make arrangements for the preparation of a commentary on the constitutional text. A team set up by the Rector Major himself has been working during the past months to collect material for such a commentary. With a view to giving it greater authority (even though it will not be an official document), the Councillors have examined the first draft and made their observations.

7. *The "Privileges" of our Society*. "Privileges" granted to a group of the faithful or to religious Institutes represent a help which the Apostolic See gives for the service which they offer to the universal Church. Our Society too has

had Privileges for the carrying out of its mission according to our own charism. The Code of Canon Law, revised in line with the indications of Vatican II, did not abolish Privileges, but these need revision in the light of the new canonical norms. The General Council, with the help of the Faculty of Canon Law of our University, has set on foot this work of revision.

8. Also examined were the arrangements for *missionary "twinning"* and our commitment in centres for the assistance of emigrants.

The plenary session of the Council has also been marked by two other events of importance.

On 23 and 24 November the Council took part, with the Italian provincials, in the official Feast of the Rector Major, organized this time by the Sicilian Province. External manifestations of the intense love felt for Don Bosco in the person of his 7th successor were provided in an event involving 4,000 pre-adolescents at Catania on the 23rd and in a meeting (again at Catania) on the 24th with more than 2,500 adolescents and young adults. Meaningful too were the fraternal meeting with salesian confreres in the evening of 23 November (and in particular with those who were celebrating some special anniversary of profession or

ordination), and the big eucharistic concelebration on the following day in the Sanctuary of the Weeping Madonna at Syracuse, in the presence of a huge throng representing all groups of the Salesian Family.

During the following days from 25-30 November, the Councillors made their own annual retreat at the house of Zafferana Etnea; it was preached by Fr Nicholas Loss on the theme: "The human creature in dialogue with his God according to the Scriptures". They were privileged moments of meditation on the Word of God, of spiritual intimacy with the Lord and of salesian brotherhood.

### 4.3 Activities of the Councillors

#### The Vicar General

The animating activities carried out in the provinces by the Vicar General include the following.

On 10 October he took part in the meeting of the Provincial Conference of Spain and Portugal at Madrid, which had included in its agenda the theme of the tasks of the coming ordinary provincial chapters. In this connection Fr Scrivo gave an address, which was followed by a discussion to promote a deeper understanding of the points made.

On October 26 and 27 he was in

Zurich to represent the Rector Major at the inauguration of the new buildings of the Italian Catholic Mission.

#### **The Councillor General for Formation**

Fr Paul Natali, in addition to various meetings and visits for purposes of animation, and to the necessary work connected with the UPS, its life, and its relationships with affiliated study-centres (including various meetings concerning the new organization of the Studentate at Cremisan), took part in the combined visit to the European French-speaking provinces.

With the personnel of his Department he has proceeded with work chiefly along the following three lines:

— the writing of the commentary on the 24 articles forming the third part of the Constitutions: "Formed for the mission of pastors and educators" (C 96-119), and the corresponding articles of the General Regulations (R 78-102);

— the organization, through the preparation of suitable aids, and the animation of the course for those involved in formation at the post-novitiate level which began at the Generalate on 11 November; he also took part in some preliminary meetings with the Department for the Salesian Family and Social

Communication in connection with the coming course for animators of the Salesian Family;

— finally the task of revising the "Ratio Fundamentalis" ("Formation of Salesians of Don Bosco", Rome, 2nd edtn. 1985), and the "Criteria and Norms for salesian vocation discernment: Admissions". Both these texts have now been completed: their promulgation by the Rector Major bears the date of 8 December 1985. This has been the most important work as regards both quality and quantity. Further useful information in the same connection can be found in this same issue of the Acts in the article by the Councillor for Formation.

#### **The Councillor General for Youth Pastoral Work**

In July the Councillor General for Youth Pastoral Work sent to every province the printed booklet "The Salesian Plan for Group Activity". A letter of presentation explained how it fitted into the series of aids offered by the Department, and a form was included asking for comments after the booklet had been studied. The same booklet was also published early in November in English and Spanish, and sent to the provinces concerned.

August saw the beginning of the publication in Spain of the aid "The Educative Community in Form-

ation". It consists of five folders, of which so far only two have been published, covering twelve themes. The others will follow in due course. Starting from the idea of salesian animators, the active participation of lay people in the educative community, and the possibility of working alongside them in such a way that from being professional collaborators they can develop into members of the Salesian Family, the contents include reflections on the professional quality of work, christian experience and salesian knowledge.

Next Fr Juan Vecchi met the provincials of the Pacific Region of Latin America to see how the proposals made for each province in the 4th Latin-American meeting at Cumbaya could be put into effect. The participants took stock of the situation as regards the pastoral animation of each province and the team responsible for it, the educative and pastoral plan, and the experience gained in group movements in the context of the environment and needs of Latin America.

In the province of the Antilles he met with parish priests and those in charge of youth centres for an exchange of ideas on problems and guidelines concerning these two sectors. In Venezuela he took part in some study days on "the role of religious and laity in educative communities", in which Salesians and

FMA made a deeper study together of the new tasks of animators, and especially the possibility of a greater participation in the formation of the laity, with better methods.

In October it was India's turn. The first meeting was with the members of the pastoral teams of the provinces at Lonavla (Bombay) for the purpose of seeing how matters stand as regards the possibilities of the present provincial structures for an efficacious animation and involvement of the communities of the various provinces; new educational aspects of the present-day situation in India were also studied. A second meeting took place at Madras with vocational promoters and animators and with rectors of aspirantates, to deal with problems in this field. Fr Vecchi devoted the remainder of his time in India to making contact with the confreres of the provinces of Gauhati, Calcutta, Madras and Bangalore.

In November he took part in the combined visit to the French-speaking provinces of Europe at Lyons.

In the meantime, work has begun within the Department on the final preparations for the first seminar on our presence among emarginated youngsters, which will take place at Benediktbeuern (Germany) in February 1986. The returned forms asking for information have been analysed, and at present reports are being prepared on the topics chosen

for special study, together with the names of those invited to take part.

**The Councillor for the Salesian Family and Social Communication**

For a good part of the European summer (July, August, September), Fr Cuevas remained at Rome to preside over the work of the international commissions which were preparing the new text of the Regulations of the Salesian Cooperators. Taking part were Cooperators themselves with some Salesians and Daughters of Mary Help of Christians as consultants.

From 10-15 September he participated, with the Rector Major and Fr McPake, in the European Congress of Past Pupils at Dublin (Ireland), for the study of the theme: Youth unemployment in Europe. Some 400 Past Pupils took part.

From 23-29 September he was at the Latin-American Meeting of salesians working in the field of radio and television. 22 confreres met together and were accompanied by some of their lay collaborators. They examined aspects of the salesian presence in this field, the development policy for these means in the salesian mission, the involvement of the provinces, and future coordination of the structures concerned.

From 30 September to 5 October he preached the spiritual exercises

in Chile to 45 salesians, including the young confreres who would soon receive ministries and sacred orders.

From 13-15 October he was in the Province of Paraguay to make contact with groups of the Salesian Family and with confreres working in the social communication sector.

From 15-17 October he made a short visit to the Province of Sao Paulo (Brazil) to coordinate plans for development of social communication.

From 23 October to 4 November he was fully occupied at the 2nd World Congress of Salesian Cooperators, which had as its objectives the definitive revision of the Cooperators' Regulations, analysis of the present state of the Association, the mission of the Cooperator among young people, and the designation of candidates for membership of the World Consulting Body. Between official delegates and observers, some 300 persons took part, representing 42 different countries from around the salesian world.

Between 8-11 November he accompanied the Rector Major and other Councillors to the combined meeting with the provincial councils of Lyons, Paris and Brussels. The programme was a heavy one, with a high level of participation, and dealt particularly with the incisive nature of the salesian presence in the highly secularized en-

vironment of French-speaking Europe.

And finally, in the ordinary course of work, he attended meetings of the World Consulting Body of the Cooperators and of the Confederal Council of the Past Pupils of Don Bosco, together with numerous animating visits to various groups of the Salesian Family in Italy.

#### **The Councillor General for the Missions**

After leaving Rome in July at the end of the plenary session of the Council, Fr Luc Van Looy preached the spiritual exercises to all the confreres of Madagascar from 31 July to 6 August. He then visited the communities of Bemaneviky, Ijely, Mahajanga and Ivato before returning to Rome on 16 August, with a brief stop en route at the provincial house of Paris.

On 28-29 August he was present at an assembly of the confreres of the Vice-Province of Sardinia to study with them their plan for missionary commitment in Madagascar, after which he went directly to Belgium to take part in the celebrations for the golden jubilee of his parents' wedding.

On 6 September he went to Tanzania to visit the communities of the East African Delegation. He was able to visit the following com-

munities: Mafinga, where there is an aspirantate with 85 aspirants, a catechetical centre and a parish; Iringa, with its trade school and oratory; Dodoma, also with a trade school and oratory; and Dar-Es-Salaam, the seat of the missionary procure, where there is an oratory and catechetical work is done in the schools.

After a day's break at Nairobi he went to Sudan, where he was able to visit the community at Juba, which runs an oratory and school of printing, and pass on to Wau (where there is an FMA community) in the hope of being able to go on to visit our work at Tonj. Unfortunately it was not possible to proceed further on account of the war; the two confreres at Tonj are isolated and cut off from the other zones. After waiting in vain at Wau for five days he returned to Juba and went on at once to Nairobi.

At dawn on 25 September he reached Embu to visit the confreres of the Italian Central Province and the FMA who are there; he was able to see for himself the great progress made in both works. On the evening of the 27th he called a meeting of those in charge at Nairobi and Embu to study a plan for the formation of young African candidates. On the 29th he left for Rome.

From 2-6 October he animated the meeting of new missionaries gathered at Turin for study and



visits to the places associated with Don Bosco. On 6 October in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians he presented the crucifix to the 13 missionaries of the 115th expedition.

On 8 October he left for Korea where, from the 12th to 18th, he took part in the General Chapter of the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament in the capacity of Apostolic Visitor. On 22 October, after visiting all the houses of Korea, he went on to Bangkok. On the following day he reached Vietnam where for nine days he was able to form an impression of the situation of the Church and the Congregation and of the country itself. Afterwards he spent some time in Thailand, where he was able to visit the houses of Bangkok, Sampran, Banpong and Hua Hin.

On 3 November he returned to Rome.

**The Councillor for Latin America  
(Atlantic Region)**

Fr Charles Techera left Rome on 27 July and the next day began the consultation for the appointment of the new provincial of the Province of Manaus (Brazil). For the first time he was able to reach and make a brief visit to the missions of Rio Negro and Rondonia. He then left via Sao Paulo for Angola, where he preached the spiritual exercises to Cooperators.

the missionaries, at the same time presenting them with the new text of the Constitutions and Regulations.

Returning once again to Latin America from Africa he went to Paraguay to begin there also the consultation for the appointment of the new provincial. From 5-8 September he presided over a meeting of the Provincial Conference of La Plata at Buenos Aires. He also had a meeting with the FMA provincials and delegates of Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay (at which Mother Dolores Acosta was present) for the purpose of launching the preparations for the centenary of 1988.

On 15 September he began the Extraordinary Visitation of the Province of Recife in North-East Brazil.

On 21-22 September he took part in a meeting of the SDB and FMA provincials of Brazil, again with the objective of making preparations for the centenary; at this meeting the FMA Mother General (Mother Marinella Castagna) was present, together with Mothers Ilka Perillier and Rosalba Perotti. After this, the meeting of the provincial conference of Brazil continued until September 24.

On 28 October, having completed the Visitation at Recife, he returned to Rome to participate in the 2nd World Congress of the Salesian

**The Councillor for Latin America  
(Pacific-Caribbean Region)**

During August, September and October 1985, Fr Ignatius Velasco was in the northern part of the Region to fulfil a previously arranged programme of activities.

The Extraordinary Visitation of the Province of Medellin (Colombia) began in the first days of August; it had to be interrupted for some weeks at the beginning of September, and was concluded at the end of October.

He visited some of the Republics of Central America: Costa Rica, Nicaragua and Honduras, where he took advantage of the possibility of gathering the various communities together for the solemn presentation of the new text of the Constitutions.

Subsequently he presided at the annual meeting of the provincials of the Region. This year it took place in the Antilles at the House of Pinar Quemado, near Jarabacoa, where the novitiate is erected at the present time. At this meeting Fr Juan Vecchi was also present. The meeting dedicated two days to the study of the document of Cumbaya on pastoral work planned for the Latin-American continent during the present six-year period. A detailed study was also made of the situation in the area of initial formation in the various provinces of the Region.

The Regional Councillor then

went to Mexico. He reached Mexico City on September 18 and spent the night at the provincial house at Santa Julia, and so was there when the tragic earthquake struck the city in the morning of the 19th. The horror and enormity of the disaster left an indescribable impression. Thanks be to God and to Mary Help of Christians that our own confreres and houses were spared serious harm.

Afterwards he was able to continue his work with the consultation for the appointment of the new provincial of the Province of Guadalajara: he began this work of animation at the house of Monterey in the north of the country and then passed through every city where we have a community.

At the conclusion of the canonical visitation of the province of Medellin, he returned to Rome at the end of October to be present at the final part of the Cooperators' World Congress.

**The Regional Councillor  
for Asia**

Fr Thomas Panakezham left Rome on 30 July for the Far East. After brief visits to some communities in the Vice-Province of Korea and the Province of Japan, he spent several days in Thailand for the purpose of making the consultation for the appointment of the new pro-

After these tasks he went to the Philippines to begin the Extraordinary Canonical Visitation. During the 72 days of the visitation he was able to see for himself the great work done in the province in the field of vocations, in the development of missionary work, and in the propagation of devotion to Mary Help of Christians. Worthy of note is the fact that the Philippines hierarchy has designated our church at Paranaque (Manila) as the National Shrine of Mary Help of Christians. The growing missionary thrust is evidenced by the presence of the province in Papua New Guinea (where there are now three foundations, at Araithiri, Port Moresby and Rabaul), and by the beginning of a new presence at Jakarta (Indonesia) to meet the needs of the island of Timor. The Regional Councillor was able to visit only the missionary presences in Papua New Guinea, leaving till a later date a visit to the other mission centres.

After the Visitation Fr Panakezham presided over a meeting of the provincials of the Far East at Hong Kong. At this meeting it was decided to promote in 1986 a meeting of the salesian Brothers of the Far East for a deeper study of the new text of the Constitutions; other matters discussed were the way of celebrating the centenary of 1988, the "joint visit" programmed for

1986, and the coming provincial chapters.

The Councillor returned to Rome on 31 October to take part in the Cooperators' World Congress.

#### **The Councillor for the English-speaking Region**

During the summer period in the northern hemisphere Fr Martin McPake made two visits, each of a month's duration, for animation purposes: the first to Australia and the second to North America. In both cases he presented the new Constitutions to the confreres, helping to make them understood and absorbed; to this end he was able to visit all the formation communities and the majority of the other houses.

In Australia he was able to confer the ministry of acolyte on four young confreres, and on another occasion to receive the perpetual profession of five members in the presence of almost one thousand other members of the Salesian Family.

In both continents he was able to observe the joy with which the confreres have received the new text of their Rule of Life and are committing themselves to living it ever more fully.

Between these two longer visits, the Regional Councillor passed through Ireland where, in company vincial.

with the Rector Major, he was present at the final part of the European Congress of Past Pupils ("Eurobosco"). Finally before returning to Rome at the end of October, he made a rapid tour of the houses of the Province of Great Britain for the purpose of the consultation for the appointment of the new provincial.

**The Regional Councillor  
for Europe and Central Africa**

Continuing his contact-making visits to the provinces of the Region, Fr Dominic Britschu passed successively through the provinces of Germany, Austria, Hungary, Belgium and France. Priority was given to meetings with those responsible for communities (provincials, rectors, provincial councillors, delegates for various sectors) without detracting from the importance of being present at retreats, eucharistic functions, perpetual professions, and meetings for other celebrations or fraternal gatherings. Of these the principal ones took place at Waldwinkel, Cologne, Vienna, Benediktbeuern, Brussels, Lyons and Rome.

Worthy of special mention was the retreat made by some sixty priests and laity, all devotees of Don Bosco, in the University Church of Budapest.

Noteworthy, finally, was the presence of the Regional with the Rector Major and other members of

the General Council at the first "joint visit" to the Region, for the benefit of the French-speaking European provinces, which took place at Lyons: this was a fraternal gathering in which the grave problems posed to the salesian mission in a secularized environment were studied.

**The Regional Councillor  
for the Iberian Peninsula**

The summer period is not the best for making extraordinary visitations in this Region; it does lend itself on the other hand to interesting works of animation.

Fr Rico preached retreats first to the FMA at the "Auxilium" in Rome and at Mornese, and later to the FMA of Portugal at Lisbon, and to the Portuguese Don Bosco Volunteers at Fatima. He also gave a course of spiritual exercises and animation at Lisbon for the rectors and vicerectors of the salesian houses of Portugal; then, after receiving the religious profession of the Portuguese novices, he had a three-day meeting at Porto with the formation personnel of the aspirantates, pre-novitiates, novitiates and post-novitiates. By the grace of God the formation process is becoming more consolidated, and there is greater clarity about objectives, greater unity about criteria of formation and greater continuity between the various phases.

In Spain he was able to take part

in the "international conversations" on salesian life which took place at Valle de los Caidos, and in the study-week on youth pastoral work, directed by Fr Juan Vecchi, which was attended by all members of provincial councils of the Region together with the provincial delegates for this sector and the national delegate. He also preached the spiritual exercises to the novices of Madrid, and gave seven lectures at the course of ongoing formation for the Region that was taking place at Campello. He was also present at the meetings of the Focolari of Don Bosco held at national level, and at the first national meeting of the Young Cooperators of Spain.

From 9-11 October he presided over the meeting of the Iberian provincial conference, which had the benefit of the presence of Fr Scrivo, and where among the themes studied was that of the formation of future African salesians of the nations where the Spanish provinces are working, the completing of the Statute of the Salesian Missionary Procure based at Madrid, and the preparations for the provincial chapters of 1986 and the salesian centenaries of the same year (the centenary of Don Bosco's visit to Spain) and of 1988.

**The Regional Councillor for Italy,  
Switzerland and the Middle East**

At the end of July Fr Bosoni met with the Provincials of Italy to begin

with them a rethinking of the salesian presence in this territory and to study the run-up to 1988.

In August he inaugurated the course of ongoing formation for the Region and visited many houses in the mountains, especially in the Triveneto area, where he was able to observe at first hand some interesting summer activities of the salesians and members of the Salesian Family.

He preached a retreat to the Past Pupils of Sicily and presided, on 8 September, at the first profession of the novices of Lanuvio (Rome). Later he was at Turin for the installation of the new Provincial of the Central Province and met the novices of Pinerolo.

On 15 September he began the Extraordinary Visitation of the Adriatic Province, which had to be temporarily interrupted between 6-9 October for engagements at Turin and Rome.

On 4 November he was present at the closing functions of the World Congress of Cooperators, and from 8-11 of the same month he met once again with the Italian Provincials, and presided at Loreto over the seminar of study to consider the salesian presence among young people on the fringe of society.

Finally he met with the rectors of the houses of the Middle-East Province, who met in Rome for purposes of updating and programm-

ing, and completed the visitation of the Adriatic Province as the General Council took up once again the intense activity of its plenary session.

**The Delegate of the Rector Major for Poland**

Fr Augustyn Dziędziel, carried out in the months of August, September and October, the Extraordinary Visitation of the Polish Province of St John Bosco, Wroclaw. At the same time he made the consultation in the same province for the appointment of the new provincial.

On 24 August 1985 he presided over the celebration for the inauguration of the new FMA provincial of their province of Wroclaw. The office has passed from Mother Bozena Stawecka to Mother Danuta Kaminska.

In connection with the International Youth Year, a salesian youth pilgrimage was organized from all over Poland to the Shrine of the Madonna of Czestochowa; some 3,500 young people took part. During the night-time Mass the Delegate blessed and gave the crucifix to 12 missionary confreres (6 priests and 6 clerics) destined for the following missions: 4 priests and 5 clerics for Zambia, 2 priests for Zaire, and 1 cleric for the Middle East.

Through the initiative of the Consultant Group of the Polish

Provincial Conference, a national meeting of the rectors of all the salesian houses in Poland was arranged for 16-20 September at Lutomiersk. The speakers were the provincials and vice-provincials. The new Constitutions were presented and studied, under the presidency of the Delegate.

Between 28-30 October Fr Dziędziel presided over a session of the Polish Salesian Provincial Conference. As well as the principal theme of religious consecration, other particular problems were studied, e.g. initiatives for the centenary of the death of Don Bosco, indications for the drawing up of provincial directories, salesian publishing activity in Poland, and preparations for the "twinning" of the Polish provinces with another African country in addition to Zambia.

Finally, there were several visits made for animating purposes to the formation communities in Poland, where there are numerous confreres in formation. In the three novitiates in Poland there are 133 novices, spread over the four provinces.

## 5. DOCUMENTS AND NEWS ITEMS

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### 5.1 2nd World Congress of Salesian Cooperators. *Concluding address of the Rector Major*

The 2nd World Congress of the Salesian Cooperators took place at the "Salesianum", Rome, from 28 October to 4 November 1985. It was concerned almost entirely with the revision of the Cooperators' Regulations, promulgated at Easter 1974 and in use on an experimental basis for the last ten years. The new text had been prepared by three Commissions, working on the conclusions of provincial and national pre-congresses; it was discussed and voted upon, receiving the approval of a large majority. It will now be examined by the Rector Major with his Council and then sent to the Apostolic See for definitive approval.

Some 300 persons from 42 different nations took part in the Congress, of whom 176 had the right to vote; the remainder were lay and religious observers. The presence of the Salesian General Council, the Mother General of the FMA with some of her Councillors, and representatives of other groups who are members of the Salesian Family provided a sense of enthusiastic and fraternal participation in this important event, in

which the Cooperators were the protagonists.

Significant too was the participation of Cardinals and Bishops who presided at the eucharistic celebrations, and much appreciated was the audience with the Holy Father.

The Rector Major, Fr Egidio Viganò, presided over the Congress and enriched it by his guidance and stimulation. We give here, in advance of publication of the Acts of the Congress, the Rector Major's concluding address, in which he pointed out some urgent needs to which the Cooperators — and with them the entire Salesian Family — are called upon to respond in the Church of the present day.

My dear well-deserving and hard working Cooperators and Delegates, dear brothers and sisters of the Salesian Family,

We have reached the end of the 2nd World Congress of the Salesian Cooperators.

We give joyful thanks to the Lord who has been with us to enlighten us with the gifts of his Spirit. We are grateful to our Blessed Lady for her motherly intercession, and to the always dynamic Don Bosco who has interested all heaven on our behalf.

I congratulate you for getting through so much work. This has been the most enriching stage of the revision of the "identity card" of the Cooperators' Association which has followed Vatican II, and from it will emerge a new text which will be advantageous for the entire Salesian Family.

The three groups founded by Don Bosco (Society of St Francis de Sales, Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, Association of the Cooperators) share with each other the characteristics associated with the name of their own particular group, making it part of the programme in each of the other two: in fact every group lives the "salesian" spirit, every group cultivates a filial "Marian" devotion, every group carries out its apostolic work in "cooperation". Hence the names of the three groups express in complementary fashion the profound common values of the spiritual and apostolic heritage left to us by the Founder.

*The "secular dimension"  
in the Salesian Family*

In this concluding address I think it better not to enter into a detailed evaluation of the work of the Congress, which has indeed been both positive and full of promise for the future. I prefer rather to offer

you some fundamental considerations based on the "secular dimension" proper to our salesian vocation.

It is a dimension which already had its roots in the beginnings at Valdocco, and a perspective furthermore that was insistently pointed out by Vatican II. In different and analogical ways it touches not only the mission common to the three Groups but also their particular style of life.

The "secular dimension" has fallen victim to a fatal caricature: that of "secularism", which renders the gospel worldly and corrupts the apostolate, detaching individuals from their particular vocation and even from the faith. Precisely for this reason more emphasis is needed on the Council's vision of the relationship between the Church and the World, and on what history indicates as necessary in the Church's work of salvation.

"Saeculum", in fact, means a period of history, a space of human experience, a concrete reality of the world as a theatre where man's adventure is played out, with his efforts and defeats, his progress and his false steps (cf. GS 2).

And so the Council relaunched, as a powerful and original motive for renewal in pastoral work, the secular dimension of the whole Church as regards its mission.

The People of God "cherish a feel-



ing of deep solidarity with the human race and its history" (GS 1); the Church "travels the same journey as all mankind and shares the same earthly lot with the world: it is to be a leaven and, as it were, the soul of human society... and believes it can contribute much to humanizing the family of man" (GS 40). The saving and eschatological objective of the Church is shot through with history; it has therefore a considerable "secular" dimension. Rightly Paul VI was able to define it as the "servant of humanity".

To the specific objective of redemption and salvation Vatican II frequently links that of "the renewal of the whole temporal order": "the mission of the Church, in consequence, is not only to bring men the message and grace of Christ, but also to permeate and improve the whole range of temporal reality by the gospel spirit" (AA 5; cf. also 2 and 7).

"Consecrated life" itself is never presented by the Council as something "alien" to human society (cf. LG 46): "consecration" and "secularity" are never mutually exclusive, although they are linked together in different degrees leading up to the ultimate level which is that of secular Institutes, in which profession is made of "consecrated secularity" or "secular consecration".

The famous "secular character" referred to as proper and peculiar to the laity (cf. LG 31) reflects and spells out for them with specific tasks a global dimension which belongs to the whole Church.

"Gaudium et Spes" outlines a continual exchange of values and tasks between the Church and the world: the help given by the People of God to the world and what it receives in return (cf. chap. IV). They are in continuous dialogue with one another, in a mutual vital relationship similar to the diastolic and systolic dynamism of the heart.

Human values are assumed (first step) into the mystery of the incarnation, precisely to be then poured out (second step) in becoming in the secular world the saving riches of the Word made flesh.

In this exchange dialogue "Pastors", "Consecrated persons" and "Laity" take part in an inseparable and complementary manner. But the Laity are the central bridge in this dialogue; without them there is the danger that the others will remain only on the margin of society.

Fundamental is our common incorporation into Christ through the sacraments of initiation which renders all of us equally brothers and sisters in the one Son. What later distinguishes us from one another (as Pastors, Consecrated persons, and Laity) provides us with mutual service and enrichment in view of

the one same mission of the emancipation of man.

It was Don Bosco's deep intuitive understanding of this communion that made him want to bring us together to work in the world: he was moved by his apostolic heart; he was prompted by a concrete and historical sensitivity; he felt himself called to provide a response to the challenges of the world which he heard above all in the anguished cries of the young. For this reason he began the work of the Oratories, his commitment to the missions, the care of vocations, the defence and purification of popular religious practices. He wanted to work for the good of human society: "on the good or bad education of young people", he used to say, "depends the happy or sad future of society's usages and customs" (cf. Foreword to the Constitutions of 1858).

*A message  
from the 1st International  
Congress (1895)*

As a faithful expression of this plan of Don Bosco, the 1st International Congress of the Cooperators is worth recalling; it took place at Bologna from 23-25 April 1895.

For Don Rua they were days of great salesian joy; writing to the confreres about the event he spoke

of a date "to be written in letters of gold" in the history of our Family, and he referred explicitly to the prophetic words of Don Bosco in the dream of the personage with the ten diamonds: "1895 will see a great triumph" (MB XV 187; cf. "Lettere circolari di D. Michele Rua, Turin 1965, p. 153).

In Italy it proved to be an event of extraordinary proportions for the Church itself. Taking part were four cardinals (of Bologna, Milan, Ravenna and Ferrara), 29 archbishops and bishops, and the Holy Father himself (Leo XIII) sent a special letter. On the following day, 26 April, no fewer than 50,000 people went in pilgrimage to the hill of Our Lady of San Luca to give thanks to the Mother of God.

The Congress did not deal with the special works of the Congregation; rather did it dwell on ecclesial and social commitments on the frontiers of faith. The theme of the Congress was in fact: "Social salvation through Religion and Charity" (which in present-day language might be expressed as "Integral emancipation through a civilization of love"!)

Cardinal Svampa emphasized some of the more urgent aspects: "the education of the young, the improvement of the condition of the working classes, the need for a wholesome press, missions to the unbelievers".

Fr James Bellia, a past pupil of the Valdocco Oratory, was given the task of taking an account of the proceedings of the Congress to the Papal Secretary of State, Cardinal Rampolla del Tindaro, to inform him that the resolutions taken concerned "a general reawakening and renewal" of secular apostolic initiatives.

Don Rua, comparing the stimulating characteristics of this Congress with the shortcomings of certain confreres, wrote in a circular letter: "Ah!... if they had only been present at the Congress, I have no doubt that they would have resolved to change their way of life. Let us all live, I beg of you, in the spirit of Don Bosco!" (cf. A. Amadei, "Il Servo di Dio Michele Rua", Vol. I, Ch. 12 "Il gran trionfo", pp. 682-693).

He became ever more strengthened in the conviction, inherited from Don Bosco, that the Association of the Cooperators is at the root of salesian work, that it accompanies its development, intensifies its practical nature, ensures its efficacy, makes it more incisive in society, and widens its horizons for the education of needy youth and for the evangelization of the poor.

My dear salesian confreres present here this morning and dear salesian sisters FMA, let us never forget that without the Cooperators we weaken our true secular dimen-

sion to a dangerous extent, losing little by little the characteristic traits of the identity impressed on us by Don Bosco. Without them we are no longer genuine bearers of Don Bosco's apostolic plan in the world.

And you, my dear Cooperators, without the consecrated members of our Salesian Family, would find it very difficult to remain faithful to the ideals of the Founder, because your true characteristic is not so much that you are in the world, but rather that with us you are witnesses to Christ in the spirit of Don Bosco.

We were born together to walk side by side through the centuries, not descending to worldly levels ourselves, but architects of the history of salvation.

### *Questions of apostolic present-day interest*

Even though it be of different forms, our "secular dimension" offers us various fields at the present day where our commitment is needed. Two of them can serve as examples: the field of "religion" and that of "politics". They are two sectors which are distinct one from the other but which converge in the unity of life. Unfortunately the distinction between the two is not everywhere clear: where religion manipulates politics it leads in dif-

ferent degrees to theocratic obscurantism; and when politics exploit religion an enslaving dictatorship results. We know by sad experience that in either of these circumstances the secular dimension of our salesian mission becomes mutilated and restricted.

But what I want to emphasize in this closing address is the urgent need to develop our mutual communion in a renewed form, which will demand a greater depth of faith, a more modern social sense and a wider and better qualified involvement of lay people. This was in my mind when formulating the Strenna for next year: "Let us foster the vocation of lay people for the service of the young in the spirit of Don Bosco". But let me come back again to those two points: "religion" and "politics".

On the one hand: Vatican II has insisted very much on the secular projection of "religion"; and the intention in using the term was evidently to make reference to the vitality of the christian faith seen in today's society. It declares, it is true, that the mission of the People of God "is not in the political, economic or social order", but rather a religious one; but it immediately goes on to explain that "this religious mission can be the source of commitment, direction and vigour to establish and consolidate the communion of men ac-

cording to the law of God" (GS 42); and for that reason it exhorts christians to "carry out their earthly activity in such a way as to integrate human, domestic, professional, scientific and technical enterprises with religious values, under whose supreme direction all things are ordered to the glory of God" (GS 43). Such a faith bears with it a capacity for communication and a commitment to witness of life and evangelization which penetrate into the dynamic nuclei of human cultures, with the purpose of "affecting and as it were upsetting, through the power of the Gospel, mankind's criteria of judgement, determining values, points of interest, lines of thought, sources of inspiration and models of life for humanity" (Paul VI, EN 19).

On the other hand, the significance of the term "politics" or "political" has suffered a change of emphasis in recent years, from its more technical and restricted meaning in the order of parties and policies, to a wider and more vital one of social values and perspectives which relate to the interpretation and realization of the "common temporal good" (cf. GS 26, 31, 69, 74, 75).

According to this second and wider concept the political dimension, even though not involving man in his totality, acquires a breadth which affects the very

formation of the individual and permeates great cultural aspects of our human society. At this level no one can opt out from a true "political responsibility", even though he be not involved in specific service of a militant character.

The recently approved SDB Constitutions express this aspect very well when they say, in an article which received praise from the examiners of the Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes: "We share in a way appropriate to religious in the witness and commitment of the Church to justice and peace. While not getting involved in ideologies and party politics, we reject everything that encourages deprivation, injustice and violence. We cooperate with all who are trying to build a society more worthy of man's dignity" (C 33; cf. also circular letter of Fr Ricceri, ASC 284, 1976).

Now, active participation in this secular dimension of the Church's mission brings home to us the indispensable need we have of an updated knowledge of the Church's social teaching, and of strengthening our communion and exchange of values for a mutual apostolic enlightenment and enrichment.

Especially in these two areas must be felt those rhythmic and complementary heart pulsations by which the members of a group share with others their goods and

perspectives of dynamic fidelity. Think for instance of the harmony that must be attained between youth pastoral work and pastoral work for families; of the problems of young people in society; of the education and training of apprentices so that they can take their place in the world of work; of initiative to ensure the liberty of the school in the State; of the search for a language adequate for evangelization purposes in an era of cultural change; of the need for an incisive presence in the sector of the mass media; of the need to support and collaborate in the growing missionary commitment.

Without an interchange with the lay members of the Salesian Family, the consecrated members would gradually become "outsiders", without any influence on the evolution of social life. And the lay members, without communion with those who are consecrated, would be exposed to the diminution and loss of their characteristic linkage with the Church: the lay person in the world needs constant spiritual re-animation.

Here then are two aspects which must not be separated, two poles which must be kept in tension, so as to ensure a continuous production of apostolic energy for the world of today.

It is my hope that this Congress, following the example of that of

1895, will launch an appeal to all our Family to rethink courageously and in depth its specific "secular dimension". The lay members bring a permanent enrichment to the Church-World dialogue.

I think that precisely here is to be found the secret of the up-to-date nature, the apostolic creativity and the social importance of our common mission; not secularism, not an acceptance of worldly values, but not detachment either, nor deafness to the cry of the poor who are living in the world.

Our preferential option for needy youth and for the life of faith in working class areas is the contribution which society is looking for at the present day from Don Bosco's Salesian Family.

*The spiritual bond which unites us*

The vital spring which makes possible these ideals stemming from history and which links us together in brotherly communion is an interior energy to which we give the name "pastoral charity". It is the heart wherein is realized the rhythmic pulsations of the spirit of Don Bosco. He expressed it in the motto which distinguishes us from others as a Family: "Da mihi animas".

In a circular letter I wrote in February 1982 on the subject of the

Salesian Family, I said that at its source there is a unifying energy which generates in us a kind of spiritual consanguinity or relationship: it is the kind of pastoral charity that was characteristic of our Founder.

It cannot be identified with the various spiritualities proper to the priestly or religious life, or to married or professional life, etc.; it is a deeper bonding energy which brings together in harmonious fashion the various currents of these spiritualities and unites them in a single great current. From the pastoral charity lived and passed on to us by Don Bosco springs the common "salesian spirit" that makes us complementary Groups in the one Family. The care and intensification of this "spirit" is entrusted to all of us but with different service roles to play.

It was Don Bosco's intention that the Salesian Congregation should provide in this connection a priestly service of delicate responsibility. This is not a privilege, but a ministry; not a dignity, but a function; not a relic of an age of clericalism, but a prophetic and pedagogical choice which ensures the proper and efficacious exercise in the complex and difficult worldly situations of the priesthood of the baptized which is shared by all.

I think it indispensable to point out that our apostolic dynamism

does not consist simply in activity. In the circular letter already referred to I asked you to beware of a misunderstanding: "in every truly apostolic life", I wrote, "pastoral charity permeates the very being of the person: before becoming *action* it is a *way of life*; it is a participation in the very love of God, a uniting with him, a self-donation and self-annihilation so as to belong utterly to him and be totally available for working for his Kingdom. *Pastoral charity* must not be superficially identified with altruism. First and foremost it is an intrinsic change of life through which a person lives in intimate union with the God-Saviour and totally at his beck and call for action" (ASC 304, p. 23).

This is the precious source which characterizes our common salesian vocation, even though it be lived in different ways by different groups, and in different degrees by different persons. It is a necessary point of reference for membership of any group belonging to the Family, and in particular for the Association of the Cooperators. Certainly membership will not be perfect from the outset. To some extent it resembles married love: it begins with a certain feeling of attraction, grows with mutual knowledge, is purified through difficulties and transformed through sorrow and periods of aridity; it overcomes moments of disillusionment, experiences con-

version, and is ever aware that it has not yet reached its highest level; it commits itself in hope without ever becoming discouraged, and looks always to those models who have been faithful to their membership to such an extent that they have become saints.

*Two urgent tasks to be carried out*

In the light of these reflections I see two great tasks to which we need to give priority at the present day: they are demanded by the re-elaboration of the Cooperators' "identity card".

The first is that we must all work for the extension of this providential Association, which Don Bosco considered to be one of the columns on which rested his mission in the world: "an Association of the greatest importance for us", he called it, "which is the soul of our Congregation (i.e. the consecrated members!), and which serves as a bond between us in doing good, in union and with the help of the good faithful who live in the world" (cf. Acts GC19, ASC 244, p. 155).

In July 1886 he declared without any hesitation: "It will be the Cooperators who help in fostering the Catholic spirit. You may think this to be a utopian idea on my part, but I stick to it. The more the Holy

See is attacked, the more will it be supported and defended by the Cooperators; the greater the spread of unbelief in every direction, the more will the Cooperators raise on high the burning torch of their active faith" (MB XVIII 161).

We must bring it about by a common effort on the part of all that this group of the Salesian Family becomes the front-line expression of our "secular dimension". This is an exciting challenge and one which is high-minded and truly ecclesial; its promotion will give us greater social influence.

And the second task is our duty of formation: there is an urgent need to cultivate in every group, with the fraternal collaboration of the others, the vitality and growth of pastoral charity. This is a first priority: updated formation of all in the spirit of Don Bosco. The fruits of its genuine quality will be seen in a more adroit creativity and a more decisive apostolic courage in the face of the insistent challenges of the present day.

### *The Cooperators and the Help of Christians*

And in conclusion let me emphasize the importance that Don Bosco attached to devotion to Mary Help of Christians to make our common vocation flourish. On 23

May 1984 in a conference given to the Cooperators in the Basilica at Valdocco, he said: "I am close to the end of my days, and it gives me great joy to see that instead of falling off, the favours bestowed by Mary are increasing every day and in all parts of the world. They are increasing in Italy, in France, in Spain, in Portugal, Belgium, Russia, Poland, Austria, the Argentine Republic, in Uruguay and Patagonia", and how much longer could he have made this list at the present day! "And the Salesian Cooperators are the means God has chosen as his instruments to propagate to an ever greater degree the glory of his Mother. You should all be very pleased at this and hence put great trust in Mary's patronage" (MB XVII 149).

Dear brothers and sisters, we live at a difficult time, but an exciting one: we are called to prepare the advent of the third millennium of christianity. Mary Help of Christians is precisely the "Madonna of difficult times". Let us entrust ourselves to her and our efforts will bear fruit.

Thank you.



## 5.2 Intervention of the Rector Major at the Extraordinary Synod of Bishops

In the period between 25 November and 8 December the Rector Major took part in the Extraordinary Synod of Bishops convoked by Pope John Paul II on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the conclusion of Vatican Council II. He was there as one of three Superiors General (the other two were the Abbot General of the Benedictines and the General of the Jesuits) elected by the Union of Superiors General to represent the Institutes of Consecrated Life. We publish the intervention of the Rector Major in the general assembly on 26 November.

Holy Father, Venerable Pastors, Sisters and Brothers,

The Institutes of Religious Life are in debt to Vatican II for a true qualitative leap in their ecclesial dimension and in the nature of their characteristics.

A comparison of the Acts of the General Congress on "States of Perfection", held at Rome in 1950, with the Council documents (and the subsequent *Motuproprio* "Ecclesiae Sanctae" and Apostolic Exhortation "Evangelica Testificatio") reveals a deep change: "nihil novi et omnia nova".

The five criteria for renewal of

"Perfectae Caritatis" (n. 2) describe the new ecclesial orbit indicated for consecrated life.

But it must be said that in addition to the documents, which certainly represent the official launching platform, there emerges the overall significance of the Council itself as a Pentecostal event: a visit from the Holy Spirit at the beginning of a new epoch in history. No one in fact had, I do not say prepared, but even foreseen the course the Council would take nor the perspectives of its conclusions; one has only to think of what happened to the preparatory schemes and of the progressive developments during the four sessions. A fair number of those taking part in the Council experienced a profound change of mentality as it progressed. And this is a significant fact which is also reflected in the chronology of the sixteen documents approved.

Vatican II differed from the other Councils which had preceded it in that it assumed (through the intuition of Pope John XXIII) an objective that was explicitly "pastoral". A similar approach influenced the manner of dealing with the various themes, showing that the "pastoral" choice was not just a vague idea, divorced from doctrine and superficial as regards practice, but a vital stimulus to insistence on the questioning nature of the truth of salvation, on the creative responsibility

of the Bishops, on the indispensable nature of cultural mediation, on the renewed vision of relationships between the Church and the World and on the importance of methodological criteria.

This new approach has influenced to no small extent the concept and renewal of consecrated life in the various Institutes.

We can say, without any exaggeration, that Religious (and in this intervention I am referring to religious Institutes of men) have realized in the past twenty years a tremendous work of historical importance, concentrated in at least three General Chapters; among other things they have tackled the re-elaboration of their fundamental code of life (subsequently approved by the Apostolic See).

The grave crisis which occurred in the 70's (a phenomenon of vast proportions which overtook the entire Church, the priestly ministry and even civil society itself, to such an extent that it seemed a time of crisis for the whole of western civilization) has left its mark on almost every Institute; it has shown itself in shortcomings in vocational selection, a certain inadequacy in formation, spiritual superficiality in accepting changes, and the ingenuous lack of importance given to asceticism. Brothers and Lay Institutes have been particularly wounded: they have greater need of light and

of ecclesial support. But a crisis like this, more than being an effect of the Council, is rather a confirmation of just how indispensable the Council was, and of the urgent need there is to maintain the new orbit that it created.

At the present day, from the point of view of the clarification of their own identity in the Church and their courage in beginning a real renewal, it can be said that Institutes of Religious Life have, on the whole, reached a high level of clarity and hope.

Among the convictions they have acquired, even though they be not fully operative in every member, the following should be emphasized:

1) the task of bearing witness to *the spirit of the beatitudes* by once again putting forward sanctity as a response to the challenges of the emerging culture, and thus instigating all the People of God to realize their vocation to holiness;

2) the "*ecclesial character*" of Religious Life, in that it is not just a reality "in" the Church, but truly "of" the Church in a renewed harmony between ministries and charismata;

3) *the special "consecration"* on the part of God who, in religious profession, gives fullness to the baptismal alliance with Christ, conferring a new degree of trust in the

possibility of the total surrender of oneself;

4) the *charismatic* dimension of consecrated life, as an expression of the presence of the Holy Spirit for a more creative approach in the Church;

5) "*the particular characteristics* of each Institute, which is linked with the original spiritual and apostolic experience of the Founder, and which contributes to the enriching of the Church with a multiplicity of gifts;

6) the various ways of participating actively in the "*mission of the Church*", deepened by the aspect of "apostolic consecration" outlined in n. 8 of "Perfectae caritatis";

7) and finally, the "*community option*" as a style of life and a prophetic expression of the evangelical values of brotherhood, dialogue and koinonia.

We Religious are grateful to God for this providential Council.

But twenty years is not a long period for the renewal of some 300,000 professed religious. It is not to be wondered at (and on the other hand it happens too in the other ecclesial sectors) that there are still problems with individuals and with groups, that there are delays and arbitrary interpretations, that some have got lost or gone astray: it is the price that must be paid at a turning point in history. It is not surprising

especially when you think that Religious Life is an existential commitment usually found on the very frontiers of great social changes, of pastoral experimentation and of so many unpublished initiatives. Pope Paul VI made this very point: "Often they (i.e. Religious) are found at the outposts of the mission, and they take the greatest of risks for their health and their very lives. Truly the Church owes them much" (EN 69).

In our opinion the Synod is called to encourage and give ever greater force to the orbit marked out by Vatican II for impressing a stronger and more prophetic trenchancy on Religious Life, directing the attention of those responsible to the rousing presence of the Spirit for the greater stimulation of the good that is growing in the individual Institutes (now even through an increase of vocations).

There is a proverb which says very significantly: "A falling tree makes more noise than a whole wood in growth".

The Synod should foster the growth of the wood!

### 5.3 Missionary departures

1985 saw the celebration for the 115th time of the MISSIONARY DEPARTURE ceremony. According to figures reaching the Department

of the Missions, those leaving for the Missions during the year were 74 in number. They came from 15 different nations: Argentina (1), Belgium (2), Colombia (1), France (2), Germany (1), Great Britain (1), Holland (1), India (11), Italy (8), Mexico (1), Philippines (7), Poland (12), Portugal (2), Spain (22) and U.S.A. (2).

Their destinations were in 27 different countries: Angola (1), Antilles (4), Benin (2), Bolivia (1), Brazil (3), East Africa (11), Ecuador (1), Equatorial Guinea (7), Ethiopia (1),

Gabon (1), Guatemala (1), Indonesia (2), Ivory Coast (3), Japan (1), Liberia (3), Macau (1), Middle East (1), Mozambique (1), Nigeria (1), Papua New Guinea (5), Rwanda (1), Senegal (3), Timor (2), Togo (2), Venezuela (1), Zaire (5), Zambia.

Let us be grateful to God for the gift of these missionary vocations, and pray that he may increase their number, for the good of his Church and for an efficacious continuation of the missionary activity of our Society begun by Don Bosco.

## 5.4 Our dead confreres (1985 - 4th list)

"Faith in the risen Christ sustains our hope and keeps alive our communion with our brothers who rest in Christ's peace... Their remembrance is an incentive to continue faithfully in our mission." (C 94)

NAME	PLACE and DATE	AGE	PROV.	
P ABRATE Angel	Salta	4-11-85	70 ACO	
P ALDI Enrico	Bahía Blanca	25-09-85	74 ABB	
P BARUCCI John	Kotagiri	26-04-85	80 INK	
L BOGETTI Bartolomeo	Genova	11-10-85	68 ILT	
P POZZO Agostino	Genova	11-08-85	72 IRO	
P ČAKÁNEK Giuseppe	Dubnica	31-08-85	71 CEB	
L CAMPAGNOLO Pio	Verona	22-09-85	82 IVO	
L CAPRETTI Pietro	Torino	23-11-85	75 ICE	
P CARVALHO T. Sebastião	Campo Grande	27-09-85	46 BCG	
L COGHI Giuseppe	Brescia	28-09-85	53 ILE	
P DECAROLI Aldo	Krishnagar	21-11-85	73 INC	
P DIAMANTINO Aparicio	New York	14-09-85	53 THA	
P DURANTE Pietro	São Paulo	31-12-85	70 BSP	
P EDAMALAI Chacko	Dibrugark	28-08-85	46 ING	
P FONSECA RIBEIRO Manuel	Porto	5-07-85	57 POR	
P FRIGERIO Ambrogio	Brescia	29-09-85	78 ILE	
P GASPARI Claudio	Córdoba	16-11-85	64 ACO	
P GAVASSA Agostino	Biella	21-10-85	68 INE	
P GIOVANDO Lorenzo	Trino	29-09-85	83 INE	
P GIUSSANI Gilberto	Treviglio	30-09-85	78 ILE	
P GONCIARZ Pedro	São Carlos	5-11-85	75 BSP	
P JANNILLI Raffaele	Frascati	5-08-85	64 IRO	
P LAZZARI Celestino	São Paulo	23-11-85	78 BSP	
P LELLIS ALVES Eduardo	Lorena	3-11-85	96 BSP	
L LEONE Emilio	Anagni	24-09-85	71 IME	
P MORO Mario	Roma	21-11-85	65 UPS	
P MOSKAL Celestine	West Haverstraw	24-09-85	86 SUE	
P PIANGERELLI Basilio	Frascati	10-10-85	74 IRO	
P FONTES Agenore	Belo Horizonte	15-10-85	89 BBH	
Fu Ispettore per 15 a.				
P RAMIREZ AVILA Alejandro	Judibana	29-07-85	91 VEN	
P RIGLER Francescco	Trstenik	13-04-85	72 JUL	
P RODRIGUES Miguel	Lisboa	27-09-85	82 POR	
P RODRIGUES PEREIRA José	Guadalajara	13-06-85	80 MEG	

<b>P SCHÜTZDELLER Wilhelm</b>	Jünkerath	1-11-85	87	GEK
<b>P SOÓS István</b>	Eger	17-11-85	72	UNG
<b>P STREČANSKÝ Jozef</b>	St. Georges sur-Meuse	22-06-85	75	BES
<b>P STUHLÝ Gerard</b>	Ústí nad Orlicí	20-09-85	73	CEP
<b>P TOGNOCCI Mario</b>	West Haverstraw	7-12-85	67	SUE
<b>P TONINI Antonio</b>	Varazze	7-10-85	76	ILT
<b>P TREVISAN Graziano</b>	Venezia	30-11-85	59	IVE
<b>P TUBERET Michael</b>	Bolton	3-06-85	65	GBR
<b>P ULAGA Giovanni</b>	Željmje	12-09-85	49	JUL
<b>P VALLES Francisco</b>	Alcoy	9-06-85	79	SVA
<b>P VAN Phan viet Joseph</b>	Hochimin	9-06-85	36	VIE









