

# 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**

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## 1. LETTER OF THE RECTOR MAJOR

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### THE ASSOCIATION OF SALESIAN COOPERATORS

1. Presentation to the confreres: The persevering action of Don Bosco – From Don Rua to the present day – The time is ripe for a relaunching.
2. In the light of the path followed by Don Bosco, the Founder: the importance of the revision of the Regulations – Steps to discernment concerning the foundation – The flexible vitality of the charism – Responsibility of the animators. – Essential aspects of your identity as secular salesians: the energy coming from charity among lay people – The salesian spirit of Don Bosco – For a relaunching of the Association: Some practical questions to be faced – A spiritual movement – The living presence of Mary Help of Christians.

Rome, Feast of the Sacred Heart 1986

*My dear confreres,*

My hearty greetings to you on my own behalf and that of all the members of the General Council; we are gathered here in plenary session, praying and working intensely for all of you.

I would like you to read carefully my letter to our Cooperators, which I offer you in this issue of the Acts.

As you already know, 9 May last saw the approval by the Apostolic See, through the Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes, of the new text of the “Regulations of apostolic life” of the Association of Salesian Cooperators. The date is of some significance because 110 years ago to the day, 9 May 1876, Pope Pius IX, the great friend of Don Bosco and his guide in his delicate work as a Founder, gave recognition to what was then called the “Pious Union”, whose Regulations had been drawn

up with care and with the already proven experience of our dear Father.

I thought it well to promulgate this important document a few days ago on 24 May, the Solemnity of Mary Help of Christians, in the Basilica at Valdocco which was packed to the doors by members of our Family and others of the faithful.

The fact is one of vital importance for all of us.

### **The persevering action of Don Bosco**

Don Bosco did not consider that his long and difficult mission as a Founder was at an end before he had been able to give a valid structure to this Association and provide it with its own Identity Card. It had been present to some extent and in embryo from the very beginnings of his plans for the work of the Oratories.

After the approval of 1876 Don Bosco gave his personal attention to the organization and spreading of the Cooperators; he began the publication of the Salesian Bulletin in 1877, and formulated relevant guidelines and directives for the confreres.

In the first General Chapter of our Society (1877), to which Don Bosco ascribed great importance ("I want this Chapter to make history in our Congregation, so that when I die all our affairs will have been settled and organized"),<sup>1</sup> he wanted the fourth general Conference to deal with the Cooperators and the Salesian Bulletin: "an Association of the greatest importance for us, one which is the soul of our Congregation and will provide us with a link for doing good with the consent and help of the good faithful who live in the world... practising the spirit of the Salesians... These Cooperators must grow in number as far as possible... Let the

<sup>1</sup> BM 13, 177

Rectors and in general all our confreres speak always highly of this association so that its members may increase... and let them seek to enrol in it only those individuals already well known for their piety and probity of life".<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> cf. Marcel Verhulst, *I verbali del 1° Capitolo Generale Salesiano, 1877*, Edizione critica, UPS 1980; pp. 126-141 e pp. 366-372; doctoral dissertation, typescript

Don Bosco himself took on the task of giving the first conferences for the shaping and consolidation of the Association. We read in the Biographical Memoirs that in January 1878 he gave the first conference at Rome in the Church of the noble Oblates of Tor de' Specchi, in the presence of Cardinal Monaco La Valletta, Vicar General of His Holiness. And on 16 May he gave the second conference at Turin in the church of St Francis de Sales.<sup>3</sup> He frequently insisted on the novel and original ways in which the Cooperators would carry out their apostolate, on their providential importance and on the "great things" the Lord would deign to do with them and with us working together.

<sup>3</sup> cf. BM 13, 477ff.

And little by little the organizational aspects and regulations also came into being.

### **From Don Rua to the present day**

In the 10th General Chapter (1904), Don Rua was already able to codify some directives for the confreres as regards the promoting of the Association; this he did in a set of 37 regulations "for the use of the Salesians with relation to the Pious Union of Cooperators". In it he said:

— that *every Salesian* "without fail should should make this Pious Union known and esteemed";

— that *the Provincials* "should appoint a confrere who would depend on them and help them in

everything concerning the development and proper functioning of the Pious Union in their provinces”;

— that *in every house* “a confrere be specially appointed to help the Rector with the Cooperators”.

His final exhortation recalled the words of Don Bosco’s Regulations: “All the members of the Pious Salesian Society will consider the Cooperators as brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ and will offer them assistance whenever their work can help towards the greater glory of God and the benefit of souls”.<sup>4</sup>

In the Special General Chapter of 1971 which followed Vatican II, the chapter members, after studying the theme of the “Salesian Family” and rethinking the specific nature of the Cooperator, drew up a reply to the message they had received from the Cooperators themselves. In this they said: “With deep fidelity to our Founder we declare ourselves ready and eager to ‘revitalize your Association so that the splendid project set on foot by our Founder may at last be brought to completion’. We have become fully aware of the fact that we would be traitors were we not to succeed in this undertaking, and we are convinced that it is with good reason that you have sent us your appeal”.<sup>5</sup>

This solemn commitment is reflected in the text of our Constitutions approved by the Apostolic See (1984) which explicitly states the particular responsibility of the Salesians in their regard,<sup>6</sup> and assigns to the Councillor for the Salesian Family the duty of “directing” and “assisting” the provinces “so that the Association of Salesian Cooperators may develop in the territory of the province”.<sup>7</sup>

And then the General Regulations lay down that

<sup>4</sup> cf. Guido Favini, *Il cammino di una grande idea*, LDC Turin 1962, p. 199

<sup>5</sup> SGC 734

<sup>6</sup> C 5

<sup>7</sup> C 137

“every community should feel it its duty to increase and support the Association of Salesian Cooperators for the good of the Church. It should help in the formation of its members, promote and spread knowledge of this particular vocation, especially among our more committed young people and among our lay collaborators”.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> R 38

The renewed text too of the Cooperators' Regulations, after describing the ministry of the Rector Major as supreme Moderator of the Association who “is the guarantee of fidelity to the project of the Founder and promotes its growth”, recalls the particular and indispensable function that belongs to Provincials and Rectors: “Salesian provincials”, says the text, “because of the specific responsibilities of the Society of St Francis de Sales, render the ministry of the Rector Major present at local level and guarantee, with the collaboration of the Rectors, especially the bonds of unity and communion. They provide for the spiritual assistance of the Centres and involve their own religious communities in the generous fulfilment of this service of animation”.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Coop. Reg. 23

### **The time is ripe for a relaunching**

Dear Provincials, dear Rectors and confreres all, these indications of our whole tradition and of our Rule of life are an urgent appeal to get down to apostolic work. If on the eve of the centenary celebrations of '88 we really want to relaunch the charism of Don Bosco in all its integrity, we must feel ourselves bearers of a “particular responsibility” for promoting and animating a “vast movement of persons”,<sup>10</sup> with particular concern for the Coopera-

<sup>10</sup> C 5

tors. From our first beginnings they have been committed to the common mission for the young and the poor which is a continual challenge to us, extending beyond our present works.

Don Bosco's plan for the Cooperators brings home to us the bold and authentic apostolic dimension of the salesian charism in the uniting of many forces for the service of the Kingdom. The Cooperators serve the same mission as we do!

*For them we are* their "consecrated" brothers, "the sure and steadfast link expressly desired by Don Bosco... (as) the power-house of this movement of baptized people".<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> SGC 732

*For us they are*, in the strong words of Don Bosco, "a most important association, which is the very soul of the Congregation". The Cooperators in fact spur us on to a greater and more dynamic fidelity to the common salesian vocation,<sup>12</sup> reminding us of the permanent criterion of our apostolic action, which puts the oratory experience at the centre of the salesian heart.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup> cf. SGC 733

<sup>13</sup> cf. C 40

Going beyond the criterion of our works, this experience calls for many labourers, far more than the necessary presence of Salesians and of Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. The urgent requirements of needy youth are in fact so great and varied that they demand ever more numerous efforts at intervention; the field of educational and cultural action is so complex that, in addition to religious and priests, it needs the active and competent presence of generous lay people; so vast and subject to change is the sector of youth problems that, as well as renewal of the works that have done so much good in the past it needs a continuous bold and creative apostolic presence, and this often in areas where only lay people can be present and work effi-



caciously. The salesian mission, from the standpoint of what the Cooperators can bring to it, will not allow us to shut ourselves up in our houses, but compels us to adopt that social and ecclesial outlook which moved our Father to seek many strong means for responding to the needs of the young and the poor of society.

Especially must we emphasize the fundamental reason which touches our very identity as heirs of Don Bosco's patrimony. After the approval of the Constitutions of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians (1982) and of our own (1984) which followed Vatican II, the recent approval of the "Regulations of apostolic life" of the Cooperators (1986) brings with it a complete overall vision of how the charism of our Founder must be lived in present day circumstances and those of the future. It is entrusted mainly and simultaneously to these three Groups, centred on the ministry of unity of his Successor. We must be aware therefore that a *new era* is beginning for our Family, and that renewed fidelity to the Founder is going to make much greater and more concrete demands on us.

In this perspective one can better understand why communion of spirit and collaboration in commitment must grow in these three groups of the Salesian Family, even for the good of the other Groups. We cannot just passively sit back and be content to maintain the positions we have already reached; we must develop again the dynamism of that "Movement of people" which was characteristic of the apostolic enterprise of Don Bosco. "If a poor priest", said our Father in a conference to the Rectors in 1875, "having nothing, really less than nothing, and driven from pillar to post by everyone, was able to bring things to this present state;

if, I repeat, one man alone could do all this with nothing, what cannot the Lord expect from three hundred and thirty men (the number of confreres in that year), healthy, strong, willing, learned and well provided as we are now? What will you not be able to accomplish with the aid of Divine Providence?

“The Lord expects great things from you. I see them clearly and distinctly in all their phases... If someone next year will remind me of what I have said, I shall be able to point out to you the great things that the Lord was pleased to begin this year, in particular one thing that will truly astonish you (he was referring to the foundation of the Cooperators’ Association)... When I am already in eternity, these things will have an important bearing on the welfare of souls and God’s glory; they will benefit the universal Church and bring glory (yes, allow me to use the word) to our Congregation... You yourselves will marvel and be astounded to see how much you were able to accomplish in the world’s sight for the good of mankind”.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup> BM 12, 63-64

It is then indeed necessary, dear confreres, that every province set about relaunching the Cooperators’ Association. Each member should have a copy of the new Regulations of the Association: reading it will help us to reflect on the contents of art. 5 of our Constitutions and on arts. 36, 38 and 39 of our Regulations.

Every Provincial therefore, with his Council and Rectors, should study this document, so as to renew and intensify the relevant initiatives to be promoted in the houses. We are concerned with a living part of our charisma; to it Don Bosco attributed the possibility of doing “great things”. It is not something extra that has to be done; it is part of

our very selves; it adds a great deal of energy to the "Movement"; it is a promise of greater fertility; it is a growth in fidelity to the Founder and a requirement of the salesian identity.

In the conference to the Rectors from which I have already quoted, our Father ended by saying: "It was the Lord who began it all, who directed all things and gave them growth. As the years roll by he will uphold them and bring them to a successful ending. God is prepared to work all these marvels which will contribute to a wonderful increase in our membership. He asks but one thing of us: that we do not make ourselves undeserving of his goodness and mercy. As long as we remain worthy of his favours by our work, moral conduct and good example, the Lord will make use of us, and you will be astonished at having been able to accomplish so much and be capable of much more... we must really exclaim: 'I can do all things in him who strengthens me'."<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> BM 12, 64

Dear confreres, may careful reflection on this letter to the Cooperators (printed in this same issue of the Acts) and on their new Regulations inspire practical resolutions in every province and in every house.

May Don Bosco intercede for us and spur us on!

Affectionately,

*Don F. Viganò*

Rome, Feast of the Sacred Heart 1986

*My dear Cooperators,*

On 24 May last, the solemnity of Mary Help of Christians, I promulgated the renewed text of your "Regulations for apostolic life" at Turin in the Basilica of Valdocco, crowded with people. It was a very significant event and one pregnant with hope. The document, the fruit of so much prayer and work, ensures the salesian and ecclesial identity of your Association, so that it can be present in an effective and up-to-date way in the preparations for the third millennium of the christian faith.

The pontifical approval of your Regulations brings to an end the post-conciliar consolidation of the *three great columns of the Salesian Family* erected by Don Bosco: the Salesians, the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, and the Cooperators. This means that together we shall be the bold and apostolic bearers of the salesian vocation in the years to come.

In these circumstances the promulgation of the Regulations takes on a historical importance of no little significance.

If all of us (you, we Salesians and the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians) are fully aware of this, we shall be able to understand the particular responsibility to which the Holy Spirit has called us as the present century nears its end.

## 1. IN THE LIGHT OF THE PATH FOLLOWED BY DON BOSCO, THE FOUNDER

Why was it necessary to revise the Regulations which had been drawn up by Don Bosco himself?

If you recall the sense of Church, the practical concern and flexibility shown by our Founder in adapting himself to the times, we can truly say that if he were alive at the present day he would be the first to want to carry out the work of revision.

### The importance of the revision of the Regulations

Don Bosco in fact was sensitive to what was likely to happen in society and in the Church, and because he was attuned to the Spirit he knew instinctively what would be the future task of his new and original charisma. He was convinced that the physiognomy he would be able to give in the past century to the vitality of a gift so urgently needed by the Church would be no more than a first "rough copy", rich indeed in its own vitality but needing to be polished up through the designs of Divine Providence, so as to produce the "fair copy".<sup>1</sup> He had the awareness of a Founder, giving life to a spiritual Family destined to grow, develop and endure through centuries to come.

He was raised up by God at the dawn of a new age. He discerned the signs which marked the beginning of the end of the rural civilization; he saw the new importance that would attach to towns, a different way of organizing work, a rethinking of the whole of society; he saw the beginning of a situation in which ordinary people would play a concrete and active part; in short he spotted, even though not very clearly, the first underground

<sup>1</sup> cf. BM 11, 289; 12, 26

movements of social forces which would call at once for pastoral criteria and commitments never thought of in the past. The need was becoming ever more evident of going to the help of the young who were poor and abandoned, and to the masses of ordinary people; the changes that had already begun seemed to be putting their christian faith in danger, that faith which could and should have been a leaven in the new society. And for this reason he gathered the Cooperators around him and imbued them with a new apostolic spirit.

It was an apostolic ideal, therefore, which of its very nature must be able to adapt to continual change and diverse situations, in harmony with the evolution of the times and the guidelines of the Pope and the Bishops.

Now it was precisely in Vatican II that the Holy Father and the Bishops of all the world, meeting in Council over a period of four years, restudied and analysed the identity and mission of the Church, in response to the challenges of the new era then beginning. The Bishops defined its principles of identity and gave guidelines for action: a renewed ecclesiology which demanded that christians should re-think in depth their own vocation in the People of God in the world, revising especially its ministries, charismata and commitments.

This is why every group of the Salesian Family had to revise the fundamental documents in which its own charismatic character is expressed. In the new perspective of the Council a serious reconsideration had to be given to the baptismal vocation of all the faithful and to the ecclesial significance of the charisma of the various spiritual Families; and these are two aspects which are of particular importance for your own Association.

“Being a Catholic” at the present day implies a strong awareness of being a disciple, open in dialogue to everyone, but the bearer of a renewed christian identity and of a courageous formation to bear witness in society.

“Feeling oneself incorporated” into a particular charisma in the Church requires further a participation in its specific characteristics as planned by the Founder so as to reactivate it in harmony with the present indications of the signs of the times.

That is the reason for all the careful work that has gone into the revision of the first Regulations that were written for you by the Founder himself.

### **Steps to discernment concerning the foundation**

At the beginning the basic groups of what we now call the “Salesian Family” seemed like a small seed just dropped into a drill, not yet germinated, undeveloped and without shape.

Don Bosco had started out with the insistent idea of the mission to youth and the urgent need for many permanent collaborators: “Call it what you want. I must open oratories, build chapels and churches, conduct catechism classes and schools; and unless I have a loyal staff I cannot do anything”.<sup>2</sup> At the centre of his priestly heart there were the problems of needy youth and of the faith and religious practice of the poorer people. He felt himself called and sent by God to start up a movement of people committed like himself to face such problems courageously. The headaches of the discernment process brought him little by little to realize that he had a vocation as a “Founder”, but the task was far from easy. He began with com-

<sup>2</sup> BM 3, 321

plete trust in Divine Providence and bent all his abilities to the service of the cause.

In this way he was able to develop the possibilities hidden in the initial seed. It was more than thirty years later, after a period extending from 1841 to 1876 and after the experience of an initial diocesan commitment, that he laboriously reached the world level of a charism of the universal Church. From the first embryonic "Congregation of St Francis de Sales", approved by the Archbishop of Turin (Mgr Fransonì), to the foundation of his three consecrated and secular Groups, there is a whole process of clarification and growth towards a common spirit, a common mission and a common shared apostolic responsibility. Today Cooperators, Daughters of Mary Help of Christians and Salesians are called and sent as a group to promote "a vast movement of persons who in different ways work for the salvation of the young".<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> SDB C 5

In his work Don Bosco always sought the help of lay people. For this reason, when he could not realize his plan for "external members" belonging to the Society of St Francis de Sales, which he wanted to include in the Salesian Constitutions, he set about drawing up (from 1874) a new and wider plan to offer to good Catholics to enable them to do good.

When he presented an outline of his plan to Pius IX, he saw that the Holy Father was surprised that it concerned only men and not women (Don Bosco was in fact planning a separate Association for women, linked with the Institute of the FMA);<sup>4</sup> he understood at once the vital importance of the Pope's observation: "Women have always played a leading role in the performance of good works in general, in the life of the Church, and in the conversion of

<sup>4</sup> BM 11, 62; 12, 65



<sup>5</sup> BM 11, 62

nations. By their very nature they are charitable and zealous in sponsoring good works, even more so than men. If you exclude them you will deprive yourself of the very best help".<sup>5</sup> Don Bosco accepted the valuable and realistic indication of the Pope, and was later able to see the great advantages that it led to when he developed the "Pious Union" in this sense.

<sup>6</sup> BM 13, 377

It should be realized that Pius IX had an enlightening and decisive share in everything concerning the foundation of the Salesians, the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians and the Cooperators. Don Bosco himself, when sending his first greetings to the newly-elected Pope Leo XIII, asserted: "This Congregation", and we know the wide significance of the term in his own mind, "was advised, guided and approved by Pius IX of revered memory".<sup>6</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Reg. Don Bosco,  
chap. III

Our Founder wanted the Cooperators to be an "Association for good works" or a "Christian union for doing good" intimately linked to himself; it was to be something like the "Third Orders" of old, "with the difference that in the older Third Orders christian perfection was proposed in the exercise of piety; this one has for its principal objective an active life in the exercise of charity towards one's neighbour and especially towards the young who are in moral danger".<sup>7</sup>

The charismatic project finally came to maturity in the Regulations of 1876 and in the accompanying initiatives and those which followed.

In this way Don Bosco's plan is fully and synthetically expressed in a connected and complementary manner in the Salesian Congregation, the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians and the Cooperators' Association. The three fundamental documents describe the identity

and special characteristics of each group; taken together they constitute the path followed in practice by the Founder to ensure the future of the "Work of the Oratories" begun in Turin in 1841.

Don Bosco's Regulations affirm the indispensable presence of you Cooperators in the salesian charism; he insists on your close and intimate union with the salesian Congregation (and by analogy with the FMA) in sincere and fervent Family brotherhood ("one heart and one soul"), all cultivating together a dynamic sense of Church, with undisguised affection and concrete adherence to the ministry of the Pope and the Bishops.

In the following year, August 1877, Don Bosco launched the Salesian Bulletin as a means of information, bond of union, a stimulus to creative charity, and an instrument particularly suited to promoting the growth of your Association.

After the publication of the Regulations it was necessary to intensify the life of the Association and give further formation to the mentality of the Salesians and the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians so that they would become its enthusiastic animators. In the annual conference of 1877, Don Bosco remarked: "The Work of the Salesian Cooperators has hardly come into existence and it already numbers many members. We shall see its vast growth... Hand in hand with this project we have decided to publish a Bulletin which will pretty much become the Congregation's (today we would say the "Family's") official publication and include many things we shall need to make known to our Cooperators. If they now number one hundred, they will soon be thousands and thousands, and if they number one thousand they will become millions... Let us find ways of making this Association known. God wills it».<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> BM 13, 61

<sup>9</sup> Lanzo, September 1877

<sup>10</sup> OE 29, 468

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.* 469

<sup>12</sup> cf. Regulations for parishes, MB 18, 697

<sup>13</sup> BM 14, 430

<sup>14</sup> N.B. The study of Fr Guido Favini, *Il cammino di una grande idea*, LDC Turin 1962, is well worth reading.

In the 1st General Chapter,<sup>9</sup> the fourth of the 26 general Conferences was dedicated to the Cooperators: "an association which is very important for us, a strong arm of our Congregation (to which, let us not forget it, was aggregated also the FMA). The Salesian Cooperators are nothing else than good christians who, while living in their own families, maintain in the midst of the world the spirit of the Congregation of St Francis de Sales".<sup>10</sup> And so he laid it down that "the Rectors and in general all the Salesians (and the FMA) shall work to increase the number of Cooperators".<sup>11</sup> To salesian parish priests too he recommended that one of their chief concerns in dealing with their parishioners should be that of fostering the Association of Salesian Co-operators.<sup>12</sup>

And the Association grew to such an extent that Don Bosco was able to say in 1880 in a conference at Borgo San Martino: "From 1876 to the present day the Cooperators, men and women, have grown to thirty thousand and continue to grow every day".<sup>13</sup>

At the death of Don Bosco, as one may read in the decree preceding his canonization, they were already about eighty thousand (MB 19, 242).

We see, therefore, the long process<sup>14</sup> of experience of the Holy Spirit, by which Don Bosco patiently sought to discern the design God had suggested to him; he finally set out on the right road, after trying other paths which turned out to be impractical.

But nevertheless some components which constitute the basic structure of your Association have remained constant: a practical and social sense of your own catholicity seen as a gift received in the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation; an

ecclesial and civil mission of service to youth in need; an intelligent and courageous promotion of the faith of the people at a time of great changes; a particular pastoral method and the importance of bonds of union with the Society of St Francis de Sales and of communion with the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians so as to live in a genuine manner its characteristic evangelical spirit.

As you can see, it is a case of sharing with us the salesian vocation: with us you are responsible for the vitality of the Founder's project in the world.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> cf. Reg. Coop. 5

Today Don Bosco would have perfected his plan by a careful consideration of the renewed conciliar ecclesiology, especially as regards the laity. And that is precisely what we have all been trying to do in these recent years, combining your reflections and ours in the drawing up of these "Regulations for apostolic life".

### **The flexible vitality of the charism**

To live the salesian vocation in a genuine manner one must know and accept the vital values of its origins, of its growth, of its efficacious presence in the Church at the present day, and of its future perspectives. One cannot neglect a serious acquaintance, not only with the life of the Founder, but also with the subsequent history of his spiritual Family, trying to discover in the contributions of past events what they contain that is vital and applicable to the future, as required by docility to the Author of the charism. The Holy Spirit is always original; no one knows whence he comes or where he goes, but he gives growth and maturity; one can

tune in to him through prayerful listening and enlightened discernment.

If we look at the life of our Founder we can form some idea of the trouble that accompanies true docility. Of Don Bosco it has been truly said that he appeared (even, and especially, to his friends) as something of a "mystery", because he was fully open to the Spirit of the Lord who does not reveal (not even to Don Bosco himself at first) where he came from nor where he was leading him. Clear enough was the general intuition he had been given, expressed eloquently in symbols in the dream at the age of nine, which Don Bosco recalled and meditated on several times in his later years: the field and style of work, intelligent and generous dedication, the need for collaborators for the beginning and continuation of a mission so urgently needed. But he had to work through a long process of discernment, "personal" in the first instance so as to be clear about his vocation as a Founder, and then "foundational" so as to give a concrete physiognomy and a valid organization to his spiritual Family. In this way he went through various stages of clarification before he could give an identity and characteristic structure, first to the Salesians, then to the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, and finally to you Cooperators.

The three groups, the principal bearers of his charism, were invited by Vatican II to imitate the Founder by remaining open, in conformity with their historical and ecclesial nature, to the demands of the constant development of the Body of Christ in perpetual growth.<sup>16</sup>

Your Association, already recognized as being vitally present at the first beginnings of the Oratory (the Decree of approval of 9 May 1986 recalls the

<sup>16</sup> cf. MR 11

exemplary figure of Mamma Margaret),<sup>17</sup> has received from Vatican II a new injection of life. The experience and headaches of yesterday must serve to enlighten the dynamic fidelity which is needed today, at a time of renewal which implies both a sincere adherence to the origins and a shrewd flexibility as regards the present age.

<sup>17</sup> cf. Reg. Coop.

The organization of the Association must also be taken care of, and the new text of the Regulations indicates its salient features. But this is only one aspect, and one that we might call instrumental. What should be of greater concern to you and to us is the vitality of the charisma, i.e. that force of charity which is capable of relaunching the fervour, creativity, generosity and tireless apostolic dynamism of Don Bosco, of Mamma Margaret and of the first collaborators at Valdocco.

The path to such revitalization passes especially through the heart of each one of you: the gift of the Holy Spirit is for the interior person. The gospel values contained in the new Regulations need to be "personalized". Those who bear a charism in the Church are always "individuals", who have heard the Lord calling them "by name" and with a love of predilection which gives rise to a covenant lived in joyful and faithful friendship; for this reason each one feels committed to make the gift he has received flourish in the Church. The heart of every Co-operator is a depositary of a covenant of salvation; it is enriched by a special grace and shares in the power of the Spirit of the Lord, so that the Co-operator feels sent forth and properly prepared to work in history as a collaborator in the important ecclesial mission assigned to Don Bosco.

It is a case therefore of you yourselves acquiring new life and vigour, and of attending to everything

that constitutes the soul of the Association and gives it life and movement.

### **Responsibility of the animators**

This reinvigoration of the individuals and of the soul of the Association implies a continual return to two poles of reference so that the relationship between them may prove fruitful: one is the spiritual patrimony inherited from the Founder, and the other is the prophetic response you must be able to give to the present social and cultural challenges. Particularly aware of this must be especially the animators of your Association, i.e. the Cooperators who are leaders of the Centres, the Provincials, the SDB and FMA Delegates, but also all the members too. The future of the Association is strongly linked to an updated, realistic and renewed understanding of the apostolic gift given by God to the Church through Don Bosco.

The animators, therefore, whatever salesian Group they belong to, must be aware of the path travelled by Don Bosco in his vocation as Founder, and have an overall knowledge (not limited to their own group) of the true dimension of the charism entrusted to him; of that charism you who are Co-operators are a living and essential part, because he did not consider his work as a Founder fully realized until after the erection of your "Pious Union". In his mind and heart he considered you as "external" brothers and sisters; and it is pleasing to see how he began his circular of January 1881 to the Cooperators: "With a grateful heart I address you, my esteemed brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ".<sup>18</sup>

According to Don Bosco, the expression "after

<sup>18</sup> Boll. Sal. Jan. 1881, 1-3

the manner of a Third Order", with which he described the form of your Association, had a particular significance which emphasized an original aspect, because by saying "after the manner of" or "like" a Third Order, he wanted to indicate the difference between you and the old Third Orders, which aimed especially at special attention to their life of piety, while your Association was founded to express the commitments of Baptism and Confirmation in concrete works of charity, particularly in favour of the young.<sup>19</sup>

But beyond the question of the name (which has never been used in salesian tradition, because neither the Salesians nor the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians have ever been called the 1st and 2nd "Orders"), there is the reality of a common and concrete mission to be realized "together", by uniting all available forces.

## 2. ESSENTIAL ASPECTS OF YOUR IDENTITY AS SECULAR SALESIANS

As we have seen, Don Bosco sought to involve as many people as possible in the realization of his vast mission; he considered as very valuable the collaboration of members of the diocesan clergy because of their known competence in animating others; but he concentrated on finding a big number of lay people. He wanted to "reawaken the Catholic spirit",<sup>20</sup> and sought to make everyone understand the "urgent need that exists at the present day for good christians to unite among themselves to foster good and fight against evil, because in unity there is strength";<sup>21</sup> he tried to translate the religious instincts of christians and their sense of

<sup>19</sup> N.B. It may be useful to recall that the former Code of Canon Law (1918) distinguished between "Third Orders" dedicated to a life of piety (can. 702 §1), "Confraternities" dedicated to public cult (can. 707 §2), and "Pious Unions or Societies" dedicated to works of charity (can. 707 §1). The new Code gives a wider and more comprehensive meaning to Third Orders, as public associations of the faithful (can. 303; 677 §2; 298-320); this is why the Decree of approval of your Regulations used the latter term.

<sup>20</sup> Favini, *Don Bosco e l'apostolato dei laici*, SEI Turin 1952, p. 85

<sup>21</sup> *ibid.* p. 79



prayer into works of charity: "these days", he used to say, "as well as praying, which we should always do without fail, we need to work too, and work intensely, otherwise we'll be ruined";<sup>22</sup> to put it briefly he intended to "shake a lot of christians out of their lethargy, so as to spread the driving force of charity".<sup>23</sup>

<sup>22</sup> *ibid.* p. 79

<sup>23</sup> Reg. 50

### **The energy coming from charity among lay people**

Don Bosco's mission needed a lot of lay commitment, especially as regards the education of youngsters of the working classes so as to improve society: "Do you want to do a good deed?", he used to say to the Cooperators. "Then educate the young. Do you want to do something holy? Educate the young. Something even holier? Educate the young. Something divine? Educate the young. Indeed, according to the Fathers this is the most divine of all divine things".<sup>24</sup> "This Association", he repeated at another time, "has for its objective the bringing together of good christians to do some good for civil society".<sup>25</sup>

<sup>24</sup> BM 13, 490

<sup>25</sup> MB 16, 21

Now it is precisely in this field that a lot of progress is being made in the Church, especially after Vatican II. Today the conscience of the lay person, as an active member of the christian People, is much more enlightened than was the case in the past century, and new and vast social and ecclesial horizons have been opened to him.

Hence your Association needs to study at greater depth and to assimilate more fully the Council's doctrine on the laity: the commitments deriving from the priesthood of the baptized and from the sacrament of Confirmation, insertion in the local Church, the challenges to the faith thrown up by

social and cultural changes, the teaching of the Magisterium concerning temporal duties, christian witness in the family, the significant values of an authentic laity (which are poles apart from the deviations of laicism), etc.

The indispensable means for promoting this awareness are those available to every good member of the faithful: listening to the Word of God, reflecting on its content, on the texts of Vatican II and on the pastoral guidelines of the Pope and the Bishops; the practice of daily prayer and an adequate frequency of approach to the sacraments of the Eucharist and Penance; acceptance of the mystery of the Cross, especially in those life situations which call for ascetical knowledge and courage; and dedication to some apostolic activity.

It is indispensable in particular to promote, through a competent course of animation, those aspects which characterize the "lay spirituality" as such.

Among the more significant notes of such spirituality we may recall the following:

— *The christian animation of temporal duties* which belong specifically to the mission of the lay person, either within the family or in the social and cultural environment. He should feel himself a "citizen" and at the same time a "believer", translating his faith in Christ into a constant effort to transform the world.

— A sensitivity, sharpened by faith, which moves the lay person to a continual discernment of the signs of the times in communion with the local Church and to play an active and authentically christian part in the present-day process of "*social liberation*", which will vary according to the concrete situation in which he happens to live. The lay

person is called to collaborate in the development of a more genuine culture, a more just civilization of work, a more universal human solidarity, this latter being a demanding task for all the People of God (to be lived out with different vocations).

— A careful analysis of “*daily occupations*”, appropriate to his secular character, which provide for the charity of the lay person an inexhaustible mine (albeit hidden and of modest proportions) for a true and practical witness to the gospel; in this way he can demonstrate the existence of the vital resources of christian hope in a transient world.

— Diligent attention to his own “*professional competence*”, to whatever pertains to its right use and constant perfecting, which gives to the existence of the lay person the concrete tone of his sharing in the mission of the Church “in penetrating and perfecting the temporal sphere by the spirit of the gospel”.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>26</sup> AA 5

— Finally, the ever more explicit awareness of what the Council says: “Present circumstances demand from the laity an *apostolate* infinitely broader and more intense”,<sup>27</sup> *also in the specific field of evangelization and sanctification*, which offers them “countless opportunities” which go beyond the simple “witness of life”.<sup>28</sup> In this sense Vatican II emphasized the importance for the laity of a group form of apostolate: “In fact, associations established to carry on the apostolate in common sustain their members, form them for the apostolate, and rightly organize and regulate their apostolic work so that much better results can be expected than if each member were to act on his own”.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>27</sup> AA 1

<sup>28</sup> AA 6

<sup>29</sup> AA 18

And it is precisely here that appears, as a synthesis deriving from the gospel, the precious inheri-

tance of the original style of christian life experienced and offered to you Cooperators by Don Bosco with his "salesian spirit". "Lay spirituality" indicates in a fairly general way a collection of aspects to which attention must be paid; but this can be done in many ways. The "salesian spirit" on the other hand suggests a tried and tested way of doing so.

### **The salesian spirit of Don Bosco**

"Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit", says the text of your renewed Regulations, "Don Bosco lived and has passed on to the members of his Family an original style of life and action: the salesian spirit.

"It is a characteristic evangelical experience which delineates and gives a concrete tone to presence and action in the world, to relationships with one's neighbour and to rapport with God. In has its source in the very heart of Christ, is nourished in apostolic commitment and prayer, and pervades the whole of life, making of it a witness of love.

"The Cooperator gladly receives this spirit as a gift of God to the Church, and in a manner proper to his secular condition causes it to bear fruit".<sup>30</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Reg. 26

This article enshrines the summit of your commitments in the line of salesian formation. Christian love is a lived practice which cannot be simply identified with a doctrine nor even a generic spirituality. In practice it is given living expression in a clearly recognizable synthesis.

When the Regulations speak of "salesian spirit" they are describing the characteristic features of the gospel experience tested in the school of Don Bosco as an original style of life, a synthesis of criteria of judgement and of methodology of action. It

is not a conceptual analysis of relationships with God and one's neighbour, and neither is it the doctrinal presentation of the spirituality of a state or ministry, but the description of the spiritual features which identify the salesian vocation; it gives considered attention to the visible and practical traits which earmark it in real life (i.e. its symbolic representation), highlighting some of its characteristics, so as to give to it its own spiritual physiognomy.

Just as human nature, which is in essence common to everyone, is expressed in distinctive physical features, so in an analogous manner baptismal life presents models of holiness with their own distinguishing characteristics, giving rise to different spiritual schools. In them the "spirituality" of a ministry or state of life becomes involved in fact in a concrete "spirit", as a typological expression of the following of Christ.

Among us, who together form the "Family of Don Bosco", different "spiritualities" in fact come together to form the one "salesian spirit": lay, priestly, religious, that of the married and consecrated secular states, etc.

It was in this connection that Don Bosco used to say that you Cooperators live and testify "in the world" to the spirit by which the Salesians and Daughters of Mary Help of Christians are animated in their "consecrated life". You are in fact called to live the same spirit of Don Bosco in the secular condition which is properly yours. Your vocational task consists in being able to incarnate the general values of lay spirituality (if you are lay people) or priestly and diaconal spirituality (if you are secular priests or deacons) in the characteristic style of holiness and way of action of Don Bosco's charism. It

is a spirit of communion which you do not live on your own or in separation, but rather as members of an Association which ensures for each one the identity, vitality, support, opportunity for checkup, joy and the hope of deep gospel brotherhood: "united in a single mind and heart", say the Regulations, "they live in fraternal communion with the bonds characteristic of the spirit of Don Bosco".<sup>31</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Reg. 19,1

Canon Law itself, after saying in connection with associations like your own that they are made up of "members who live in the world but share in the spirit of some religious Institute",<sup>32</sup> exhorts these Institutes of consecrated life "to have a special care that these associations are imbued with the genuine spirit of their family".<sup>33</sup>

<sup>32</sup> can. 303

<sup>33</sup> can. 677 §2

This "spirit" is a vital component of the Founder's charisma. In our Family it is a harmonious blending of interior forces which renders the members fit for the realization of the mission, which develops in them that special standpoint from which they judge reality, which gives rise in them to a particular sensitivity as regards the problems of the young and the poor, which builds up a balanced and positive mentality, which enables them to appreciate the wonderful fact that they have been born and called by name with a love of predilection; it implies, above all, growth in the joyful contemplation of the mystery of God: of the Father of mercies who in his love creates and forgives, of the Son the Redeemer who in love becomes incarnate and gives himself in sacrifice, of the Spirit the Consoler who through love transforms and sanctifies.

In this way the spirit of Don Bosco appears also as a precious gift for the whole Church.

Granted therefore that at the foundation of your group consciousness there is found the "salesian

spirit", you must give great attention to the interior dynamism to which it gives rise, because that is the soul of your Association.

— The Regulations present first of all, as the basic condition for this spirit, a particular kind of "*life of faith*" which is truly "*committed in the events of daily life*". This condition implies two characteristic attitudes.

*The first* is that the Cooperator "feels God to be his Father and the Love who saves; he meets in Jesus Christ the only Son and perfect Apostle of the Father...; he lives in intimate union with the Holy Spirit, the Animator of the People of God in the world". In other words he lives a kind of interior life which finds in God himself the impulse to work intensely for the salvation of souls:<sup>34</sup> the fervour of the apostolate, "da mihi animas"! This is the root or "the most profound aspect" of your vocation: to be true 'cooperators of God' in the realization of his saving design".<sup>35</sup>

*The second* attitude is to feel himself called and sent forth on a concrete mission, that of contributing to the salvation of the young,<sup>36</sup> by being committed "to the same mission among the young and the poor"<sup>37</sup> as Don Bosco.

Hence every Cooperator, by this very experience of the mystery of God, lives a committed faith which gives him a "deep solidarity with the world in which he lives and in which he is called to be light and leaven. He believes in man's interior resources; he shares the positive values of his culture; he accepts its novelties with a critical christian sense, integrating into his own life 'everything that is good', especially if it is to the liking of the young".<sup>38</sup>

This is why there is found at the centre of the

<sup>34</sup> cf. Reg. 27

<sup>35</sup> Reg. 27/3

<sup>36</sup> Reg. 1

<sup>37</sup> Reg. 3

<sup>38</sup> Reg. 29,1

salesian spirit, as a “mystical spur”, that pastoral charity which is an incentive to work tirelessly for the Lord. Don Bosco expressed it synthetically in the motto: “Da mihi animas, cetera tolle”, and bore eminent witness to it by “bringing to life among the young the merciful love of God the Father, the saving charity of Christ the Shepherd, and the fire of the Spirit which renews the face of the earth”.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Reg. 28,1

— He wanted too to clothe this activity in a *simple, cordial and joyful kindness*, or in other words in a style of life and action which tends to promote “relationships of trust and friendship so as to create around himself a family atmosphere marked by simplicity and affection. (Every Cooperator) is a worker for peace who tries to reconcile conflicting views by dialogue and so bring about agreement”.<sup>40</sup> This is really the distinguishing characteristic of the spirit of Don Bosco; he himself described this style as “salesian” because he saw in St Francis de Sales a “model of amiability, apostolic zeal and true humanism”.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Reg. 31,2

<sup>41</sup> Reg. 28,1

He expressed it in practice through the manner of acting among young people that he called the “preventive system”: a style that is also called the “method of kindness”, since

— it “uses persuasion and not compulsion, and appeals to the inner resources of the individual, making him progressively responsible for his own growth;

— believes in the ‘invisible action of grace in the heart of every man’ and in the educational value of the faith experience;

— with confidence in the transforming power of love, tries to reach the heart and succeed in making (the educator) loved in a mature and



<sup>42</sup> Reg. 15

transparent way".<sup>42</sup>

This kindness is manifested in an atmosphere of joy and hope which arouses fellow-feeling, infuses optimism and promotes happiness. It is an expression of the interior joy that springs from the Easter dimension of the christian faith, the bearer of a supreme innovation particularly attuned to the inclinations of youth psychology.

<sup>43</sup> cf. Reg. 30,3

— Tied in with the "mystical spur" of pastoral charity become kindness, there is in this spirit a demanding "*ascetical manner of doing things*" made attractive by a smiling countenance. Don Bosco expressed it in the realistic phrase: "*work and temperance*".<sup>43</sup> It implies a true ascesis of activity lived with constancy among the difficulties and toil of daily life: the personal cross to be freely carried behind the Lord. It is accompanied by a continuous and alert control of personal inclinations and passions until there is reached an efficacious balance of self-control in behaviour and wise criticism in the face of environmental ideologies, which is an expression of active christian prudence.

<sup>44</sup> 2 Pet 1,5-7

In the salesian spirit "ascetics" and "mysticism" mutually compenetrates according to what St Peter says in his 2nd letter: "Make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love".<sup>44</sup>

— To preserve and develop this "spirit" (described in chapter 4 of your Regulations) Don Bosco was aware by experience of the uninterrupted *protection of our Blessed Lady*: not only because of his personal experience of the "motherly intervention

of Mary”<sup>45</sup> at the beginning of his vocation and throughout its development, so that he always considered her his “Teacher and Guide”, but especially because on a wider scale, in the very history of salvation, she “cooperated in a unique way in the work of the Saviour and never ceases to cooperate as Mother and Helper of christian people”.<sup>46</sup> And a particular reason for so characteristic a trait of this spirit is that the pastoral charity of your Association consists in the imitation of “the motherly concern of Mary, who intercedes for the Cooperator and helps him daily in his witness”:<sup>47</sup> in fact Mary Help of Christians is, by “her living presence”, the “special guide of the Salesian Family”.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Reg. 1,1<sup>46</sup> Reg. 27,2<sup>47</sup> Reg. 28,2<sup>48</sup> Reg. 35,1

### 3. FOR A RELAUNCHING OF THE ASSOCIATION

The solemn promulgation of the Regulations, my dear Cooperators, is certainly an event which calls for a relaunching of the Association. I would like to gather together here a few practical suggestions which may prompt you to the formulation of some practical proposals.

#### Some practical questions that must be faced

— Obviously there is in the first place the need to study, assimilate and put into practice what is contained in your Plan of apostolic life. This is a *task of ongoing formation* to bring about interior spiritual growth, with a secular slant,<sup>49</sup> able to permeate the texture of daily life (made up of family, professional, cultural, social and ecclesial relationships) with the gospel values of the salesian spirit.

<sup>49</sup> cf. Reg. 7

It is more urgent at the present day than ever in the past to strengthen the "inner man". It is a task therefore which must serve for the christian identification of the individual, but also provides a stimulus for the Association itself and for all the Salesian Family.

Such a task must be accompanied by careful attention to what Vatican II has proclaimed about "secularity", and in particular about the vocation and mission of the "lay person" in the Church. The doctrine of the Council requires a much wider knowledge and more courageous acceptance of what it means to "feel oneself a Catholic" in a pluralist world pervaded by the frightening temptation of temporal immanence. The materialism in vast social sectors which characterizes our time leads to that terrible "sin against the Holy Spirit" which cannot be forgiven.

In this connection the Pope, in his recent encyclical "Dominum et vivificantem" says that for a materialistic mentality, "the order of values and the aims of action which it describes are strictly bound to a reading of the whole of reality as 'matter'; (materialism appears as) the systematic and logical development of that 'resistance' and opposition condemned by St Paul with the words: 'The desires of the flesh are against the Spirit'." <sup>50</sup>

<sup>50</sup> DV 56

The Catholic of the present day cannot fail to accept the mission of proclaiming and bearing witness to the active presence of the Holy Spirit in history, and to his enlivening and transforming action in personal, family and social life.

— Furthermore, inner growth is necessarily accompanied, in the case of a salesian Cooperator, by the revision and intensification of his own apostolic

initiatives. Hence arises an appeal to renew his *personal obligations of witness and apostolate*: in the family,<sup>51</sup> in marriage,<sup>52</sup> in his environment of life and work,<sup>53</sup> in social relationships,<sup>54</sup> and in salesian works, “especially in Oratories, Youth Centres and Schools”.<sup>55</sup> It must be acknowledged that the structures of the Salesians and Daughters of Mary Help of Christians offer a concrete and organic field for apostolic initiatives. In this sense I would also like to remind especially the younger Cooperators, that the lay missionary volunteer project is of wide extension and very appropriate at the present day.

<sup>51</sup> Reg. 8

<sup>52</sup> Reg. 9

<sup>53</sup> Reg. 10

<sup>54</sup> Reg. 11

<sup>55</sup> Reg. 16-17

Whatever the situation, the Cooperator must feel involved with personal responsibility and a spirit of initiative in carrying out the common mission “according to his capacity and possibilities”. Thus each one enriches the Association, and hence also the Salesian Family, by growth in identity:

— “*adult and elderly Cooperators*”, says the new text of your Regulations, “bring the riches of mature experience and long fidelity;

— *young Cooperators*, with the dynamism of the new generations, help in the carrying out of the common mission by their own dedication and sensitivity;

— *Cooperators tried by ill-health* and unable to help in other ways, render efficacious the apostolate of all by the offering of their sufferings and prayer;

— *Cooperators who are priests or deacons*, whose presence is very useful, offer the services of their specific ministry, especially for formation and animation”.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>56</sup> Reg. 20,3

— A particular sector needing urgent and deep attention and fidelity to the Magisterium is that of *the social teaching of the Church*. This is something of great topical importance at the present day, a sector both delicate and complex, and one moreover which is too easily disregarded or misinterpreted. And yet it stands at the foundation of any christian commitment to the renewal of society or the launching of a civilization of love.

In the teachings of the Pastors of the Church can be found the fundamental principles, criteria of judgement and practical directives for the urgent task of cultural transformation, which implies education of the individual, solidarity of peoples, and the integral humanizing of work. An enlightening synthesis of such guidelines is given in chapter V of the recent Vatican Instruction on "Christian freedom and liberation".<sup>57</sup>

<sup>57</sup> Cong. Doc. Faith,  
22 March 1986

Article 11 of your Regulations gives succinct expression to what the attitude of the Cooperator should be in the face of these ecclesial requirements. Even though "the Association as such remains above all party politics, it is nevertheless concerned that its members be given a strong formation in this area; in fact it "intervenes courageously, following the directives of the local Church, to promote and defend human and christian values. It enlightens and encourages individual Cooperators to fulfil their duties in society in a responsible manner".<sup>58</sup>

<sup>58</sup> Reg. 11,2

— Another field of action in which the Salesian Family wants to grow, in fidelity to Don Bosco, is that of *social communication*, especially in view of the education of youth and the christian awareness of the masses. There is an urgent need today for

you Cooperators to be a christian presence in the vast world of the "means" of social communication, especially in places where plans and programmes are in preparation which touch on sore points concerning the formation of correct consciences. Communication, in fact, is one of the most incisive factors in the new emerging cultures (because of its powerful influence on public opinion and on the configuration of the 'city of man'), and hence attention must be given to its professional quality through the intervention of those among you who are competent in this sector.

The Regulations consider the commitment of Cooperators in this field as one of the "typical activities" to which priority should be given: in fact, "commitment in social communication... creates culture and spreads patterns of life among people".<sup>59</sup>

<sup>59</sup> Reg. 16,1

— Finally I would like to recall as a practical challenge to keep before your minds the intensifying of good relations, *fraternal communion and collaboration with the other groups of the Salesian Family*.<sup>60</sup> This is attained "through reciprocal knowledge and information, by mutual spiritual and formative assistance, and by involvement in common apostolic tasks".<sup>61</sup>

<sup>60</sup> Reg. 5

<sup>61</sup> Reg. 22,1

In the same sense, greater care should be given to the information services which have the scope of circulating experiences, news, testimony and initiatives which stimulate and increase the spiritual and apostolic output of all. In particular you should give constant support to the "*Salesian Bulletin*", to which Don Bosco linked the Cooperators and their apostolate, and foster its promotion and circulation in the various countries.

A greater and more lively awareness of the demands of communion and collaboration in the

Salesian Family will redound to the benefit of the Church, especially of the particular Churches where the various groups are found side by side.

In fact we understand the renewal of the Family not in the sense of each group developing on its own, but rather in that of being "together" the true charism of Don Bosco, or in other words a more authentic and efficacious gift to be presented in salesian fashion to the local Church.

### **A spiritual movement**

Still another incentive.

I have read and read again the latest encyclical, "Dominum et vivificantem", of Pope John Paul II. It is a very profound and lucid meditation which leads us to understand how intimately is inserted the "Mystery" of God in the history of humanity through the life-giving presence of the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit of the Lord makes us aware of the inclinations of the "flesh" and of the "spirit" above shortsighted modern ideologies, and gives us the power of love as the one and only efficacious shaper of man's true future, freeing us from the various determinisms stemming from Materialism. When you read the encyclical you will be able to better understand the contents of the two frontiers in the struggle between good and evil as they appear in modern society: that of "life in the Spirit" and that of "sin against the Spirit".

The Pope invites everyone to strengthen the "inner man", in preparation (even now) for the great Jubilee the Church will celebrate at the advent of the year 2000. It is a case of arousing an eschatological sensitivity which will give a more lively tone of hope at our present period in history, one that

will be marked by the approaching Third Millennium of Christianity. Man is the way of the Church, but is so in virtue of the inner man, because "God... transforms the human world from within, from inside hearts and minds";<sup>62</sup> that is why the Church is very definitely the "heart of humanity".<sup>63</sup>

<sup>62</sup> DV 59

<sup>63</sup> DV 67

Pope Paul VI reminded us that from the time of Vatican II "we are living in the Church at a privileged moment of the Spirit. Everywhere people are trying to know him better... They are happy to place themselves under his inspiration. They are gathering about him, and they want to let themselves be led by him".<sup>64</sup>

<sup>64</sup> EN 75

The Holy Spirit is indeed the bearer of a "new beginning", of a "new creation", of the "new man": he appears as the one who is Lord and gives life, and who "with wondrous providence directs the course of time and renews the face of the earth".<sup>65</sup>

<sup>65</sup> GS 26

Our Salesian Family is convinced of the life-giving presence of the Spirit at the origins of our own specific vocation; in addition it considers the postconciliar obligations of the last twenty years (which have seen the revision of the fundamental texts identifying the three Groups founded by Don Bosco) as a journey undertaken in docility to the Holy Spirit, who has visited us to enable us to put into effect once again and promote the charisma He gave to our Founder.

Today we feel that the Spirit-Creator is calling upon us to relaunch together a true "spiritual movement", i.e. a new way of living our common vocation which must be rooted in a more authentic interior apostolic mentality, which must in turn foster a more up-to-date pastoral creativity; this will have a greater social incidence on the advance-



ment of youth and the evangelization of cultures and the common people, so that there may be a more universal concern about missionary activity, and a reawakened courage and joy in belonging to a Catholic Church engaged in ecumenical dialogue.

In my letter of February 1982 on the Salesian Family I used two adverbs, "forward" and "together", as a motto to guide us to some goals of renewal. I think that the expression "spiritual Movement" interprets that motto very well, while expressing synthetically and in a more concrete manner what it is that we are intending to renew: i.e. "life in the Spirit" for both each individual and each Group: we want the witness we give to our vocation to spring from greater interior depth, with more brotherhood and communion, with greater dynamism and agility, with greater pastoral flexibility, with a more attractive and involving presence among youngsters, and with greater social impact.

This demands of everyone an indispensable attentive docility to the Holy Spirit, to his animating presence and to the results of the visit he has made to us during the revision of our Identity Cards.

It is not our aim to organize ourselves in noisy serried ranks (although the noise made by young people causes us no displeasure), but we want to be competent workers in a tapestry of christian authenticity within the concrete though modest limits of our presence in various localities, which on the other hand are numerous and found in every continent.

The Salesian Family, put forward again as a spiritual Movement,<sup>66</sup> will once again proclaim the up-to-date nature of the charism of Don Bosco, for the present day and the future. A true charisma is characterized, as is stated in the document "Mu-

<sup>66</sup> cf. SDB C 5

tuae Relationes", by "a constant re-examination of fidelity to the Lord, docility to his Spirit, prudent weighing of circumstances and careful reading of the signs of the times, the will to be integrated in the Church, awareness of obedience to the hierarchy, boldness in initiatives, perseverance in the gift of self, humility in the face of adversity".<sup>67</sup>

<sup>67</sup> MR 12

Don Bosco urged every Cooperator to be a true Catholic, of convinced and living faith, courageous and enterprising: "Do not be afraid! God is with the Church all days to the end of time. It is for the wicked to tremble before the godly, not the godly before the wicked";<sup>68</sup> "let us fight (alongside the Pope) for the cause of the Church, which is God's cause! Let us take courage and work with all our hearts. God is a generous master and will amply reward us. Eternity is long enough for us to rest".<sup>69</sup>

<sup>68</sup> BM 6, 275

<sup>69</sup> BM 7,103

#### **4. THE LIVING PRESENCE OF MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS**

Dear Cooperators, I must conclude. The study and inner assimilation of the new text of your Regulations of apostolic life must mark the beginning of a new stage in the life of your Association. We shall give each other mutual help in prayer, initiatives of service and organization, formation undertakings, and the urgent work of promoting vocations. Our Councillor General for the Salesian Family and the Vicar General of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians are already ready and willing to provide advice and stimulus for this new phase of growth. Meanwhile we put all our trust in Mary Help of Christians, Mother of the Church; we are convinced of her living presence and we frequently invoke

<sup>70</sup> cf. Reg. 35,1

her;<sup>70</sup> we entrust ourselves to her as to a motherly Teacher and Intercessor, always present and always solicitous in our regard.

On 23 May 1884, eve of the feast of the Help of Christians, Don Bosco gave a conference to the Cooperators in the Basilica at Valdocco, Turin: "Close as I now am to the end of my days", he said, "it gives me great joy to see that the favours granted by Mary instead of decreasing are growing in number every day and in every place. Never a day goes by without us receiving from town and hamlet, near and far, long accounts of extraordinary graces received through the intercession of Mary Help of Christians. And our Salesian Cooperators are the instruments that God is using to spread ever more widely the glory of his Mother. It is something that should make you all very happy and lead you to place the greatest trust in Mary's patronage".<sup>71</sup>

<sup>71</sup> MB 17, 149

The new text of the Regulations was presented to some of your representatives on 24 May last in the Basilica at Valdocco, as though coming from the hands of the Madonna herself. "The date of this solemn act", says the Decree of promulgation, "is of great significance and importance. Our Holy Father, John Paul II, speaking to members of the World Congress who represented Salesian Cooperators from all over the world, earnestly exhorted them to rely 'on the promptings and motherly inspiration of Mary most holy, the Help of Christians, who is your special and powerful patroness'".<sup>72</sup>

<sup>72</sup> Reg. Decree of promulgation

Place your trust therefore in Mary Help of Christians; get down to work; and put no limits to your hope!

The Salesians and the Daughters of Mary Help

of Christians are praying for you and are at your side.

I entrust you all to Don Bosco and I send you my blessing, with my admiration for the witness you give and my gratitude for your many and fruitful undertakings.

With deep affection in the Lord,

Don F. Viganò

### 3. RULINGS AND DIRECTIVES

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## THE ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

THE ECONOMER GENERAL

Fr Omero Paron

For making the Administrative Report prescribed by art. 196 of the General Regulations a new Form has been drawn up and is already in use. I would like to say a word about it and recall some of the norms involved. The Form remains substantially as it was before. Positive experience in the past has confirmed that the way in which it is set out makes it a valid instrument, because if completed faithfully it presents a full and clear statement of the financial situation of the province and a synthetic view of that of the individual houses.

The new Form has been modified to some extent, in the light of the comments made by some provinces and of the experience of the last fifteen years, so as to simplify the gathering of facts.

The more important changes are briefly as follows:

— the date of the beginning of the financial year is left to the choice of the individual provinces. In practice the year can coincide with:

the solar year: from 1 January to 31 December;

the scholastic year: which may vary from one country to another;

the financial year as defined by the statutes of corporate bodies;

— statistics have been reduced to those referring to salesian and external personnel;

— the column “irrecoverable credits” has been omitted because it was very little used, if at all. If necessary losses due to irrecover-

rable credits can be referred to in the General Survey under the heading "causes of losses";

— the list of individual credits and debits is no longer required: it is sufficient that the total be given. But each province should keep such lists for its own purposes;

— more space has been left for the General Survey, which is considered of great importance for any necessary explanation of the data presented;

— the "Summary of financial statements of the individual Houses of the province" has been reduced to the essentials with the elimination of various repetitions. This leaves a greater responsibility on Provincial Councils for the checking of the Reports of the different houses;

— some other changes will be clear from a careful reading of the Form itself.

Simplification of the Form does not mean that in its own administration a province must limit itself to the essential items included on the Form. In the office of every Provincial Economer there should continue to be more specific and detailed methods for keeping accounts, which can be greatly simplified at the present day by the modern accounting techniques which are available. What it does mean is that the Forms used in each province, especially those for the individual Houses, should call for greater details according to local circumstances. Each province or group of provinces therefore needs to see to the drawing up and printing of its own Forms in order to comply with what is laid down in Reg. 194,4.

It should be noticed that even though it has been simplified, the new Form to be sent to the Economer General provides a complete Report which realistically reflects (or should reflect!) the overall economic and financial situation of the province and of each house. This is not just a simple formality, but a duty incumbent on anyone who administers ecclesiastical goods (cf. CIC Can. 1287), and particular law must include the times and ways in which it is to be fulfilled (cf. CIC can. 636,2). It is to this that arts. 192, 196 and

202 of the General Regulations refer. But it should be noted that among ourselves we have been doing just this from the very beginnings: in fact the Constitutions of 1864 recalled that "all management should be carried out in such a way as to be able to render an account at any moment to God and to the Rector Major". In connection with this matter Economers General have dwelt more than once on the need for attention to punctuality in sending in the Report and on care and completeness in compiling it.

The Form is issued in three languages (Italian, English and Spanish), but is otherwise uniform. It was decided to maintain this uniformity, even though in some cases it may involve slightly more work if it is necessary to transfer data from one system to another. It was done deliberately in order to preserve an element of unity and a homogeneous view of the different situations, and thus facilitate examination of the Reports and their insertion in the archives. As has been said already, this in no way precludes the possibility that in individual provinces the Provincial Chapters may decide to insert in their provincial directories further prescriptions concerning Forms and the frequency with which they must be submitted (monthly, quarterly etc.), nor does it exclude the use of new administrative techniques within the province.

The context of the Administrative Report provides an opportunity for recalling the obligation of "rendering an account" that exists at local level, indicated in Reg. 202 in the following words: "as opportunity offers, and especially when the programme for the year's work and the economic situation are being discussed, (the local economist) will interest the entire community in the ordinary and extraordinary expenditure involved in the running of the house". This task is confirmed from the other direction as a duty of the Assembly of the confreres in Reg. 184,5.

On the other hand there is no norm making it an obligation to render an account to the whole provincial community as such. Some provinces do this on the occasion of the Provincial Chapter in the form of a report on the financial situation of the province, but there is no obligation to make such a report; the management and administration of the province with the associated task of periodic

checking belong to the Provincial with his Council (Const. 190).

It should be added also that when mention is made of the "Administrative Report" this always means both the budget and the financial balance sheet. This is expressly stated in Reg. 196: both of them have to be drawn up, but only the balance sheet is sent to the Eonomer General.

I think it opportune finally to insist on the "single" administration of the house which is entrusted to a single Eonomer, to whom everything must be referred back (cf. Reg. 198). This does not preclude the existence of sectors authorized to administer their own affairs under the control of those responsible for the purpose, but these must always come under the one central administration of the Eonomer of the community. To him the different sectors must submit their accounts, and his obligation it is to put all the different parts together and normally include them under a single overall management, and hence compile a single report. I say "normally", because there are cases in which a particular sector (e.g. a school) has to present a separate Report, but this will always be done under the overall responsibility of the Eonomer.

The third paragraph of Reg. 198 also recalls some particular situations which are not exempt from rendering an account to the religious superiors.

In conclusion, and still in reference to the Administrative Report, I recognize the great work done in the past so competently and punctually by all the Provincial Eonomers, and I know full well that it will continue in the future. Permit me to add just two recommendations that have become part of our tradition. The first is from Don Rua's circular of 29 November 1888: "Always keep your account books so carefully that if someone else had to take on the job he would understand the situation at once and know what to do". And the other is from Don Giraudi, in ASC 33 of January 1926: "Be careful to see whether such Reports were drawn up conscientiously, and with that order and precision required by every good and attentive administration, especially one dealing with the goods of Divine Providence".



## 4. ACTIVITIES OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL

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### 4.1 Chronicle of the Rector Major

After preaching the spiritual exercises to the Roman Curia (cf. AGC 317), the Rector Major left Rome 23 February 1986 for various meetings at Sondrio, Nave and Pinerolo. On 27 of the same month he was received at the Vatican together with Card. Anastasio Ballastrero by Pope John Paul II, to discuss matters concerned with the celebrations of "Don Bosco 88".

In the meantime he saw to the preparation of the text of the spiritual exercises he had recently preached, which was subsequently published by the SEI, with the title "Mistero e storia - dono e profezia del Concilio" ("History and mystery - gift and prophecy of the Council").

In mid-March Fr Viganò was at Treviso, at the invitation of the Bishop, for a meeting with the local clergy. On 5 April he was part of a group at the Press Office of the Vatican which presented the new Instruction on "Christian freedom and Liberation", under the presidency of Card. Joseph Ratzinger.

On 19-20 April he went to Schio in the Verona Province for the provincial youth festival and the 85th

anniversary of the founding of the work there.

Next followed an intense period between 23 April and 9 May spent in Spain and Portugal. His first commitment was the preaching of the spiritual exercises to all the members of the provincial councils and the rectors: 220 confreres gathered at Tarragona for the purpose. Visits followed to the Provinces of Valencia, Barcelona and Portugal. Of outstanding interest was the visit to Barcelona where he took part in some of the solemn celebrations for the centenary of Don Bosco's historic journey to that city. He brought back with him a profound impression of the lively enthusiasm there is for the Congregation among the people, the renewed and very clear understanding of our identity, and the further proof that the stature of Don Bosco seems to be growing ever greater in the historical perspective of the Church.

May 24 saw the Rector Major at Valdocco for the solemnity of Mary Help of Christians: it was on this occasion that he promulgated and presented to the Cooperators their new Regulations of apostolic life. The following day he was at Foglizzo for the celebration of the cente-

nary of Don Bosco's visit there.

On 3 June the work of the fifth plenary session of the General Council got under way.

## **4.2 Activities of the Councillors**

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

The Councillor for Formation, Fr Paul Natali, and his collaborators were engaged until mid-March in the continuation and checking of their work of revision of the Rector's and Provincial's Manuals.

In various meetings of formation personnel at provincial and inter-provincial level, of which the most important took place at Campo Grande (Brazil) and Rosario (Argentina), the new editions of the "Ratio" and the "Criteria and Norms" were presented, and various aspects of the vocational and formation situation were discussed, especially those concerning coadjutors.

A start has also been made on the preparation of an aid which will offer useful items of a historical, geographic, cultural and ecclesial kind for a better understanding of the life, work and spirituality of Don Bosco. It is aimed especially at those formation communities outside Italy which may be less familiar with the environment in which Don Bosco lived and worked. This is an ini-

tiative that has been undertaken to meet the numerous requests received from directors of novices and those working in the postnovitiate phase of formation during the two renewal courses held recently for them at the Generalate in Rome; they themselves suggested the content and form of the aid on the basis of their practical experience.

Contact and collaboration has been maintained with the team engaged on the composition of the "common nucleus" of prayers which the provinces, provincial conferences and salesian regions will keep in mind in compiling their practical guide for prayer, according to what is prescribed by Reg. 77. Also in preparation is the new salesian "Proper".

From mid-March to mid-May the Councillor was engaged full-time on the extraordinary canonical visitation of the Vice-province of "Mary, Seat of Wisdom" — the Salesian Pontifical University. The commitments deriving from the visitation kept him occupied almost continuously until the end of May.

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

In February Fr Juan Vecchi went to the Province of Munich (Germany) to address a group of confreres on the theme "Youth Groups and Movements".

Next, at the invitation of the Spa-

nish Delegation for Youth Pastoral work, he took part in a meeting of several days duration which was drawing up a "systematic plan of human formation" which the provincial delegates of Spain are putting forward as a response to the present youth situation.

A second seminar on "salesian pedagogy and youth emargination", this time for the Latin-American countries, took place at Cacoeira do Campo (Brazil). There were 42 participants from 19 provinces together with a sprinkling of FMAs. Discussions turned on various experiences and focused especially on four: salesian communities in poor and thickly populated neighbourhoods; attention to needy youngsters through educational institutions; new approaches and new plans for helping boys of the streets; the presence of Salesians and FMA in national or ecclesial organizations concerned with the problems of minors.

In Argentina Fr Vecchi was present at two study weeks on "Animators of youth groups" arranged by the Conference of the SDB and FMA Provincials and organized by the pastoral consulting group of the Plata area; this was for the purpose of making a further practical analysis of the options which characterize the salesian youth movement in the Region. The seven salesian provinces took part, together with the six provinces of the FMA.

Afterwards in the Plata salesian provincial conference further thought was given to the situation of the provinces of the Region and to the new and urgent requests of youth and of the Church with a view to a progressive redeployment of our efforts. Each province explained its own situation, and common criteria were adopted suited to the context.

In Argentina Fr Vecchi also had an opportunity of gathering together the lay collaborators of the various educational works in the Province of Cordoba for a day of reflection on present-day problems of christian education; he was also present for three days of reflection on pastoral work for vocations with salesian rectors and FMA superiors at Bahia Blanca, and in two days of study on "young people in formation" he was able to present the part of the Constitutions which refer to the Mission and to salesian pastoral work.

In May he went to Africa for two meetings for taking stock of the situation and for the purpose of making plans for the future. The first one took place at Nairobi and was attended by salesian and FMA missionaries from ten English-speaking countries. After analysing the youth condition in Africa and the pastoral guidelines of the Church in their regard, the meeting went on to examine the criteria for salesian intervention, in an attempt to provide

indications for a "model plan" for salesian pastoral work in the African context; it concluded with an examination of the present state of things as regards vocations and future prospects.

A similar programme was followed at Libreville (Gabon), with salesians and FMAs from fourteen French-speaking countries.

Following his return from Africa Fr Vecchi took part with Fr Bosoni in a meeting with the provincials and provincial councils of Italy at Vico Equense to examine some pastoral aspects of the Italian provinces in preparation also for the combined visit of the Rector Major and Councillors. The meeting had been prepared by the provincial councils using a questionnaire sent out by the Department. It was introduced by reports of a practical character by the provincials, and the discussion then focused on the following topics: the evangelization of youth, group experience and its present state, the redeployment of our forces to meet concrete needs, pastoral work for vocations, the pastoral animation of a province, the formation of lay people for insertion in our work. This event followed others of a similar kind held in Spain, Argentina, Brazil and India.

In the meantime the Department sent out to the provinces in Italian and Spanish a pamphlet entitled:

"The salesian community in its neighbourhood: presence and mission". Also sent out were invitations to attend the course of ongoing formation to be offered to provincial animators of youth pastoral work and group movements. Two further folders in the series "The educative community in formation" have also gone to press.

Continuing its study of "salesian youth groups and movements", the Department (with a view to providing a further aid) is going ahead with a study on "The group animator" in collaboration with the corresponding pastoral department of the FMA and with the help of a group of experts.

#### **The Councillor for the Salesian Family and for social communication**

On his return from the Far East in mid-February, Fr Cuevas, together with the commission of Cooperators appointed for the purpose, continued the revision and perfecting of the text of the Regulations for Salesian Cooperators to be handed to the authorities of the Congregation and of the Apostolic See.

On 7 March he took part in the meeting of the Central "DON BOSCO '88" Commission, and in the following days in the meeting of the salesian delegates who animate the Union of Past Pupils in Sicily, where he also met the presidential board of the past pupils.

Towards the middle of the month he met with the directors of the Società Editrice Internazionale (SEI - Turin) to examine at depth the situation of salesian publishing houses throughout the world.

Between 23 and 28 March he was in Spain to preach a retreat to a group of confreres of the Province of Barcelona in preparation, among other things, for the centenary celebrations of the visit of Don Bosco to that city. After the retreat he met with the provincial delegates who look after the animation of groups of the Salesian Family and of social communication; subsequently he made visits for the same purpose to the provincial offices at Bilbao, Barcelona, Seville, Cordoba and Madrid.

On 6 April he was present at Padua at a meeting of the Salesian Family of the Province of Verona on the theme: "Don Bosco's plan for the commitment of the laity in the Church".

From 9-23 April Fr Cuevas visited India and spent some time in the Provinces of Calcutta, Madras, Bangalore and Bombay; during his visit he attended a meeting of the national council of the past pupils at Calcutta. In every province too he met with the provincial delegates for Cooperators and past pupils; with the provincial council of Cooperators; with the salesian delegates for social communication; with

those responsible for our printing works, publishing houses, and audio-visual centres; with directors of Salesian Bulletins and youth publications; and with those in charge of salesian cultural centres. He also took the opportunity to get to know something about the work in social communication of the University of Poona, the national centre for ecclesiastical vocations, and the centres of the Divine Word Fathers (Poona), the Paulists (Madras and Bombay) and the Paulist Sisters (Bombay).

On his return to Rome he took part in the meeting of the national council of the Italian salesian Cooperators at Ariccia (24-27 April); the theme of the meeting was the New Regulations of the Cooperators.

On 1 May, Feast of St Joseph the Worker, he presided over a meeting of the salesian musicians of Italy for the purpose of relaunching musical activity in the provinces and programming musical initiatives for the DON BOSCO 88 celebrations.

From 2-4 May Fr Cuevas was back in Spain once more to meet with the national council of the past pupils at Barcelona; on this occasion he took part too in the commemorative celebrations for the centenary of the visit of Don Bosco. In Spain again from 16-18 May he presided, together with Fr Francesco Meotto, at a meeting of the salesian publishing houses of Spain and Portugal.

23-24 May found him at Turin for the Feast of Mary Help of Christians, to assist in the ceremony of the promulgation of the new Regulations of the Cooperators. The new text was handed by the Rector Major to 50 Cooperators from Italy and other parts of the world on this date which is so memorable for all the Salesian Family, and especially for the Cooperators' Association.

At the end of the month, 30 May-1 June, he was present at the national meeting of the Salesian Family of Austria: he took part in a consultation at provincial level, met with a big group of Cooperators at Vocklabruck and received the promise of new Cooperators at Oberthalheim. In the afternoon of 1 June he returned to Rome.

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

After his visit to India (cf. AGC 317), Fr Luc Van Looy spent a brief period in Italy, and then left for Mexico where from 1-19 March, in agreement with the Regional Councillor (Fr Velasco), he carried out the extraordinary visitation of the MIXES missions of Mexico. He was also able to give a day to the Province of Guadalajara where he made a rapid visit to the novitiate and postnovitiate at Coacalco.

In the period 19-23 of the same month he visited Cuba, and in particular the houses of La Habana and

Santiago di Cuba. The confreres of Santa Clara came to La Habana to meet him.

After a day at Mexico and a night spent at San Juan de Puerto Rico he went to Santo Domingo and spent two days visiting the houses of that city and Barahona before going on to Haiti. He spent Holy Week and Easter with the confreres of this country in the Antilles which is looking for a new social and political set-up.

Before returning to Rome he stayed from 1-4 April with the community at the Missions Office in New Rochelle, studying possible ways of collaboration with the US State Department in the development field. He left Rome again for Madrid to preside from 21-23 April over a meeting of those responsible for Mission Offices in Europe and North America, for the purpose of studying the question of missionary animation in the Congregation.

On 4 May Fr Van Looy left once again for Africa. He passed two days at Lubumbashi before going on to Zambia to visit the six salesian works in that country and study plans for the future. From 12-17 May he presided over a meeting at Nairobi with SDB and FMA representatives from ten English-speaking countries. He was accompanied by Fr Vecchi and Mother Lina Chiandotto FMA, and the purpose of the meeting was to study

and take stock of the situation of youth pastoral work in the African countries concerned. From 19-24 May the operation was repeated at Libreville (Gabon) with SDB and FMA representatives from fourteen French-speaking countries. On this occasion Fr Vecchi and Fr Britschu were present.

On 24 May, he presided at a Ceremony during which he presented the French edition of the Constitutions to a group of confreres from French-speaking African countries; he stayed on until 30 May to visit the houses of Gabon.

He left on May 30 for Angola, but was obliged to return again to Libreville because the aircraft could not make contact with the control tower at Luanda airport, where he eventually arrived the next day in time to take part in festivities in honour of Our Lady, and in the Corpus Christi procession on June 1. He spent the next two days at the house of Dondo and got back finally to Rome in the evening of 4 June.

#### **The Economist General**

At the beginning of March Fr Omero Paron took part, at the invitation of the local authorities, in a meeting of the Council of Administration of the "Beni Stabili" Society at the Swiss Institute in Lugano.

At the Sacred Heart, Rome, on 8 March he met with the Provincial

Economers of the Italian Provincial Conference. During the celebration of the Eucharist on this occasion Frs Ron and Cencini, who had died recently in a tragic road accident, were commemorated.

On March 12 he convoked and presided over a meeting of the Superior Administrative Council of the Salesian University, held at the University itself. On the agenda was the approval of the accounts for 1985 and the budget for 1986.

From 23 March to 8 April Fr Paron was in Spain. As he passed through Madrid he visited the salesian publishing-house and bookshop and also the Missions Office, and then went on to Seville for a meeting of the Provincial Economers of Spain and Portugal. The purpose was to review the principal points concerning the administration of temporal goods in the Congregation in the light of the new Code of Canon Law and the renewed Constitutions. Some interesting local problems cropped up in the course of the discussions. After the meeting he visited some other salesian works in the Seville Province, before doing likewise in the Barcelona Province and finally in the Province of Valencia.

At Turin, 9 May, the Economist General attended the ordinary and extraordinary Assembly of the SEI, called to receive the report on the operations of 1985 and approve the

accounts for the year, and to make some modifications to the Statute.

From 14-21 May he was in New York for a meeting and took the opportunity to visit some of the works of the New Rochelle Province.

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

At the end of the plenary session of the General Council on 10 January, Fr. Carlos Techera left at once for the Province of Campo Grande in Mato Grosso, where he made contact with various communities not yet visited, spending time particularly at the new novitiate and postnovitiate.

Subsequently he accompanied the Economist General in his visit to the Atlantic Region between 18 January and 6 February (cf. AGC 317), and took part in the meeting of Provincial Economists of the Region held at Campos do Jordao (Brazil) from 26-28 January.

Returning to the Province of Sao Paulo he set on foot among the confreres the consultation preceding the appointment of the new provincial. After meeting various communities he began, on 1 March, the extraordinary visitation of the Province of Porto Alegre (Brazil).

At the beginning of the following month he took part in the 2nd international seminar on "salesian pedagogy and youth emargination", held at Cachoeira do Campo from 1-6

April. After spending some days in the Province of Belo Horizonte to visit the initial formation communities, he was present at the meeting of the formation personnel of Brazil at Campo Grande. He next accompanied Fr Nicolussi (of the Formation Department) to the Province of Rosario (Argentina) for the meeting with the formation personnel of the Plata area (20-22 April), during which he presented the new edition of the "Ratio". From 24-26 April he presided over the meeting of the Plata Provincial Conference at which Fr Vecchi was also present. The principal item dealt with at this meeting was an analysis of the possible redeployment of the forces and resources of the various provinces: criteria, experiences and practical guidelines.

Returning then to Porto Alegre he continued with the extraordinary visitation which concluded with meetings with the Rectors, the Provincial Council and the Provincial himself. After this Fr Techera returned to Rome.

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

During the first half of 1986, Fr Velasco continued his work of animation, giving special attention to certain provinces. He left Rome in mid-January and made a first stop of a few days duration at the Provincial House of Medellin, where he



had a meeting with the provincial council and clarified some conclusions that had been reached in the canonical visitation made towards the end of 1985.

Immediately afterwards he began the extraordinary visitation of the Province of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico. With the exception of that at San Cristobal de las Casas and that of Morelia, all our works lie within a radius of 200 km. of Mexico City, which the visitor was able to use as a centre from which to reach each of the others in turn. Of particular significance during the visit was the blessing and inauguration of the new aspirantate for salesian coadjutors: the salesian community responsible for this work of vocational guidance and the 80 young aspirants have now been transferred definitively to the fine city of Queretaro.

He also found time for a rapid visit to the Province of Guadalajara to meet the provincial council and visit the students of theology belonging to the province of Mexico City.

The extraordinary visitation was shared by the Councillor General for the Missions, Fr Luc Van Looy, who carried out the visitation of the specifically mission part of the province among the Mixes. At the end, the two visitors made a synthesis of their observations.

Towards the end of February Fr Velasco was able to make a rapid

trip to the centres of formation of the Central American Province in Guatemala, where he also had a meeting with the Salesian Family. An interesting and pleasant surprise was provided by the young confreres of the house of formation with their musical presentation "Cantata a Don Bosco", based on the dream of 9-10 April 1886.

Subsequently the Regional Councillor left for the extraordinary visitation of the "St Rose of Lima" Province of Peru. Starting from Lima he was able to reach all the towns and cities where the salesians are working.

After the visitation ended in mid-May Fr Velasco paid a visit to the provincial house of Chile and the studentate of theology at Lo Canas to meet the salesian students of the Peruvian province.

Simultaneously with the visitations in Mexico and Peru he made the consultation for the appointment of the new provincial in both provinces.

#### **The Regional Councillor for Asia**

Leaving Rome with Fr Luc Van Looy on 11 January 1986, Fr Panakezham first presided over a meeting of the Provincial Conference of India at Sulcorna, Goa, from 13-15 January, at which were discussed the preparations to be made for the combined visit of the Rector Major

and General Councillors due to take place in New Delhi next November. Also discussed were the manner of carrying out the seminar on youth pastoral work, the commitment of the Indian provinces for the work in Africa, and inculturation in India itself.

Following this the Regional visited various communities in the different Indian provinces, particularly the formation communities. It was consoling to note the various initiatives in the field of vocations that have been started in the Provinces of Calcutta, Gauhati and Dimapur: an aspirantate for boys of Bengal and Azimganj (Calcutta); and three prenovitiates situated respectively at Ronkon and Tura (Gauhati), and Jorhat (Dimapur). Fr Panakezham next went to Sri Lanka, where he saw with satisfaction the beginnings of a new aspirantate for the boys of that island.

At the beginning of March he managed to enter Burma, where we now have 31 confreres, 3 novices and a good group of aspirants. Last April, after an interval of ten years on account of the political situation, we had three priests ordained.

After a meeting at Bangkok with the new Provincial of Thailand (Fr Tito Pedron), the Regional went on to Jakarta (Indonesia), where a few months earlier a new salesian presence had been begun in order to help the confreres on the island of Timor.

From 15 March to 1 April he carried out the extraordinary visitation of the Vice-province of South Korea, and successively from 2 April to 24 May that of the Province of Japan. In Korea there has been a great increase in conversions to Catholicism. The Salesians too are profiting from this hour of the Holy Spirit in this country; there is a steady growth in vocations despite many problems (e.g. the three years of compulsory military service). There are many problems in the religious field in Japan, but here too there is a significant improvement in the vocational sector: next year we hope to have at least six novices (in a country where the Catholic population does not exceed 400,000). One feels that Don Cimatti is still alive and working in Japan.

In the last week of May the Regional Councillor had a meeting in Tokyo with all the provincials of the Far East to decide on the common and more important problems that can be treated at the coming combined visit of the Rector Major and General Councillors due to take place at Hua Hin (Thailand) next November. Arrangements were also discussed for a meeting of perpetually professed salesian Brothers of the Far East to be held in Battulao (Philippines) in October of this year. Fr Panakezham returned to Rome on May 31.

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

Even before the General Council ended its plenary session, Fr Dominic Britschu was at Zurich (27-30 December 1985) at a meeting organized by the "Commission for salesian problems in Switzerland". Also present were the Regional Councillor for Italy, the provincials of Munich, Novara and Paris, and the rectors and FMA superiors of the salesian houses in Switzerland. The agenda included an examination of some of the more problematical aspects of the salesian presence in the country. Among the problems emerging was the coordination of the work and activities of the Salesian Family at the level of the Swiss Confederation and against the background of the salesian European Region. The meeting ended with the taking of some resolutions in view of a more intense and systematic effort at the promoting of vocations, confided to a team called "SATCH" (Salesianisches Animatoren Team für die Schweiz - CH) made up of Frs Birrer, Rogger, Paul Gallot and Donnet.

On 11 February the Rector Major assigned the Regional Councillor to carry out the extraordinary visitation of the South Belgian Province. From mid-March he visited the French-speaking communities working in Brussels and in the southern provinces of Belgium. Because

of the close proximity of Belgium to Holland, Fr Britschu also made a short visit to the new Dutch provincial, Fr André Asma, and went also to greet the Bishop of 's-Hertogenbosch, Mgr Jan ter Schure SDB. On his way back to Rome he made a brief stop at Strasbourg to celebrate with his parents the 80th birthday of his mother.

Arrived back in Rome he had to make at once the necessary preparations for a visit to the countries of Zaire, the Congo People's Republic, Cameroun and Gabon. In this part of Africa the Regional Councillor made the canonical visitation to the various communities and confreres, and made contact with the missionaries (men and women), Secular Institutes, Bishops and Apostolic Nuncios of the area. He arrived back in Rome in early June after more than a few adventurous experiences regarding times of flights, entry permits and authorizations to pass from one country to another.

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

Fr Martin McPake dedicated almost the entire period from 12 January to 10 May to the extraordinary visitation of the Province of Dublin. The visit involved journeys to Malta, the Republic of South Africa, Lesotho, Swaziland, and Ireland itself. Particularly heartening was his

visit to the salesian house at Roma in Lesotho, where he met six post-novices, all of them African, four from Lesotho and two from Swaziland.

Everywhere the visitor was able to verify for himself how useful to young people is the work done by our confreres in this province, and how highly it is esteemed by the various hierarchies and civil authorities.

After the visitation of Ireland Fr McPake spent some days at the new Provincial House of the Province of Great Britain at Stockport, near the city of Manchester.

#### **The Regional Councillor for Spain and Portugal**

Towards the conclusion of the previous plenary session, in the last days of December 1985, Fr Josè A. Rico left for Macau to visit the confreres of the Colegio Don Bosco, which belongs to the Portuguese Province. He then went on to Mozambique where he remained for three weeks, during which time he was able to visit the mission of Moatize and the houses of Maputo and Catembe. He preached the spiritual exercises to the Salesians, the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians and to the novices of both, and after the retreat received the profession of the first two Mozambican salesians (18 January).

On his return to Europe he began

the extraordinary visitation of the Province of Barcelona, which kept him fully occupied from 24 January to 31 May. During the visitation he took part also in a meeting of the Iberian Provincial Conference and the retreat preached by the Rector Major to all the rectors of Spain and Portugal as the highlight of the centenary of the visit of Don Bosco to Barcelona (1886); he also accompanied the Rector Major on his visits to the provinces of Valencia, Barcelona and Portugal.

He also visited the two African houses of the Barcelona province situated in the Ivory Coast, remaining with the missionary confreres for a period of two weeks from 11 to 25 May. Back once again in Spain he had a meeting with the Provincial Council of Barcelona, followed by one with all the rectors of the province. He took part in the Third National Congress of the Clients of Mary Help of Christians, and returned to Rome on 2 June.

#### **The Regional Councillor for Italy and the Middle East**

At the end of the winter plenary session of the General Council, Fr Luigi Bosoni began at once the extraordinary visitation of the Sicilian Province "St Paul" of Catania, which kept him busy from 11 January to 15 May, with two brief interruptions caused by commitments of a national character.

From 19-22 May he met all the rectors and visited the communities of the Province of Novara (except for that of Zurich) to sensitize the confreres for the consultation preceding the change of Provincial, the present Provincial being close to the end of his six-year term of office.

He took the opportunity offered by his presence in Northern Italy to meet the postnovices at Nave (17 May), to take part in the annual meeting of the past pupils of Treviglio (18 May), to spend a short time at the theological studentate of the Crocetta in Turin (22 May) and at the novitiate of Pinerolo (23 May); he was also present at Valdocco on the Feast of Mary Help of Christians for the solemn promulgation of the Regulations of apostolic life of the Salesian Cooperators on 24 May.

Finally from 26-31 May he was at Pacognano (Naples) with the provincials and members of the provincial councils of Italy for a pastoral programming session with Fr Juan Vecchi, Councillor for Youth Pastoral Work.

#### **The Rector Major's Delegate for Poland**

Fr Augustyn Dziędziel began his stay in Poland in January by immediately calling a meeting of the Consultant Group of the Conference of the Polish Salesian Provinces to pass on information on the work of the General Council with the relevant decisions, and to prepare the

agenda for the Conference itself.

He then carried out the extraordinary visitation of the Polish Province of Saint Adalberto, centred on Wrocław. He found that in the six years that have passed since its canonical erection, this new province has managed to become well organized, the confreres have increased in number by 60, and the works have been better structured and consolidated; the development of the field of youth pastoral work and of the animation of the Salesian Family has been followed by a notable increase in vocations, and has at the same time given rise to the opening of two new formation communities.

While making the visitation the Delegate carried out in the province the consultation for the appointment of the new provincial, and at the same time was able to make a visit of animation to the five formation communities of Poland.

He was present, at least during the last few days, of the Provincial Chapters of three provinces: Cracow (South Poland), Wrocław (West Poland) and Piła (North Poland).

At the end of May he had a further meeting with the SDB and FMA Provincials, and the SDB and FMA Provincial Delegates for the Salesian Family of all the provinces to make plans and decide on initiatives for the celebration of the centenary of the death of St John Bosco.

## 5. DOCUMENTS AND NEWS ITEMS

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### 5.1 Letter of the Holy Father to the Rector Major

*We print the latter which His Holiness John Paul II sent to our Rector Major after the latter had sent him a copy of the volume containing the text of the meditations preached during the Retreat given by Fr E. Viganò at the Vatican last March.*

To my beloved son Fr EGIDIO VIGANÒ  
Rector Major of the Salesian Society  
of St John Bosco

I have received with great pleasure the gift of the specially bound edition of the volume "Mistero e Storia — Dono e Profezia del Concilio", which you have so kindly and devotedly sent to me.

I want to thank you sincerely for the gift of the book, with its learned and interesting preface, which contains the "sermons" you gave in February last to the members of the Roman Curia during the Retreat in the first week of Lent. In this way you have given me the possibility of reading once again and joyfully reliving the mystical atmosphere of prayer and meditation to which your words gave rise, as you spoke on the great and fundamental mysteries of ecclesial reality and life in the light of the doctrine of Vatican II.

While expressing the heartfelt desire that your work may become widely known and esteemed among priests, religious and the faithful in general, I invoke upon you choice and copious heavenly favours, for an ever more fervent and efficacious salesian ministry in every continent along the lines of your Founder St John Bosco.

With these thoughts and the expression once again of my gratitude for your week of guidance, I am happy to renew to you the propitious Apostolic Blessing, which I affectionately extend to your Collaborators and to all the Members of the Institute.

From the Vatican, 25 April 1986.

**Joannes Paulus II**

### 5.2 "Regulations of apostolic life" of the Association of Salesian Cooperators. Decrees of approval and promulgation

*As indicated in the Letter of the Rector Major, the Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes approved on 9 May 1986 the "Regulations of apostolic life" of the Association of Salesian Cooperators; on the following 24 May the Rector Major issued the decree of promulgation of the same Regulations.*

*We print below the two decrees, which are of great importance for the whole Salesian Family.*

**Decree of approval of the Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes**

The Association of "Salesian Co-operators", whose headquarters are now in Rome, was founded by Don Bosco and approved by the Apostolic See through the Brief "Cum sicuti" of 9 May 1896.

It is a public association of the faithful, "after the manner of a third order", which shares in the spiritual patrimony of the Society of St Francis de Sales, dedicated in the Church to an extensive apostolate among youth and the common people. It has as supreme moderator the Rector Major of the Salesians of Don Bosco.

In obedience to the directives of the Church and in the spirit of Vatican Council II, the Association has drawn up, under the responsibility of the Rector Major with his Council and with the collaboration of experts, a renewed text of the "Regulations of apostolic life" based on that written by the Founder St John Bosco, and has submitted it to the Apostolic See for approval.

This Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes, after careful examination of the text, and in the light of the favourable vote given in a Congress which took place on 15 April last, by this present decree ap-

proves and confirms it, with the modifications laid down in the same Congress, according to the Italian text deposited in this Congregation's archives, all requirements of Canon Law being observed.

With the example in mind of the figure of Mamma Margaret, who was in fact the first great Cooperator of the Oratory of Don Bosco, this Congregation earnestly prays and hopes in the Lord that all the members of the Association may grow in their union with God and in their generous participation in the mission of the Church, according to the salesian spirit of predilection for the young and the poor.

Rome, 9 May 1986

**Jean Jérôme Card. Hamer, O.P.**

*Prefect*

**† Vincentius Fagiolo**

*Secretary*

**Decree of promulgation of the Rector Major**

The apostolic energy shown by Don Bosco in founding, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and the motherly guidance of Mary, the Society of St Francis de Sales and, with St Mary Domenica Mazzarello, the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, saw a further and wonderful extension when he set up officially the "Pious Union of Salesian Cooperators" as the third branch of the Salesian Family (cf. NR/1974).

In the first Regulations of the

Association the Founder gave very clear indications for the manner of salesian cooperation in the Church's mission in the world, the particular obligations entailed and the accompanying spiritual advantages.

The urgent desire for deep renewal launched by Vatican II and translated into practice through the deep analysis of the foundational charism made by the General Chapters of the Salesians and of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians which took place afterwards, made it clear that "Don Bosco's original 'Regulations' needed to be updated in order to harmonize them with the teachings of Vatican II, but without deviating from the spirit and objectives of our Founder" (NR/1974). The New Regulations which resulted, "the fruit of hard work carried out with diligence and loving concern" especially by the Cooperators themselves, was promulgated for an experimental period by the worthy Rector Major at the time, Fr Luigi Ricceri, on 14 April 1974. This was followed by the "Agreed policy of the Salesians and Daughters of Mary Help of Christians for the animation of the Cooperators" (ASC 278, pp. 53-58).

The promulgation of the Code of Canon Law on 25 January 1983 (and the definitive approval of the Constitutions of the Salesians and of the Daughters of Mary Help of

Christians) made urgently necessary a revision of the New Regulations as well, so as to redefine in canonical and ecclesial terms the Pious Union of Salesian Cooperators and bring the experimental period to an end.

Those in charge, therefore, undertook a work of sensitization of the Cooperators on a worldwide scale, and this was followed by the task (by no means without its difficulties) of drawing up a new text of the Regulations to express the Founder's thought and plan in up-to-date language and according to the pontifical directives. Worthy of special mention in this connection is the 2nd World Congress of Salesian Cooperators, held at Rome from 28 October to 4 November 1985, which provided skilled and competent input for the elaboration of the new text. The final work of editing was carried out by a special commission set up for the purpose, after which the Rector Major, with the collaboration of the General Council of the Salesian Congregation, undertook the task of the final revision so as to harmonize the text with the genuine thought of Don Bosco in founding the Cooperators. The text thus revised was then sent to the Apostolic See, with which a profitable dialogue subsequently took place. After examining the observations of the Consultors appointed for the purpose and the introduction of the amendments agreed



upon, a favourable vote was given in a Congress of the appropriate Pontifical Congregation. This was then followed by the official approval with the Decree of 9 May 1986.

In this is expressed first of all the fact that the Salesian Cooperators are "a public association of the faithful, 'after the manner of a third order' (cf. CIC c. 303), which shares in the spiritual patrimony of the Society of St Francis de Sales, dedicated in the Church to an extensive apostolate among youth and the common people". In this way the intimate and vital communion of the Association of Salesian Cooperators with the Church is defined: it acts in fact in the Church's name for the public good (cf. can. 116 §1), and this through participation in the spiritual patrimony of the Society of St Francis de Sales, on account of which as a Group of the Salesian Family it is "a bearer of the common salesian vocation and shares responsibility for the vitality of Don Bosco's project in the world" with "the specific values of its secular characteristics" (R/1986,5).

And therefore, in virtue of the power invested in me as Supreme Moderator (cited in the Decree, and cf. R/1986, 23 §1) I promulgate officially the "Regulations of apostolic life" of the Association of Salesian Cooperators on the Solemnity of Mary Most Holy, Help of Christians, "the special guide of the Sal-

esian Family" (R/1986, 35 §1) and I also declare that it now comes into force in accordance with the universal law.

The date of this solemn act is of great significance and importance. Our Holy Father, John Paul II, speaking to members of the World Congress who represented Salesian Cooperators from all over the world, earnestly exhorted them to rely "on the promptings and motherly inspiration of Mary most holy, the Help of Christians, who is your special and powerful patroness" (Acts World Congress, p. 131).

May the Cooperators therefore know how to accept with childlike trust from the hands of Our Lady these "Regulations of apostolic life"; and may the witness of the gospel values they contain be their joy and the guarantee of the daily protection of the diligent Mother of the Church.

Given at Turin, 24 May 1986, Solemnity of Mary Most Holy, Help of Christians.

**Fr Egidio Viganò**  
*Rector Major*

### 5.3 Letter of the Rector Major to the Holy Father concerning the beatification of Pope Pius IX

*We transcribe the letter sent by the Rector Major to His Holiness John Paul II after the proclamation of the heroicity of the virtues of the Servant of God Pius IX. It is an invitation also to every Salesian to consider the position held by Pope Pius IX in the life of Don Bosco and in the origins of our Society.*

Rome, 6 June 1986

TO HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II  
VATICAN CITY

Most Holy Father,

I feel it a duty first of all to thank you for having taken a decisive step in the Cause for beatification of Pope Pius IX by the proclamation of the heroicity of his virtues, which happened in July of last year. I have heard it said that already one miracle has been presented which, if it should be approved, will open the way to beatification.

For the Salesian Family of Don Bosco the glorification of the Venerable Pius IX is an event we look forward to with great joy. Together with Don Bosco it is to Pius IX that we owe our specific character in the Church. We consider him our second Father: "Alter Salesianorum Parens", as runs the inscription on the base of his monumental statue

in the Basilica of the Sacred Heart in Via Marsala. For Don Bosco Pius IX was Father, Master, Adviser, Consoler and Animator; and for the great Pope Don Bosco was a most devout son, ready for any sacrifice to meet his desires; he showed himself to be always the Pope's strong defender and proclaimed his merits in life and after his death. When he sent his first greetings to Leo XIII immediately after his election, Don Bosco himself said: "This Congregation was advised, directed and approved by Pius IX of venerable memory". Our Founder esteemed Pius IX as a saint: through the pages of the Salesian Bulletin (June 1878) he exhorted people to invoke his intercession, and asserted with prophetic conviction: "in a short space of time he will certainly be on our altars. Even though these words came spontaneously as soon as Don Bosco heard of his passing, they are an indication of the spiritual harmony between one saint and another. All things considered, a century of waiting for the study of a pontificate which lasted thirty-two years in very complex times is not too long. Thank you then in anticipation, Most Holy Father, for the joy you will give the Salesian Family by the glorification of Pius IX. Our preparation and participation will be fervent and intense.

While imploring the apostolic blessing for the whole Salesian

Family, I profess myself  
Your Holiness' most devoted  
servant,

Fr Egidio Viganò

#### **5.4 Decrees for the beatification of the salesian Martyrs, Mgr. Versiglia and Fr Caravario**

*Although with considerable delay we print an English translation of the Pontifical "Briefs" promulgated on the occasion of the beatification of the salesian martyrs, Mgr Luigi Versiglia and Fr Callixtus Caravario. The two documents reached our Generalate only recently in the original Latin.*

##### **Brief "Maiorem hac dilectionem" for the beatification of Mgr Luigi Versiglia**

"Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (Jn 15,13). These words of the Lord, who "died for all" (2 Cor 5,15), confirming his teaching by his example, can be applied in a special way to the holy pastors who, following in his steps, have carried out their mission with untiring zeal and "have given their lives" for their flock. Our mother the Church, unceasing in her cultivation of virtue, is justly proud of those who by their death gain victory. Among these we find Luigi Versiglia, a bishop who rendered Chinese soil fertile by his blood.

Born 5 June 1873 at Oliva Gessi in the diocese of Tortona, he was received as a pupil in the chief Institute of the Congregation of St Francis de Sales in Turin, without giving the least thought to what choice of life he would make in the future: one of his fellow pupils was Luigi Orione. The example of the virtues of St John Bosco, then still alive, and the missionary spirit on which that salesian community was nourished, prompted the young Luigi Versiglia to enrol among the members of the Congregation, in which he made his perpetual vows in 1899 into the hands of Blessed Michael Rua. He attended to the study of philosophy in Rome at the Gregorian University, while practising spiritual ascetics and taking his first steps in the youth apostolate. In due time he was ordained priest, and received an obedience as master of novices in the little town of Genzano, in the exercise of which office he moulded tender souls in a wonderful way to the life of the spirit and to priestly commitments, inflaming them with apostolic fervour.

But his thoughts were always on the missions, and finally his desires were fulfilled when Blessed Michael Rua sent him to China with other confreres, the first handful of salesians, to cultivate that portion of the Lord's vineyard. Luigi began his missionary activity in the city of Macau where he brought about

great progress among the community of the faithful and took particular care of lepers; he became known as the "father of orphans".

When in 1918 the Vicariate Apostolic of Shiuchow was entrusted by the Holy See to the Salesian Society, Luigi Versiglia, despite his reluctance, was appointed Vicar Apostolic and was ordained Bishop on 9 January 1921.

In his new mission field he showed himself to be a true pastor, as described in the Gospel and in the Letters of St Paul: he was a good and simple man, ready to meet the needs of others, a father and brother to his companions rather than their superior, energetic and decisive in initiatives, tireless in activity; in brief, he was a good shepherd whose external activity was nourished by his inner piety and who sought nothing but the glory of God and the extension of his kingdom in this world. The number of christians grew to three times its number, religious and social works greatly increased, and a seminary was established. Luigi, sparing himself no effort, visited the mission stations amid great political difficulties: his little boat, which he often used as dwelling place, chapel and pulpit, was an image of the Church tossed on the waves of a tempestuous sea.

This man, given over so completely to activity, was at the same

time (and especially during the last years of his life) dedicated also to contemplation; he cultivated union with God and the habit of prayer, and gave himself over to penance. Preparing himself in this way for martyrdom, he said on one occasion to his confreres: "If God desires a victim for the good of the mission, I am ready". On 25 February 1930, while on a boat with his confrere Callixtus Caravario and some other people, three young women among them, on his way to visit the mission station of Lin Chow, he was captured by pirates. The latter, moved by evil desires, wanted to abuse the young women, and Luigi and his confrere made every effort to defend their integrity. Because of this he was first beaten by those miscreants and then shot several times: the good shepherd, following in the steps of Christ, did not hesitate to face death for the sheep confided to his care.

After the cruel killing, the fame of the martyrdom suffered by the intrepid bishop began immediately to spread far and wide. In consequence in the Vicariate of Shiuchow the process was introduced through the ecclesiastical authorities; then, in obedience to the legislation then obtaining, Pius XII on 13 June 1952 approved according to practice the setting up of the commission for the introduction of the cause. Subsequently processes were begun in the

ecclesiastical curias of Hsiangkiang (i.e. Hong Kong) and of Turin, whose juridical validity was recognized by a decree of the Congregation of Rites of 5 July 1963. Following the juridical procedure, the discussion then began in the Congregation for the Causes of Saints on the martyrdom of this Servant of God and of his confrere Callixtus Caravario, and Card. Francis Carpino, presenter of the cause, in the ordinary Assembly held in 1976, posed the question: whether there is certainty about the martyrdom, its cause and signs, or in other words about the miracles referring to the case under discussion and about the results. Paul VI, after receiving the report, declared on 13 November of the same year that the martyrdom and its cause were approved.

We, in the light of the report of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, have dispensed from the prescription of can. 2116,2 of the Code of Canon Law, and have fixed the date for celebrating the beatification of the two martyrs. On that day therefore in St Peter's Square, in the course of a solemn ceremony we have pronounced the following formula: "We, in response to the requests of Our Brother John Baptist Cheng-chung Wu, Bishop of Hong Kong, of many other Brothers among the Bishops and of many of the faithful, after having consulted the Congregation for the Causes of

the Saints, by our Apostolic authority grant the faculty by which the Venerable Servants of God Luigi Versiglia and Callixtus Caravario may be called henceforth by the name of Blessed, and that their feast be celebrated each year on 25 February, the day of their birth to everlasting life, in the places and manner by law established. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit". Then after the customary homily on the life and virtues of the two martyrs, we ourselves have been the first to venerate and invoke them with the greatest devotion. What we have laid down in this letter shall remain valid in perpetuity, anything to the contrary notwithstanding.

Given at St Peter's Rome, under the seal of the Fisherman, 15 May of the year 1983, the fifth of our Pontificate.

**Brief "Maximum amoris" for the  
beatification of Fr Callixtus Caravario**

It is well known that martyrdom provides the greatest witness to love for God. Rightly therefore the Second Vatican Council has emphasized: "Martyrdom makes the disciple like his master, who willingly accepted death for the salvation of the world, and through it he is conformed to him by the shedding of blood. Therefore the Church considers it the highest gift and supreme test of love" (Lumen Gentium, 42).

Such an encomium is applicable, as well as to the other intrepid witnesses of Christ, to Callixtus Caravario who was a companion of Luigi Versiglia, his associate in missionary work and, finally, sharer of his glorious battle.

He was born on 8 June at Cuorgnè, in the diocese of Turin into a poor family, the son of a labourer. After being a pupil of the Salesians at Turin, he became a member of their Congregation and made his religious vows in 1919; he continued with studies in the classics and philosophy, and began even at the time to take care of children and adolescents. Moved by the desire to spread the name of Christ in China, he was sent there in 1924 while still a cleric. He gave himself to the work of evangelization first at Shanghai and then, when religious were expelled from that city, on the island of Timor where he dedicated himself with great charity to the care of orphans whom he helped in many ways. After completing his theological studies at Canton he was ordained priest in 1929 by Mgr Versiglia who immediately sent him to the mission station of Lin Chow. There in a short space of time he won over the Christians by the practice of prayer, zeal for souls and his kindness in dealing with others.

At the beginning of 1930 Callixtus went to Shiuchow to accompany Bishop Versiglia on the pastoral vis-

it to his mission station at Lin Chow. In the boat with them on the way to the village there were some other people, including three young Christian women. On 25 February about midday, just after the recital of the Angelus, the boat was captured by pirates. Because Callixtus and the Bishop energetically defended the girls against those men whose passions had been aroused, they were beaten with sticks, and were then taken ashore and shot. According to the evidence of those who were present, Callixtus, following the example of his Bishop, bore everything patiently, thinking only of God and putting the defence of chastity before his own life. The witness given by both in this way, as we said on the day of their solemn beatification, "still reminds today's society of the very high value and price of this virtue, whose safeguarding, coupled with respect for and the promotion of human life, well merits placing one's life in danger".

Immediately after his cruel death Callixtus, like Luigi Versiglia, was hailed as a martyr. In consequence the ecclesiastical authorities instituted in the years 1934-35 in the Vicariate of Shiuchow the process on the cause of his martyrdom. The acts of the process, together with many letters expressing requests, were sent to Rome; subsequently, with the observance of everything

required by law, Pius XII on 13 June 1952 personally approved the setting up of the commission for the introduction of the cause. The processes established by the Apostolic See then took place in 1953 in the ecclesiastical curias of Hsiangkiang, the city commonly called Hong Kong, and of Turin from 1953-57: their juridical validity was recognized by a decree of the Sacred Congregation of Rites issued on 9 July 1963. Following the juridical norms there then began in the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints the discussion on the martyrdom of this Servant of God and of Bishop Luigi Versiglia, first in a special meeting of the Prelates and Consultors held on 3 February 1976, and then on 11 May of the same year in a plenary session of the Cardinals. In the latter meeting Card. Francis Carpino, presenter of the cause, posed the question: whether there is certainty about the martyrdom, and of the signs of miracles "in casu et ad affectum" in the case being dealt with. Each of the Cardinals gave his vote. The Holy Father Paul VI, to whom everything was then referred on 5 August of the same year, after carefully examining the votes of the Cardinals, declared on 13 November 1976 that there was certainty regarding the martyrdom and its cause. We therefore, in the light of the report of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, have granted

a dispensation in accordance with what is prescribed by can. 2116,2 of the Code of Canon Law, and have fixed the date for the solemn beatification of the two martyrs.

Today therefore, in St Peter's Square, we have made the following declaration: "We, in response to the requests of Our Brother John Baptist Cheng-chung Wu, Bishop of Hong Kong, of many other Brothers among the Bishops and of many of the faithful, after having consulted the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints, by our Apostolic authority grant the faculty by which the Venerable Servants of God Luigi Versiglia and Callixtus Caravario may be called henceforth by the name of Blessed, and that their feast be celebrated each year on 25 February, the day of their birth to everlasting life, in the places and manner by law established. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit". Then after the customary homily on the life and virtues of the two martyrs, we ourselves have been the first to venerate and invoke them with the greatest devotion. What we have laid down in this letter shall remain valid in perpetuity, anything to the contrary notwithstanding.

Given at St Peter's Rome, under the seal of the ring of the Fisherman, 15 May of the year 1983, the fifth of our Pontificate.

### 5.5 New Salesian Bishops

Two new salesian bishops have recently been appointed, one soon after the other. We give a brief account of their salesian history.

1. *Mgr Walter de AZEVEDO, Coadjutor Bishop of Sao Gabriel de Cachoeira*

On 22 May 1986 the Osservatore Romano carried news of the appointment of Mgr. Walter de Azevedo as Coadjutor Bishop of the Diocese of Sao Gabriel de Cachoeira (Brazil).

Mgr. de Azevedo was born in Sao Paolo (Brazil) 8 May 1926. After the normal studies he entered the Novitiate of Pindamonhangaba, where he made his first profession as a salesian on 31 January 1944. He was ordained priest at Sao Paolo 8 December 1953, obtained the Licentiate in Pedagogy at Lorena and subsequently studied Missiology in Rome at the Gregorian and Urban Universities, graduating with the Doctorate.

For some years he was the coordinator of youth pastoral work in the province of Sao Paolo, and continued in the same capacity after being transferred to the missionary Province of Manaus, even after becoming rector of the house of Porto Velho.

In 1979 he was called upon to take charge of the Manaus Pro-

vince. For the past few months, after completing his term of office as provincial, he has been at the Generalate in Rome collaborating in the work of the missions Department.

2. *Mgr. Jose Carmen di PIETRO, Bishop of Sonsonate*

On 2 June 1986 the Holy Father appointed as Bishop of the new residential See of Sonsonate (El Salvador) the Salesian Fr Jose Carmen Di Pietro, Provincial of the Province of Central America.

Mgr. Di Pietro is of Italian extraction, being born at Foggia on 3 September 1928. After high school studies at the salesian missionary colleges of Bagnolo Piemonte and Ivrea, he entered the Novitiate at Chieri-Villa Moglia, where he made his first profession in 1948.

Very soon afterwards he was sent to Central America, where he did his theological studies and was ordained priest at Guatemala 21 September 1957. He obtained the Licentiate in Philosophy and Theology at the UPS in Rome, and was called to direct the Studentate of San Salvador. Later he was parish priest of the salesian parish in Panama and then became rector of the Provincial House in San Salvador.

Since 1980 he has been Provincial of the Central American Province.



## 5.6 Confederal President of the Past Pupils of Don Bosco

*We publish the decree of 14 June 1986, by which the Rector Major has reconfirmed Dr Joseph CASTELLI as President of the World Confederation of Past Pupils of Don Bosco.*

Prot. N. 86/672

### DECREE

We, Fr EGIDIO VIGANÒ, Rector Major of the Salesian Society of St John Bosco, in accordance with art. 14a of the Statutes of the World Confederation of the Past Pupils of Don Bosco, after being informed of the results of the confederal elections, and derogating from art. 15b of the same Statutes by reason of a faculty granted by his Eminence Card. Edward Pironio, President of the Pontifical Council for the Laity by letter dated 12 June 1986, Prot. 1106-86-A.E.C.-17, for the reasons given validity by that letter, and after consulting individually the mem-

bers of the Confederal Presidential Council with positive results

**DO HEREBY RECONFIRM  
IN OFFICE**

**Doctor JOSEPH CASTELLI  
as CONFEDERAL PRESIDENT  
OF THE PAST-PUPILS**

for a further period of six years, with all the rights and duties inherent in that office, from 14 June 1986.

While thanking all the elected members of the Confederal Council for their auspicious and generous collaboration, I wish them and the President the greatest success, not least in view of the coming celebrations of the CENTENARY of the death of St John Bosco, for an ever more fruitful development of the mission of the Salesian Past Pupils in the world.

Given at Rome 14 June 1986

**Fr Egidio Viganò**

*Rector Major of the Salesian Society  
of St John Bosco*

**Fr Francis Maraccani**

*Secretary General*

## 5.7 Our dead confreres (1986 - 2nd 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	DATE	AGE	PROV.
P ACHILLI Antonio	Roma	3-05-86	77	IRO
P ARAUJO Manoel	Timtanta-Pernambuco	6-04-86	78	BRE
P BARUCQ André	Lyon	16-05-86	86	FLY
P BISINELLA Giovanni	Bassano del Grappa	22-04-86	77	IME
L CAMEJO Jacinto	General Pirán	19-04-86	87	ALP
L CARBONE Michele	Bari	17-06-86	89	IME
P CARREÑO José <i>Fu Ispettore per 7 anni</i>	Pamplona	29-05-86	80	SBI
P CORTES Paulo Emilio	Cali	15-05-86	72	COM
L DE GREGORIO João	São Paulo	5-06-86	60	BSP
P ERDÖ Francesco	Varazze	22-03-86	91	ILT
L ESCOBAR Juan	Guatemala	14-03-86	74	CAM
P FANZOLATO José Adolfo	Ferré	1-06-86	74	ARO
L FERNÁNDEZ BOLAÑO José A.	Bata (Guinea Eq.)	10-06-86	34	SMA
P FLEMING William	Melbourne	6-05-86	53	AUL
P FURTADO Benedict	Bombay	13-06-86	55	INB
L FUSI Giuseppe	Nazareth (Israele)	6-04-86	82	MOR
L GALLO Pietro	Roma	24-03-86	65	IRO
P GILIBERTI Giuseppe	Torino	10-05-86	69	ISU
P HEBRANT Noël	Marche-en-Famenne	14-03-86	77	BES
P KARLINGER Franz	Hartberg	1-04-86	74	AUS
P KOCH Otto	Buxheim	22-02-86	85	GEM
P LANCIONI Lancino	Genova	20-04-86	69	ILT
L LARA Juan Bautista	Santiago	2-04-86	78	CIL
P LEDVINKA Jan	Kneždub	3-04-86	56	CEP
P LEHAEN Mathieu	Houthalen	1-04-86	86	AFC
L MACCARIO Cesare	Torino	29-05-86	85	ISU
P MANHARD Thomas	Benediktbeuern	15-04-86	71	GEM
P MARUCCI Matteo	Taranto	12-05-86	63	IME
P MATTAM Thomas	Shillong	16-06-86	56	ING

NAME	PLACE	DATE	AGE	PROV.
<b>P MENACHERRY Varghese</b>	Cochin	6-05-86	56	INK
<b>P MILANA Gaetano</b>	Palermo	16-01-86	70	ISI
<b>P MORA Giovanni</b>	Borgomanero	14-05-86	73	INE
<b>P MOTTA Giovanni</b>	Varazze (Italia)	2-06-86	68	MOR
<b>L MUNZI Luigi</b>	Torino	19-05-86	84	ICE
<b>L MURARO José Antonio</b>	São Leopoldo (Rio Grande)	2-03-86	89	BPA
<b>P O'NEILL William</b>	London	16-05-86	74	GBR
<b>P ORLANDI Renato</b>	Zurigo (Svizzera)	2-06-86	62	INE
<b>P PENNISI Gregorio</b>	Catania	22-05-86	79	ISI
<b>P PERKUMAS Antonio</b>	Caracas	31-01-86	76	VEN
<b>L PULITI Felice</b>	Roma	27-04-86	77	IRO
<b>P RICHARD Albert</b>	Liège	14-04-86	69	BES
<b>L RIEGER Franz</b>	Helenenberg	30-04-86	82	GEK
<b>L SIOLI Francesco</b>	Sesto San Giovanni	24-04-86	81	ILE
<b>P SKOCZYLAS Jozef Zbigniew</b>	Cieszyn	14-03-86	52	PLS
<b>P STELLA Giuseppe</b>	Cuneo (Italia)	26-04-84	76	SUE
<b>P STUHEC Franc</b>	Opicina (Trieste)	22-05-86	73	JUL
<b>P SUITNER Karl</b>	Linz	21-03-86	80	AUS
<b>P SVEC Alois</b>	Modlany	28-03-86	56	CEP
<b>P WIERA Stanisław</b>	Lublin	30-05-86	51	PLS

