



# **acts**

**of the general council**

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**year LXVIII january-march 1987**

**N. 320**

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

**Roma  
Direzione Generale  
Opere Don Bosco**





# acts

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

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OFFICIAL ORGAN OF ANIMATION AND COMMUNICATION FOR THE SALESIAN CONGREGATION

**N. 320**

**Year LXVIII**

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Editrice S.D.B.  
Edizione extra commerciale

Direzione Generale Opere Don Bosco  
Via della Pisana, 1111  
Casella Postale 9092  
00163 Roma Aurelio

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## THE GUIDE TO THE CONSTITUTIONS

The Commentary on the Constitutions. - Some criteria for reading the volume. - More important aspects: The growth of the interior man; Don Bosco "father and teacher"; Formation; The present challenge of inculturation; Pastoral creativity. - Clarification of the "Rule of life". - Invitation to interior assimilation. - A valid "aid" for fostering hope. - The beginning of an improved ecclesial and Marian outlook.

Rome, Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception,  
8 December 1986

*My dear confreres,*

I am back in Rome after some long journeys undertaken for purposes of animation. In September I was in Colombia, Ecuador and Brazil; in October in North Belgium and Holland; in November I took part in two important "Team visits", at Delhi with the Indian provinces, and in Thailand with those of the Far East. I also made a brief visit to Japan to convey the greetings and represent the whole Congregation at the celebrations for the 60th anniversary of the arrival of the first Salesians in that noble country. Everywhere I was able to observe the will that exists to grow in fidelity to Don Bosco, through the enthusiastic and profound preparations for the celebrations of 1988. There was the feeling of being caught up in an atmosphere of convinced adherence, of serious programming, and of renewed commitment to our mission for youth.

One feels a joyful and industrious communion with Don Bosco, who from heaven lets us feel his genial presence, the charm of his kindness, and the stimulation of his oratorian creativity. 1988 is already beginning to appear on our horizon as a year overflowing with grace.

### **The Commentary on the Constitutions**

On my return to Rome I had the satisfaction of witnessing the publication of the long awaited volume: "The Plan of life of the Salesians of Don Bosco – A Guide to the Constitutions".

This is the Commentary desired by the GC22. Among the Chapter's Practical Directives and Deliberations we read: "Let the Rector Major with his council study the desirability of preparing a commentary on the renewed Constitutions which will serve to deepen their sense, make the spiritual content easier to grasp, and encourage the confreres to live them".<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> GC22, 4

The confreres now have available this important aid, drawn up to meet the triple objective desired by the capitular assembly:

1° the deeper doctrinal and historical analysis of the content of the Constitutions;

2° a lively perception of the spiritual implications for the necessary personal assimilation;

3° a stimulus and invitation to bear witness to them by their practice in our daily life.

We can rightly rejoice at this event! I speak for all of you in thanking the 17 competent confreres who collaborated in preparing the text, and especially the Secretary General, Fr Francesco Maracani, who coordinated all the work, rendered the



different parts of the text homogeneous, and saw to the compiling of the basic documentation.

### Some criteria for reading the volume

The volume runs to many pages, but no one need be apprehensive on that account. It is not a useless abundance of words, but a serious study and presentation of dense material. In presenting it, I myself have pointed out that "this is not a book to be read through at one sitting like a novel, but rather a text for meditation following on the reading of selected articles made either personally or in community".<sup>2</sup>

The Constitutions are the "basic charter" of our Rule of life;<sup>3</sup> reflection on them is therefore important for keeping our conduct in line with the plan determined by the Spirit.

It will be useful to keep in mind some criteria which will help in the understanding of the volume and in making good use of it.

— *The first criterion* is to grasp the unitary sense of the entire text of the Constitutions. For this purpose it will be particularly useful to read the three introductory Studies. They present the overall significance of the Constitutions in our consecrated life, they offer a synthetic account of the historical evolution of the text from Don Bosco to the present day, and they also provide an indispensable organic survey of the "structure" desired by the GC22 for the redrafting of the entire constitutional text.

To the careful reading of these studies should be added also a consideration of the brief syntheses found at the beginning of each of the Parts, which

<sup>2</sup> cf. Ital.edtn. p. 7

<sup>3</sup> cf. C 192

emphasize the way in which each Part fits organically and harmoniously into the whole.

A plan of life cannot admit of being broken up in such a way that the implications of a project which is in itself unitary and organic become concealed or distorted. The understanding of our Constitutions requires as a basis a knowledge and awareness of the vital synthesis which animates them and which constitutes the light and support for the interpretation of each article.

The need of methodical analysis obviously calls also for a detailed understanding of the content of the individual articles; but as a prerequisite for an objective reading and a subsequent comprehensive review (two points which are in fact complementary), attention must first be concentrated on the three important initial keynote disquisitions and on the presentations of the individual parts and chapters.

—*The second criterion*, which is really the principal one, is the salesian spiritual standpoint from which the Commentary should be read. Here one should have in mind at the same time the three objectives indicated by the GC22 which we have already noted.

It is a matter of understanding in depth the implications of our religious profession, the elements which constitute it and the “grace of consecration” which ensures its application and our perseverance.

This criterion presupposes the fundamental attitude of faith centred on the mystery of Christ, on the explicit will (on the part of both the individual and the community) to follow him daily, and on the evangelical values to be witnessed to in our new times, in the orbit of renewal marked out by Vati-

can II and the diligent directives of the magisterium. Such an attitude ensures a correct interpretation of the doctrine concerning the religious life which has been copiously renewed, made deeper and developed by Vatican II and subsequently.

This is a criterion which calls specifically for a constant and objective reference to the Founder and to the living and authoritative tradition of the transmission of his charisma. The history of Don Bosco and the Congregation is for us the source of spiritual vitality; the Constitutions are nothing else than the description of the characteristic experiences of the following of the Lord as lived by Don Bosco, and by him passed on so that it would grow and develop homogeneously in the Church. Without the concrete element of a lived experience it would not be possible to grasp the true core and spirit of the text.

It is true that the historical sensitivity required of the confrere who reads and meditates on the Rule is not of a strictly scientific kind; the latter could indeed be reductive if it were limited to the analysis of specific documents. It is a question of a realistic and connatural knowledge, nourished by a genuine sense of belonging to a living Congregation with worldwide experience; it is founded on concrete facts of great importance and authority, such as the sources, Don Bosco's first great disciples, the General Chapters, the witness of our Saints, the constant directives of the Rector Major with his council, communication and the happy initiatives of the various provinces.

As a further help to the attitude of faith of the reader, an appropriate explanation, albeit concise, has been prepared of the biblical quotations placed as indications at the head of the individual chap-

ters; and each article has been followed by an invocation which expresses the content once more, but in the form of a prayer.

In reading the text one must be able to profit by the significance and spiritual inspiration which lies behind the writing of the pages.

For an objective foundation and documentation of the principal events, the "notes" will be particularly useful; even though they cannot be used very easily in a communal reading, they will prove helpful for personal reflection.

— Finally, *a third criterion* of particular importance concerns the ecclesial value of the Constitutions. The Commentary in fact is dealing with a Rule of life approved by the Apostolic See as an authentic description of one of the Church's charismata.

The reader must remember that the constitutional text has been formulated with the universal contributions of all the provinces; it represents the reflected communal awareness of a "gift" received and lived in an authentic tradition which goes back to the origins. The renewed text is not the work "of the Superiors", as some have said, nor is it due to some influential group of chapter members, but is the result of a prolonged communal task, the fruit of the labours of our last three General Chapters: "Through the general chapter", we read in the Constitutions, "the entire Society, opening itself to the guidance of the Spirit of the Lord, seeks to discern God's will at a specific moment in history for the purpose of rendering the Church better service".<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> C 146

It has been a communal conversion to the charismatic authenticity of the origins, starting from the many problems of the present day and in the



light of the different cultural sensitivities. The long period of research and discussion (nearly twenty years) may have left in the minds of some, of a superficial mentality or concerned about other things, a false impression of relativism: this would cause a delay in the vital process of our renewal.

Despite the difficult work involved, the GC22 wanted the Commentary to be produced, not only to ensure for the Congregation a correct interpretation of the constitutional text, but also to invite all the members to a true conversion to the ecclesial identity of the genuine plan of salesian life.

No one should think that he does not need it; it is not a question of minutiae, but of the overall organic sense of the vocation of each one among the People of God. It is a precious service of enlightenment.

The collaborators who were asked to make their contributions were chosen from the leaders of the various capitular commissions who had been more closely involved in the final elaboration of the contents of the articles in the various chapters, and the definitive structure of the whole.

The members of the General Council were able to revise and perfect the various contributions, with particular concern to see that the complete work should be a real homogeneous and authoritative aid, faithful to the approval given to the Constitutions by the Apostolic See. In this revision they had always in mind the principle stated in the text itself: "The present Constitutions enshrine the spiritual riches of the traditions of the Salesians of Don Bosco, and define the apostolic project of our Society.

"The Church, in approving them, assures us of the authenticity of the gospel way of life traced out

by our Founder, and recognizes in it 'a special benefit for the whole People of God'".<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> C 192

### **More important aspects**

I consider the publication of this Commentary an important event for the Congregation. It can provide the necessary light for the new and decisive stage of applying and putting into effect all the delicate and complex work that has followed Vatican II. For this reason I recommend it to the careful reading and meditation of every confrere. I would advise provincials and rectors to use it frequently in communal assemblies, especially during penitential seasons and times of retreat. It should become a family means of preparing for the coming centenary celebrations of Don Bosco.

It will certainly serve to recall and deepen some aspects which are particularly urgent at the present day. I will point out some of them; the knowledge that they should be given priority may enable us to make better use of the Commentary.

#### — *The growth of the interior man*<sup>7</sup>

The reader should concentrate on article 3 of the Constitutions, which deals with "our apostolic consecration". In this article are set out both the meaning and the value of our profession as Salesians of Don Bosco: specifically we have reference to the Father's love, to our discipleship of Christ for the building of his Kingdom among young people, and to the transforming gift of his Spirit. This is an accurate presentation of our Covenant relationship, of our own self-offering, of the grace of unity, of

<sup>6</sup> cf. AGC 312, p. 44-45

<sup>7</sup> C 3

the apostolic dynamism which is rooted in us, and of the determining nature for us of our mission to the young and the poor.

Understand this article well and you have in synthesis and in organic fashion an illustration of the entire contents of our Constitutions and of the full christian life they map out for us, revealing the interior wealth and evangelical depth of our profession. Straightaway we can see where to direct our attention and where we need to improve, if we want to overcome any residue of the spiritual superficiality which is so harmful for an apostolic Congregation committed to live and work in these new times.

In presenting the new Constitutions to you I spoke of the need for a revived understanding of the vital significance of religious profession at the embryonic stage of a new era.<sup>8</sup> A proper understanding of our apostolic consecration is the beacon which lights up all the vast panorama of profession, or in other words the interior man who must grow in us.<sup>9</sup> It is encouraging, I wrote at that time, "to consider our own life-plan as a gift (a charism!) which develops in us with the support and animation of the power of the Holy Spirit".

<sup>8</sup> cf. AGC 312, p. 27-30

<sup>9</sup> cf. AGC 312, p. 30-34; 22-23

<sup>10</sup> C 21

— Don Bosco "*father and teacher*"<sup>10</sup>

The renewal of religious life brought about by Vatican II has restored a special importance to the figure of the Founder.<sup>11</sup> Article 21 of the Constitutions presents him as the model and historical source of our charism. Article 196 shows that our vocation is anchored in Christ, "whom we find present in Don Bosco who devoted his life to the young". And the Foreword gives us the Constitu-

<sup>11</sup> cf. AGC 312, p. 18-19

tions as his "living testament" which is for us a "precious treasure".

If we really love Don Bosco we shall be able to detect in the Constitutions his friendly smile and his presence as "father and teacher".

With his project he began a school of apostolic sanctity, which shows to the world an original aspect of the many forms of the Church's life and holiness. Our way of being christians is precisely that of reactivating in time and space his experience of evangelical life<sup>13</sup> as though he were repeating to us each day: "Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ".<sup>14</sup>

<sup>12</sup> cf. AGC 319

<sup>13</sup> cf. C 97

<sup>14</sup> cf. 1 Cor 11,1

It will be fitting, therefore, if we can direct our reading of the Commentary to those aspects which take us back more vitally to the Founder, with particular attention to chapter II on the "salesian spirit". Chapter VII too on "dialogue with the Lord" introduces us to the great secret of the apostolic holiness of Don Bosco, nourished by an interior attitude of continual union with God.

These are two chapters which provide heartfelt justification for the title of "father and teacher" that we give to the Founder.

— *Formation*<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> C 100

Another important aspect which should claim our attention in our reading is that of formation.

The Commentary can be of great help in leading us to think in practical terms about the statement in art. 100 of the Constitutions: "The principle of unity in the Congregation is the charism of our Founder, which of its richness gives rise to different ways of living the one salesian vocation".

This is an aspect which cannot be let go: the



unique vocation of the Salesians of Don Bosco is that described authentically in the Constitutions. It is true that many different cultures exist, but Don Bosco's evangelical project is one and only, and salesians of every culture must be able to reproduce its genuine features. This is why the true reference centre for all, in every part of the world, is found in the Constitutions as rewritten by the General Chapters and approved by the Apostolic See. The Commentary is a help to the understanding of the objective sense of the one salesian vocation.

It may be that the style and mentality with which the articles of the Constitutions have been written reflects the influence of one culture more than another, notwithstanding the fact that confre-res with different backgrounds and from every continent collaborated in drafting them. The description of gospel values and of charismata, which are gifts from on high and therefore transcendent in their essential content, cannot be given concrete expression except through some particular cultural mediation. Faith or charisms have never existed without being inserted into a particular culture. Hence the necessity to be able to use such mediation to attain what is objective in the values described, and so be able to embody them without misinterpretation into one's own life situation.

The Commentary, even though itself being part of a particular culture, is a help, by means of its ample historical and doctrinal explanations, to the more easy attainment of the specific content of salesian fundamentals. And so both those in formation and their guides can embody quite authentically, though in different ways in different places, the vitality of Don Bosco's genuine charism in the following of Christ. In fact: "Formation is one in its

essential content and diversified in its concrete expressions; it accepts and develops whatever is true, noble and just in the various cultures".<sup>16</sup>

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.*

The reading of the Commentary should lead everyone everywhere to assimilate, in the clarity of worldwide communion, the essential features of the salesian identity.

—*The present challenge of inculturation*<sup>17</sup>

<sup>17</sup> C 7

The process of inculturation is one of today's delicate problems. It is a process substantially inherent in christianity itself, and for that reason is absolutely indispensable, even though it be complex in nature and enduring. It never comes to an end because cultural evolution is always taking place, and in recent times has greatly increased its pace.

The charism of Don Bosco is a small aspect of the Mystery of the Church as it unfolds in time; its inculturation cannot take place in separation from the overall task of implanting the Gospel itself. In whatever cultural situation he may be placed, the salesian must undertake this process in parallel and in agreement with his local Church. "Inculturation", declared the Extraordinary Synod of Bishops, "is not merely external adaptation, since it implies both the intimate transformation of authentic cultural values by their integration in christianity and the impregnation by christianity of the various human cultures".<sup>18</sup> "A facile accommodation which would lead to the secularization of the Church is to be avoided, as is also a retreat by the community of believers into an impenetrable ghetto. A missionary openness bent on saving the world both spiritually and materially is what is to be commended. Such a stance leads not merely to acceptance, but to the staunch defence of truly hu-

<sup>18</sup> Final Report II, D,  
4

man values. Such integral salvation is achieved only when such human values are purified and further elevated by grace to intimacy with God through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit".<sup>19</sup>

<sup>19</sup> *ibid.* D, 3

And so what I want to emphasize here is the service the Commentary can offer for the implementation of so delicate and necessary a duty in respect also of our own charism within the Church.

Evidently this is not an aid which can tackle all the problems of the different cultures but, as we have just seen, its whole purpose is to ensure a correct understanding of the essential content of Don Bosco's charism. It serves to indicate what the salesian identity is that has to be embodied in local cultures, avoiding any misinterpretations or breaking of communion. In fact, the process of the inculturation of our charism, though obliging us to its gradual but real local incarnation and not just its simple adaptation, is not meant to damage the vital unity of the Congregation by leading to ambiguous and destructive nationalistic or provincial attitudes. Our world communion is not cultural uniformity but a living convergence of many cultures within the one vocational identity described in the constitutional text. Cultural differences must never change the content of the Constitutions; a particular culture does not take precedence over the charisma: it invented neither the Gospel nor Don Bosco's apostolic plan, even though it furnishes them with a land for their growth and a history into which they can enter as leaven.

Article 7 of the Constitutions says explicitly that "our vocation calls us to be deeply united with the world and its history. Open to the cultural values of the lands in which we work, we try to understand them and make them our own, so as to

incarnate in them the message of the Gospel".<sup>20</sup> Without any doubt this is a challenge of a particularly delicate nature, and hence it is well to remember that the inculturation of the Gospel (and therefore also of our charism) is ultimately the work of God and not simply the result of human adaptation. This is well illustrated by the Apostles: they grew up in a Jewish culture and were sent by the Lord to evangelize peoples everywhere, and hence to evangelize a multiplicity of cultures too. What was primarily asked of them was absolute fidelity to the testimony of Christ, together with the adaptability to assume new values and the ability to prescind from particular elements of Judaism that had already been overcome by the Gospel (we may recall the cataclysmic mission of Paul among the pagans).

<sup>20</sup> C 7; cf. 30, 57, 101

Neither one's own culture nor that of the others can ever be the unconditional criterion for the process of incarnation of the Gospel or of a charism. Culture is not something absolute; it cannot be conceived as something finished and closed. It is a creation of man, enriched by the positive contributions of his growing experience, but also partly flawed by his ignorance and mistakes. Cultures have always been like this, with some negative aspects; in this sense they have always exercised a kind of unconscious control on man's mentality and conscience, thus impairing his true human dignity; these belittling factors can in fact be detected in every culture and need to be offset by a truer and more mature human evolution enlivened by the signs of the times and especially by the revelation of Christ.

And so the inculturation of the Gospel (and with it that of the Church's various charismata) is



not like the entrance of a guest into a house where nothing can be touched and where he will not move a muscle, but rather like the happy arrival of a fellow-worker, a bearer of freedom and freshness, an apostle of renewal who intervenes in the evolution of the existing culture to transform it into something better and give it growth through new cultural expressions.

True enough, this can happen only as the result of a combined effort on the part of all sectors of the local Church, and may take many generations for its realization.

What we are concerned about at present is to point out the salvific superiority and the dynamic beneficial effects of the Gospel (and of our own particular charism) in comparison with existing cultures, and to indicate the importance for the process of inculturation of the salesian vocation (a process truly indispensable at the present day) of a clear understanding of the content of our own identity, and of committing ourselves, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to its authentic realization according to the needs of time and place. "The salesian community", say the Constitutions, "works in communion with the particular Church. It is open to the world's values and attentive to the cultural milieu in which it carries out its apostolic work".<sup>21</sup>

The GC22 wanted the Commentary to be produced, precisely to help us not to betray the gift we have inherited from Don Bosco, and to incarnate it in peoples everywhere as a living reality.

— *Pastoral creativity*<sup>22</sup>

Another aspect, strictly linked with the incarnation of the salesian identity, is that of pluralism in pastoral work.

<sup>21</sup> C 57

<sup>22</sup> C 40

The Constitutions tell us that our specific and characteristic mission of being “in the Church signs and bearers of the love of God for young people, especially those who are poor”<sup>23</sup> is carried out in practice through a whole variety of pastoral commitments. This plurality arises from the different youth conditions with which we come in contact, and also from the spirit of initiative and hence the creativity and apostolic inventiveness typical of fully committed confreres. 23 C 2

To guide the necessary passage from the unity of the mission common to all salesians throughout the world, to the pastoral variety dictated by the different local situations, the Constitutions provide common and enduring criteria which need to be properly applied: the first of these is the experience of Don Bosco in the Oratory of Valdocco, which was destined to be for us “the lasting criterion for discernment and renewal in all our activities and works”.<sup>24</sup>

24 C 40

A very important purpose of the Commentary is precisely that of guiding us in the correct interpretation and application of the pastoral criteria contained in the Constitutions.

If it is true that “our mission sets the tenor of our whole life; it specifies the task we have in the Church and our place among other religious families”,<sup>25</sup> it means that all the articles of the Constitutions which indicate and specify our pastoral commitments have a particularly incisive character as regards our salesian vocation. It is therefore providential that we now have available a handbook which gives a detailed explanation of their content and makes their meaning clear. 25 C 3

At a time of great social and cultural transformations, one of the most delicate problems for the

whole Church is that of concreteness of method for an efficacious apostolate. And the same is evidently true for the Congregation.

The changed condition of youth require a pastoral approach which is both creative and courageous; there are no ready-made formulas to apply; the problems are so diverse that no single solution can meet all of them. Every province and every community needs to observe and take note, to discern, and then adopt a suitable course of action. Hence the need for knowing and giving importance to those common criteria which form part of Don Bosco's precious charismatic tradition.

The Commentary provides an ample and authoritative explanation of them, and so helps to provide a set of common basic criteria for the whole Congregation.

### **Clarification of our "Rule of life"**

The general Introduction to the Commentary offers us a synthesis of the different meanings of the term "Constitutions" with a brief indication of the evolution of its use in religious life, and with an explanation of its nature as the "basic charter" of our "Rule of life".

To be Salesians means to return to the experience lived by Don Bosco, who attached particular importance to practical and methodological aspects in both apostolic activity and personal behaviour, as well as community life. The following of Christ implies a certain way of living; being a disciple implies too a certain methodology of activity and asceticism. The living tradition of the Founder's charism requires specific details and indications which are

not found in the Constitutions, even though they must always be in harmony with them. Article 191 asserts this explicitly when it lists the various components of what is called "the particular law of the Society".

The Commentary makes this aspect clear in explaining the different articles and especially in the explanatory synthesis it provides of the significance and value of the "General Regulations",<sup>26</sup> which flank the Constitutions with the indispensable norms for their practical application. The content of several constitutional articles is in fact developed and completed as regards their application by the corresponding Regulations.

As an example we could quote our responsibility in the Salesian Family,<sup>27</sup> which obliges us to provide certain services, the latter being specified in the Regulations.<sup>28</sup>

Another example is our mission, substantially described in chap. IV of the Constitutions, but which requires further practical details; the latter are found in the Regulations, starting with the drawing up of the educative and pastoral plan.<sup>29</sup>

So too in the case of formation:<sup>30</sup> the concrete applications are indicated not only in the Regulations,<sup>31</sup> but also by the "Principles and Norms" of the "Ratio".

Finally we may recall the constitutional articles relating to the General Chapter<sup>32</sup> and the Provincial Chapter:<sup>33</sup> more detailed norms are needed in both cases, and these are found in the Regulations.<sup>34</sup>

A careful reading of the Commentary therefore will help us to understand and appreciate the extension, depth, usefulness, value, evangelical inspiration and concrete nature of the whole of our "Rule of life".

<sup>26</sup> cf. Commentary, Ital. edtn. p. 955

<sup>27</sup> C 5

<sup>28</sup> cf. R 36-41

<sup>29</sup> cf. R 4-35

<sup>30</sup> cf. C, ch. VIII and IX

<sup>31</sup> cf. R, ch. VIII and IX

<sup>32</sup> cf. C 146-153

<sup>33</sup> cf. C 170-174

<sup>34</sup> cf. R. 111-134; R 161-169

### Invitation to interior assimilation

The GC22 wanted the Commentary above all as a help to assimilation, i.e. to the transferring of the vital content of the Constitutions to the area of personal awareness and spiritual conviction.

The general Introduction recalls the four aspects of this process: knowledge, harmony, devotion and living practice.<sup>35</sup> The Constitutions are a "book of life": it is not their purpose to lead us into a convent, there to live as observant religious (we read in the Commentary); they call upon us to stand at Don Bosco's side as "missionaries of the young". This is the fundamental commitment of our salesian profession, lived and further developed all through our life. To achieve this objective we must make of the Commentary a book of study and of prayerful reflection. These are two complementary conditions for its profitable use: study leads to a deep understanding in the realm of conscience of the content to be lived, and prayerful reflection fosters their internal assimilation as convictions and spiritual choices.

Both study and prayerful reflection of this kind is necessary both personally by the individual confrere, and as a communal practice by means of a suitable programme.

*Every confrere* should consider the Commentary as a valuable gift which the Congregation makes to him personally. It will serve him for a better understanding of his salesian profession, and for growth in it:

- study, following various basic themes (obtainable if necessary from the analytical index to the Constitutions), will increase in him the

<sup>35</sup> cf. Commentary, Ital. edtn. p. 28-29

awareness and enthusiasm for his plan of baptismal life;

- and prayerful reflection will lead him to discover better the sense in which the Constitutions are the “living testimony” of Don Bosco, and why they are for him, the Salesian, the “way that leads to Love”.

*Every community* too is invited to profit by the riches contained in this volume, especially at times of retreat or in penitential seasons:

- study, carried out in common with the help of a competent leader, will deepen in the confreres the gospel significance of their lives as missionaries of the young, and intensify their awareness of an important and very much up-to-date ecclesial charism;
- and prayerful reflection, accompanied perhaps by appropriate celebrations of the Word, will lead all the members to feel the depth and validity of the penetrating declaration of Don Rua (who was called the “living Rule”): “the Constitutions, emanating from the fatherly heart of Don Bosco and approved by the Church, will be your guide, your defence in every danger, in every doubt and difficulty. They are for us the book of life, the hope of salvation, the core of the Gospel, the way of perfection, the key of paradise, the pact of our covenant with God”.<sup>36</sup>

### **A valid “aid” for fostering hope**

After the providential turning point of Vatican II, the Rector Major with his council were given the task of preparing for the Congregation some aids which would be particularly useful in this pe-

<sup>36</sup> Letter to Provincials and Rectors on “The observance of the Constitutions and Regulations”, 1 Dec. 1909; in “Letters of Don Rua”, Turin 1965, p. 498-499

riod of profound transformation: the "Ratio", the "Criteria and norms for salesian vocation discernment", the Commentary or "Guide to the Constitutions", the Book of Government made up of the manual "The Salesian Rector" (of which the revised edition is at the press), the manual "The Salesian Provincial" and that for the "The Provincial Secretary" (soon to be published), the "Proprium" for the liturgical celebration of salesian feasts and commemorations with also the rite of our religious profession (in an advanced stage of preparation); the manual containing the "common nucleus" for our communal life of prayer following the indication of art. 77 of the Regulations (also close to publication), and various other guidelines offered at the right moment by our various Departments.

All these form a collection of valid aids, prepared with competence and sacrifice; their purpose is to help in the process of applying the conciliar renewal in our own Congregation. It is not easy to find other religious institutes which have available at the present time such a wealth of valuable accessories which are both practical and methodically based on spiritual acumen.

Quite a number of others are envious of them and ask for copies. It would indeed be strange if we ourselves did not value and exploit them. The coming celebrations of 1988, now getting closer, should prompt us to make constant and intelligent use of them. In this way we shall be able to give back to our communities that charismatic freshness that belongs to Don Bosco's evangelical plan, which is an essential characteristic of our identity, and which the local Churches expect with such great hope from the presence of salesians for the benefit of the young and the working classes.

Among these aids the Commentary has a special place, because it introduces us to the "basic charter" of our vocation. If it is used well it will greatly increase our hope, because it will lead us to understand the significance, breadth and depth of the fundamental option we made at our salesian profession, and will help us to apply it daily in our lives, revitalizing the mystical impulse of "*da mihi animas*" and its ascetical counterpart of "work and temperance". It will enlighten and accompany us in that "fidelity to the commitment made at our religious profession" which "is a response which we continually renew to the special Covenant that the Lord has made with us".<sup>37</sup>

<sup>37</sup> C 195

### **The beginning of an improved ecclesial and Marian outlook**

We have sometimes been accused of being too closed in our own works, with a kind of inward-looking mentality that puts the emphasis on an *esprit de corps* which smacks of a private chapel rather than the universal Church. We take note of the fact without arguing about it; it was to some extent a mentality common to religious institutes in general, and also in a different sense to the diocesan clergy.

The renewal provoked by Vatican II asks us to take a more authentic view of our identity. The Commentary, as we suggested earlier when speaking of the ecclesial criterion, explains repeatedly how "the salesian vocation places us at the heart of the Church and puts us entirely at the service of her mission"; by our witness and our activities "we contribute to the building up of the Church as the



Body of Christ, so that also through us she may appear to the world as the 'universal sacrament of salvation'".<sup>38</sup>

<sup>38</sup> C 6

It is very important that we reactivate and bring up to date the charismatic dimension of our vocation, so that all may see that we are in truth a gift "for the whole People of God"<sup>39</sup> and that we are really and constantly renewing "the desire to work with the Church".<sup>39</sup>

<sup>39</sup> C 192

<sup>40</sup> C 7; cf. 35, 42, 47, 48, 57

In this sense what is said in art. 1 of the Constitutions about the charismatic origin of the work of our Founder must sound a deep chord in us; in fact, "from this active presence of the Holy Spirit we draw strength for our fidelity and support for our hope".<sup>41</sup>

<sup>41</sup> C 1

And then the ecclesial perspective of our charisma is personalized and rendered more specifically discernible by the direct intervention of Mary, which was felt permanently by Don Bosco and which, as a grateful son, he recognized and proclaimed: «The Blessed Virgin is our foundress. She will also be our support».<sup>42</sup>

<sup>42</sup> BM VII, 197; cf. C 1, 8, 20, 34, 92

The Council has taught us to link Mary more and more with the Church, and the Church with Mary. The awareness too of her diligent and constant presence as Mother of the Church and Help of Christians prompts us to count with ever greater trust on the "grace of consecration",<sup>43</sup> which ensures for us both the power of the Holy Spirit and simultaneously the motherly care of Mary, so that we may faithfully fulfil with their help all that by their gift we have joyfully promised.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>43</sup> C 195

<sup>44</sup> cf. prayer, C p. 7

The Commentary offers abundant elements for reflection on the ecclesial and Marian perspective of our Constitutions.

Dear confreres, we have available a very valid collection of aids for realizing in the Holy Spirit and in fidelity to Don Bosco the great metamorphosis of Vatican II, so as to enter actively as Salesians into the third millennium of christianity. In particular the Commentary on the Constitutions is offered to us as light and stimulus for growth in our vocational identity. Let us treasure it so as to make really effective at the present day our salesian profession which is "for the poor and the little ones a pledge of hope"<sup>45</sup> and "the most precious gift we can offer to the young".<sup>46</sup>

<sup>45</sup> C 196<sup>46</sup> C 25

May Mary Help of Christians assist us and intercede on our behalf so that, remaining always with Don Bosco, we may follow to the end our "way that leads to Love".

I wish all of you a new year of growth in salesian witness and in apostolic fruitfulness in preparation for the centenary celebrations of 1988.

Let us together ask daily for the light, courage and apostolic creativity which the Holy Spirit gives uninterruptedly to the Church, and in her to those who bear his charismata.

Affectionately in Don Bosco,

*Don F. Viganò*

## 2. GUIDELINES AND POLICIES

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### 2.1 PASTORAL WORK FOR VOCATIONS

Fr Juan E. VECCHI

*Councillor for Youth Pastoral Work*

#### **A serious obligation**

Every year we count the number of young people entering the novitiate. In them we see the most valuable results of our pastoral work, a sign that "the Lord loves the Congregation, wants to see it vibrant for the good of the Church and never ceases to enrich it with new apostolic energy" (C 22). Every vocation is a gift on the part of God and of the young person who puts himself at the service of salesian life and apostolic activity (cf. C 22).

We welcome him with gratitude and wonder, knowing that we have not deserved the gift. It would be a paltry attitude to bewail the lack of vocations, or to lay the blame for it on someone of those who share our pastoral work, when the number of candidates does not come up to our expectations.

The Congregation is aware of the vocations problem. What the GC21 said in 1978 seems equally true today: "We must admit that there have never been so many studies, researches and workshops on the vocation apostolate as in recent years. We must acknowledge likewise that there has been a growth of consciousness and dedication in this regard" (GC21, 108). Every province and every region have programmed and carried out all kinds of initiatives: vocation groups and camps, welcoming communities, vocation days, centres for youth guidance, etc.

The numerical results do not seem on a par everywhere with the work that is done, but this is not the only indication of the intensity and quality of the work done in the field of vocations. Laborious periods of seed-sowing and patient research have produced

results only years later. This is now becoming clear as regards vocations in the Church and in the Congregation. Study of the new entrants, new methods in guiding and following candidates, the preparation of new initiatives aimed at making young people aware of the different kinds of vocation that exist and their openness to them have led to experiments which are only now giving rise to a practice which is more thorough and well-founded.

A serious and constantly revised theological consideration has not been lacking either. Pedagogical and pastoral indications abound as regards criteria, phases, factors, settings and conditioning elements. In recent years too there has been an exchange of experiences on the part of teams from dioceses and religious institutes, with gratifying results.

There is no point in going back over all this. As far as the Congregation is concerned the doctrinal synthesis and practical suggestions put forward by the GC21 are still valid (GC21, 106-119), as also are the guidelines given in the Department's "OUTLINES FOR A PROVINCIAL VOCATION PLAN" (Rome, September 1981), which was called for by the same General Chapter. These and other documents of the local Churches, which deal in an organic manner with theological principles and pastoral criteria, can be used as a fundamental frame of reference for the development of our own activity in this field.

It may be helpful on the other hand to recall some points which have emerged from the experience of recent years. After the drawing up of educative projects, after reflecting on the structures in which we work (schools, oratories or youth centres, parishes), after the relaunching of group activity, after so much insistence on the educative community and the formation of lay people, we now want to intensify our work for vocations as part of our preparations for the centenary celebrations.

### **Work for vocations in the overall youth pastoral work**

Pastoral work for vocations should be strictly connected with youth pastoral work in general, and should form a dynamic part of

it. This was indicated by the GC21 (cf. n. 106) and endorsed by the document of the Church's 2nd International Congress on vocations: "Pastoral work for youth and for vocations are complementary. The latter finds in the former its necessary room for activity. Youth pastoral work becomes complete and efficacious when it includes the vocational dimension" (n. 42).

This criterion is fully confirmed by what has happened in practice. Every vocation is born in the soil of faith and develops to the extent in which it is given life through spiritual formation. Any attempts to separate pastoral and vocational aspects have proved to be short-lived, especially in culturally complex environments. For this reason the Congregation wanted them combined in our structures and the Constitutions and Regulations include them in the one educative and pastoral project (cf. C 28, 37).

It follows that for us the natural places to work for vocations are those where we carry out our other work for youth. From the very beginnings of education to the faith, those vocational motives should be present which foster attitudes which enable youngsters to read the signs of God and respond to them with generosity.

Youth pastoral work which did not contain in itself and in every phase of its development a vocational thrust would be failing in its objective. In fact all faith experience is a response to a call leading to practical life choices in the ecclesial community and in the world.

Vocational guidance without a previous foundation in faith and constant reference to it, is reduced to so many mere techniques, devices for catching candidates, motivations whose flaws and inconsistencies are soon shown up. That is why art. 37 of the Constitution describes vocational guidance as "the crown of all our educational and pastoral activity".

Seen in this light, vocation pastoral work is a service to youth. God gives to each one of them a personal call, and each must make his individual response. Hence the three levels at which a valid intervention can be made: the general guidance offered to every youngster who is making his pilgrimage of faith in our environments; the following up, with suitable initiatives, of those who show

signs of a priestly or religious vocation, or as a committed layman; and a special care of those who want to follow a salesian vocation.

The three levels are not successive nor separated from one another; they sustain and serve each other. It does not help to separate them, so as to take short cuts which can provide a quick solution to our worries about numbers. The linkage between them implies the need for many and different initiatives for presenting the different vocations, and helping the individual as he moves towards a mature decision. It is especially important to make sure that the ordinary means of pastoral work: catechesis, celebrations, personal contact etc., are imbued with vocational stimuli.

### **Community involvement**

The active involvement of all the local communities in every single province is an indispensable condition for achieving the desired results. To delegate to a particular individual or to a structure the solving of the vocational problems of the whole province proves more and more inadequate every day, not only as regards numerical results but also in respect of our pastoral service to the young as we have already explained it. For this reason the GC21 recommended: "More than persons delegated to perform certain actions they (animators and delegates) should be channels of communication supplying new ideas and information to the various communities" (n. 114).

Wherever there is a salesian community, there are the conditions for passing on God's call. The time has gone when there were certain fruitful fields (the family, parish, rural areas) where a single worker could reap a rich harvest of vocations. In their place there is now the witness, the direct experience of the young, the environment and spiritual assistance which, through a slow and gradual maturing process, lead to a development of attitudes and the ability to respond.

In the Church at the present day there are dioceses and religious institutes which have made the vocational drive their primary objec-

tive, suspending all other initiatives if necessary in order to bring every local community into a harmonious acceptance of their shared responsibility and to train them to carry out effective vocational work.

This is the line our Constitutions lay down for us when in art. 37 they assert that "the family atmosphere of welcome and of faith, created by the witness of a community which gives of itself with joy, is the most efficacious setting for the discovery and guidance of vocations" (C 37).

The community commitment can be manifested in various ways. We shall dwell on four of them.

The first is that of including in the community's own plan of action the vocational guidance of all the youngsters, and the special care of those who show signs of a vocation. It is sincerely to be hoped that this would not be the last point in the plan, made up of improvised initiatives fitted into odd bits of time that may be left over from other things, and whose success depends more on good luck than good management.

The growth of a desire for self-donation in an individual is the result of a lot of small and imperceptible previous happenings which have helped it to emerge: contacts, messages, models, hints thrown out in celebrations, suggestions for points to think about. To leave the whole business to a single function or experience, even though it be an intense one, and leave aside the value of the daily educative contribution, is to compromise the final result, and may indeed betray the deepest objectives of vocational guidance.

A second manifestation is the special intention given by the Rector to this aspect, both in his work of animation of the educative community and in his personal role as guide of the young people.

Many are the tasks that fall to the Rector, and his direct involvement in the christian formation of the pupils may risk being relegated to second place. And yet this is one of the characteristic traits of the salesian Rector, so evident in those Rectors who grew up under Don Bosco's own guidance, that of being the friend and formation guide of the youngsters. It is a task that he cannot delegate com-

pletely to others, and one that requires competence, dedication and time. Don Bosco's assertion should be kept in mind: "The Rector should be entirely dedicated to his pupils, and not take on commitments which may keep him away from his office". Don Bosco kept up his weekly conferences to the boys of the higher classes and was their ordinary confessor until the last years of his life, so as to enlighten them on problems they would meet in the future (cf. MB XVIII, 258). He is a good example to us!

A third manifestation of the community commitment is its welcoming attitude. Recently some of our communities, in common with those of other congregations, have offered themselves as places where young people wanting to know something deeper and more directly about religious life can go to gain experience of it and try it out. The results have proved positive to the extent that the community succeeded in inserting them into its own rhythm of gospel brotherhood, prayer and apostolic work.

In the welcoming and following up of such visitors the presence in the community of young religious is of great value. They are closer to the rising generations and their sensitivities, sharing their tastes and aspirations, and appear as more congenial models. Communication is easier among people who have grown up in the same kind of conditions. Conversation about the deeper reasons for a choice of life become almost inevitable, and the response becomes the more penetrating when it is given by a friend in a friendly atmosphere. Sharing the same activities helps to a better grasp of the characteristics of the kind of life that is being experienced together.

Finally, while a community is welcoming, witnessing and offering experience, it is also telling its own story. The presentation of the Founder's charism and the affectionate link with the origins are the determining factor in the birth of some vocations. So is information on the present commitments of the Congregation, especially those of greater difficulty and greater significance. We recall how Don Bosco made the departure of the first missionaries an intense moment lived by the whole house. The approach of 1988 is for us a golden opportunity and a stimulus for acquainting young people with the out-



standing story of our Father and of the spiritual Family to which he gave rise.

The local communities are therefore indispensable in all vocation work. We must continue in our efforts to make them a favourable setting, a place of welcome, an eloquent sign and place of fulfilment of the salesian vocation.

### **Attention to youth**

After recalling the indispensable role of each community, we must now take a look at the "field" where vocations are arising at the present day.

The 17-24 age-group seems rich in possibilities. The choice of a state of life has in fact been moved back because of the lengthened period of adolescence and the complexities of preparation for life. In this age-group the elements of previous meaningful experiences begin to coalesce into stable decisions. This means that we must pay much more attention to this group than we have done in the past, without lessening our commitment among boys and adolescents.

This "young adult" group tests our ability to carry out an effective educative dialogue and communicate the Good News of the Gospel. The promotion of vocations calls on our part for a more clear-cut personal witness and more committed faith. General statistics of the Church with this age-group are encouraging, and this is true also in the Congregation, especially in contexts where are verified the youth phenomena already referred to.

For the higher classes in schools therefore, deeper periods for reflection should be offered, together with proposals for cultural, social and apostolic commitment. In youth centres and parishes the serious and systematic spiritual care of the animators and collaborators should aim not only at the efficient fulfilment of their practical occupation, but especially at helping them to grow in generosity and service.

Our presence among volunteers, young cooperators, university

students, and young people associated with the salesian youth movement, offer us plenty of opportunities, if we are awake to them, of opening up new human and ecclesial horizons and of discovering availabilities and aptitudes.

### **Experiences of particular importance**

There is no place for improvisation in the process of maturing of a vocation in a subject. Every step, even the small ones, in human and christian growth has a certain importance. As in every work of education, pastoral work for vocations requires attention to the whole and to each separate phase: docility, an almost spontaneous inclination to a certain kind of life, the awareness of God's call through various signs, and the will to follow a plan of life modelled on that call.

But there are some experiences which reveal more clearly and immediately the characteristics of an existence given to God and to men and enable its joy to be felt. They therefore lead more directly to definitive motivations.

One of them is certainly *prayer*. Prayer meetings are multiplying everywhere, and not only among adults but among younger people as well. They involve times, places, groups and "schools" in which the participants open themselves to the voice of the Spirit who prays in us: attitudes are developed, various ways of praying are learned, and the Word of God is approached. Young people prize them as times of interior unity and of development of the sense of life in the light of God.

The Congregation is responding to this, as witness the improvement in prayer in our educational environments, the retreat houses for young people, the many initiatives involving sanctuaries, public churches and groups.

These experiences provide a positive sign of vocational fertility. In some cases the intention and the theme of the periodic meetings are expressly vocational. From prayer there is a natural transition to a dialogue of discernment and to spiritual direction. And so these

centres of prayer have become also centres of vocational guidance, which work in harmony with other pastoral workers and projects.

Other significant experiences are *service and the apostolate*. These, if one can get beyond mere activism and get them based on motives of faith and charity, open young people to an awareness of the immense needs of the world and the Church, and make them feel the force of the message of the Gospel.

The animation of environments and activities, cultural and social commitment, volunteer work at home or abroad, collaboration in missionary activity, are all opportunities and stimuli for a reflection on the use of one's life in accordance with God's plans.

Pedagogical and spiritual assistance is indispensable if such activities are to become a real process of growth in Christ, and not be limited to the expenditure of energy in the work itself.

*Group experience* is also important. It includes both of the preceding, and brings them together in a communal context of sharing, including the sharing of responsibility.

Statistics confirm what is already observable by the naked eye concerning the incidence of group experience on the birth of vocations, but it is not a matter of just any group; it must be of the kind where there is a sense of belonging, an ecclesial awareness rooted in faith and apostolic tendencies. In the life of such groups, in fact, various factors in vocational maturing converge.

To discuss and make judgements together on ideas and reality create a habit of watchfulness and discernment which helps in making a response.

Apostolic activity is a training ground for self-donation and for coming to know the needs of one's fellow men.

Personal contact with the different vocations: priestly, lay, religious, parents youth workers, help in understanding the various ways of living the Church's mission.

We may add too an atmosphere for reflection about one's own future, and the possibility of contact with educators who, while discovering one's dispositions and inclinations, help to give concrete expression to ideals.

In this way every committed group becomes "vocational" in a general sense, because it cultivates its membership and active participation in the life of the Church; but in a specific sense too because it provides opportunities for clarification and growth for vocations to a life of special consecration.

### **The call itself**

For some young people the call comes through the presence of "models" who carry with them a gospel sense and quality. Others are quite certain that they would never have understood the call at all if they had not been given an explicit invitation to commit themselves in the priesthood or religious life. This provides an illustration of the two fundamental aspects of our vocational mediation: to bear witness, and to call.

Zeal and joy, as expressed in consecrated life are certainly of themselves an invitation. The sole "seeking of vocations", without fostering our own religious life and testimony, and the capacity of the community for welcoming candidates, only provokes crises of credibility.

But at the present day disinformation about the priesthood, the religious life and other forms of commitment, like the lay vocation or the consecrated secular state, militates against the interpretation of the objective value of our witness. Many generous dispositions are left unexpressed because no one showed those concerned, in a convincing manner, where and how they could be used and brought to fruition.

Omitting to say that personal word which invites an individual to think and so provides a call, means failing in one of the aspects of our ministry. Not everything begins through silent testimony. Christ teaches us to give the call. In the case of the apostles, in addition to the fascination of his own word and person he addressed to each one an individual call.

We read in a document of the Italian Church: "The presentation of different christian vocations in their variety and what they

call for, can break a dangerous vicious circle which is building up in our communities. Many young people are tempted to remain apart from the christian community because they find it slow-moving and silent in the face of some human problems to which they themselves are very sensitive; on the other hand the incisive nature of the christian presence in certain sectors is diminished by the lack of young people who know how to incarnate gospel values in choices for the good of mankind; from this follows the connection between the progressive loss of credibility of the christian community and the progressive evisceration in the youth sector. This vicious circle can be broken by the evangelical courage with which some young people, enlightened and sustained by adults, will commit themselves in sure vocational options" (Seminari e vocazioni sacerdotali, CEI 1979).

We believe that God continually "calls" young people to serve him (cf. C 28), and that in this work he asks for our collaboration, and our ability to mediate in doing the calling.

### **The salesian plan**

At the present day there are two realities which challenge our plan for vocations and bring new energy to our vocational work: *the lay dimension of the Congregation and the Salesian Family*.

The first implies that we must be able to present the salesian vocation adequately in its two dimensions, priestly and lay. The Rector Major emphasized the urgency of this in his closing address to the GC22: "The cry of alarm heard more than once in our assembly about the falling off in the number of our lay confreres prompts us to consider practical ways of carrying out the promotion of this particular vocation" (GC22, 81).

The subjective conditions in which a brother's vocation is born and matures are different from those of other vocations to particular commitments. At the foundation there is always the generous acceptance of the presence of God, the willingness to give one's own life in the service of the Kingdom and of one's fellow men. If

these fundamental dispositions are lacking the difficulties arise which explain the dearth of results.

But it is also true that for the adequate presentation of a kind of religious who combines the nature of a religious with that of a lay person, more than a little care and creativity is required.

A practical directive of the GC22 recommends: "Let the provinces in their pastoral work for vocations be aware of the urgency of stepping up initiatives in the field of the lay salesian vocation" (GC22, 9). The phrase "stepping up" is an invitation not to let ourselves be ruled by habit, but to find new ways of putting young people in touch in a direct and convincing way with this salesian figure.

Many provinces are already responding. They have included a brother in their vocation teams as suggested by the GC21 (cf. GC21, 114): in camps, groups, aspirantates etc. brothers are able to provide candidates for the salesian life with suitable information about the characteristics and possibilities of the lay salesian vocation, and provide for the welcoming acceptance of those who wish to embrace this vocation.

It will be more decisive and fundamental if confreres and communities analyze more deeply and live the originality of the salesian mission, which is capable at the present day of being expressed in ways which exploit the lay dimension.

The salesian plan extends beyond the Congregation: it concerns all the salesian Family. Pastoral work for vocations, if properly understood, puts before young people the full range of callings in which the ministerial richness of the Church is expressed; and at the same time it is careful to present salesian life in its multiple forms of expression: male and female, consecrated and lay.

The present work of the salesians in parishes, groups, youth centres and schools, where boys and girls share activities and programmes of formation, provides an opportunity for making known the beginnings, development and present possibilities of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, the other religious institutes which are members of the Salesian Family, and of the Don Bosco Volunteers. Every youngster engaged in an educational process in our environments should be well informed about the As-

sociation of Salesian Cooperators and the Past Pupils, and be invited to join them as settings in which a lay vocation can be realized.

These few indications are not meant to be exhaustive guidelines, but rather a reminder. We are the bearers of the salesian charisma. Through what we do and say, God wishes to reach others whom he has already prepared interiorly to accept an invitation.

### **Conclusion: prayer and initiative**

From what has been said it will be evident that vocational work must be carried out in many ways and with a variety of initiatives within a unified and consistent plan for youth pastoral work. It is useless to expect a satisfactory result from a single initiative, from a single presence, from a single member. Each one by his efforts will contribute his own small part, and when these are all gathered together they become something big.

Commitment to vocational work is not something to be added to more important tasks, as something accessory for the purpose of providing a replacement of personnel. It is one of the objectives of our mission (cf. C 6, 28). We must therefore expand and multiply our initiatives.

We must work with boys, but also with young men; we must be able not only to carry out our plan in our own settings, but also carry it beyond them through our ministry, through vocational centres, and by means of social communication.

It will be well not to underestimate the value of large structures for welcoming candidates, renewing such places in style and manner of operation, but at the same time dispose all communities for the insertion of young candidates.

But among all our efforts, priority should be given to prayer. At the beginning of these pages emphasis was laid on the fact that every vocation has the character of a gift: a gift of God to the young person concerned and to the Congregation; and a gift of the young man who freely chooses to put his life at the service of the salesian mission. There is an interplay here between two freedoms and in

the last analysis we are powerless to convince the young person that he should give a positive response to God's call.

The document of the 2nd World Congress on Vocations says: "Prayer is not just one means among others for receiving the gift of a divine call, but is the means par excellence, the means given by our Lord himself. Prayer covers not only the giving of new calls, but embraces all the needs of the Church in respect of consecrated life: the quality of vocations, their variety according to the gifts of the Spirit, apostolic fruitfulness, and perseverance" (n. 33).

Let us translate this indication into our daily communal practice; let prayer accompany and sustain our initiatives of service to the young and our concern for the increase of workers in the harvest of the Lord.



## **2.2 THE SALESIAN RECTOR, A MINISTRY FOR THE ANIMATION AND GOVERNING OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY**

Fr Paolo NATALI  
*Councillor for Formation*

The new edition of the Italian edition of the volume "THE SALESIAN RECTOR, A MINISTRY FOR THE ANIMATION AND GOVERNING OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY".

When the first edition was published a few years ago it was well received both in the Congregation and outside it, and was used for reading, meditation and consultation at personal level and in various meetings of rectors and confreres. The second edition, which is now published, has been revised in accordance with the new Code of Canon Law, the definitive text of the Constitutions and Regulations, and suggestions and contributions which have reached the Generalate.

Granted the substantial continuity with the previous edition, we limit ourselves to pointing out the spiritual setting in which it should be read, its primary purpose, some fundamental objectives, and a few innovations.

### **Setting and purpose**

The "Rector's Manual" was asked for by the GC21 in the context of a reflection on "The animation of the community for evangelization. The role of the rector" (GC21, 61d). It is significant that its revision comes at the end of the postconciliar process of the reformulation of the salesian charisma, which has its primary and most authoritative expression in the text of the Constitutions. To renew and bring up to date the quality and efficacy of the rector's ser-

vice is an act of obedience to the salesian spirit, a spirit which is renewed, and is also a manifestation of that methodical and practical approach which is indispensable for living the salesian experience in an authentic and renewed form.

In this sense the Rector Major in the Presentation of the book recalls that it is meant to be a personal aid, sufficiently complete without pretending to be a complete treatise, genuinely evangelical, permeated by the salesian spirit, and planned in view of our mission. Its use will enable the rector to live his ministry in fidelity to Don Bosco.

### **The fundamental objectives**

In the perspective of the primary purpose and the rector's obligations, we may point out the more immediate objectives, which aim at clarifying the parameters of the ministry of authority (cf. GC21, 61d) and providing authentic motivation for rectors in their service.

The text, in fact, is designed:

- to bring back the original and traditional figure of the salesian rector as regards service to the community in its pastoral mission;
- to help rectors to understand, esteem and live the spirit of their ministry, by acquiring the appropriate virtues and aptitudes, and using modern means and methods;
- to prompt the confreres to sincere collaboration and ensure the growth of shared responsibility and the understanding of their respective roles (cf. GC21, 48).

As is evident, the Manual does not just deal in a general way with the superior in the local community, but highlights the value and original nature of salesian authority as found in its primitive inspiration, and now set in the context of the ecclesial and cultural sensitivities of the present day.

There are two important points about this originality. One concerns content: authority for Don Bosco meant fatherliness (GC21, 587). According to Don Rinaldi, "he was never anything else but a father" (ASC 56, 1931, p. 940). The other refers to practice and style: the rector governs by animating and animates by governing (GC21 61). This style, indicated throughout the Manual, is presented as an ideal to aim at, and as a grace which never fails to work when the salesians are faithful. Don Albera said something similar: "In every Congregation there is a collection of ideas and aims, a way of thinking and acting, which creates its distinctive spirit" (Manual p. 21).

The treatment then becomes broader and follows the history of the rector's role, noting its significant permanent features and its adaptation to circumstances right down to our own times, in which it has been called by Vatican II to "be in harmony with present-day situations, with the needs of the apostolate, with the requirements of culture and with social and economic circumstances" (PC 3).

The following of the text becomes a kind of spiritual meditation which leads to deeper understanding and to the development of greater fidelity, to a greater interior assimilation of the values needed for nourishment, to the use of updated means and methods, so that the rector, as Don Albera says, "being placed on a lampstand ... may shed the light of virtue and knowledge all around" (Manual p. 13).

### **The innovations**

There are several innovations in this second edition. Some of them concern the form of presentation: the language has frequently been simplified and rendered more readily intelligible; the contents have been arranged in a more logical order; repetitions and redundancies have been eliminated, and valuable sections which were missing have now been inserted. Other innovations regard content and arrangement: we may quote as examples, in harmony with the new text of the Constitutions and Regulations, the items which refer

to the pastoral and educative project, to social communication and to the Salesian Family; another example is the redrafting of the whole of chapter 7, made necessary by the new Code of Canon Law.

To keep things short we shall refer to just three important points, even though they relate to different aspects.

a. *Service of the salesian identity*

A comparison of the general index of the new and previous editions will immediately reveal a difference in the ordering of the chapters which deal with animation and government. Formerly the order was: prayer, community life, practice of the counsels, pastoral work; in the second edition this is changed to: pastoral work, community life, practice of the counsels, dialogue with the Lord. Also evident is the change in the ordering of the evangelical counsels among themselves, and the location and structure of the part dedicated to "dialogue with the Lord".

These innovations are the visible expression of the fidelity of the Manual to the text of the Constitutions, and still more to the salesian identity condensed in that text. The consistency between the Manual and the formulation of the plan of life of the Salesians of Don Bosco is intended to give prominence to the principle and criterion which must characterize the function of the rector: he is called carry out the ministry of authority first and foremost as the servant of the salesian charismatic identity, in accordance with the style and characteristics that properly belong to it. He is sent "to animate the community so that it may live faithful to the Constitutions and grow in unity" (C 55).

b. *The total perspective in animation and government*

The first task of the rector, say the Constitutions, is to animate the community (C 55), to coordinate the efforts of all (*ibid.*), to see to it "that it may accomplish its apostolic plan in unity and fidelity" (C 44).

Without detracting in any way from the pastoral service to be shown to the individual confreres (the rector, in fact, "has a direct

responsibility toward each confrere" (C 55), the Manual emphasizes more than did the first edition the function of the rector in respect of the community as a whole (it will be useful to consider how Chap. 6 has been arranged). The rector, profiting by the sensitivity and broad outlook stemming from his experience of the priestly ministry, assumes the overall responsibility for everything; he is sensitive and attentive to the pastoral and educative project, to the style of evangelical and community life, to the atmosphere of prayer, to the community's openness and to salesian and ecclesial communion. It is not a question of the rector doing everything himself, but of the rector animating and governing everything, albeit in different ways according to the circumstances.

*c. Living his own specific ministry with commitment and realism in the diversity of situations.*

The task which the Manual assigns to every rector is certainly both stimulating and demanding. It should not be thought of however as a fine but discouraging presentation of a theoretical ideal detached from life, nor should the great variety be forgotten of the situations in which he may be called upon to work.

Pedagogical sensitivity is able to unite a sense of realism (cf. C 19) with the demands of quality, unity of criteria (and sometimes of means) and situational variety. This can be seen more clearly, for example, in chap. 3 where there is reference to the multiplicity of expressions of the local community, and of what is required of the rector who must aim at being "a credible model without idealizations".

## Conclusion

This Manual, revised in complete harmony with the Constitutions, will accompany rectors and also other animators and superiors in carrying out their ministry; it offers useful material for conferences, community meetings, periods of reflection and verification on the principal aspects of salesian life.

It opens with "Don Bosco's confidential memoranda to rectors", of which it is intended to be to some extent a prolongation. We trust that if it be welcomed with an open heart it will enable every rector to feel beside him and among the confreres the living presence of Don Bosco, as a friend, brother and father. If the Manual serves even to a small extent to revive this presence and fatherliness, it will have achieved its purpose.

## 4. ACTIVITIES OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL

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### 4.1 Chronicle of the Rector Major

In the period 2 - 24 September the Rector Major visited the confreres of Colombia, Ecuador and Brazil, accompanied by the respective Regional Councillors, Fr Velasco for the first two countries and Fr Techera for the third. In Brazil, instead of moving continually from one place to another, he stayed for some days at San Paolo, Manaus and Recife, where the confreres came together for meetings that had been arranged in advance.

In the morning of 4 October, at Turin, he presented and commented on the new Regulations of apostolic life of the Cooperators to the SDB and FMA delegates of the Cooperators of Italy, and in the afternoon he distributed the Regulations to many Cooperators of Piedmont who filled the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians at Valdocco.

The following day he inaugurated at Rebaudengo the new and promising organization "VIS" for the International Volunteer Movement, and in the afternoon presided at the moving ceremony of the bestowal of the missionary crucifix on the departing missionaries.

He was in North Belgium and Holland from 23 to 26 of the same

month for various fraternal gatherings, culminating in the presentation of the Dutch edition of the new Constitutions.

On 1 November he left Rome once again, this time for Asia where, accompanied by the Regional Councillor Fr Thomas Panakezham, he presided over two "team visits" (at New Delhi for the provinces of India, and at Hua Hin in Thailand for those of the Far East); he also visited the missions of North-East India (Dimapur) and of Southern Thailand (Surat Thani); finally he went to Tokyo to take part in the celebrations for the 60th anniversary of the arrival of the first salesians in Japan.

He returned to Rome on 1 December for the plenary session of the General Council. This he interrupted on December 20 and 21, to participate together with the members of the Council in the annual Feast of the Rector Major, which took place this time in the Vice-Province of Sardinia.

### 4.2 Activities of the Councillors

#### The Vicar General

Immediately after the former plenary session of the Council, Fr

Scrive left for Madagascar where from 26 July to 4 August he preached the annual retreat to the confreres of the five missionary communities who come from the Southern, Roman, Sicilian, East Venice provinces of Italy and the Vice-province of Sardinia. He was able to take the opportunity for a personal talk with the individual confreres and take part in communal meetings for the evaluation and coordination of the salesian work in the island.

From 13 to 16 September he was in the Province of Ljubljana. After participating in the celebrations for the golden jubilee of the arrival of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians in Yugoslavia, he met the confreres in formation and held meetings with the provincial council and with groups of confreres in the more central communities.

The first two weeks of October found him in the Pacific and Caribbean Region, where at Lima he preached a retreat to the provincials of the Region. Afterwards, from the 7th to the 10th he presided over a meeting of the Chilean rectors at Santiago, followed by a similar meeting with the rectors of the Antilles at Santo Domingo from October 11 to 14.

In November on the 14th and 15th, with the Economer General, he had a meeting in Turin with the provincials of Piedmont, the two

FMA provincials of Turin, and the rectors of the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians and of the Sanctuary of Colle Don Bosco, to study various problems concerning the centenary celebrations of 1988. In particular the tasks and responsibilities of the "Don Bosco 88 Secretariate" were defined, with Fr Piero Scalabrini at its head (cf. Documents and News Items, n. 5.2 in this issue).

On 16 November Fr Scrive was at La Spezia for a meeting with the local "DB88" Commissions of the SDB and FMA houses of Liguria and Tuscany. The initiatives of the different communities were studied and some guidelines for their coordination and realization were agreed on. On the following day he had a further meeting at Florence-Scandicci, where the preparation, significance and celebration of the centenary were studied by all the rectors of the Genoa province.

Finally, on 23 November in the Don Bosco Institute of the FMA at Padoa, he took part in a meeting of the "DB88" diocesan commissions of the SDB and FMA provinces of Venice. Three themes were proposed for discussions, first by the commissions separately and then in a combined meeting: the ecclesial dimension, the youth educational process, and the involvement of the laity - all with the reference to the "DB88" celebrations.



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

Fr Paolo Natali was at El Plantio (Madrid) from 5 to 10 August to preside over a meeting of formation personnel and teachers (some 60 in all) from the Region of Spain and Portugal. The discussions centred on an introduction to the new edition of the Ratio so as to understand it more easily and note the changes from the first edition, especially as regards the methodology of formation; the meeting then went on to consider other formation themes of common interest.

In September he worked with his collaborators in finalizing the new edition of the Rector's Manual, which has now gone to press.

From 1 to 6 October he visited the Studentate of Theology at Cremisan, which is affiliated to the UPS, for inauguration of the first year of the new study-curriculum. On this occasion he gave an address on "The dialogue of salvation. Cultural aspects and formative requirements", with reference to the objectives to which the Centre itself has given priority: i.e. biblical and ecumenical themes.

Between 12 October and 25 November Fr Natali visited the provinces of Japan, the Philippines, China, Thailand, and the vice-province of Korea. He had meetings with provincial councils, provincial formation commissions, and members of

formation communities. Marked progress was noted in the formation sector, remaining problems were discussed and guidelines given for possible solutions.

In the Philippines he took part in a meeting with some 60 Brothers from all parts of the Asian Region except India. He gave two addresses on the "Identity and formation of the salesian brother according to the Ratio/1985, and as it appears in the first provincial directories which have reached the Generalate". He also presented, still in the Philippines, the "Criteria and norms for salesian vocation discernment" to a meeting of the provincial council, formation personnel and teachers, rectors and confessors.

After some modifications to his planned programme caused by unforeseen circumstances, he took part in the "team visit" at Hua Hin and also met the Thai provincial formation commission and the formation personnel of Sampran to examine together the formation section of the provincial directory.

The ordinary obligations of his service, especially those with regard to the UPS, were carried out during the periods he was in the Department at Rome.

In the meantime his collaborators:

- took part in the giving of the updating and renewal course for

those engaged in youth pastoral work, and lectured on various themes;

- took part in various meetings dealing with formation topics;

- completed the work for the printing of the Rector's Manual and "Aid n. 1"

This "Aid", "The time of Don Bosco", and the others which will follow, are offered as ancillary material for the ordinary salesian subjects which form part of the study curriculum laid down by the FSDB. They will consist of brief anthologies of texts, taken from publications quoted in the Ratio, to which reference can be made for further study, or for more complete and organic presentations.

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

After the conclusion of the last plenary session Fr Juan Vecchi went to Calcutta for the third Seminar on "Salesian pedagogy and youth emargination", a report on which will be found elsewhere in this edition of the Acts (cf. Documents and New Items, n. 5.1).

He then preached the annual retreat to 96 confreres of the Barcelona Province (Spain). During August and September he was in the Vice-province of Sardinia, and in the Provinces of East Venice, Milan

and Genoa to present the pastoral plan for the "salesian presence in the local neighbourhood". He did the same for the Central, Subalpine and Novara provinces in meetings in Turin on 21 and 22 September. At Verona, through the initiative of the province and of the Pedagogical and Teaching Centre, the presentation was made available to all the Catholic schools of the city.

Meanwhile the pamphlet on this theme has been published in Spanish and Portuguese translations.

From 23 September to 2 October, Fr Vecchi visited the provinces of Poland, accompanied by Fr Augustyn Dziedziel. At Lutomiersk he had two days of study with the provincials and provincial councils on the pastoral animation of the province and on the pastoral commitments of the present six-year period. Subsequently he developed analogous themes for all the Polish rectors, 80 in number, gathered at the same place (Lutomiersk). After that it was the turn of the provincial commissions for pastoral work, together with some animators at local level from the four provinces. With these a reflection was made on the characteristics of the salesian pastoral presence, on new problems which the human and religious formation of the young raise for pastors, on the dynamics of animation and on the need to work towards a uniform mentality and practice through re-

flection and the systematic circulation of guidelines among confreres and communities.

After these visits, which were the main purpose of his visit, Fr Vecchi visited the novitiates at Czerwinsk and Kopiec and the studentates at Wozniakow, Lad and Cracow, speaking in each case to the young salesian about prospects and problems in the field of youth pastoral work. At Cracow he presided at the Eucharist for the inauguration of the scholastic year and had a meeting with the teaching staff. A visit to the technical school at Oswiecim, now renewed and flourishing, brought his visit to Poland to a close.

Still in October, he was at Vienna for the inauguration of the new provincial house and the attached youth centre which is animated by the Salesian and Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.

A meeting for the study of the man-woman relationship with a view to our presence in coeducational structures took Fr Vecchi to Spain. This meeting, which was proposed and organized by the FMA, brought together in an effort at deeper analysis of the question the seven SDB and three FMA provincials of Spain, with the members of their respective councils. Also included were the delegates for youth pastoral work.

From 17 to 23 November he ac-

companied the Rector Major for the "team visit" to the provinces of the Far East at Hua Hin, Thailand.

Meanwhile in Rome the 20th ongoing formation course was begun, intended for provincial delegates for youth pastoral work and animators of group activities. Those taking the course number 43, which is a greater number than was foreseen and exhausts the available space, with the result that some requests for enrolment had to be refused. The greater number of the participants are from Latin America (27), followed by the Asia Region (5), Central Europe (4), Spain and Portugal (4), Australia (2) and Italy (1).

Finally, in September the Department sent to provincials, delegates and pastoral teams or commissions the "Dossier PG1", in which are presented some initiatives, experiences and news of the pastoral sector which illustrate the response the Congregation is trying to give to the complex youth situation of the present day. In the introduction the desire is expressed to send out the Dossier periodically and its purpose is stated: to start up communication between the Department and provincial and national delegates for youth pastoral work, and between the Department and study centres on pastoral questions; to foster the exchange of significant experiences and material useful to workers in

the pastoral field; to bring to the knowledge of the provinces projects which illustrate how stated and agreed pastoral guidelines have been put into practice; and to promote collaboration between salesians working in the pastoral sector.

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

In the period August-November 1986, Fr Cuevas made visits to various Regions and was present at numerous animation meetings.

Among the principal activities were the following:

At Madrid (24-27 July) Fr Cuevas had a meeting with the national and provincial delegates of the Cooperators for a deeper study of the new Cooperators' Regulations, promulgated on 24 May; arrangements were also made for the publication of the Spanish edition and for the programming of the formation of lay people working in the salesian mission.

He then left for Argentina where he took part in a meeting at Regional level of all salesians working in the social communication sector. Several provincials were present together with some sixty others, made up of Salesians, Daughters of Mary Help of Christians and lay collaborators. The meeting revealed the need for better qualification in

this sector through increased initiatives and a new mentality, so as to make a greater impact through the means of social communication in the fields of education and pastoral work for the young and the poor.

Among those taking part in this study seminar were also representatives of the Catholic International Office for the Cinema (OCIC) and the Union of Catholic Broadcasters for the Latin-American continent (UNDA-AL).

This was followed by various meetings with different groups of the Salesian Family at Buenos Aires, especially with those in administrative positions: one with the provincial and national delegates of the Cooperators for the study of the new Regulations and for future programming; one with the salesian delegates for the Past Pupils, and another with the leaders of the Past Pupils at national and regional level, for the purpose of studying a renewal of commitment and the organization and linkage of their work with that of the salesians. The provincials of Argentina too were present at all these meetings.

In Ecuador Fr Cuevas held two meetings of particular importance:

a) A study-seminar with confreres who work in social communication in the provinces of the Pacific-Caribbean Region (13-16 August). Here too, taking part in the study, discussions and formulation of pro-

posals, were some Daughters of Mary Help of Christians and Cooperators who were specialists in this field. For the development of some themes certain professors from the Research and Study Centre for Communication in Latin America (CIESPAL, Quito) lent their assistance. The participants were more than fifty, and included publishers, those responsible for TV and radio transmissions, as well as provincial delegates and the directors of the Salesian Bulletins of the Region.

b) The Latin-America Congress of the Past Pupils (Quito, 13-17 September). The presence and participation of the Rector Major at the inaugural session gave an authoritative note to the presentation to the Past Pupils of an urgent programme of interventions, especially in the fields of education and social communication, so as to spread the salesian values they had learned at the school of Don Bosco. The presence of 250 delegates from all the provinces of Latin-America, the quality of debate, and the completing of the Confederal presidency, all contributed to the successful outcome of the Congress, as a relaunching of the Past Pupils' activity with the support of the salesians.

In August Fr Cuevas also visited the Colombian provinces. At Bogota he met with the provincial council to help in the acquiring of a deeper knowledge of the Family and Com-

munication sectors at provincial level; he was present too at a meeting of coordinators of the Cooperators and Past Pupils, salesian communicators, Daughters of Mary Help of Christians and Daughters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary.

At Medellin he addressed a big assembly of Cooperators, and explained the content of their new Regulations. A meeting with the Past Pupils in the same city served to encourage the newly elected leaders to make use of the new structures to give renewed dynamism to their National Federation.

In the communications sector at both Bogota and Medellin he was able to observe the commitment of the salesians to the carrying out of initiatives with other groups of the Salesian Family; in this connection efforts are being made to set up a salesian publishing house which will provide support for youth activities, for the educative and pastoral work of the Church, and in particular for members of the Salesian Family.

In visits to the Province of Central America, Fr Cuevas met with groups of Cooperators in Panama, El Salvador and Guatemala to explain their new Regulations. He also attended a meeting of the provincial council, visited Mgr Aparicio and the the Mother House of the Daughters of the Divine Saviour at San Vicente; he also visited a very

successful work for the technical training of young workers, which is run by a group of salesian past pupils at San Salvador.

In Guatemala he met all the formation personnel to impress on them what the Rule has to say about formation with respect to the Salesian Family and social communication. Before leaving the city of Guatemala he also met with the leaders of the National Federation of the Past Pupils.

In Mexico between 30 August and 5 September he visited the two provincial centres at Guadalajara and Mexico City, for animation meetings with the provincial councils, salesian communicators, delegates for the Cooperators and leaders of the Past Pupils. At Coacalco he joined the Salesians and Cooperators for a day of study on salesian themes.

At Guadalajara he met numerous representatives of groups and institutes, and visited the new provincial centre of the Cooperators. This and other apostolic initiatives have brought about a big increase in the number of Cooperator centres, especially in North Mexico. In the two provinces he also met with groups of Don Bosco Volunteers who are experiencing a significant growth in vocations.

From Mexico Fr Cuevas went on to the United States. At Los Angeles

he had a meeting with salesian delegates for the Cooperators to study the new Regulations.

At New Rochelle he met with the delegates for the various groups of the Salesian Family to study the situation of each group and make decisions about lines of action for the renewal of the mentality and activity of the confreres, and for a relaunching of the life of the Church in the USA, especially through the Cooperators.

The situation of the Past Pupils was also analysed; valid experiments are in progress for bringing them together, and for the commitment of the Federations in the salesian mission.

There has been a notable increase in the field of social communication in this province: valid services exist at international level, and new technologies have been successfully applied for internal communication in the province; they have been of great use to the provincial centre.

Fr Cuevas was in Venezuela for a short visit from 10 to 12 September. The time available allowed only for a meeting with the provincial council of the Cooperators, meetings with the "Damas salesianas" to promote initiatives and provide clarifications, and exchanges with the "Friends of Don Bosco" and with the national leaders of the Past Pupils. The work of animation of the different groups of the Salesian Fa-

mily is well integrated and coordinated by those responsible at provincial level. The visit ended with an evening celebration with many representatives of all groups of the Salesian Family.

The visit of animation to Latin-America ended at Santiago (Chile) with a meeting with the provincial council of the salesians and a further meeting at national level with the coordinators of the Cooperators. The study meeting was unfortunately interrupted by the police because of the state of siege which was afflicting the country at that time. Other meetings were possible with the salesians, especially those in formation, and with the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.

On 24 September Fr Cuevas returned to Rome.

Between 25 September and 1 October Fr Cuevas accompanied Fr Vecchi in various initiatives organized by the Rector Major's Delegate for Poland and the Polish provincials. The main one was a meeting at Lutomiersk with all the rectors to study the development of the groups of the Salesian Family and to acquire a deeper knowledge of the new Regulations of the Cooperators. Afterwards he had meetings at Lodz with all the provincial delegates for the Cooperators and the Cooperators' provincial council;

and finally a day was dedicated to the study of the communications sector with all the salesians of the different provinces involved in this sector.

On 3 October Fr Cuevas was at Turin for a workshop of the provincial delegates for the Cooperators. The meeting coincided with the visit of the Rector Major to Valdocco, which served to prompt the salesians to a greater understanding of the animation of the Cooperators. At the same time there took place the presentation of the new Regulations to numerous groups of Cooperators from the Piedmont area (Subalpine, Central and Novara provinces). The experience was a moving one and gave renewed strength to the many Cooperators who in different ways contribute to making the spirit of Don Bosco felt at the present day.

From 2 to 25 November Fr Cuevas took part in the "team visits" planned for the Asian Region at Delhi (India) and Hua Hin (Thailand). Between the two he was able to visit the Philippines and Hong Kong to maintain contacts of animation and programming with the provincial delegates for the Family and for communication. He took the opportunity to become acquainted with some of the centres which the Church maintains in these countries, like Radio Veritas (Ma-

nila) and the centres for communication and catechesis at Hong Kong and Bangkok.

A last item that could be mentioned in this long series of journeys was the International Book Fair at Frankfurt and the biennial European exhibition of religious books at Tournai, both of them significant occasions for study and for cultural and pastoral manifestations. Fr Cuevas was accompanied by several salesians in charge of publications. Their experiences emphasized for them the importance that attaches to the printed word which is expanding in every continent, and the need there is for religious and catechetical publications which take account of the social, cultural and ecclesial changes which are taking place everywhere; religious books, in fact, present fertile possibilities for fostering the dialogue between faith and men's searchings today. Appropriately chosen books can contribute to cultural dynamism and give added weight to the christian message among youth and people in general, with careful attention to the languages and norms through which men of every culture and religion want to be understood.

Don Cuevas' last activity during the period was with the communicators and delegates for the Salesian Family of the Munich province (Germany) at the end of November.

On 1 December he returned to Rome.

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

During August Fr Luc Van Looy made the Extraordinary Visitation of part of the province of Manaus (Brazil), sharing the work with the regional Councillor, Fr Carlos Techera.

After spending the first part of September in Rome for office work, he spent the period from 18 September to 26 October in carrying out in the name of the Rector Major the Extraordinary Visitation of the Dutch province, with an interruption for a few days at the beginning of October for the animation of the period of preparation of the departing missionaries who received the missionary crucifix at Turin on 5 October.

Between 23 and 26 October he accompanied the Rector Major to Holland and North Belgium for the presentation of the new Constitutions and for the animation of the Salesian Family in those provinces.

He passed the month of November in Asia: after spending the first week in India for the "team visit", he was able to spend six days with the confreres in Burma. In the third week he took part in the second "team visit" in Thailand for the provinces of the Far East, after which he visited the confreres in Sri Lanka.



He returned to Rome on 29 November.

#### **The Economist General**

In the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians at Turin on 17 August, Fr Omero Paron presided, as representative of the Rector Major, at the funeral of Fr Alvin Fedrigotti, the former Prefect General of the Congregation.

From 13 September to 5 October he made a journey to various non-European countries:

- to New Rochelle (USA) on 13 and 14 September;

- to the western province of the USA (15-20 September), visiting the works in San Francisco and Los Angeles;

- to Guatemala (21-25 September) for a meeting with the provincial economists of the Pacific-Caribbean Region at the studentate of theology; Fr Velasco, the Regional Councillor, was present at this meeting;

- to Miami, (USA) (26-27 September);

- to the province of Venezuela (28 September - 5 October), where he met the local economists and made contact with the principal works of the province.

After his return to Europe, he was present on 11 October at Vienna (Austria) for the inauguration of the new provincial house and of the youth centre "Don Bosco Haus" in Sankt Veitgasse.

Each month he goes to Turin (Valdocco) and to Colle Don Bosco to inspect the work in progress in preparation for the "DB88" centenary, including the arrangements for the Missionary Museum.

#### **The Councillor for the Atlantic Region of Latin America**

Fr Carlos Techera left Rome on 26 July with the Councillor General for the Missions to take part in the episcopal ordination of Mgr Walter de Azevedo at San Paolo on the following day. On the 28th, jointly with Fr Luc Van Looy, he began the Extraordinary Visitation of the province of Manaus, Brazil.

From 12 to 15 August he was at Belo Horizonte to participate in the third meeting of the Salesian Family of Brazil on the theme of "menor carente"; immediately afterwards he was present at a meeting of all the SDB and FMA provincials, and finally he presided over a meeting of the Brazilian provincial conference.

On 4 September he took part in another meeting of SDB and FMA provincials, this time of the Plata area, held at Cabana (Cordoba); this

was followed by a meeting of the provincial conference of the same area.

Subsequently he gave conferences at the course of ongoing formation for the salesians at Ramos Mejia, and at that for the FMA at Buenos Aires.

From 16 to 24 September he accompanied the Rector Major in his visit to the province of Brazil, with meetings at San Paolo, Manaus and Recife.

On 25 and 26 September he visited the interprovincial novitiate at La Plata and on the 28th began the Extraordinary Visitation of the province of Rosario in Argentina, which occupied him until the second part of November.

During this time too he organized the visit of the Secretary General to the five provinces of the Plata conference, and his meeting with the provincial secretaries of Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay.

He returned to Rome on 22 November.

**The Councillor for the Pacific-Caribbean Region of Latin America**

Fr Velasco left Rome on 1 August, and after a brief stop in Spain went on to El Salvador, where he met the provincial council to study the situation after the appointment of the former provincial as Bishop of Son-

sonate. On 16 August he represented the Rector Major at the episcopal ordination of the new Bishop. The ceremony took place in the city's public stadium and was presided over by Cardinal Miguel Obando SDB, accompanied by the Apostolic Nuncio and twelve other Bishops, seven of them salesians.

After these engagements Fr Velasco began the Extraordinary Visitation of the province of St Peter Claver, Bogota, in Colombia.

The visitation had to be interrupted briefly while the Regional Councillor accompanied the Rector Major on his visit of animation to the provinces of Bogota, Medellin and Quito. At Quito he took part in the opening ceremonies of the Latin-American Congress of Past Pupils. Afterwards he made a rapid visit to Nicaragua and was present also at the meeting of provincial economists at Guatemala with the Economist General, Fr Omero Paron.

Subsequently he went to Chosica in Peru to take part with the provincials of the Region in the retreat preached by the Vicar General (Fr Scrivo) and Fr Pennati. At the end of this the annual meeting of the provincials took place.

Returning to Bogota he then continued the Visitation which ended only on 30 November.

On 6 December Fr Velasco returned to Rome.

### The Regional Councillor for Asia

Fr Thomas Panakezham left Rome at the beginning of August and went first to Nairobi to begin the Extraordinary Visitation of the province of Bombay, of which East Africa forms a provincial delegation. He was able to visit the three communities in Kenya (Nairobi, Knorr and Karen) followed by the four communities in Tanzania (Dar-Es-Salaam, Iringa, Mafinga and Dodoma). He was not able to enter Sudan because of the political situation, and consequently was unable to meet the confreres in the three communities of Juba, Tonj and Wau. He was particularly struck by the great development evident in all our foundations, thanks to the tireless and enthusiastic work carried out by the comparatively small number of confreres through love of Don Bosco. The same is true of the two foundations of the Central province at Embu and Siakago, also in Kenya. It can be truly said that Don Bosco is at home in East Africa, and is esteemed by the hierarchy, the youth and the people in general.

After 16 days spent in Africa, Fr Panakezham went on to India where he continued the Visitation of the Bombay province (17 August to 14 October). The province has several communities in Bombay, the capital of the State of Maharashtra,

and in other places in the same large State, but it also extends to Goa, to Gujarat and to Madhya Pradesh (the western part of the Indian sub-continent), with a population of nearly 150 million. The Visitor observed with satisfaction the self-sacrificing work carried out in the missions, the great concern for poor boys, and the attention given to the initial formation of the young salesians.

After completing the Visitation, Fr Panakezham went on 15 October to the Philippines to set in motion the consultation for the appointment of the new provincial; he was able to visit all the communities of the province with the exception of those in Papua New Guinea and Timor. He was also able to make a rapid visit to Hong Kong.

On 3 November at New Delhi the "team visit" of the Rector Major and several members of the General Council began. All the provincials and members of their Councils were present..

From 9 to 16 November Fr Panakezham accompanied the Rector Major on his visit to the province of Dimapur in North-West India, with a brief stop at Gauhati and another at Calcutta where the Rector Major visited the house for the post-novitiate training of coadjutors from all six of the Indian provinces.

On 17 November the second "team visit" began, this time for the

provinces of the Far East (Philippines, Japan, Hong Kong, Korea and Thailand). It took place at Hua Hin, a salesian retreat house, distant some 200 km from Bangkok.

Finally between 23 November and 30 November, Fr Panakezham accompanied the Rector Major first in a visit to the missions of the Thai province, and in particular to the Diocese of Surat Thani, and then to Japan for the celebrations of the 60th anniversary of the arrival of the salesians in that country.

On 1 December he returned to Rome with the Rector Major.

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

From 3 August to the middle of October Fr McPake carried out the Extraordinary Visitation of the Australian province of "Mary Help of Christians".

As he passed through the various communities in this vast continent and in Western Samoa, he observed with great joy the excellent salesian spirit which animates the confreres and the members of the other groups of the Salesian Family. He was impressed by the vigour and creativity with which our work is sustained and developed, despite the comparatively small number of confreres in the province. The latter are strengthened by a good number of very active Cooperators in the

schools and parishes, in the youth clubs and in the missionary work in Samoa.

It gave the Visitor great pleasure to see how much the salesians are esteemed by Bishops and Archbishops in the Australian dioceses and by the Cardinal in Samoa.

At the end of the Visitation Fr McPake went on to the USA, where he made a rapid visit of animation to both provinces, presenting the new edition of the "Ratio" in various communities and in meetings of rectors and parish priests.

In the three countries he visited he could not fail to note the striking differences between the local cultures, but was also able to observe how well the salesian charism adapts to any culture, and how much happiness it brings to the young people of every country. He had concrete evidence that although our charism, like the Gospel itself, is not proper to any one country, it is perfectly at home in all of them!

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

Before continuing the Extraordinary Visitation of the Paris province (begun in April and interrupted for the summer plenary session of the General Council), Fr Domenico Britschu went to Maribor in Yugoslavia to take part in the "Internation-

tional discussion on salesian life", which this time concentrated its reflections on the theme of "concepts of religion among people of the lower classes".

After making contact with various confreres in Slovenia Fr Britschu went as Visitor to the salesian houses of Sion and Morges, in Switzerland, and then continued his visitation of the salesian communities in Paris and those scattered about the northern part of France: Normandy, Brittany, Angio, Champagne and French-speaking Flanders.

At the end of October in Morocco the Visitor had the opportunity to make numerous and fervent ejaculations. To the insistent early-morning invitations of the muezzin, he responded giving thanks to the name of the merciful and compassionate God for the excellent work done down there by his Prophets, the friends of "Dun Buscu", as they call him.

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

Hardly had Fr Rico returned to his Region than he had to take part in the funeral of the provincial of Bilbao, Fr Hilary Santos, who died on 1 August. Immediately afterwards he had a meeting with the provincial council of the province.

He was then present at the pro-

fessions of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians at Seville (5 August), and after that at the professions of the salesians at Sanlucar la Mayor where the novices of the provinces of Seville, Cordoba, Barcellona and Valencia were finishing their novitiate. On 16 August fifteen novices made their first profession.

From 5 to 9 August he took part with Fr Paolo Natali in the meeting of Spanish and Portuguese formation personnel for the study of the new "Ratio" and other problems.

On 24 August he began the Extraordinary Visitation of the province of Valencia, with a meeting of the provincial council. Immediately afterwards he left for the visitation of the foundations of this province in Mali (at Touba, Sikasso and Bamako) and took the opportunity also to visit the salesian works in Senegal (Tambacounda, Saint Louis and Thies), which belong to the province of Leon.

Returning to Spain he continued the visitation of that part of the province of Valencia, with two interruptions. One was for a meeting of the Iberian provincial conference (29-30 October) and the other for a study seminar on coeducation prepared by the Spanish FMA (31 October - 1 November) to commemorate the centenary of the arrival of the first Salesian Sisters in Spain.

He returned to the Generalate in Rome on 1 December.

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

Immediately the summer session of the General Council was over, Fr Luigi Bosoni met with the provincials of Italy, gathered at Rome from 25 to 27 July, and took part in the course for new rectors of the region (25 July to 4 August). He was present at Mogliano Veneto for the funeral of the vice-provincial of that province on 5 August, and presided at the Mass for the perpetual professions of the FMA at Rome (Via Marghera) on the following day.

On 19 August during the confreres' retreat he presented and installed Fr Carlo Filippini as the new provincial of the Novara province, and took the opportunity to visit some of our houses for summer vacations in the Valle d'Aosta.

On 30 August he accompanied the Rector Major to Bologna for the celebration with his novitiate companions of their 50th anniversary of profession.

At Rocca di Papa he took part in the meeting of the vocational animators of the Region (31 August - 1 September), and in the meeting at Pordenone of the National Council of the Past Pupils (7 September).

On 8 September at Turin he received the profession of the novices, and on the following day attended the funeral of the rector of Cumiana.

He then left for Sardinia where

he was engaged in the Visitation of the vice-province from 9 September to 3 October.

On 5 October he was back once again in Bologna for the first Mass of a newly ordained priest and then went on to Turin for the missionaries' departure ceremony, and for the inauguration of the International Volunteer Movement (VIS) and the meeting of the Mission Sector.

He presided at Caselette over a meeting of the Italian provincial conference (6-7 October), and on the following day began the Extraordinary Visitation of the Roman province, which occupied him until (and beyond) the beginning of the winter plenary session of the General Council.

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

At the beginning of August Fr Dziedziel went to Poland to preside over the installation of two new provincials: Fr Adam Smigielski in the Wroclaw province and Fr Stanislaus Skopiac in that of Pila.

He then left for Africa to carry out the Extraordinary Visitation of the six salesian missions in Zambia, entrusted to the Polish provinces, where 24 confreres are working. During this period he also preached the retreat to the salesians and salesian sisters in Zambia.

Following on this he went to

Uganda, accompanied by Fr Thomas Thayil, provincial delegate for Kenya, Sudan and Tanzania, on a factfinding visit to see the present situation, the needs of the local Church, and the possibilities for further missionary foundations by confreres from Poland.

Returning to Poland in the last week of September, Fr Dziedziel accompanied Fr Juan Vecchi and Fr

Sergio Cuevas of the General Council on their visit of animation.

He was then present at the provincial chapter of the province of Warsaw, and presided over a meeting of the provincial conference of Poland.

After a final visit to the various formation communities, Fr Dziedziel returned to Rome at the end of November.

## 5. DOCUMENTS AND NEWS ITEMS

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### 5.1 Our commitment for boys and young people who are "at risk".

*The following contribution is from the Councillor for Youth Pastoral Work, Fr Juan Vecchi, and relates to the Seminars promoted by the Department concerning the commitment of the Salesians for boys and young people "at risk", with some practical conclusions for our pastoral and educative mission.*

#### **The seminars**

In the month of August the last of three seminars on "Salesian pedagogy and the emargination of youth" took place at Calcutta. On the two preceding ones (at Benediktbeuern and Cachoeira do Campo) sufficient information has already been given through the pages of ANS (February and March 1986) and the Acts of the General Council (nn. 317, 318). The seminar at Calcutta covered the geographical area of Asia and Australia. 40 confreres and two FMA took part, representing ten provinces.

After a review of the forms of poverty and emargination most widespread in the Asia continent, the task of the salesian Congrega-

tion and the criteria for evaluating the initiatives undertaken were clarified.

Twenty presentations were made. They were classified for purposes of deeper analysis according to those to whom they were directed, and the kind of work done: refuges for boys at risk (rag-pickers, drop-outs, street-vendors, youngsters with physical difficulties); different forms of training for work that poor boys could cope with; remedial education for delinquents; promotion of rural communities; other forms of need to which the Congregation has responded in particular circumstances (lepers, young prisoners, school for blind youngsters, etc.).

The seminar was privileged to have a visit from Mother Teresa of Calcutta, who addressed a message to the participants and remained to converse with them for more than an hour. As on the previous occasions a concluding memorandum was drawn up to summarize impressions, important points, proposals and commitments.

At the end of the three seminars, which were organized in an identical manner so as to collect and make more widely known the initiatives in progress, we now have to evaluate the results and the per-



spectives that have been opened up, from the overall standpoint of the salesian mission.

#### **The motives and objectives**

It must be emphasized in the first place that the exercise was prompted by art. 26 of the Constitutions: "The Lord made clear to Don Bosco that he was to direct his mission first and foremost to the young, especially to those who are poorer... With Don Bosco we reaffirm our preference for the young who are 'poor, abandoned and in danger', those who have greater need of love and evangelization, and we work especially in areas of greatest poverty".

The application of this article, which finds abundant endorsement in the Constitutions themselves (cf. art. 2, 6, 24, 26, 31, 33, 41, 42), is rendered concrete in the general Regulations as follows: "Keeping in mind its own social milieu, every province should study the situation and condition of youth and the common people, and periodically verify that its works and activities are providing an effective service for young people who are poor: in the first place for youngsters who because of economic, social and cultural poverty, sometimes of an extreme nature, have no possibility of success in life; for those who are poor at an affective, moral and spiritual level, and for those who live

on the fringe of society and of the Church" (R 1).

It follows from this article that poverty is not to be measured by some generic standard, but according to the concrete manifestations that emerge in a particular context, where the possibilities in life for young people are exposed to grave risks.

The same point is repeated in a practical directive of the GC22, which asks the confreres for a special effort at realization in the present six-year period: "The General Chapter asks all salesians to 'return' to young people, to their world, their needs, their poverty... Let them make the courageous choice of going to the poorest among them, relocating our works if necessary in the places where poverty is greatest" (GC22, 6). "Provincials with their councils as also provincial chapters, when drawing up and periodically verifying their own plan, shall reassess their various works and prepare practical options with, if necessary, a relocation of our present centres of work among the young and the working class" (GC22, 7).

This practical directive was endorsed by the Rector Major in his closing address. Among the "frontiers" for our youth pastoral work in the next six years he indicated a "bolder presence among the poor". "The pastoral charity lived by Don

Bosco prompts us to go to the most needy of young people, to those in special danger, whether in the third world or in the consumer society". "To relaunch our presence in this preferential area of salesian educative activity we must give more consideration to the concrete situation of the young and needy in the countries where we are working" (GC22, 72).

Authoritative support for this commitment is given by the pastoral options of more than a few Churches. The Italian Church proposes "to begin from those in the worst situations who are the dramatic sign of the present crisis" (cf. "La Chiesa e le prospettive del Paese", 4). The Latin-American Churches have made "a preferential option for the young and the poor" (Puebla Document, 1134-1165). Some words of the Extraordinary Synod of Bishops reveal a similar movement in the universal Church: "After the second Vatican Council, the Church became more aware of its mission in the service of the poor, the oppressed and the outcasts. The true spirit of the Gospel is manifest in this preferential option for the poor, which however is not exclusive. Jesus Christ said that the poor were blessed (Mt 5,3; Lk 6,20) and for our sake himself chose to be poor (2 Cor 8,9)" (Synod Report, D 6). Among the various forms of poverty and oppression to which

the Synod subsequently refers, we should pay particular attention to those which are a challenge to our charism: those concerning youth, education and the poor.

Quotations could be multiplied indefinitely.

The seminars therefore are not an isolated initiative, either for us or for the Church. Rather they indicate a line of commitment which will be illustrated and sustained, as earlier were those relating to the world of work, to groups and group movements, and to the educational plan in its various practical structures (schools, oratories and youth centres, parishes).

The seminars were offered and carried out as an opportunity for dialogue and common appraisal between the Department and the provinces. The provincials were asked to indicate works of this kind at present existing in their own provinces. The experiences on which a report was asked for were chosen so as to avoid repetitions, to put due limits to the discussions and to restrict the number of those participating in them. The choice of those taking part was also left to the provinces. The relationship with the provinces was made further evident by the presence at the various meetings of members of the General Council, provincials, vice-provincials, delegates for youth pastoral work, as well as those directly invol-

ved in the initiatives themselves.

Within the different Regions, the seminars were prepared or followed up by local meetings (Italy, Spain, Brazil) organized by the respective provincial conferences, either directly or through the delegates for youth pastoral work.

The objectives of the meetings were thought out in the light of the mission entrusted to the provinces:

- to evaluate, document and make widely available the wealth of educative experience gathered by the Congregation in these fields;
- to attempt a critical assessment of the experiences, by comparison with other analogous initiatives and with the help of expert consultants;
- to make an effort at greater pedagogical efficiency, especially in those initiatives based on a first intuition which has not yet had time to mature;
- to work out possible plans for re-launching and development, identifying new fields for our work.

### Conclusions

What conclusions emerge from this complex operation of fact-finding and appraisal?

- In the first place the meetings have given prominence to *the dramatic character of many youth situations* that could easily be neglected, either because we have become

used to them or merely through ignorance: child labour, social and cultural outcasts, dependence which differs little from slavery, economic discrimination, typical deviations of advanced societies. The imbalance becomes the more dramatic when one looks at the number of youngsters trapped in some of these situations. In the face of the desire of these people for freedom, their sound resources, and the consequences of dragging out these negative conditions, it is extremely difficult to remain indifferent or to dodge the problem by saying there is nothing we can do.

- *The developments* in the work of the Congregations for needy youth over the past fifteen years are evident. Of the seventy initiatives studied in the three seminars the greater number (up to 90%) had been begun in the period between 1970 and 1985. They represent however the continuation of a commitment expressed by the Congregation throughout its earlier history in programmes to meet other forms of poverty and other educative criteria. Proof of this are works of which we are still proud as being signs of the efficacy of the preventive system. The same enthusiasm must lead us at the present day to confront the new form of poverty whose roots and consequences must be met by new means of analysis which suggest new kinds of intervention.

– The insertion of these initiatives in a *diversified ensemble of works* within a province marks us out as apostles and educators of the young, capable of understanding and dealing with every kind of educational situation in which they may be found: those in which can be applied a first and more general prevention, those in which we must be able to direct youngsters to greater commitments in christian life (groups, animators, vocations), and those in which (at least as a first step) we must use a pedagogy of rescue and support.

There is an interdependence and mutual enrichment between the structures and initiatives through which each province works. The risks present in an area must be known and taken into consideration in all educative programmes and interventions. Those who work more directly in the sectors of risk can help in their understanding and prevention, while receiving support and enlightenment from other works. It would be a mistake to oppose works to each other, to see in the growth of one kind of work the weakening of another, or simply to separate them. All should be considered in provincial communion as interdependent and mutually fruitifying.

– One of the facts most frequently emphasized was the need for a further and continual *pedagog-*

*ical qualification of these works*. In fact, if a work is to be truly educational it cannot be limited to a first sympathetically motivated approach, nor even to a first rapid intervention of support. It must aim, like all our other works, at forming good christians and upright citizens. Attention must therefore be given to the competence of those working in this sector, to the adequacy of the relevant structures and to the programmes of activities. It would hardly be a serious approach to adduce as a motive for not undertaking work of this that specifically qualified personnel is needed and at the same time make no plans to train them.

– There emerges too from the series of meetings the transforming force and the *applicability of the preventive system* in many of the situations studied. The Rector Major, in concluding the GC22, had already recalled that the concept of prevention should not be interpreted as limiting salvaging activities, but rather as a positive indication of valid attitudes and methods for meeting even the most difficult situations. “Don Bosco teaches us”, he said, “that the educative strength of the preventive system becomes evident also in its capacity for rescuing boys who have been abandoned but who still preserve some seeds of goodness, and for preventing further deterioration in those

who have already started on the downward slope" (GC22, 72).

– The value of *informal structures or initiatives* should be recognized, i.e. those which in style and content are adapted to the situation of those we are trying to help, and are tailored to their needs and educational possibilities. In some contexts the difficulty of inserting youngsters with extremely negative backgrounds into a formal system of education is extremely clear. The setting, programme and structures must be adapted to their requirements and resources. To some this may seem like pioneering and inconsistency, but it is in fact no different from what Don Bosco did when he had to adapt a whole system of education to his boys (evening schools, apprenticeships etc.). The Constitutions tell us in listing our works that in addition to the kinds that are well established, "we dedicate ourselves also to every other kind of work which has as its scope the salvation of the young" (C 42). It is up each province to overcome a merely spontaneous approach to youngsters of this kind and see to it that programmes are consistent, while remaining dynamic and capable of adaptation.

In some places the initiative in favour of these poorer lads begins as an extension of an already strongly based salesian work. This gives rise to the double dimension

that is indispensable to salesian pastoral work: a long-term educational programme for an appropriate preparation for life in the case of those who are sufficiently motivated, and an effort to reach in their own environment the others who are more exposed, with programmes adapted to an initial approach to them and to meet their immediate needs.

– The need was seen to avoid working with a criterion of meeting present requirements, abstracting from *the knowledge of the cause of poverty and the context* of the situations in which young people are at risk or rejected by society. It is impossible at the present day to separate three areas of intervention which are naturally linked together, independently of our desires: the educational, area which aims at helping people to get out of negative situations of risk and develop all their personal resources; the cultural area, which stimulates the human community to become conscious of the situation in which it is living, and to mature its attitudes and evaluations; and the political area, which is concerned with public structures and their channelling to the common good.

That we must combine the last two with our pastoral interventions is quite a different thing from ignoring them altogether. The presence in the seminar of confreres and sisters who are members of Church

or State organizations which are trying to solve youth problems, was of great help.

— Finally, an established fact and indication for the future is *the combined strength of these initiatives*. Some of them have become the focus of concerns deeply felt by the Church and in the neighbourhood, but to which few had the courage to make a response. Once a programme had been launched and was seen to be succeeding, volunteers, professional people, began to offer their collaboration and in many cases have adopted our own style and spirituality. Their initiatives display the characteristic traits of shared responsibility and management, a convergence of the public and private sectors, and interventions on various fronts.

#### **Practical indications**

From the survey that has been made, the subsequent exchange of ideas and the important points that have emerged, the following practical indications can be deduced.

1. Every province should fulfil what is prescribed in art. 1 of the General Regulations, already quoted in these pages. It should get to know the youth situation in its own territory. It should keep this knowledge up to date, and make it known among the confreres so that

all may understand the motives underlying certain preoccupations and the reasons for certain choices.

2. In programming the development of its work every province should provide for some initiatives that can give a response to the forms of poverty which most endanger the possibility of a dignified life for children and young adults.

3. When through the initiative of some confrère or competent organisms a province decides to take on one of these new presences, it should make the discernment spoken of in art. 44 of the Constitutions; it should give to the initiatives a guarantee of quality by providing personnel and helping in the drawing up of a concrete plan.

4. Continual communication should be maintained between these and the other works of the province, with mutual information and exchange of experiences (through meetings of rectors, encounters for animation and discussion, reports etc.). Provincial commissions for pastoral animation should include this point in their supporting and follow-up programmes.

5. Since communication between the provinces is indispensable for a proper development of these initiatives, a consultant body will be set up in the Department, composed of two groups: one of ample propor-

tions and the other more restricted. They will tackle the problem of training and be available to help the provinces in their study of the youth conditon.

6. For training the necessary personnel, the Salesian Pontifical University will prepare a course in social pedagogy. Its academic characteristics will depend on the respective authorities.

"From as far back as 1841 the priest John Bosco joined with other ecclesiastics to receive into appropriate dwelling places *the most abandoned boys* of the city of Turin". This was how in the historical introduction to the Constitutions (1858-1873) Don Bosco explained the beginnings of the Congregation. To this dedication to the outcasts he attributed the Lord's blessings on his work. This is something we must never forget! Our reflections as we approach 1988 must lead us to revive this and other dimensions which are so characteristic of our salesian mission.

## 5.2 DON BOSCO 88 Secretariate

While in every country and province the preparation in being intensified of initiatives in connection with the centenary of the death of Don Bosco, at the suggestion of the central Commission there has been

set up at Turin-Valdocco the "**DON BOSCO 88 Secretariate**", for a more efficacious preparation and celebration of the centenary, particularly in the places of the salesian origins.

The task of the Secretariate will be to coordinate the replies to the various requests and logistic requirements (informations, communications, accommodation, guide-services, programming, liturgies etc.). of the various groups coming from all over the world, and in connection with the central places themselves (Turin-Valdocco, Colle Don Bosco, Chieri).

The Secretariate is headed by Fr Piero SCALABRINO. reference may be made to him by Salesians and the various groups of the Salesian Family, for the programming and organization of initiatives involving our holy places.

The address is:

Fr Piero Scalabrino  
Via Maria Ausiliatrice, 32  
10152 - TORINO  
Italy  
Tel. (011) 52.12.326

## 5.3 Meeting of Provincial Secretaries.

From 17 to 19 November the provincial secretaries of Paraguay, Uruguay and the provinces of the Plata provincial conference had a meeting at Buenos Aires with the Secretary General.

The encounter was asked for by

the Rector Major as part of a series of meetings which are being organized for the animation of the provinces and for the fuller and more faithful application of the norms of our particular law, to preserve unity whilst fully respecting decentralization. Following the approval of the Constitutions by the Apostolic See, some aspects of our practical organization need verification and re-launching.

In this perspective the meeting at Buenos Aires concentrated on an analysis and discussion of some of the principal themes concerning the task of provincial secretaries and the service they give to the provinces and to the Congregation itself. The meeting dwelt particularly on the matter of "communication" within the provinces and the Centre, and on the important theme of the organization and documentation of provincial and local archives. Also discussed extensively were the juridical dispositions which accompany the life of the provincial and local communities.

This meeting in Argentina is intended to be the first of a series of meetings with provincial secretaries which are being planned in conjunction with the Regional Councillors. The Secretary General, who was able to observe at first hand the organization of provincial archives and the excellent work carried out in the service of the confreres, took

the opportunity to present a first draft of the contents of the Manual which is being prepared on the organizational and juridical aspects of our communities

#### **5.4 New Salesian Bishop.**

The Osservatore Romano of 30 Novembre 1986 carried the news of the appointment of our confrere Fr Louis Kébreau as Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Port-au-Prince, in Haiti.

Mgr Kébreau was born in Haiti, 8 November 1938. At the age of 20 he entered the salesian house Jarabacoa as an expert in agricultural science, followed by his novitiate at Moca and his first profession on 16 August 1963.

After theology at the theological faculty of the University of Sherbrooke in Canada, he was ordained priest on 11 May 1974.

Called almost immediately to undertake the responsibility of rector, he directed the house of Petion-Ville for some nine years. In 1981 he was appointed provincial delegate for the republic of Haiti and at the same time a member of the provincial council.

Mgr Kébreau comes to the Episcopate with a rich experience gained in contact with the poor youngsters and the social problems of his country.



## 5.5 Our dead confreres (1986 - 4th list)

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

NAME	PLACE	DATE	AGE	PROV.
L ALONSO Evello	Santo Domingo	10-12-86	58	ANT
P ANTHRAPER John	Alwaye	26-10-86	72	INK
P BARROS Samuel Correla	Fortaleza	25-09-86	61	BRE
P BEREK Gyula	Esztergom	18-10-86	73	UNG
P BONDRANO Giulio	Borgo S. Martino	14-11-86	82	INE
L BOTTONI Francesco	Roma	05-11-86	74	ICE
L CALAON Alfredo	Monteortone	12-12-86	76	IVO
P CAMMARANO Pietro	Frascati	30-10-86	84	IRO
P CONRAT Gregorio	Ramos Mejía	14-11-86	71	ABA
P COOLEN Jean	Lubumbashi	17-11-86	78	AFC
P COSTA Isauro	Montevideo	02-02-86	83	URU
P DUNAND Paul	Hyerès	15-10-86	80	FLY
P FLORES LÓPEZ Rafael	Mérida	10-11-86	85	SSE
L FORSTMAYER Lorenz	Eisenstadt	07-06-86	88	AUS
L GEERKENS Jean	Mufulira (Zambia)	10-10-86	79	AFC
P GIOACHIN Luigi	Sondrio	22-09-86	79	ILE
P GIORDANO Antonio	Torino	04-11-86	82	INE
L GOTA IBAÑEZ Antonio	Barcelona	14-11-86	89	SBA
L GUILLÉN GUILLÉN José	Judibana	17-08-86	77	VEN
P HELLIN Omer	Huy	22-10-86	62	BES
P HERNANDEZ ANDRÉS José	Sevilla	04-11-86	58	SSE
L HERNANDEZ MARTÍN Lorenzo	Madrid	28-10-86	88	SMA
P HORVATH Kálmán	Budaörs	25-09-86	74	UNG
L JEMAN Giovanni	Palermo	29-08-86	83	ISI
P JUGE REY Gerardo	Magdalena del Mar	13-09-86	77	PER
P KAMIŃSKI Nikołaj	Rumia	22-09-86	75	PLN
P KAVIN Jozsef	Pannonhalma	03-09-86	84	UNG
P KORNER Wilhelm	München	12-11-86	91	GEM
P LE CHARLES Jean	Reims	24-11-86	55	FPA
P LENART Bolesław	Kraków	08-11-86	79	PLS

NAME	PLACE	DATE	AGE	PROV.
<b>P LEWIŃSKI Jan</b>	Aleksandrow	10-12-86	55	PLN
<b>P LIOTTA Silvestre</b>	Palermo	12-08-86	71	ISI
<b>L MARONGIU Giuseppe</b>	Macao	24-12-86	76	POR
<b>P MARTIN Julius</b>	Polur	02-10-86	69	INM
<b>P MASSARINO Luis</b>	Montevideo	25-12-86	63	URU
<b>L MEDAGLIA Pietro Francesco</b>	Brescia	02-11-86	75	ICE
<b>P MILETI Salvatore</b>	Palermo	02-11-86	70	ISI
<b>P MOLEÓN Adolfo</b>	Puerto Stroessner	28-11-86	73	PAR
<b>P NICHOLSON William</b>	Bolton	09-12-86	74	GBR
<b>P NICOLETTI Stefano</b>	Randazzo	20-10-86	69	ISI
<b>P PALLIKUNNATH Jose</b>	Trichur	29-11-86	42	ING
<b>P PANAROTTO Giovanni</b>	Cuiabá	13-11-86	78	BCG
<b>P PONZETTI Giulio</b>	Nazareth	10-11-86	78	MOR
<b>P PRANDINI Remo</b>	Helman	25-12-86	44	BOL
<b>P PÜTZ Gerhard</b>	Bonn	09-11-86	73	GEK
<b>P RAVASI Candido</b> <i>Fu Ispettore per 4 anni</i>	Caracas	15-12-86	78	VEN
<b>L RINCÓN Julio</b>	Ibagué	20-11-86	76	COM
<b>E RIVEROS Luis Carlos</b> <i>Fu per 4 anni Prefetto Apost. dell'Ariari (Colombia)</i>	Granada (Colombia)	27-09-86	51	
<b>P SÁNCHEZ VARGAS Rafael</b>	Guadalajara	18-09-86	77	MEG
<b>L SARUGA Joze</b>	Trstenik	31-10-86	69	JUL
<b>P SCHILLING Paul</b>	Kassel	04-10-86	77	GEK
<b>P SIUDA Florian</b>	Swiecie	06-08-86	65	PLN
<b>L SQUARCINA Giuseppe</b>	Ypacaraí	29-09-86	64	PAR
<b>P STRNISKO Tibor</b>	Brunswick	03-11-86	74	AUL
<b>P TALAVERA D. Marcelino</b>	Madrid	04-11-86	77	SMA
<b>L TONIOLO Pietro Pasquale</b>	Manaus	22-11-86	85	BMA
<b>P TRONECZEK Bronisław</b>	Slemien	09-11-86	74	PLS
<b>P TURINO Daniel</b>	Córdoba	28-08-86	62	ACO
<b>P VAN VIELE Albert</b>	Melun	16-02-86	67	FPA
<b>P UBEZZI Bartolomeo</b>	Damasco (Siria)	13-10-86	78	MOR
<b>P VILLA Giovanni</b>	Sondrio	26-11-86	79	ILE
<b>P VIRZÌ Calogero</b>	Randazzo	21-11-86	76	ISI
<b>P ZANONI Guido</b>	Lugagnano d'Arda (PC)	21-12-86	74	ILE
<b>P ZAPPALÀ Francesco</b>	San Gregorio (CT)	23-09-86	75	ISI
<b>P ZAVATTARO Giuseppe</b> <i>Fu Ispettore per 6 anni</i>	Torino	11-12-86	85	ISU







