



# acts

of the general council

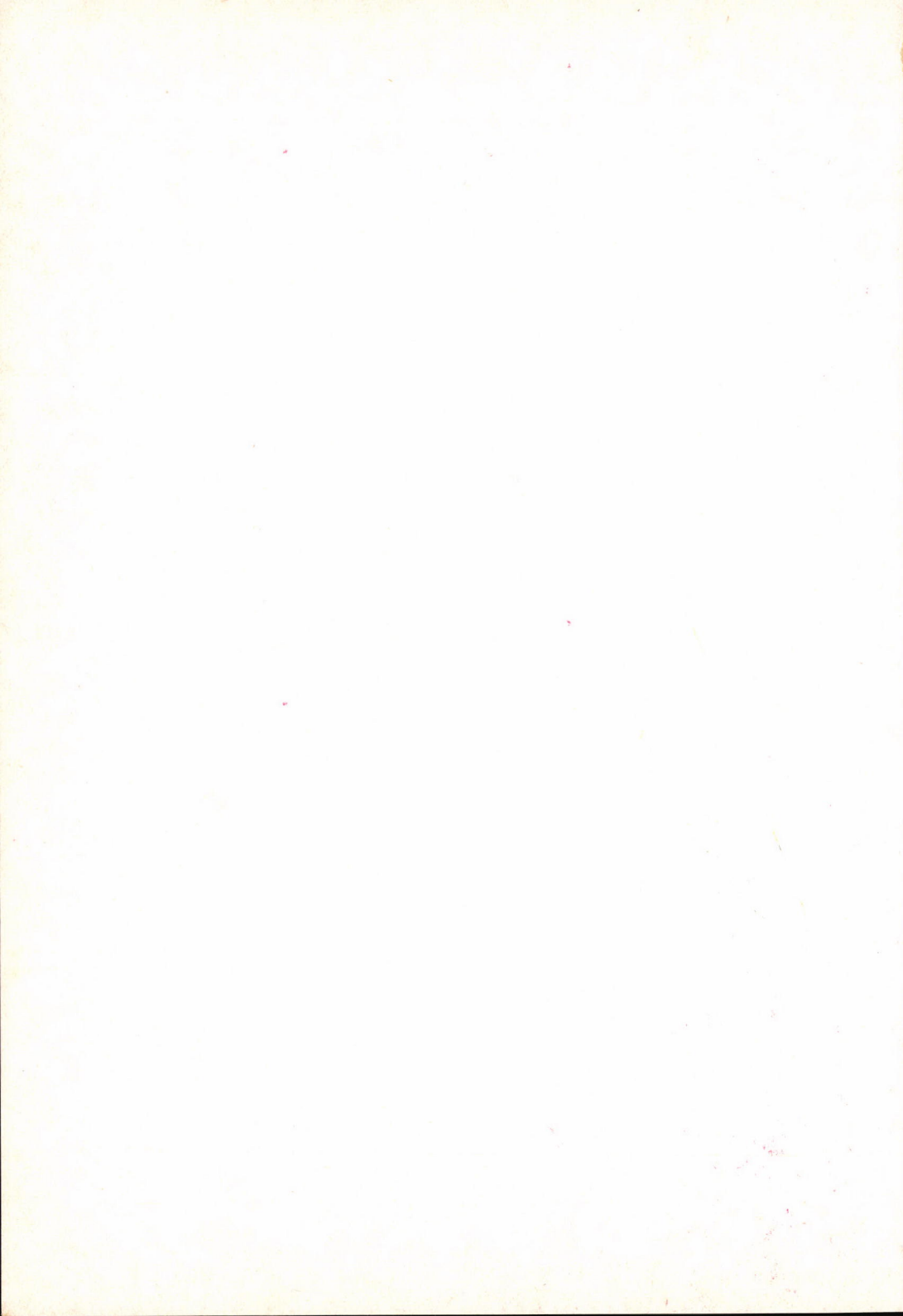
---

year LXIX january-march 1988

**N. 324**

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**

---

OFFICIAL ORGAN OF ANIMATION AND COMMUNICATION FOR THE SALESIAN CONGREGATION

---

## **N. 324**

**year LXIX**

**january-march 1988**

1. LETTER OF THE RECTOR MAJOR	1.1 Don Egidio VIGANÒ <b>The Eucharist in the apostolic spirit of Don Bosco</b>	3
<hr/>		
2. GUIDELINES AND POLICIES		
<hr/>		
3. RULINGS AND DIRECTIVES	3.1 <b>The house chronicle: an obligation calling for fidelity</b>	53
<hr/>		
4. ACTIVITIES OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL	4.1 Chronicle of the Rector Major	60
	4.2 Activities of the Councillors	61
<hr/>		
5. DOCUMENTS AND NEWS ITEMS	5.1 The Synod of Bishops Interventions of the Rector Major	75
	5.2 Seminar of salesian specialists in pedagogy. Summary and conclusions	82
	5.3 New salesian bishop	88
	5.4 Deceased confreres	89

Editrice S.D.B.  
Edizione extra commerciale

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

---

*Esse Gi Esse Roma*

## THE EUCHARIST IN THE APOSTOLIC SPIRIT OF DON BOSCO

The most vital theme for measuring our spirit and activity. - Don Bosco and the Eucharist: Mass, Communion, Adoration. - The eucharistic outlook of Vatican II. - The Father's masterpiece: «making Christ the heart of the world». - The insuperable paschal work of Christ. - The living and permanent nature of the event of the New Covenant. - The wonder of the Church's sacramental character. - Adoration and mission. - The pastoral obligation of creating «Church». - Some concrete requirements of Don Bosco's eucharistic pedagogy. - A Marian devotion which leads to the Eucharist.

Rome, Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception  
8 December 1987

*My dear confreres,*

I am writing to you on the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, harbinger of the birth of Christ at Christmas. It is a day unusually dear to the Salesian Family: it not only takes us back in gratitude to our origins but at the same time urges us to go boldly forward to even greater realities. May my greeting to each of you bring you also the hope and trust that goes with the period of Advent.

We are beginning a new year which is dedicated in a special way to the prophetic memory of our Founder. We feel his invitation to approach with deep interior feelings and apostolic creativity the renewal on 14 May next of our salesian profession: one of the loftiest choices we could possibly make,

and one which endorses anew the mystery of our Covenant with God by giving it a deeper and fuller expression.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> cf. C 23

### **The most vital theme for measuring our spirit and activity**

In view of this Year of grace, I very much want to reflect with you on an aspect which I consider central in Don Bosco's personality and in the apostolic heritage he bequeathed to us: the place occupied by the Eucharist in our spirit and activity.

I already broached this subject in my circular letter on the «Salesian educative project», when I reflected on the meaning of «educating by evangelizing».<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> cf. ASC 290, July - December 1978

It is the most vital standard against which we can measure ourselves. The Eucharist in fact is the source of our salesian pastoral charity,<sup>3</sup> our sharing in Christ's heart;<sup>4</sup> the experience of our union with God;<sup>5</sup> our individual living communion with the Church;<sup>6</sup> the endorsement of the special gift of our predilection for the young;<sup>7</sup> the energetic source of our kindness, friendship, optimism and joy; of our daily commitment to work and temperance, and of the practical and creative nature of our approach to apostolic work:<sup>8</sup> in other words it is the great motivating force behind the «salesian spirit».

<sup>3</sup> cf. C 10

<sup>4</sup> cf. C 11

<sup>5</sup> cf. C 12

<sup>6</sup> cf. C 13

<sup>7</sup> C 14

<sup>8</sup> cf. C 15, 16, 17, 18, 19

The Constitutions recall that the celebration of the Eucharist is «the central act of every salesian community», and that the presence of the tabernacle in our houses is «a reason for frequent encounters with Christ», from whom «we draw energy and endurance in our work for the young».<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> C 88

We are deeply aware of what the Vatican Coun-

cil declares: that the Liturgy (of which the Eucharist is the highest expression) is «the summit towards which the activity of the Church is directed, and at the same time the fount from which all her power flows».<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> 10. SC 10

The Fathers of the Church had already said that the liturgy is «at the same time the summit of wisdom and the vertex of religion», «the salvation of the faithful and their spiritual progress».

Those mysterious words of Christ: «he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him»<sup>11</sup> have been throughout the centuries the true measure of christian faith. And as it was at the time of Christ so it is at the present day, there are too many who fail to understand: «after this many of his disciples drew back and no longer went about with him».<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Jn 6,56

<sup>12</sup> Jn 6,66

The obscuring of the central place of the Eucharist in the salesian spirit and apostolate, my dear confreres, would result in a deviation from Don Bosco's living tradition (enshrined in the perennial tradition of the Church), and a very dangerous manifestation of superficiality in our pastoral work and pedagogy.

### **Don Bosco and the Eucharist**

A sketch of the life of Don Bosco written from the eucharistic point of view would be both attractive and stimulating. Here we shall just recall one or two aspects which are well known but which serve as a true guide.

The Christ who dominated the whole existence of Don Bosco was, by preference, Jesus alive and present in the Eucharist, the «master of the house»

(as he used to put it), the centre of gravitation towards which everything converged, the «bread of life», the «Son of Mary» Mother of God and of the Church. Don Bosco lived by and in this presence, which was always close at hand.

When he spoke of God, it was often in terms of Jesus in the Eucharist, true man and true God, who came down from heaven to save us, who died on the cross for us and who is living still on our altars and in our tabernacles. Nothing could be more easily accessible and at the same time more thrilling. To have Jesus in the house, in fact, meant that one could go and meet him whenever one wished, take part in his death and resurrection, have a heart to heart conversation with him, receive him in Communion and be transformed by his Spirit for the mission.<sup>13</sup>

The life of our Father, right from his early boyhood, and the history of the first Oratory constitute a hymn of praise to the Eucharist. What feelings filled the minds of the better ones among his boys can be deduced from the following burning words of Dominic Savio: «When I pass close to him (Jesus in the Eucharist), not only would I cast myself in the mud to honour him; I would even throw myself into a furnace so as to share in some way in that infinite fire of love which drove him to institute this great Sacrament».<sup>14</sup>

Behind the saintly lad there was Don Bosco, his spiritual guide, who passed on to him his own eucharistic ardour. In fact, we are told by Don Lemoyne, «when Don Bosco preached on the extent of Our Lord's love for us, he would often weep and bring tears to the eyes of his hearers. Even during recreation time, if the conversation turned to the subject of the Holy Eucharist, he would beam with

<sup>13</sup> cf. e.g. G. BOSCO, *Il Giovane Provveduto*, Turin 1863, p. 129

<sup>14</sup> *Opere e Scritti* ed. e ined. di D. B., v. 6 Turin SEI, 1929-1965 = cit: ed. Caviglia, v. 4, Savio, c. 14, p. 37

holy ardour, and he would frequently say to the boys: 'My dear boys, love Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament with all your hearts, and you will be truly happy!' His words made the boys more convinced than ever of the truth of the real presence of Jesus Christ. He was truly happy when he managed to have a good number of the boys take turns in receiving holy communion each day». <sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> BM 4, 317

We may recall some of the more significant things said by Don Bosco about the three great aspects of the Eucharist: the celebration of Mass, sacramental communion, and adoration of the consecrated species.

— **The Mass.** «The sacrifice of the altar», wrote Don Bosco. «is the glory, the life and the heart of christianity». <sup>16</sup> «One cannot imagine anything more holy and precious than the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ, and so when you go to Mass», he said to the boys, «I want you to be convinced that you are doing something which is the greatest and holiest thing you could possibly do, something which gives greatest glory to God and is most useful for your own soul. Jesus Christ comes himself in person to apply to each one individually the merits of his adorable blood which he shed for us on the cross of Calvary». <sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup> G. BOSCO, *Il cattolico istruito nella sua religione* = *Lecture Cattoliche I* (1853-54) 9, p. 191

<sup>17</sup> G. BOSCO, *Il Giovane Provveduto*, Turin 1847, p. 85 in «Opere Edite», v. II (p. 265)

Even more eloquent than his words was his example. Don Ceria wrote: «He was recollected, attentive, devout and exact in his celebration of Mass; he pronounced the words with clarity and feeling; he visibly enjoyed distributing holy communion, hardly able to conceal his inner fervour. But in it all there was no trace of affectation or serving the eye; without either haste or undue lingering he proceeded from start to finish in a calm and natural manner. This is how the early Salesians saw him,

and this too is how he appears to us, the latest arrivals». <sup>18</sup>

His union with Christ in the celebration of the Eucharist reached sublime heights: «occasionally his face would be bathed in tears... It also happened that at times he looked so ecstatic after the elevation that he appeared to be seeing Jesus Christ with his own eyes». <sup>19</sup> This happened with greater frequency during his last years. <sup>20</sup> His manner of celebration was in truth that of one who deeply believed, and more than a few people came long distances to be present at his Mass, while benefactors and cooperators who had the privilege of a private chapel in their own house vied with each other to have him with them.

His great educational concern was to help his boys to grasp the sacramental reality of the Mass: «Understand well, my children, that when you assist at holy Mass it is just the same as if you were seeing our divine Saviour coming out of Jerusalem and carrying his cross to Calvary where he is crucified and sheds the last drop of his blood. When the priest celebrates holy Mass, this same sacrifice is renewed, but in a bloodless manner». <sup>21</sup>

The Mass was always the central point of the feasts celebrated by the boys, and was prepared with great solemnity with music, singing and lots of servers. People used to come to Valdocco from other parts of the city to take part in the festive eucharistic celebrations.

— **Holy Communion.** The reception of Communion is another focal point in the spirit and action of Don Bosco. He spoke of it as «essential to the smooth running of the house»; <sup>22</sup> the «column which supports the material and moral world»; <sup>23</sup>

<sup>18</sup> E. CERIA, *Don Bosco con Dio*, Colle Don Bosco (Asti) 1947, p. 97-98; cf. BM 1, 387

<sup>19</sup> BM 4, 314; cf. BM 13, 702

<sup>20</sup> cf. MB 17, 558-559

<sup>21</sup> G. BOSCO, *Il Giovane Provveduto*, Turin 1847, p. 84-85, op. cit. p. 264-265

<sup>22</sup> BM 7, 466

<sup>23</sup> *Collected Letters*, ed. E. CERIA, SEI Turin, 1955, v. I, p. 299

<sup>24</sup> cf. BM 6, 77<sup>25</sup> MB 14, 44

«the strongest moral support of the young»;<sup>24</sup> «the foundation of vocations».<sup>25</sup>

These are significant expressions, but they do not contain the whole of Don Bosco's thought, i.e. that the one receiving Communion experiences personally a most intimate encounter with Jesus Christ, who incorporates him into Himself and makes him an apostle by the power of the Holy Spirit.

We can detect a distant echo of this in the words with which he concluded the conference he gave at Rome in 1876: «'Grant us, O Lord (the Church prays), that by participating in the merits of your Body and Blood sacrificed on the cross, we may be deserve to be included among your members'... As members of the most Sacred Body of Jesus, we must keep ourselves closely united with him, not in an abstract but in a concrete manner, in believing and in our actions».<sup>26</sup>

<sup>26</sup> MB 12, 641

There is no greater happiness on earth, he used to tell his boys, than a well made Communion: «What joy it is to receive our Divine Redeemer into our hearts, that same God from whom we must draw the strength and constancy needed every moment of our lives».<sup>27</sup>

<sup>27</sup> BM 12, 18

The biographies of Comollo, Savio, Magone and Besucco all contain, among other things, burning references to the Mass, to Communion and to Viaticum which transforms the fear of death into a loving embrace of Jesus. «If I want something important», said Dominic Savio, «I go to Communion and receive the Sacred Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus, offered for us to his eternal Father on the cross. What else do I need to be happy? Nothing in this world, but just to be able to see face to face the God I adore in faith on the altar».<sup>28</sup>

<sup>28</sup> ed. Caviglia, v. 4, Savio, c. 14, p. 35

At the school of Don Bosco, the promoter of

frequent Communion, his boys achieved real growth in a strong and clear faith, and through the Eucharist scaled the heights of sanctity.

Significant in this connection is the inserting in his «Companion of Youth» of the translation of a text from the Council of Trent, which had previously been quoted only as regards its general sense, but which is much more incisive when expressed literally: «It would be highly desirable that every faithful christian should keep himself in such a state of conscience that he could receive holy Communion each time he assists at Mass, and that this Communion should be not only spiritual but also sacramental, so that greater fruit may be reaped from this august and divine Sacrament».<sup>29</sup>

He was also one of the strongest and most convinced supporters of the desirability of making the First Communion at an early age: «Avoid as a plague the opinion that the first communion should be deferred to a late age».<sup>30</sup>

— **Adoration.** The awareness of the living presence of Christ in the consecrated Host is a stimulus to a convinced attitude of adoration. This was a particular characteristic of Catholic piety in the nineteenth century, and especially at Turin, city of the Blessed Sacrament. At the Valdocco Oratory this kind of piety flourished in the eucharistic heart of Don Bosco, and this also from the conviction that he was able to inculcate among the boys that Jesus lived in the house with them: he was present there with his infinite love to be their daily Friend.

It is true that the kinds of eucharistic piety lived at the Oratory were those which flourished at the time in dioceses and parishes: hours of adoration, eucharistic triduum, Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, processions and (especially for their

<sup>29</sup> G. BOSCO, *Il Giovane Provveduto*, Turin 1885, p. 108, in Op. Ed. v. XXXV; cf. Conc. Trent Sess. 22, c. 6 in DENZINGER-RAHNER 1955 n. 944; cf. also G. BOSCO, *Il Giovane Provveduto*, 2, VIII (append Const. p. 250)

<sup>30</sup> G. BOSCO, *Il Sistema Preventivo*, 2, VII (ibid.)

pedagogical value) individual and group visits; but Don Bosco knew how to motivate them from an educational point of view with a sanctifying quality which remains as a challenge to us at the present day.

If Jesus, with his permanent presence, is at the centre and heart of every salesian house, he cannot possibly be forgotten. Hence the importance of cultivating various expressions of contemplative piety in the life and activity of those who belong to him. Don Bosco's urging of the boys themselves to visit frequently Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, to ask him for spiritual and material graces, to talk with him, to think about his death and resurrection, to spend a little time with him, is one of his most frequently occurring exhortations: «Remember, my sons,» he used to say, «that Jesus is in the Blessed Sacrament with lots of graces that he wants to give to those who ask for them».<sup>31</sup>

And again: «I also recommend visits to the Blessed Sacrament: 'Our gentle Lord Jesus Christ is there in person', the Cure of Ars used to exclaim; if time is limited, let us at least kneel before the tabernacle and say a Pater, Ave and Gloria. This alone will steel us against temptation».<sup>32</sup>

And in one of his Good-Nights<sup>33</sup> he insisted with fatherly conviction: «There are two things the devil is deadly afraid of: fervent Communion and frequent visits to the Blessed Sacrament. Do you want Our Lord to grant you many graces? Visit him often. Do you want him to grant you only a few? Visit him but seldom». Such visits, he added, are a powerful defence against the attacks of the enemy. «Visiting the Blessed Sacrament, my dear boys, is essential if you want to overcome the devil. Therefore make frequent visits to Jesus; if you do that,

<sup>31</sup> G. BOSCO, *Il Giovane Provveduto*, Turin 1847, p. 103

<sup>32</sup> BM 9, 167

<sup>33</sup> 24 February 1865

the devil will never prevail against you».<sup>34</sup>

<sup>34</sup> BM 8, 32

There is no doubt that Don Bosco's spirit and pedagogy give special importance to adoration as a manner of practising friendship with Christ present in the Eucharist. Dominic Savio, Magone, Besucco all made good use of this method; and if the same cannot be said of all the Oratory boys, there were more than a few who imitated them.

This dominating character of the Eucharist however went hand in hand with an educative practice that aimed at the integral overall formation of the youngster, in which human needs and requirements are seriously attended to in all their aspects, from their primary material needs (like food, lodging and clothing) to those of an intellectual, moral and cultural nature; from education for work, for study and for art, so as to be able to take a proper place in society, to the satisfaction of the insuppressible needs of the young, such as self affirmation, the correct use of freedom («let them have full freedom to run, jump and make as much noise as they like»), the fostering of recreational activities, theatre, music, etc.

An education, therefore, which is full and joyful, but one whose secret (as is evident from the models described in detail by Don Bosco himself) we see to be youthful hearts centred on the Eucharist (Mass, Communion and Adoration), or in other words on Jesus who is alive and present, and whom they know, love and visit as their dearest Friend. Youngsters in whom kindness, commitment and joy are obviously present and spring from a sacramental experience of Christ, whose loving influence on all their behaviour is evident.

We may conclude this rapid glance at the central place of the Eucharist in the spirit and and acti-

vity of Don Bosco by recalling what a heroic task he accepted because of a devotion inseparable from the Eucharist, that of the Sacred Heart, expressed in the building of the Church of the Sacred Heart in Rome as his culminating work. He said himself that «devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus includes all the rest» and that the source of this devotion is to be found precisely in the Blessed Sacrament. «Keep always before your minds», he said at Paris, «the thought of the love of God in the Holy Eucharist».<sup>35</sup>

<sup>35</sup> MB 16, 195

The Constitutions assure us that «under the inspiration of God, Don Bosco lived and handed on to us an original style of life and action: the salesian spirit».<sup>36</sup>

<sup>36</sup> C 10

This spirit «finds its model and source in the very heart of Christ, apostle of the Father».<sup>37</sup>

<sup>37</sup> C 11

And to this we may just add that for Don Bosco this reality of living and sharing the deep redemptive concern of the Heart of Jesus was intensely concentrated on the great and ineffable mystery of the Eucharist.

## The eucharistic outlook of Vatican II

It is often said that the mentality, language and catechesis of the nineteenth century concerning the eucharistic mystery reflect a vision which is not organic and is rather incomplete. We know that for historical reasons mediaeval christianity intensified the cult of the permanent real presence in the consecrated species. The Council of Trent itself, as the legatee of what had gone before it, dealt separately with the Eucharist as a permanent Sacrament<sup>38</sup> and the Sacrifice of the Mass;<sup>39</sup> subsequent interpreters emphasized from a pastoral point of view a

<sup>38</sup> Conc. Trent sess. 21

<sup>39</sup> Conc. Trent sess. 22

certain separation in popular devotion between the «sacrifice» of the Mass and the permanence of the real presence in the consecrated species. Religious practices of the time, without detracting from the value of the Mass, leaned rather towards the permanence of the sacrament through multiple and varied devotional expressions.

For us at the present day the nineteenth century was certainly a long time ago; but we have to admit that in those days it was certainly possible to develop a concrete holiness in both educators and young people.

After Vatican II there has been in the Church's ecclesiology a genuine and qualitative leap in the strongly organic doctrine of the paschal mystery (of which the Eucharist is the sacrament) and in the whole of liturgical cult. There is a fresh and deeper understanding of the concepts of the Paschal mystery, of the New Covenant, Priesthood, Real Presence, the Body of Christ, Communion and Mission; in a word, of the «Sacrament» which sees the whole eucharistic cult from the standpoint of a liturgy and kind of piety that have undergone great renewal. We can certainly say that the directives that have followed the Council<sup>40</sup> make it possible for us to salvage in a renewed form more than a few of the devotional values of the past, even though they were linked with an imperfect outlook.

Here we find ourselves facing a massive challenge: to this richer and more organic eucharistic vision launched by the Vatican Council there should correspond a spiritual praxis and pastoral pedagogy very much more intense and incisive.

One wonders in fact what is actually taking place in certain environments which see themselves as being in the vanguard of progress: in these pla-

<sup>40</sup> cf. e.g. *Eucharisticum mysterium*, Cong. Rites, 25 May 1967

ces we are witnessing a lopsided over-evaluation of the importance of human and cultural values, without there having been first the careful and indispensable discernment of prophetic values to which Don Bosco always bore witness on the basis of the central nature of the Eucharist, precisely in view of a more genuine and valid human formation.

Sometimes we find ourselves face to face with a kind of impoverished pedagogical activity that lacks a genuinely «pastoral» inspiration: it does not respond sufficiently to the stimulus of «*Da mihi animas*».

The purpose of Vatican II was not to eliminate the tremendous efficacy of the Eucharist in our spirit and activity, but rather to intensify it and relaunch it with more authentic truth.

What we are called upon to do at the present day is to permeate the praxis left us by Don Bosco with the conciliar indications concerning the eucharistic mystery. We must know this widening of horizons and be able to translate it into life as it is lived.

How our Father would rejoice at some of the Council statements, and how he would translate them into educational initiatives. Take for instance the following passage from the Decree «*Presbyterorum Ordinis*»: «In the most blessed Eucharist is contained the whole spiritual good of the Church... The Eucharist appears as the source and the summit of all preaching of the Gospel, and the faithful who have already been consecrated in baptism and confirmation are fully incorporated in the Body of Christ by the reception of the Eucharist. Therefore the eucharistic celebration is the centre of the assembly of the faithful... The house of prayer in which the most holy Eucharist is celebrated and re-

served, where the faithful assemble, and where is worshipped the presence of the Son of God our Saviour, offered for us on the sacrificial altar for the help and consolation of the faithful – this house ought to be in good taste and a worthy place for prayer and sacred ceremonial. In it pastors and faithful are called upon to respond with grateful hearts to the gifts of him who through his humanity is unceasingly pouring the divine life into the members of his Body. Priests ought to take the trouble to properly cultivate liturgical knowledge and art».<sup>41</sup>

<sup>41</sup> PO 5

Don Bosco became the great pastor of youth that we know, precisely because of his deep adherence to the eucharistic mystery and his sharing in it. If a certain mentality and mode of expression of his time have need of updating, this should not imply any impoverishment of his role as a prophetic Founder.

What we have to do is discern in his way of acting the formative values of the Eucharist in the harmony of that same faith which made of him, as it must make of us at the present day, an insuperable model of pastor and educator, constantly stimulated by holy initiatives. The substance in fact is the same: Jesus Christ is with us! The paschal event is at our disposal here and now: the Emmanuel who intervenes daily in the formation of the New Man!

It is therefore worth the trouble, my dear confreres, to dwell for a while on so substantial a topic; it will enable us to enrich our centenary year with the rediscovery in depth of that «pedagogy of kindness» which is proposed to us in the Strenna to celebrate the memory and prophetic presence of Don Bosco.

The reflections I am offering you will serve to

recall and summarize the many meditations each one will have made in the course of his salesian life, so as to better understand and relaunch everything in the eucharistic practice of our Father that was not merely transitory – and that means the substance of it. Only in this way shall we be able to bring about a genuine renewal of a kind of pastoral work and pedagogy which without the central position of the Eucharist would no longer be the precious legacy we have inherited.

Let us begin in a rather roundabout fashion so as to make sure that we have a proper and, as far as possible, adequate understanding of so vital a theme.

### **The Father's masterpiece: «making Christ the heart of the world»**

If we had to seek in the whole universe the most perfect expression of the brilliant ability of the Creator, we should at first be well and truly at a loss.

Before the immensity of the macrocosm we are left astonished and well nigh dismayed in our admiration as we give free reign to our imagination, and we seem to be in a shifting whirlwind rather than in a position to make judgements and comparisons as one would do in a museum. Everything is so unbelievably above the normal ideas of time and space which circumscribe our thoughts and imagination that we are well nigh unable to compare one planet with another.

And as we continue to contemplate the wonders of the universe we become still more bewildered and almost incredulous in finding that in it there is a perfection which is not at first noticeable, and

that furthermore an enormous power and tremendous vitality are involved.

We realize that we are dealing with a higher and ineffable capacity for planning that leaves us no alternative but to conclude that what is done by the Creator exceeds our wildest imaginings. In fact the sciences, as they progress, are simply engaged in a learning process as they strive to penetrate the laws and secrets of creation.

Nevertheless, even as we contemplate the wonders of the world, we are aware that as human beings we have a higher gift: the acute penetrating power of the spirit which enables us to reach far beyond the perfections of nature; our intelligence takes us always beyond the labours of Hercules with a courage that outdoes the legend of Ulysses.

And so, in so far as we are men we find present in creation the treasure we call love, a thing which is worth more than any macro or microcosm because it transcends matter and introduces us to the intimate mystery of the life of the Creator.

There we discover without too much difficulty that *God's real masterpiece is Man*, made in his own image, the living synthesis of cosmic wonders, free and enterprising, who thinks, who makes judgements, who creates, who loves, and who is therefore destined to be the minister of all created things, the voice of praise, the mediator of glory in joyful dialogue with the Creator himself.

Unfortunately man's history and the very meaning of the cosmos have been deformed by sin. St Paul in fact says: «the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God».<sup>42</sup>

<sup>42</sup> Rom 8, 20-21

And it is precisely in our own history that when the fullness of time had come God raised up the «*new Man*», his definitive masterpiece: Jesus Christ! He is the culmination of the whole work of creation. In Him «the mystery of man truly becomes clear... He is the image of the invisible God, the perfect man... who in a certain way has united himself with each and every man... the firstborn of many brothers».<sup>43</sup>

<sup>43</sup> GS 22

In his life on earth he felt himself solid with every man of every century, from the first Adam (his progenitor) to the last of his brothers born at the end of time. Solid with them in good and evil, he has overcome sin by the power of his great love, to which he bore witness by giving his own life in the supreme event of his death and resurrection. Through his permanent paschal presence in the sacrament of the Eucharist he continues to generate in history in union with the Church, his spouse, the new Man until his victorious return at the end of time. As the liturgy says, God the Father «has hidden from us the day and the hour when Christ, the Lord and judge of history, will appear on the clouds of heaven robed in power and splendour. On that glorious day the present world will pass away and there will arise new heavens and a new earth».<sup>44</sup> And there Christ will offer his Kingdom to the Father.

<sup>44</sup> Advent Preface I/A

Rightly therefore does the Council declare that «the Lord is the goal of human history, the focal point of the desires of history and civilization, the centre of mankind, the joy of all hearts and the fulfilment of all aspirations... (the Father's loving design) to unite all things in Christ, things in heaven and things on earth... And the Lord himself said: «Behold I am coming soon, bringing my recom-

pense... I am the alpha and the omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end!». <sup>45</sup>

<sup>45</sup> GS 45

I think it important, dear confreres, to come back continually on this synthesis of faith, so as to be able to understand the ineffable value of the eucharistic mystery, and to convince ourselves that it is not possible to prescind from Christ in the promotion of man and in the development of a true salesian pedagogy.

It is certainly our duty to take up everything that is positive in the various processes of the signs of the times, but we must also be able to discern their ambivalence and to harmonize their novel and positive contributions with the immense and definitive innovation of Christ's Passover.

### **The insuperable paschal work of Christ**

Jesus Christ was aware that he had a very personal vocation which called him to a mission which was impossible from a human standpoint: to face up radically to evil, to re-establish the Covenant of all humanity with God, to give back sense to the cosmos, to proclaim the truth about the sense of life and history, to point out the way to be followed in practice, and to provide a superabundant supply of energy to keep Man moving along in his pilgrimage throughout the centuries.

Jesus understood ever more clearly that the Father's plan was directing his vocation and mission to a strategic moment which would be the culmination of his existence in earthly history: what he called «His» hour!

His great historical hour is called his «Passover» («Pasch» or «Easter» in English). *It is a master-*

*piece of Christ the Man, within the masterpiece of the Father.* It is something so sublime that not even the Creator could think up something greater, as it has been happily said: «id quod maius fieri nequit»! (that than which it is impossible to do anything greater). It is the maximum gesture which the all-powerful brilliance of the creative love of the Father could think of as possible in human history.

Jesus, born of Mary through the work of the Holy Spirit, as a true and responsible descendant of Adam is the living synthesis of cosmic marvels; he gives back to man the vocation of being the minister of everything created, the voice of praise, the mediator of glory, through his sacrificial love endorsed by the resurrection.

This masterly work he carried out as One of us, our best representative, fraternally solid with all the rest. He did it «once for all».<sup>46</sup> He did it and left it permanently imprinted on his human existence after rising from the dead. The historical events of his death and resurrection have, in fact, given a definitive constitution to Christ's soul and body, they have perfected his individual human nature by giving to it traits and features which remain for ever as indications of his victorious physiognomy. We may say that they established the soul of Christ (his heart) in the supreme act of his self-oblation in extreme love, and have adorned his physical body with the consequences of his total donation, made visible in the scars of his bloody immolation.

The man Christ, in fact, stands before the Father «as a Lamb that seemed to have been sacrificed... and a choir of thousands and thousands of voices cried out: 'Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honour and glory and blessing'».<sup>47</sup>

<sup>46</sup> Heb 9, 12.28

<sup>47</sup> Rev 5, 6.12

These paschal events are the liturgical and sacrificial realization of the New Covenant, the last and eternal covenant which gives his place to the new Man, to the new Heavens and the new Earth.

The penetrating letter to the Hebrews assures us that «Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) he entered once and for all into the Holy Place, taking not the blood of goats and calves but his own blood thus securing for us an eternal redemption».<sup>48</sup>

<sup>48</sup> Heb 9, 11-12

In the light of the paschal events and of Christ's command to make a «sacramental memorial» of them in the celebration of the Eucharist, the Apostles beheld with wonder the realization of the New Covenant he had promised. There you have the full sense of his «presence»! *The Passover and the Eucharist signified for them in the first place the great and ardently awaited hour of the definitive Covenant.*

This Covenant put an end to the loss of sense of the cosmos and the ancient cult, which had not been sufficient, and began a new one, thought up, planned and realized only by Christ, by his love and solidarity as the Second Adam. This was a new cult in which priest, victim, temple, altar, sacrifice and liturgical banquet are concentrated in the unique reality of Christ's person.

And so He it is, Jesus Christ, his heart, his love, his word, his body, his blood, his priestly consecration (in the hypostatic union), which constitute the great treasure of the New and Eternal Covenant. One only Love, one only Gospel, one only Priest, one only Sacrifice, one only Communion, for ever: the only valid objective for the hope of man and of the cosmos.

There you have the Father's masterpiece: «making Christ the heart of the world»! He is the new Man, He is the truth, He is the way and the life; He offers his flesh as food and his blood as drink to give birth and growth to the new Man.

It is well for us to come back frequently on these thoughts and keep in our minds for the benefit of ourselves and our young people this supreme and vital historic work of Christ. Objectively we cannot prescind from it: it would be ignorance, the emptying out of faith, ingenuous secularism, and unpardonable superficiality to forget these realities in order to make space for a transitory and mundane mode of life which would render our vocation and mission frail and without strength.

The supreme paschal events of Christ, within the masterpiece of the Father in the limitless and wonderful universe of his creation, constitute the high point of greatness, love and beauty in all the Creator's work.

Who could possibly fail to see that this is at the centre of the life of believers, and in particular of the spirituality, pedagogy and pastoral work of Don Bosco's Salesian Family?

### **The living and permanent nature of the New Covenant**

«The renewal in the Eucharist of the covenant between the Lord and man», we are told by Vatican II, «draws the faithful and sets them aflame with Christ's insistent love. From the liturgy, therefore, and especially from the Eucharist, grace is poured forth upon us as from a fountain, and the

sanctification of men in Christ and the glorification of God to which all other activities of the Church are directed, as toward their end, are achieved with maximum effectiveness».<sup>49</sup>

<sup>49</sup> SC 10

This is a solemn statement which should influence all our pastoral and pedagogical planning if we do not want to waste time following obsolescent ideas.

Through a sacramental action, the Eucharist makes present for us here and now in a very real way the same substantial reality of the paschal events of Christ, by continually renewing and communicating to us the sure and certain riches of the New Covenant. In the course of the centuries there have been either denials of the existence among us of the «real presence» of Christ who died and rose again, or attempts at explanations which have only upset the integral and organic nature of the cult of the Eucharist by undervaluing at various times either the priestly ministry, or the sacrificial aspect, or ecclesial growth, or the transformation in the liturgy of life and history which give to the cosmos its true sense.

It is urgently necessary to get back to the organic truth of the doctrine in the whole of our renewed pastoral activity, whether as regards spirituality, catechesis or pedagogy.

This is the Church's great treasure: the Eucharist is the common boon for use in the future of all the work of salvation.

«To accomplish so great a work», says the Council again, «Christ is *always present* in his Church: he is *present* in the sacrifice of the Mass, not only in the person of his minister ... but especially in the eucharistic species... He is present in his word... He is present when the Church prays

and sings. Christ, indeed, always associates the Church with himself; she is his beloved bride... And so (the Eucharist), because it is an action of Christ the Priest and of his Body, which is the Church, is a sacred action surpassing all others. No other action of the Church can equal its efficacy by the same title and to the same degree».<sup>50</sup>

<sup>50</sup> SC 7

The theme of the living presence among us of the New Covenant is precisely one of the central aspects of the eucharistic mystery which the Council wanted to restore in all its greatness and wonderful fertility.

In his encyclical «*Mysterium fidei*» on the doctrine and cult of the Eucharist,<sup>51</sup> Pope Paul VI, while setting out on the one hand motives for pastoral concern and anxiety with regard to possible reductive interpretations concerning the permanent real presence of the body and blood of Christ in the consecrated species, insists also on the objectivity of other modes of the «real» presence of Christ in the celebration of the Breaking of the bread. «All of us realize», he says, «that *there is more than one way in which Christ is present in his Church*»; and he goes on to list the various modes. «The mind boggles», he concludes, «at these different ways in which Christ is present; they confront the Church with a mystery ever to be pondered».<sup>52</sup>

<sup>52</sup> *Mysterium fidei* (MF) in «*Enchirid. Vat.*», Edizione Dehoniane, Bologna, v. 2 1976, n. 422

What concern us here are those modes of presence which are directly linked with the celebration of the Eucharist. Let us concentrate on three of them which ensure the living presence among us of the New Covenant.

— The first refers to Christ in so far as «he is present in the Sacrifice of the Mass *in the person of the minister*, 'the same now offering through the ministry of priests, who formerly offered himself on

the cross';<sup>53</sup> the one who presides at the Eucharist is therefore playing a sacramental role. 53 SC 7

— The second emphasizes that Christ «is present *under the eucharistic species*».<sup>54</sup> Paul VI adds the comment in the encyclical «Mysterium fidei»: «This presence is called 'real', not with the intention of excluding all other types of presence as if they could not be 'real' too, but because it is presence in the fullest sense: that is to say it is a substantial presence by which Christ, the God-Man, is wholly and entirely present. It would therefore be wrong to explain this presence by having recourse to the 'spiritual nature', as it is called, of the glorified body of Christ, which is present everywhere; or by reducing it to a kind of symbolism».<sup>55</sup> 54 ibid.

— The third says that Christ is also present «*when the Church prays and sings*, for he has promised 'where two or three are gathered together in my name there am I in the midst of them (Mt 18,20)'».<sup>56</sup> And the celebrating priests represent also the Church which, in union with Christ, has recourse to the Father. 55 MF, op. cit. n. 424

These modes of «real presence» offer an admirable manifestation of the originality of the ways in which Christ is with us. We need to concentrate our reflection on them so as to be enlightened in our eucharistic awareness.

We know that the redemptive effects of the Pasch have been realized in history once only for all time, and that in consequence the personal oblation and immolation of Christ are the great and unique sacrificial event of the New Covenant.

«Christ does not have to offer himself again and again, ... or else he would have had to suffer over and over again since the world began. Instead of

<sup>56</sup> SC 7

that, he has made his appearance once and for all, now at the end of the last age, to do away with sin by sacrificing himself».<sup>57</sup>

<sup>57</sup> Heb 9,25-26

The starting point for an understanding of this mystery must be a consideration of Christ's resurrection as the indispensable foundation of his Church's liturgy.

«The great point of all that we have said», (from the letter to the Hebrews again), «is that we have a high priest of exactly this kind. He has his place at the right of the throne of the divine Majesty in the heavens, and he is the minister of the sanctuary and of the true Tent of Meeting which the Lord, and not any man, set up».<sup>58</sup>

<sup>58</sup> Heb 8,1-2

There you have the tremendous aspect of originality! The sacrifice of the New Covenant is not simply a fact from the past, but is renewed here and now in a sacramental manner; when we celebrate the Eucharist, it is Christ himself who is acting in the presence of the Father; Christ is therefore with us as «the mediator of the New Covenant between God and men».<sup>59</sup>

<sup>59</sup> Heb 9,15

In the eucharistic liturgy Christ himself is actively involved, and makes of his Passover a living act which continues through all time in the Church.

During our eucharistic celebrations we need to close our eyes sometimes and make the effort to meditate so as to understand the transcendent density of the mystery in which we are taking part.

In the very course of the celebration itself, after the consecration of the bread and wine, we even interrupt the solemn prayer to the Father to exclaim with admiration: «The mystery of faith! When we eat this bread and drink this cup, we proclaim your death, Lord Jesus, until you come in glory»!

During the celebration of the Eucharist, enlivening periods of silence are indispensable. The heart of the believer has need of certain moments of recollection. The mystery calls also for silence at times, not simply as a pause but as an opportunity for listening to the Spirit. It is a moment reserved for a movement of love to enable a personal penetration of the sacramental veil to take place.

The richer the mystery, the greater is the need for silent contemplation.

It is a matter of «savouring» the presence of Christ, who involves us in the New Covenant.

### **The wonder of the Church's sacramental character**

Let us try to analyse more deeply this living presence of Christ in the New Covenant.

First let us look at its components.

*The one Priest*, with his act of self-sacrificing oblation («a death he freely accepted» – Eucharistic prayer II) is Christ the High Priest who stands before the Father.

*The one sacrificial Victim* is the flesh and blood of his human body, which is risen but which continues to appear in heaven as the «Lamb that was slain».<sup>60</sup>

<sup>60</sup> Rev. 5,6

*The sacrificial Banquet*, is the true incorporation, through the mediation of the sacrament, into that same body of Christ, which in this way continues to grow in a mystical fashion throughout history. In fact, says St Paul: «The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we

<sup>61</sup> 1 Cor 10, 16-17

all partake of the one bread».<sup>61</sup>

There is indeed a mine of authentic wonders to be discovered; they are contained and manifested (albeit in a hidden manner) in the sacramental character of the Church, when she celebrates the Eucharist. The Council's expression that makes of the Church itself the great «sacrament of salvation», goes beyond pure symbolism; it objectively transcends the limits of time and space. Only with the eyes of faith can one perceive the paschal reality.

At the conclusion of the Eucharistic Prayer, which is addressed personally to the Father, we proclaim in fact with reference to Christ: «Through him, with him, in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honour is yours, almighty Father, for ever and ever. Amen!»

*Everything is realized through the real presence of Christ.*

Let us dwell briefly on these three points in the eucharistic celebration so as to better appreciate their density concerning Christ's «real presence».

— *In the first place the Priests* who preside at the celebration of the Eucharist have an exceedingly high «sacramental» role to fill. They render Christ himself present and renew the content of his sacrificial offering, of adoration, praise, covenant and apostolic commitment.<sup>62</sup> They also represent the Church. In the name of Christ and as representatives of his Church, they speak to the Father; Paul VI says in fact: «Christ is present in his Church as she governs the people of God, since her sacred power comes from Christ, and since Christ, the 'Shepherd of shepherds', is present in the pastors who exercise that power, according to his promise to the Apostles».<sup>63</sup>

<sup>62</sup> cf. PO 2<sup>63</sup> MF, op. cit. n. 422

In this sacramental role the priests gather together the daily lives of the faithful and insert them into the very love of Christ; in this way every human generation enters into the paschal work of the Lord, as a spiritual sacrifice in solidarity with him. It is the sublime moment when history becomes transformed into liturgy. It is not a question of some alienating rite, but rather of the highest degree of celebration of the most concrete realization of human love in the unrolling of daily life and in all the vicissitudes of existence through the authentic significance of the universe itself.

And within this role of ecclesial representation, there is a very special sacramental function in the ministry of celebrating priests. While carrying out the liturgical commemoration of the paschal events they act directly in the person of Christ; they lend him their voice, through the help of a special «sacred power». «In the person of Christ», says the Council, «they effect the eucharistic sacrifice»,<sup>64</sup> and elsewhere the same Council goes on to say: «acting in the person of Christ and proclaiming his mystery, they unite the votive offerings of the faithful to the sacrifice of Christ their head, and in the sacrifice of the Mass they make present again and apply, until the coming of the Lord, the unique sacrifice of the New Testament».<sup>65</sup>

<sup>64</sup> LG 10

<sup>65</sup> *ibid.* 28

What a great mystery this is!

— *Secondly*, we need to consider that the priest's ministerial activity is permeated by the power of the Holy Spirit *for the consecration of the bread and wine «so that they may become the body and blood of our Lord, Jesus Christ»*,<sup>66</sup> and for the invocation of the fullness of the Holy Spirit upon the assembly.

<sup>66</sup> Eucharistic Prayer II

The sacramental manner of this presence is sac-

rificial; under the sacramental signs of the body and blood (which were in fact separated during the bloody immolation on Calvary), it makes «truly, really and substantially»<sup>67</sup> present before the Father, Christ's risen body with the scars of the sacrificed and acceptable victim. The reality contained in the eucharistic species, said St Ambrose, «is not what nature formed, but what the blessing created».<sup>68</sup>

<sup>67</sup> DENZINGER  
RAHNER, *Enchirid.*  
*symbol.* 1955, n. 874

<sup>68</sup> MF, op. cit. n. 429

And there, once again, you have another aspect of the great mystery!

— *Thirdly*, the real and substantial presence of Christ's risen body brings with it a new and wonderful sacramental effect: that of *assimilation to him in the Communion banquet*. *It is there that «all of us who share in the body and blood of Christ are brought together in unity by the Holy Spirit».*<sup>69</sup>

<sup>69</sup> cf. Eucharistic  
Prayer II

This is a truly striking vision of faith. The sacramental rite of eating and drinking carries with it, by analogy with the natural process of assimilation, a mystical incorporation of ourselves in Christ, so as to form with him a single body as time passes; for, as St Leo the Great says: «The sharing in the body and blood of Christ has no other effect than to accomplish our transformation into that which we receive».<sup>70</sup>

<sup>70</sup> LG 26

When the Council speaks of the Church as the «Body of Christ» it is not its intention that the phrase should be understood simply as a figure or a metaphor. 'Lumen gentium' makes a clear distinction between «images of the Church»,<sup>71</sup> and the deeper expression «the Church, the Body of Christ».<sup>72</sup> This latter expression indicates, in fact, an objective and divinely mysterious reality which can-

<sup>71</sup> LG 6

<sup>72</sup> LG 7

not be reduced to the level of a simple metaphor; the term implies that the Church is in reality a visible organism of spiritual life which, in virtue of its being an assembly of persons in communion with Christ, becomes the overall «universal sacrament of salvation».

In the Mystical Body «the life of Christ is communicated to those who believe and who, through the sacraments, are united in a hidden but real way to Christ in his passion and glorification... Really sharing in the body of the Lord in the breaking of the eucharistic bread, we are taken up into communion with him and with one another... The head of this body is Christ. He is before all creatures and in him all things hold together... From him 'the whole body, supplied and built up by joints and ligaments, attains a growth that is of God' (Col 2,19)... And in order that we might be unceasingly renewed in him, he has shared with us his Spirit who, being one and the same in head and members, gives life to, unifies and moves the whole body. Consequently his work could be compared by the Fathers of the Church to the function that the principle of life, the soul, fulfils in the human body».<sup>73</sup>

<sup>73</sup> LG 7

This realistic description, while plunging us into the insuperable originality of the sacramental dimension of the New Covenant, makes us more clearly aware of why the Council spoke to us of the «mystery of the Church».

It is in the Eucharist that we perceive with wondering contemplation the tremendous innovation of «being christians». Rightly should we recognize that «all the sacraments, and indeed all ecclesiastical ministries and works of the apostolate are bound up with the Eucharist and are directed to-

wards it. For in the most blessed Eucharist is contained the whole spiritual good of the Church».<sup>74</sup>

<sup>74</sup> PO 5

### **Adoration and mission**

The wonder of the multiplication of the «real presence» is an incentive to us to place at the centre of our life of faith an attitude of adoration. The various stages in the celebration of the Eucharist and the permanence of the consecrated species are an invitation to a cult of contemplation in faith. It is something of an excelling nature which provokes in us an intelligent adoring silence while we venerate and contemplate its different aspects of cult, sanctification, profession of faith, self-sacrificing witness, apostolic commitment, deepening of truth, and triumph of love.

— *In the Mass*, we may contemplate who is the priest who («here and now») makes the true sacrificial oblation. As we have seen, it is Christ himself; and he does it for us and together with us, so as to incorporate into his offering also the contributions of our own daily life and troubled existence.

Here our meditation should lead us to discover what is «specifically christian», what was lived and revealed by Christ in his Passover. In the Eucharist there is no danger of ambiguous or distorted interpretations. What is specifically christian is not to be measured by the yardstick of the Old Testament or by hasty temporal expressions; it is presented in its full originality in the gift of self in love which has become sacrifice: the ability to make a joyful offering of the concrete and generous commitment of one's love.

The new Man, the result of the Passover, lives

in its fullness the love of a non-violent charity, directing himself simultaneously towards its two objectives, God and Man, through an intrinsic «grace of unity» which springs from the heart of Christ where the love of the Father is the cause, the source and the strength of our love for our neighbour, for the poor, for the young, for those in need.

— *In the consecrated species* too, we may contemplate the manner in which Christ offers himself to us in the guise of a victim, prompting us to an understanding of the rich value of suffering in life when it brings about an increase of love through the giving of ourselves in sacrifice. This is why Christ remains always, even after the Ascension, as the true «Emmanuel, i.e. as 'God with us' because», as Paul VI recalls, «day and night he is in our midst, he dwells with us, full of grace and truth; he restores morality, nourishes virtues, consoles the afflicted, strengthens the weak, and proposes his own example to those who come to him».<sup>75</sup>

<sup>75</sup> MF, op. cit. n. 438

Not without reason does the same great Pope Paul VI exhort us to «tirelessly promote the cult of the Eucharist, the focus where all other forms of piety must ultimately emerge».<sup>76</sup>

<sup>76</sup> MF, op. cit. n. 436

And John Paul II has reminded us that it is impossible to conceive of a local religious community which does not unite in contemplative faith around the tabernacle.

— *Finally in sacramental Communion*, we may contemplate the marvel of our assimilation into Christ, as a result of which we become his Body to continue his redeeming mission in the world.

At the communion banquet we have two won-

derful aspects on which to meditate: the fertility of the Eucharist which daily generates the Church, and in addition its being sent forth in history with a concrete mission for the salvation of men. These are two quite fascinating considerations.

The Church, by the strength of the Spirit, is reborn from Christ every day, born of his priestly mediation; in the Eucharist he mystically unites the Church, his Spouse, with himself, thus forming a single fertile body which gives new life to so many children. Here alone can the authentic matrix be found for the origin of the Church! She does not rise up from below by some process of self-generation, but is vitally inserted by sacramental action in a pre-existing and structured living organism which is the Body of Christ. One does not receive communion simply to take part in a ritual celebration, but by its reception one enters into a living participation of what is specifically christian so as to feel being sent forth for a mission of salvation.

This is why communion prompts vital decisions, stimulates criteria for apostolic work and provides paschal energy for growth and perseverance.

In adoration of the Eucharist, therefore, it can be clearly perceived that the New Covenant is not a thing of the past, a simple doctrine or a mere ritual celebration, but the permanent origin of the new Man in a People united by God to be the protagonist of true human progress and of the gathering of all creation into Christ.

### **The pastoral obligation of creating «Church»**

At this point, my dear confreres, we have to ask ourselves whether so dense a panorama of paschal

marvels is really the guiding factor in our lives as consecrated people and our commitment to pastoral work for the young and the poor.

None of us has any right to forget or to pass over in silence the rich content of the «Mystery of faith». To prescind from the Eucharist in salesian life and in our pastoral and pedagogical activity would be to betray the sense and plan of our apostolic consecration.<sup>77</sup>

<sup>77</sup> cf. C 3

In 1988 Don Bosco expects us to rethink our preventive system in depth. Young people ask for our sincere witness to the authenticity of the christian mystery, and that we set it out for them. They have the right to expect that we appear to them as signs and bearers of the wonders of the New Covenant. Any dodging, any camouflage, any desire to appear as no longer out of date, would disqualify us from being disciples of Christ and Don Bosco's legatees.

1988 challenges us: either to be with Don Bosco through the centuries, or to adopt certain fleeting modern styles!

We must be able to live and pass on to the young an authentic experience of Church at this great historic moment of conciliar renewal at the dawn of the third millennium of the christian faith.

There is a delicate and very important aspect which has been in my mind like a question mark while making these reflections: what are we to think and do about the non-christian youngsters who, in many parts of the world, frequent our centres of education?

Clearly we cannot use with them the same methods of «christian initiation» which must be used in the case of those who are baptized. But in such a case must we say that Don Bosco's preventive

system would lose its meaning?

It is an undeniable fact that salesian pedagogy works with singular efficacy among a lot of youngsters of other religions. Our own experience assures us that commitments of this kind are fully justified and has prompted us to make altogether new evaluations and appraisals in this regard.

In going into this field we have followed precise indications of the Constitutions: «People still awaiting the gospel message», they tell us, «were the special object of Don Bosco's concern and apostolic effort. They continue to stimulate our zeal and keep it alive: ... *the salesian missionary* makes his own the values of these people and shares their hopes and anxieties».<sup>78</sup>

<sup>78</sup> C 30

Furthermore, speaking of human advancement the Constitutions remind us that «we labour in economically depressed areas and for poor youth. We educate them to a sense of moral, professional and social responsibility. In this way we contribute to the development of both people and environment... While not getting involved in ideologies or party politics, we reject everything that encourages deprivation, injustice and violence. We cooperate with all who are trying to build a society more worthy of man's dignity. The advancement *to which we dedicate ourselves in the spirit of the Gospel* makes tangible the love of Christ which makes men free, and is a sign that the Kingdom of God is among us».<sup>79</sup>

<sup>79</sup> C 33

And again: «*Imitating God's patience*, we encounter the young at their present stage of freedom».<sup>80</sup>

<sup>80</sup> C 38

«Our apostolic activity», they tell us still further, «is carried out in a variety of ways, which depend in the first place upon the actual needs of those for

whom we are working. Sensitive to the signs of the times and with initiative and continual flexibility, we evaluate our activities».<sup>81</sup>

<sup>81</sup> C 41

We must therefore act in a whole variety of ways, but always as «missionaries».

The missionary spirit does not prescind from the Eucharist nor diminish its central position. Missionaries, in fact, as agents in a commitment to education, dedicate themselves to their work «in the spirit of the Gospel», imitating God's patience and being educators «in complete fidelity to Don Bosco». Together with their work for the large non-christian majority, on the other hand, they also educate and form groups of baptized youngsters and believers.

And therefore, both to nourish the spiritual life of confreres in this difficult apostolate, to promote the growth of young people who are already christian, and also to let others see what in practice is the secret motive force behind all their kindness and activity and the real significance of their educational plan, there is need to cultivate among them (and I would say especially among them) in adequate fashion the absolute centrality of the eucharistic mystery.

Our reflections up to this point, dear confreres, give us the assurance that there is an objective relationship of mutual causality between eucharistic celebration, apostolic and missionary spirit, and experience of Church. It is a vital relationship: the one and only hope for the future. It has been expressed: «the Church makes the Eucharist and the Eucharist makes the Church».

«Being christians» means being members of Christ's Church. But the mutual causative relationship between Eucharist and Church will be neither

incisive nor fruitful unless pastors and flock are reached and moved by its paschal content. Introduction to such a sublime christian reality poses a particularly urgent challenge at the present day to the pedagogical ability of communities and all workers in the pastoral field. Among other things, all are in need of greater liturgical knowledge and competence.

To form true christians means to introduce them to an experience of Church. And every true experience of Church makes the believer a sharer in the reality of the Mystery. It is true that today one must be able to begin from the hermeneutic sensitivity to the signs of the times which has led to the present cultural transformation; but if we want to introduce the young to the New Covenant, we must be able to give pride of place to the immense innovation of the Passover, and situate it before the interesting but comparatively tiny innovations of the anthropological turnabout. The paschal novelty judges and assumes in the course of time but also infinitely surpasses so many progressive cultural innovations which, although having a certain value, pale into insignificance in comparison.

Workers in the pastoral field are invited to become qualified at one and the same time in both the emerging culture and above all in the deep and precise sense of the paschal mystery, always «thinking with the Church», and eschewing unworthy exploitations. No one will ever be able to present anything greater and more novel than Christ's Passover, the great masterpiece of the Father and the supreme work of Man.

And so it will be necessary to lead up to the great contents of the Eucharist by a most adequate cultural mediation. At the present day cultural in-

novations are certainly exacting; but the goal to be aimed at will always be that of making understood, accepted and shared the paschal mystery of Christ.

Our task is to single out the pedagogical and pastoral path that will best lead to a true christian initiation (the «mystagogy» so dear to the Fathers of the Church). Every pastoral commitment must seek to find the road which leads to the indispensable meeting between contemporary sensitivity and the saving contribution, so necessary and insuperable, of the New Covenant.

The pastoral path to be followed in the generation of «Church» demands a strong commitment to renewal, both in catechesis about the Eucharist and in its liturgical celebration.

In such a celebration the Church proclaims both the mystery of its own precise nature (= ecclesiology) and the fruitfulness of its specific mission (= ecclesiogenesis). She is the Second Eve, with whom Christ, the Second Adam, gives origin to a new human race.

Hence one cannot be satisfied with seeking in the Eucharist something new about God or about man; one cannot stop at a simple introduction to rites (though this is necessary); nor will it suffice to celebrate mere human, youthful or social values. What is required is a true introduction to the mystery of Christ.

In this way the eucharistic celebration will appear as a genuine meeting between existence and faith, between daily life and the Gospel, between the saving truth and current problems.

Together with the «paschal memorial» will grow the discovery of love and the precious nature of life; it will be urgently necessary to educate to a sacramental sensitivity with its original and symbol-

ic richness; and the attitude of contemplative adoration will need to be intensified. Pastoral pedagogy will be concerned to foster active participation, the awareness of being sons in Christ, the peculiar christian values of gratitude, the settings of solidarity, and the historical requirements of the mission.

This is the practical way to generate «Church», a way that offers society «upright citizens», who are competent and responsibly committed. It is through the Eucharist that will be formed that valid Laity to which the recent Synod of Bishops referred.

We, who are sons of Don Bosco and have inherited a precious pedagogical legacy, must be able to propose and communicate always to the young the specifically christian content of the Passover of Christ offered to them in the Eucharist.

### **Some concrete requirements of Don Bosco's eucharistic pedagogy**

The Strenna of the Jubilee Year invites us to attach great importance to the «pedagogy of kindness», which is a characteristic of the preventive system.

Allow me, dear confreres, to put a fundamental question to you: *what place in our educative projects at the present day is taken by the eucharistic mystery?*

Let us be honest! Perhaps many of us are just wasting time. Don Bosco does not agree with certain kinds of rationalization. We need to do some serious revision and then make a courageous fresh commitment. The preventive system, in its most genuine expression, will always be based on pasto-

ral charity sustained by the two great columns of the sacraments of Reconciliation and the Eucharist. These statements are not just relics of an obsolete religious culture, but prophetic perspectives of Vatican II.

From the spiritual and pedagogical legacy left to us by our Founder there emerge among other things the following practical requirements to which we must give our attention.

— *First of all for ourselves.* Don Bosco's spirit, as we have seen, is entirely concentrated on Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, from which comes forth the fire of «Da mihi animas». Our communities must grow around the altar, and draw on the riches associated with Emmanuel's dwelling with us.

Christ is not only the great personage of our ideals, but also the Friend who lives in our house with us and for us. We look continually to him in the supreme expression of his Passover. Don Bosco wrote in the spiritual testament he left us: «Your first Rector is dead. But our true Superior, Jesus Christ, will never die. He will always be our Master, our guide, our model. But remember that in his own time he will also be our judge and the rewarder of our faithfulness in his service».<sup>82</sup>

The central place of Christ is lived, in our spirit, with an unusual sensitivity as regards contemplation and friendship towards the Eucharist, and hence with a particular delicacy and studious respect for its humble sacramental dimension. It should be embellished by art, by dignified liturgical vestments, by an elegance of cult which rejects oversights, bad taste, coarseness, and the decay of its inherent symbolic messages.

From a merely external point of view, every-

<sup>82</sup> F. MOTTO, *Memorie dal 1841 al 1884-54-6* (Spiritual Testament) ed. LAS Rome 1985, p. 31

thing about the Eucharist seems almost insignificant: the person of the priest (one of us like all the others), a piece of bread, a little wine, some words of prayer. If we do not raise these elements to the much higher and dignified level of the ecclesial part they play through their sacramental expression, if we present the persons of the celebrants as just ordinary people, if we trivialize the rite of Mass, if we carelessly change the liturgical Prayer to suit our arbitrary and passing fancy (or even our ideology), we deprive the heart and contemplative thrust of the liturgical rite of its content of mystery, which in fact is substantially inherent in it.

Let us not forget, my dear confreres, that the Eucharist is something than which nothing can be greater; and it is this as a reality of the entire Church: «in the Church, with the Church, for the Church»!

This demands on the part of priests a special contemplative ability, whose interior vitality must be concentrated on the risen Christ (the one and only High Priest!) and on the Church his Spouse to serve her and represent her worthily.

And here allow me to remind you, dear confreres who are priests, of the importance of a daily nuptial attitude deeply linked with the Eucharist: I am speaking of the praying of the Divine Office. We priests recite it with the Church and in the Church's name for the benefit of all. Unfortunately there are some who have no clear awareness of its nature and ecclesial value, and skip over it as though it were simply a personal prayer to be said or not according to one's taste.

Article 89 of our Constitutions says explicitly that «the Liturgy of the Hours extends the grace of the eucharistic mystery throughout the day».<sup>83</sup>

And it further reminds priests and deacons (the «clerics») of the «obligations assumed at their ordination».<sup>84</sup>

<sup>84</sup> cf. CIC can. 1174,1

I think it will be useful here to quote in its entirety a passage from the decree on the «General Instruction on the Liturgy of the Hours»<sup>85</sup> which deals precisely with the relationship between this official prayer and the Eucharist.

<sup>85</sup> 2 February 1971

«The Liturgy of the Hours», we read, «extends to the different hours of the day the praise and prayer, the memorial of the mysteries of salvation and the foretaste of heavenly glory, which are offered to us in the eucharistic mystery, the centre and culmination of the whole life of the christian community. The Liturgy of the Hours is in itself an excellent preparation for the fruitful celebration of the Eucharist because it fosters the necessary dispositions, such as faith, hope and love, devotion and a spirit of sacrifice».<sup>86</sup>

<sup>86</sup> *General Instruction on Liturgy of the Hours*, n. 12

The priestly attitude of Jesus Christ is centred without any doubt in prayer. He himself has said that we «ought always to pray and not lose heart».<sup>87</sup> We know too that through him we «continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God»: <sup>83</sup> we give back to the universe its true sense: being made the voice of praise of all created things.

<sup>87</sup> Lk 18,1

<sup>88</sup> Heb 13,15

It will therefore be necessary for this more intimate relationship between the Eucharist and the Liturgy of the Hours that greater attention be given, especially by priests and deacons, to the Church's prayer of the Divine Office.

(N.B. It will be a good thing to read, both individually and in community, what was suggested by the Councillor for Formation, Fr Paolo Natali, in AGC 321 [April-June 1987, pp. 44-56] concerning our liturgical celebrations. He gives some directives

and guidelines which are needed in a particular manner at the present day!)

And so Don Bosco wants from us a higher level of spirituality and celebration in the liturgy. It does not matter that others may follow poorer and even trivialized ways of doing things, justifying themselves with pseudo-cultural reasons. The great criterion which must enlighten our own celebrations and prayer is the ineffable and definitive value of the paschal events.

We must have the courage to face up to the educational consequences of such a criterion if we want to achieve success in the laborious pedagogical work of leading young people to live the Eucharist.

And this leads us to a second group of practical requirements called for by the prophetic legacy of our Founder.

— *For the education of the young and of people in general.* Don Bosco's apostolic activity was designed to lead to the Eucharist those to whom it was addressed. In his biography of Francis Besucco we find him saying categorically in Chapter 19: «They can say what they like about various educational systems, but I find no other sure foundation than frequent Confession and Communion; and I do not think it an exaggeration to say that if these two elements are left out, you can say good-bye to morality».<sup>89</sup>

<sup>89</sup> ed. Caviglia, v. 6, *Besucco*, c. 9

Such a peremptory tone is unusual in Don Bosco; it is explained by the polemical context in which he was speaking, but it reflects his real feelings.

The sacrament of Reconciliation combined with a living participation in the Eucharist was in the hands of Don Bosco «the pedagogical means 'par

excellence' for correcting his boys and building a true and solid piety, of the kind that is required in life and penetrates it».<sup>90</sup>

<sup>90</sup> ed. Caviglia, v. 4, Savio, Studio p. 355

The richness of our Father's pedagogy is certainly of wide extent, but it would be difficult to deny that these two sacraments – Reconciliation and the Eucharist – constitute its source and summit.

Our very Constitutions (to which we look in order to prepare ourselves for our great relaunching on 14 May next) recall the same thing in various articles:

«Our highest knowledge is to know Jesus Christ, and our greatest delight is to reveal to all people the unfathomable riches of his mystery. We walk side by side with the young so as to lead them to the risen Lord, and so discover in him and in his Gospel the deepest meaning of their own existence, and thus grow into new men».<sup>91</sup>

<sup>91</sup> C 34

«We introduce the young to the experience of ecclesial life by bringing them into a faith community and helping them to take part in it».<sup>92</sup>

<sup>92</sup> C 35

«The Eucharist and the sacrament of Reconciliation, celebrated with care, are means of exceptional value for education to christian liberty, to conversion of heart and to a spirit of sharing and service in the ecclesial community».<sup>93</sup>

<sup>93</sup> C 36

We must therefore revise the way in which we carry out our daily work for the young. We must move gradually: «Imitating God's patience», say the Constitutions, «we encounter the young at their present stage of freedom. We then accompany them, so that they may develop solid convictions and gradually assume the responsibility for the delicate process of their growth as human beings and as men of faith»;<sup>94</sup> but it should be always clear in

<sup>94</sup> C 38

our educational projects that «we introduce the young to a conscious and active participation in the Church's liturgy, the summit and source of all christian life».<sup>95</sup>

<sup>95</sup> C 36

This introducing the young «to a conscious and active participation in the Church's liturgy» means, in practice, introducing them to the paschal mystery. In Don Bosco's method of education it meant building up an awareness of faith and of the friendship of living with Jesus Christ in the Eucharist.

A fundamental attitude of this kind requires, among other things, careful pedagogical attention to the following *six eucharistic aspects*:

1. «conversion»: without a sense of sin it is impossible to understand the central and indispensable place of Christ; and on the other hand, without a deep understanding of the truth of love, sin will be incomprehensible;
2. «enlightenment» by the Word of God: only the light of the Gospel can provide a valid response to life's pressing problems;
3. awareness of the «real presence» of Christ in the New Covenant; we cannot insist too strongly on the need to make known and understood the wonders of the sacramental character of the Church in the celebration of the sacrifice of the Mass;
4. «living incorporation into Christ»: sacramental communion is the true cradle of the new Man; it should be continually presented and inculcated as the source of deep convictions and as strength for courageous christian behaviour;
5. «mission»: being the Body of Christ in the world requires the daily commitment to take part in his saving activity; one of the charac-

teristics of our educational work must be to introduce young people to the apostolate;

6. finally, the friendship of «adoration», not forgetting its reparation aspect. Don Bosco gave special importance to the fact of having Jesus in the house, close at hand and available to us; the inculcating of the Emmanuel mystery banishes the depression of feeling lonely, and ensures that each one has a strategic starting point for the revival of his appreciation of the good of his own existence.

There you have some guidelines for drawing up practical programmes.

A little earlier I mentioned the step by step pedagogical approach. Initiation to the eucharistic mystery is a dynamic and pedagogically creative process, which develops gradually as those to whom it is addressed grow in their understanding of the paschal events, and the consequent demands they make for faith in personal and social life.<sup>96</sup>

<sup>96</sup> cf. Eph 4,13

But going slowly is no excuse for stopping half-way or, worse still, for not starting at all. It keeps always clearly in mind the goal to be achieved, and the process is no longer gradual if there is not a continual movement towards the objective. It always supposes therefore a pedagogical and concrete growth which provides a permanent stimulus to those who want to be true christians and live by the Eucharist.

And that leads me to repeat with deep conviction what I said at the outset: the theme of the Eucharist is a vital one for us; it is the measure of our spirit and activity!

## A Marian devotion which leads to the Eucharist

In conclusion, dear confreres, I suggest to you a stimulating aspect suited to the Marian Year we are at present living. I will mention it only briefly without developing the idea. I am thinking of the eucharistic perspective of Don Bosco's devotion to our Lady.

The 1860s were a critical period in the Italian Risorgimento, especially in Piedmont. Everything seemed to be conspiring against the Church. Don Bosco watched attentively, suffered, and then went into action. He saw in the rebirth of eucharistic devotion and of that to Mary Help of Christians the two columns on which to lean to avert catastrophe.

In a political and cultural context which compelled the Pope and the Church to live in a «state of siege», he could find no better course of action than to place unlimited trust in the mystery of the Eucharist and the powerful intercession of the «Help of Christians».

Though he was not a theologian by profession, he sensed as a pastor and educator that the line of force of the faith passes always through the Eucharist with the motherly mediation of Mary.

On 30 May 1862 (the year and month of the first salesian profession ceremony!) Don Bosco narrated his famous «dream of the two columns» which rose «in the midst of an endless sea». One was surmounted by a statue of Mary Immaculate at whose feet a large inscription read «Auxilium christianorum»; the other, far loftier and sturdier, supported a Host of proportionate size and bore beneath it the inscription «Salus credentium».<sup>97</sup> They are the two who have been raised from the dead:

<sup>97</sup> BM 7, 107 ff.

Christ and Mary, the new Adam and the new Eve, who guide the Church!

The «flagship» – symbol of the Church, the «one ark of salvation» – after a furious struggle with the stormy sea and the concentrated attacks of the enemy ships, fought back and won through as soon as it had tied up to the two columns, i.e. the Eucharist and Mary Help of Christians.

Undoubtedly the dream has a strong apologetics message, but it also expresses Don Bosco's state of mind and deep convictions.

In December of the following year, 1863 – writes Don Ruffino – our Father gave as the Strenna for 1864 «Devotion to the Blessed Sacrament and to Mary», taking up once more the dream of the two columns. «Listen carefully to what I say. Picture to yourselves a huge globe hanging at its poles from two columns. On one is written: 'Regina mundi', and on the other 'Panis vitae'». The columns give out «a very brilliant light», while places remote from them are «shrouded in darkness».<sup>98</sup>

<sup>98</sup> BM 7, 354

Jesus and Mary are for Don Bosco people who are alive and living in history; they intervene powerfully in favour of the Church. Mary leads to Jesus, but his real presence to which she leads is that of the eucharistic mystery.

Away beyond every contingent and limited social and political situation, there remains as a living and contemporary fact the perennial and prophetic significance of the two columns. To them we too must have recourse in our interior life and in our pastoral and pedagogical commitment to the education of the new Man.

I think it will be meaningful to recall here the moving episode concerning the foundation of the house at Liege in Belgium, which emphasizes this

relationship. Mgr Doutreloux, the energetic Bishop of that city, had gone to Turin on 7 December 1887. Don Bosco was seriously ill at the time. The Superiors, who had already discussed with Don Bosco the Bishop's request for a foundation, told him that the project would have to be delayed because of lack of the necessary personnel. On the following morning, the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, the Bishop went personally to greet Don Bosco who, to the surprise of all the others, gave him an immediate affirmative reply. What had happened in the meantime? Our Father had said to his Secretary, Don Viglietti, that morning: «Get some paper, take your pen and write down what I am about to say: These are literally the words which the Immaculate Virgin said to me when she appeared to me during the night: 'It is the wish of God and of the Blessed Virgin Mary that the sons of St Francis de Sales should go and open a house at Liege in honour of the Blessed Sacrament. There public honour began to be given to the glories of Jesus, and from there the same glories must spread to all your houses and communities, and specifically to the young people who will be entrusted to their care all over the world. Feast of Mary's Immaculate Conception. 1887'. And there he stopped. While he had been dictating he wept and sobbed; and he was moved with emotion for quite some time afterwards».<sup>99</sup>

<sup>99</sup> MB 18, 438-439

Do you not think that this is an emblematic incident which, while revealing the Marian heart of our Father as he lay dying, manifests the living and concrete trend of his Marian devotion to Jesus in the Eucharist?

It must be our hope and prayer, dear confreres, that Don Bosco, going beyond the mentality and

language of his time, will always remain – a hundred years after his death – our Teacher and Guide towards the living presence of Christ who involves us in the wonderful sacramental gift of the New Covenant.

Each day Mary leads us to Christ. And may Christ be always for us the Emmanuel of the Church's liturgy and of the tabernacle

Dear confreres, let 1988 reawaken in our hearts the salesian spirit in so intense a form that with intelligence and courage we shall be able to renew through the Eucharist Don Bosco's legacy in our pastoral work for the young and the poor.

I send you my cordial greetings and best wishes, especially for 14 May!

With hope and trust in the Lord,

Fr Egidio Viganò

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Fr E. Viganò". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'F' and 'V'.

### 3. RULINGS AND DIRECTIVES

---

#### **3.1 THE HOUSE CHRONICLE: AN OBLIGATION CALLING FOR FIDELITY**

*The Secretary General*

Art. 178 of the General Regulations gives practical norms for the preservation of the living patrimony of our communities, as a stimulus and sign of fidelity to the memory of the developments taking place in the Congregation with God's help. The article says that (the rector) «should keep the archives in order and up to date, and compile or see to the compiling of the house chronicle». By referring the primary responsibility to the rector as the animator of community life, the text of the Regulations highlights the importance of the archives for the history of communities and, in close association with this, of the HOUSE CHRONICLE.

We shall dwell on this latter obligation, which our tradition has always considered a family characteristic, so as to indicate some practical norms for improving the situation.

##### **1. The importance of the house chronicle**

It is not difficult to understand the importance of the house chronicle when one reflects on the sources of the history of our origins. We can say in fact without hesitation that the historical details of the Valdocco Oratory, of the origins of our Society and of the entire life of our Founder have been compiled to a great extent from the «chronicles» which Don Bosco's first sons and collaborators took such pains to draw up. This subsequently became a characteristic of our Family as we have said: the first Salesians were intuitively aware of the importance of collecting and passing on the

details of everything that happened at the Oratory, especially items which involved Don Bosco directly, and they gave themselves wholeheartedly to a laborious task of which we at the present day are able to reap the benefits. In our central historical Archives we have many of these «chronicles» of the early days: one need only mention Don Bonetti's «History of the First Twenty-five Years of the Oratory», and the chronicles of Don Ruffino, Don Rua, Don Barberis, etc. The author of the «Biographical Memoirs» explicitly acknowledges that the rich documentation he used was drawn to a great extent precisely from these sources. Don Lemoyne wrote in fact: «Don Ruffino and Don Bonetti are absolutely trustworthy as witnesses... We have linked their two chronicles together because one supplements the other... And to their testimony we shall add the highly authoritative witness of Don Michael Rua, of Mgr Cagliero and of other veteran Salesians» (cf. BM VI, 283; VIII, 396).

In connection with the chronicles of the individual houses we find in the same Biographical Memoirs a conference given by Don Bosco to the assembled rectors on 2 February 1876, in which he warmly recommends this duty. He put it like this: «Here and now, what is most urgent is that each rector write a summary history of his own school, from its opening to the present time, and then go on to chronicle all important happenings...» He recalled his own practice and explained the reasons for it: «I have already briefly jotted down various items concerning the Oratory from its beginnings until now; in fact I have written a detailed account of many things up to 1854. From that year on we concentrate on the Congregation as such, and the subject matter becomes much vaster and more complex. I see this work as very useful to those who will follow after us and as redounding to God's greater glory. And so I shall strive to continue writing» (cf. BM XII, 52).

The same idea is repeated by Don Bosco in his introduction to the Memoirs of the Oratory: «To whom will this work be of use? It will serve as a guide for overcoming future difficulties by past experiences; it will show how God has always been our guide in everything...» (MO, p. 16).

From this conviction of the Founder the Salesians learned to hand on the memory of works and individuals; and we can see for ourselves from our Archives how the subsequent foundations of the Salesians and Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, especially in the Missions, have been amply documented in a wonderful way.

And so we can understand why the Regulations continue to recall at the present day the importance of keeping chronicles: it is a question of remaining faithful to our history, of a duty of praise and gratitude to the Lord for what he has done through each Salesian and every community, and of a courageous trust in the future.

The need today is to endorse this obligation: we are aware in fact that the sensitivity shown by the first Salesians in this field has fallen off to some extent, and there are several places where the chronicle has been largely left aside!

## **2. Those responsible for keeping the chronicle**

The Regulations indicate who has the obligation for compiling the chronicle.

According to our tradition, the primary responsibility obviously rests on the rector in his role of animator of community life, and in consequence as the one responsible for organizational aspects of the community and its work. The recording of the history of each work forms part of the concern of the rector, in so far as his ministry includes the preservation of everything the confreres and their collaborators have succeeded in doing in the spirit of Don Bosco.

It is not stated however that the rector must write the chronicle himself. The article of the Regulations says in fact: «compile or see to the compiling». What the rector must do therefore is find an able and sensitive person who will write the chronicle carefully and keep it up to date.

One must insist on the fact that the one chosen should in fact be «able» to write the chronicle, i.e. that he should be aware of the main criteria to be applied in the drawing up of a document that will be valid from a historical point of view.

Emphasis too needs to be laid on the timely updating of the chronicle; it should not be written up at long intervals with the risk of losing the vivid expression of events and allowing the document to deteriorate into a dreary and shabby summary.

Here we may mention an objection that is frequently heard: there is no time for these «bureaucratic» obligations! The best response is perhaps given by the example of Don Bosco and our first missionaries, men dedicated to a quite extraordinary apostolate but who nevertheless found the necessary time to write for the benefit of those who would follow them.

### **3. The content of the chronicle**

It is very important that the chronicle be compiled according to specific criteria, in order to provide a valid document for those who will come along later and look in it for characteristic aspects of our charisma. The chronicle in fact is neither a simple diary nor an enlarged calendar, but should be a book from which one may glean the physiognomy of a community or a work and which highlights the more significant events of the community's life.

The fundamental criteria is certainly that of seeing to it that by reading it over a year one can get an idea of the way the community is made up, especially as regards personnel, the activities that have been carried out, and events of an educative or pastoral nature that have marked the year: events that should be written up with the concern to pass on to posterity what was most significant about them.

Following this criterion it is possible to list certain items which should be found in the chronicle every year:

- a. A description of the community and its work: each year the chronicle should begin with the presentation of the salesian community (the individual members with their respective duties) and of the work (in its various sectors, with the collaborators, young pupils, members of the faithful etc. involved);

- b. The community's programme: that of the salesian community as such and also, when possible, those of the various sectors of the work;
- c. The more important feasts and events: these should be presented so as to include their more interesting aspects and should be accompanied by adequate documentation (photographs, newspaper reports, etc.);
- d. Characteristic and important visits: of superiors, of religious and civil authorities, of other guests who have enriched our salesian spirit, etc. Special reference should be made to the canonical visitation of the provincial, and also to the extraordinary visitation when the latter takes place;
- e. Evaluations carried out at the end of the year or at other special times.

These are only examples of what should appear in the chronicle; the creativity of the chronicler will find many other items for inclusion.

It will also be useful if to the chronicle are attached the various local newsletters, bulletins etc.; these are valuable sources of information.

#### **4. Photographic documentation**

As already stated, the chronicle should be accompanied by a good selection of photographs to be suitably preserved in the house archives as an integral part of the chronicle itself. Nowadays photography has been developed to an extent which permits of a much better and precise documentation than was once the case; but if this is to be realized in practice some individual needs to be given the specific task of looking after such documentation. There is no need for a superabundance of photographs, but it is important to have such documentation of essential matters and that it be given proper attention; in this field too we must have in mind that what

we want to do is to pass on historical souvenirs to the young confreres who will come after us.

With regard to photographs there are two points that should be safeguarded:

- a. Photographs preserved in this way should be accompanied by written details, so that at a future date it will always be possible to say precisely to what event or persons they refer. Each print should therefore carry the date, place, nature of the event, and persons included.
- b. Photographic documentation of more important events should be sent to both the Provincial Centre and the Secretary General at the Generalate, for preservation for the use of everyone. This is a point which calls for loving interest!

There may be some particular events for which audiovisual documentation may be appropriate in addition to the usual photographs, e.g. by way of film, audiocassette, videocassette, etc. In these things the spirit of religious poverty will naturally be observed.

## **5. Synthesis of the chronicle for the central Archives**

A praiseworthy custom which characterized our Society from its beginnings was to send copies of house chronicles to the centre of the Congregation, to make them available to more members of the Salesian Family. In Don Bosco's conference to the rectors already quoted, we read: «Each year the rector should have this chronicle clearly transcribed into a large ledger which is to remain in the school archives, while the original or another copy should be sent to Turin; in this way the superiors will be thoroughly acquainted with the functioning of every school and have a good idea of our Congregation's history» (BM XII, 52).

This practice continued in the Congregation for a considerable time; but with the big increase in the number of houses, the superiors no longer asked for the full chronicle of each house but only for a yearly summary.

It is important to note the obligation imposed on Provincial Secretaries: «Every six years there is to be sent to the Secretary General a summary of the chronicle of each house, indicating its principal events and the more important stages in its growth...» (cf. «Juridical elements and administrative practice in provincial government», n. 170).

In practice: every year the rector will see to the drawing up of a summary of the house chronicle covering the more important events (with adequate documentation) and will send it to the Provincial Secretary. The latter in turn will prepare the synthesis to be sent to the Secretary General every six years.

All this will provide a great contribution to a knowledge of the Congregation and its history.

It is hoped that the value of these brief norms will come to be better understood, for the good of each house and the Congregation as a whole. Don Bosco, the centenary of whose death we are celebrating, provides us with an example and encouragement.

## 4. ACTIVITIES OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL

---

### 4.1 Chronicle of the Rector Major

After his return from his journey to Latin America (cf. AGC 323) the Rector Major was involved for the entire month of October in the Bishops' Synod, and for greater convenience stayed during this period in the salesian community at the Vatican. In the Synod's general assembly he made a speech and contributed also a written intervention (cf. n. 5.1 of the present issue of the AGC), and was particularly active within the Italian language group, to which he transferred because of his special interest in the pressing problems to be discussed in that group. At weekends he returned to the Generalate to deal with accumulated correspondence and other urgent matters.

From 31 October to 2 November he was at Battersea, London, to celebrate with the confreres and members of the Salesian Family the centenary of the arrival of the Salesians in Great Britain.

Zagreb welcomed him from 6 to 9 November for the Team Visit to the Provinces of Yugoslavia, which was followed immediately by the opening of the plenary session of the General Council.

With the members of the Council he made the annual retreat from 15 to 21 November in the house of the Discalced Carmelites at S. Croce (Bocca di Magra); the preacher was the Bishop of Leghorn, Mgr Alberto Ablondi.

The Ligurian province profited by the presence of the Rector Major in their territory to arrange a meeting at La Spezia on the theme of the Synod; confreres from all the houses took part, together with representatives of the FMA. At the end of the retreat the annual «Feast of the Rector Major» was celebrated at Genoa, characterized by interesting periods of discussion with various youth groups, and the making of their promise by numerous Cooperators.

During the Council session itself the Rector Major was able to make three short journeys:

- to Brescia (27-29 November) to celebrate the silver jubilee of the technical school, which was combined with the opening of the Don Bosco centenary year at a civic level; he took the opportunity at the same time to meet the postnovices at Nave and to have a meeting with the Salesian Family and local inhabitants at Darfo, on the theme of the Synod;

– to Trent (6-8 December) for celebrations to mark the centenary of the arrival of the first Salesians; he took the opportunity also to meet young people and members of the Salesian Family at Bolzano;

– to Liege, Belgium (12-13 December), to celebrate the centenary of Don Bosco's decision to send the Salesians to that city.

## 4.2 Activities of the Councillors

### The Councillor for Formation

After the Team Visit to the provinces of Spain and Portugal, which took place at Fatima from 2 to 9 August, Fr Paolo Natali prepared a number of journeys for the purpose of making contact with those responsible for formation in various provinces which he would be visiting between 6 September and 31 October.

The objective of these visits was to follow up and ensure the realization of the prescriptions of the FSDB and of the Provincial Formation Directories as regards the structure of formation communities, the training of teachers and those in charge of formation, the improvement of methods of formative activity, the content of each specific phase and the continuity between them, the efficacy of the

pastoral experiences and study programmes.

In each province visited he had meetings with the provincial and provincial council, the provincial formation commission, the formation guides and teachers in the individual communities and study-centres (where he also met with the house council when convenient), and with the young confreres in formation. In some provinces he was able to spend a morning of discussion with the rectors and an afternoon with young confreres in their first five years of priesthood.

And so, after the Team Visit to the provinces of the English-speaking Region (September 6-12), he visited successively the Provinces of Mexico-Mexico (September 14-18), Mexico-Guadalajara (18-22), and Central America - Guatemala (23-27).

He gave particular attention:

– in Mexico-Guadalajara to the interprovincial theologate at Tlaquepaque, to the new premises for the formation community and study-centre, which is already in process of becoming affiliated to the UPS; and to the prenovitiate for Salesian Brothers at San Luis Potosi, its buildings (which house also the aspirants), and the formation team;

– in Mexico-Mexico to the interprovincial postnovitiate which has been transferred to Huipilco-Tlapan; to the prenovitiate for Bro-

thers at Queretaro, one of the formation structures which has been given most care; it was here that a discussion took place with those responsible at provincial and local level on the formation plan for the Brother from the prenovitiate to the end of the practical training period;

- in Central America (which is experiencing a flourishing of vocations in both number and quality) to the theologate at Guatemala in view of the formation, updating and intelligent movement of personnel who must be trained for future needs, and to the unification of criteria for admissions.

Returning to Rome at the end of September, Fr Natali left once again for the same purpose and was away throughout October on visits to some European provinces: Yugoslavia, Ljubljana (JUL) and Zagreb (JUZ); North (BEN) and South (BES) Belgium; and North (FPA) and South ((FLY) France.

In the various meetings a common interest and practical desire for improvement were shown:

- as regards the composition of formation communities, sometimes reduced to a too small number of confreres in formation, and therefore compelled to combine confreres in specifically different phases;

- as regards study-centres, the seriousness of their structure and approach, the importance given to certain disciplines and to pastoral

applications, and the greater or less possibility of integrating into their programmes the contents indicated by the FSDB.

For this purpose information was obtained about the Faculties at Zagreb and Ljubljana; study programmes were examined and meetings held with those responsible (Rectors and Deans) of the following study-centres: the CKS (Centrum voor Kerkelijke Studiken) in North Belgium; the IET (Institut d'Etudes Theologiques), an inter-religious Institute in South Belgium; and at Paris the CENTRE SEVRES (Higher Institute of Philosophy and Theology of the Jesuits) and the INSTITUT CATHOLIQUE.

As regards the formation process and fidelity to the criteria of our FSDB, some guidelines were agreed on. Numerous meetings were held, among them one with the provincial formation commissions of both French provinces, which took place at Ressina for a full day and was attended also by the Regional Councillor (who was making the canonical visitation of the Lyons Province at the time) and by both provincials.

On his return to Rome Fr Natali spent the first part of November in visits to the novitiates of Lanuvio and Pinerolo, to the theological studentate of Turin-Crocetta, the community of the theologians at Rome-Gerini, that of the post-novices at San Tarcisio and that of the student priests at Rome-Testaccio.

Meanwhile at headquarters the Department was preparing its contribution to the course of ongoing formation organized by the Youth Pastoral Department, for which it provided animators for its whole duration.

Various other contacts took place to obtain information about the experiences of other Institutes in the area of formation, and a course of ongoing formation was organized for those in charge of formation among the Capuchins.

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

After the ending of the seventh plenary session of the General Council, Fr Vecchi animated a week of deeper study of the new constitutional text in the Province of Portugal, attended by some forty confreres. Immediately afterwards he took part with the Rector Major and other members of the Council in the Team Visit to the provinces of the Iberian peninsula. This was followed in turn by a two-day pastoral conference in the Roman Province (28-29 August) at which he developed the theme: «Formation and shared responsibility of lay people in the educative and pastoral community».

In September he was in the United States for the Team Visit to the provinces of the English-speaking

Region at Ipswich (Boston), and then came back to Rome for a seminar (Sept.21-25) at the Generalate on «Salesian educational and pastoral praxis and the Educational Sciences» the conclusions of which will be found elsewhere in the present issue of the AGC (cf. n. 5.2).

There followed a week at New Delhi (27 Sept - 3 Oct.) to take part in a study group, verify the manner of organization of the National Pastoral Centre, and put the final touches to the organization of a course to be held in 1988. He then left for South America where he began at Porto Alegre with a meeting with the national pastoral team for the reformulation of a plan for salesian youth spirituality in harmony with the cultural and ecclesial culture of that area. At Rosario, Argentina, the pastoral teams of the seven provinces of the Plata area came together to discuss the possibilities and limitations of animation in their various provinces, and decided on new methods for an interchange of guidelines and experiences at inter-provincial level. Fr Vecchi then took part in meetings at Buenos Aires and Rio Gallega to consider pastoral work for vocations. Finally he spent some days in the Province of Bolivia, where he met with the Provincial Council and the rectors to consider the pastoral plan and the experience gained in the field of group work among the young.

In early November he accompanied the Rector Major in the visit to the Provinces of Ljubljana and Zagreb.

In the meantime the Youth Pastoral Department had sent out to the provinces Aid n. 12 «The salesian animator in the youth group», the dossier PG 2, and the volume «Youth emargination and salesian pedagogy» which collects together the papers given and the experiences related at the three seminars which took place in 1986.

At the Generalate on 3 November the 22nd course of ongoing formation began, arranged this time especially for vocation animators, rectors of aspirantates and reception communities, and those in charge of pre-novitiates: a course prepared in collaboration with the Formation Department. 27 confreres took part, representing 25 provinces. At the same time our University had laid on a course for those working in education with 24 participants between SDBs and FMAs from various parts of the world. Fr Vecchi contributed several talks on the preventive system and the state of the salesian school at the present day.

Finally, in response to an invitation to give particular attention to the era of youth, facts were collected concerning our work among young university students in Europe, and a study meeting on this theme has been convened for April 1988.

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

Between July and November Fr Sergio Cuevas took part in the first place in the various Team Visits programmed by the Rector Major and Council: at Fatima (2-8 August) for Spain and Portugal; at Ipswich, USA (8- 13 Sept.) for the English-speaking Region; and at Zagreb (7-9 November) for the Provinces of Yugoslavia.

In Italy he was present at the meeting of new rectors in Rome on 19 and 20 August, and then presided at Turin over the meeting of salesian musicians from Europe, in which the FMA also took part. At this encounter more than 100 persons, including professors, teachers, choir-masters and composers analysed the place of music in salesian environments at the present day. Various artistic and musical initiatives for 1988 were studied, and contacts were made with a view to the relaunching of education in music in a pastoral and youthful context; foundations were laid for the organization of an association to bring together all salesian musicians scattered around the world.

Before the Team Visit in USA, Fr Cuevas visited the Cooperators Centres in Puerto Rico, and after the Boston meeting went on to El Salvador in Central America to make contact with the groups of the Salesian Family.

In late September he was in the Province of Manaus (Brazil) for the animation of delegates for the Salesian Family and Social Communication, and had very useful meetings with the Cooperators at various centres. The same work was subsequently repeated at Curitiba in the Province of Porto Alegre, where more than a hundred Cooperators and their delegates met together to study more deeply the content of their new Regulations of apostolic life.

Before leaving Brazil he took part at Sao Paulo in a meeting with provincial delegates for social communication held to review the work of the salesian publishing house at Mooca, and also had a discussion on the meaning of belonging to the Salesian Family with those responsible for the various groups working in the territory of the Sao Paulo Province.

Continuing the visits for animation he went on in the first week of October to Argentina for meetings which had been arranged at Cooperator centres in the Bahia Blanca Province, and which involved also the Past Pupils and other groups of the Salesian Family.

Discussions for reflection and programming took place also with those in charge of social communication, and time was found for visits to our formation communities and the John XXIII Institute.

At Buenos Aires Fr Cuevas was present with Fr Jose Reinoso, central delegate for the Cooperators, and with the local delegates at a meeting of the Cooperators provincial council. A day was also given to a meeting for animation and planning purposes with those responsible for the Don Bosco publishing house of Buenos Aires.

From 5 to 13 October he was in the Chilean Province where he visited the Cooperators' centres of Punta Arenas and Puerto Natales in Patagonia. Here too were studied forthcoming programmes to be transmitted by the «President Ibañez» salesian radio. At Santiago he met with Cooperators from the centres in the country's central zone, and took part in the celebrations for the centenary of the arrival of the Salesians organized by the Don Bosco Past Pupils. Several days were also dedicated to the social communication sector with various meetings and visits, and he took part in a study session with the salesian provincial council. Finally he shared in some celebrations held to mark the eightieth birthday of Cardinal Silva Henriquez.

Returning to Rome he was present with the Salesian Oblates of the Sacred Hearts at Tivoli for a study-day on the particular charisma of their congregation.

From 23 to 27 October Fr Cuevas took part in the pilgrimage of the

Salesian Family to Jasna Gora, Czestochowa (Poland, and in the congress which followed, and later at the training session for delegates who animate the various local centres in the Polish Provinces.

Immediately after his return to Rome he left once again for Australia, where in addition to becoming acquainted with salesian works he had meetings with Cooperators, and especially with their leaders and delegates, and with those responsible for the preparation of the coming Asian-Australian Past Pupils Congress to be held at Melbourne from 28 August to 3 September 1988. This will be one of the significant events marking the centenary of the death of Don Bosco in that region.

Back in Rome after the Team Visit to Yugoslavia, he launched the work of the first seminar on salesian periodicals for youth at Turin-Valdocco from 23 to 28 November 1987.

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

In the period between 30 July and 15 August Fr Luc Van Looy preached two retreats for SDB and FMA missionaries, the first at Sikasso (Mali) for those of Mali, Ivory Coast and Guinea Conakry, and the second at Parakou (Benin) for the missionaries from Benin and Togo.

On the Feast of the Assumption,

15 August, he inaugurated the new novitiate at Lomé, Togo, and then went on to visit the communities of Lablé and Ebolowa (Cameroons) from 16 to 24 August. He returned to Rome for the period 25-30 August for the Study-Week on Salesian Missionary Animation.

He left once again on 5 September, this time to take part with the Rector Major and other Councillors in the Team Visit to the English-speaking Region. On his return journey he visited some organizations in Germany before reaching Rome on 16 September.

From 30 September to 4 October he was at Turin with the nineteen new missionaries who were preparing to leave for the mission territories to which they had been destined, and presented them with the missionary crucifix at the departure ceremony in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians on 4 October.

Four days later he left for the East, where he visited the communities of Jakarta and Timor and passed through many villages in Eastern Timor. From there he went on to Calcutta, and took the opportunity to visit the mission of Ranchi and the houses of Siliguri and Sonada.

From 25 to 30 October he was at Shillong to take part in the Week of Study on Evangelization in India.

In the evening of 31 October he arrived in South Korea, where he had the joy of presenting to all the

confreres the Constitutions translated into Korean.

Finally, between 4 and 9 November he visited the Japanese confreres working in Tokyo, Osaka and the island of Kyushiu, before returning to Rome.

#### **The Economist General**

On 18 July Fr Omero Paron held a meeting at Milan with the Provincial Economers of the Italian Provincial Conference, and together with the Secretary General (Fr Maraccani) dealt with the economic relationships between a salesian house and a parish.

On 5 August he assisted at the perpetual profession of four Daughters of Mary Help of Christians of the two Roman provinces at the Sacred Heart, Rome, and presided at the concelebration.

September 8 found him at the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians, Turin, to receive the first professions of the Pinerolo novices.

At Venice on 27 September he took part in a meeting of animators of youth groups in the Venetian Province of St Mark, and during the eucharistic celebration received the perpetual profession of two young Salesians.

On 29-30 September he presided at Loreto at a further meeting of the Provincial Economers of the Italian Provincial Conference, and was at

Turin on 8 October for the meeting of the Council of Administration of the SEI.

From 14 October to 7 November he visited the Provinces of Bombay, Bangalore, Madras and Calcutta in India.

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

Leaving Rome in the first week of August Fr Ignacio Velasco went directly to the Republic of Haiti, for the purpose of making a first contact with the situation in that country where later he was to carry out the visitation as part of the Extraordinary Visitation of the Antilles Province. In a stay of four days he was able to meet the superiors of the Delegation and some of the confreres at Petion-Ville and Port-au-Prince.

From Haiti he went on to Cuba, which also forms a provincial delegation of the same province of Santo Domingo, and there made the visitation. He was able to meet and speak with all the confreres and visit the salesian works at Havana, Santa Clara, and Santiago di Cuba. He was also able to spend some time with a group of 80 young people who were staying at our house of Compostela for an experience of living together.

On leaving Cuba he went by way of Panama to Ecuador, to make a

brief visit of animation to the provinces of Bogotá and Medellín.

He then returned to the Antilles, and after meeting the provincial and provincial council at the provincial centre he continued the visitation of the individual houses of the Dominican Republic.

Following this he returned once more to Haiti for the visitation of the various communities, and was able to take part in the closing days of the course in salesian spirituality being given there by Fr Martin McPake, Councillor General for the English-speaking Region, and Fr Morand Wirth, Vice-Provincial of Lyons, France. The province owes them a debt of gratitude.

The visitation of Haiti was followed by that of Puerto Rico, after which Fr Velasco returned once again to the Dominican Republic for a further visit to some of the communities in the capital and the area of Barahona.

Finally the visitation was brought to a close with the usual meetings with the various commissions, the assembled rectors, and the provincial council.

In the first week of November the Councillor returned to Rome.

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

After the summer session of the General Council, Fr Carlos Techera

left for Brazil where he immediately began the Extraordinary Visitation of the Province of St John Bosco, Belo Horizonte.

After some delay in obtaining the necessary visa, he arrived in Angola for a visit that had been planned for a long time. There he visited the communities of Luanda and Dondo, and the recently founded community at Kalulo; because of the difficulties prevailing in the area he was not able to go to Lwena.

One of the main topics figuring in discussions with the confreres was the urgent need for arrangements for the formation of candidates to the salesian religious life, who are already beginning to appear. It was also possible to clarify some prospects for the future in conversations with the Cardinal Archbishop of Luanda and the Apostolic Delegate.

On his return from Africa to Latin America, Fr Techera took part in a historic meeting at La Plata: here for the first time there came together the seven SDB Provincials and their delegates, the FMA Provincials and delegates, and those responsible for the Don Bosco Volunteers, Cooperators and Past Pupils. The meeting was opened with a presentation by the participants of the manner in which each group lived the charisma of our Founder in line with their own specific characteristics. This was followed by a session dealing with the organization of preparations for the «Don Bosco '88» centenary.

After celebrating at Montevideo the silver jubilee of his priestly ordination, Fr Techera continued his visitation of the Province of Belo Horizonte; he was also able to carry out the consultation for the appointment of the new provincial of the Province of Recife.

At Brasilia he was able to meet with the Apostolic Nuncio and various Bishops who expressed their gratitude for the work done by the Salesians in the Belo Horizonte Province, especially in the field of youth pastoral work with poorer children and those of the streets.

Profiting by the decision to delay the opening of the session of the General Council by a week, the Regional Councillor was able to make a brief visit to Bolivia, and subsequently to become acquainted with the situation in Nicaragua and Cuba by meeting the confreres of the two countries.

On Sunday 8 November he returned to the Generalate in Rome.

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

Leaving Rome on 3 August Fr Thomas Panakezham went first to Bombay to launch the consultation for the appointment of a new provincial to succeed Fr Chrys Saldanha, whose six-year period of office is coming to an end. He spent a week for this purpose, during

which he was able to visit almost all the communities of the province.

He then went to Hong Kong to accompany the Rector Major on his journey to mainland China: Peking, Canton and Shiuchow. Thanks are due to those who prepared the details of this journey with so intelligent a view to the future.

With this event concluded the Regional Councillor stopped in Thailand for a rapid visit to the formation communities of Sampran on his way back to India to begin the Extraordinary Visitation of the Madras Province.

In point of fact the visitation began in Sri Lanka, where the Madras Province has four communities. Although this country is suffering so much because of problems of an ethnic nature, it should be noted that our confreres are able to work without any great difficulties.

An important event which took place during the visitation of the province was the meeting at Madras between 8 and 10 September of the Indian Provincial Conference, at which was approved a document on the «Intellectual Formation in post-novitiates» in India. Two commissions were also appointed to study intellectual formation in the pre-novitiates, novitiates and studentates of theology. Approved too were the main points for the functioning of the «Don Bosco Youth Animation» project which will be centred on New Delhi.

The visitation of the Madras Province took two and a half months, from 24 August to 8 November. The Visitor noted with satisfaction a marked concern for the poor, an outstanding Marian devotion, and an increase in vocations.

After a brief stopover at the Provincial House in Bombay, Fr Panakezhham returned to Rome on 11 November.

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

During the months of August, September, October and the first week of November, Fr Martin McPake did a lot of travelling: in his province of origin, the United States, Haiti, Canada and once again in Great Britain.

After a brief rest in Scotland, he went to the Provincial House at Stockport and took part with the members of the provincial council in an evaluation of the work that had been done in the past year and the drawing up of a programme for the year about to begin.

Towards the end of August he left for the United States, where from 4 to 17 September he accompanied the Rector Major, first in a brief visit of animation to the Western Province and then in the Team Visit at Ipswich (Massachusetts); this in turn was followed by a further rapid visit of animation to some of the

communities in the New Rochelle Province.

From the United States he went on to Haiti, where together with the Vice-Provincial of the Lyons Province he joined the confreres of the Haitian Delegation at Petion-Ville for a week of salesian spirituality and reflection on the theme: «Don Bosco yesterday and today, in history and in the Constitutions».

After this meeting the Councillor went to Canada for the Extraordinary Visitation of the Canadian Delegation.

He looks back with pleasure on each of these visits. In the brief visit to Stockport in England he was able to admire the serious approach of the provincial council to its work. In the much longer visit to the United States there remain fresh in his memory the big meetings at San Francisco, Los Angeles, Boston, Newton and New Rochelle, at each of which the presence of the Rector Major was a source of joy, understanding and enthusiasm for the salesian vocation, and strengthened the family feeling between SDBs, FMAs, Cooperators and Past Pupils. Fr McPake recalls in particular the day at Newton when the Rector Major received the perpetual profession of three Salesians, and the press conference at New York during which Fr Viganò replied to questions from various journalists on the problems of China, Nicaragua, Haiti etc. In Haiti itself the

Councillor was able to admire the self-sacrificing work of the confreres of the Delegation, who are among those working in the greatest numbers for the poor.

Going from Haiti to Canada for the visitation was like passing from one extreme to the other as far as the social context was concerned: the only thing common to the two places was the spirit of the confreres. The work of Don Bosco is highly esteemed in Canada which is generally considered to be a rich country; if the number of our confreres were not so small we could get into the Canadian world of youth at almost any point.

The Regional Councillor completed his travels by returning to his province of origin with the Rector Major, this time to take part in the solemn commemoration of the centenary of the arrival of the first Salesians at London. The central theme of the encounter was: «The Church and Youth». The Rector Major had come directly from the Synod of Bishops in Rome and drew the attention of all the participants to the importance of the laity in the Salesian Family – to the great pleasure of the many lay people present!

After the celebrations the Rector Major and Fr McPake returned to Rome on a day when thick fog closed London Airport for several hours; the circumstance was a reminder of that day a hundred years

earlier when on 16 November 1887, shortly before Don Bosco's death, the first three Salesians arrived at Battersea on just such a day!

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

Cison di Valmarino (Treviso) was the venue in the first week of August for the annual meeting of the teaching staff and animators of the Faculties of Pedagogy and Theology of Benediktbeuern. Present with them and the German provincials was also the Regional Councillor.

This was the period during which the Extraordinary Canonical Visitation had been programmed for the Southern French Province (Lyons). The visitation by Fr Domenico Britschu began officially on 10 September and ended on 27 October.

Marroggia and Lugano (in the Ticino Canton of Switzerland) played host on 29 and 30 October to the members of the «Commission for salesian problems in Switzerland» (CPSS) and of the SATCH (cf. AGC 318). The agenda for the meeting left ample time for the final preparations for the Don Bosco centenary.

The provincials of Croatia and Slovenia, accompanied by their respective Councillors, met for the first time from 6 to 9 November at Zagreb with the Rector Major and

the Councillors for the various Departments: Formation, Youth Pastoral Work, the Salesian Family and Social Communications. The Regional Councillor stood in for the Councillor for the Missions.

The house of Berlin-Wansee hosted from 12 to 15 November the Provincial Conference of German-speaking provinces. The Provincial of North-Belgium was also present.

**The Regional Councillor  
for Spain and Portugal**

Leaving Rome at the end of July, Fr Jose Antonio Rico took part in the Team Visit to the Region at Fatima in Portugal from 2 to 8 August.

After a rest period, the Councillor was engaged in the first half of September in organizing the preparation of the salesian manual of prayer, the study plan for African confreres belonging to the Region, and the various initiatives to be realized during the Don Bosco Centenary Year. Following this he preached the retreat to the novices of the Madrid Province.

On 20 September he took up once again the visitation of the Seville Province which he had been compelled to interrupt in the previous May. The visitation continued until 31 October, with a brief interval for the autumn meeting of the Iberian Provincial Conference (24-25 October).

With the Extraordinary Visitation behind him, Fr Rico went to the course of ongoing formation taking place at Campello, where he passed on information concerning the life of the Congregation and the Region.

Finally he brought together the rectors of the Madrid Province for a preliminary meeting in preparation for the Extraordinary Visitation of their own province which will begin early in February 1988.

On 9 September he returned to the Generalate.

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

After the summer session of the General Council, Fr Luigi Bosoni had a meeting from 24 to 27 July with the Provincials of Italy and the Middle East to make concrete decisions for the implementation of the indications that had been given at the Team Visit. Options were made which were to be passed to the provinces before they made their plans for the new educational and pastoral year. These were stated in a letter sent out on 28 July.

On 1 August Fr Bosoni began in the name of the Rector Major the Extraordinary Visitation of the Middle East Province, which went on until 1 November and provided an opportunity for him to meet the Sal-

esians and Daughters of Mary Help of Christians of eight different countries spread over three continents, and to experience salesian work in places often in the news because of events of war, terrorism, poverty or famine.

The visit took him to Syria, Lebanon, Turkey, Israel, the West Bank, Egypt and Ethiopia. In Ethiopia, in addition to the confreres at Makalle and Adigrat he was able to meet also the Salesians and Daughters of Mary Help of Christians of Addis Ababa, Dilla and Zway, belonging to the Lombard and Emilian provinces.

The entire experience was rich in emotion and striking incidents, but also provided a great deal of satisfaction and food for thought. The Visitor was able to see at first hand how much Don Bosco's work is everywhere esteemed, and how his sons have been able to get into places where earlier it would have been thought impossible for them to be allowed to remain. He met really heroic confreres, and came to understand the vast nature of the harvest and the great need for courageous labourers.

On his return to Italy, Fr Bosoni had separate meetings with those responsible for three sectors of the Provincial Conference: youth pastoral work, formation, and financial administration. These were followed by the Council's annual retreat, the feast of the Rector Major, and

the beginning of the next session of the General Council.

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

The principal activities of Fr Augustyn Dziedziel, the Rector Major's Delegate for Poland, in the months from August to October were as follows:

Immediately after his arrival in Poland in August he was present at a meeting of the provincials, and made various visits for animation purposes to the SDB and FMA formation communities in particular. Subsequently he convoked and presided over a meeting of the Polish Provincial Conference.

He then accompanied on their journey to Africa the first four Polish confreres destined for the foundation of salesian missions in Uganda. These he left at Nairobi in Kenya, where they will spend a year making immediate preparations for their missionary work. With one of the new missionaries he then visited Uganda itself to obtain an idea of the situation there and the proposals offered us by the Archdiocese of Kampala.

Returning to Poland, the Delegate took part in the pilgrimage of the Salesian Family to the Marian sanctuary of Czestochowa, which marked the beginning in Poland of the celebrations for the DB'88 centenary year. He also took part in the

meeting of all the SDB and FMA provincials and local superiors, who had gathered to study the Regulations of Apostolic Life of the Cooperators. Present at both these events were also Fr Sergio Cuevas (Councillor General for the Salesian Family), Fr Jose Reinoso (Central Delegate for the Cooperators), and Mr Paolo Santoni (Cooperators' World Coordinator).

Before his return to Rome Fr Dziel had a further meeting with the Polish provincials.

#### **The Secretary General**

Between August and October Fr Francesco Maraccani presided over three meetings of provincial secretaries from different regions of the Congregation. They took place at:

- Rome, 7-11 September, for Central and Northern Europe;
- Barbacena (Brazil), 21-25 September, for the Brazilian provinces;
- Cumbayá (Ecuador), for the Pacific-Caribbean Region.

These meetings had been preceded in 1987 by similar encounters for the Italian and Middle East Region in Rome in April, and for the Region of Spain and Portugal at Seville in May. The aim of all the meetings was to obtain a deeper understanding of our particular law after

the promulgation of the new Code of Canon Law and the Constitutions, and to study some organizational aspects of the life of our provinces and communities. Particular emphasis was laid on communication at various levels, and the preservation of our history through the care of archives and centres of documentation.

Worthy of special note in this regard was the meeting at Barbacena in which the FMA provincial secretaries also took part. It was held at the Centre of Salesian Documentation which has been set up there to provide a service for all the Brazilian Provinces.

In the course of his journeys the Secretary General took the opportunity to visit some of the houses in the provinces through which he passed, and especially those involved in formation. In Brazil, in addition to the Province of Belo Horizonte (which hosted the meeting), he was able to spend a short time in the Provinces of Recife and São Paulo. In the Pacific Region, after the meeting at Ecuador and a visit to the houses of Quito, he made a short stop at Bogotá and Caracas. Everywhere he was able to get an idea of the living reality of the Congregation, and admire the work done by the confreres for the benefit of young people, and especially the most needy ones among them.

### 5.1 The Synod of Bishops.

#### Interventions of the Rector Major

*As stated in the Chronicle (cf. n. 4.1), the Rector Major, as one of the elected Superiors General, took part from 1 to 30 October in the Bishops' Synod on the Vocation and Mission of the Christian Laity in the Church.*

*We print the text of the two interventions he made during the course of the Synod: the first orally in the Assembly, and the second submitted in writing.*

#### 1. Formation of the Laity and Pastoral Work for Youth.

(Intervention made in the assembly hall, 8 October 1987)

*Holy Father,  
Venerable Pastors,  
Brothers and Sisters:*

The «Instrumentum Laboris» deals with the formation of the laity in para. 70 and following paragraphs. My contribution is concerned with an aspect of this which has been already mentioned by a previous speaker: the importance of a «pastoral project for youth» for ach-

ieving the formation of a valid laity.

1. It will not be out of place to recall once again what has been said so many times before: to the People of God as a whole, the Body of Christ and Temple of the Spirit, is addressed the mission of salvation in history and the call to holiness.

Before going more deeply into this and analyzing the necessary distinctions involved (and also to do this correctly) it is first necessary to emphasize what is common to all. The greatness and christian dignity of all members lies in the fact that they are children of God, members of the Body of Christ and living stones in the Temple of the Holy Spirit; the distinguishing characteristics of the various members from each other are to be found in special functions and services for the good of the common mission.

2. In this sense the whole Church, through the harmony of its components, is the great sacrament of salvation for humanity. The mutual concord between the common factors and the specific differences found in it could be expressed as follows:

- the whole Church is «secular», but not all its members are «lay»;

- the whole Church is «consecrated», but not all its members are «religious»;
- the whole Church is «contemplative», but not all its members are «monks and nuns»;
- the whole Church «evangelizes», but not all its members are «successors of the Apostles»;
- the whole Church is a «priestly people», but not all its members are «bishops and priests»;
- the whole Church is «kingly», but not all its members are «shepherds», etc.

The fact, for instance, that the Church has a «secular dimension» does not contradict nor rule out the particular sense of the «secular character» proper and specific to the laity (LG 31), but is rather a pressing invitation to analyse that sense. And an analogous treatment is necessary in the case of each of the other dimensions referred to.

3. Reflection on the mystery of the Church therefore must follow two lines, but it is really a question of two complementary aspects which are mutually indispensable: what is «common» to all and what is «specific» to the various groups. As far as pastoral work for the young is concerned, it is evident that the line to be followed is the first one: that of the common vocation. Youth, in fact, is that large portion of the People of God which

is growing in the common vocation as it moves towards specifically different callings.

On the other hand, youth is also that great portion of humanity which naturally experiences and at the same time makes part of itself the contributions of education for a gradual human advancement.

From both these points of view (the christian vocation of youth and cultural growth), a great innovation can be observed at the present day. Not without reason does one hear continual references to the «new evangelization» and «new education», and this not only as regards the young.

4. This objective reality is an invitation to Pastors to consider the complex youth condition in its entirety, overcoming any reductive and dualistic interpretation which would make pastoral work for youth nothing more than «evangelization» and «catechesis». It must include pedagogy too because this is called for by the very reality of «evangelizing by educating». It is sufficient to think of what christian parents must do with their children.

It is necessary therefore to include in the method of approach to youth pastoral work (with the differences called for by age and sex) also the complex cultural problem in education, if one really wants to heal the cleavage between the Gospel and culture. The task is specifi-

cally that of forming a christian who, because of the very fact that he is a christian, will be a competent and responsible citizen.

Para. 47 of the «Instrumentum Laboris» refers to «evangelization and inculturation»; the two must go together in a living and close union from the very beginning of the formation of young people.

The Gospel must be presented as the transcendent leaven and goal of human advancement in youth.

5. At the present day it has become imperative to draw up plans for youth pastoral work which are both practical and appropriate to the local situation, and in them it will be necessary to ensure that the salient points are clearly set out.

I refer briefly to some of them:

- a. A «youthful spirituality», embracing both festivity and daily routine, which should be alive and capable of expression in different forms according to the various charisms to which the Spirit gives rise, and which tends explicitly towards holiness. It is not a spirituality solemnly deduced from speculative principles, but rather one that looks to living models who practise it and that utilizes the young people themselves as its exponents. It involves the fostering simultaneously of interior assimilation and of the sense of apostolate, developed gradually through an adequate pedagogy of holiness;
- b. a «particular care of vocations» by creating an environment and contacts which will help in the discernment process through the renewed appreciation of the benefits of spiritual direction. This should be one of the most delicate characteristics of pastoral work among youth;
- c. a «strong sensitivity for the social and communal dimension». The process of socialization is one of the great signs of the times; it calls for revision in the fields of both evangelization and education; it gives rise to a real innovation in the practice of christian virtues and brings to light new perspectives in holiness;
- d. a «pedagogical ability» to follow young people through their period of cultural growth and their introduction to the world of work. Here one has to face up to the whole vast field of education and the school (with its humanities and technical sectors) which cannot remain extraneous to the care and attention of Pastors;
- e. and finally, though the list is not exhaustive, an «intelligent and pedagogical participation in expressions and manifestations of joy», of artistic and musical diversion activities, of the kind which arise naturally from the fertile creativity of youth.

6. It is opportune, especially, to emphasize that the Holy Spirit, the animating principle of the life of the Church, has shown a practical favour for this kind of pastoral work by raising up numerous charisms for the benefit of the young. It would seem obvious that all members of the People of God should give more attention to these initiatives of the Spirit, by discerning their values, by appreciating their originality, and by showing respect for the assignment of their fields of activity. Pastoral work for youth at the present day requires dialogue, both of the various charisms among themselves and more especially of the charisms with Pastors; it also demands a certain elasticity between parishes (and even rising above parish level), particularly in the big cities, so as to come to grips more realistically with the concrete youth condition.

7. In conclusion, the Formation of the Laity is indeed a gigantic challenge which presupposes the urgent drawing up of practical projects of pastoral intervention.

The «Instrumentum Laboris» has a stimulating statement in para. 33: «in a certain sense the other two states of life (i.e. priestly and religious) are subordinate to the lay state», which is equivalent to saying that in pastoral work a clearer and much greater emphasis should be laid on the part to be played by the Laity.

The Council has pretty well up-ended our notion of the Church's set-up. Formerly its frontiers were thought of as being manned by the clergy and religious; now, with the concept of the People of God as the leaven of humanity, we are asked to note that it is the laity who are the front-line troops, even though we recognize (as the quoted text goes on to say) that «from other points of view the others are subordinate in turn to the priestly and religious states».

This reference and stimulus become even clearer in the case of youth pastoral work: Pastors, Religious, and the adult Laity themselves are called upon to see their specifically distinctive characteristics as being directed to the fostering, shaping, care and ensuring of the common vocation of the young, so that in them may grow and mature the various specific vocations, among which is that of the well formed Laity itself.

Instead of turning a deaf ear to youth or of feeling ill at ease with them, we should remember with a smile the shrewdly perspicacious remark of the famous artist Picasso, as he talked about the way his artistic style had developed. «Learning to be young», he said, «requires a great deal of time!», which in our case means that Pastors, Religious and adult Laity should be aware that age has brought them wisdom,

and that on this account they have a valuable diploma which enables them to be of pastoral help to youth!

Thank you!

**2. For a positive description of the «lay person among the faithful».**

(Intervention in writing after the presentation of the language-group summaries)

What we are looking for is not a «definition» of the Lay person in the Church, but a «typological description» along the lines followed by Vatican II. Some difficulties and ambiguities that have been noted in the postconciliar period need clearing up.

1. During the first weeks of the Synod's work on the Vocation and Mission of the Lay person, there was a strong insistence on values common to all the members of the People of God. These values stem from the sacraments of christian initiation (Baptism, Confirmation, the Eucharist) and bestow on all the dignity of «children of God», of «disciples of Christ», of «members of the faithful», in the organic communion of the Body of Christ in history which is the Church.

The Lay person therefore, like all the rest, is a «member of the faithful» with all the rich qualities of vocation and mission that this implies.

Thus far everything is «positive».

2. Some Synodal Fathers on the other hand have insisted on the secular dimension in so far as this is proper to the whole Church: the People of God in fact, taken as a whole, must be the sacrament of salvation in living history (or «in saeculo»).

We have to recognize therefore a global characteristic of «secularity» for the whole Church. Pope Paul VI asserted, commenting on para. 40 of 'Gaudium et spes', that «the whole Church has an authentic secular dimension, intimately inherent in its nature and mission, which has its root deep in the mystery of the incarnate Word, and which is realized in different forms through its members» (to representatives of Secular Institutes, 2 February 1972).

The Lay person therefore, in common with all members of the faithful, is called upon to respond in a christian manner to the challenges and needs of men of our time.

3. Starting from these two contrasting points of view there came the proposal to leave aside (and even to correct) what is said of the «secular character» of the laity in para. 31 of 'Lumen gentium'. The use of the term «laity» or «lay person» could be suppressed, because «member of the christian faithful» would be sufficient. It would be merely a matter of developing the theme of the Common Priesthood and the prophetic and regal aspect

brought about by Baptism in the secular condition of all the People of God.

4. But if we were to proceed in this fashion, we should not be remaining faithful to the vision presented by Vatican II. And that in turn would not only be unacceptable, but would be of no help in clarifying the figure of the Layman.

There are those who say that the difficulty of description would pass instead to the priest and religious who would become «non-lay» people.

5. The Extraordinary Synod of 1985, twenty years after the Council, recommended a much deeper acceptance of the conciliar documents: «Theological interpretation of the Council's teaching», says the 'Final Report' at n.1.5, should be mindful of both the individual documents and their inter-connection. Only in this way will it be possible to explain the full meaning of the Council's decisions, which are often very complex».

The Report dedicates a whole section (II, C) to «The Church as Communion», emphasizing the participation and shared responsibility of the Laity (cf. II, C n. 6).

It then goes on to dedicate another section to «The Mission of the Church in the World», emphasizing the special importance of 'Gaudium et Spes': «We affirm the importance and timeliness of the Pastoral Constitution on the Church

in the Modern World, 'Gaudium et Spes'» (cf. II, D n. 1). In fact, «the Church as communion is a sacrament for the salvation of the world» (ibid.)

6. Now the documents of Vatican II speak of the historical condition of the Church in the world at two distinct levels: one for the whole Church taken globally as the People of God in the world, and the other for the Laity when describing their specific «secular character».

a. The «secular dimension» of the whole Church: this is a recognition of its historical character, expressed especially in 'Gaudium et Spes', e.g.: the Church «cherishes a feeling of deep solidarity with the human race and its history» (n. 1); «the presence and action of the Church in the world... which is the theatre of human history» (n. 2).

It «is inserted in the whole human family... it is a question of saving human beings, of building human society» (n. 3) etc.; cf. also nn. 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10.

b. The «secular character» of the Laity: this is a typological description which distinguishes the Laity from members in holy Orders and from Religious, in the sense that they are with them in being members of the faithful incorporated in Christ and constituted as People of God with the same dignity and in common

participation in the same vocation and mission in history, «they seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and directing them according to God's will. They live in the world, i.e. they are engaged in each and every work and business of the earth and in the ordinary circumstances of family life which, as it were, constitute their very existence» (LG 31).

7. We should not be surprised at this double level, which is characteristic of the aspect of mystery in the Church. Even from the «priestly» aspect reference is made to a priesthood which is «common» to all and to a «ministerial» priesthood proper to the ordained (cf. LG 10). So too with reference to the witness of the spirit of the beatitudes in the following of Christ: there is a deep spiritual attitude common to all (cf. the universal vocation to holiness, LG 39- 42; even the Laity must spread in the world the spirit of the beatitudes (LG 38, GS 72, AA 4), but there is also another one which is specifically part of the radical aspect of Religious (who by their state «give outstanding and striking testimony that the world cannot be transfigured and offered to God without the spirit of the beatitudes», LG 31).

8. To avoid confusion or leaping to incomplete conclusions we must analyze more deeply, along the lines

indicated by the Council, the proper and distinctive meaning of that specific «secular character».

Secularity, in general, should not be thought of in the context of a dualism that would oppose the World to the Church, but as the ensemble of the creatural values of the world in their historical development (in the «saeculo»), linked with the incarnation of the Word and destined to be gathered together in Christ (the Reign of Christ for the Reign of God! - passim in Vat. II).

In fact, «the mission of the Church is not only to bring men the message and grace of Christ, but also to permeate and improve the whole range of the temporal» (AA 5; cf. also 2 and 7).

It is not a question therefore of a simple existential factor of an exclusively sociological kind, added externally like a wrapping that will be discarded with the passing of time. The Fathers expressed the profound christian nature of such an intrinsic linkage by asserting that what is not assumed (by the Word - by christians) is not redeemed.

9. The special «secular character» of the Laity is not to be understood as some kind of dignity «additional» to that of being a christian, just as the ministerial priesthood does not as such confer a greater dignity than the common priesthood, though it implies a proper and spe-

cial function of salvation. The «secular character» consists in permeating human life with the baptismal riches of the «energy of the resurrection». The Laity consider that it is their christian vocation and mission to carry out this great task from a position within temporal values so as to assume, advance and multiply their autonomy. Through their efforts this autonomy reaches its fullness in its recapitulation in Christ.

And so the Laity intend «to carry out their earthly activity in such a way as to integrate human, domestic, professional, scientific and technical enterprises with religious values, under whose supreme direction all things are ordered to the glory of God» (GS 43).

This is the line followed in the encyclical «Redemptor Hominis» in which Christ is presented as the «Redeemer of the world! In him has been revealed in a new and more wonderful way the fundamental truth concerning creation, ... in him the visible world which God created for man - the world that when sin entered was 'subjected to futility' (Rom 8,20) - recovers again its original link with the divine source of Wisdom and Love» (RH 8).

The «proper» characteristic of the lay person therefore implies the assuming from within of the temporal realities of creation so as to promote and purify them through the

new kind of life that stems from christian initiation, harmonizing them in the vital synthesis of consolidation in Christ. He takes on the conditions of life common to all men and permeates them with the new riches flowing from the Gospel.

10. In this way the «typological description» of the lay person appears as something clearly positive, both from the christocentric point of view of the dignity common to all the People of God, and from the point of view of his specific ecclesial task to permeate and perfect the order of temporal reality with the evangelical spirit (cf. AA 5).

It is desirable therefore that the actual secular nature of the whole Church should be put forward in the first place, with the main global aspects of challenge and the need of redemption (culture, economy, the family, world of work, etc.), and then subsequently the «secular character» of the lay member of the faithful can be specified.

**Fr Egidio Viganò**

## **5.2 Seminar of salesian specialists in pedagogy.**

### **Summary of the work and conclusions.**

The Generalate in Rome was the venue from 21 to 26 September 1987 for a seminar on «Salesian

Educational and Pastoral Praxis and the Educational Sciences», organized jointly by the Department for Youth Pastoral Work and the Faculty of Educational Sciences of the Salesian Pontifical University. 76 Salesians from 29 provinces took part, including specialists in the educational sciences, pastoral animators and confreres carrying responsibility for government. Eight Daughters of Mary Help of Christians from the «Auxilium» Pontifical Faculty of the Educational Sciences and from the International Centre for Youth Pastoral Work were also among the participants.

The seminar was the culmination of a long period of preparation that had begun in February 1985, and had passed through various phases: the selection of those who would take part, preliminary soundings to identify topics of greater interest, the choice of specific themes, the sending out of invitations, the reaching of an understanding between those presenting papers, and the final organizational details.

The objectives of the seminar were explained by the Councillor General for Youth Pastoral Work at the opening session: to provide a response to the urgent need felt in various contexts for further attention to the pedagogical and educative dimension of our work; to reflect on the demands for renewal imposed on educational theory and practice by present-day developments in

the educational sciences; to analyze more deeply the relationship between educational and pastoral praxis and the educational sciences.

The work and conclusions of the seminar have been summarized in a report drawn up by an ad hoc group and given general approval by the participants.

The report reads as follows:

1. The work of the seminar began with a series of papers designed to provide a basis of history and ideals as a background against which discussions could take place.

First of all the place of the figure of Don Bosco was defined in the context of the cultural movement of his time and a period in history which has been investigated by scholars, both salesian and non-salesian (P.Stella). The commitment of Don Bosco and the first generations of Salesians to the study and utilization of the educational sciences was presented in depth (J.M.Prellezo). The manner of integrating the educational sciences into educational and pastoral practice in some recent significant pedagogical experiences was analyzed in detail (G.C.Milanesi). And the steps were described in the process which has led to the formation of a new awareness in the Congregation as regards our educational and pastoral commitment, and the formative requirements to which it gives rise (J. Vecchi).

The discussion which followed

the presentation of these initial papers revealed the fact that in the salesian environment, as also in the wider ecclesial context, a separation prevails to a great extent between educational and pastoral praxis and the educational sciences, even though there have been attempts to bring the two together which have met with a certain measure of success; these have not usually risen above the level of motivated opposition and eclecticism.

Among the reasons given to explain the lack of integration one that stands out is the fear of compromising the originality and specific nature of Don Bosco's pedagogical message by a dangerous synthesis with sciences founded on anthropological premises which are uncertain, ambiguous, and at variance with the christian view of life; but also pointed out was the fact that little trust could be placed in some educational sciences which lacked a clear epistemological basis and could not be convincingly verified in practice.

The need was expressed to go ahead with the detailed analysis of salesian experience in this sector, i.e. experiences of efforts to integrate practice and the educational sciences in typical environments of salesian work: schools, oratories, parishes, youth centres, professional training, etc.

Emphasis was laid on the veering towards pastoral aspects that had

taken place in the Congregation at both the level of reflection and that of general policy, without overlooking the risk of reducing education to pastoral work or pastoral work to education.

The importance was explained too of giving a clear place to education, with its own specific identity, in salesian apostolic commitment, defined as evangelizing activity among the young.

The second day's work began with the presentation for debate of closely connected problems concerning the relationship between pastoral work and education, especially in the light of recent Church teaching and various theological approaches (G.Groppa, E.Alberich, R.Tonelli).

Despite the very real theoretical differences in approach by the speakers and the practical difficulty of coping with ambiguous terminology, a basic convergence emerged as regards the unity of educative and pastoral action, ensured by the real coincidence of their final objectives (total salvation, evangelization, etc.), the distinction (but not opposition) between the two aspects of such action, and the necessary dialectic which guarantees its authenticity.

The subsequent discussion led to a recognition of the practical necessity of adopting in salesian practice the line which had emerged from the reflections of the recent General

Chapters (and the terminology used in official documents), which endorses the unity of educational and pastoral activity and the distinction between its two aspects; and the likely consequences were pointed out that would arise at the level of salesian life and identity if a unilateral overemphasis were to be given to one or other of the two complementary dimensions of apostolic action.

The more serious difficulties arise when a deeper theoretical study of the problem is undertaken. In this field the diversity of theological perspectives was noted and the practical implications involved in each of them were assessed; it was emphasized that there is an urgent need for a more satisfactory epistemological basis to the relationship between the theological and educational sciences, and for the production of a working synthesis with clear and well thought out options.

In connection with this last point the example can be quoted of the difference between the line of animation (preferred in Italy and Spain) and the line of christian service, witness and fellowship, backed by the liturgy (preferred in German-speaking areas).

Finally, note was taken of the difficulties experienced by a certain number of Salesians in coming to grips with these matters at a theoretical level, both because of an urgent need to get something done

and the lack of specific preparation in the matter at issue.

3. The third day of the seminar's work witnessed an attempt to provide a response to the need, that had emerged from the preceding work, to improve the educational set-up by the systematic utilization of the educational sciences.

In this perspective a wide though not exhaustive range of new requirements in the educational field was presented, arising from the more problematic factors in the life of youth, e.g. drug addiction (Tomas), religious indifference (Brecheisen), young people not yet evangelized (Nava), or from various sectors of salesian life, e.g. group activity (De Pablo), social communication (Bosco), pedagogical reflection (Nanni).

The study of the pedagogical challenges inherent in educational requirements was integrated with the analysis of themes of a general character already tackled in the first two days.

One of the particular points discussed was whether Salesians are sufficiently conscious of the need for systematic pedagogical reflection to enable them to work competently in the field of education. In this connection it was noted that, although there is in fact a growing awareness of the problem, it is in general still insufficient or provoked by external influences, and is nei-

ther reflexive nor adequate. In many cases the need for reflection, though recognized, is thwarted by the lack of supportive structures. It was said that the shortcomings noted were due in particular to a certain lack of centres and teams able to facilitate at intermediate levels (provincial and local) a mediation between the scientific results coming from the educational sciences and the practical needs of salesian work.

In connection with the concrete ways in which the educational sciences can be utilized for a progressive improvement of the salesian educational and pastoral work, some interesting proposals were put forward, such as giving greater importance to the salesian educative and pastoral plan; giving new vigour to centres, means and occasions for pedagogical experimentation; making use of the services provided by psychological, social and pedagogical consultation centres; establishing teams for educational animation at national or provincial level; making use of teacher-training institutes; publishing reviews for the spreading of principles of educational animation; practising the «scrutinium educationis»; supporting the valid and central place of educational evaluation at every level; applying to our own contexts general methods of analysis that have been devised.

In connection with these and other proposals, the main study centres of the Congregation, and in particular the Faculty of Educational Sciences of the UPS, were asked to take up the matter at the level of research and experimentation, leaving practical liaison and application to centres at a lower level.

4. In the final phases of the work (on the fourth day of the seminar) a deeper study was made of particular topics concerning the integration and exploitation of the educational sciences in the formation process of Salesians.

A first paper (Schepens) depicted the identikit of the mature Salesian in the light of the «Ratio», indicating the content and phases of his intellectual formation and practical formative experiences in view of his educational competence in the overall picture of integral salesian formation; from the point of view of method the speaker appealed for individual personalized supervision during the formation process, and especially during the practical training period.

A second paper (Arto) developed a detailed picture of the theoretical and practical demands which salesian praxis and identity make on the educational sciences, which should respond with scientific contributions and practical means for more immediate utilization.

The discussion of these topics highlighted the need for a preparation which will overcome a mere generic approach and lead to a satisfactory level of professional pedagogy for all Salesians, without excluding the possibility of a still more specialized formation, provided that this does not clash with the need for educators to be mobile when the needs of apostolic work may require it, as already happens in many social and ecclesial contexts.

The difficulty was noted of realizing in a relatively short time the ever more demanding process of the pedagogical formation of Salesians. The desirability was emphasized of making clear options at local level, and of assigning priorities within the many formative opportunities offered by the educational sciences, keeping in mind the perspectives of development and change present in society, in the Church and in the Congregation.

The discussion also identified more than a few difficulties that arise in intellectual formation because of the need for civil recognition of qualifications; there were tensions between professional and cultural requirements, between general formation and specialization, between the educational sciences and the preventive system (the preventive system in its charismatic essence as a means for a new understanding of the educational sciences?), between wisdom and scientific skill, between practical technique and mere theoretical knowledge.

Finally the desire was expressed that the Salesian should be trained to spread pedagogical culture and educative perspectives for lay collaborators and others working in the social field.

Summing up the discussions as a whole it is possible to pick out certain indications, some of them of a practical nature, which call for further thought and work.

Summing up the discussions as a whole it is possible to pick out certain indications, some of them of a practical nature, which call for further thought and work.

1. The first point to emerge was the need for salesian activity to be educationally competent at every level, beginning with individuals and going on to general guidelines, to specific projects in every sector, and to individual deeds of an educational and pastoral nature. This can be achieved through a more intensive mutual exchange of information and stimulus between the organs of the Congregation, centres of study and animation, and confreres working directly in the field. From this point of view it would be desirable to organize further periodic meetings among the various components of the dialogue to which this present seminar has given rise. Study should also be given to the establishing of suitable forms of coordination among persons and centres in the Congregation who

are actively involved in the study, teaching and application of the educational sciences.

2. The educational qualification of apostolic activity demands an incisive effort during initial and ongoing salesian formation. Contributions to this end can be made not only by the Congregation's centres of study and formation (the Faculty of Educational Sciences of the UPS, the novitiates, post-novitiates and studentates), but also by the intermediate structures of animation. From this point of view it appears urgent and indeed unavoidable that the competence acquired by confreres in various specialized pedagogical sectors should be utilized on an institutional and not merely individual basis, so as to ensure for the praxis at grass-roots level an organic assistance that is not just occasional or sporadic.

3. The retrieval of the educative quality of salesian apostolic activity must certainly be rendered concrete in a more competent and professional kind of pedagogy: at the same time it is essential to bring back the education commitment to a deep sense of the life choice which characterizes our identity as a radical option for Christ in an apostolic life at the service of youth evangelization.

This will make more productive and give added driving force to the

consciousness of tensions which still exist between salesian tradition and the educational sciences, between the purpose and content of evangelization and the contribution made by pedagogy, between practice and the «assistance» given by science.

4. These and other questions which still remain open call for specification and more detailed analysis which further initiatives of study and comparison can help to provide. It is hoped therefore that there will be further periodic seminars on organic themes, coordinated by the FSE and by the Departments concerned.

### 5.3 New salesian Bishop

In succession to the late lamented Mgr Walter Bini, who died so tragically last June, the Holy Father has appointed as Bishop of Lins (Brazil) our confrere Fr Irineu DANELON, who for the past year has been Provincial of the São Paulo Province. The news was carried by the *Osservatore Romano* of 3 December 1987.

A native of the state of São Paulo, where he was born at Piracicaba on 4 April 1940, Mgr Danelon has been a salesian since 31 January 1958 and a priest since 16 September 1967. He obtained the Licentiate in Philosophy and Letters at São Paulo

and that in Pastoral Catechetics at our own Pontifical University in Rome.

Before his appointment as provincial he had been rector of the studentate of philosophy at Loreno and the High School at Campinas. He took part in the GC22 as delegate of

the confreres of the São Paulo province.

He therefore takes with him to his new episcopal see a notable experience in the fields of education and pastoral work, as well as the typical salesian spirit.

#### 5.4 Our dead confreres (1987 – 33rd 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.
<b>P ABRAMS Hubert</b>	St-Pieters-Woluwe	23-09-87	74	BEN
<b>P ARMIÑANA José</b>	Shillong	28-10-87	58	ING
<b>L BARRERA PARRA Patrocinio</b>	Cúcuta	20-08-87	82	COB
<b>L BEJARANO CHOQUE Pedro</b>	Bogotá	02-08-87	82	COB
<b>L BORDIGNON Settimo</b>	Chieri	16-12-87	67	ICE
<b>L BOSCHIN Luigi</b>	Brescia	10-11-87	84	ICE
<b>L CABIDDU Francesco</b>	Albano Laziale	02-12-87	90	IRO
<b>P CHEVOLLEAU Hebert</b>	Clermont-Ferrand	26-09-87	66	FPA
<b>L COGLIATI Ambrogio</b>	Roma	08-11-87	73	ICE
<b>P COLOMBINI Giov. Battista</b>	Banpong	14-12-87	80	THA
<i>Fu Ispettore per 6 anni</i>				
<b>P CONFALONIERI Santo</b>	Gela	23-07-87	66	ISI
<b>P CVETKO Ivan</b>	Krapinske Toplice	08-06-87	82	JUZ
<b>P DE MARTIS Pietro</b>	Ossi (Sassari)	11-10-87	61	BRE
<b>P DELL'ORO José Blas</b>	Uribelarrea	13-09-87	88	ALP
<b>P DEL TORCHIO Carlo</b>	Varese (Italia)	15-12-87	53	BCG
<b>L do NASCIMENTO Mario Hipolito</b>	Coxipó da Ponte	03-10-87	91	BCG
<b>P ETCHART José Oscar</b>	Juarez (Buenos Aires)	15-11-87	60	ABA
<b>P FRIGO Antonio Pesavento</b>	Udine	02-09-87	78	IVE
<b>P GELEYN Giulio</b>	Santiago del Cile	13-09-87	77	CIL
<b>L GIAMPAOLI Abele</b>	Lombriasco	17-09-87	82	ISU
<b>P GIL FURTADO Francisco</b>	Montevideo	10-11-87	89	URU
<b>P GUERIN Jean André</b>	La Crau	20-11-87	88	FLY
<b>P HOPKINS James Anthony</b>	Ballinakill	30-08-87	71	IRL

NAME	PLACE	DATE	AGE	PROV.
P KAHNÉ Stanis	Radenci	30-09-87	66	JUL
L KISS József	Budapest	30-11-87	87	UNG
L KONAN Jan	Nitra	24-08-87	75	CEB
P KONYA Ferenc	Fulopaszallas	25-10-87	73	UNG
P KOSTANJEVEC Jože	Trstenik	29-06-87	87	JUL
P KUCINSKI Teofil	Twardogora	01-10-87	81	PLO
P KURTA Alphonse	Nice	07-12-87	73	FLY
P LESNIAK Marian	Boleszkowice	28-10-87	47	PLN
P LUPI Leopoldo	Milano	12-12-87	74	ILE
L MARINONI Giacomo	Novara	24-10-87	84	INE
P MARIOTTA Alfredo	Bombay	22-10-87	76	INB
P MONTERUMICI Arturo	Albano	28-09-87	78	IRO
P MORALES MORALES Hiscio	Barcelona	15-09-87	81	SMA
P O'FLYNN Thomas	Farnborough	19-11-87	78	GBR
P OJEDA BLANCO Isaias	Caracas	02-12-87	88	VEN
<i>Fu Ispettore per 4 anni</i>				
L OPEZZO Antonio	Torino	23-11-87	84	ISU
P OREGLIA Francisco	Mendoza	05-08-87	75	ACO
L PAGLIASSOTTI Giacomo	Torino	10-12-87	80	ICE
P PAGNAMENTA Giacomo	Lugano	27-11-87	66	INE
P PILLA Ruggiero	Caserta	15-10-87	76	IME
<i>Fu Ispettore per 5 anni, Economo Generale per 20 anni</i>				
E PINTADO José	Cuenca (ECU)	18-11-87	84	—
<i>Fu Ispettore per 1 a., Vicario Apostolico di Méndez per 15 a.</i>				
P PRUS Stefan	Warszawa	03-12-87	69	PLE
P RUSSO José	Bernal	20-10-87	76	ALP
P SABALIAUSKAS Antonio	Boston	29-07-87	82	SUE
P SCRIBANTE Lorenzo	Cuiabá	12-10-87	74	BCG
L SENECA Vincenzo	Banpong	22-10-87	82	THA
P SENGSTSCHMID Rudolf	Waidhofen/Ybbs	05-05-87	68	AUS
P SERSEN Anton	Adamovské Kochanovce	19-08-87	78	CEB
P SGROI Angel	Maximo Paz (Santa Fe)	24-10-87	56	ARO
P SPAGGIARI Pier Antonio	Forlì	04-10-87	64	IAD
L TERENCE Secondo	Borgomanero	04-11-87	67	INE
P TOMÉ NEBRERA Antonio	Madrid	26-11-87	52	SMA
L van BAAL François	Utrecht	10-11-87	68	OLA
P VAN DE VENNE Polydoor	Leuven	09-10-87	77	BEN
P VANA Biagio	Torino	06-10-87	68	ISU
P VESELÝ Alois	Brno	18-08-87	77	CEP
P VILLASANTA Paolo	Cagliari	11-09-87	62	ISA



