

# acts

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

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OFFICIAL ORGAN OF ANIMATION AND COMMUNICATION FOR THE SALESIAN CONGREGATION

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## 1. LETTER OF THE RECTOR MAJOR

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### **"STRIVE TO MAKE YOURSELF LOVED"**

Introduction. - A spiritual event. - A symbol of our Profession. - Don Bosco tells us "Make yourselves loved". - Some essential requirements of our pastoral charity: (a) the centrality of Christ, (b) the oratory criterion, (c) the fostering of vocations, (d) lay involvement. - Entrusted always to Mary. - A centenary, source of blessings.

Rome, 31 May 1988

*My dear confreres,*

On 14 May last, the anniversary of the first salesian Profession made by 22 courageous young men into Don Bosco's hands in 1862, there took place in every province and community the rite which is for us the most significant of all the manifestations marking the centenary of the death of our Father: the oath of fidelity to his charism through the solemn renewal of our religious Profession.

I had the great pleasure of presiding at the celebration which took place in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians at Valdocco, crowded with almost a thousand confreres from the three Piedmontese provinces with representatives of other houses from around the world. It was a memorable day, rich in hope and spiritual significance, and a day of deep communion with all Salesians in all five continents. At the end we gathered around the casket containing Don Bosco's mortal remains and lis-

tened with emotion to some of the fatherly recommendations from his spiritual testament; we felt the urge to continue with generosity and creativity his mission to the young and the poor, while making a trusting prayer for an increase in vocations. When we came outside afterwards we found waiting for us a numerous group of pilgrims from the Valle d'Aosta region, led by their Bishop and enlivened by the exhilarating and harmonious music of a boys' band. One of the young musicians, just turned 12 years of age, took the microphone and addressed us briefly in the following unforgettable words: "We thank all of you Salesians for having renewed your consecration for the benefit of young people in Don Bosco's name. We who say this to you are boys from the Valle d'Aosta, descendants of those chimneysweeps to whom Don Bosco gave a home right here at the beginning of his work. Things have changed since then (today we are wearing clean shirts, for instance), but our hearts still feel the same sentiments towards the successor of Don Bosco, to whom we wish every happiness in the constant and self-sacrificing work we know he does for us boys. Thank you!"

And the thought came spontaneously to our minds that those boys from the Valley of Aosta represented so many other youngsters from all over the world, and were interpreting their common feelings as they saw the salesian Profession as "the most precious gift" they are still offered by Don Bosco at the present day.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> cf. C 25

## A spiritual event

The confreres' positive comments have emphasized the deep and significant value of this event. A Congregation so numerous and of such universal extent wanted all its members to renew on the same day their fundamental option and the supreme expression of their own life of faith: the baptismal option for Christ, rethought personally with a clear awareness and defined as a community act in line with the evangelical project of the Constitutions. It is our special covenant with the Lord; a loving encounter which marks and gives direction to the whole of life; the total donation of ourselves to God and to the young; the concrete christian sense of an entire existence consecrated by the power of the Spirit. It is the most expressive act of our freedom as Christ's disciples.

Rightly do the Constitutions tell us that profession "is one of the most lofty choices a believer can consciously make, an act which recalls and endorses the mystery of his baptismal covenant by giving it a deeper and fuller expression".<sup>2</sup>

We well know that from a salesian point of view this was a moment both rich and exacting: the expression of a mature fidelity; an event which makes of the Centenary the launching pad for a spiritual and apostolic renewal. We made a lengthy preparation for it so that the gesture would not be reduced to a mere formality, and we are convinced that on that day the level of grace rose in the Congregation and that we shall soon feel its beneficial effects.

Fidelity to Don Bosco's charism has been our great preoccupation during these decades that have followed Vatican II; we have meditated and discussed a great deal, we have done a lot of work and

<sup>2</sup> C 23

made many experiments; God and Our Lady have helped us to make an efficacious revision of our Rule of life with one eye on our origins and the other on the changed needs of the present day. The Apostolic See, by approving the renewed Constitutions, has assured us of the authenticity of the gospel way of life traced out by our Founder, and recognizes in it 'a special benefit for the whole People of God'.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> C 192

That is why we have sworn to be faithful. We have done so with joy and hope, convinced that we were making "a response which we continually renew to the special Covenant that the Lord has made with us", while we recalled with trust that "our perseverance is founded entirely on the fidelity of God who loved us first, and is nourished by the grace of his consecration. It is sustained too by love for the young to whom we are sent".<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> C 195

## **A symbol of our Profession**

The new "Rite of Religious Profession" for our Society envisages the bestowal of a special symbol of salesian consecration. For this reason, during the ceremony of renewal of profession on May 14, a "medal of Don Bosco" was given to those temporarily professed, and a "cross of the Good Shepherd" to the perpetually professed.

The designer of the medal, the artist Ettore Calvelli, has created a countenance of Don Bosco which reflects his oratorian heart ("Da mihi animas") and his decisive and inspired practical character, as the living model for every newly professed Salesian: a real Master of salesian educative praxis, with a penetrating gaze which draws souls

together in a family communion of ideals and friendship for a joyful and responsible growth in a consecrated apostolic life. The reverse side of the medal has been left blank to allow for the engraving of the name of the confrere receiving it, as a sign of his determination to make a definitive commitment.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> cf. C 24

In turn the engraver of the cross, the artist Giandomenico Sergio, has presented us with what I consider to be the most expressive symbol of our characteristic presence in the Church. In a circle on the obverse of the cross he has created a figure of the Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ, who is the true "inventor" and supreme model of pastoral work. The design was inspired by the famous second century fresco found in the Roman catacombs of Priscilla and recalls the parable of the Good Shepherd in John's Gospel;<sup>6</sup> it portrays Jesus carrying a sheep on his shoulders with two others at his feet; on each side of the expressive figure the artist has placed two saplings, on each of which is perched a dove with an olive twig in its mouth. It is a captivating engraving, rich in genuine christian tradition, which inculcates trust, teaches kindness and sacrifice, excludes all violence and gives promise of peace and hope. It brings to mind the immortal words of the Gospel: "The Good Shepherd is ready to lay down his life for his sheep. I know my own and my own know me. And there are other sheep I have that are not of this fold, and these I have to lead as well. They too will listen to my voice, and there will be only one flock and one shepherd".<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> cf. Jn 10, 1-16

In a similar circle on the reverse of the cross is inscribed a phrase of Don Bosco with his signature: "Studia di farti amare - Sac. Gio. Bosco" ("Strive to make people love you - Fr. Jn. Bosco"). It is the

specification of the salesian spirit and pastoral method for the benefit of the young. This evocative phrase was written by our Father in 1863 in a memorandum which he gave to Don Rua when sending him to be the first rector at Mirabello: "Since I cannot always be at your side ... I write as a loving father who opens his heart to a most dear son"; and he gives him various pieces of advice, among which is that of striving to make himself loved.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> BM 7, 317

That very significant phrase occupies a strategic place in the salesian spirit. Don Bosco would repeat it once again to Don Rua, his designated successor, on his deathbed; the Biographical Memoirs tell us in fact that "one of the last things said by Don Bosco to Don Rua was this: make yourself loved!"<sup>9</sup> We may also recall that in the well known letter from Rome of May 1884, Don Bosco insists precisely on the fact that it is not enough to love but it is necessary also to make oneself loved.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> MB 18, 537

<sup>10</sup> MB 17, 107-114

His past-pupils state explicitly that Don Bosco had received from God in the highest degree the gift of making himself loved;<sup>11</sup> the point is recalled by Don Albera in an unforgettable circular: "it must be said that Don Bosco loved us in a manner that was unique and all his own: we were irresistibly fascinated by him ... I felt that I was loved in a way I had never previously experienced ... with an affection that surpassed any other: it completely enveloped all of us in an atmosphere of joy and contentment... He drew us to himself by the overflowing supernatural love which welled up in his heart".<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> MB 17, 482

Don Bosco himself used to say that the preventive system is a love which attracts young people to do good: God who is Love itself wants everything to be done through love.

<sup>12</sup> P. ALBERA, *Don Bosco nostro modello*, 18 Oct. 1920, in "Lettere Circolari", Turin 1965, pp. 372-374



Cardinal Cagliero too testifies that when he was given the task of following up the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians in its early days, he often discussed problems with Don Bosco and that the latter "in his unfailingly affable manner set my mind at rest by saying: 'you know the spirit of our Oratory, the preventive system, and *the secret of making oneself loved*'".<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup> cf. MACCONO, S. Maria D. Mazzarello, I, 274, Ed. FMA, Turin 1960

Fr Piano, a past-pupil of the Oratory's early years who became a theologian and parish priest of the Great Mother of God parish in Turin, was right in saying to Don Bosco on his last feastday in 1887: "this heart of mine will love you as long as it continues to beat; it loves you because we see in you a sign of the love of God".<sup>14</sup> It is a matter therefore of a "making oneself loved" which is an expression of a spirituality and an apostolic method that was novel and unprecedented.

<sup>14</sup> MB 18, 366

### **Don Bosco tells us again "Make yourselves loved"**

We must recognize the fact that this prophetic message left to us by the Founder gives an original physiognomy to the whole of our "apostolic consecration". If on 14 May last we made our common promise to be faithful to our religious profession, we must be able to analyze this message more deeply and give it special importance. This will ensure the continuity of the true identity of the salesian spirit and the authentic methodology of our educative and pastoral praxis.

Let us look at some expressions in the Constitutions which give clear confirmation to what we have said.

Art.1: The Holy Spirit formed in Don Bosco "the heart of a father and teacher, capable of total self-giving".

Art.2: The project left us by our Founder is "to be in the Church signs and bearers of the love of God for young people, especially those who are poor".

Art.4: "Inspired by the goodness and zeal of St Francis de Sales, Don Bosco called us Salesians", a name which specifies our identity as tireless and amiable apostles.

Art.8: The presence of Mary in the history of the salesian charisma and our entrustment to her are aimed at making us "become witnesses to the young of her Son's boundless love".

Art.10: The salesian spirit which through God's inspiration Don Bosco has passed on to us "is summed up and centred in pastoral charity".

Art.11: The source of this pastoral charity is the very heart of Christ with "the preoccupation of the Good Shepherd who wins hearts by gentleness and self-giving".

Art.14: "Our vocation is graced by a special gift of God, predilection for the young: 'That you are young is enough to make me love you very much'. This love is an expression of pastoral charity and gives meaning to our whole life".

Art.15: Christ the Good Shepherd wants the Salesian to be among young people "open and cordial, ready to make the first approach and to welcome others with unfailing kindness, respect and patience. His love is that of a father, brother and friend, able to draw out friendship in return; his chastity and well balanced attitude open his heart to spiritual fatherhood and give transparent witness to God's anticipating love".

Art.16: The family spirit must be characteristic of every salesian house; it "becomes a family when affection is mutual ... and when, in an atmosphere of mutual trust and daily forgiveness, the need and joy of sharing everything is experienced".

Art.17: Love brings with it optimism and joy; the Salesian "believes in man's natural and supernatural resources without losing sight of his weakness... He radiates joy and is able to educate to a christian and festive way of life".

Art.18: The style of loving kindness is sustained and defended by work and temperance: "The Salesian gives himself to his mission with tireless energy; temperance gives him the strength to control his heart, to master himself and remain even-tempered".

Art.19: The manner of making oneself loved is, in addition, not an easy one and must be continually animated by a spirit of initiative, flexibility and creativity: "In those things which are for the benefit of young people in danger or which serve to win souls for God, I push ahead even to the extent of recklessness", Don Bosco used to say.

Art.20: The preventive system is described as "a spontaneous expression of love inspired by the love of God... (It is) a way of living and handing on the gospel message, and of working with and through the young for their salvation. It permeates our approach to God, our personal relationships, and our manner of living in community through the exercise of a charity that knows how to make itself loved".

Art.25: Don Bosco's "system" is a method for leading people to holiness, as in fact it has already done; "it reveals the unique worth of the beatitudes and is the most precious gift we can offer to the young".

Art.38: The educative and pastoral activity of the Salesian "instead of using constraint appeals to the resources of intelligence, love and the desire for God, which everyone has in the depths of his being. It brings together educators and youngsters in a family experience of trust and dialogue".

Art.39: The practice of this method implies our active and friendly presence among youth: "it demands a fundamental disposition on our part: an empathy with the young and a willingness to be with them».

Art.40: Don Bosco's spiritual and apostolic experience at Valdocco remains our permanent criterion for discernment and renewal: "(his first Oratory) was for the youngsters a home that welcomed, a parish that evangelized, a school that prepared them for life, and a playground where friends could meet and enjoy themselves".

Art.61: The witness of the evangelical counsels is of extraordinary help in making oneself loved; "by fostering purity of the heart and spiritual freedom, (they) render our pastoral charity more concerned and productive". And Art.63 adds: "The evangelical counsels, fashioning his heart entirely for the Kingdom, help (the Salesian) to discern and welcome God's action in history; they transform him into an educator who proclaims to the young 'new heavens and a new earth', awakening in them hope and the dedication and joy to which it gives rise".

Art.81: Don Bosco's loving kindness demands a secure chastity which becomes a distinguishing sign of the Salesians as the virtue which they must cultivate in the highest degree. "Our tradition has always considered chastity a resplendent virtue, bearing a special message for the education of

youth. Through it we bear witness to the predilection of Christ for the young; it allows us to love them in an open and uncomplicated way, so that they may 'know they are loved', and it enables us to educate them to love and to purity". For this reason the Salesian must have recourse, as is suggested in art.84, "with filial trust to Mary, the Immaculate Help of Christians, who helps him to love as Don Bosco did".

This rapid survey of precise and enlightening statements from the Constitutions highlights the importance of the theme and the characteristic value it gives to our religious profession, justifying our option as an expression of a style of identity. It puts an original emphasis on the salesian spirit and on our educational and pastoral praxis.

Certainly holiness always demands deep humility, which implies self-detachment in the practice of a profitable emptying out of one's self. The Imitation of Christ teaches us to want to be unknown and thought of as nothing ("ama nesciri et pro nihilo reputari").<sup>15</sup> This is a wise monastic counsel, fundamental enough in itself but not applicable to everyone in the same way.

In our ministerial and apostolic life we must keep in mind the demanding maxim of St Paul: "I urge you then, be imitators of me";<sup>16</sup> "be imitators of me, as I am of Christ";<sup>17</sup> "brethren, join in imitating me, and mark those who so live as you have an example in us".<sup>18</sup> Paul teaches us that we must put on Christ in such a way that he takes the place of our own self, and we can truly say: "for me to live is Christ";<sup>19</sup> "it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me".<sup>20</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Book I, ch. 2, n. 3;  
Book III, ch.15, n.4

<sup>16</sup> 1 Cor 4,16  
<sup>17</sup> 1 Cor 11,1

<sup>18</sup> Phil 3,17

<sup>19</sup> Phil 1,21

<sup>20</sup> Gal 2,20

This is the apostolic mystique which permeated Don Bosco's heart and ministry. It calls for a very demanding ascesis so that the emptying out of self should result in our own lives acquiring a transparency which may transform them into an "existential sacrament" so that we can be in fact signs and bearers of the love of Christ. It is true that holiness is impossible without humility; but there is also a humility attainable through the practice of particular virtues, especially of a social kind, that can be called "sacramental", in the sense that it makes the existence of the disciple meaningful and attractive as embodying the mystery of Christ and communicating him to others through the disciple's own life. All of this provides a foundation and justification for the spirituality and apostolic method of "making oneself loved": be imitators of me, as I am of Christ!

### **Some essential requirements of our pastoral charity**

The solemn renewal of our religious Profession in this centenary year surely implies the making of resolutions for the future. For May 14 we did not prepare a merely devotional ceremony, but we solemnly expressed our precise intention of being Salesians for the new times, able to respond to the challenges of the present day. I have been asked repeatedly in this sense for an indication of some of the more strategic points to which we should attend throughout the Congregation.

I would like to dwell on some vital aspects, by referring to four articles of the Constitutions, the "observance" of which has a very positive influence

on our renewal. This will lead us to a better understanding of the fact that "observing the Rule" implies an attitude of constant active commitment to know, study, discern, plan, revise, collaborate, work joyfully, and in particular pray a great deal.

a. *The centrality of Christ.*

Art.3 of the Constitutions says that "we live as disciples of the Lord", and that we offer ourselves totally to God "in order to follow Christ and work with him in building up the Kingdom". In the light of this offering, which is already in itself a grace we have received, God the Father "consecrates us through the gift of his Spirit and sends us out to be apostles of the young". The gift of the Spirit permeates our heart with his gentle power and enables us to live the life of disciples in complete fidelity. The secret of success is to be found in the constant consolidation of the bonds of our precious covenant with God. We know very well that this can be weakened by superficiality in spiritual matters and that on the other hand its daily guarantee is the meeting with Christ in the Eucharist.

Now the solemn renewal of profession recalls every confrere to the duty of constantly fostering in his life the central position of Christ: everything from Him, with Him and through Him! It was precisely for this reason (as well as to meet the requests of various confreres) that in my first circular letter of this Centenary Year I decided to provide a careful treatment of the theme: "The Eucharist in the apostolic spirit of Don Bosco".<sup>21</sup>

I beg you, dear confreres, to make the content of that circular material for your constant meditation, if you want to be able to really "observe" the

<sup>21</sup> cf. AGC 324, Jan-Mar. 1988

important art. 3, which throws much light on the content of our formula of profession.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>22</sup> cf. C 24

b. *The oratory criterion.*

Another directive of particular relevance is given us by the Constitutions in art. 40, which states that "as we carry out our mission today, the Valdocco experience is still the lasting criterion for discernment and renewal in all our activities and works".

A criterion of this kind requires in the first place that the starting point be the condition of youth most in need and of the poorer classes in general ("our priority commitment to the poor") with christian formation as our main concern ("a parish that evangelizes), but with parallel attention to a welcoming family atmosphere ("home"), to human advancement ("school"), and to a happy common participation in cultural and sporting activities ("playground"). It is a way of doing things which is characteristic of our charisma, and demands from us a programme of revision and pastoral creativity to match the different levels of culture and faith in which our young people are found.

At the highest level there must always be a specific plan of youth spirituality which ensures that among the youngsters there is always a group which will become an effective evangelizing leaven among their companions ("salesian youth movement"). Don Bosco was able to bring about an educational experience of youthful holiness, and provided methodical evidence of the effectiveness of so lofty an objective by the wonderful results it produced. We must be convinced of this and be modern promoters of the same pastoral wisdom without



yielding to “secularist” or “popular” ideas which are sometimes aimed unfortunately at submerging our charism in plans of a purely horizontal approach or in merely social and political tendencies.

c. *The fostering of vocations.*

The Constitutions, in the chapter on those to whom our mission is addressed, recall in *art.* 28 that “many young people are rich in spiritual potential and give indications of an apostolic vocation”. In practice this means that we must be able to site our various works in social environments sensitive to christian values, and furthermore launch specific group movements which will enable us to help many young people “to discover, accept and develop the gift of a lay, consecrated or priestly vocation, for the benefit of the whole Church and of the Salesian Family”.

I think it appropriate in this connection to insist on two explicit indications which involve objectively those who have renewed their salesian profession with a firm purpose of fidelity. The first is the emphasis that among the specific ends of the Congregation is the will to be faithful to Don Bosco in paying “special attention to apostolic vocations”.<sup>23</sup> The second is the responsibility of the provincial community, and hence of every house, to coordinate and evaluate our apostolic work, to encourage collaboration and to stimulate pastoral work for vocations.<sup>24</sup> The Constitutions assure us that this is “a work of collaboration with God’s design, the crown of all our educational and pastoral activity, (and) is sustained by prayer and personal contact, above all in spiritual direction”.<sup>25</sup>

Dear confreres, we must admit with sorrow

<sup>23</sup> C 6

<sup>24</sup> cf. C 58

<sup>25</sup> C 37

that in some places there has been a falling off among our priest members of their precious ministerial service in the sacrament of Reconciliation, to which Don Bosco gave himself so tirelessly and to which he attached extraordinary pedagogical and pastoral importance, especially for the maturing of vocations.

And then our communities must display a happy atmosphere of a common life and intense work that "enkindles in the young the desire to get to know and to follow the salesian vocation",<sup>26</sup> so that every house may become a "leaven giving rise to new vocations after the example of the first community of Valdocco".<sup>27</sup> Every confrere should feel himself committed to this delicate but indispensable task, beginning with prayer and going on to explicit and pedagogically suitable suggestions.

In this connection every rector has a particular responsibility which he cannot avoid: "he cannot be called a true son of Don Bosco if he does not strive in every way to promote the greatest possible number of vocations in the field assigned to him by Divine Providence".<sup>28</sup>

<sup>26</sup> C 16

<sup>27</sup> C 57

<sup>28</sup> cf. *The Salesian Rector*, 1986 edn. n. 123

#### d. *Lay involvement.*

Finally, *art.5* of the Constitutions obliges us to give strong support to the Salesian Family. Among the latter's constituent groups, both the Association of Cooperators and that of the Past Pupils are largely made up of lay people. By the will of the Founder we have a particular responsibility in their regard "to preserve unity of spirit and to foster dialogue and fraternal collaboration for our mutual enrichment and greater apostolic effectiveness". Speaking of the Councillor for the Salesian Family,

the Constitutions declare that "he directs and assists the provinces so that both the association of the salesian cooperators and the movement of the past pupils may develop according to their own statutes in the territory of the province".<sup>29</sup>

<sup>29</sup> C 137

If we want to live our profession to the full by putting into practice art. 5 of the Constitutions we must make our horizons much wider with regard to the laity. This is clearly demanded by Vatican II and was a very concrete pastoral directive of the last Bishops' Synod. We await the Apostolic Letter of the Holy Father to shed further light on this task we have. I have insisted more than once on this theme and have recalled the thought and example of Don Bosco:<sup>30</sup> a greater awareness is required of "dynamic observance" in this matter and much more practical dedication at the level of both the province and each local community. Lack of growth in such a sector could be a yardstick indicating a possible lack of fidelity to Don Bosco.

<sup>30</sup> cf. AGC 317; 318; 321

This is not a duty which is easy to carry out, nor is it a matter of organization alone; it presupposes a genuine salesian spirit and ardent ecclesial zeal prompted by "da mihi animas". And here I would like to impress strongly on the provincials the urgent need to appoint really valid delegates for this work, and on the rectors the indispensable need for their communities to commit themselves in this regard. The life and growth of these associations is rooted especially in the local centres where there is a greater possibility for intensifying the spirit and fostering activity.

Provincials and rectors can meditate with profit, and with the intention to fulfil them, on the indications given in our General Regulations<sup>31</sup> with reference to the Cooperators and Past Pupils; they

<sup>31</sup> R 36, 38, 39

would do well in addition to read carefully what is said in the same connection in the two recently published manuals of government: "The Salesian Provincial" and "The Salesian Rector".<sup>32</sup>

<sup>32</sup> cf. *L'Ispettore Salesiano*, 342-344; *The Salesian Rector*, 142-144

You can see therefore, dear confreres, that the fidelity we promised on 14 May last has some very practical consequences calling for a depth and creativity which launch the "observance" of our salesian project into an orbit where it must move with the speed the Holy Spirit wants in the Church, and with ever fresh initiatives.

The four aspects we have briefly considered provide further and stimulating evidence of this. The Congregation will raise its level of spiritual intensity to the extent that it is centred on Christ and lives out this centrality through the oratory criterion, the fostering of vocations, and the involvement of the laity.

### **Entrusted always to Mary**

The Don Bosco centenary year (with its unforgettable renewal of religious profession) has coincided so far with the Extraordinary Marian Year proclaimed by the Holy Father in preparation for the year 2000.

Calling to mind the filial Act of Entrustment made by the whole Congregation on 14 January 1984 at the beginning of the last General Chapter which gave us the definitive text of the Constitutions and General Regulations, we believe that what Mary did for Don Bosco at the beginnings of our charisma she has done also with us in the laborious period of postconciliar renewal, and she will continue to do the same as we approach the year

2000 and the Third Millennium. This is stated explicitly in art. 8 of the Constitutions which refers both to the beginnings and to the time still to come.

Entrustment to Mary Help of Christians must be cultivated in the conscience of every confrere; it should be the subject of meditation and frequently renewed as a spiritual stimulus having practical efficacy for the vigour and vitality of our consecration. Mary in fact is a mother who immerses us in the Spirit, helping us to acquire an ever greater awareness that for us "to live is Christ". She is the shining witness, the most concrete and impelling help who involves us in the life-giving presence of the Holy Spirit and the consequent deep and vital bonds with the Lord. No one can manifest to us more clearly than she the action of the Paraclete who incorporates believers into the resurrected life of the Son; no one more than she can lead us more kindly and practically to forget ourselves and live for Him so as to make ourselves loved.

Mary proclaims magnificently in herself the qualitative leap inherent in the Incarnation and Redemption, which unites in definitive fashion the transcendence of the Mystery with the banality of daily life, the consistency between eternity and temporal change, the life of the resurrection with the vicissitudes of mortal man until he reaches that intimate "transpersonalization" through which he puts on Christ and lives in him. Mary has shown forth the mysterious values of this qualitative leap by an attitude of faith so sublime as to earn for her the title "She who believed". Through the work of the Holy Spirit, her faith was concentrated in Christ, conceived and developed within her, who grew and matured with her, involving her ever more explicitly in his mission until the fullness of

Calvary when she became, through Christ's testament, the Mother of humanity.

If the faith of St Paul led him to cry out "for me to live is Christ", with greater reason must the believing heart of Mary have suggested to her: "It is no longer I that live; it is Christ who lives in me. The life I now live in this world I live through faith in the Son of God (who is my son too)!".

Furthermore Mary, assumed into heaven and living eternally with Christ, has an eye on history and intercedes uninterruptedly with her Son with the solicitude of a mother. In her role as "Help of Christians and Mother of the Church" she distributes throughout the centuries the copious fruits of that qualitative leap which began in her womb with the conception of the incarnate Word and reached its fullness in Christ's paschal victory. In this way Mary continues throughout history to bring Christ to birth in the heart of every believer, so that his being may be conformed to Christ, making him a sign and bearer of the divine love and constituting him, in communion with other believers, that "universal Sacrament of salvation" which the pilgrim Church is among all peoples.

Daily awareness of our entrustment to Mary ensures us the help of a Mother, the promptings of a Teacher, the directives of a sure Guide, as well as the genuine indications of what is implied by salesian identity and fidelity; it inspires a timely response to the challenges of our times and strengthens the resources of our pastoral creativity in the light of our demanding mission among the young and the poor. Entrustment to Mary should daily accompany the future perspectives which stem from our profession.

Let us meditate with prayerful attention on

those words of the Constitutions: "The Virgin Mary showed Don Bosco his field of labour among the young and was the constant guide and support of his work, especially in the foundation of our Society. We believe that Mary is present among us and continues her 'mission as Mother of the Church and Help of Christians'" <sup>33</sup>.

<sup>33</sup> C 8

### **A centenary, source of blessings**

By way of conclusion let us look back over the first four months of this "Year of grace" which we are living as a prophetic memorial of Don Bosco. We are observing with gratitude a real predilection of the Lord.

We may say without exaggeration that the Strenna of the "pedagogy of kindness" has received as a masterly comment nothing less than the magnificent Apostolic Letter of the Pope, "Juvenum Patris", which has spread the message of Don Bosco's pedagogical holiness to the whole of the Church.

The churches designated for the gaining of our Jubilee Indulgence are receiving an ever growing number of pilgrims (and especially young ones), particularly at Valdocco and the Becchi where the numbers are increasing in quite extraordinary fashion.

The renewal of religious profession and a series of special spiritual retreats have proved to be intense expressions of spiritual depth. The many celebrations at the centre and further afield (those at which I have been present or of which I have had news) have far exceeded all expectations and have served to make Don Bosco better known, to lead

many people to follow his teachings and to relaunch the spirit and zeal of the component groups of the Salesian Family.

The publications which have so far appeared have made a significant addition to our literary patrimony in the fields of history, pedagogy and spirituality.

The salesian Youth Movement has grown in enthusiasm and in the understanding of its own identity, and the "DB88 Appraisal" is being prepared with great seriousness. In many diocese of the different continents there have been initiatives of study, of prayer, and of making plans in the field of youth pastoral work which draw their inspiration from Don Bosco.

In various countries too there have been civic manifestations of great social significance, and commemorative events expressive of gratitude (celebrations, study congresses, monuments, postage stamps, coins, medals, hymns and music recitals, conjuring demonstrations and artistic presentations of various kinds) which have highlighted different aspects of the truly multifaceted figure of our Father: in Mexico I heard a wonderful chorus sung by great crowds of young people: "his heart is great as the shores of the sea, and after a hundred years he has not ceased to love us still"! And still to come are several other events which will certainly be moments of grace.

What is most impressive is to see the deepening understanding of Don Bosco's spirituality, the ever growing interest in his pedagogy, and especially the explosion of friendship and fascination for him shown by countless numbers of young people of so many nations.

Truly the centenary is showing us in a thousand



ways the relevance and urgent need of Don Bosco's charism in the world and the Church! It is up to us to renew our fidelity and spirit of initiative with a humble and intelligent filial attitude. The Constitutions tell us that "the Lord has given us Don Bosco as father and teacher. We study and imitate him, admiring in him a splendid blending of nature and grace. ... These two aspects combined to create a closely-knit life project, the service of the young. He realized his aim with firmness, constancy and the sensitivity of a generous heart, in the midst of difficulties and fatigue".<sup>34</sup> And the most outstanding characteristic of his generous heart was the pastoral holiness which enabled him to "make himself so greatly loved".

<sup>34</sup> C 21

As we look at the fine "cross of the Good Shepherd", the symbol of our apostolic consecration, let us listen each day to Don Bosco's exhortation: "strive to make yourself loved", as the authoritative indication for our personal and community life.

My cordial greetings to each one of you with the assurance of a daily remembrance in the Eucharist. May Don Bosco intercede for us!

Affectionately in the Lord,

Don F. Viganò

### **2.1 ONGOING FORMATION, A DUTY OF FIDELITY TO DON BOSCO**

**The local community, 'the natural environment for vocational growth'.**

Fr Paolo NATALI

*Councillor General for Formation*

#### **Introduction**

To give substance to the centenary celebrations we have put ourselves, in the words of the Rector Major, "in a kind of state of novitiate for an intense and lengthy work of ongoing formation" (cf. AGC 319, p.14), and he added: "We intend to make of 1988 a year of reflection and resolutions on salesian sanctity". A sign of this was the solemn renewal of our religious profession.

This proposal and commitment take us back to the text of the Constitutions, where it says that the Salesian is so called because he learns to model his own life on that of Don Bosco (cf. C 97), and render this fidelity practical in a *'formation process which will last all his life'* (C 98).

It will be remembered that ongoing formation entered our environment initially as an essential consequence of the renewal called for by the Council. The SGC translated it into an attitude of docility to the Holy Spirit which is the guarantee of the continuity of the salesian charism and its re-expression through fresh initiatives, but it did not go beyond a few explicit references of a practical character. The GC21 considered it 'necessary to restate the argument systematically' (GC21, 307), and offered reflections on its various aspects: its concept, reasons, subject, objectives, and its more significant areas (GC21, 314-342). The GC22 considered ongoing formation

an attitude of primary importance for the individual, and made of it the criterion for the organization and thrust of the third part of the Constitutions, dedicated precisely to formation (cf. AGC 312, p.25).

The importance given to this matter by our Rule of life is reflected in corresponding sections of the FSDB (cf.488-530), the Provincial's Manual (378-390), and throughout the Rector's Manual. Recent Provincial Chapters too have shown that the topic is a matter of universal concern which has been expressed in organic and sufficiently comprehensive decisions.

This progress in study and acceptance of ongoing formation which has matured in the last twenty years can be assessed at the present day in the light of the Congregation's experience. Grounds for doing so are provided by views and impressions arising from the *Team Visits* carried out for the most part in 1987.

Our present purpose therefore is to leave aside theoretical reflections and general organizational details, and *to set out some considerations about the local community, the primary place for ongoing formation and 'the natural environment for vocational growth'* (C 99). This will facilitate the evaluation of present situations and the formulation of effective proposals for the future.

## **1. From the 'Team Visits': some observations and practical conclusions.**

### **1.1 Some observations**

The matters discussed in the 'Team Visits' were those presented by the various provinces as the most vital and relevant to their life and work. What they had to say was based on hard facts in salesian life, and by means of dialogue and the exchange of experiences an effort was made to achieve a clearer understanding and a more adequate response to problems.

From this review which involved individual Provinces, and also Groups, Provincial Conferences and Regions, some *basic facts* emerge:

- the matter of ongoing formation is among those given most emphasis;
- everywhere there is concern about the quality of life of the confreres and of communities;
- there has been a significant convergence of views as regards both the analysis and appraisal of situations and the practical measures deemed necessary to solve problems.

Because of the manner in which the meetings were planned and the practical approach which characterized them, they tended to concentrate on problematic situations, taking as already known and esteemed the many positive aspects and lines of growth.

As far as the quality of salesian vocational experience is concerned, attitudes came to light of lack of motivation, of stagnation and of superficiality. Instances were met with of criteria inconsistent with the constitutional project, and hence of a certain vagueness of approach to personal and communal life. 'Living' and 'working' were sometimes conceived in an individualistic manner which made any real sharing, and still more true communion, impossible in the community. Here and there educational work was marked by a frenetic activity which carried confreres away, squandering their energy and wearing them out, sometimes even diverting them from typically salesian situations through a sense of either inadequacy or incompetence.

Specific instances of periodical or extraordinary ongoing formation seemed ill adapted to adults, perhaps because they were put forward in a form more theoretical than practical (cf. Prov.Man. 386-389); often, it was said, they did not reach the salesian in the field of his practical experience. The animation provided seemed weak and lacking in continuity; it did not lead to renewed attitudes, to more authentic criteria, and to a stronger and more stimulating mystique.

There was more than this to the general situation. These were merely some aspects which, in the general opinion, weakened the quality of personal and communal life and hence dulled the experience of fundamental qualities, thus curbing the process of vocational response.

## 1.2 Practical conclusions

Those chiefly responsible for the animation of the confreres felt themselves directly involved, and in the course of the discussions came to common conclusions. We can sum them up in a basic conviction and some practical guidelines.

*A. A basic conviction: ongoing formation takes place principally in the course of everyday occupations.*

Personal formation means the assimilation by the individual of vocational values (cf. FSDB, 130ff.). How is this assimilation to be fostered?

The FSDB indicates a first line of approach: 'experience' must be gained. The passage from known values to lived values cannot take place except through an experience which stems, under certain conditions, from contact with persons and with reality: 'as he lives and works for the common mission', say the Constitutions (C 99; cf. FSDB, 130).

The first of these conditions is the elimination of whatever might obstruct, more or less seriously, the very ability to appreciate the truth of these values and to assimilate them interiorly. They are the so-called 'personal psychological inconsistencies', i.e. the lack of vocational understanding found even in 'normal' people who, although they want to realize such values, feel themselves motivated in practice by forces opposed to the values themselves. The 'inconsistency' shows itself in the state of tension and humiliation when they become aware that, despite knowing what their true motivation should be, they are in fact moved primarily by their psychological needs.

A delicate work of progressive self-understanding and purification is called for. To the extent that the Salesian can free himself from these negative or over-conditioning aspects (cf. FSDB, 62-95; CN, 39-40, 46-52), he is in a position to be able to receive (vocational values are a free gift!), mature and work towards his personal formation, especially in the course of his daily activities. It is in

these in fact that one can profit by the formative efficacy of ordinary activities (C 119) carried out in contact with young people and with that attitude of discernment which develops the ability to learn from life (cf. C 119).

Everyday experience therefore, and its quality, exert a powerful formative or deforming influence. In consequence particular periods and initiatives must be clearly placed at the service of this same process which is continuous and takes place in the local community (cf. C 99). This criterion, which expresses the 'mind' of the constitutional text, is characteristically salesian and is new from a methodological standpoint: 'Adult life and some of its particular times and circumstances require some special thought as regards method' (FSDB, 501).

The Rector's Manual devotes some paragraphs to adult confreres, to the characteristics of their experience, their needs, and the kinds of animation suited to them. The Provincial's Manual describes their situation, attitudes and requirements, and points to the conditions needed to meet them (cf. Prov. Man. 385-389).

The characteristics of adult life emphasize the primary importance of everyday experience, the importance of learning from life through the continuous interplay of theory, discernment and practice, and hence the importance of the local community as an active formative environment.

This was the process preferred by Don Bosco, and the one he followed in practice. He always considered the environment as a place and means of education (cf. R.Man. 126) and saw the practical characteristic experience to be gained there as the best school of life and salesian spirit and practice (cf. C 97).

### *B. Some strategic points*

With the principle unanimously accepted, the next question was: How in practice can the quality of this everyday experience be ensured? How can we sustain in the confreres this attitude of ongoing formation which in the last analysis is the true expression of fidelity? How can we stimulate the 'constant effort of conversion and

renewal'? (C 99)

The results of the 'Team Visits' indicate some strategic points to which one can appeal. They are well known, but the general opinion was that they are not sufficiently esteemed:

- the local community as the eminent place for ongoing formation;
- the animating role of the Rector in this community;
- the community plan of life and the educative project lived in the perspective of a double efficacy, a pastoral one for the young people and a formative one for the Salesians;
- the support of initiatives at provincial level.

These points are presented at length in the FSDB and the two manuals, but have not been sufficiently put into practice. The 'Team Visits' repeatedly emphasize their importance. We summarize them briefly therefore, referring readers to the official texts for a more detailed presentation.

*a. Making the local community the natural environment for vocational growth (C 99)*

'The very life of the community is itself a factor in formation', say the Constitutions (C 99). But they add some indispensable conditions: it must be a community 'united in Christ and open to the needs of the times'. The FSDB goes into more detail: 'The life of the community becomes a constant term of reference: brotherly sharing and especially the apostolic thrust embodied in a common and consistent plan, the central position of Christ which is lived and celebrated, the authentic evangelical style of life, all combine to provide a living communication of the salesian ideal; they become a vocational criterion and stimulus' (FSDB, 155). The Rector's Manual is almost entirely given over to principles, criteria, methods, means and structures for use in the animation of the different areas so that in the local community may be realized the conditions needed for an authentic salesian experience.

*b. Stimulating the Rector in his role as animator*

This immediate reference to the Rector is natural when speaking of the community as a formative environment. His first task in fact is 'to animate the community so that it may live faithful to the Constitutions and grow in unity'; it is his task to help every confrere 'to realize his own personal vocation' (C 55). In other words it is a matter of fostering the experience of vocational values and the process of ongoing formation.

In connection with the responsibility of the Provincial and his council in the selection, formation, and following up of the Rectors, there are insistent references in the Provincial's Manual. The conclusions of the 'Team Visits' endorse the statement that 'his first task is the animation and formation of the Rectors; he should foster their preparation so that they may be spiritual animators, practical guides in the spiritual life, and responsible leaders in the mission'. They also emphasize that the new Rector's Manual 'should be the reference text for the study of their animation'. After the deep analysis of the figure of the Rector made by the Congregation in recent decades, the purpose of the Manual is to provide a practical overall view of how the animation and government of the local community should be carried out.

*c. Giving direction to the community life-plan and ensuring the formative dimension in educative pastoral work*

This is another strategic point: 'the Provincial and his council should mastermind and give animation to the life-plan of each salesian community and verify that it is being followed out. The Salesian Pastoral and Educative Project (PEPS) and the drawing up of the community's yearly programme should be important elements in ongoing formation' (from the conclusions of the 'Team Visits').

These two items mutually integrate each other in salesian life, and it can be said of them what the Rector's Manual (cf.111 ff.) and the Provincial's Manual (cf.191 ff.) state about the PEPS. It provides an outstanding means for the vocational animation of the confreres, and a pedagogical aid for the formation and growth of the commu-



nity itself. The plan reflects what has been done so far and at the same time paves the way for further developments. The drawing up and revision of the plan leads the confreres to define the path of formation they must follow, to give continuity to their activity, to put together a convergent and unifying overall picture, to strengthen their sense of belonging and to reach a common criterion of judgement. This ensures a dynamic standard, the search for a practical and authentically salesian way of life that contributes to the realization of 'the natural environment for vocational growth'.

Inevitably the project will give rise to some individualism, the personal following of a generic path, without any concrete commitments or points of reference, and without any serious appraisal or productive corroboration.

In the course of the 'Team Visits' it became clear that there was need to rethink the message of the Constitutions and to ask whether its truth is understood: that in carrying out the mission we find our way to holiness (C 2); what manner of living and working for the common mission (C 99) must we adopt so that it will constitute a true experience of vocational values (C 98)? what must we do to live with our young people the spiritual and educational experience which Don Bosco called the 'Preventive System'?

In the conclusions to the 'Team Visits' provincial commissions for formation and for youth pastoral work, and at local level those in charge of these respective sectors, are asked to work together in drawing up a programme for the work of education which will ensure that the confreres are placed in favourable conditions for fostering vocational values in quality and in their relationships (cf. C 3). These conditions are laid down in the FSDB. By putting them into practice educational and pastoral activity becomes something wise and an expression of faith, apostolic action becomes an area for the forging of that intimate unity of spiritual life and apostolic mission which belongs to the specific characteristic nature of our vocation (cf. FSDB, 166-171; Rec. Man. 61).

*d. Gauging provincial support-initiatives to the needs*

The local community needs the contribution of provincial roles and organisms. The Provincial's Manual presents the province as a 'formative community itself in formation' and points out the role of provincial animators in the field of ongoing formation.

The situation, as analyzed during the 'Team Visits', and the conclusions reached, make clear the necessity for provincial initiatives that will meet the real needs of the confreres, who are generally adult. They also call for special attention to be given to priest confreres during the early years of their ministry, and to coadjutors in the period immediately following perpetual profession (cf. FSDB, 523).

They also remind provincial animators of their duties: to inculcate a mentality of ongoing formation; to coordinate initiatives at provincial level so that they be neither improvised nor lacking in continuity; to prepare suitable aids; to ensure that objectives are chosen which are related to personal and community needs; to make sure that methods adopted vary according to category and age.

*e. Checking on our obligation of fidelity*

This confrontation with reality is not so much aimed at bringing new aspects to light as at prompting a practical verification of our daily manner of living and working for a renewed commitment of fidelity. Such a verification, adapted to the differing community situations, can find numerous points of reference and valid guidelines in the FSDB and in the Provincial's and Rector's Manuals. It will be useful to read over those pages again.

Here we refer to those aspects which the 'Team Visits' have shown as needing priority; we would like to help in their verification as an element of our fidelity.

- Is our community for us 'the natural environment for vocational growth'? What vocational values do we really experience in it (apostolic and fraternal life, prayer life, style of evangelical life)?
- Which situations do we consider most formative and which, in

fact, most deforming?

- Does a newcomer entering our community feel that he is coming into a stimulating environment or one that will hold him back? Why?
- How do we help each other to live the formative value of our everyday experience and learn from life? What degree of communication of experience exists in our community (cf. FSDB, 172-177)?
- Do we feel our educative and pastoral work to be a stimulating and formative environment, or do we find it a reason for superficiality and dissipation? Why? Do we consider that our way of acting is in accordance with salesian principles and motivated by them?
- Does our community live according to a communal plan? Do we try to move forward together? Is there communication and communal appraisal, or perhaps individualism and dispersal of effort? Are we growing in our convergence as regards criteria and objectives?
- Are the following effective as means of reflection and discernment: the personal colloquy with the superior, the 'scrutinies', community celebrations, the organisms of participation and shared responsibility?
- How can we together play a responsible part in ensuring community animation and the adequate exercise of his ministry by the Rector?
- What needs strengthening in our community so that it may become ever more the 'natural environment for vocational growth'?
- What initiatives at provincial level in the field of ongoing formation would best meet the needs of the community?
- As regards verification in the light of art.118 of the Constitutions: through what personal and communal initiatives do we cultivate
  - the spiritual life,
  - theological and pastoral updating,
  - apostolic initiative and creativity?

- As regards verification in the light of Regs.99-100: how can we foster in the community what our Regulations call for:
- Ongoing formation requires that each confrere:  
improve his ability in communication and dialogue;  
cultivate an open and critical mentality;  
develop a spirit of initiative in renewing his own plan of life from time to time?
  - Each confrere should:  
form the habit of reading and study in the sciences necessary for the mission;  
keep alive his openness to prayer, meditation, personal and communal spiritual direction (R 99), and to his qualification and requalification (R 100)?

## **Conclusion**

It will be readily understood that this obligation of verification takes place at three levels, which differ in depth but are closely linked with one another and indispensable for all:

1. The level of 'general awareness': this refers to the knowledge of our particular charism, and of what a well founded and updated vision of it in its reality and dimensions can give to the individual;

2. The level of 'knowing how to apply it', of the development of the relevant aptitudes and methods, of their practical application: this includes updating and pastoral and pedagogical requalification. It is not just a matter of absorbing new theories, but of learning through practical experience new ways of getting things done;

3. The level of 'being', as a deeper understanding of one's own vocation and the maturing of profound 'psycho-spiritual attitudes' in harmony with the 'single movement of love towards God and towards our brothers' of which the Constitutions speak (C 3). This is the level which characterizes the life of the local community and its ongoing formation. It should never be wanting, and to it everything should be referred for a purer and more efficacious witness of ser-

vice to young people and their perplexities.

It was with these commitments in mind that on Saturday 14 May 1988, the worldwide profession day, Salesians asked through the intercession of their Father and Founder for the grace of fidelity to the special Covenant which the Lord had made with them.

May that prayer be heard, through the intercession of Mary Help of Christians.

## 2.2 THE ORATORY AND/OR YOUTH CENTRE

Fr Juan E. VECCHI

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### 1. A permanent criterion

The name and reality of the Oratory are found throughout all Don Bosco's life and writings. It began in a nomadic form and developed, after successive improvements and additions, into the Oratory of St Francis de Sales, the cradle and mother-house of the Congregation. For this reason the story of the beginnings of the Congregation is strictly linked with that of the evolution of the Oratory (cf. St John Bosco, 'Memoirs').

Rightly did Don Ceria, who dedicates a chapter in the first volume of the 'Annals' to the Oratory, express the place it occupied in the mind of Don Bosco, educator of the young, in the following words: "The Oratory continues to be Don Bosco's primary work for the poorer classes, the work with which his fame as the apostle of the young is most closely linked; little by little it extended beyond the limitations expressed in its name' (Annali, vol.I, p.633).

The underlying spirit did not cease with the foundation. It has continued, and there is hardly a single General Chapter or Rector Major that has not made notable comments on the Oratory's work and on the spirit of which it is the fruit, reflection and guarantee. If everything written by biographers, essayists, superiors and General Chapters on this topic were collected together, it would form a very useful anthology.

It was not surprising therefore that the thrust of renewal prompted by Vatican II, which asked for a return to the origins, should direct our gaze to this activity which figures so characteristically in our history.

The Special (20th) General Chapter launched the first of a series of pastoral documents by taking a second look at '*Don Bosco of the Oratory*' as a necessary point of reference for linking fidelity with innovation. In line with this reflection the definitive text of the Constitutions proposes the Oratory as the permanent criterion for salesian activity which, with the needs of the young as its starting point, welcomes them into a family environment (*home*), aims at the development of all their human resources (*school*), enlightening them and bringing them to rebirth by faith (*parish*), and all this in an environment of joy and friendship in which the youngsters see their aspirations recognized and they themselves play a responsible and leading part with adults in their processes of growth (*play-ground*).

It could be summed up by saying that the Oratory was the place where Don Bosco's pastoral charity became the educational and pastoral praxis that we call the 'preventive system' (cf. C 20); that the further development of the system is still linked with the characteristic style of the Oratory; and that the latter is more than a mere structure or environment and is in fact a '*model*' for every salesian work.

This last statement enshrines the idea that *every salesian work*, whatever its specific objectives, is a '*youth centre*'. In whatever other activities it may be involved (school, training centre, parish) it remains always ready to provide a multiple response, inspired by pastoral charity, to youth problems; this makes it a point of reference for young people of the area and for all interested in youth, with a welcoming environment and an atmosphere of personal relationships which make it become '*an Oratory*'.

## 2. A specific environment

Having made this necessary and more general consideration, let us now turn our attention in particular to the kind of work, environment, or pastoral structure, with the typical objective, style and organization spoken of in art.42 of the Constitutions: 'We carry out

our mission chiefly in such works and activities as make possible the human and christian education of the young, such as *oratories and youth centres*, schools and technical institutes, boarding establishments and houses for young people in difficulties'.

The characteristics of the same environment are described in articles 11 and 12 of the General Regulations and considered as '*an integral part of the pastoral project*' of every salesian parish (R 26).

The first point to consider is the place occupied by this environment in the present-day reality of every single province and in its plans for development or future reshaping. It would be difficult in fact to find in a province the 'oratorian spirit' if it had no activity in which this were given its maximum expression. Every province carries out the salesian mission through scholastic or parish commitments, or through those of cultural promotion and social communication, or various services in the fields of education and catechetics. The experience of recent years would seem to suggest that frequently the overall image becomes defined as the result of decisions to meet contingent local circumstances rather than of well thought out planning. And so it has happened that as a result of insistent local requests some provinces have developed parish work, and not always in the poorest areas, while others have concentrated prevalently on the scholastic field.

Emphasis on the oratory component varies greatly from province to province. Statistics indicate that there are more than 800 Oratories and/or Youth Centres in the Congregation, but their geographic distribution shows a concentration in some provinces and a gap in others.

There is a lack of ecclesial tradition in this regard in some places, and the Salesians have not modified the situation. Here the youth centre, as an alternative to scholastic activity, still has to overcome difficulties arising from its less structured character and from its apparent weakness as a factor in education. It is considered a complementary work of only secondary importance, not to be compared with the consistent cultural programmes of formal education.

In other provinces, where initial conditions were favourable, a



decline has occurred because of lack of adaptation to new circumstances and the new needs of youth. It is well known in fact that the former 'Sunday' or 'weekend' kinds of activity have died out with the advent of freer and more mobile forms of youthful and family life; that the Oratory for 'boys only' no longer meets the need at a time when the educational and religious requirements of people in general seem to be overriding even in the youth sector; that the Oratory as 'an environment of games and catechism' is no longer adequate where the reality of free time calls for cultural initiatives that are more varied and require competence; that the Oratory as a setting managed by Salesians alone and 'used' by the young must give way to a community in which both youngsters and lay collaborators take part and become fully inserted in the dynamics of the neighbourhood.

All this does not of course overlook the necessary qualification of some traditional aspects of the Oratory: catechesis against the background of a new evangelization and the consistent increase in the number of those who remain at a distance, and group movements at a time when young people belong to many movements and have no firm idea of their own identity.

Since these remarks may seem over-critical, it must be pointed out on the other hand that in some regions a systematic rethinking process is going on. New forms of the Oratory are being developed in poor quarters as a result of pastoral creativity. To these must be added the improvement of the traditional Oratories through the adopting of initiatives and pastoral lines of action which correspond to present sensitivities (emargination, volunteer work, group movements, ecclesial insertion, etc.).

Reflection on the specific characteristics of our own pastoral work which the celebration of the Centenary prompts us to make, and the urgent need felt by the Church for places where the possibility of efficacious religious socialization is provided for youth, lead us to examine the consistency of this kind of presence in the context of all the works of the province, and create conditions which will enable it to use all its educative possibilities.

Such reflection should have a twofold result. In the first place

every province should have among its different works *some in which the heart of the work consists of the Oratory or Youth Centre*, with all its characteristics realized in the best possible way. This is the only way to remove any doubts about its efficacy and to pass on a salesian style and practice to the younger generations. It is also a practical way for the province to show that it does not consider such work as a marginal activity suitable for filling in periods left free after carrying out other activities considered more 'formative' or 'pastoral'. It is a concrete way of demonstrating belief in the educational and evangelizing influence of such work.

The second result should be the fulfilment, case by case, of what is prescribed in the Regulations: *The parish 'should consider the oratory and youth centre an integral part of its pastoral project'*. As regards the reorganization of what we have at present, it will be useful to review the situation of the parishes so that each of them may be enriched with the activities of a youth centre; and in future it will be necessary to accept only those parishes which because of their geographical and social situation and the availability of premises and personnel enable us to offer young people an oratory environment in addition to the religious care of the parishioners in general.

### **3. Conditions that need to be ensured**

But if the Oratory or Youth Centre is to achieve this importance in the overall thinking of the province, some conditions must be ensured if there is to be continued educational and pastoral consolidation.

Without any doubt the first of these conditions concerns *personnel*. Just as a school cannot function without a sufficiently numerous and competent staff, so an Oratory or Youth Centre cannot realize its educational and pastoral capabilities without sufficient and trained personnel.

Educative and pastoral tasks involved in community animation call for proven knowledge and competence. Appraisal of the youth

situation must be continually updated, as also must be the understanding of the neighbourhood reality. Collaborators must be trained and made to share responsibility with us; a careful selection of initiatives is needed with particular attention to their educative potential; there is the personal relationship with the young people, who must find the educators always relaxed and available; and there is the animation of different groups to be attended to.

This insistence should not be interpreted as a call for the assignment of a number of people which in the present condition of the provinces would be utopian. We know that all our works, both now and in the future, require a sufficiently large nucleus of Salesians capable of involving numerous other forces. But a more equitable distribution of personnel should be aimed at in places where the Oratories have so far been accorded only marginal importance. At the same time this insistence should be understood as applying to the theoretical and practical training of confreres working in the Oratories and to the possibility of their continual updating.

The director of the Oratory was always a key figure and he is so still at the present day, even though he works in a different way in a community context of collaboration and shared responsibility. It is up to him to ensure the spirit and pastoral objectives of all the activity. He must see to the animation of the whole community and the training of all concerned, both those with particular roles to play (catechists, animators, group-leaders, collaborators, coaches) and every single youngster. This implies of course that he must be able to delegate organizational and economic responsibilities to others.

Finally a certain permanence is desirable in the various sectors of activity, especially in those which best succeed in forging links with the youngsters and the neighbourhood.

But it is not enough to provide sufficient and trained personnel. In the meetings that have been held for the purpose of relaunching the oratories, it was recognized that one of the main causes of their rise and fall is a lack of continuity in their management caused by changes in criteria regarding those aspects which are still at an experimental stage though often recommended. A second condition

therefore is the ensuring of a *community style of management*. This is not always easy to bring about because of previous customs, and can lead to reversals even in structures in which it is indicated by the Constitutions themselves or in which it began favourably.

Community management refers in the first place to the provincial community. As the body chiefly responsible for the salesian mission, this helps to formulate a *project* and guarantees its continuity despite changes of personnel, particularly with regard to those aspects which the Congregation has most at heart at the present day: openness as far as possible to all young people, christian identity, educational consistency, involvement of lay people, participation in the activities of the Church and the neighbourhood, quality of evangelization, group activity. For the better definition of this project there are readily available today salesian aids and Church documents which clarify objectives and lines of action, the conditions required for individuals and the neighbourhood, and the manner of linkage with the Church and civil society.

Community management refers secondarily to the *local community*. Salesian work must not be something divided, but must be made up of all the various activities which shape the mission in any particular place. The community must therefore consider the Oratory or Youth Centre as an object of its attention, discernment, and solidarity, and not hand over its total concern and responsibility to a single confrere.

Finally, community management implies that responsibility for the project and for its realization is *widely shared with the laity and young people*, according to their possibilities, by means of appropriate structures and ways of working. It is not just a case of giving them something to do, but of creating a community in which they feel they are welcome and of carrying out processes in which they are actively involved.

These are not the only conditions, but they will serve for the present communication which is meant to be a reminder rather than an exhaustive list.

The third General Chapter, under the direct inspiration of our Father, gave the following guidelines on the *'first exercise of*

*charity of the Pious Society of St Francis de Sales':*

- 'Let every Rector be solicitous about setting up an Oratory if there is not one already, or developing it if it already exists. He should consider this as one of the most important works entrusted to him.
- *Clerics and other salesian confreres* should be assigned to this work, so that they may steadily become more capable of so important a ministry of charity for the benefit of the young.
- *All members*, both clerical and lay, should consider themselves fortunate to be able to work in this sector, in the conviction that this kind of apostolate ... is for many youngsters, especially in towns and cities, their only plank of salvation' (MB 18, 702-704).

The concern is evident! It is up to us to meet it today with methods that are different, but with the same 'oratorian heart'.

## 4. ACTIVITIES OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL

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### 4.1 Chronicle of the Rector Major

From 8 to 16 April the Rector Major was in Zambia, calling at Nairobi on the way out. He presided at Lusaka over the Team Visit to Africa and Madagascar; present at the meeting were various members of the General Council, the provincial of the Central African province with the members of his provincial council, delegates and representatives of the new salesian foundations in the African continent. It was a week of very objective and useful work.

On 17 April he was at Bologna for a meeting with the Youth Movements of the city and region on the occasion of the Don Bosco centenary celebrations; the following day, at Milan, he took part in the solemn commemoration of Don Bosco organized by the city council and the Salesian Family of the region in the famous 'La Scala' Theatre (cf. this edition of the Acts, 5.1). On 19 April he was once again at Bologna to give a conference on Don Bosco in the context of the "Tuesdays of St Dominic" initiative organized in that city.

He left on 27 April for Panama for three intense days of meetings and popular celebrations. After this he

went on to Mexico and visited among other places Queretaro, Cerro Cubilete, Irapuato, Leon, Mexico City, Guadalajara and Monterrey. The Don Bosco centenary celebrations, jointly organized by the four SDB and FMA provinces, proved to be extraordinary manifestations of youthful initiative and participation by the people in general.

Returning to Italy on May 10, he spent the two significant dates of May 13 and 14 at Turin. On the 13th the Basilica at Valdocco was filled to capacity by the FMA who had gathered to express "gratitude to Don Bosco with Mother Mazzarello"; and on the following day the Basilica was once again filled, this time by the SDB who had come together for the solemn renewal of their salesian religious profession.

May 20 and 21 found the Rector Major at Sondrio for a commemoration of Don Bosco at which a large number of the local citizens were present; and he was back once again in Turin on the 23rd and 24th for the feast of Mary Help of Christians, rendered particularly solemn this year because of the double motive of the Marian Year and the Don Bosco centenary.

After this he left for Poland where between May 27 and 30 he took part at Poznan in extraordinary manifestations admirably organized by the four Polish SDB provinces.

On 4 and 5 June, the weekend after the plenary session of the General Council had begun, he took part in the solemn centenary celebrations at Bergamo, where in addition to meetings with young people from all over the Province, the Bergamo city council conferred on him the distinction of "honorary citizen" as an indication of their esteem for Don Bosco and his method of education. He was also at Treviglio for the large-scale meeting of the Past-Pupils and the interesting celebrations they organized to commemorate Don Bosco.

On 11 and 12 June, together with various other members of the General Council, he made the Team Visit to the UPS Vice-Province.

## 4.2 Activities of the Councillors

### The Councillor for Formation

Fr Paolo Natali, in addition to the normal work associated with his department at headquarters and visits made to some communities and study centres in the Rome area (first among them the UPS), spent the greater part of the time from

February to May in three journeys for animation purposes:

- from 11 February to 25 March in India, Hong Kong and Macau, Australia and Thailand;
- from 8 to 13 April in Zambia, for the Team Visit at Lusaka;
- from 13 to 27 May in the four provinces of Poland.

### *Meetings and their purpose*

With the exception of the Team Visit to Zambia which had its own particular physiognomy, the other visits were for specific meetings and purposes which had much in common.

The *main objective* was that of evaluating together, in the light of local circumstances and the concerns and requirements at the level of the Congregation as a whole, the positive aspects of the formation process and also the problems and difficulties encountered, so as to identify the causes and propose suitable solutions.

This enabled thought to be given when necessary to such matters as buildings, the characteristic manner of organization of some of our communities, points concerning teachers and formation guides (selection, preparation and updating), unification of criteria for assessment of candidates, and progression in formation content.

A second objective, a consequence of the above, was that of re-

flecting on continuity of local projects with the 'Ratio' (FSDB) and provincial directories, with due regard to different cultural situations.

In connection with contacts made: almost all the formation communities were visited, and in each of them there were discussions with the rector and his council, the teaching staff and formation guides, and with the young confreres in formation. At provincial level there were meetings with the provincial and provincial council, the provincial formation commission, and with the 'curatorium' in those places where it existed. In India a further meeting was possible with the provincials of all six provinces under the presidency of the Regional Councillor.

The following *communities and study-centres were visited*, in the respective provinces, together with the other activities mentioned:

- In India (11 February to 7 March):
  - Bombay province: Nasik, Poona, Lonavla;
  - Bangalore province: Alwaye, Kotagiri;
  - Calcutta province: Bandel, Kaljani-Vidyaniketan, Siliguri;
  - Guwahati province: Rongkon, Shillong-Sunnyside, Shillong-Mawlai;
  - Madras province: Coimbatore, Yercaud.
- Fr Natali was unable to enter the Dimapur province but had a meeting and discussion with the provincial and the rector of the postnovitiate. He also visited some other communities not directly involved in first formation.
- At Hong Kong (10-14 March, after a day's stay at Bangkok):
  - The 'Salesian House of Studies' which has in the community (with different sections and different confreres responsible in each) novices, postnovices, students of philosophy and students of theology. A visit was also made to the centre of studies frequented by the students, the 'Holy Spirit Seminary', a pontifical faculty which confers degrees and which has some Salesians on its teaching staff;
  - Other communities, including communities and mission stations in Macau.
- In Australia (15-21 March):
  - The 'Catholic Theological College', frequented by our students of philosophy and theology, which has seven salesian teachers on the staff;
  - Lysterfield, where the community includes novices, students of philosophy and brothers in professional training;
  - Oakleigh, where there are the prenovices and students of theology.



- Fr Natali also had a meeting at Lysterfield with the rectors to discuss with them the matter of ongoing formation; he had a further meeting with the provincial formation commission.
- In Thailand (22-25 March):
  - The formation communities of Sampran;
  - The new aspirantate and prenovitiate being built at Banpong-Sarasit;
  - A meeting with the provincial council and the provincial formation commission.
- In Poland (13-27 May):
  - He presided on 14 May at the rite of renewal of profession of the confreres of the Warsaw province in the church of Don Bosco at Plock; the following day he was present again in the same church for its consecration, and a few days later at Czerwinski took part in the funeral of two confreres killed in a road accident;
  - At Warsaw he had special meetings with salesian teachers and students of the various Faculties of the Warsaw Academy, and at Lublin with those of the Catholic University (some of them teach also in our other study-centres);
  - He visited also for the purposes already stated: the novitiates at Czerwinski (PLE), Swobnica

(PLN) and Kopiec (PLO); the postnovitiates of those doing pre-university courses at Lutomiersk (PLE), Rumia (PLN) and Cracow (PLS); the postnovitiates of students of philosophy at Kutno-Wozniakow (PLE) and Cracow (PLS), and the studentates of theology at Lad (PLN) and Cracow (PLS).

In the meantime work was going on in the Department for the preparation of the article in this issue of the Acts concerning ongoing formation (cf. n. 2.1) and on finishing the second volume of aids: 'Aids/2'.

Work has also begun with a view to the implementing of the last request of the GC22: "The richness of the vocational identity of the lay salesian shall be studied more deeply at different levels, and its essential significance for the life and mission of the Congregation shall be recognized in the light of present-day thinking in the Church. The Formation Department shall monitor this deeper study" (GC22, 9).

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

After the opening of the centenary celebrations at Turin, Fr Vecchi went to Spain. At San Lucar he preached the retreat to the SDB and FMA local superiors of the provinces of Cordoba and Seville, and did the same at Loyola for the rectors

of the provinces of Madrid, Bilbao and Leon, and for the FMA local superiors of the province of Madrid. The invitation had been made with particular reference to the centenary.

Fr Vecchi then spent part of February and March on a 25-day visit to the two USA provinces. At San Francisco he followed out a series of carefully prepared meetings: with pastoral animators, teams for pastoral work for vocations, young priests, deans of religious activities in the schools, and those taking part in the course of ongoing formation at Berkeley.

In the New Rochelle province he had similar meetings and took part also in others with a wider representation of Salesians, Salesian Sisters and lay people. In addition to visits to places of particular interest (West Haverstraw, Paterson), Fr Vecchi was present at the opening of the centenary celebrations at Marrero (New Orleans). There he was able to take part in a study-day on the salesian method of education for the numerous lay collaborators who work in elementary schools and media managed and pastorally animated by the SDB and FMA.

In late March and early April he was engaged in a retreat at Mornese for the local superiors of the FMA Barcelona province, and immediately afterwards took part with the Rector Major and other members of

the General Council in the Team Visit to the confreres in Africa.

From 17 to 21 April the first congress on '*Salesians and university students*' took place at the Generalate; it had been prepared by the Department for Youth Pastoral Work in collaboration with the UPS Vice-province. The purpose of the initiative was to give some thought to the growing commitment of Salesians in this field through residential hostels, chaplaincies, academic structures, and the presence of university students individually or in groups in parish and oratory environments. 33 confreres and one FMA took part, representing five countries (Belgium, Ireland, Italy, Poland and Spain). A number of very useful conclusions were reached, of which copies have been sent to the provinces.

A meeting of the provinces of the Pacific Region of Latin America was held in the last week of April at Cumbaya, Ecuador, on the "*Presence and insertion of salesians in areas of emargination*". The initiative was a consequence of the earlier Team Visit at Caracas. Taking part with Fr Vecchi were 40 confreres from 10 provinces, all involved in government, formation, pastoral animation, or work in very poor areas. Different kinds of service to the poor were examined, together with examples from Latin America and the salesian criteria to be ap-

plied to ensure that such work be in line with our particular charisma.

Fr Vecchi was next present and made a leading contribution to a meeting for the appraisal of "*salesian youth spirituality*" in Italy organized jointly by the SDB National Centre for Youth Pastoral Work and the FMA counterpart, the International Youth Pastoral Centre. The meeting took place at Salesian Headquarters between 9 and 11 May.

On May 12 he left for India to animate a course in youth pastoral work, promoted by the Indian provinces for some forty confreres working in this field at provincial level. The course lasted a month and was inspired by a similar course that had taken place earlier in Rome. It was thought that to run the course in the country concerned, in contact with specific questions and problems and in a language better understood by those taking part, would lead to a greater convergence in animation among the provinces concerned. The Indian Provincial Conference had entrusted the organization and running of the course to the recently constituted Centre for Youth Pastoral Work. In the opinion of those taking part the experience proved to be very valid for unifying criteria, content and methods, for raising pastoral work to an inter-provincial level and especially for giving con-

crete expression in the local context to directives and guidelines.

While in India, Fr Vecchi was invited to preside over the rite of religious profession and the conferring of medals and crosses on 14 May. He also took part in the opening of the 4th "Don Bosco Scout Camp", organized by the Indian provinces in connection with the centenary, and was able to visit the novitiates of Kotagiri and Coimbatore.

In the meantime work has been completed in the Department on two publications to promote reflection, with the printing and distribution of the volume "*Prassi educativa pastorale e Scienze dell'Educazione*" (edited by Vecchi-Prellezo, about 300 pages), and the dispatch of Dossier No.3 which carries guidelines and experiences on the Oratory - Youth Centre.

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

Shortly after the opening of the centenary year Fr Cuevas took part in the commemoration organized by the Rotary Club of Turin in honour of our Founder. Towards the end of February he was at Valencia in Spain to preach a retreat to the rectors and provincial council members of that province, and availed himself of the opportunity to make contact with the leaders of the Past-Pupils Federation at Villena and

take part in a day of formation at Campello for the Cooperators of the Valencia province.

His activities during March can be summarized as follows:

He had meetings in Ireland with the Cooperators' provincial council, with the leaders of the Past-Pupils, and with the salesian delegates for the animation of both groups. A few days were also given over to getting to know and giving animation to the province's activities in the field of social communication: the Salesian Bulletin and other publications, artistic and musical expressions, etc.

Returning from the visit to Ireland he called in at Great Britain, where he got to know various groups of Cooperators and Past-Pupils, met with their leaders, conversed with the salesian delegates, and took part in the festivities in honour of Don Bosco in the college at Farnborough.

Visits and contacts of this kind have always proved very profitable for mutual acquaintance and for an animation which nourishes the rich experience of salesian life already possessed by the lay groups of the Family.

Still in March he took part in the days of formation and planning involving all the delegates for the Cooperators and Don Bosco Past-Pupils of the Italian provinces.

The Team Visit to Zambia provi-

ded Fr Cuevas with the opportunity to make contact with salesian work in neighbouring countries. He spent Holy Week in Kenya (Nairobi, Embu, Makuyo) to get to know and to animate activities of various groups of the Salesian Family. In the first week of April he met with the leaders of the Cooperators and Past-Pupils in South Africa. In all these visits he never failed to make contact also with the Salesian Sisters: the exchange of views regarding the Salesian Family was enriching and prospects for the coming years are good.

From 6 to 12 April Fr Cuevas was at Lusaka in Zambia with the Rector Major and other members of the General Council for the Team Visit: one of the points that emerged was the need for organization of lay people who take Don Bosco as their inspiration, and a bolder endeavour to put communications at the service of education and evangelization.

During the second part of April he made a lengthy visit to the lay groups of the Salesian Family in the United States of America. In particular he took part in the Cooperators' Provincial Congress at West Haverstraw (April 15-20): a well organized and directed meeting for a deeper analysis of the Cooperator's identity and for relaunching the local and provincial organization of

the association in the vast territory of the USA.

While at New Rochelle he made contact with the salesians and their collaborators at the "Don Bosco Multimedia Center", and with other Catholic centres working in the communications sector in the United States.

From 21 to 25 April Fr Cuevas was at San Francisco and Los Angeles to meet SDB and FMA delegates who animate groups of Cooperators and converse with the leaders of the various associations. Through these days of study an effort was made to reflect on the significance of the vocation of the salesian Cooperator in the context of the North American Church and on the apostolic development and missionary commitments which are arising in the Los Angeles area.

Towards the end of April he went on to Mexico, where some days were given over to formative meetings with SDB and FMA delegates. Later he had meetings also with the provincial delegates for the past-pupils. Further days were spent with the salesian communicators, those responsible for publications, and with the provincial superiors.

In the first week of May Fr Cuevas moved on to Guadalajara for a heavy programme of meetings for purposes of information, formation and animation with the leaders of

the Cooperators, groups of Don Bosco Volunteers, local delegates and rectors concerned with the development of groups of the Salesian Family. He also reserved some time for the young salesians in first formation (theologians and prenovices) in connection with our duties as animators of the Cooperators and Past-Pupils, and as those responsible for the use of social communication in the service of youth.

On his return to Europe he followed the activities associated with the Art Exhibition organized in Rome by the World Confederation of Past Pupils. Between May 6 and 10 he took part in the national meeting of the young Past-Pupils of Spain: more than a hundred young people came together to reflect on and develop a number of guidelines concerning "the task of the young Past-Pupils as apostles among youth".

From May 13 to 15 Fr Cuevas and the Confederal President of the Past Pupils took part in the national Congress of the Past Pupils of France, held at Samoens (Upper Savoy). More than 300 members made a study of the theme: *"Living and loving today: a challenge"*. An interesting and significant point was the presence and participation of the provincials and provincial councillors of both the French provinces (Paris and Lyons); present also were the FMA superiors and representati-

ves of the Don Bosco Volunteers. A deeper analysis was made of Don Bosco's educational work and his response as an apostle and educator to the challenges of his time. The organization and fraternal environment fostered by the leaders of the Past-Pupils were admirable and gave to the gathering the significance of a commitment for the future. The presence and words of Mgr P. Pican, the new French salesian bishop, were very encouraging.

From May 19 to 29 an International Seminar of Salesian Publishers took place at Turin; it was organized as an act of homage to Don Bosco in the centenary year. The happy coincidence with the first international book-exhibition held in Turin at the same time, and the awarding in the same context and environment of the 'Grinzane-Cavour' prize, promoted by our International Publishing Society (SEI), gave greater meaning and added stimulus to our seminar.

The seminar itself, at which the Councillor General and collaborators from his department were present, had as its theme "*The cultural challenge to the salesian publishing-house*". By means of competent contributions from salesian and secular experts we were able to probe more deeply the mind and attitude of Don Bosco in the face of the cultural challenges of his time and the educational criteria adopted by sale-

sians at the present day to provide a wise response to the new demands of culture made through youth and the ordinary people.

Finally, at the beginning of the new plenary session of the General Council, Fr Cuevas took part in the National Congress of Spanish Past-Pupils (4-6 June), organized to coincide with the Don Bosco centenary.

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

Even before assisting at the opening of the centenary celebrations at Turin, Fr Luc Van Looy took part in a study-meeting on the Missions at Benediktbeuern in Germany on 28-29 January 1988.

Between 2 February and 23 April he was engaged in the Extraordinary Visitation of the North-Belgium province, with a brief interval for the Team Visit at Lusaka for salesian Africa.

After finishing the Visitation in Belgium, the Councillor presided at the annual meeting of Mission Procurators of the European and North-American countries, who met at Warsaw (Poland) from April 24 to 28 to study criteria for human advancement.

From 3 May to 3 June he directed the course of ongoing formation organized at the Generalate specifically for salesian missionaries. The

general theme of the course was "salesianità in a missionary context". 36 missionary confreres from 29 countries took part with dedication and satisfaction.

### **The Economist General**

On 11 December 1987 at Genoa-Sampierdarena, the Economist General blessed the new premises of the Provincial Office of the Ligurian-Tuscan province.

In the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians at Turin on 31 December 1987, during the Mass of thanksgiving at the end of the year, he presented and gave a commentary on the Rector Major's Strenna for 1988.

After the conclusion of the plenary session of the General Council and the centenary celebrations at Turin and the Becchi, he presided at a meeting of the provincial economists of the Italian Provincial Conference held at the Sacred Heart in Rome.

From 1-12 March he visited the province of Portugal. At Lisbon he had a meeting with the parish priests of the province on juridical and economic aspects of the salesian parish. He also managed to visit the distant communities of Cape Verde and Madeira.

On 9 April he was at Sao Paulo in Brazil for a meeting with the pro-

vincial and provincial council. He took advantage of the possibility to pass through Brasilia and New Rochelle.

On 5 May he was with the Administrative Council of the SEI at Turin for the shareholders' meeting.

He celebrated the feast of St Mary Mazzarello on 13 May with the FMA community at Cinecittà in Rome.

On 14 May, the day of salesian profession, Fr Paron presented the "cross of the Good Shepherd" to the community of the Generalate and visitors, including in particular the group of missionaries taking part in the ongoing formation course.

He went to Cisternino (Brindisi) on 22 May for the celebration of the feast of Mary Help of Christians and for the inauguration of the monument to Don Bosco in the city square that bears his name.

On 29 May he was once again at Sacro Cuore, Rome, for a meeting with the provincials and provincial economists of the Italian Provincial Conference for the examination and approval of the economic section of the national directory.

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

Immediately after the opening of the centenary at Turin, Fr Carlos

Techera left for the province of Bahia Blanca in Argentina, where in the city of Viedma he took part in a week of pastoral study to programme the activities of the year ahead. He took the opportunity to visit some of the other communities of the province.

On 20 February he received the Rector Major who arrived at Buenos Aires to preach a retreat to the rectors of Argentina, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay. This important event, programmed as part of the centenary celebrations, took place at Fortin Mercedes. After the retreat he accompanied the Rector Major on his visit to various communities and also on his significant meeting with the 'Mapuches' Indians (cf. chronicle of the Rector Major in AGC 325, 4.1). He was also with the Rector Major at Brasilia for the celebrations in honour of Don Bosco (cf. *ibid*).

On 3 March Fr Techera began the Extraordinary Visitation of the Campo Grande province (Mato Grosso, Brazil), a visit which kept him occupied until the second part of May, with two interruptions: on 25 March to preside over the meeting of the Provincial Conference of Brazil at Barbecena in the province of Belo Horizonte; and on 29 April for a similar meeting of the Plata Provincial Conference at Viedma.

He had many rich experiences, especially during the Extraordinary

Visitation, as for instance during the Holy Week celebrations among the Xavantes and Bororos Indians. He was able to admire the great work carried out by the Salesians and the FMA in those areas since 1894. Great gratitude was expressed by archbishops, bishops and laity. During his time in the province he was also able to visit almost all the FMA communities, groups of salesian Cooperators, Don Bosco Volunteers, Past-Pupils and other groups of the Salesian Family.

A very important occasion was that of 14 May: the Regional Councillor presided at the celebration during which the Salesians of Campo Grande renewed their religious profession.

After concluding the Visitation with a meeting of the rectors and the provincial council, Fr Techera left for Italy. He celebrated the feast of Mary Help of Christians at Turin and returned to the Generalate on 25 May.

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

After the solemn celebrations for the inauguration of the Don Bosco centenary, Fr Ignacio Velasco left at once for his region.

His first engagement was in the province of Peru where he had a



meeting with the provincial and his council and visited the formation communities.

He then went on to Chile and stayed some days at Santiago, where he met with the provincial council and took part in the celebrations for the priestly silver jubilee of Mgr Tomas Gonzalez SDB, which took place in the house of the Patronage of St Joseph with very many confreres and members of the Salesian Family present, Cardinal Silva Henriquez among them.

Subsequently he visited the southern part of Chile, calling at the salesian works of Punta Arenas, Povenir and Puerto Natales.

On his way back from Chile he made a brief stop in the province of Bogotá, where he met the provincial and the newly appointed salesian bishop, Mgr Hector Lopez, Vicar Apostolic of the Ariari.

Towards the end of February he began the Extraordinary Visitation of the province of "San Luca", Venezuela, which continued until the end of May with the exception of a brief interruption for a rapid further visit to Haiti in Holy Week, and a longer interval at the end of April and in early May; this was to allow the Regional to accompany the Rector Major on his visit of animation to Panama and later to Mexico (cf. chronicle of Rector Major).

At the beginning of June Fr Velasco returned to Rome.

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

After the conclusion of the winter session of the Council and the beginning of the centenary celebrations, Fr Martin McPake spent four months from February to May in the Eastern USA province of New Rochelle, where he carried out the Extraordinary Visitation. The whole period was redolent of the Don Bosco centenary spirit and marked by the enthusiasm to which it has given rise.

On his arrival the Visitor became immediately aware of the widespread fruits of the great celebration which had taken place on 31 January in St Patrick's Cathedral, New York, when in the presence of some four thousand people Cardinal O'Connor expressed his appreciation not only for our saintly Founder, but also for his 7th Successor and present-day sons in the United States of America.

Similar celebrations, though on a smaller scale, studied the four-month Visitation at Tampa, Miami, New Orleans, Columbus, Boston, Paterson and other places. At Boston Cardinal Law vied with Cardinal O'Connor in expressing his high opinion of Don Bosco, the present Rector Major and the salesian confreres.

Outstanding in the Regional's memory is a brief visit he made to Canada, where on May 21 some two

thousand young people met together in the national sanctuary of St Joseph at Montreal to give thanks to God for the gift of St John Bosco and to renew their commitment as young christians faithful to the gospel values. Presiding over the celebration was Mgr. Paul Gregoire, one of the new Cardinals, who said in his homily that during his life the biography of Don Bosco had been his bedside book, which he has read many times, annotated, and frequently recommended to educators in his archdiocese.

The high-point of the Visitation was 14 May, when in communion with the whole Congregation the confreres renewed their profession. The celebration had been well prepared and proved to be a memorable occasion and a source of deep joy throughout the province. Today, 'ad perpetuam rei memoriam', every community has an artistic parchment bearing the profession formula and the signature of all its members.

In these celebrations it was abundantly clear that the sons of Don Bosco are a living part of the Church in the United States. Given that the Catholic Church is the only one in the country which is still growing in numbers, and that in the next century will constitute 50% of the population, the Visitor hopes that the American confreres may be blessed with a big increase in voca-

tions (at present very few), and so continue to make their contribution to the life of the Church.

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

Fr Thomas Panakezham left Rome on 3 February and began with a rapid visit to communities in the provinces of Bangalore, Madras, Calcutta, Guwahati and Dimapur in India. He was able to meet with provincial councils for an exchange of ideas and the resolving of some important problems concerning the good running of the respective provinces. In the province of Dimapur in particular he visited almost every community to make the consultation which precedes the appointment of the new provincial.

Still in India Fr Panakezham presided over a meeting of all the provincials: it was the first meeting of the "Presidency of the Indian Provincial Conference" after the recent approval of its new Regulations by the Rector Major and his Council. At this meeting concrete lines of action were laid down for the animation of formation communities, especially those for the formation of coadjutors, and also for the animation of rectors. Guidelines were also given for the meeting of animators of youth pastoral work, due to take place with Fr Vecchi at Bangalore; for personnel for Project Africa; and for the national education commis-

sion. The programme for the visit of the Rector Major next November was also studied.

On 22 March the Regional Councillor went to the Philippines where he visited the formation communities and received the perpetual profession of twelve young confreres.

On 28 March he began the Extraordinary Visitation of the Chinese province of "Mary Help of Christians", with headquarters in Hong Kong. This was interrupted for a few days while the Regional presided over a meeting of the provincials of the Far East held at Seoul, Shen-Weol-Dong, from 12 to 14 April. This meeting reviewed the Team Visit made last year in Thailand at Hua Hin; it also evaluated the extent to which the directives given by the Rector Major and the General Council after the individual Extraordinary Visitations had been implemented, and studied the programme for the Rector Major's visit next November.

On his way back from Korea Fr Panakezham called at Japan and visited the formation community of Chofu, Tokyo. It was consoling to note that both in Korea (11 novices) and Japan (8 novices) there is a notable increase in the number of novices and prenovices.

On 19 April the Visitation was resumed at Taiwan, where there are three communities belonging to the Hong Kong province. This was fol-

lowed by the visitation of the province's three communities in Macau.

The Visitation came to an end on 29 May, and the Regional feels it a duty to emphasize the good spirit which is everywhere to be found, together with the strong scholastic commitment. Prayer and work is needed though for an increase in vocations.

Fr Panakezham returned to Rome on May 30.

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

After the winter session of the General Council and the inauguration of the Don Bosco centenary celebrations with the solemn manifestations at Turin, Fr Dominic Britschu left for his region. After a short stay at Paris he began the Extraordinary Visitation of the South German province with headquarters in Munich, a task which occupied him almost full-time over recent months; the visitation of the communities and his contacts with the whole salesian reality in every work enabled him to see at first hand how very much alive is Don Bosco's spirit in this country.

The Visitation had to be interrupted in early April to enable Fr Britschu to take part in the Team Visit to the African countries at Lusaka in Zambia.

A moment of particular spiritual intensity was the celebration of 14 May, when the Regional found himself at Ensdorf in the company of many confreres from the province.

Worthy of note also are visits and meetings which Fr Britschu attended in Paris and Vienna, and that of the Interprovincial Conference of German-speaking countries at which was present also the new provincial of Ljubljana.

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

Leaving Rome after the inauguration of the Don Bosco centenary year, Fr Jose Antonio Rico spent the greater part of the time between 4 February and 28 May on the Extraordinary Visitation of the Madrid province.

In February nevertheless he spent a week going round the houses of the Barcelona province to launch the consultation for the appointment of the new provincial. He repeated the process in April in the Leon province.

From 26 to 28 February he took part in the National Congress on Professional Formation, which took place at Madrid in connection with the Don Bosco centenary and the debate initiated by the Spanish Government for the reform of such formation.

Between March 12 and 20 he accompanied the Rector Major in his

visit to the Seville and Cordoba provinces, a visit which ended with the 1st National Congress of the "Hogares Don Bosco" (Don Bosco Focolari) at Madrid.

Still in March (21-22) he presided over a meeting of the Iberian Provincial Conference. On the previous day (20), with the approval of all the Spanish SDB and FMA provincials, the new national delegate for the salesian Cooperators was appointed.

The Extraordinary Visitation of the Madrid province gave the Regional Councillor an opportunity to go to Equatorial Guinea, where he remained for two weeks to visit the four communities working there. Here the most significant event was the inauguration of the work at Bata in the presence of two Bishops, the Vicar General of the third Guinea diocese, and the Governor of the region.

On 14 May Fr Rico celebrated the renewal of salesian profession, first with the students of theology at Madrid and later with other communities of confreres and FMA, the Don Bosco Volunteers and representatives of the Cooperators.

Finally, during the course of the visitation to the Madrid houses he preached the novena of Mary Help of Christians and celebrated the feast there.

The Visitation ended with a meeting with the provincial council on May 27, and with the rectors on May 28.

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

After the centenary festivities at Turin and the Becchi, Fr Bosoni left for Venice where he was due to begin the Extraordinary Visitation of the "San Marco" province of Mogliano. But a sudden illness caused him to be admitted to hospital and subsequently rendered necessary a period of care and rest.

He was able to return however to Mogliano Veneto on 24 April to set in motion the consultation for the appointment of a new provincial and passed through all the communities of the province to meet and sensitize the confreres in this connection.

In recent months he was also able to take part in Don Bosco centenary celebrations at Cerignola di Foggia, Parma, Bologna and Milan.

At Rome in May he presided at the National "Appraisal '88", at which were present Salesians, Daughters of Mary Help of Christians and young people.

On May 14, the day of salesian profession, he was at Valdocco with the Rector Major, and took advantage of his visit to Turin to bring up to date the consultation for the appointment of a new provincial of the Subalpine province in meetings with the provincial council and rectors.

He also took the opportunity to visit the novitiate at Pinerolo, as he

had already done earlier with the novitiate at Lanuvio, and to meet the students of theology at Turin-Crocetta. He had earlier visited the postnovitiates at both Nave and Rome (San Tarcisio).

On May 24 he took part in the solemn celebrations in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians at Turin, and on his return to Rome presided at the meeting of the Italian Provincial Conference from 27 to 29 May.

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

Immediately after the plenary session of the General Council, Fr Augustyn Dziedziel, left for Poland where he had a meeting with the provincials at Czestochowa to draw up a programme for the coming Team Visit and for various other activities at national level.

He then launched the consultation for the appointment of the new provincial of Cracow, and took the opportunity afforded by this to visit all the local communities of the province to provide animation.

Towards the middle of March he was able to welcome the Secretary General (Fr Francesco Maraccani) to the country, and to be present at some of the meetings which the latter had with the provincial secretaries at Cracow.

At the end of March he left for Zambia to take part in the Team Visit at Lusaka for the African countries. He was able to use the occa-

sion also to visit all the salesian works in Zambia. On his way back he stopped in Kenya to meet four Polish confreres who are preparing themselves for the launching of salesian missions in Uganda, and with another four confreres from Poland who are doing their theological studies at Nairobi.

After a brief stay in Rome Fr Dziedziel returned once again to Poland, where he had a further meeting with the provincials to acquaint them with the results of the Team Visit at Lusaka and give them news of the missions in Zambia, and to initiate the work of the Polish Provincial Conference.

Between 13 and 26 March he accompanied the Councillor for Formation (Fr Paolo Natali) on his visits to the eleven formation communities in Poland and to the three communities of university professors and students.

Finally, at the end of May he accompanied the Rector Major in his visit to Poland and in the national celebrations for the Don Bosco centenary which took place at Poznan with the whole Salesian Family taking part.

### **The Secretary General**

In accordance with his six-year programme, Fr Francesco Maracani (in addition to the normal office-work at headquarters and some meetings for spiritual animation,

one of which was the preaching of a retreat to the confreres of Barcelona) proceeded with his objective of making contact with provincial secretaries for the purpose of studying with them the application of the universal law and of our own particular law in the organization of our provinces.

In the month of March it was the turn of the provincial secretaries of Poland with whom, in agreement with the Rector Major's delegate, he had a meeting at Cracow at the provincial house. In five days of work (March 14-19) they were able to study together many points concerning the organization of the Provincial Office and archives, and problems of communication between the provinces and the headquarters of the Congregation.

Following the meeting with provincial secretaries, the Secretary General took the opportunity to visit various Polish communities, and particularly the formation communities: the studentate of philosophy and theology at Cracow, the novitiates at Kopiec and Czerwinsk, the postnovitiate at Kutno-Wazniakow, and the studentate of theology at Lad. He was able to meet the young confreres and everywhere gained the impression that there was a lively affection for Don Bosco and the Congregation. Very enriching too for his overall knowledge of the Congregation were his visits to Oswiecim, Lodz, Plock and Warsaw.

## 5. DOCUMENTS AND NEWS ITEMS

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### 5.1 Don Bosco and the world of work.

*address of the Rector Major at the 'Scala' of Milan.*

*In the context of the Don Bosco centenary celebrations, the Salesian Family of Lombardy and Emilia together with the City Council of Milan organized a solemn civic commemoration for 18 April in the Scala Opera House, one of the best known artistic environments in the world. With the Rector Major, the Mayor of the city of Milan, the two salesian Cardinals Alfons Stickler and Rosalio Castillo Lara, the Provincial, and some members of the General Council, were present the Cardinal Archbishop of Milan (Carlo Martini) with his five Auxiliary Bishops, Cardinal Giovanni Colombo (former Archbishop of the Diocese), the Secretary General of the FMA (representing the Mother General), members of parliament and mayors of the Province, and numerous Consuls with offices in Milan. In the big theatre, filled to capacity by representatives of the people of Milan and of the Salesian Family, the Mayor made an opening speech of greeting and explained the reasons underlying the celebration. He was followed by Car-*

*dinal Martini with some brief but deep considerations on the Church's prior attention to the young at the present day in imitation of Don Bosco. The Rector Major then developed the theme "Don Bosco and the world of work". After a musical intermezzo the President of the Italian Senate (the Hon. Giovanni Spadolini) brought the manifestation to an end with an effective presentation of Don Bosco's activity in his own period.*

*We print the Rector Major's address in full.*

Mr Mayor,  
Your Eminences and Excellencies,  
Civil, Military, Political and Religious  
Authorities of the City of Milan,  
Diplomatic representatives of various countries,  
Dear Friends of Don Bosco and  
members of the Salesian Family,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Before speaking to you of Don Bosco here at the Scala of world-wide fame, I would like to direct a thought to the Hon. Ruffilli, a salesian past-pupil, who was killed shortly after taking part in the presentation of a book recounting the memoirs of the 'San Luigi' Oratory

of Forlì, where he had grown up. His state funeral is taking place at this very moment in the presence of the President of the Republic and the President of the Senate. The latter has assured us that he will be here at the Scala before the end of this manifestation.

In thanking the Mayor of Milan, a past-pupil like myself of the oratory of Sondrio, for having given us the possibility and honour of commemorating Don Bosco at the Scala, the Temple of Music, I would like to say that our Saint had a great love of music and it is in no way out of place to speak of him here. He made of music an effective element of education, and organized special music classes for the boys of his oratories. Among his pupils was the future Cardinal Giovanni Cagliero, the composer of Masses and other well known compositions that drew praise from Joseph Verdi himself.

I think it especially significant that this commemoration of the centenary of Don Bosco is taking place in a Milan which the authoritative American magazine "Time" described as the city with a tradition of work, business activity, and progress; and I would like to shed a little light on the historical figure of this great Educator by directing your attention to the values of work which he fostered among the young people of the poorer classes.

## **The present day need of a 'civilization of work'**

Let us begin with a preliminary observation.

Work is at the centre of present-day society; it conditions its progress and its moments of imbalance, and is one of the main causes of crises. "*Work*", says the encyclical 'Laborem exercens', "*is in a certain sense the key to the whole social question*" (LE 3).

There is an urgent need therefore to set about promoting a true civilization of work.

But a vision of this kind presupposes a deep cultural transformation which will translate into practice in today's society the fundamental truths connected with human work. The integral formulation of this doctrine at the present day is a challenge which involves even a rethinking of the great gospel commandment of love with a view to its adequate social application.

It is customary to distinguish *work as an 'objective fact'* which conditions its nature, from its '*subjective dimension*' which touches the conscience and competence of the individual. Under both these aspects there are many examples at the present day and they are very complex.

Certainly Don Bosco cannot be presented as a prophetic visionary with formulas for solving the big



modern problems of work as an objective social fact, but his dedicated witness provides an original message mainly in connection with the 'subjective dimension' of work.

In this regard the possibility of a 'civilization of work' implies the overcoming of the concept of the formation of technicians and craftsmen understood as nothing more than training in the acquirement of skill, and calls for a change to a more integral human vision: "man in fact constitutes the beginning, the subject and the purpose of all working activity"!

What makes Don Bosco's relationship with the world of work original is the *educative intention*; this embraces the whole of the person of the young apprentice, from the concept of human advancement connected with skill and professionalism *to the social and ethical dimension (the formation of the 'upright citizen')*; it insists not only on the vindication of rights but also on the fulfilment of duties.

### **Don Bosco, a man with a passion for work**

There is no doubt that behind Don Bosco's description as the 'Saint of work' and his proclamation as 'Patron of apprentices' lies the fact of his concept of work and his esteem for it, in the sense of a

*personal dedication to an activity requiring inventiveness and a spirit of sacrifice.*

Born at a time of severe poverty when it was quite general for juveniles to be in employment, the youngest of three brothers and after losing his father at the age of two years, young John soon had to start prematurely on farm work, first in his home surroundings and later as a farmhand on the property of others. When he reached 15, in order to continue his studies he had to move several miles away from his family and lodge with a tailor whose trade he learned in his spare time. Simultaneously he entered the musical area, practising the organ, violin and gregorian chant, and was also able to spend several hours with a blacksmith learning how to handle hammers and files.

At Chieri during his higher studies he found time to frequent the workshops of a carpenter and a shoe repairer, and in this way learned to use a plane and square, and to repair boots and shoes.

The ideal that sustained him was that of studying, but at the same time he gained experience of the efficacy of manual work as a source of help, a means of forming the spirit, and an aid to maturing in life's responsibilities.

Even after becoming a priest, he always displayed a remarkable dedication and ability for activity and

organization. What eventually brought about his death was in fact that he was worn out with overwork. At Marseilles in 1884, Dr Combal of the University of Montpellier said after examining him: "You have worn yourself out with too much work. You are like a suit that has become threadbare through being worn constantly, weekdays and Sundays".

It should be noted especially that Don Bosco, with his practical and industrious approach, always showed a particular sensitivity as regards the very many positive aspects of the "lay" quality peculiar to the world of work, which recognizes the goodness and right order of creation and bears witness to man's dominance over creation through his activity.

### **His first contact with young workers**

After moving to Turin to begin his priestly ministry he at once found himself in contact with a new phenomenon: *the first beginnings of the social question among workers*. The city was rapidly changing by a series of small steps from being a place of handicrafts to full industrialization.

Attracted by the possibility of employment, whole families were moving seasonally or permanently into the region's capital, thus giving

rise to an urban wage-earning class within which the weakest category and the one without hope was that of the younger people. And it was for the benefit of this group that Don Bosco developed the option he had made to be an educator for workers. The first youngsters with whom he made contact during the 1840's he described as "stonecutters, bricklayers, roadmakers, general labourers etc. who came from places quite far away: the Savoy region, the Valley of Aosta, Biella, Novara, Lombardy etc.".

He decided that the initial form of intervention for the benefit of the most needy was the *Oratory*, an environment which proved with the passing of time to be of great formative efficacy for individuals, and also to be of considerable social importance. He devoted his Sundays to their education; during the week, to the puzzlement of many of the clergy of the time, he went to visit them at their workplaces, shops, building sites and scaffolding.

And as well as all this, as he tells us himself in his 'Memoirs', "every Saturday I went to the prisons with my pockets well filled, sometimes with tobacco, sometimes with fruit, sometimes with rolls of bread, always for the purpose of cultivating the acquaintance of the unfortunate prisoners, of helping them, of making them my friends. It was then that I discovered at first hand that if

the youngsters on leaving that place of punishment were offered a kindly hand, if they could find someone to take care of them, to be with them on Sundays and Feastdays, someone who would try to find them work with an honest employer etc., these youngsters were quite capable of living an honourable life".

But before long Don Bosco found that this was not enough. He became aware that one of the causes of the intolerable situations in which the young people found themselves was plain ignorance. They needed instruction, Their human and social advancement needed a cultural basis which would give them a better standing in the eyes of employers.

And so he went on to organize in his Oratory a Sunday-school and an evening school with lessons in reading, writing, drawing, arithmetic, history, singing and music, sometimes based on books and aids which he had compiled himself: an educational initiative which today could rightly be called complementary to practical trade instruction.

### **The boarding stage and protection by contract**

Then came the patriotic explosion of 1848-49 which touched off the renaissance movement which was to lead to national unification

and a profound restructuring of society. When the first critical phase was over, Don Bosco took a step forward which proved decisive as regards his educational plan: that of providing the youngsters with clothing, food and lodging. Moreover he set about establishing benefit funds in favour of trade apprentices, and a *Mutual Aid Society* whose regulations testify to his practical approach and to his wise principles of solidarity and ethical clarity. The common fund, built up from small individual contributions and free donations would provide for the daily support of a youngster who might become ill or unemployed, or for other individual needs.

From that time too dates the decision to lay down the well known "*work contracts*" for the defence of the fundamental rights and duties of the young apprentice and his employer. They set out all the details concerning wages, observance, moral needs, Sunday rest, insurance against sickness and other contingencies, the prohibition to employ the apprentice in work extraneous to his trade, and his gradual training for higher possibilities.

A good deal has been said and written about these agreements; today some people see them as leading up to trade unions. But it should be kept in mind that at the basis of Don Bosco's concern to find employment for the boys and to establish apprenticeship contracts lay

that 'educative passion' which made him give himself body and soul to the human and christian advancement of poor youngsters so as to make of them upright and responsible citizens.

As far as the world of work is concerned Don Bosco appears not as a pioneer trades-unionist but as a man with precise educational objectives in view.

### **The creation of "workshops" and the formation of "trade instructors"**

But even with all this behind him he was still not satisfied. The artisans' workshops and the environment of the newly established factories often developed into places which, far from being environments for completing education, often turned out to be situations of moral deviations and abuse which led to the youngsters losing their faith. It was not easy to find a sufficient number of upright employers. The phenomenon of dechristianization of the masses was already beginning to appear on the horizon; the cleavage between the Gospel and the world of work would be a fact before much more water had passed under the bridge. For the moment the workers' unions, which excluded the employers, were beginning to displace the mutual aid societies of earlier years and were adopting

strongly critical attitudes towards the traditional popular religious practices.

And so despite the fact that he did not have sufficient resources to pay for the building of the church of St Francis de Sales, then nearing completion at Valdocco, Don Bosco began to seek everywhere for funds to put up new buildings and equip them as *schools and workshops for handicrafts*; in these, in addition to training in trades, attention was given to forming in the boys the ethical and christian conscience of the honest worker. As 1853 approached he opened workshops for shoe-making and repairs, and for tailoring; in 1854 a shop for bookbinding followed, in 1855 one for carpentry, and in 1862 a blacksmith's shop. In these courses Don Bosco himself was often the first teacher thanks to the experience he had had in his younger days, brief though it had been. In 1861, after working towards it for years, he succeeded in inaugurating a *printing press*, which soon became the driving force behind many activities at Valdocco: it provided work for the youngsters, went on to absorb a paper-mill and printed a numerous series of books and pamphlets. A considerable amount of capital was continually fed into this venture to keep the machinery up to date and remain, in Don Bosco's words, "in the vanguard of progress". He al-

ways had a proper esteem for technical advancements, and despite so many difficulties of a bureaucratic and financial nature he received indications of esteem, chief amongst them that at the 1884 National Exhibition at Turin.

But as early as the 1850's Don Bosco had already found that he could not continue to do everything by himself: he needed external trade instructors to whom he could entrust responsibility for the management of the workshops. He was partly disappointed in this because some of his first ones were more interested in production and making money than in teaching a trade to others. His own idea, and it is worth repeating, was that the workshop should be a true school of all-round learning.

Faced with a challenge of this kind he made a bold decision: he invited the best of the pupils who were already qualified in their trade, and also others, to stay with him and devote themselves full-time to the service of the young apprentices. In this way there appeared the *new and original figure of the consecrated lay Salesian, or "Coadjutor"*, who was just as much a religious as his priest confreres, but placed all his technical and educational ability gratuitously at the service of the young apprentices.

In this way there grew up in embryo in the little world of Valdocco

a centre for training in handicrafts which was soon to grow into *true trade schools*, with appropriate programmes and methodical teaching. Before Don Bosco died he was able to see the realization of the first of such schools at S. Benigno Canavese, Genoa-Sampierdarena, Nice and Marseilles in France, Barcelona in Spain, and at Buenos Aires, Niteroi, Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paolo in Latin America.

To these initiatives must be added his clear intuition of the growing *importance of the lower classes in the structuring of the new society*. Social and cultural evolution rendered every day more evident the importance that these people were assuming. It was becoming necessary to build the new fatherland with people "of the hammer and sickle", by forming in them the conscience of upright and competent citizens.

From all this educational commitment we can glean a prophetic message from Don Bosco which is still valid at the present day.

### **His message for a culture of work**

But, it will be asked, how much of his teaching is still valid for us a hundred years later, living as we are in a vastly different social and economic system?

a. In the first place Don Bosco

can remind us that *at the centre of every family, social, political and economic concern there must be the individual, and in this case the young person*, with his needs and expectations and his personal dignity. Don Bosco's standpoint in his many interventions of all kinds was that of *education*, and he never let slip an opportunity of reminding all and sundry of this point, and particularly those constituted in authority; whether the latter were favourable or hostile, he always recognized their noble duty of dealing with the widest structures of society, of defining the elements of civil cohabitation, of studying how riches could be equally distributed, of repairing the social woof and warp so badly damaged by the struggles of the risorgimento. Don Bosco always maintained that *commitment to education is indispensable*: the first subject of work is the worker himself.

It is precisely *in this cultural perspective* that Don Bosco is to be seen: the primacy of man over work; the primacy of subjective over objective work; the primacy of the worker over considerations of capital; the primacy of conscience over technical matters; the primacy of solidarity over the interests of selfish individuals or privileged groups.

All this demands a strong spiritual background which Don Bosco built

up through religious teaching and which the encyclical "*Laborem exercens*" draws out from the "Gospel of work" in an updated and always open "social teaching of the Church".

b. But Don Bosco had also a *great esteem for the objective aspect of work*. He kept a keen eye on the evolution of the nascent industries and was awake to the various *contributions made by technology*. He saw in these conquests of human progress new horizons and possibilities for doing good. He experienced this in particular in the printing sector.

There is no doubt that technology is one of the major factors in civilization's great transformation from the rural to the industrial world and from industry to the present post-industrial development. Certainly if technology is put at the service of selfishness and materialist ideologies which cannot understand solidarity in an integral form, it can give rise to so much inequality and injustice as to bring about the emergence of a welfare and consumer society which has no respect for the individual, and still less for men in general.

But it is none the less true that *technology is something good*; it is the fruit of intelligence and knowledge which are certainly a great gift and blessing; if instead of being at the service of selfish egoism it

were made an element of love, what immense advantages it would bring to humanity. It is an indispensable "*ally of work*", as John Paul II has called it (LE 5), and has laid the foundations for putting forward in a new way both the manner of approach to problems of work and the social rethinking of the great gospel commandment of love.

Don Bosco, as we have seen, taught a due appreciation and esteem for the true lay status proper to the world of work; he taught that due importance should be given to the temporal order, with openness to scientific progress; that there should be high regard and competence as regards organizational demands (even at managerial level), and in everything that facilitates, improves, speeds up and multiplies work; but that all this should be set against a background of ethics and love, so that *technology and its lay characteristic never become "man's adversaries"*. The ability to accept the truth of these things in a proper manner, without exaggerating them by unilateral deviations is a continuous fundamental challenge to a true work-culture.

Today, after Vatican II, we can assert that christianity has rediscovered the creatural values of the lay state, while propagators of lay values are coming to understand (even if not always explicitly) the contributions of the Gospel.

c. At a time when industry and commerce had begun to develop more quickly, Don Bosco gave to youthful work and employment the place it deserved in the sector of education and social esteem. *He managed to incarnate the longings of a "work culture" into a pedagogical and didactic system.* A trade was not a type of slavery nor yet a mere hobby, but a noble profession and duty, a powerful factor for material and moral good as regards the individual, the family and society as a whole: a source of satisfaction, in evident conflict with slavery of a worker to a machine and with production for production's sake.

He meant to give to work the *dignity of having a school of preparation for it*, going beyond the minimum needed for technical skill or for economic results.

In line with the first article of the Regulations in use in his houses, the education given to the apprentices had a threefold aim: religious and ethical, cultural and intellectual, and technical and professional. In this way he raised the young worker from the status of a mere object to be exploited to that of a collaborator for good with the employer in line with his own personal dignity as a citizen and to the extent of his own ability.

He was able to instil in his pupils *an appreciation for work and the joy that accompanies it*; this is evi-

dent from the undisturbed contentment and enthusiasm of thousands of pupils who had been educated to see in their profession their own individual worth as persons, a preservation from the dangers that arise from the bad use of freedom and spare time, and the key to their position in society interpreted not only as a right but also as a duty.

d. A further point still. Don Bosco worked and struggled to *eliminate the opposition that existed between study and work*, between the category of the students and white-collar workers, and that of the blue-collar workers and artisans, or 'artisti' as they were known at the time in Italian. The classroom and workshop were under the same roof; machinery and books went hand in hand; the *technical side was not separated from that of the humanities*, and in this way an example was provided of a fraternal community where *distances arising from diversity of occupation were overcome*: no class struggle but a convergence in communion and collaboration between different categories. With his educational system based on family spirit, on care-free joy, on mutual confidence between the educator, the trade instructor and the pupil, he educated both lots of youngsters using the same religious, ethical and civil basis, and in this way was able to harmonize diversity of occupation

or work with social communion.

c. Practical man that he was, Don Bosco was not satisfied with mere theory. *With courage and creativity he faced up to the most urgent problems*, always starting from the realities of the situation, giving immediate practical help to the boys and drawing out from the boys themselves a first tentative solution to their difficulties.

All too often in the "risorgimento" society, even in the most pressing cases it was not possible to intervene successfully either at a legislative level or at that of immediate social assistance. And meanwhile the youngsters could not wait.

This was recognized by a Milan newspaper ("Il Secolo") which certainly had no love for the clergy. Following Don Bosco's visit to the city in September 1886 it wrote: "Don Bosco is one of the most active propagators of clerical doctrines and is also one of the most intelligent, because he does not stop at preaching but works incessantly, establishing institutes of every kind, workshops, missions, gathering the poor together and doing just about everything that the Liberals ought to be doing".

And I conclude, Ladies and Gentlemen, with a message that is certainly of use for the world of work at the present day.



It was formulated by a Saint who spent his whole life in tireless activity, who set up educational works for young apprentices, who had understood at once the urgent need for a work-culture, who fostered social solidarity, who introduced a "lay" dimension of professional work into his communities of consecrated life, and finally who made of work a means of reaching holiness with a modern spirituality and ascetical system adapted to the new anthropology and a changing society.

The relationship of Don Bosco with the world of work is without any doubt a significant element in the valuable and multifaceted legacy we have received from him at a hundred years from his death.

It was fitting that here in Milan we should together reflect briefly on these things.

Thank you for your attention!

Fr Egidio Viganò

## 5.2 New Vice-Province in East Africa

Prot.N. 025/88

THE RECTOR MAJOR

of the Salesian Society  
of St John Bosco

– after careful consideration of the

situation of salesian work in East Africa,

- in the light of articles 156 and 158 of the Constitutions,
- with the consent of the General Council given in the meeting of 19 January 1988, in accordance with articles 132 and 156 of the Constitutions,

## DECREES AS FOLLOWS

1. The Provincial Delegation for the salesian houses of East Africa belonging to the Province of "St Francis Xavier" with headquarters in Bombay, India, is abolished.
2. The VICE-PROVINCE of "St John Bosco" is erected and is composed of the houses mentioned in 1. above.
3. To the new Vice-Province of St John Bosco, with headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya, will belong those confreres who form part of the Provincial Delegation referred to in 1. above at the date when the present decree comes into effect.
4. The present decree will come into force on 24 June 1988, Solemnity of St John the Baptist, Precursor of Our Lord.

Rome, 10 June 1988

Fr Egidio Viganò  
Rector Major

Fr Francesco Maraccani  
Secretary General

### 5.3 New Salesian Cardinal

On 29 May 1988 the Holy Father announced that in the Consistory to be held on 28 June there will be added to the College of Cardinals, among others, Archbishop *Antonio JAVIERRE ORTAS*, at present Secretary of the Congregation for Catholic Education.

Antonio Javierre Ortas was born at Siétamo, in the Diocese of Huesca (Spain), on 22 February 1921. He entered the Salesian College at Huesca and made his novitiate at Girona, where he was professed on 11 September 1940. After perpetual profession in 1946 he studied theology at Salamanca and was ordained priest on 24 April 1949.

He gained his doctorate in theology at the Pontifical Gregorian University in 1951, and taught at the PAS-UPS from that year until 1976. He made a particular study of miracles, ecumenism, and the problem of the apostolic succession in the early centuries, while teaching fundamental theology. On these topics he wrote various articles and publications.

He was Dean of the Faculty of Theology from 1959 to 1968, Rector Magnificus of the University from 1971 to 1974, and from 1972-74 also Delegate of the Rector Major as Religious Superior at the UPS. In 1971-72 he was a member of the Congre-

gation's Special General Chapter.

In 1976 he was appointed Titular Archbishop of Meta, and called to the post of Secretary of the Congregation for Catholic Education.

### 5.4 New Salesian Bishops

*The following are brief informative notes on salesian confreres who have been appointed Bishops in recent months.*

#### 1. *Mgr Pierre Pican, Coadjutor Bishop of Bayeux and Lisieux.*

On 10 March 1988 the Osservatore Romano carried the news of the appointment of Fr Pierre Pican SDB as Coadjutor Bishop of the Diocese of Bayeux and Lisieux.

Pierre Pican was born at Saint-Nicolas in the Diocese of Coutances (France) on 27 February 1935. At the age of 12 he entered the aspirantate at Giel, and subsequently made his novitiate at Dormans; his first profession as a Salesian was on 4 September 1955. After perpetual profession in September 1963, he studied theology at the studentate of Lyons and was ordained priest at Coat-an-Doc'h on 23 April 1966.

He obtained the Licentiate in Literature and in 1974 was called to direct the house of Caen, and at the same time was appointed a provin-

cial councillor. Only a year later he was appointed by the Superiors to lead the Paris Province as provincial.

At the end of his 6-year mandate as provincial he returned to Caen to be rector of the centre for technical training, a task on which he was still engaged when appointed Bishop.

2. *Mgr Zacharias ORTIZ, Vicar Apostolic of Chaco Paraguayo.*

The appointment by the Holy Father of Fr Zacharias Ortiz SDB (Provincial of Paraguay) as Vicar Apostolic of Chaco Paraguayo and successor to Mgr Alejo Obelar, who had retired on reaching the age limit, was announced in the *Osservatore Romano* on 7 April 1988.

Zacharias Ortiz was born at Arroyos y Esteros, in the Diocese of Concepcion (Paraguay), on 6 September 1934. At the age of 15 he entered the 'Domingo Savio' Salesian College at Rosario, Argentina; in January 1954 he began his novitiate at Alvear, Argentina, and made his first profession. This was followed by perpetual profession on 14 January 1961.

After theological studies he was ordained priest at Cordoba, Argentina, on 14 August 1965. Subsequently he obtained the Licentiate in Pastoral Theology and spent some years as a parish priest before

being appointed Rector of the 'San Vicente' College at Asuncion, and later (in 1983) of the aspirantate at Yapacarai. He was a member of the GC22, after which in 1985 he was appointed Vice-Provincial and a year later Provincial of Paraguay.

3. *Mgr Carlos Felipe XIMENES BELO, titular Bishop of Catula.*

The appointment of Mgr Carlos Felipe XIMENES BELO SDB as Titular Bishop of Catula was announced on 16 April 1988. He retains his previous appointment as Administrator Apostolic of Dili (Western Timor).

Carlos F. Ximenes Belo is a native of Timor (Indonesia), where he was born at Uailacama (Baukau) on 3 February 1948. He was 13 when he entered the salesian house of Ossu (Timor), and was later admitted to the novitiate which he made at Manique (Portugal), where he also made his first profession on 21 September 1973.

After his practical training he studied theology at Estoril in Portugal, and completed his studies at the Salesian Pontifical University in Rome. On 26 July 1980 he was ordained priest at Lisbon.

He went on to get the Licentiate in spiritual theology and in 1981 was appointed novice master for the salesian novices in the house of Fatumaca (Timor), a post he filled

until 1983 when the Apostolic See chose him to be Administrator Apostolic of Dili.

4. *Mgr Jesus JUAREZ PÁRRAGA, Auxiliary Bishop of La Paz.*

The Holy Father has appointed as Auxiliary of the Archbishop of La Paz (Bolivia) our confrere *Jesus JUAREZ PÁRRAGA*, Director of the Catechetical Centre of La Paz.

Jesus Juarez was born in Spain at Alquerias, in the Diocese of Cartagena, on 22 July 1942. He entered the aspirantate of Cabezo di Torres and after making his novitiate in the same house made his first profession as a Salesian on 16 August 1961.

He had asked to go to the missions and was sent to Bolivia for his practical training. He returned to Europe for theological studies carried out at Benediktbeuern (Germany) and was ordained priest in his native Spain on 16 December 1972. He then returned to Bolivia where he was sent to Muyurina as pastoral animator.

Two years later he was back once again in Rome where he completed his studies at the Pontifical Salesian University and obtained the Diploma in Spiritual Theology.

Returning to Bolivia again, he was appointed Vice-Provincial in 1979 and in 1982 became Rector of the house of 'Maria Auxiliadora' at La Paz.

## 5.5 Our dead confreres (1988 – 2nd list)

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

NAME	PLACE	DATE	AGE	PROV.
P ALBERTI Francesco	Catania	05-04-88	52	ISI
L ALLARIA Giuseppe	Castellamare di Stabia	25-05-88	104	IME
P ALVARADO PINEDA Miguel	Santa Ana	19-05-88	59	CAM
P BALLARI Antonio	Córdoba	04-04-88	78	ACO
P BARATTO Giacomo	Bardolino	12-04-88	78	IVO
P BEZZE Eliseo	San Antonio de los Altos	07-03-88	56	VEN
P BIROCCHI Tommaso	Sassari	09-03-88	72	ISA
P CARUZZO Tomás José	Córdoba	17-02-88	80	ACO
L CASTRO Alejandro	Neiva	12-04-88	84	COB
P ĆESARZ Eugeniusz	Płock	22-05-88	62	PLE
P CESLAR Albin	Pusina	30-03-88	69	JUZ
P CONTRERAS AZÓCAR Luis Raúl	Iquique	16-02-88	84	CIL
P DEL PIERO Luis	Buenos Aires	05-06-88	93	ABB
L DEMMEL Ludwig	Benediktbeuern	19-03-88	82	GEM
L DODARO Salvatore	Lima	10-03-88	86	PER
P DONNA César	Asunción	26-02-88	71	PAR
P FAILLACE Luigi	Catania	16-03-88	84	ISI
P FAVRE Carlos	Montevideo	21-05-88	37	URU
P FRIEDRICH Victor	Bahía Blanca	17-04-88	71	ABB
P GAMBINO Vincenzo	Palermo	12-03-88	79	ISI
P GARCÍA HERNÁNDEZ Serafín	Sincelejo	27-05-88	75	COB
P GEELLEN Jozef	Etterbeek	05-04-88	69	BEN
P GODOY SAAVEDRA Marino	Santiago	17-03-88	73	CIL
P GRYCHTOLIK Józef	Wrocław	01-06-88	72	PLO
P GSCHOSSMANN Alois	Wien	08-04-88	80	AUS
D GUTIÉRREZ GONZÁLEZ Ramón	Madrid	15-03-88	68	SLE
P HOLLERBACH Philip	Mannheim	10-05-88	82	GEM
P JACOBACCI Erminio	Bahía Blanca	14-04-88	74	ABB
P JANTOSKA José	Lima	26-02-88	80	PER
P JEGOU Joseph	Caen	10-03-88	78	FPA
P KUZAK Zygmunt	Kraków	19-03-88	87	PLS
P KWIOTEK Georg Antonius	Rheine	31-05-88	79	GEK
P LASKIEWICZ Jan	Łódź	06-03-88	69	PLE
P LUCHINO Luis	Córdoba	17-03-88	70	ACO
P MAŁAN Zbigniew	Wyszogród	18-05-88	29	PLE
P MANCINI Virginio	West Haverstraw	07-05-88	93	SUE

NAME	PLACE	DATE	AGE	PROV.
<b>P MANENTI Giacomo</b>	Arese	11-04-88	72	ILE
<b>P MARTORELLE Louis-Paul</b>	Toulon	13-04-88	71	FLY
<b>P MEDELLIN Paolo</b>	Bogotá	12-04-88	80	COB
<b>P MOSCATELLI Luigi</b>	Arese	03-05-88	81	ILE
<b>P PASCUAL GONZÁLEZ Isaac</b>	Aguilar de Bureba	03-04-88	51	SBI
<b>P PERLA Rudolph Joseph</b>	London	27-03-88	64	GBR
<b>L PRESCIUTTI Domenico</b>	Civitanova Marche	19-02-88	74	IAD
<b>P PUŠNIK Jože</b>	Weržej	17-05-88	82	JUL
<b>L RICCOBENE Giovanni</b>	Caltanissetta	08-05-88	85	ISI
<b>P RINDONE Rocco</b>	Messina	30-03-88	49	ISI
<b>P RIVAT Jean-Baptist</b>	La Crau	29-04-88	84	FLY
<b>L ROMITELLI Aldo</b>	Roma	16-03-88	68	IRO
<b>S RYMAR Jan</b>	Wyszogród	18-05-88	24	PLE
<b>P SÁNCHEZ MARTIN José</b>	Sevilla	23-03-88	80	SSE
<b>L SAVIOLI Sixto</b>	Bahía Blanca	07-05-88	82	ABB
<b>P SOMMACAL Antonio</b>	Belluno	28-05-88	80	IVO
<b>P STETTMAYER Emmanuel</b>	Hobart-Tasmania	27-04-88	89	AUL
<b>P SZOREK Maksymilian</b>	Kopiec	09-06-88	81	PLO
<b>P SZYMAŃSKI Florian</b>	Śmigiel	06-05-88	79	PLO
<b>P TENTO Guido</b>	Santiago	27-02-88	81	CIL
<b>L TONINI Vincenzo</b>	Lombriasco	03-04-88	65	ISU
<b>P TOTTH Pál</b>	Mosonszolnok	11-03-88	60	UNG
<b>P VERONA Silvano</b>	Civitanova Marche	03-05-88	66	IAD
<b>P VISCONTI Nicola</b>	Torino	29-05-88	62	ICE
<b>P VRATNIK Michal</b>	Gdańsk	21-02-88	76	PLN
<b>P ZENAROLA Tarcisio</b>	Udine	22-05-88	65	IME
<b>P ZORKO Stefan</b>	Ljubljana	20-03-88	72	JUL