

acts

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

OFFICIAL ORGAN OF ANIMATION AND COMMUNICATION FOR THE SALESIAN CONGREGATION

N. 330

Year LXX

july-september 1989

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Editrice S.D.B.

Edizione extra commerciale

Direzione Generale Opere Don Bosco

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1. LETTER OF THE RECTOR MAJOR

"THE DON BOSCO CENTENARY AND OUR RENEWAL"

Introduction - A rapid look back over the celebrations: The Jubilee Year; enthusiastic participation by young people; Appreciation on the part of civil authorities; Studies and publications; Artistic cultural and sporting manifestations; Lived experiences in the Congregation; Vitality of the Salesian Family; Interest of the Bishops and of so many diocesan and parochial communities; Wholehearted participation of the Holy Father. - Some priorities to be fostered: Our ecclesial dimension; The urgent need for the christian education of youth; The careful and competent development of a "Laity-project"; A more modern use of the means of social communication as a means of evangelization. - The overriding impression: "an event of grace". - The primacy of an internal apostolic conviction. - The surprising vitality of the Salesian Family. - The Youth Movement. - Lay involvement. - the Marian dimension. - Devotion to Don Bosco, the Saint. - The two great commitments before us: the 1989 Strenna; the GC23. - Conclusion.

Turin-Valdocco:
Solemnity of Mary Help of Christians
24 May 1989

My dear confreres,

Some months have now passed since the conclusion of the Don Bosco Centenary Year. It was a very demanding event both for us and for our Family.

I invite you to look back and reflect on its vital significance and on the future activity it implies. I do not think it is too early to attempt a first assessment which will serve to strengthen our salesian identity among the People of God and our missionary thrust in the world. Without any doubt the Centenary has had a decisive influence on every aspect of our renewal process. We can consider it as an important historical stage coming at the end of the long post-conciliar period of redefining our vocation as sons of Don Bosco through the three

great General Chapters (20, 21 and 22); it marks the transition from an era of research and crisis to a phase of renewed vocational awareness and of more courageous pastoral and missionary effectiveness. This seems to follow logically from the facts, the many hopes to which they have given rise, and the plans that have been made.

It is true, of course, that one cannot consider the Centenary as a watershed at a precise moment in time, but it certainly appears as the time and space in which came to fruition the fruits of the delicate preceding work shared by the Congregation and the whole Salesian Family: if the perennial values left to us by Don Bosco and tradition had not been more deeply analyzed and expressed in a form suited to the present day, they would in fact have been no longer understood.

In this sense we are bound to say that the Centenary has truly been a "year of grace" in which Don Bosco has endorsed the present-day relevance of his charisma, and has in a sense put his personal signature to our post-conciliar identity card.

We have to admit in fact that the great Saints preserve the youthfulness of the Church: they lived in the past but are men of the future, bearing witness to the novelty-filled transforming activity which is proper to the Holy Spirit.

A rapid look back over the celebrations

It is impossible, and indeed it would be out of place in a letter of spiritual reflection, to list everything that took place in the Houses, the Provinces, the different countries and Regions, and at a central level in the Salesian Family and the Church.

But I think it may be useful to refer briefly at the outset to the main facts, because they form the basis of the reflections which follow.

— *Preparation of the Centenary.* Planning of the celebrations began immediately after the GC22 ended in 1984. Even before that there had been suggestions and initiatives, but we had to await the election of the Rector Major and his Council by the General Chapter. The objectives to be attained were immediately decided on, and special commissions were set up with representatives of the various Groups of the Salesian Family in the Provinces; a Central Coordinating Commission was also established in Rome under the presidency of the Vicar General, Fr Gaetano Scrivo. The latter commission drew up in good time some fundamental guidelines and laid down the general programme to be followed, choosing at the same time those to be responsible for the various sectors. The work was strenuous, especially for the President of the Central Commission who undermined his own health to ensure a happy outcome to the celebrations. As we know, Fr Scrivo suffered a serious heart attack almost at the end of the Centenary: we owe him a great debt of gratitude.

The main steps taken at central level in this period can be recalled by reading again the Acts of the General Council, some of the Rector Major's letters,¹ and various communications of the Vicar General.²

We intended commemoration and commitment to go hand in hand, avoiding "two attitudes, opposite indeed in tendency but both equally misleading: a triumphalism which is out of date and therefore no longer understood, difficult to accept and of short lived impact at the present day; and a re-

¹ AGC 313, "*Don Bosco 88*"; AGC 319, "*1988: An invitation to a special renewal of profession*"; AGC 323, "*From Peking towards 88*".

² AGC 317, "*To all those responsible for the various Groups of the Salesian Family*", with the attached General Theme and scheme for reflection; AGC 321, "*14 May 1988: Day of Salesian Profession*"; AGC 325, "*A glance forward to 'Appraisal DB88'*".

ductive minimization incapable of living the centenary as an outstanding event through which the Holy Spirit, who 'through the motherly intervention of Mary raised up St John Bosco', asks us to intensify our commitment to the 'living Don Bosco' in our own time."

There was also a detailed logistical plan for the necessary (and costly) adaptation of the places particularly associated with Don Bosco: at Valdocco, and especially at the Hill of the Becchi, so as to render them apt and meaningful for pilgrimage purposes.

And here special thanks are due to the Economist General, Fr Omero Paron, and those who gave him their generous collaboration.

— *The Jubilee Year*. With an "Apostolic Brief" the Holy Father declared the centenary year a year of jubilee, enriching it with graces and indulgences, to celebrate Don Bosco's witness of holiness and obtain special helps through his intercession.³ To the seven churches originally indicated in the Brief, the Apostolic Penitentiary subsequently agreed to add numerous others in every continent (and even in the Soviet Union: in White Russia, Georgia, Lithuania and the Ukraine), so as to extend the jubilee advantages to many young people and the faithful in general in every region of the earth.

³ cf. AGC 321, pp. 73-75

This gave rise to an extraordinary variety of spiritual initiatives and pilgrimages which characterized every month of the centenary year. Without prejudice to the many popular manifestations that took place elsewhere, and particularly in the Basilica of Don Bosco at Panama and in his church at Leon in Mexico, those on the largest scale took place at Turin-Valdocco and at the Becchi — "Hill of the Youth Beatitudes".

The impact of the places especially associated with Don Bosco and a sound theology of pilgrimages and sanctuaries have helped to give these events a transcendental character. Pilgrimages in fact not only recall the mystery of Christ's own pilgrim path, endorsed by the rich experience of the faithful down the centuries, but they also have the characteristics of a "sacramental" of the Church, an expert in humanity and the teacher of the Gospel, and lead to a dynamic practice of the pedagogy of conversion.

Among the more significant pilgrimages to the places of Don Bosco must be included those of all the parish oratories of Milan, those of many Italian and European dioceses led by their Bishops, those of several European groups with salesian connections, and many others representing other continents. Deserving of special mention are those from Poland, Yugoslavia and Hungary, those from the Middle and Far East and from America, the numerous groups of the Salesian Family of Spain with the branches of the Association of Mary Help of Christians and the national "Camp Bosco".

At Colle Don Bosco more than a million pilgrims, very many of them young people, came to pray.

In this way a new value has been given, especially among the young, to the traditional practice of the christian pilgrimage, and this in an era of consumerism and tourist activities; it has reactivated the sense of prayer, of the historical and geographical presence of the sacred, of the frequenting of the sacraments and, in this case, of the model of apostolic holiness that was particularly Don Bosco's, and of his powerful intercession especially in the work of education.

— *Enthusiastic participation of the young.* Among the specific objectives kept in mind in drawing up the overall programme was the full involvement of youth, through the convergence of the various pastoral and educational forces of our Family. Of this the "Appraisal DB88" function at Turin was to be the culminating expression.

The theme to be investigated more deeply was "*Youth in the Church for the world*", following the great signposts of Vatican II. The Centenary found every Province committed to this common task with positive results. There were numerous initiatives at various local levels; lively national youth meetings, conventions or congresses took place, especially in the different countries of Latin America (Argentina, Antilles, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, etc.), in Spain and elsewhere. Special days of communal living and reflection were organized, as also were specific spiritual retreats, study meetings and contests of various kinds; there were festive youth celebrations and sporting tournaments. Every Province and region can be said to have prepared manifestations of a high formative content. The success of the "Appraisal DB88" put the crown on all the rest; it was like a proclamation by the young people themselves of a future path to be followed with creative imagination and ecclesial depth.

Expectations that followed the two-year period of preparation were far surpassed. The young people showed themselves the foremost promoters of a renewal of awareness of faith in Christ, of their ability to make serious commitments, of their practical and courageous apostolic possibilities. The kind of holiness fostered by Don Bosco attracted

and inspired them; his spirituality was shown to be up to date and auspicious, like a fruitful experience to be cultivated in the new cultural conditions. Contributing to this wonderful result were well prepared animators belonging to the various Groups of the Salesian Family.

Other large-scale and festive youth manifestations, rich in reflection and prayer, took place at Colle Don Bosco, the city stadium of Turin, in the Verona Arena, in the cities of Manila and Queretaro, to mention only a few, and in very many other places too.

— *Appreciation on the part of civil authorities.*
At central level two significant events of a social kind had been planned: one at the Regio Theatre of Turin for the official opening of the Centenary, and another in Rome at the Capitol for its closing. But in fact very many others took place all over the world: manifestations promoted by States, Parliaments, Towns, Universities, Associations, Clubs, Groups from the sectors of culture and work, and even by trade unions and political parties; churches and monuments were erected; streets and squares were given significant new names; special postage stamps were issued; honorary citizenships were conferred on Don Bosco's Successor; gold and silver medals were presented in recognition of educational merit, and the centenary found widespread commemoration in television and radio programmes and in the press; etc.

One need only recall as examples the celebration promoted by the Governor at Brasilia; in Portugal the presence of the President of the Republic at the inauguration of the Centenary and of the Minister of Justice at the closing ceremony; in Argentina the initiative of the President of the Republic

who declared the central events of the celebrations to be matters of national interest; in Uruguay the homage given to Don Bosco in Parliament; in India the intervention of the Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi, on the occasion of the issue of the commemorative postage stamp; in Italy the visit of the President of the Republic to Valdocco, the warm and grateful participation of the former President Sandro Pertini, the commemorative address by the Foreign Minister at the Capitol, the Rotary Club's initiative at the New Theatre of Turin, and the celebrations in various cities: at the Scala at Milan in the presence of the President of the Senate (the Hon. Spadolini), the San Carlo Theatre at Naples, the Palazzo dei Normanni at Palermo, the Teatro Comunale at Bologna, and finally the interesting activities and study days organized by various Universities.

We may say that a vision of Don Bosco's personality has been consolidated in the humanitarian and social aspects of his work and mission: a Saint who is at the same time a well-deserving citizen because he committed his many personal qualities and his pedagogical brilliance to fostering the good of society.

— *Studies and publications.* Everywhere, to some extent, studies have been organized and works published in many different languages on Don Bosco's personality, his works, his spiritual, pastoral, pedagogical and social aspects. It is not possible to list them all, ranging as they do from works aimed at simply making him known to the general public, to accounts of historical research and assessments of his place in the Church and the cultural field.

Among them we may recall: the two volumes

of "*Don Bosco nel Mondo*" by Marco Bongioanni (translated into other languages); "*Don Bosco nella storia della cultura popolare*", edited by Francesco Traniello; "*L'esperienza pedagogica di Don Bosco*" by Pietro Braido (in various languages); "*Don Bosco e la musica*" by Mario Rigoldi; "*Don Bosco nella fotografia dell'800*" by Giuseppe Soldà; "*Giovanni Bosco studente*" by Secondo Caselle; "*Scritti pedagogici spirituali*", published by LAS; "*Scritti spirituali*" by Joseph Aubry (new edition); "*Don Bosco, attualità di un magistero pedagogico*", edited by Robert Giannatelli; "*Pensiero e prassi di Don Bosco nel primo Centenario della morte*", special edition of the review "Salesianum" (of some 300 pages); "*Parola di Dio e carisma salesiano*" of the International Congress of our Biblical scholars; "*Studi su San Giovanni Bosco*" of the first high academic level International Congress on Don Bosco held at the UPS; the work "*Torino e Don Bosco*" in three volumes of the Turin municipal historical archives, edited by Giuseppe Bracco; "*Don Bosco Fondatore*" papers given at the Symposium which took place at the Generalate, Rome; the new biography "*Don Bosco, storia di un prete*" by Tere-sio Bosco, with numerous translations including one in Russian; the whole of the LDC catalogue on Don Bosco, full of texts and audiovisual aids; some contributions from the Salesian Historical Institute, etc. (Apologies to the numerous authors who have not been mentioned!).

The "Auxilium" Faculty of Educational Sciences, of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, has also made various contributions with studies and other papers in their own Review of the Educational Sciences, as for instance on the project of Fatherliness in Don Bosco⁴ and on Don Bosco as

⁴ Gertrud Stickler,
n. 25/1987

the master of the new method of education;⁵ and especially through two interesting books: one by Maria Piera Manello, "*Madre ed educatrice. Contributi sull'identità mariana della Figlia di Maria Ausiliatrice, per una pedagogia mariana nell'anno centenario*"; and the other by Antonia Colombo, "*Verso l'educazione della donna oggi*" — the Acts of the international congress organized as part of the centenary celebrations.

⁵ Piera Cavaglia,
n. 26/1988

I am glad also to record with gratitude the courageous efforts of Fr Basilio Bustillo (Madrid) to complete the long desired translation of the Biographical Memoirs into Spanish.

Side by side with the spreading of knowledge, there has also been a patient and painstaking work of research and deeper analysis which has opened up new lines of study. There have also been one or two publications of a caustic or deriding nature, based on doubtful premises, which however have helped in various ways to greater objectivity and more serious reflection.

— *Artistic and cultural manifestations.* In this connection we must recall in the first place the film "*Don Bosco*" of Leandro Castellani and other films and documentaries, including in particular "*Giovanni, il ragazzo del sogno*", made by the Salesian Film Unit of Turin. And two musical works of special artistic value must also be mentioned: the symphonic concert of Marek Kopelent (of Czechoslovakia) performed at the Regio Theatre of Turin, and the musical oratorio of William Rabolini SDB at the San Carlo Theatre of Naples.

There was also an abundance of musical productions, recitals, choral concerts etc. in Argentina, Chile, Italy, the Philippines, Spain and other countries.

Songs, exhibitions, theatrical productions, contests, sporting events and a host of other youthful and popular manifestations have made evident the fascination Don Bosco can still arouse, especially among young people, and this was brought to the notice of the public in a thousand and one different ways. How could we ever forget the ascent of the Aconcagua, the highest peak of the Americas and the placing there of a commemorative plaque; and the stage of the Tour of Italy for professional and amateur cyclists which had Colle Don Bosco as its finishing point in honour of the centenary.

Special mention must be made of the blessing of the foundation stone of the new "*Don Bosco Library*" at the UPS in Rome, popularly known as "*Don Bosco's University for the young*"; it will help to foster a serious cultural development among the people of the area, especially the younger ones, as well as among those frequenting the University itself.

— *Lived experiences in the Congregation.* All the provincial and local communities have fostered specialized activities, particularly for improving fidelity to the Founder's spirit, for a better implementation of our mission among the young and the poor, for an intensification of communion and collaboration between the constituent Groups of the Salesian Family, and for launching a youth movement of ecclesial depth. Two very meaningful events, prepared for by a lengthy period of reflection and prayer, were the renewal of their salesian Profession by all confreres on 14 May, and the perpetual profession of 126 young SDBs and FMAs in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians at Valdocco on 8 September. These spiritual events bore witness to the close adherence of all to their Father and

Founder and to the relevance of his spirit and mission to the present times. Today we want, as did those first 22 young men in 1862, to remain with Don Bosco to share his experience of the Holy Spirit permeated by "da mihi animas", his evangelical style of acting and his pedagogical and pastoral method of kindness.

Special retreats were organized with a view to a better knowledge and living out of Don Bosco's charism. The Rector Major himself undertook the preaching of various courses and retreats to many Rectors in Latin America, India and the Far East on the theme of "Interior apostolic conviction", or in other words of the "Grace of unity" which characterizes the whole of our consecrated life.

There were many study-days and meetings; handbooks of formation, liturgical aids, meditations and prayers etc. were published. In many places a relaunching of the oratories was undertaken; commitments were made to ensure a new manner of presence among needy youth, to intensify our missionary thrust, to improve our catechetical and evangelizing activities, to foster the Marian dimension, and to make sure that our pastoral work among youth should bring about a dynamic Movement of christian faith.

The principal organizers and animators of many of the events that took place were evidently the confreres themselves; and it must be added that the Provinces contributed, according to their possibilities, to the so-called "88 Fund" to help to meet the economic problems associated with the celebrations. The desire has grown in the Congregation to return to the deep motivations of each one's vocational choice, and there has been a reawakening of the awareness of the fascination which Don Bosco

continues to exert.

We seemed to enter a spring-like climate of renewed enthusiasm which helps us to meet with hope the difficulties of the present day, as for instance certain ideological mirages and the falling off in vocations in some places.

— *Vitality of the Salesian Family.* One of the truly wonderful aspects of the Centenary has been the participation of the Salesian Family, both within the individual Groups and in the common collaboration of all working together. Of great significance was the symposium on Don Bosco the Founder, with the involvement of responsible leaders of each Group.

The Daughters of Mary Help of Christians promoted a wealth of initiatives of particular spiritual, apostolic and pedagogical depth. They were enthusiastic promoters of the participation of girls and young women, and saw their work culminate in the beatification of Laura Vicuña at the Hill of the Becchi.

The Cooperators held regional and national meetings; they grew in number and intensified their commitment to formation, which was studied in detail in the meeting of their World Consulting Body in Rome. They are taking up with hope the guidelines of Vatican II, so enriching for the application of their Regulations of Apostolic Life. Positive results have followed from the meetings of SDB and FMA Delegates for the Cooperators in various countries and regions. Worthy of note too was the 1st Spanish National Congress of the "Hogares Don Bosco" for the christian animation of young couples and their families, which brought together at Madrid nearly a thousand couples.

The Past Pupils organized and celebrated their

first combined World Congress as an indication of greater communion. They too organized other congresses and meetings at various levels. They promoted exhibitions and contests; in particular they set up an international art exhibition in Rome, and promoted interventions in the mass media; they showed creativity and great gratitude. It must be said that a cause for wonder and surprise was the adherence and collaboration of many past pupils who, though not officially on the Associations' lists, felt themselves actively challenged by the Centenary.

Each of the other Groups too, and in particular the Don Bosco Volunteers, deepened and strengthened with joy their vocational bonds in the common spirit. Especially fruitful was the meeting with the Superiors General of institutes of consecrated life founded by Salesians.

But in addition to the initiatives of each Group one cannot fail to note the extraordinarily efficacious quality of their mutual communion as a Family. The incisive nature of this was evident especially in the Turin celebrations in the presence of the Holy Father (at Colle Don Bosco, Valdocco, and the City Stadium), and in those, for example, at Queretaro in Mexico jointly organized by the four Provinces (two SDB and two FMA) in an admirable sharing of effort. The Salesian Family also celebrated the Marian dimension of our charisma and proclaimed its importance.

What a tremendous amount has been done, and what a lot can be done everywhere in time to come through this union of purpose, in line with our slogan "forward together"! The Centenary has seen the growth in the Salesian Family of a mentality and attitude which is more active and practical.

— *Interest of the Bishops and of many diocesan and parochial communities.* The Centenary has also had extraordinary ecclesial repercussions: Cardinals, bishops, apostolic nuncios, parish priests and others with the care of souls, communities of the faithful, lay associations, men and women religious of many Institutes, all celebrated Don Bosco as a providential gift of God for the good of the young, especially of the poorer classes.

Pride of place among these must go to the Archbishop of Turin, Cardinal Anastasio Ballestrero, whose great pastoral heart and keen spiritual wisdom led him to suggest the Don Bosco jubilee year, and whose efficacious interest was largely responsible for the Pope's visit to Turin and its neighbourhood. His deep and guiding influence was expressed at first hand throughout the various stages of the celebrations: the opening and closing of the Centenary with all the Bishops of Piedmont, his homilies and appropriate interventions during the visit of the Holy Father; his unparalleled reflections on the salesian identity, the urgent need of pastoral work for the young, the relaunching of the Oratory, and the original and exemplary nature of Don Bosco's priestly ministry.

Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini too, of Milan, wrote some very significant pastoral letters about Don Bosco and his pastoral work of education, and agreed to accept the Doctorate in Educational Sciences of our University in Rome in his honour.

Not without significance also is the fact that the Commission of the Italian Bishops Conference decided to celebrate at Valdocco the national day of pastoral work, dedicating it to the youth sector.

It is not possible to list all the Cardinals, archbishops and bishops who took part in celebrations

all over the world; in some cases entire national or regional bishops conferences took part together. Their pastoral letters and addresses on Don Bosco are innumerable. In Spain, for example, they were so numerous and meaningful that it has been suggested that they be collected and published in a special volume by the BAC (Library of Christian Authors). Many bishops too led big diocesan pilgrimages to the Don Bosco holy places or to the churches designated for the gaining of the jubilee indulgences.

Many of our Provinces made available biblical, biographical, pastoral and educational material to priests and animators of community apostolates for such things as prayer vigils, study days, celebration purposes, festive liturgies, and for information and reflection in seminars, formation centres of various kinds and in youth gatherings.

We cannot forget the presence of more than 60 salesian bishops and cardinals at the opening of the Centenary, their solemn concelebration with the Rector Major at Colle on 1 February and the intimate and fraternal dialogue they had with him on the same occasion. It was clearly seen that Don Bosco and his charism are not our private property but a true gift of Christ and Our Lady for all the People of God in their demanding mission for the education and evangelization of the young.

— *Active participation of the Holy Father.* This was a gift that we had not foreseen when making the first draft of the programme, but one which was welcomed with great joy and which sparked off very careful preparation. It was the Pope himself who decided on it as a mark of gratitude and personal conviction: "Don Bosco is one of the great Saints of the Church", he had said to me; "we must

highlight his unique character and his prophetic mission". The participation of Peter's Successor was certainly the culmination and most memorable point of the celebrations; it gave them an authentic ecclesial slant and the highest possible enlightened endorsement of their spiritual, pastoral, educational and social message.

Let us recall the more outstanding and eloquent interventions of the Holy Father:

- the Brief for the proclamation of the Jubilee Year;
- the precious Letter "Iuvenum Patris";
- the pilgrimage of two and a half days to the places of Don Bosco;
- the solemn beatification of Laura Vicuña at the Becchi;
- the numerous addresses and homilies;
- the special audiences;
- the official conferring on Don Bosco of the universal title: "*Iuventutis Pater et Magister*";
- the encouraging concluding address to the Rector Major and his Council on 4 February 1989.

The Pope loves the Salesian Family, and in turn the Salesian Family continues its tradition of convinced and active adherence to Peter's ministry.

We have reason to be deeply grateful to Pope John Paul II for what he did to foster the Centenary and throughout the year of its celebration. He gave an authoritative explanation of the singular stature of Don Bosco in the Church and enthusiastically launched his charisma towards the third millennium. We must treasure his witness and the enlightenment he has given us.

Some priorities to be fostered

I want to emphasize the point that the Centenary has revealed the incisive nature of the presence of our confreres and of the members of the Salesian Family. If Don Bosco's sons and daughters of the present day were not thoroughly imbued with his passion for education and apostolic work, with his anxiety for the salvation of the young and with a strong attachment to his person as Father and Teacher, the Centenary would not have touched the heights I have spoken of. Without a living Family there might not have been a living Don Bosco, at least in the desired degree; but this is an observation open to many questions and challenges to which each one must face up in all honesty.

A deeper analysis and closer attention to the promptings of the Spirit leads us to recognize the fact that the centenary celebrations have led us to single out some points of a spiritual, pastoral, cultural and pedagogical nature which are lacking. They have served as a motive for verification to enable us to raise the quality of our life and activity. We are strongly stimulated to overcome the danger of stopping at "things" and "structures", certainly indispensable in themselves, so as to reach with serious awareness the deeper points of our charisma. We have experienced a strong thrust forward, a time for gaining a true and peaceful consciousness of the true salesian spirit, of the permanent fascination of our Founder, of trust and appreciation of his evangelical plan, of the enthusiasm to feel ourselves partakers in his mission, of greater brotherly communion, of greater hope in the overall process of renewal.

But we are also aware of our shortcomings, and it seems useful to point out some of them with a view to our renewal.

Among other things, Don Bosco asks us to improve the following aspects: our ecclesial dimension; the realization of the urgency of the christian education of youth; attentive and competent commitment to a "Laity-project"; and a more updated evangelizing presence in the mass media.

— First of all, *our ecclesial dimension*. If there is one aspect that has emerged strongly during the centenary year it is that of the ecclesial character of Don Bosco and of his work. The sense of the universal Church and concrete commitment in the particular Church have come to be seen as two inseparable dimensions which must be fostered in their complementary aspects.

Vatican II emphasized the mystery of the Church; it asked that we feel and live our shared responsibility for the great common mission, and work to make our charism incisive in our local areas. This implies the adopting of a whole new manner of pastoral planning in order to correct defects; it calls for creative renewal in our works, sensitivity to the urgent need for our presence in new places, and coordination and collaboration with other workers in the local environment.

The centenary year should prompt us to make everyone understand that in practice and despite our limitations we are a true gift of God for the local Church, in line with the values and objectives of the characteristics proper to Don Bosco's apostolic plan.

— *The urgent need for the christian education of youth* has without any doubt been one of the

clearest and most disturbing challenges raised by the centenary celebrations and reflections.

The Pope and the Bishops have been repeating this for years with worried insistence. Young people themselves show that they are thirsting for the great ideals proclaimed by Christ, who is unfortunately tragically absent in a civilization pervaded in a thousand ways by a subtle materialism. The Centenary has prompted us to choose this urgent problem for the work of our coming General Chapter.

We have come to understand that Don Bosco would know no rest if his educational method were no longer to be a "pedagogy of holiness" in which Jesus and Mary were the great friends of present-day youth. A renewed and deeper understanding of the importance of "prevention" must continue to enrich salesian educational practice.

What a great deal we have to recover and find anew in this vast sector! There is the quality of educators, the inspiration behind planning, the christian structure of our method, courageous down-to-earth traits in our projects, the fostering of a family and pastoral atmosphere. We need to root out from among us a spiritual and pedagogical superficiality which would stand in the way of true fidelity to the Founder.

— *The careful and competent development of a "Laity-project"*. Another of the points clearly emerging from the Centenary has been the importance of the active presence of the laity in our Family. The recent Apostolic Exhortation "Christifideles laici", the fruit of the 1987 Synod, has confirmed the pastoral priority of this aspect in the process of ecclesial renewal. Don Bosco supported with growing conviction the salesian commitment to the animation and the spiritual and apostolic in-

volvement of the laity. In our great General Chapters of the post-conciliar period we have clearly confirmed our will to continue our Founder's plans in this field. We have set out on this path, but not everywhere. There are more than a few confreres who lack an adequate mentality in this regard. We must urgently intensify the construction of our framework, dedicate to this sector convinced and able confreres, better organize and stimulate the provincial organisms of animation, especially of the Cooperators' Association and of the Past Pupils.

— *A more modern use of the means of social communication as a means of evangelization.* During the Centenary I was invited by the civil authorities of Mathi to visit the famous paper factory bought by Don Bosco: it still exists and now belongs to a Finnish company, greatly improved from a technical point of view but still permeated by lively memories of our Founder. He had wanted to get into this sector of communication through the press, so as to be (as he put it) "in the vanguard of progress".

The social communication initiatives of our Family have played a noteworthy role in the success of the Centenary; the preparation of appropriate aids, coordination between our Press Office and other centres in Italy and overseas, an international congress of salesian publishers, the first meeting of the Provincial Delegates of Europe and Latin America, various consultations, and the launching of the Institute for Social Communication (ISCOS) of our University. We have also been able to get a better idea of the very influential role of this sector in the education of the young and of people in general. The last General Chapter (GC22) and the Constitutions and Regulations⁶ have insisted on a

⁶ C 6, 43; R 31, 33

reconsideration of our presence in this field.

Many Provinces have already taken positive steps in this direction, but the Centenary calls on us to give greater consistency to these new evangelizing presences, as regards both the content of the material to be communicated and the new means that most appeal to us for passing it on. There is an apostolic urgency in this sector which can give fresh life to a great many initiatives launched by our Father, but which with the passing of time and natural development have been forgotten or gone out of fashion: music, the theatre, group communication, etc.

This too is a priority which must be followed up by overcoming the many shortcomings which exist.

The overriding impression: an event of grace.

But the most widely held feeling is that the Centenary has been an extraordinary gift that we have received from on high.

I have heard it said repeatedly by many confreres in all parts of the world that the first Centenary of the death of Don Bosco has shown us that our Father and Founder is more alive than ever! The forecasts and expectations are now things of the past; the objectives we had in mind have been attained in ways that were more than just satisfactory; it has been a period of intense rethinking which has set us on the road with more conviction towards the great goals of renewal indicated by Vatican II. If there had been anyone who had foreseen an atmosphere of triumphalism, or whose thinking was conditioned in some way by ideologies, and in consequence did not bother to put himself in harmony

with these celebrations, he would have found himself disappointed or out on a limb.

We can say in fact that the positive results were due to Don Bosco himself! His brand of holiness, the dynamic activity of his spirit, his pastoral criteria, his educational experience, his kindness expressed in the phrase "make yourself loved", his practical organizing ability, his oratorian heart and understanding of people, his realism in getting down to brass tacks and his universal missionary outlook, his sense of Church, his priestly attitude to politics, and especially his genial predilection for the young — all these things combined to render consideration of him both fascinating and prophetic.

No one could have foreseen the great benefits which accompanied this event: memories that led to discoveries, to challenges, to prospects for the future. Objective knowledge of our Founder has increased and it has been made very clear that any reductive attempt to interpret his educational methods using purely horizontal and humanistic criteria are doomed to failure.

It has been a "Year of grace" in which his charisma has been celebrated as though it had just been discovered; the lights of Vatican II have enhanced its relevance to the present day. This has led not only to the overcoming of any ingenuous triumphalist mentality, but also of that exclusively domestic perspective, too much turned in on itself, which could make us appear as an enclosed and exclusive domain; we have directed our gaze more to the mystery of Christ and his Church.

The centenary year has been for us a kind of living, precious and prophetic synthesis (in organic continuity with our tradition) of 25 years of post-

conciliar work: the SGC, the GC21, the GC22, the renewed text of our *Rule of Life*, the "*Ratio Institutionis*", the two *Books of government* (the Provincial's and Rector's Manuals), the *Regulations of Apostolic Life* of the Cooperators, the many aids for renewal, the fundamental *Identity Documents* of the other Groups of the Family, have found organic and existential expression in the figure of Don Bosco the Founder, the model given us by God "as father and teacher".⁷

⁷ C 21

This overall view of our redefined identity thus becomes the true launching-pad for our commitments to a new evangelization and a new education: a "Year of grace" which takes us into the "Advent" preceding the Third Millennium.

The "Salesian" of the new age, described in our renewal documents, always finds his point of reference in Don Bosco, and the Centenary has provided an ecclesial, social and Family endorsement of the fact. After hardly a hundred years our Father's dreams have become reality, even though unfortunately we still have so many shortcomings and there are still vast horizons opening out before us. It is as though Providence had settled on the year 1988 to bring the process of research to a happy conclusion and project the salesian mission in all its fidelity into new phases of history. The Centenary was a commemorative event, but for us it was above all a new springtime.

The Pope declared at Turin that Don Bosco's charisma is indeed "great" and that at the present day it is particularly "necessary" to the Church and society. I think that this "Year of grace" is an invitation to us to concentrate our attention on the charismatic aspect of our Family; with Don Bosco we form a "charism" in the Church! Or in other

words, our Family is vitally involved in that "privileged moment of the Spirit" to which Paul VI referred in "Evangelii nuntiandi".⁸

⁸ cf. EN 75

If the "experience of the Holy Spirit" is inherent in the nature of a charism,⁹ we can say that historically the greatest and most vital charism of our century was the Second Ecumenical Vatican Council; it was the main initiative in the revitalization of the Church by the Holy Spirit: a kind of pentecostal event. And around the Council the Spirit has given rise to many other charisms which stir up a new vitality among the People of God, and among them have emerged some ecclesial Movements of which our Family is surely one!

⁹ cf. MR 11

The presence of the Spirit indeed has touched, and deeply so, the renewal of charismata already existing. In this sense we must feel ourselves challenged; our Family is a living gift for the People of God: a youthful and popular charism, marked by educational concern and practical common-sense activity, without either sensationalism or polemics, but alive and creative in its courageous sharing in ecclesial renewal following the lofty and noble principles of the Founder. The Centenary has provided us with the great grace of recognizing the way we must follow, the renewed "charismatic" path we must travel with enthusiasm and creativity for a long time to come.

The primacy of internal apostolic conviction

Central to this our gift from above I would place the struggle against spiritual superficiality. In every part of the Congregation we dedicated ourselves with living interest to the great act of renewal of

our salesian profession on 14 May 1988. Ongoing formation initiatives in this regard have been many and well prepared. For a whole year that we looked on as a kind of general novitiate we analyzed more deeply our vocational identity in the Church. A very useful aid to this end was the commentary on the Constitutions.¹⁰

The great fundamental theme, explained and studied more deeply in numerous retreats, formation groups and study days, was that of our internal apostolic conviction, a result of the "grace of unity" which characterizes salesian pastoral charity. The path followed in the General Chapters after Vatican II has led us to a synthetic perspective of our "apostolic consecration". The interior assimilation of this reality has been one of our spiritual tasks during the Centenary.

The "grace of unity"¹¹ gives organic vigour and energy to the pastoral charity which is the driving force behind the salesian spirit.¹² It implies a mutually inseparable intercommunication between the elements indicated in the happily worded art.3 of the Constitutions: the special "covenant" with the Lord, the "mission" to the young and the poor, the fraternal "community" to whom the mission is entrusted, and the radical "practice of the evangelical counsels" guided by a filial attitude of obedience. It is a matter of an original style of reading the Gospel which shone so brightly in Don Bosco's experience of holiness lived in "a closely-knit life project".¹³ It is precisely in this effort at deeper study that we have sought the surest and most radical remedy to the spiritual superficiality we have denounced.¹⁴

Our consecration in an active life of education is not something that it is easy to live up to. It requires a special initial preparation and a continual

¹⁰ *The Project of Life of the Salesians of Don Bosco - A Guide to the Salesian Constitutions* - Ed. SDB, Rome 1986

¹¹ cf. SGC 127

¹² C 10

¹³ C 21

¹⁴ cf. *Interioridad apostólica* - Ed. Salesiana, Buenos Ayres 1988 - Reflection themes of the Spiritual Exercises of the Rector Major

and appropriate ongoing formation. Everything is powerfully concentrated on pastoral charity with its two interconnected points of reference: God and those to whom our work is directed. Between the two there is an unmistakable and original dynamic linkage. Love of God is the source and cause of everything; love of our neighbour is the practical demonstration and sure yardstick for measuring true love of God, and the indispensable path along which the love of charity proceeds. There is a kind of common circulation between the two, a mutual causal relationship at different levels, in which union with God has the interior priority while in the practice of our system priority is given to service to our neighbour. The true God is inconceivable without his love for man, and our neighbour cannot be authentically thought of except as an image of God. And so no dedication to the young is genuine unless it proceeds from the love of God, but it is equally true that for us there is no true love of God that prescind from a predilection for the young, and especially those in need.¹⁵ The craving for God is inseparable from a preoccupation for man: we live the great commandment of the Gospel in a single movement of charity. There is no disjunction between the two reference points of our pastoral charity.

¹⁵ cf. Mt 25, 34ff.; 1 Jn 2, 9-11; 3, 14-15 etc.

And it is here that the “grace of unity” comes in; it proceeds from the presence and power of the Holy Spirit and constitutes the primary richness of the “grace of consecration”¹⁶ inherent in our religious Profession. It generates the vital synthesis and interior unity between Covenant, Mission, Community and the Evangelical Counsels which are at the foundation of our salesian identity. Through this grace of unity each of the four aspects

¹⁶ C 195

indicated is vitally connected with each of the others and is authentic only if witnessed to within the context of the others. To want to foster one without the others would only do harm to the charismatic nature of our Profession.

The Centenary has helped us to meditate in a salesian fashion on the fundamental option of the religious Profession: the *Covenant* as the unquenchable source of "da mihi animas"; the *Mission* as the characterizing trait of our identity in the Church; the *Community* as the setting from which stems the communion which constitutes the subject and style of our life and activity; the *practice of the Evangelical Counsels* as the framework which gives life to the true donation of ourselves as disciples of Christ. The unity and inseparable nature of the four elements is a wonder of grace given daily life in us by the sanctifying power of the Spirit.

The event of May 14 was intended precisely to avoid in us a harmful separation between "religious life" and "salesian charism". Our apostolic consecration constitutes us as "charismatic". This has compelled us to rethink, with a dynamic view to the future, the meaning of some other classic terms in frequent use and which could become, almost unconsciously, the expression of a certain static attitude which is the cause of division between "religious life" and "charism"; examples of such terms are: "observance", "primary and secondary objectives", "community life", and "vows".

If by "*observance*" we mean fidelity to the Founder, it will demand from us a spirit of initiative, creative enthusiasm in pastoral charity, adaptability to the situation of those for whom we work, and versatility in meeting the demands imposed by the renewal of the Church and the conditions of the

times. The renewed Constitutions are courageously centred on Don Bosco's "charism", going beyond an external legality which would not promote apostolic flexibility. They do indeed contain wise and renewed norms to be put into practice, but the principle that guides life and activity proceeds from a strong interior conviction and from that spiritual and pedagogical experience which is the soul and source of those very norms and transcends them.

If *instead of "primary and secondary objectives"*, we speak of "*mission*", it means that we are rethinking matters in an evangelical and theological form as an active participation in the deep mystery of the Church and its evangelizing duty, living a special Covenant with God.

If in speaking of "*community*" we put the emphasis on "*brotherly communion*", it means that our living together must be characterized by the placing in common of the values of Don Bosco's evangelical project, of the Covenant, of the Mission and of the radical characteristics of the Counsels as vital aspects of our charism. The community must consciously become the "subject" of the mission.

And when we speak of the "*vows*" we must have in mind the *overall implications of "Profession"* which interpret the evangelical counsels in more organic and apostolic form, meaning that each of them must be thought of and lived in harmony with the whole salesian plan. We renewed our profession and not merely our vows.

The Centenary therefore has implied also for the other Groups of the Family an effort to make an interior assimilation of the salesian vocation in its substantial aspect of charisma and of life in the Spirit.

It is certainly a far cry from a renewed aware-

ness of one's own proper identity to the putting into practice of what is implied in these new horizons of fidelity. The road from one to the other is never-ending, but it is the only way that leads to the true goal.

The surprising vitality of the salesian family

The central coordinating commission which drew up the programme for the Centenary was made up, as I said earlier, of representatives of the various Groups of the Salesian Family; and the same was true in general of similar committees in the different countries and regions. Collaboration was practical and universally felt. Reference to Don Bosco easily produced a convergence of the interests of all.

This union of purpose has shown that *together* we can do great things for the young, the poor, the Church and society. The world has seen that this Family is in no way closed in on itself but is evangelically open; that it has a real love for the Pope and the Bishops and is faithful to their Magisterium; that it commits itself to collaborate with the local Church to the best of its ability; that it is a force at the service of the common good. It is able to involve everyone to some extent in doing good: civil and ecclesiastical authorities, different social groups (even when they hold very disparate views, adherents of different religions, educators with different cultural backgrounds. The Centenary has in fact provided a great spur for the relaunching of our Family. An invitation was felt to aim at goals higher than those of the past in both the social and ecclesial spheres.

In addition to the attraction which Don Bosco

continues to exercise, we have noted with joy the efficacious results of the convergence of salesian forces in areas where they are to be found in association. This led to the spontaneous proposal to plan and work together in a more coordinated form, overcoming resistance and with a fraternal approach to the difficulties that are bound to arise. It is also a question of intensifying among the various Groups the central concept of *communion*, which is one of the corner-stones of the ecclesiology of Vatican II.

The evocative meeting of representatives of the various Groups in Don Bosco's rooms early in the morning of 31 January, almost at the very hour of the death of our Father and Founder, enabled us to meditate with filial affection on the common legacy he left us, and thus inaugurate in a humble and familiar manner as grateful sons and daughters the many celebrations that were to follow. There we pronounced once again the password for everyone: "forward together!"

It is difficult indeed to enumerate here the initiatives put in hand in the different sectors.

Looking at the dynamism of this Family during the Centenary, one can see very clearly that there have grown up a more flexible and practical mentality and attitude of communion both at central level and in many of the Provinces. And this happy experience has led to a more conscious and communal adherence to our salesian patrimony, with more effective attention to the common spirit, the common mission and the common method; and this in turn has strengthened the conviction and desire for "going ahead together".

The commitment and initiatives of the lay members belonging to the various Groups in the Family

have been particularly significant; often indeed the laity have appeared the most dynamic and exuberant in celebrating Don Bosco's greatness and emphasizing the validity of his message, as though to remind us that from this standpoint we must bring about a greater and better convergence of the efforts of all.

The Centenary has called the Salesian Family to transform itself into a true "ecclesial Movement" renewed by the Spirit for the benefit of today's youth.

The youth movement

The best and most promising result of the re-launching of our Family is the growth of a corresponding Youth Movement. It can be said to arise quite naturally from the vitality of the Salesians, the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, the Cooperators, the Don Bosco Volunteers, the Past Pupils and the other Groups. It was almost tangible in the "Appraisal DB88".

For several years there has been talk of such a Movement and efforts were made to realize it, starting in Latin America. It marks the beginning of a new kind of youth association.¹⁷ Pope John Paul II himself gave us an authentic reminder of "the urgent need to revive in well-nigh every part of the world valid models for Catholic youth associations. The Pope exhorts you to be faithful, alert and skilful in an effort to develop such sodalities on an ever wider scale. This is a pressing invitation that I make to all who are responsible in any way for the christian education of youth".¹⁸

Without any doubt the starting up of the Movement must be included among the best and most

¹⁷ cf. AGC 294 "Youth groups and movements"

¹⁸ Oss. Rom. 8.5.79, cf. also GE 4, AA 18, 19, 21

¹⁹ cf. GC21 156-159

urgent "new kinds of salesian presence".¹⁹ The Centenary assures us that group activity among the young is a requirement of the preventive system and of the oratorian criterion of renewal; it recalls to our mind the leadership of Dominic Savio, a young person seeking after an ideal, and challenges us to better acceptance of such an educational and pastoral inspiration, which is by now a living reality in our Family.

At the "Appraisal 88" event there were 2,500 youngsters present, mainly from the European Provinces, and they represented a real commitment on the part of nearly every province: a world initiative, carefully prepared by two years of work through aids drawn up with patient competence. The meeting was the culmination reached after a process that had included the direct involvement of so many young people. At Turin, with Don Bosco, the threads marking the rebirth of our group activity were brought together: listening in faith, efforts at assimilation, joyful and festive celebrations, the sharing of problems and ideals, stimulating dialogue, prayer and the sacraments, pilgrimages with reverent memories, perspectives of christian witness, and proposals for growth.

Don Bosco, the "Father and Teacher of Youth", has come to be the living inspiration for today and tomorrow of an authentic youth spirituality, the fruit of his "realistic pedagogy of holiness" which does not disappoint "the deep aspirations of the young (the need for life, love expansiveness, joy freedom, future prospects), but at the same time leads them gradually and realistically to discover for themselves that only in the 'life of grace', i.e. in friendship with Christ, does one fully attain the most authentic ideals."²⁰

²⁰ IP 16

His mission among the young is a prophecy which still resounds at the present day. His reading of the Gospel for youth becomes translated into a spirituality which generates a convinced and tenacious attachment to him as a Teacher, even though with evident need for further interpretation in line with Vatican II.

I invite you to read again from this point of view the "Reflections following 'Appraisal DB88'" of the Councillor for Youth Pastoral Work, Fr Juan Edmundo Vecchi, in the Acts of the General Council.²¹ I call your attention to two points he emphasizes: one concerning the Salesian Family, and the other young people.

²¹ AGC 328, pp. 31-40

The 'Appraisal' reminds our Family of the "value of organisms of animation and intercommunication". The new era of salesian group activity will flourish if the sector is given good Delegates and Youth Pastoral Teams really capable of animation and possessing a well worked out collection of plans, guidelines, incentives, suggestions, spiritual enticements and apostolic creativity. The Centenary has proved to be a successful test of such organisms.

Furthermore the 'Appraisal' has highlighted "the new youthful subject". In the first place it has pointed out the lengthening of the period of youth itself which requires us to commit ourselves with special ability also to the age group ranging from 18 to at least 25 years. Adolescents and young adults are a privileged group in the Church; they are living through a period which is strategically important for their awareness of the faith and the building of a proper cultural synthesis. Living with them in an educational capacity, pastoral skill in approaching them, the original salesian interaction between

²² Oss.Rom. 5.2.89

evangelization and human advancement, all invite us (as the Pope said) "not so much to dedicate ourselves haphazardly to the young, but to 'educate according to a plan'"²² — a plan designed to make them the main agents in the maturing of their own personalities and of their active participation in the Church and Society.

We have accepted this moving scenario as a panorama of the future: to dedicate ourselves with greater conviction and competence to youth spirituality as the moving spirit in the new era of group activity. The beatification of Laura Vicuña and the inauguration of the "House of the young Saint" at Murialdo have drawn attention to Don Bosco's school of youthful sanctity, already proven by many adolescents around the world. The Salesian Youth Movement is now a reality, and it must be consolidated with intelligent and courageous perseverance.

The 'Appraisal' has provided a happy endorsement for a project which was already being talked about and has pushed it forward, requiring on our part the ability to carry out with the young an educational experience of greater evangelical consistency. And this is certainly one of the main lines along which our charisma must be launched anew.

Lay involvement

I have already said that lay people played a significant part in the Centenary, and especially those belonging to the various Groups of our Salesian Family. If to this fact we add the special efforts (though still far from perfect) that have been made by the Congregation in recent years to bring about

their growth in both quantity and quality,²³ and if we recall that in the Church the last Synod of Bishops²⁴ studied this very theme, subsequently dealt with by the Holy Father in his Apostolic Exhortation "Christifideles laici", we find before us a vast horizon open to our spiritual and apostolic vitality.

²³ AGC 317, 318, 321

²⁴ 1987

In the characteristic traits proper to the two Associations of Salesian Cooperators and the Past-Pupils, Don Bosco has called on us to be more ecclesial and more outward-looking. We have seen for ourselves that his spirit, founded on realism and a gift for synthesis in the midst of living experience, responds to the evangelical preoccupations of so many of the lay faithful. He himself has given us a prophetic example by involving them in his mission and forming them in the faith. The collaboration and christian common sense of Mamma Margaret is at the origin of this promising involvement. We cannot be faithful to Don Bosco at the present day unless we have a growing number of committed lay people working with us.

The Regulations of Apostolic Life for the Cooperators remind us that the Association was founded, as Don Bosco tells us himself, "to shake up christians from the apathy in which so many of them live, and to spread the driving force of charity."²⁵

²⁵ RAL 50

The Association of Past Pupils too, while providing a yardstick for the effectiveness of our educational methods, has the task of bringing to families and society those educational values which foster the dignity of the individual and improve social conditions.

If we want to live the salesian identity in our new times we must give much importance to the guidelines and directives of the Apostolic Exhortation on the vocation and mission of the Laity. In

²⁶ cf. CL 57²⁷ cf. *ibid.* 36-44

particular, while we commit ourselves to their formation — which is one of the great pastoral priorities in today's Church²⁶ from the standpoint of the "new evangelization"²⁷ — we shall involve them with us as leaders in the great pedagogical and pastoral mission the Lord has given to the Salesian Family.

We must recognize the fact that the Centenary has served to deepen also the secular dimension of our charism and reawaken in us an apostolic interest that had become dormant to some extent for various reasons, and which now we must be able to overcome. Here too, as in the case of the Youth Movement, we must give our attention to the organisms of animation by choosing Delegates who are able and competent. The Centenary has put the bellows to the smouldering embers and has whipped up the fire of a vast "charismatic" movement inspired by Don Bosco.

The Marian dimension

For more than six months the Centenary coincided with the extraordinary Marian Holy Year proclaimed by the Pope (Pentecost '87 — the Assumption '88) in preparation for the great Jubilee of the year 2,000. A happy coincidence!

On the one hand this has led us to discover the sense of looking to the future in our centenary celebrations, and on the other it has emphasized the constituent and original Marian dimension of Don Bosco's charism and work. The Basilica of Mary Help of Christians at Valdocco, the sacred place of the birth and centre of radiation of the salesian vocation and mission, where are venerated the mortal

remains of Don Bosco, Mother Mazzarello and Dominic Savio, was the goal of a huge number of pilgrimages and the centre of many of our celebrations.

The encyclical "Redemptoris Mater" has prompted appropriate Marian reflections in the Congregation; the "theology of the image" which it develops²⁸ has led us to look with greater attention at the stimulating ecclesial significance of some aspects of Lorenzoni's painting of the Help of Christians which he produced in accordance with Don Bosco's wishes. The pedagogical, catechetical and "sacramental" functions of the sacred image have in fact combined to enhance the original Marian aspect of the heart of our Father.

The advent of the third millennium must be interpreted in the spirit of Mary of Nazareth, as the "magnificat" of the pilgrim Church. "Mary preceded the entry of Christ the Lord into the history of the human family which, when the mystery of the Incarnation was accomplished, entered the fullness of time... Similarly by means of this Marian Year the Church is called ... on her own part to prepare for the future the paths of this cooperation; for the end of the Second Christian Millennium opens up as a new prospect".²⁹

The Salesian Marian Academy, animated by the late lamented and worthy Fr Domenico Bertetto, a tireless apostle of Mary, dedicated a plenary session of particular solemnity to a commentary and deep analysis of the encyclical's message.³⁰ And in this way the Marian dimension came, and I would say quite naturally, to form a constituent part of the atmosphere of our centenary initiatives.

Emphasis was placed on the intimate link between Mary and the Holy Spirit, the source of all

²⁸ cf. *Red. Mater* 33-34

²⁹ *ibid.* 49

³⁰ f. AMS. Boll. di Colleg. n. 3, *Maria Ausiliatrice Madre della Chiesa* - UPS Rome, 1987

charismata, and on what she has done for our Founder and our apostolic Family; in fact, "through the motherly intervention of Mary, the Holy Spirit raised up St John Bosco to contribute to the salvation of youth".³¹

³¹ C 1; cf. Adriaan Van Luyn, *Maria nel carisma salesiano*, LAS Rome, 1987

³² cf. G. BOSCO, *Le meraviglie della Madre di Dio invocata sotto il titolo di Maria Ausiliatrice*, Turin 1868

We contemplated too with particular depth the Marian heart of our Father and the historical and ecclesial realism that lay behind his predilection for Mary as the "Helper and Mother of the Church".³² In this important connection we have admired the harmony between this choice of Don Bosco and the conciliar guidelines of Vatican II: an ecclesial vision of the figure and role of Mary in the history of salvation, her prerogatives as Queen of the Apostles, and her motherly interventions, especially in times of difficulty. Turin, which was already the city of the Comforter of the Afflicted, has become also the city of the Help of Christians; and the Basilica of Valdocco has become the living centre of a world-wide spreading of this so relevant devotion to the Mother of God and of the Church. Many pilgrimages, which included a visit also to the interesting Marian museum that has been set up in the precincts of the Sanctuary itself, have confirmed that this vitality exists.

Of particular significance was the first International Congress of the Associations of Mary Help of Christians held at Valdocco with close on a thousand participants, of whom a very large number came from Spain.

The words of the Pope at the Angelus on Sunday, 4 September, in the square at Valdocco, packed with the faithful, resound like a great appeal of the Centenary: "We are here at Turin-Valdocco before the Sanctuary of Mary Help of Christians, created by the love and courage of a saint.... The

Second Vatican Council presents Mary to us as a model of the Church... in her maternity and her solicitude for the salvation of all people. From this Marian shrine that is so significant for young people I would like to appeal to parents, priests, consecrated persons and all educators, reminding them of their vocation to represent with generous self-giving the Church's maternity in the birth and growth of faith in the hearts of the young. How many difficulties young people are faced with in this area today! It is a demanding challenge, one of the most urgent, and yet one that is delicate and complex. It is not an easy task, but it is more than necessary. I invite you therefore to look at Mary, powerful help and maternal guide of educators in the faith... Guided by her 'who has believed', we will be led to feel more intensely the task of educating in the faith, and to see more clearly that the Church's activity in the world is like an extension of the motherhood of the Virgin 'full of grace'."³³

³³ The Pope's Angelus, 4.9.88

The Marian dimension therefore, interpreted and lived in line with Don Bosco's ecclesial and apostolic vision, belongs to the very soul of the rich experiences of this jubilee year of grace, which will also inspire the work of the coming General Chapter.

Devotion to Don Bosco, the saint

All I have said so far has been centred on Don Bosco and the enlightenment we get from him. But there is still another aspect that I would not like to omit, because of the moving manifestations to which it gave rise all through the Centenary: I am speaking of the prayers which went up to the Saint

from all over the world, from a multitude of youngsters and members of the faithful and even from non-Christians. Our charism has a permanent intercessor in heaven! The figure of St John Bosco is fascinating because of his rich personality and the undertakings which have made him great in history. But he is no less efficacious in his role as a Saint, which makes him a powerful intercessor before God, able to obtain through insistent and loving petition a host of graces and favours, both spiritual and temporal, of which we all feel the need.

Even Pope John Paul II, at the end of his homily on 4 September 1988 in the Square of Mary Help of Christians, joined the immense chorus who pray to him, with this lofty invocation: "Dear Saint! How much we need your great charism! How necessary it is for you to accompany and assist us in understanding the mystery of the child, the mystery of the human person, particularly the young person. Dear Saint John! Although you left us one hundred years ago, we feel your presence in our 'today' and in our 'tomorrow'. Dear Saint John! Pray for us. Amen!"³⁴

I am sure that every member of the Salesian Family prays frequently to St John Bosco; but I invite everyone to intensify that prayer, to be faithful to him, to propagate devotion to him, especially among the young and people in general. The salesian charisma is not something separate from him, who remains always its intercessor and guide. Harmony of spirit and communion of prayer with St John Bosco not only assimilates us to him more closely but also intensifies our participation in the mystery of the "Communion of Saints" that we profess in the Creed. This too is an aspect of the ecclesial character which animates our spirit.

³⁴ *Nella Terra di Don Bosco*, p. 123 - LDC Turin 1988

We must never forget that Vatican II exhorts all the faithful to "honour the memory of the saints", not only for their example but especially because "our communion with the saints joins us to Christ, from whom as from its fountain and head issues all grace and the life of the People of God itself." And it adds that: "It is most fitting that we love those friends and co-heirs of Jesus Christ who are also our brothers and outstanding benefactors... and that we have recourse to their prayers and their powerful help."³⁵

³⁵ LG 50

Devotion to St John Bosco therefore unites us to the cult of the Church in heaven, as we communicate with its members and venerate especially the memory of the Virgin Mary Help of Christians, of St Joseph, the Apostles and Martyrs and all the Saints, especially St Francis de Sales and those of our Family.³⁶

³⁶ *ibid.*; C 9, 24

Those with other new charismas envy us this wonderful point of reference on which a whole new Movement can be based. We on the other hand can sing with the Church's liturgy our joy at celebrating the feast of St John Bosco; he strengthens us by his example, guides us by his teaching and protects us by his intercession.³⁷

³⁷ cf. Missal:
Preface of Pastors

The two great commitments before us

Among the vital consequences of the Centenary and the many intended courses of action to which it has given rise, I want to mention two in particular which impose on us a serious obligation: the 1989 Strenna for the whole Salesian Family, and the theme of the coming General Chapters of the Salesians and Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.

The Strenna asks us for a renewed and more intense and carefully prepared work for vocations. For Don Bosco's precious charism to be living and active at the present day, there is need for new generations of sons and daughters who will assimilate its specific values and make them the source of growth in every continent. Renewed pastoral work for vocations will be the most authentic expression of both the fidelity of those already consecrated and the apostolic fruitfulness of their work. I think that the surest yardstick for measuring the "return of Don Bosco" and the "return to Don Bosco"³⁸ will be precisely the daily educational work carried out by individuals and communities in seeking out and fostering vocations.

On the occasion of the 'Appraisal DB88' at Turin, some of us met young people who were seeking information and advice about becoming Salesians and Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. And in addition, the celebrations led us to meditate more than once on Don Bosco's own constant and fruitful work for vocations: it was recalled especially at the Cathedral of Chieri, filled as it was with young people with a "calling". Cardinal Ballestrero, in his pastoral letter: "*Saint John Bosco, priest of Christ and of the Church*",³⁹ dwelt explicitly on his great dedication to pastoral work for vocations; to this end he faced up to countless difficulties of his day, he was bold and enterprising in caring for "late" vocations (as they were once called), even though in the climate of the archdiocese it was a new initiative and little understood, creating for them special environments and formation programmes.

At the present day some parts of the world are experiencing a frightening fall in the number of

³⁸ IP 13

³⁹ 5.6.88

vocations, and it has become urgent to find new means for identifying and taking care of them. The Centenary, in proclaiming the relevance of Don Bosco's charism to the present day, prompts us to seek out many and qualified people who will continue that charism in both consecrated and lay life. In consequence we are led to intensify our daily prayer for vocations, this mysterious gift of God which must first be asked for and then educated to maturity.

And then there is the *theme of the coming General Chapters* of both the Salesians and the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, which refers to our educational practice, so that it may become an integral and incisive part of the "new evangelization". A more objective awareness of the world of youth, and a consideration of its influence on the texture of social life, demand the ability to carry out the christian formation of the young in a pluralist and secularized society. This is what lies at the foundation of pastoral work for vocations.

The "upright citizen", of whom Don Bosco spoke, is such if he is formed as a "good christian". And there you have one of the biggest challenges of our present period in history. Cultural transformations require a "new education", but without faith it will be neither consistent nor permanent. Don Bosco was raised up to "establish a synthesis between evangelizing activity and educational work. His concern for evangelization ... formed part of the whole process of human formation... Since the young people are living through a period of particular importance for their education... faith must become the unifying and enlightening element of their personality."⁴⁰

The Holy Father recalled, in the audience granted

⁴⁰ IP 15

to the Rector Major and Members of the General Council, that "it is a theme which touches deeply the entire Church. It has implications which do not depend entirely on particular characteristics of the prevailing youth condition, but stem from a cultural situation which is passing through a period of great changes as the third millennium of christianity draws near. It is a time of great ecclesial responsibility and of a captivating commitment in the process of evangelization."⁴¹

⁴¹ Oss.Rom., 5.2.89

This certainly is the central objective of all our activity and also the most daunting challenge of the present cultural changes. To be able to respond it is essential that we make a careful revision of our methods. But even before that — and the order is of great importance — there needs to be an adequate interior renewal of every son and daughter of Don Bosco and of the genuinely salesian atmosphere in every community. With apostolic fire in the heart of each member and an evangelical environment in every house, there will not be lacking the understanding and strength needed to renew methods of action: faith, in fact, is a gift of God which can come also through the witness and communication of the life of the educators. (We must not deceive ourselves on this point — this is not a magic method which works automatically; you have only to look at the Apostles, the Saints, at a Cure of Ars, at Don Bosco, at Mother Mazzarello. Remember the authoritative declaration of Vatican II: "Religious life is ordered to the following of Christ by its members and to their becoming united with God by the profession of the evangelical counsels. For this reason, it must be seriously and carefully considered that even the best-contrived adaptations to the needs of our time will be of no avail

unless they are animated by a spiritual renewal, which must always be assigned primary importance even in the active ministry.”⁴²

⁴² PC 2

Conclusion

Dear confreres, each one of you certainly has his own overall opinion of the values of the Centenary and has made his own personal assessment. To write this circular letter I first spoke with many confreres and asked the opinion of the members of the General Council. The reflections I have put before you are based on lived experience and, although not pretending to be complete, help in the formation of a positive overall judgement, which will be a stimulus to our renewal and give us constancy in carrying it out.

I want to repeat yet again that a hundred years after his death Don Bosco is still personally concerned about the relaunching of his charisma: it is as though he had said to us during the work of the post-conciliar period that we had been faithful in what we had done, and that now, while congratulating us on the “fair copy” of our newly elaborated identity documents, he exhorts us to bear witness to that identity in the practice, launching his mission and spirit towards new centuries in every part of the world.

During the last years of Don Bosco’s life he was very concerned about the future of our spiritual Family: we only have to recall the dream of the personage with the ten diamonds⁴³ and his direct interventions in the first General Chapters. He wanted to ensure the continuing of the main characteristics of his spirit, the unique nature of his mission, the

⁴³ 1881

apostolic mentality and the formation of the members, the practice of the preventive system, the fostering of vocations, the purifying of communities ("the Congregation", said the third General Chapter, "needs a good cleansing"!)." ⁴⁴ When we remember that Card. Ferrieri, Prefect of the Vatican Congregation concerned with Religious, had suggested to the Pope that there be an Apostolic Visitation of the salesian houses (which in fact never took place), and that there was a move in the Vatican to aggregate our Congregation after Don Bosco's death to a similar one already in existence, ⁴⁵ we can understand the concern in our Father's heart during the '80s and how Providence responded — a response we have been celebrating all over the world during this Centenary.

We must indeed express our gratitude to Don Bosco and show him still greater love, honouring the title the Church has given him by proclaiming him the universal "Father and Teacher of Youth". And with him we thank Mary Help of Christians for the motherly guidance she gave him in his singular experience of the Holy Spirit. And above all we praise the good Lord himself and his Spirit. We are deeply grateful to God for the gift of predilection for the young and the poor which made of our Founder one of the great trail blazers of the future for the Church and society.

And so, with immense gratitude in our hearts, we are happy to have been called by God by name, to be in these new times industrious disciples of Christ in following with the young the way pointed out by Don Bosco "which leads to Love". ⁴⁶

The DB88 celebrations have set us on the road to the commitments of the next Centenary. May we be creative and faithful protagonists.

⁴⁴ MB 16, 414-415

⁴⁵ cf. CERIA, *Annali* 2, p. 446. C 196

⁴⁶ *Cost* 196

My cordial greetings to you all from the Basilica at Valdocco, the centre from which what the Pope called a "great Charisma" has spread throughout the world.

May the Lord enrich us with the light and strength of his Spirit!

My best wishes for your continued growth.

Don F. Viganò

RECALLING THE MINISTRY OF Fr LUIGI RICCERI TO THE SALESIAN FAMILY

My dear confreres,

My letter in this number of the Acts had already been printed when we received the news of the death of our beloved Fr Luigi Ricceri, my predecessor in the service of Rector Major, so well deserving because of a whole life spent intensely for our Congregation and the Salesian Family.

When death came to claim him at 3.55 p.m. on June 14, it found him ready and serene. He died in the community of Castellammare di Stabia where he had been welcomed and cared for with great affection during the past year. At his bedside as he passed away were Fr Paolo Natali, Fr Luigi Fiora, the Provincial of Naples, the Rector of the house and other confreres.

The solemn and familiar funeral rites took place today, June 16, in the Basilica of the Sacred Heart, Rome, in accordance with his own wishes, after which the remains were laid to rest in the salesian cemetery at the Catacombs of Saint Callistus. The participation of the Rector Major, who presided at the concelebration, and of his Council, the Mother General and General Council of the FMA, of Cardinals Rosalio Castillo Lara, Antonio Javierre Ortas and Gabriel Garrone, of numerous Salesians, Daughters of Mary Help of Christians and representatives of all the Groups of the Salesian Family, bears witness to the gratitude which we must express to our brother and father in prayer.

While I ask you to continue your prayers for the repose of his soul, I invite you to thank God for all that has been done in our Family through the ministry of Fr Ricceri, and to invoke his intercession that he may obtain for us from Mary Help of Christians and from Don Bosco the grace to be faithful in passing on to others the salesian charisma.

Fraternally in the Lord

Don F. Viganò

The following is the text of the Rector Major's homily during the concelebrated Funeral Mass in the Basilica of the Sacred Heart.

Dear brothers and sisters, we are gathered together in this eucharistic assembly to celebrate an act of christian faith, rich in affection, in gratitude and in hope.

Last Wednesday at 3.55 p.m. our brother Luigi Ricceri, a salesian priest who became the sixth successor of Don Bosco and ruled the Congregation for 12 years, breathed his last.

His death becomes for us a meditation of faith and a stimulus to life: a joyful contemplation of the loving kindness of the Father and the willing attention of a son.

That may sound rather like a disturbing paradox.

At the funerals of great men of business, of politics and culture, you would hear reflections of a different kind. In a cultural climate where what is immanent is all important, death is something sad: it puts an end to all energy, removes the person concerned from the historical scene and buries him definitively in the past, even though his passing may give rise to reactions and strife.

Only in christianity does the hidden impenetrability of death open up to what is transcendent, to the real transcendence of history, and not to abstract speculation.

It is a transcendence that we feel to be in operation here and now in the presence of the mortal remains of our well deserving brother; from his coffin he invites us to commemorate the death of Christ, the supreme vertex of all human activity.

The liturgy tells us that in every member of the faithful who dies is fulfilled the mystery of the Son of God, who died and rose again, the first fruits of the dead.

This our brother was reborn in the waters of Baptism; his countenance became assimilated to the image of Christ; he was nourished by Christ's body and blood as food for his earthly pilgrimage; he grew in that new life which is eternal; he was inundated with Christ's redeeming power, which is stronger than death. He will rise again with his Lord, and proclaim in the words of the

Bible: "O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting?" (1 Cor 15, 55).

Let us look for a moment at Christ's attitude in the face of death: his own death, that of Lazarus, that of the son of the widow of Naim, of Jairus' daughter. He was truly immersed in sorrow, in fear, in great distress: "Let this chalice pass from me!" (cf. Lk 22,42).

Death indeed is always the obscure ending of earthly life: it breaks the bonds of kinship and friendship; it destroys the use of the senses; it marks the end of a mission that has been undertaken: "Father, into your hands I entrust my spirit" (Lk 23, 46), "It is finished!" (Jn 19, 30).

But from it there emerges the power of the resurrection; a new period of youth begins; the horizons of a truer life open up; entry is gained to the full communion of the mystery in company with the Church in heaven; there is no renunciation of history but incidence on history's course takes place in a different way; rest takes the place of struggle and agony. This is the transcendence of love, of the charity which is stronger than death.

Our brother, Fr Luigi Ricceri, reached the goal of his existence at more than 88 years of earthly pilgrimage. That is a long period of time; it included youth, maturity, the third age — and even the fourth age.

A lengthy experience of the christian paradox, in different forms of sharing in the Mystery, which chiselled his personality, reveals to us today the splendour and validity of being a christian.

His youth — 24 years — was marked by a meeting with Christ: "Jesus, looking upon him, loved him", and said to him: "Come, follow me" (cf. Mk 10, 21 ff). The young man in the Gospel went away sad at those words, but Luigi Ricceri on the other hand found in that meeting the joyful discovery of his future; he found the true meaning of his own existence and the enthusiasm for a practical and definite mission; he felt the attraction and the festivity of life, and knew intuitively that with Christ he would become a leading agent in the spreading of his Kingdom.

At Caltagirone, the town of Fr Luigi Sturzo (founder of the Christian Democrats), while engaged in studies at the secondary school, he became a member of the Don Bosco Circle at the Salesian Oratory. With this the native resources and qualities of his Sicilian origin took a leap forward and became directed to ever more lofty designs.

In the industrious family atmosphere of the holy educator, the 'father and teacher of youth', he became aware that he would be well satisfied if he could become a Salesian: to dedicate himself for ever to the good of the young and the poor. He set about becoming competent in the humanities by the constant application of his sharp and versatile intelligence. He was ordained priest to dispense the riches of the Paschal mystery, and gave himself wholeheartedly to the realization of the ideals which our dynamic Founder had left as a legacy.

He became a Salesian in 1917 and a priest in 1925. With Don Bosco as his constant companion he set out on the evangelical way of life that leads to Love: 70 years of convinced fidelity!

"O blessed years of my youth!", he seems to say from his catafalque to all youthful generations.

The years of his maturity — 40 years — were marked by intense activity and accomplishments, as he moved from one stage to another, first in Sicily and later in Piedmont and Lombardy. He became well known as an excellent educator in both school and oratory, with outstanding cultural qualifications in many fields which included music and the theatre; in due course he became a Rector in various houses, and later Provincial in both the Subalpine and Lombard provinces, and eventually was called to be a member of the General Council of the Salesian Congregation, spread throughout the world. These were four decades of tireless work, of a constant spirit of initiative, of important human contacts, of new plans, of courage and breadth of outlook.

The times were not easy, especially during the tormented period of the '40s. To defend the Rector Major, Fr Ricaldone, he had for a time as Provincial at Turin to undergo the experience of imprisonment.

Among his more significant achievements as a member of the General Council were: the relaunching of the Salesian Cooperators (at the GC19 in 1965 the document relating to their Association, of which he was the author, was immediately and unanimously approved by the assembly with applause); the impulse given in the field of social communication to the Italian Salesian Bulletin which reached a circulation of more than 300,000 copies, and to the new edition of Don Bosco's "Catholic Readings", published under the name "Meridiano 12"; his lively interest in dramatic literature and compositions; the modernization of the SEI; and finally his concern for the group of consecrated lay women, founded by Fr Philip Rinaldi, who eventually became the Secular Institute of the Don Bosco Volunteers.

It is difficult indeed to list all he did. It would be no exaggeration to confer on him the title "Knight of Industry", in imitation of the so-called holy managerial qualities of the Founder, together with those of the "loyal son", faithful to the spirit and mission of the Father.

He had with him the dynamic energy, the creative imagination and the practical ardour of his native volcanic territory, animated and sustained by the interior apostolic qualities of salesian consecration.

The period of the third age — 12 years — he lived as the sixth successor of Don Bosco.

He was elected Rector Major in 1965, at the age of 64.

At the time, the Church was making preparations for the final session of the Second Vatican Council, and the agitated and eventful post-conciliar phase was beginning, rich in perspectives and open to great expectations, but with many new problems. As Rector Major it fell to his lot to see to the organization and carrying out of the historic Special General Chapter (1971), which went on for seven months and was to launch the Congregation into the new orbit of Vatican II: it had to revise the text of the Constitutions, open up a healthy decentralization while maintaining unity, rethink the formation of personnel and the pastoral quality of our work, face up to the excesses of protesters, follow carefully the emergence of

new personality values, of social and political challenges that affected us more and more, the many problems caused by the new cultures, and in particular that of stemming the haemorrhage caused by the religious crisis.

After that Chapter, Fr Ricceri indicated five main lines on which the attention of the confreres should be concentrated and along which their practical efforts should be directed. To list them is equivalent to making a synthesis of his delicate ministry of animation and guidance during his 12 years as Rector Major:

1. A lively sense of the presence of God;
2. The mission to the young and the poor.
3. The building up of community.
4. The relaunching and exploitation of the Salesian Family.
5. The fostering of unity in decentralization.

Behind each of these there was a dense series of commitments and projects: the building of the new Generalate at Rome with the consequent transfer of the General Council which had hitherto had its residence at Turin; the project of voluntary work in Latin America; the team visits; the yearly week of spirituality for the Salesian Family; the courses of ongoing formation, etc.

As Rector Major he was also Grand Chancellor of the Salesian Pontifical University in a disturbed period of restructuring and growth which saw our Athenaeum raised to the dignity and responsibility of an Ecclesiastical University, thus ensuring for Don Bosco's mission the serious scientific underpinning required by the new times. This process implied a whole series of study sessions, complex discussions, interventions and sacrifices which are difficult to imagine; but thus was laid down the basis of future promise for the enlightened and competent services that would be rendered to the Church by the Salesian Family's mission to the young and the poor.

The fourth age — more than 11 years — was entirely pervaded by the humility and wisdom of one who has grown old in the faith. The knowledge of the approaching goal gives a unique tone to the life of faith and brings with it an interior peace that non-Christians cannot understand.

Pope Paul VI left us his testimony to this experience of the 'fourth age' in his "Thoughts on death": a sublime meditation in which he traces with keen perception the intimate feelings of an old believer on the threshold of death.

In recent months I received from Fr Ricceri several confidential letters, notes and memoranda, written in his own firm script: they reveal the secrets of his interior life.

From these pages emerges the filial contemplation of the infinite mercy of the Father as the most highly valued characteristic of his love; and then the recognition of his wisdom and power in creation, and in the incalculable benefits and kindness of his providence. One can admire in them too the dignity of the penitent who recognizes with humble sincerity his own limitations and shortcomings and immerses himself in the ineffable solidarity of Christ; there is the joy felt at the presence of the Holy Spirit with his gifts, especially the charisma of the Founder, and for the motherly solicitude of the Virgin Mary.

"The moment of the great encounter", he wrote to me as long ago as 1979, "is rapidly drawing near". Just as Paul VI had said in his meditation: "*tempus resolutionis meae instat*". And he went on: "There comes back to my mind the poor story of my life, shot through as it has been on the one hand with a wealth of singular blessings, deriving from God's ineffable goodness, and on the other by wretched actions which I would rather not remember, so imperfect, mistaken, ridiculous and foolish they seem; always I think of St Augustin  summing up: '*miseria et misericordia*'".

He then turns his gaze to a contemplation of the agony of Christ who dies for others, for us. In him "the solitude of death was filled by our presence, he was consumed by love; his death was the revelation of his love for those who were his own: '*in finem dilexit*'".

When I look back on my conversations with Fr Ricceri in his last years, I recall that his mind was always directed to the confres, to the life of the Church, to the ministry of the Supreme Pontiff, to the growth of the Congregation and the Salesian Family. I think what that was said by a scholar concerning progress in the life

of the Spirit is very true: an analogical application of the law of gravity is appropriate: as a falling stone increases in velocity the nearer it gets to the ground, so does the faith of a believer increase in intensity as he approaches the goal of his final meeting.

Dear brothers and sisters, in this Eucharist we give thanks to the Father for the riches of Christ's mystery, sewn and brought to maturity in the life of our brother Fr Luigi Ricceri, and while treasuring the witness he has given us, we pray for him: Grant him, Father eternal happiness. That he may gaze for ever upon your face, for in you he has always hoped and believed. Take away from him every stain of frailty. May your mercy be for him like heavenly dew. You, who are rest after toil and life after death, grant that he may take part in the eternal Easter mystery in your abode of light and peace. Hear the prayer of this assembly and grant that that the desires and sacrifices of this our brother for the growth of Don Bosco's charisma in the world, may obtain for it a new quality of life with numerous and committed vocations.

Mary, Mother of your Son, intercede for him and help him!
Amen.

2. GUIDELINES AND POLICIES

2.1 AN INTRODUCTION TO THE APOSTOLIC LETTER "VICESIMUS QUINTUS ANNUS"

Fr Paolo NATALI

Councillor General for Formation

Pope John Paul II's Apostolic Letter "*Vicesimus quintus annus*", written to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the promulgation of the Vatican Council's Constitution on the sacred liturgy, "*Sacrosanctum Concilium*", draws attention to:

- the importance of that memorable event (n. 1);
- its "relevance in relation to new problems" (n. 2);
- the enduring validity of its principles (n. 5), because the reform of the liturgy, "together with the biblical renewal, the ecumenical movement, the missionary impetus and ecclesiological research" contribute to the overall renewal of the Church (n. 4).

Of this importance, relevance and enduring validity we would like to present an overall picture, not only as an introduction to the reading of the pontifical document, but also to highlight some of its interesting aspects. They will stimulate our obedience in faith and give greater motivation to our liturgical formation.

At various times in the past there have been references to this theme in the Acts of the General Council (cf. ASC 297; AGC 321), and what was said then is in perfect harmony with what the Pope says to us today. This happy conformity is an endorsement and guarantee of the guidelines which may, perhaps, still need to be put into practice with greater fidelity by every salesian community.

We shall reflect together on the general themes contained in the Letter: the principles and criteria which are at the foundation of the renewal of liturgical life, their practical application in celebra-

tions, the need for ongoing formation; but here and there we shall look further afield to situations in the Congregation which need improvement, so that our confreres may be better able to express in their lives and in their relationship with the young what they have received in the celebration with faith (cf. FSDB 98).

1. Principles and criteria

The Pope emphasizes some principles and criteria, not in view of a harmful rigidity (cf. n. 11), but to motivate and safeguard the authenticity and development of renewal. It is as though to say that the extent to which we believe in the mystery of Christ and his Church becomes the criterion according to which we act and the measure of what we do. The contents of the faith, already attentive to new problems (cf. nn. 16-18), sustain the laws of prayer. In other words, the renewal of liturgical life and its practical applications, in view also of the future (e.g. "to implant the liturgy in new cultures" — n. 16, or to "build upon the riches of popular piety, purifying and directing them towards the Liturgy as the offerings of the peoples — n. 18), are based on some principles and items of faith which underlie criteria and practical directives.

What are these principles?

a. *The liturgy is the exercise of the permanent priesthood of Christ* (cf. n.10). We must keep ever alive the affirmation of the disciples: "It is the Lord!". "Nothing of what we can do in the Liturgy can appear more important than what in an unseen but real manner Christ accomplishes by the power of his Spirit" (n. 10). In a context of signs, of which some are essential (the word, prayer and liturgical structure) while others are linked with the time in which we live, he brings us back tirelessly to the great event of his Passover.

b. *The liturgy is the place where Christ is actively and continuously present.* Christ is always present in his Church, and enables her to manifest herself as one, holy, catholic and apostolic (cf. n. 9):

- especially in liturgical celebrations, the place par excellence where christians meet God, and in an eminent and unique manner in the sacrifice of the holy Mass, celebrated by the assembly under the species of bread and wine (cf. n. 7);
- in the person of the ordained minister, consecrated to act “in persona Christi”;
- in the word of God, listened to in faith and assimilated in prayer, endowed with greater abundance and variety “so that the intimate link between rite and word may be manifested” (n. 8).

c. *The liturgy, in “making present” the paschal mystery, believed in faith, leads automatically to certain requirements:*

- Because Christ is present when the Church is gathered in prayer in his name, the christian assembly, whose greatness stems from this mystery, will foster brotherly acceptance and welcome in its decorous attitudes, gestures, hymns etc. including also forgiveness.
- The need for active and conscious participation on the part of all, according to the diversity of orders and of office, is a motive also for the preference given to communal celebrations “when the nature of the rites implies this” (cf. n. 10)
- Because the ordained minister celebrates “in persona Christi”, his interior and exterior dispositions (the words he utters, the rhythm of prayer, his gestures, his vestments, the place he occupies, etc.) should be in harmony with the mystery he enacts (cf. n. 7).
- Because Christ is present in his word as proclaimed in the assembly, the book and place of proclamation should be worthy and dignified. No other reading may replace that of the word of Christ. And indeed any other words that are spoken should be in harmony with that word (the homily, hymns, exhortations etc.), so that the words of men may be at the service of the word of God without obscuring it (n. 10), and the word of God through the interior disposition of the ministers, the careful preparation of the homily through study and meditation, may arouse in the faithful “the desire to discover Christ” (n. 8).

- Because of the great “pastoral value of the liturgy, it allows for a measure of adaptation to the assembly and to individuals, with the possibility of openness to the traditions and culture of different peoples, though with certain stipulations (cf. nn. 10,16).
- Since liturgical celebrations are not private acts but “celebrations of the Church, the sacrament of unity” (n. 10) their regulation is dependent solely on the hierarchical authority of the Church. “Fidelity to the rites and to the authentic texts of the Liturgy is a requirement of the *Lex orandi*, which must always be in conformity with the *Lex credendi*.”

2. Practical application to celebrations

These principles, criteria and guidelines have placed a broad and positive obligation on believers as regards their realization. But the Pope's Letter also indicates the conditions and circumstances which have retarded their more widespread application and understanding: the tendency to see religious practice as something of a private affair; a certain rejection of institutions; a decrease in the visibility of the Church in society; passive and indifferent attitudes; and the turning back in a one-sided and exclusive way to the previous liturgical forms as though they were the sole guarantee of certainty in faith, while some people have promoted outlandish innovations in a wild creativity which misunderstands the positive value of the renewed rites and the great possibilities they offer today.

“Sometimes”, says the Pope, “there have been noted illicit omissions or additions, rites invented outside the framework of established norms, postures or songs which are not conducive to faith or to a sense of the sacred; abuses in the practice of general absolution; confusion between the ministerial priesthood, linked with ordination, and the common priesthood of the faithful...” (n. 13).

We could go further and say that to these tensions and confusions have been added in some places others born of a marked tendency to use the liturgy for political purposes. There are those who would want the liturgy to express, in a language and spirit alien to

its true purpose, all human problems and desperate social needs of the time. That attention be given to human problems is lawful and evangelical; but if taken to extremes it could, depending on the prevailing mood at the time, manipulate the whole of the liturgy to suit personal tastes. The liturgy could never respond to this kind of situation.

Fundamentally it is a question of bringing the people to the liturgy and at the same time bringing the liturgy to the people — two positive aspects of the same problem. A liturgy is needed that is more open to life, more embodied in culture, more stimulating as regards mission — a liturgy of today, but one with a dimension of living tradition, hierarchic by nature and expressive of the unrivalled experience of the Church's faith (*"lex orandi lex credendi"*) (cf. n. 15).

3. The need for ongoing formation

"It is therefore necessary and urgent to actuate a new and intensive education in order to discover all the richness contained in the Liturgy" (n. 14).

Some of the immediate needs could be summed up as follows:

— The fragmentary nature of initiatives needs to be overcome and, "thinking with the Church", organic initiatives need to be developed which will make possible an ongoing formation;

— A conversion is needed to a new mentality, and hence to a new style of celebration. The renewal is not just a matter of texts, but of head and heart. If there is no renewal of heart nothing will be renewed, no matter how many new texts are available. Texts rapidly grow old if the human heart is not renewed. "Cultural adaptation also requires conversion of heart, and even where necessary a breaking with ancestral customs incompatible with the Catholic faith (n. 16). One responsible for celebrations must go back incessantly to the deep roots of his faith if he wants his liturgical act to be a real cooperation of the realization of salvation:

— Among the pressing tasks that lie ahead would seem to be that of a biblical and liturgical formation of the People of God, of pastors, and of the faithful in general. Pastors of souls should be among the first to be imbued by the spirit and force of the liturgy (cf. n. 15). They must emphasize and communicate the aspects of the mystery. Liturgy is not just a list of things to be done; it means a Person to be met, the One who has risen from the dead. There are people who must be brought to this meeting. The person of Christ and the mystery of his death and resurrection must be lived in prayer and contemplation. Participants must be helped to fix their gaze of faith on the presence of the Risen Christ.

— The linkage between faith and sacraments and between the word and liturgy must be understood more deeply. Liturgy without word would degenerate into a kind of magical rite, while the word would be reduced to a mere abstraction if disjoined from the liturgy. We must be able to rediscover all the evangelizing possibilities of the liturgy, without prejudice to its nature as an act of devotion — a liturgy which evangelizes (oh! the pedagogical wisdom of the liturgical year!): faithful to God and faithful to man!

4. Conclusion

To renew, as the Pope requests us in his Letter, “that spirit which inspired the Church at the moment ‘Sacrosanctum Concilium’ was promulgated” and to give it new life in strong and zealous communities, we are invited:

— to imitate Don Bosco. How very relevant at the present day is our Father’s example: he wanted solemnity in celebrations but also fidelity in the rites; from the day of his first Mass he always had with him the booklet of the rubrics which he frequently read over again;

— to read over those documents which are probably the most important as far as the reform is concerned: the introductions to the Missal, the Lectionary, and the Liturgy of the Hours. They are

three documents which not only tell us what should be done but also reveal its deep meaning;

— to study the Letter “Vicesimus quintus annus” in the light of the Constitution “Sacrosanctum Concilium”;

— to verify, with the help of the questions suggested in AGC 321, p.55, the quality of our liturgical life and its celebrations, “allowing scope for opportune initiative” (R 174):

- among the various aspects of growth, which ones do we consider more significant at personal, community and pastoral levels?
- what situations (criteria, customs, expressions, conditions etc.) need to be straightened out, corrected or overcome?
- how can we get a deeper understanding of renewal so as to attain to a living liturgy?
- how can we ensure an ongoing liturgical formation and liturgical animation?
- how can we overcome a formalism or passivity that has become habitual, or a practice not in conformity with ecclesial norms?
- how can we foster the interior and exterior conditions required for each celebration?
- how can we give a pedagogical and pastoral importance to the great solemnities of the liturgical year, without ever substituting them by other celebrations, even though the latter may be specially dear to us?

The criteria for this verification are those already referred to; they are taken from “Vicesimus quintus annus” and from a certain well balanced spiritual outlook that we have acquired through grace and endeavour, and is the confident hope of the Pope and his prayer: In the work of liturgical renewal “it is necessary to keep in mind with great balance the part of God and the part of man, the hierarchy and the faithful, tradition and progress, the law and adaptation, the individual and the community, silence and choral praise. Thus the liturgy on earth will fuse with that of heaven... to praise with one voice the Father through Jesus Christ” (n. 23).

4. ACTIVITIES OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL

4.1 Chronicle of the Rector Major

After his return from Cuba on 10 March (cf. AGC 329), the Rector Major had various engagements in Rome in addition to his ordinary work: at the UPS, with the Italian Provincial Conference, the Provincial Chapter of the Middle-East Province, etc.

In April at Acireale-Catania he took part in the 2nd Congress of the Sicilian Dioceses, where he gave an address on the ecclesial significance of the religious life at the present day (April 3-5). He then went to Nave for the golden jubilee of the work there (15-16 April), followed by Bari for a meeting with the Salesian Family and a visit to the technical schools of the Italian Southern Province, and then to Sesto San Giovanni for a retreat with the confreres (28-29).

From April 11 to 14 he was at the Vatican for the Plenary Session of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, and then at a meeting of the Council for the Laity, where he gave a paper on the formation of the christian laity in the light of the Apostolic Exhortation «Christifideles laici». On the 30th he gave a conference on the vocation and mission of the laity to the Italian National Meeting of the

Directors and Delegates of the Co-operators, gathered in Rome.

From May 6 to 11 he visited Split, Zadar and Rijeka in Yugoslavia, after which he went on to Trieste to meet the members of the Provincial Chapter of the East Venice Province. Other places he managed to visit in May were: Turin on two occasions (5-6, the «Blessed Michael Rua» Oratory in the Monterosa sector, and 23-25, Valdocco for the Feast of Mary Help of Christians); and Pavia (13-14) for the inauguration of the new oratory. From May 25 to 27 he took part in the annual meeting of the Union of Superiors General, which this year took place at Arriccia and studied the topic of «poverty».

A final engagement, immediately before the plenary session of the General Council, took him to Foggia where we have a work for drug-addicts, and to Cerignola for the silver jubilee of our presence there (3-5 June).

4.2 Activities of the Councillors

The Councillor for Formation

Fr Paolo Natali and the members of his Department were occupied between March and the end of May

in the following work:

- With the help of a small commission they carried out the final revision of the volume *«The Salesian Brother»* (his history, a deeper theological and spiritual analysis of his identity, pastoral vocation work and formation in his regard). The book is now at the press; it is an aid that was asked for by the GC22 (cf. doc.9), and is addressed to all confreres, but in a special way to those who bear direct responsibility in the fields of pastoral work for vocations and formation;

- The continuation of the preparation of *«Aid 3: Suggestions for teaching the history of the Congregation and the Salesian Family»*;

- Various ministerial engagements, and the customary services to our University;

- The following visits of animation:

- In Italy to Pinerolo (novitiate), Nave (post-novitiate), Turin-Crocetta (studentate of theology);
- In Brazil from April 1-22, especially to the formation communities of the six provinces: São Paulo, Campo Grande, Manaus, Recife, Port Alegre; and to Campo Grande for the annual meeting of formation personnel of the practical training period;
- In U.S.A. from 22 to 27 April, in the New Rochelle Province;

- In Spain from 7-22 May to the formation communities of the provinces of Madrid, Cordoba, Seville and Valencia.

In every province, as a general rule, Fr Natali met with the formation personnel, teachers (where there were study centres), the young confreres in the period of initial formation, and finally with the Provincial Council and/or the Formation Commission.

Everywhere an attempt was made to obtain an objective overall view of the situation (aims, methods, personnel and structures) with the positive aspects that are displayed, and the difficulties and problems which were discussed and for which suggestions were made for possible solutions.

The Councillor for Youth Pastoral Work

At the end of the Dec.'88 - Feb.'89 plenary session of the Council, Fr Juan Vecchi left for India where, together with the National Delegate for Youth Pastoral Work (Fr Joseph Kezhakkekara) and Fr Chrys Saldanha, he took part in two meetings with the members of the Provincial Councils of the six Provinces in the country.

The meetings took place at Kotagiri and Calcutta, with the same theme studied in both: *«The pastoral animation of the Province and*

the Salesian Educative Pastoral Plan».

Continuing the same journey, Fr Vecchi then spent a week visiting our works in Japan, after which he went on to Korea where he took part in the inauguration ceremonies of the new school buildings at Kwangju and held meetings with the confreres to pass on information and exchange ideas.

At the end of April he went to Poland for some days of reflection on the theme: «*Pastoral work and emarginated youth*», organized by our recently established Institute of Christian Pedagogy of Warsaw for all the Polish Church. This was followed by a meeting with the teams for pastoral work of all the Polish Provinces, with a view to deciding on forms of mutual coordination and collaboration, and especially to strengthen the National Pastoral Centre, destined to be the focal point for animation and coordination among the four Provinces and the point from which our experience can spread in the Polish Church.

Fr Vecchi then carried out, at the Rector Major's behest, the Extraordinary Visitation of the Generalate community between 17 April and 10 May.

His last visit outside Italy was to Austria where on May 20 and 21 he took part in the inauguration of the gymnasium which the Unterwaller-

schorf community is making available to the youth of the area.

In the meantime the Department sent out to the Provinces the 4th Dossier on Youth Pastoral Work, entitled «*Salesian pastoral work for vocations. Come and see*». It met with a favourable response from the Provinces, and the edition of 2,000 copies is now exhausted.

In collaboration with the FMA International Centre for Youth Pastoral Work, the Department has begun preparations for a European meeting on salesian youth work, to be held at Vienna next November. Invited to the meeting are all SDB Delegates and FMA Coordinators of their respective Provinces, to launch communication and collaboration at European level in view of the new realities planned for the early '90s.

Finishing touches are meanwhile being put to Dossier n.5: «*Salesian - how and why*». It is a stimulus, in line with the Strenna for 1989, for the vocational commitment of the provinces. It contains the responses of 500 young Salesians, all of whom entered the novitiate after 1984, to a questionnaire.

The Councillor for the Salesian Family and Social Communication

From the end of February '89 to early June, Fr Sergio Cuevas was involved in the following programme:

At Manila, in the Philippines, he presided from Feb.23 to March 3 over a meeting of salesian communicators of Asia. Taking part were those responsible at provincial level for this sector from Japan, Korea, Thailand, the Philippines and Madras (India); to these were added the delegates from Ireland and Malta for the purpose of studying a possible coordination of the various publications in English. Taking part too were some local specialists, and some non-salesian workers in the same field from various parts of Asia. The opportunity was provided to visit some communication structures in the Philippines, and other centres operating at international level. The meeting turned out to be a valuable occasion for a revision of the plans already in progress and for a relaunching of the animation of the communications sector in line with the suggestions of the document *«The Salesians and communication»*.

From Manila Fr Cuevas continued with a programme of visits to make contact with the Salesian Family at Taiwan, and in particular to see the work being developed at Taipei by the Don Bosco Publishing House, and the work at Tainan.

He was also able to make a brief visit to Thailand to see the work being done in the areas of social communication and the Salesian Family in our foundations in that country.

In a subsequent visit to Japan he was able to meet with with the salesian communicators of Tokyo, those responsible for the salesian Cooperators, and with the respective SDB and FMA delegates. He also met the FMA Superiors and those of the Sisters of Charity of Miyazaki. All these contacts were a stimulus to the consolidation of the salesian charisma in the land of the Rising Sun.

During the visit there was also the possibility of meeting the young Salesians in formation and of observing the recent advances in the technical and technological field by the Japanese graphics and television experts, thanks to the kindness of Salesians and past-pupils working in these sectors.

After spending Holy Week in Rome, Fr Cuevas left for Chile to carry out the Rector Major's mandate to make the Extraordinary canonical Visitation of that Province. This kept him occupied from 29 March to 31 May.

On 2 June he returned to Rome to take part in the plenary session of the General Council.

The Councillor for the Missions

After the winter session of the Council Fr Van Looy left Rome for New Rochelle, where he stayed sev-

eral days to study the situation of the Missions Office. He was also able to visit the community of theology students at Columbus, Ohio, before going on to Peru. For some time he had wanted to visit this missionary territory but had had no opportunity. He was now able to update his knowledge and provide animation as he toured the territories of Huaraz and Chacas and went on to the mission entrusted to us by the Archdiocese of Cusco. He saw at first hand the difficult conditions in which the missionaries are living, and he was himself involved in some demonstrations by the peasants.

Subsequently he spent four days of missionary animation in Chile, especially among the young confreres. In a rapid visit to Valparaiso he recalled the importance of Don Bosco's dream of 1886.

In Argentina he spent two days at Buenos Ayres to animate the young confreres and get to know the Boca area where our first missionaries worked. From 12 to 19 March he was in the Province of Bahia Blanca for a meeting with 26 SDB and FMA missionaries at Junin de los Andes to study the present situation and the future of the missions among the Mapuche.

Fr Van Looy then returned to Rome for a brief two-day stopover before leaving for Korea with Fr Juan Vecchi. Here he was given the

honour of cutting the ribbon for the inauguration of the new school buildings at Kwangju on Holy Saturday. He remained in Korea for four days before going on to Thailand.

At Hua Hin in Thailand, he held a meeting from 29 March to 4 April with 15 SDB and FMA missionaries from the Far East to study the topic: «Cultures, religions and evangelization in the Far East». On 5 and 6 April he visited two refugee camps for Cambodians and Vietnamese near Aranyprathet, where Salesians and past-pupils of Thailand have started up trade courses for the young men.

The Councillor for the Missions wanted to go to Burma but did not succeed in obtaining the necessary permission, and so took the opportunity to visit the confreres of Sri Lanka instead.

Returning once again to Rome, he spent a week at headquarters before going to Spain for a meeting of the Iberian Provincial Conference at Campello in the Province of Valencia, to study the formation process in Africa.

From 23 April to 1 May he was in Equatorial Guinea, where he visited the missions of Bata, Mikomeseng, Malabo and Banapà.

From Equatorial Guinea he moved on to Groot-Bijgaarden, Brussels, where from 2 to 6 May he presided over the annual meeting of those in charge of Mission Offices, with

29 participants from 14 countries. They studied the matter of collaboration with Governments and the European Community, and also systems of financing with the NGO (Non-Government Organization).

From Belgium he went on to Holland where he spent 8-9 May in a meeting with the Provincial Council and a visit to various houses.

On May 15-16 he was at Colle Don Bosco and Turin for a meeting with those in charge of the Missionary Museum and those involved in services for the missions at Valdocco.

From 20 to 26 May, accompanied by the Provincial (Fr Filiberto Rodriguez), he made a visit of animation to the houses of the Leon Province, ending up at Santiago di Compostela where preparations are in full swing to receive the young people who will gather there with the Pope next August. In his journey from Rome to Leon, Fr Van Looy was able to spend half a day in Barcelona.

From 26 to 29 May in the Provincial House of Madrid, he presided over a meeting of provincial delegates for missionary animation of the European Provinces. The main topic dealt with concerned the sense and specific nature of Missions and the verification of missionary activity in the Provinces, with some necessary planning for the future. 38 delegates from 23 Provinces took part.

At the end of this meeting Fr Van Looy returned to Rome.

The Economist General

On 25 February Fr Omero Paron was at Mestre, Venice, for the official presentation of the new salesian work of training young people destined for the world of work, and met with the civil and ecclesiastical authorities of the City and Region of Venice who were present at the ceremony.

On 18 March he went to the San Lorenzo Institute of Novara for the inauguration of the Don Bosco gymnasium, and on 29 March presided at Como at the closing Mass of the Provincial Chapter of the Milan Province.

From 15-16 April he accepted the invitation to take part in the golden jubilee celebrations at Nave (Brescia), and from 24 to 30 of the same month visited the Austrian Province where he met with Rectors and Economers in the houses of Vienna - Unter St.Veit, Linz and Klagenfurt. He was also able to make a brief visit to almost all the houses of the Province.

From 8 to 11 May he accompanied the Rector Major on his visit to Split, Zadar and Rijeka in the Province of Zagreb. On his return he stopped to see the salesian work at Trieste, where the Provincial, Pro-

vincial Councillors and all the Rectors of the Venetian Province of San Marco were gathered to meet the Rector Major.

The Councillor for the Atlantic Region of Latin America

From the end of February to the middle of May Fr Carlos Techera was engaged in the extraordinary visitation of the São Paulo Province of Brazil, the province with the largest number of members in the South-Atlantic Region and the first salesian province in Brazil; from it have come 17 bishops (6 of them now gone to their reward). The Province also has jurisdiction for Angola, the mission entrusted to the whole of the Atlantic Region, where there are 20 confreres working in 4 communities. This part of the province will be visited in August.

During the visitation Fr Techera was able to observe at first hand the appreciation of the various Bishops for the work being done by the Salesians, especially in favour of needy youth; many initiatives are in progress in this field.

In this period the usual meetings took place of the Provincial Conferences of Brazil and the Plata. Both of them studied the important topic: *«Salesians and social communication»*: in this connection two interprovincial consulting bodies are at work to promote the same

theme in the individual provinces. In Brazil there was also an exchange of experiences about the process of redimensioning in the provinces, while in both conferences there was a discussion on the manner in which a serious approach could be taken to the Strenna on pastoral work for vocations, and on the preparation of the provincial chapters.

After bringing the visitation to an end with the Rectors and the Provincial Commission for Pastoral Work, and on the following day with the Provincial Council, Fr Techera went to Turin, where he took part in the celebrations in honour of Mary Help of Christians (May 23-24), thanking the Madonna and invoking her help for the needs of the confreres and all the Salesian Family in the 13 provinces of his Region.

On 25 May he returned to Rome to prepare for the plenary session of the General Council.

The Councillor for the Pacific-Caribbean Region of Latin America

Fr Ignacio Velasco left Rome immediately after the conclusion of the General Council's Retreat, and headed for the Province of Venezuela in the company of the Rector Major, who was to preach a retreat to the rectors of that province.

During the same week he went to

Santo Domingo for three days, where he met with the Provincial, Provincial Council, the Provincial Delegate for Haiti, and some other confreres of the same country. The purpose was to present the guidelines and conclusions reached by the Rector Major and General Council regarding the immediate future of the Haitian Delegation after the events that are well known to everyone.

There was a calm and fraternal review of the facts that had caused so much suffering in the past months. This helped to renew confidence and enthusiasm for the organization of salesian life in Haiti.

Fr Velasco then went back to Venezuela to accompany the Rector Major in his visit to Cuba. The visit began at Santiago di Cuba, a city at the extreme east of the island, and the Rector Major was able to call successively at Camaguey, Santa Clara and Havana; in each of these places there were meetings with the confreres working there, with the Salesian Sisters, the young people and members of the Salesian Family.

After the visit to Cuba, which had special significance for the Salesians living and working with Don Bosco's spirit in that difficult situation, Fr Velasco went on to begin the Extraordinary Visitation of the Province of the Divine Saviour, which includes the countries of Central America and Panama. The visitation be-

gan with the Republic of Nicaragua, where he met with the whole Provincial Council.

Then, in an effort to fulfil all the duties of the visitation, the Visitor went through the countries in order: Panama, Costa Rica, Honduras, and finally El Salvador, the headquarters of the Province. The visitation was concluded towards the end of May.

Subsequently the Regional made a short visit of a few days to the Provincial Office at Medellin in Colombia, and to the formation communities of Rio Negro and La Ceja.

After a further two days stopover in Caracas, Fr Velasco returned to Rome.

The Councillor for the English-speaking Region

Not having an extraordinary visitation to carry out, Fr Martin McPake spent the period March – May 1989 in visits of animation to every part of the Region with the exception of Australia and Western Samoa.

He began in the Vice-Province of Southern Africa, of recent erection, passing through all the communities in the three countries which make up the new circumscription. Despite difficulties inherent in the complex situation, due not least to internal problems in each of the countries (e.g. apartheid in the Re-

public of South Africa), the Regional is of the opinion that a brighter future lies ahead in all of them. He noted in particular the spirit of unity which reigns among the confreres, the strong catechetical thrust throughout the Vice-Province, the apostolic courage in fighting apartheid (at Daleside 45% of the pupils are black or coloured), and the wise creativity shown by the 'Provincial' Council. A source of joy at the time of the visit was that seven young men were preparing themselves for entry to the novitiate.

After returning to Rome from Southern Africa, Fr McPake left almost immediately for the United States and Canada. During the six weeks he spent in North America he was obliged to limit his visits to the Provincial Offices and the Centres of Formation. This was due not only to the vast extension of the area involved, but also to the disturbing fall in the numbers of young people in every stage of formation.

Of particular concern was the situation that had arisen at Newton in the Province of New Rochelle. This Centre has given good service to both North American Provinces for more than 60 years, forming almost all the English and French-speaking Salesians at present working in both countries. But now, a somewhat drastic fall in the number of novices and post-novices has led to a redimensioning of the whole field of

formation. Fortunately, in studying the situation with those responsible, the Regional had with him for several days the Councillor General for Formation, Fr Paolo Natali. After various meetings and discussions with the two General Councillors, decisions were made with a view to a new and more fruitful future.

From North America Fr McPake flew to Ireland, where he spent a week before going on for a rather longer visit to Great Britain. In both provinces he tried to visit all the salesian houses, including those of the FMA. He took part in various meetings, was present at a Salesian Family Day, and received the promises of new Cooperators. In both Provinces there is a strikingly high degree of collaboration between the different branches of the Salesian Family. Equally striking, unfortunately, is the very small number of vocations, and much self-sacrificing work is going into the seeking of a remedy for this situation.

After celebrating the Feast of Mary Help of Christians in his province of origin, Fr McPake returned to Rome.

The Regional Councillor for Asia

Fr Thomas Panakezham left Rome on 19 February for New Delhi, where he made a brief stop at the new Don Bosco School at

Alaknanda. This school in the capital city can be considered a real grace from Mary Help of Christians and Don Bosco; for nearly twenty years the Salesians have been hoping to establish a school in New Delhi, but only recently has it become possible to do so. It may also be appropriate to recall that through the tireless work of the past-pupils and especially that of the Chief Minister Purna Sangma of Meghalaya (the state of North-East India), and the benefactors of this school, the Salesians managed to get Rajiv Gandhi to authorize the issue of the commemorative postage-stamp of Don Bosco in India.

On 22 February Fr Panakezham began the Extraordinary Visitation of the Guwahati Province of 'Mary Help of Christians', in North-East India, a specifically missionary province. The Visitor was able to observe the great dedicated and self-sacrificing work of the confreres, and their love for evangelization so as to build up the local Church. In this young Church have arisen several good vocations. The visitation ended on 6 May.

In the meantime the Visitor also held a meeting with the presidency of the Indian Provincial Conference (12-13 March), at which various topics were considered, including the following: the revision of a draft document for the formation of postulants and novices at an all-India

level; a detailed programme for a course in ongoing formation to begin at Bangalore in January 1990; a regional structural plan for the Indian Cooperators; the appointment of a secretary to the conference as required by the statutes; and finally information concerning the past-pupils.

On 7 May the Regional Councillor took part in the eucharistic celebration at Bandel (Calcutta), during which the Apostolic Pro-Nuncio to India, Abp. Agostino Cacciavillan, declared the church dedicated to Our Lady of a Good Journey a "Minor Basilica".

On 8 May he went to Hong Kong to begin the consultation preceding the appointment of the new Provincial, and for this purpose visited all the communities of Hong Kong and Macau.

The final stage of the Regional's journey was a visit to the confreres of Vietnam. Accompanied by Fr Matthew King, Vice-Provincial of Hong Kong, he was able to visit between 16 and 23 May all the communities and meet all the confreres. They number 86 Salesians and 7 novices. They are all well and express their gratitude for the prayers and sacrifices that have been offered for them; they ask that these may continue. Many of them, including several deacons, are waiting for priestly ordination. They show a truly admirable fidelity to the

Church and the Congregation. We must thank the local civil authorities of Ho Chi Min City (formerly Saigon) and of Cam Dung for their kind and gracious welcome.

The Regional Councillor for Spain and Portugal

At the end of the General Council's retreat (18 February), Fr Jose Antonio Rico left Rome for Spain where two days later he had meetings with the Provincial Council and the members of the provincial commissions of the Province of Cordoba, to begin the Extraordinary Visitation which was to continue until 14 May.

On 28 February he was present at the closing of the Provincial Chapter, which took place at Granada.

After visiting the three communities in the Canary Islands he went on to Togo, where the Cordoba and Seville Provinces between them sustain three foundations: two at Lome and one at Kara. The Visitor spent more time in the formation community of Lome, where there are 11 novices and 10 recently professed confreres. During the visit he presented the Don Bosco centenary medal to the Archbishop, Mgr Robert-Casimir Dosseh-Anyron, to thank him for the kindness and affection he has shown to the Sons of Don Bosco.

Fr Rico also visited the neighbouring country of Benin to greet the confreres of Cotonou and Porto-novo, who belong to the Bilbao Province.

Returning to Spain, he had a meeting with the Provincial of Seville and the FMA Vice-Provincial, to inform them of the situation of the houses in Togo. He also took the opportunity to spend some hours with the novices of Sanlucar la Mayor.

Continuing the visit to the houses of the peninsula, the Regional took part in the Provincial Assembly of the Cooperators at Cordoba (16 April), the meeting of the Past-Pupils' Regional Council at Pozoblanco (23 April) and the 16th Provincial Assembly of the Associations of Mary Help of Christians at Cordoba (30 April).

On 20 and 21 April Fr Rico presided over a meeting of the Iberian Provincial Conference, at which were present also Fr Luc Van Looy (Councillor General for the Missions), Fr Gerard Balbo (Provincial of Paris) and Fr Antonio Cesar Fernandez (Director of Novices at Lome), to study the theme of salesian formation in the post-novitiate at Lome.

On 9 May as the visitation was approaching its end, the unforeseen death occurred of Fr Federico Hernandez, Provincial of Bilbao, and the Regional went at once to Bilbao, ac-

accompanied by the Provincial of Cordoba, to be with the confreres there and take part in the funeral.

In the final days of the visitation of Cordoba, Fr Rico held another meeting of the Provincial Council, attended also by Fr Paolo Natali, who was on a visit to the formation communities.

On 13 May the feast of the Provincial Community was celebrated, with a large-scale participation of the confreres, and on the following day, the Solemnity of Pentecost and anniversary of profession in the Congregation, he had a meeting with the Rectors, with whom he celebrated the Eucharist and shared a family meal, thus bringing the Visitation to an end.

From 15 to 24 May the Regional Councillor was at Orense to preach the Novena for the Feast of Mary Help of Christians in the big parish we have there. On the 25th, the Feast of Corpus Christi, he took part at Madrid in the celebrations for the priestly diamond jubilee of Fr Aniceto Sanz, and during the following days was present with Fr Luc Van Looy at the meeting of the provincial missionary animators of our European provinces, held at Madrid.

At the end of May Fr Rico returned to Rome.

The Regional Councillor for Europe and Central Africa

Among the various engagements of Fr Domenico Britschu during the period March – May 1989, the one requiring most time was the journey which took him to Zaire, Rwanda and Burundi. It was the fourth time he had been in the Central African Province, and this time it was for the purpose of carrying out the Extraordinary Visitation in the name of the Rector Major. The work took much longer than had been foreseen. The visitation should have ended on May 25, but went on in fact until June 11. The miscalculation was due to a fundamental error: in Africa one cannot programme a journey on the basis of distances measured in miles or kilometres alone; unforeseen circumstances must always be allowed for, and the virtues of hope and patience are a *sine qua non*.

The Regional Councillor for Italy and the Middle East

After the solemn conclusion of the Don Bosco centenary year and the pontifical audience of 4 February, Fr Luigi Bosoni was at Vico Equense (Naples) for the Retreat with the General Council and the Provincials of Italy and the Middle East.

He then took part in a meeting

with those responsible for the formation sector on the theme of the practical training period, in which he had been asked to make a contribution.

On 23 February he began, in the name of the Rector Major, the Extraordinary Visitation of the Italian Southern Province of 'Blessed Michael Rua', with headquarters at Naples, which kept him engaged until the beginning of June, and took him to all the salesian houses in Calabria, Puglia, Basilicata and Campania. He was also able to be present at the opening of the Provincial Chapter, and at a meeting to assess the youth situation at provincial and regional level.

He interrupted the visitation only to make a brief trip to Rome for Easter and the meeting of the Italian Provincial Conference (19-21 May) on the theme of the Salesian Family, followed by a meeting of the CISI presidency on sport in our houses, and of the 'curatorium' of the Lanuvio novitiate.

Fr Bosoni returned to Rome on 2 June, Feast of the Sacred Heart, to take part in the plenary session of the General Council.

The Rector Major's Delegate for Poland

In the period March – May 1989 Fr Augustyn Dziedziel made various

animation visits to salesian communities and groups of the Salesian Family.

He took part in the opening ceremonies of the Provincial Chapters of Breslau and Pila.

He accompanied the Councillor for Youth Pastoral Work (Fr Juan Vecchi) during his visit to Poland, and in particular in the Symposium held at Warsaw on the problems of young people at risk, and subsequently in the meeting of national and provincial delegates for youth pastoral work.

He called and presided over a meeting of the consulting group of the Polish Salesian Provinces, and had a further meeting with the Provincials themselves.

He was also able to make a visit for animation and coordination purposes to the countries lying to the east of Poland.

Later he went to Uganda, stopping off at Rome for a few days on the way. In Uganda he had talks with the ecclesiastical authorities concerning the foundation of the first salesian work in that country and its subsequent development. He also preached a retreat to the first group of confreres working in that country.

On his way back to Rome Fr Dziedziel stopped briefly in Kenya and visited some of the salesian communities there.

5. DOCUMENTS AND NEWS ITEMS

5.1 Approval of the text for Religious Profession in our Society

on May 6, 1989, Feast of St Dominic Savio, the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments approved the proper text for the Rite of Salesian Profession, which had been opportunely revised after the approval of the Constitutions by the Apostolic See. We give below the original text in Latin and an English translation from the Italian.

Latin text

CONGREGATIO DE CULTU DIVINO ET DISCIPLINA SACRAMENTORUM

Prot. 933/87

SOCIETATIS S. FRANCISCI SALESII

Instante Reverendissimo Domino Aegidio Viganò, Societatis S. Francisci Salesii Rectore Maiore, litteris die 9 Iulii 1987 datis, vigore facultatum huic Congregationi a Summo Pontifice IOANNE PAULO II tributarum, textum Ordinis Professionis Religiosae proprium eiusdem Societatis, lingua italica exaratum, perlibenter probamus seu confirmamus.

In textu imprimendo inseratur ex integro hoc Decretum quo ab Apostolica Sede petita confirmatio conceditur.

Eiusdem insuper textus impressi duo exemplaria ad hanc Congregationem transmittantur.

Contrariis quibusdam minime obstantibus.

Ex aedibus Congregationis de Cultu Divino et Disciplina Sacramentorum, die 6 maii 1989, in Festo Sancti Dominici Savio, adolescentis.

Eduardus Card. Martinez
Praefectus

Vergilius Noè

*Archiep. tit. Vancariensis
a Secretis*

English text

CONGREGATION FOR DIVINE WORSHIP AND THE DISCIPLINE OF THE SACRAMENTS

Prot. 933/87

SOCIETY OF SAINT FRANCIS DE SALES

At the request of the Very Reverend Fr Egidio Viganò, Rector Major of the Society of St Francis de Sales, in a letter of 9 July 1987, in

virtue of the faculties granted to this Congregation by the Supreme Pontiff JOHN PAUL II, we willingly approve and confirm the proper text of the Rite of Religious Profession of the same Society, drawn up in Italian.

When the text is printed, this decree by which the desired approval of the Apostolic See is granted must be inserted in its entirety.

In addition, two copies of the printed text should be sent to this Congregation.

Anything to the contrary in no way withstanding.

From the Office of the Congregation for Divine Worship and for the Discipline of the Sacraments, on the 6th day of May 1969, on the Feast of the youth, Saint Dominic Savio.

Edward Card. Martinez
Prefect

Virgilio Noè
Titular Archbishop of Vancaria
Secretary.

5.2 Our dead confreres (1988 - 4th list)

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

NAME	PLACE	DATE	AGE	PROV.
P ACERBI Francesco	Shindenbaru, Oita	13-06-89	68	GIA
P ANDREATTA Albert	Surrey (Canada)	11-03-89	66	SUO
P BALZANO Ricardo Bonifacio	Córdoba	04-04-89	80	ACO
P BARRIO ORTE Angel (del)	Valencia	23-04-89	56	SVA
P BELZA Juan Esteban	Buenos Aires	01-05-89	71	ABA
P BORT Pio	Verona	12-06-89	56	IVO
P CABRIA Ercole	Torino	10-06-89	74	INE
P CALVENZANI Enrico	Verona	22-04-89	92	IVO
P CAMERONI Arnolfo	Torino	23-03-89	76	ICE
L CAPON Jean	Lubumbashi	16-03-89	80	AFC
P CARLO Juan	Cuenca	19-03-89	71	ECU
P CASTENETTO Cipriano	Mogliano Veneto	31-01-89	69	IVE
P CUTILLAS GARCÍA Luis	Barcelona	21-02-89	94	SBA
P DAL MASO Antonio	Castello di Godego	15-06-89	80	IVE
P DETHIER Jean	Bruxelles	14-03-89	80	AFC
L DI MAIO Giuseppe	Castellammare di Stabia	26-04-89	79	IME
E DI PIETRO José Carmen	Sonsonate (El Salvador)	29-05-89	60	
<i>Fu Vescovo di Sonsonate per 3 anni</i>				
P DROZD Aleksander	Łódź	26-04-89	81	PLE
P D'SOUZA Victor	Bombay	14-06-89	67	INB
P DUROURE João Baptista	Campo Grande	04-04-89	92	BCG
P FALLICO Nunzio	Marsala	27-05-89	81	ISI
L FIGLHUBER Johann	Fulpmes	11-04-89	77	AUS
P FLECCHIA Andrea	Lanzo Torinese	09-06-89	68	ISU
P FUGLIK Vojtech	Borova'u Policky	31-03-89	69	CEP
P GILARDI Nereo	Brescia	27-03-89	77	IVO
P HERNANDO CONDE Federico	Bilbao	09-05-89	59	SBI
<i>Fu Ispettore per 2 anni</i>				
P HERNÁNDEZ HURTADO Jerónimo	Valencia	26-03-89	77	SVA
P JIMÉNEZ SÁEZ Aurelio	Bonao (Rep. Dominicana)	25-05-89	46	ANT
L LAKRA Samuel	Guwahati	24-05-89	79	ING
L LANGAN Edward	Manchester	22-04-89	69	GBR
P LE GOFF Joseph	Pouillé	25-02-89	78	FPA
P LEHAEN Jozef	Boortmeerbeek	28-05-89	79	AFC
L LIS Stefan	Warszawa	29-03-89	77	PLE
P LIVESEY John	Brooklyn Park	21-05-89	75	AUL

NAME	PLACE	DATE	AGE	PROV.
L LIZARRALDE URIA José	Urnietá	14-02-89	77	SBI
L MALINA Władysław	Sokolów Podlaski	05-02-89	87	PLE
P MAZIAR Romano	Roma	20-05-89	66	IRO
P MEDINA SEVILLANO Pacífico	Barcelona	01-06-89	77	SCO
P MEULENYSER Charles	Caen	08-06-89	87	FPA
P MUCELLI Nicola	Cagliari	22-03-89	60	ISA
P NUNÉZ Ernesto	La Linea de la Concepción	01-05-89	66	SSE
P OLMÍ Franco	Parma	30-05-89	74	ILE
P PILES NAVARRO Juan	Barcelona	09-04-89	87	SBA
P PINHO Manuel Julio de Bastos	Lisboa	13-05-89	62	POR
<i>Fu Ispettore per 6 anni</i>				
P PITTINI Paolo	Montevideo	27-03-89	86	URU
P POLENGHI Romolo	Arese	10-05-89	85	ILE
P POOTHARA Anthony	Guwahati	01-06-89	49	ING
P RECCHIA Giovanni	Castellammare di Stabia	19-04-89	78	IME
L REMY Pierre	Luze-en-Hainaut	25-01-89	79	BES
P REZENDE Ronaldo	Araçatuba	21-02-89	47	BCG
P RICCERI Luigi	Castellammare di Stabia	14-06-89	88	ICE
<i>Fu per 7 anni Ispettore, per 12 anni Consigliere nel Consiglio Superiore e per 12 anni Rettor Maggiore</i>				
L RINALDI Alfred	West Haverstraw	29-05-89	74	SUE
P SHERIDAN Lawrence	Bootle	19-05-89	74	GBR
P SKRZYPCZYK Józef	Kraków	22-05-89	77	PLS
L TAPIA CASTILLO Jorge	Iquique	04-05-89	83	CIL
S THURUTHEL James	Ravulapalem	20-05-89	28	INK
P TOMASELLI Giuseppe	Messina	09-05-89	87	ISI
P TORRES SÁEZ Mariano	Barcelona	11-06-89	80	SVA
P TRANCASSINI Francesco	Alessandria d'Egitto	16-03-89	81	MOR
L TWENHÖVEL Arnold	Vechta	04-06-89	81	GEK
L VAN WIGGEN Kees	Leusden	12-05-89	73	OLA
P VEDANI Angelo	Torino	11-04-89	81	ISU
P VERONA Giovanni	Gussago (Brescia)	07-06-89	74	SUE
P VIDELA Juan Carlos	Bahía Blanca	14-03-89	81	BBH



