

acts

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of the Salesian Society
of St John Bosco**

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THE POPE'S APPEAL FOR THE MISSIONS

- Introduction.- The missionary heart of Don Bosco.- He dreamed of sons in the South and the East.- Ours is a missionary Congregation.- The Pope's message in the Encyclical "Redemptoris missio".- Enthusiasm for the "mission" stems from the mystery of God.- Missionary activity has pride of place in evangelization.- The missionary is invited to a renewal without deviation.- A glance at Don Bosco's missions at the present day.- Salesian spirituality for our missionaries.- Everyone - in communion and active participation.- The Lord is preparing a new springtime of faith.

Rome, 24 February 1991

My dear confreres,

I am writing to you in the liturgical atmosphere that prepares us to relive once again Christ's paschal mystery. We look to him as the centre of our existence and of all human history. He is the Good Shepherd, "sent" by the Father to give life to an entirely "missionary" Church among the peoples. In it he raised up also our own vocation as a special charisma of evangelization.

I want to use the opportunity offered by the Pope's recent Encyclical to invite you to reflect on our missionary dimension in the Church.

In my preceding letter we meditated together on the ecclesial event of the most recent Bishops' Synod to prepare ourselves to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the priestly ordination of Don Bosco.

This time I think it will be opportune to consider together another ecclesial event: the publica-

tion of the Encyclical "Redemptoris missio". It is well that we should be in harmony, in our prayer and reflection, with the directive events of the Church.

The Encyclical deals with a theme that is a vital one for all; it is of special importance also for us.

In addition, in Lima, the Peruvian capital, the Fourth Latin-American Missionary Congress (COMLA-4) has just taken place to give new strength to the missionary commitment in those countries whose culture is christian. This too is an event that prompts us to reflect on the importance of the missions.

Furthermore our own GC23 considered the missionary dimension of the Congregation, and produced a concise guideline for a review and progressive coordination of the new salesian foundations in Africa.¹ This guideline has been carefully studied by the Rector Major with his Council, who have made certain decisions now being put into effect.²

¹ cf. GC23 310

² cf. AGC 335, pp. 65-66

This combination of circumstances, as well as the numerous "missionary journeys" planned by the Rector Major and various Councillors for this year, are an invitation to us to concentrate our attention on a truly vital theme, and one which fills us with enthusiasm at the courageous commitments the Congregation has made. But it makes us think more deeply also of a particular characteristic of which the Pope has reminded us more than once: that we must be everywhere true "missionaries of the young". There is something about that word "missionary" that takes us to the very roots of the faith and makes us understand more explicitly the true significance of our salesian vocation.

Before going into the more substantial aspects of the Encyclical, it may be well if we consider to-

gether the missionary dimension of our Congregation (and Family). Among ourselves this is a characteristic that is taken for granted, but it is not so clear in other contexts. There are some lists, for example, that are more or less official, which do not include us among missionary Institutes – with the corresponding consequences.

Let us first look briefly at the missionary heart of Don Bosco, and then at his prophetic missionary dreams, so as rightly to assert the missionary dimension of our Congregation.

The missionary heart of Don Bosco

We may safely say that Don Bosco can be listed among the great missionaries of the 19th century, even though he was never personally on the missions “ad gentes”.

“It can be said”, wrote Eugene Ceria, “that the missionary idea grew in him”.³ It is an idea that is intrinsic to his vocational plan as a Founder, and coextensive with his whole existence. At first it was present in embryo and he was hardly conscious of it, but then it gradually took on a form that became progressively clearer and more distinct.

The same thing is said in more incisive or delicate terms by both Fr Paul Albera and Fr Philip Rinaldi, who trace back Don Bosco’s missionary vision to his dream at the age of nine.

The foreign missions, wrote Don Albera, “were always a burning aspiration in Don Bosco’s heart, and I am quite sure that Mary Help of Christians, from her first motherly revelations to him while he was still a boy, had given him a clear intuition in this regard... He spoke about it continually to us his first sons; we were filled with wonder and felt

³ E. CERIA, *Annali* I, p. 245

ourselves carried away by a holy enthusiasm... At the bedside of young John Cagliero who was dying, Don Bosco saw the Patagonians waiting to receive redemption at Cagliero's hands, and he foretold his recovery and revealed in part what the future had in store for him".⁴

⁴ D. Albera, *Circular Letters*, pp. 132-133

And Don Rinaldi said in his turn: "In commemorating that first dream of our venerable Father we have implicitly celebrated the centenary of the beginning of the whole of salesian work; because we may say that it was in that first vision that he was consecrated as the apostle of youth, the father of a new religious family, a missionary to non-christian peoples; that vision it was that stirred up also in his heart a lively desire for religious life and the evangelization of pagans".⁵

⁵ ACS, 24 June 1925, p. 364

The missionary ideal in fact, that had been alive in him from the time of his secondary school studies,⁶ developed and matured with the passing of time.

⁶ cf. BM 1, 246

At the end of his period of pastoral formation in the College of St Francis of Assisi in Turin (1844), he was thinking of entering the Oblates of the Blessed Virgin, who had opened a flourishing mission in Vietnam, so that he could soon become a missionary, and for this he began to prepare himself by prayer and the study of the appropriate languages. Don Cafasso, his spiritual director, let him go along on this line for a while, but then at an opportune moment said a decisive "no" and bade him stay in Turin, where he found him a post at the refuge of the Marchioness Barolo, where he could concern himself with large numbers of young people. He obeyed, and Providence guided his steps. But his apostolic work among the young, far from quenching his missionary zeal, shed fresh light on it and gave it a new and original slant.

⁷ cf. BM 3, 257

We know that missionary undertakings, reported in the *Annals of the Propagation of the Faith*⁷ – one of his favourite sources of reading material – made a deep impression on him. There were so many souls to be saved, and he felt that in some way he shared the responsibility for them.

⁸ BM 3, 257

From 1848 Don Rua and others had heard him exclaim more than once: “Oh, if only I had lots of priests and young clerics! I would send them to preach the Gospel in Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego...”⁸

⁹ BM 3, 383; BM 4, 294

He was often seen, during those same years, looking at a map and heaving a deep sigh at the thought that “so many regions were still lying in the shadow of spiritual death”.⁹

¹⁰ D. Albera, *Circular Letters*, p. 134

When after indescribable sacrifices he was finally able to launch his missions (1875: the Congregation’s greatest enterprise!) his missionary heart exulted, and he seemed to give them the whole of his eager attention.: “From then onwards”, wrote Don Albera, “the Missions were at the centre of his heart and he seemed to live only for them... He talked about them with such enthusiasm that we all marvelled and were deeply edified by his burning ardour for souls”.¹⁰

With no less intensity Don Rinaldi, drawing on memories of the distant past, wrote: “In his great heart there had been accumulating for years on end the apostolic ardour of a Francis Xavier, nourished by a heavenly flame that was revealing the future to him through dreams... For me there has never been a missionary as zealous and tireless in his propaganda as he was. I can still see him, the loving Father, in the distant memories of my salesian vocation, precisely in those years when his missionary fervour was at its height; and it has left

an indelible impression on me: he was a true missionary, an apostle devoured by a passion for souls".¹¹

But Don Bosco was not satisfied to keep the missionary ideal to himself; he passed it on to his Congregation (and Family) as an essential element of his spiritual and apostolic patrimony. A memorandum he sent in 1880 to Pope Leo XII is quite explicit: "The foreign missions have always been a cherished concern of the Salesian Congregation".¹²

It was his wish therefore that his foundation should be also truly missionary "ad gentes".

It will be worth our while to consider, albeit briefly, some of Don Bosco's dreams that manifest very clearly his plans as a Founder.

He dreamed of sons going to the south and the east

Don Bosco had many dreams: not without justification has he been called "the dreaming Saint".

Their classification is a ticklish problem, and their interpretation still more so. We still lack a critical and scientific study of them, nor is it easy to make one.¹³

But this does not mean that some of his dreams lack historical and prophetic importance; they have given substance to his charismatic personality and prompted him to undertake courageous initiatives inexplicable from a purely human point of view.

Commenting on the so-called dream of the diamonds,¹⁴ I said that one can speak of Don Bosco's dreams at a level that is different and more vital than scientific criticism (though the latter is also desirable for a serious investigation); it is the level of the existential influence they had on the mind of the Founder and in the life of his followers.

¹¹ ACS, 24 June 1925, p. 367

¹² BM 14, 501

¹³ cf. FAUSTO JIMENEZ: *Los Sueños de Don Bosco*, Madrid 1989

¹⁴ cf. ASC 300

Some of the dreams must be considered as revelational in character; they cannot be explained merely by an analysis of the personal inner feelings of the Saint.

Fr James Costamagna (who later became a bishop and had verified at first hand in Latin America the charismatic value of various dreams) saw clearly in Don Bosco a "prophetic personality"; after reading of a missionary dream in 1885 he wrote to Don Lemoyne and told him of a phrase said to him in confidence by the good Father: "among all the Orders and Congregations, ours perhaps has had the greatest guidance from God".¹⁵

Among the dreams containing 'revelations' there are five that refer specifically to the missions "ad gentes":

- one in 1872 on Patagonia; this was the one that made Don Bosco begin his missions;
- a second in 1883 which describes a journey through Latin America: it relates many details that were unknown not only to Don Bosco but even to scholars of the time;
- a third in 1885 about the lower part of South America; this was the one that led Don Costamagna, who was already in America, to write back and quote the phrase referred to above;
- a fourth, also in 1885, on Africa, Asia and Oceania; we look upon this one with special wonder and interest at the present day, because we are already witnessing its prodigious realization;
- and the fifth in 1886, on the journey by air from Valparaiso to Peking: I have checked the geographical details myself during various journeys I have made, so as to encourage all of us to renew our hope as we courageously approach "Project China".¹⁶

¹⁵ MB 17, 305

¹⁶ cf. ASC 323

These missionary dreams help us to understand the mind of our Founder, his magnanimity and the boldness of his initiatives. In them the Congregation clearly appears as being among the ecclesial groups committed as such in the mission "ad gentes", and this precisely in the South and East of which the Encyclical speaks: they foretell the flourishing of vocations among native peoples and provide scope for verification – in 500 years time!¹⁷

¹⁷ cf. MB 17, 645

The period from the first missionary expedition (1875) to the present day shows that such dreams have come true, even though prospects of further growth still remain open, especially in China where, for that matter, salesian missions were launched with unhoped-for success and bedewed with the blood of our first martyrs.

They are dreams which – and this perhaps is a fact unique in history – have traced some decades in advance what would be done later by his followers. And not without reason Don Bosco is felt today, in the most widely separated places on earth, as a fatherly and forestalling presence friendly to local culture and a powerful protector.

In many intercontinental journeys I have often been able to verify to some extent the prophetic element in these dreams, which always incite us to press on towards a fascinating future. I have found this to be true in Latin America, in Africa and Madagascar, in Asia, Japan and the Philippines, in Australia and Oceania. As our confreres in those regions read these dreams once again, they consider them as so many providential prophetic messages. In some places I have even been asked to settle heated discussions about some geographical point.

They are dreams which have had a real influence on missionary life in the Congregation, and

continue to do so. In their own way they provide confirmation for the constitutive aspect of the salesian vocation itself in the Church.

Ours is a missionary congregation

The mind and heart of the Founder and the uninterrupted tradition in our Family are an open confirmation of the fact that the missionary dimension is an "essential feature" of our charisma.¹⁸

¹⁸ cf. C 30

For us Salesians the missions "ad gentes" are not just so many works on a par with others, the only difference being that they are carried out in distant countries with different cultures: no, no. They represent something very much deeper: an essential aspect, a particular dimension of our identity as Salesians of Don Bosco in the Church. It is true that the Congregation is not listed in the Pontifical Yearbook among the "Missionary Institutes" strictly so-called (i.e. among those dedicated solely to the foreign missions); but in it, and this precisely by ecclesial institution, the Founder wanted there to be a true commitment to missions "ad gentes". His was a truly providential plan. Today we cannot but recognize the fact that the missions have been the historical means for bringing about the inculturation of the salesian charism in the world on a universal scale. And that is something deserving of great merit.

From the very beginning we have fostered missionary vocations in the strict sense, i.e. the care of those confreres – and they are many – who have been enriched with the "special vocation" which is the characteristic note of every true missionary. Such a special vocation is not something that makes them exceptional in respect of other confreres, but rather a more lively and generous expres-

sion of the vocation of all. It manifests, in fact, a condition inherent in the nature of the common charisma; every confrere is fundamentally available to go to the missions if obedience should take him there.

It is no more than 100 years since we began our missions in Latin America; 50 years later we turned to Asia and finally (after another 50 years!) we have committed ourselves in an overall fashion to Africa and Oceania. We can say that we have directed our attention, as the Pope suggests, towards the South and the East,¹⁹ where the greatest demographic growth of people is taking place: so many of them young and in conditions of such great poverty.

¹⁹ cf. *Redemptoris missio* (RM), 40

Our missions are a standing demonstration, in three great and successive stages and at world level, of the practical preferential option of the Congregation for the young who are poor and in such great need.

The last two decades have seen a relaunching of missionary activity among us. This is something providential which is giving new life to our charisma and leading us forward into the future with hope. In my letter on "Our African Commitment",²⁰ I said that the opening of this new missionary frontier was inherent in our living tradition and would be the harbinger of great blessings from the Lord. We are witnessing the truth of that statement. The missionary commitment is freeing us from the dangerous trend towards a soft and easy life, from superficiality in spiritual matters, and from genericism. In the missions we get a taste of the origins, we experience the perennial validity of the oratory criterion, and we seem to see Don Bosco once again in the authentic beginnings of his mission to the young and the poor.

²⁰ ASC 297

The GC23 directs our attention in a special way to Project Africa, but I would like to invite you to reflect at the same time on all our other missionary frontiers, some of which are the result of recent initiatives, like that of the "high altitudes" missions in Latin America, those of Papua New Guinea and the Samoan Islands, the new openings in Indonesia and Cambodia and, with due hope and preparation, the return to the immense Chinese mainland.

With regard to our work in Africa, we may say that we are beginning a new phase, marked by a clearer and growing awareness of the need for our insertion in the culture of those peoples, for the consolidation and development of our work, for an ever more appropriate method of evangelizing the young, and especially for the care of local vocations and their adequate formation by creating the necessary structures. We are making great steps forward which should help us to review and deepen the significance of all our commitments.

To go ahead wisely and efficaciously in this new phase it will be well for us to build up a more genuine missionary mentality, not only in those directly involved but in all the confreres.

An opportunity to do this is offered us by the recent important Encyclical on the missions. The definition of what is still today specific missionary activity deepens and makes practical the significance of the whole of the new evangelization. We all need to do some rethinking about the authenticity of faith: that of the apostle and that of the catechumen.

The Holy Father insists that the Encyclical has as its goal "an interior renewal of faith and christian life. For missionary activity renews the Church, revitalizes faith and christian identity, and offers

fresh enthusiasm and incentive".²¹

²¹ RM 2

Let us try to esteem these reflections and authoritative guidance. In all of us there is a radical missionary instinct which prompts us to pass on our faith to others. The GC23 too has reminded us that our apostolate goes from faith (ours) to faith (of the young) under the impulse of salesian spirituality, the driving force behind our journey.

John Paul II reminds all of us that "faith is strengthened when it is given to others".²²

²² RM 2

The Pope's message in the Encyclical "Redemptoris missio"

On the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Vatican II decree "Ad gentes" (December 1965), the Holy Father has published the Encyclical "Redemptoris missio" as a clear endorsement of the perennial validity of the Church's missionary mandate. The document represents a great appeal by the Pope to face up with greater responsibility to the missions "ad gentes". It also offers reflections and provides clarifications, in the light of important developments that have taken place in recent decades.

The title of the Encyclical takes us back to the proclamation made to all by John Paul II at the beginning of his pontificate: "Open the gates to Christ!". It was a cry that found ample comment in his first Encyclical "Redemptor hominis", in which he declared that "man is the primary and fundamental way for the Church". To this and other appeals the Pope has added his personal testimony in the way he has carried out Peter's ministry. Because of his many apostolic journeys he has been rightly called "the first missionary of the world".

One may say that the exhortation to open the

gates to Christ has been the fundamental theme of all his pontificate; in particular it is the principal objective of this new Encyclical: "the mission of Christ the Redeemer, which is entrusted to the Church, is still only beginning! ... we must commit ourselves wholeheartedly to its service".²³ We need only look at contemporary humanity: of more than five thousand million people on earth, only one third know Jesus Christ, and of these only 18% call themselves Catholics (and among Catholics not all are true believers). In Asia, the home of 60% of all humanity, the baptized are less than 2%. And everywhere to some extent the number of those who do not know Christ is growing faster than those who follow him.

Missionary concern, therefore, is in urgent need of relaunching; it will prompt a renewal of all commitments to evangelization and will present the Church as the true sacrament of salvation in the world.

The Encyclical takes into account the developments that have been made, and opens up new perspectives.

We can indicate some of them: a new item stemming from Vatican II is the dense theological content of the concept of 'mission'; another is the difference between specifically missionary activity, pastoral care of the faithful, and the re-evangelization of countries that at one time had a christian tradition but are now heading rapidly down the road to secularization; the new criteria for the specific description of missionary activity – criteria that are not only geographical but also cultural and sociological; the novelty of the prominence given to young Churches, still in need of further maturing; the novelty of the including of promotional com-

²³ RM 1

mitments for the development of peoples through the education of conscience.

What the Encyclical tells us, to put it in a nutshell, is that missionary activity helps the Church to respond to the immense challenge of an epoch-making transformation without parallel in history for its vast extent, depth and rapidity. In such a transformation missionary commitment appears as "one of the Church's fundamental activities: it is essential and never-ending".²⁴

²⁴ RM 31

I invite each one of you to read this pontifical document with care and attention. Here we shall reflect on some aspects of it that will help us to be courageous in harmonizing ourselves with the missionary heart of Don Bosco.

Enthusiasm for the "Mission" stems from the mystery of God

The concept of 'mission' is at the foundation of all the ecclesiological renewal introduced by Vatican II; it is intimately connected with the very nature of the Church, the mystical body of Christ in history. Its missionary dimension is rooted in fact in the relationships of mission in the Trinity itself: in that of the Word sent by the Father to become man and, through the resurrection of Christ, in that of the Holy Spirit. The Church, the universal Sacrament of salvation, combines in itself in organic harmony the two Trinitarian 'missions' and so becomes the great evangelizer of all peoples.

The Council, in proclaiming the missionary nature of the Church (especially through the constitution "Lumen gentium" and the decree "Ad gentes") affirms the extraordinary vitality of this innate dy-

namism she has, especially with regard to the present epoch-making change "which gives rise to a new situation for mankind".²⁵ Not only is there in the world a new emerging culture which in itself is not of christian origin, but peoples themselves are on the move, and the number of those who do not know Christ is continually increasing; horizons are widening, as also are the possibilities for missionary commitment. Missionary activity in the Church is a long way from being complete; indeed, says the Pope, it is only beginning. The "farthest ends of the earth" indicated by the Gospel are not simply geographical, and we may say that instead of coming nearer they are getting farther away. Hence the urgency for missionary activity. All believers are asked to broaden their outlook so as to embrace the vast horizons of the non-christian world.²⁶

This vision of the Council has brought a new enthusiasm to the Church. In a certain way it has brought about a convergence of the "missions ad gentes" with the unique and fundamental "mission" of evangelization (proper to all the People of God), thus bringing about an organic incorporation of missiology in ecclesiology. This serves to shed more light on all the evangelizing activity of the Church and strengthens the strict relationship it must cultivate towards contemporary man, to whose insistent challenges it must be able to give the response of salvation.

It is in this global perspective that is born the need of a "new evangelization" to guide the entire renewal of ecclesial activity at the present day. Everything is rooted in the Trinitarian missions which are incarnated and founded historically in the one fundamental mission of the Church.

²⁵ AG 1

²⁶ cf. RM 40

Missionary activity has pride of place in evangelization.

In the light of this unifying vision of the Council, there are some who have wondered whether it be still opportune to speak of specific missionary activity; would it not be sufficient to speak simply of the missionary aspect inherent in all ecclesial activity?

Certainly one must acknowledge that if the mission of the Church is unique, this aspect must be concretely present in every form of ecclesial action. But it does not follow that all these forms of activity are of the same kind. The Encyclical is concerned to emphasize the fact that missionary activity "ad gentes" remains indispensable and fundamental. "Care must be taken", says the document, "to avoid the risk of putting very different situations on the same level and of reducing, or even eliminating, the Church's mission and missionaries 'ad gentes'." ²⁷

²⁷ RM 32

The conciliar decree had already said that differences in the evangelizing activities of the Church do not flow from the inner nature of the mission itself, but from the circumstances in which it is exercised. These circumstances depend either on the Church itself, or on the peoples, classes or men to whom its mission is directed.²⁸ And so within the one mission various evangelizing activities can be distinguished: everything is evangelization and indeed, after the Council, everything must be "new evangelization"²⁹ – but it remains necessary to distinguish from each other some activities with particular characteristics.

²⁸ cf. AG 6

²⁹ cf. ASC 331

The decree "Ad gentes" had already distinguished specifically missionary activity from pasto-

³⁰ cf. AG 6

ral activity (addressed to the faithful) and ecumenical activity (aimed at restoring unity between christians).³⁰

The recent Encyclical presents in general three different forms of evangelizing activity: a) "missionary activity" among people who do not know Christ; b) "pastoral care" of the christian faithful; and c) the "re-presentation of the Gospel" in countries of earlier christian tradition which have now become secularized.

It is not easy to define hard and fast boundaries between the three forms; certainly these activities cannot be identified one with the other, but neither are they mutually exclusive in such a way that each could be enclosed in a watertight compartment. There is intercommunication between them, but on one condition: that specifically missionary activity must be, even for the others, the first and defining quality of all evangelization: "without the mission 'ad gentes', the Church's very missionary dimension would be deprived of its essential meaning and of the very activity that exemplifies it".³¹ Lack of concern for it, or allowing it to become weak, would be evidence of lack of fervour and a sign of a crisis in faith.

³¹ cf. RM 33, 34

And so in the Council's view of the one mission, to distinguish specifically missionary activity from the others does not weaken it or make it seem less important, but rather strengthens its identity and consistency, and emphasizes the great value of the service the first gives to the others, of which it constitutes the foundation and driving force.

How then at the present day are we to specify the proper characteristics of the missions "ad gentes"? This is a question to which it is difficult to give a simple reply. There are at least certain ele-

ments that help in making a judgement in different situations; they help above all in asserting as a basic principle the importance of two aspects that are interconnected: i.e. that all evangelizing activity proceeds from the Church's unique mission, and that specifically missionary activity is the root and primary impulse behind other kinds of evangelizing activity.

The Encyclical, in an organized manner, goes more deeply into the meaning of missionary activity in its specific sense. "It is distinct from other ecclesial activities inasmuch as it is addressed to groups and settings which are non-christian because the preaching of the Gospel and the presence of the Church are either absent or insufficient".³² Its central objective is that of founding christian communities "sufficiently mature to be able to incarnate the faith in their own environment and proclaim it to other groups".³³

³² RM 34

³³ RM 33

Consideration must be given therefore also to social and cultural aspects: "here we are speaking of a great and lengthy process, in which it is hard to identify the precise stage at which missionary activity properly so-called comes to an end and is replaced by pastoral activity".³⁴ To the geographical criterion we used to employ at one time to indicate "mission territories" – and which still remains partly valid (the Encyclical speaks of the South and East) – there is added a criterion of the sociological order which takes account of some of the big transformations which characterize today's social prospects (e.g. the demographic explosion in some parts, the worlds of youth and of work, urbanization and migration, refugees and exiles, etc.). There is also another criterion proper to the emerging culture where there appear, as the Encyclical

³⁴ RM 48

puts it, modern equivalents of the Areopagus (a symbolic reference, in the company of St Paul, to the Areopagus of Athens, the cultural centre of the citizens), such as the vast area of social communications, women's liberation, international solidarity, commitments for peace freedom and justice, the complex areas of scientific research, etc. When one considers the criteria mentioned in the Encyclical it becomes immediately clear that specifically missionary activity has become at the present day both pluriform and flexible; it cannot be enclosed in a particular territorial area, nor be reduced to a romantic vision of lonely work in a jungle. "Religious and social upheaval", says the Encyclical, "make it difficult to apply in practice certain ecclesial distinctions and categories to which we have become accustomed".³⁵

³⁵ RM 32

But sociological and cultural differences do not lead to a loss of the elements which characterize specifically missionary activity and distinguish it from either pastoral work or the re-evangelization of groups that have become secularized.

It is of interest to us to explore a bit further this elasticity in the concept of specifically missionary activity as applied to our own charisma. For the moment it is enough for us to know that the Encyclical assures us that it is permanent, and even that it "is only beginning".³⁶ Before going further in that direction however it will be of interest to highlight some new dimensions that are very positive; in their regard the Encyclical dispels certain doubts and ambiguities that have arisen and accompany them.

³⁶ RM 30

The missionary is invited to a renewal without deviation

Among the innovations which the Encyclical endorses and emphasizes, there are three of particular significance: the conciliar vision of the "Kingdom of God", more extensive than that of the Church; the process of evangelization which deepens the values of subjectiveness, avoiding in evangelizing activity whatever smacks of proselytism; and the new and demanding values of either ecumenism, or of inter-religious dialogue and the urgent need for the inculturation of the Gospel.

There are some recent perspectives which have become an important part of the new evangelization and which must be adopted in every apostolic activity of the Church. The missionary, for instance, is called upon to renew himself following the line of Vatican II: he must be able to incorporate in his evangelizing work the values that promote the Kingdom; he must use a method able to move personal freedom and conscience; he must avoid a polemic tone of apologetics so as to make possible an intelligent and well prepared inter-religious dialogue. He can no longer content himself with a kind of magic sacramentalism.

Like all innovations, these too that I have indicated have been accompanied by ambiguities and have given rise to doubts of a kind previously unknown.

The Encyclical provides new light that clarifies them. Superficial interpretations concerning missionary activity would pretend to emarginate and weaken it in various ways rather than renew it.

Let us follow the Encyclical in its clarification of the three more significant innovations we have listed.

— *The danger of fostering a reductive sense of the "Kingdom"*

³⁷ cf. LG 5

Vatican II has made a necessary distinction between "Church" and "Kingdom of God".³⁷ The incipient reality of the Kingdom can be found outside the confines of the Church in the whole of humanity; the People of God indeed has the mission of coordinating and perfecting also the evangelical values of cultures and the temporal order in relation to the mystery of Christ: the Church in fact is the "seed and beginning" of the Kingdom in history.³⁸

³⁸ *ibid.*

This explicit vision of the Council ensures a horizon that is wider than missionary activity, and for us serves to give prominence to the salesian style of interchange and mutual relationship between evangelization and human advancement.

But there are some who have misinterpreted this distinction and have put forward in recent years a secularist concept of the Kingdom. They concentrate attention on the human values of the temporal order and undervalue the specific mission of the Church (because, they say, all 'ecclesiocentrism' must be avoided). While going more deeply into the values of the created order (something evidently positive), they overlook the mystery of Christ the Redeemer (thereby depriving christianity of its very nature). By concentrating only on the rich values of the lay element in the historical reality of cultures, they conclude that "what counts are programmes and struggles for a liberation which is social and economic, political and even cultural", in view of a progress that is purely earthly.³⁹

³⁹ RM 17

In the light of this kind of ideology any specifi-

cally missionary activity is ruled out of court; the primary objective to be attained would no longer be the proclamation of Christ but that of social justice, especially among people most in need. This is a danger that must be avoided, but avoiding it is not enough; the missionary must be able to incorporate the innovation of this conciliar vision into his activity as one sent by the Lord.

The new evangelization, in fact, involves a commitment to give greater value to the mystery of creation;⁴⁰ this must evidently be done in full and indispensable correlation with the mystery of the redemption, highlighting the novelty of the Gospel and the historical and theological necessity of the cross.⁴¹ The Kingdom of God, says the Pope, "is not a concept, a doctrine, or a programme subject to free interpretation, but is before all else a person with the face and name of Jesus of Nazareth, the image of the invisible God".⁴² It is in him and through him that the new evangelization fosters the social dimension of charity.⁴³ It is precisely the mystery of Christ that saves and gives value to the temporal order. Vatican II has stated explicitly that "the work of Christ's redemption concerns essentially the salvation of men, but it also takes in the whole of the temporal order... permeating and improving it with the evangelical spirit".⁴⁴

From the mystery of Christ, creator and redeemer, stems and grows the vocation and mission of the lay faithful in the world and the urgent need for an adequate formation of their conscience. What new horizons are opened in this way for the activity of the missionary!

The correct vision of the Kingdom takes nothing from the importance of missionary activity; rather it requires a more updated realization. In

⁴⁰ cf. AGC 331

⁴¹ cf. Final Report of Synod-85

⁴² RM 18

⁴³ cf. Strenna 1991; Commentary of Rector Major

⁴⁴ AA 5; cf. 7

other words, an authentic perspective of the historical reality of the Kingdom does not weaken but rather strengthens and broadens the foundations and objectives of missionary commitments and throws light on our "evangelizing by educating".

— *the temptation to be unconcerned about "conversion" and "baptism."*

Another ambiguity clarified by the Encyclical is the temptation to reduce christianity to the status of just one religion among many others. Since in every religion possibilities of salvation can be found, there would be no sense in activity for conversions. A person who has grown up in a culture opposed to the mystery of Christ, but with a certain religious foundation to it, should not be disturbed in his beliefs but made to grow in them to strengthen religious transcendence; to try to convert him would be "proselytism" and threaten his dignity as a person. And so respect for freedom and conscience would exclude all missionary activity as being essentially directed towards conversion.

Furthermore, even in the case of individual conversions to Christ, this should not necessarily lead to the administration of the sacrament of baptism (which in particular cases gives rise to suspicions of a social kind), and would be no longer necessary for salvation. God would supply for it by the positive elements in the various religions. And an interpretation of this kind should be offered to missionaries as an anthropological updating to be followed in their programmes.

The Encyclical makes us reflect on the totally original nature of christianity: it is not simply a *religion* (born of human research), but a faith that comes down from on high through historical

events. No human religion is, in itself, a bearer of salvation; only the Christ-event can be so: "no one comes to the Father, but by me".⁴⁵ The "good news" of this historical event is not a cultural concept alien to the various mentalities of people who have not yet heard of it, but a fact to which they too have not only a right but even an urgent need of it. Hence the missionary importance of its proclamation – one cannot remain silent about it; "necessity is laid upon me", says St Paul; "woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!"⁴⁶ And then, it is possible for all people to perceive in some way the mystery of Christ, because it is not expressed in abstract concepts but by the narration of real events of his life (he was born, did good to others, taught the truth, suffered, died and lives again). No cultural structure is an obstacle to the understanding of this "good news", which is indispensable for every individual and belongs to all peoples. The faith is concentrated entirely on the historical reality of Jesus Christ; only in him can it be known who God is and how he exists; only through him is there a way of escape: "there is no salvation in anyone else".⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Jn 14,6

⁴⁶ 1 Cor 9,16

⁴⁷ Acts 4,12

And it is precisely this objective fact which is the fundamental reason why the Church is of its nature missionary.

The Encyclical goes on to show why the proclamation of Christ and bearing witness to him, made in a manner that respects consciences, are something offered to man (who remains free) to foster and perfect his dignity.⁴⁸ Conversion to Christ is a gift of God; every individual has a right to it, because through the very fact of his existence everyone is personally called to salvation. Peter and the Apostles proclaimed in explicit terms the urgent need to turn to Christ: "be converted!"⁴⁹

⁴⁸ cf. RM 7

⁴⁹ Acts 2,37-38; 3,19

⁵⁰ cf. Mt 28,19

Conversion was connected with the sacrament of baptism by Jesus himself.⁵⁰ To separate the two would be to obscure the genuine significance of the christian faith. Christ willed to remain concretely in history (for the benefit of every individual) through the Church as his Body, the sacramental bearer of all the vital elements necessary for salvation, and the "place" where it is possible to meet him frequently and with certainty.

⁵¹ cf. RM 46,47

Baptism is the great "sacrament of the faith"; it incorporates everyone, in an objective and organic manner, into the Church as the Body of Christ existing here and now.⁵¹ It is true that around the celebration of Baptism there may have grown up sociological considerations (and even superstitions), but this is always one more reason for explaining more clearly its true nature and indispensability from a theological point of view.

Hence missionary activity, thought out afresh and relaunched in line with the criteria of the ecclesiology of Vatican II, is called upon to renew its methods, not least with an eye to a deeper understanding of the subjective nature and characteristics of every culture; it must keep always in mind the conscience and freedom of the person addressed. But for this very reason it is prompted by Christ himself and by the centuries-old practice of the Church, to foster by intelligent pedagogy the conversion of people to Christ. This must be accompanied by an appropriate preparation for Baptism, as the sacrament that generates the new life which brings about incorporation into the community of believers for the building of the local Church.

— *The risks of religious relativism.*

The fact that after the Council there has been an

intensification in ecumenism between the various christian denominations – because of their common baptismal values – and in dialogue with other religions (especially Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam) – because of the seeds of evangelical truth present in them – has led some people to suppose that specifically missionary activity could be substituted in some areas by appropriate inter-religious relationships. Considering then that some religions are strongly embodied in the cultures of those who profess them, it has been suggested that to inculcate the faith among such peoples it would be necessary to accept much of their ways of life, even in delicate matters of personal, family and social conduct, because (as is true) the Gospel is not properly a textbook of morals.

The Encyclical warns against interpretations of this kind which misrepresent the Church's missionary activity.

In the first place ecumenism must be understood and practised in its full meaning; it is not to be identified merely with meetings for discussion and a certain degree of collaboration, even though these are things that form part of it and express its nature. Initiatives of this kind can prove positive in some regions and less so in others; they can also have defects. The ecumenism launched by the Council implies a personal change of mentality, an attitude of seeking for the truth, and this is inherent in the very concept of the new evangelization; it is "a fundamental dimension of all the Church's activity". It requires an adequate formation on the part of all, including missionaries themselves, to re-think and deepen their knowledge of the Gospel with a mental attitude of understanding for the other churches while being aware of one's own

Catholic identity. This implies a special formation for the believer that, instead of making him polemic, will enable him to take part in discussions with an eye to finding common points of truth; a formation of this kind also enriches the way in which missionary activity is carried out, giving due value to the wealth held in common in Baptism and the Scriptures. Obviously it is necessary to avoid falling into a harmful irenics, especially in the case of sects motivated more by vague religious ideas rather than by true faith in Christ.

As far as "dialogue with other religions" is concerned, an attitude is needed similar to that of ecumenism as regards the positive values present in every religion. This requires a knowledge of those religions and relationships of dialogue; getting together with them around a table is certainly enriching for both parties. This is not just a change of tactics; it is a matter of understanding that in other religions too there are so-called "seeds of the Word" that can grow and flourish with the help of prayer and the power of the Holy Spirit. Rightly does the Encyclical declare that "other religions constitute a positive challenge for the Church: they stimulate her both to discover and acknowledge the sign of Christ's presence and of the working of the Spirit, as well as to examine more deeply her own identity and to bear witness to the fullness of Revelation which she has received for the good of all".⁵²

It is not easy to acquire a mentality of this kind and the corresponding ability in discussion, but it is certainly an attitude inherent in the new evangelization launched by Vatican II, and which must therefore be a constituent part of the Church's renewed missionary activity.

And then there has to be a courageous dedication to the inculturation of the faith, but avoiding any form of superficial interpretation made without proper discernment and without serious criteria of communion with the local Church.

In every culture (and in the human religious ideas that permeate it) there are many positive values, but alongside them there are also negative values and errors; in particular there can be a pre-Christian outlook which has taken no account of the historical factor of the event of Christ. It is a question therefore not only of cultures of all centuries, rich in so much human experience, but also of a form of religious thought that has remained static at a point over two thousand years ago (insofar as it lacks the experience of faith begun in Christ). If on the one hand the Church is urged to inculturate the Gospel in the vast number of different local Churches, on the other she is sent by Christ himself to "evangelize cultures" and therefore to discern their positive values and purify them from their negative aspects; and this is something that brings with it misunderstandings, difficulties and even persecutions. All the Apostles died as martyrs. The mystery of the incarnation of the Word, while showing us the boldness and realism of "becoming truly man" speaks to us also of the courage of bearing witness and of patience (passion and death) in proclaiming the truths of salvation. Christ corrects and also purifies, but always in a manner consistent with his role as Saviour.

Well knowing that ecumenical and inter-religious activity has a long and difficult road ahead of it (especially with Islam), the Pope encourages missionaries to persevere with faith and charity in their daily witness, convinced that "dialogue is a

path towards the Kingdom and will certainly bear fruit, even if the times and seasons are known only to the Father".⁵³

⁵³ RM 57

A glance at Don Bosco's missions at the present day.

Nowadays missionary activity has become more varied and flexible: to the geographical criterion have been added others of a sociological and cultural nature. There has been, therefore, an evolution and mobility that does not lend itself easily to the making of fixed lists and categories. But the Pope insists that the substantial elements that specify missionary activity remain clear.

It will be useful for us to meditate on this evolution and permanence, with reference to our own missions.

Today, in fact, through the merits of a large number of missionaries, several particular Churches have come into being among people who a few decades ago did not yet know Christ. Nevertheless in those same regions "there are still very large areas where there are no local Churches or where their number is insufficient in relation to the vastness of the territory and the density of the population";⁵⁴ in other words, areas where the phase of "planting the Church" has not developed sufficiently; "the growth in the number of new Churches in recent times", says the Encyclical, "should not deceive us".⁵⁵

⁵⁴ RM 49

⁵⁵ RM 37

And so, in such areas the task remains very much alive of forming christian communities which will be a real sign of the presence of Christ in human life, even though a basic diocesan structure

may have been already established: the work of deeper evangelization must continue.

On the other hand there may be sectors of the population or special cultural and social environments which do not yet know Christ.

And this brings to mind another aspect to which we must give serious thought: that of the different charismata (our own, for example) approved by the Apostolic See for the universal Church, which have been bestowed by the Spirit precisely for the evangelization of particular social sectors or cultural environments.

Our own charism has been created for the benefit of youth and the poorer classes. "You may say", said Don Bosco, speaking of the missions, "that in those distant lands there are already other Congregations. That is quite true; but remember that we are going there to help them, not to take their place. In general they are concerned with adults; we are going to care for the young, and especially those who are poor and abandoned".⁵⁶

⁵⁶ MB 18,49

The Congregation, in fact, takes on primarily the task of contributing to the young Churches of these distant countries the gift of its particular speciality in the field of evangelization: i.e. the ability to educate to the faith needy youngsters and the poorer people. This is clearly something we give so as to collaborate in building in the local Church those sectors or environments where the Gospel is particularly lacking.

It is true, of course, that the same kind of situation can occur also in Churches that are sufficiently well established; in fact the three different levels indicated by the Encyclical (missionary activity, pastoral care, and re-evangelization) are frequently found together and overlap, even in so-called christian countries.

But if this is so, do we not become missionaries wherever we are working?

The answer is 'yes' in a general sense, that of the fundamental mission of the Church, which stimulates our apostolic zeal to make Christ and his Gospel known to young people: everywhere we are "missionaries of the young". But not everywhere are we so in the proper and specific sense of the missions "ad gentes". To be missionaries in this strict sense, *some other particular conditions are necessary*, even in our own Congregation, and especially the following:

- to live personally (by inspiration or by disposition of religious obedience) *a vocation that has the character of a mission "ad gentes"*: "Christ the Lord has always called from the number of his disciples those whom he has chosen that they might be with him so that he might send them to preach to the nations"; and so missionaries "have a special vocation";⁵⁷
- to be sent by lawful authority to take the faith to those who are far from Christ;⁶⁸ this implies, in fact, *leaving one's own country and culture*;
- to be generously committed in the service of *integral evangelization* without limits of energy or time;⁵⁹
- to be constantly striving, even at personal cost, to *insert oneself into the people and culture* of those to whom one is sent;
- to desire that the *commitment be for all one's life*; this is an aspect, says the Encyclical, which still retains all its validity at the present day: "it is the model of the Church's missionary commitment, which always stands in need of radical and total self-giving, of new and bold endeavours,... without being daunted by doubts, misunderstand-

⁵⁷ AG 23

⁵⁸ cf. AG 23

⁵⁹ cf. RM 65

ings, rejection or persecution".⁶⁰

⁶⁰ RM 66

If we look back over the hundred years of missionary activity realized by our Congregation, we see that in some areas it has been dedicated (and in some cases is so still) to the "planting of the Church". But generally, and especially in recent years, it has gone to insert itself in young Churches in Southern and Eastern parts, to carry out there the particular mission to the young and the poor that is Don Bosco's charism. In some cases too, after building the local Church to a certain maturity (with the establishment of dioceses) it has changed its presence from one of overall responsibility to a concentration on that of its own particular charism.

What is worth emphasizing is that all these specifically missionary activities have not been carried out by single individuals, working on their own and following personal plans, but by confreres who by virtue of their same salesian vocation have been sent to collaborate in a common missionary plan, drawn up by the Congregation. The latter, being an Institute of consecrated life, has a missionary soul and generously takes on responsibilities; among other things it looks after the missionaries themselves: their special vocation, their formation, their destinations, and follows them up throughout their commitment "ad gentes".

The Founder has bequeathed to us the conviction that in the Church we Salesians have a missionary task to promote and carry out, and he himself has given us the example through great sacrifices.⁶¹

Already the Council decree "Ad gentes" had asked us to consider seriously whether in the present state of affairs we were able to extend further our

⁶¹ cf. ASC 297; "Our Founder saw Africa"

⁶² cf. AG 40

missionary commitment, perhaps by reshaping our work in christian countries so as to reinforce missionary work.⁶² By God's grace we can say that we have responded generously to this appeal: a large number of provinces have led the way with courage and sacrifice, and they continue in their commitment.

But certainly it is always possible to do more and to do it better, and this is the appeal we want to discern in the new Encyclical.

It is not only a matter of intensifying our sacrifices, but also of a true and abundant enriching of our salesian authenticity.

The GC23 has asked us in general to improve the pastoral quality of our work. The Encyclical assures us that by increasing our specifically missionary activity we shall find the secret and incentive for reaching a higher level in all our pastoral activity: it is in the missions, in fact, that one experiences more clearly that the Gospel is the precious "good news" for the present day, and that the faith of the confreres themselves becomes reawakened as they proclaim the events of Christ.

Missionary activity helps us also to rediscover the originality of our particular form of youth pastoral work. We need only think, for example, of the salesian oratory. In some well-deserving dioceses there are wonderful examples of parish oratories for the children of christian families in the local community, and they do a great deal of good. But Don Bosco's oratory is conceived with a missionary perspective for young people without a parish because "the Church's mission is wider than communion";⁶³ in it a group of young people more mature in the faith become apostles of their companions ("youth for the young"!)), while the confreres invol-

⁶³ RM 64

ved feel themselves to be really “missionaries of the young” to whom they have been called.

And so, the Congregation’s missionary commitment is called at the present day to grow in quality and intensity and also to stimulate the pastoral quality of all our foundations, and to relaunch Don Bosco’s oratory as a permanent criterion for the discernment and renewal of all our activities and work.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ cf. C 40

Salesian spirituality for our missionaries

Missionary activity is not founded directly on human abilities, even though these may play an important part in it. The protagonist of the entire mission of the Church is the Holy Spirit: he calls, enlightens, guides and gives courage and efficacy; his work shines out in eminent fashion in the mission “ad gentes”.⁶⁵ The missionary is invited to enter into a special harmonious relationship with the Lord’s Spirit.

⁶⁵ cf. RM chap. 3

In its final chapter, the Encyclical deals precisely with missionary spirituality. If we read carefully the brief paragraphs, we can apply their contents to the spiritual legacy left us by Don Bosco, as described in my Letter on “salesian spirituality for the new evangelization”.⁶⁶ For us missionary spirituality is not of another kind, but our own – intensified and given new light by the aspect of being sent “ad gentes”.

⁶⁶ AGC 334

In the first place there is the fact that our missionaries feel themselves “rooted in the power of the Holy Spirit”; he it is who has rendered the whole Congregation missionary. That implies in the missionaries an intensification of the experience of faith, hope and charity, which enables them to live in a constant attitude of union with God and in a

penetrating feeling of exodus that makes us think of the kenosis and incarnation of the Word. The Encyclical puts as the first condition that of "allowing ourselves to be led by the Spirit": "the mission is difficult and complex, and demands the courage and light of the Spirit:... we must pray".⁶⁷ And the Pope adds: "My contact with representatives of the non-christian spiritual traditions, particularly those of Asia, has confirmed me in the view that the future of mission depends to a great extent on contemplation".⁶⁸ It will never be superfluous to insist on the need for meditation on the Word in connection with the mentality and situations of peoples, and on the continual effort to build "community" with a constant and adequate preaching of the Gospel.

With regard to the principal elements set out in the letter previously referred to, we may note that:

- *internal apostolic conviction*, characterized by the charity of "da mihi animas" (with its "grace of unity" and internal synthesis of consecration and mission), places the salesian missionary in a position to be able to translate his contemplation of God into the "ecstasy of action". His available and practical faith stems from that of Abraham, the father of believers, who leaves everything and sets out; an exodus that carries with it the pouring out of his own interior dispositions to spread in the world a concrete "youthful spirituality";
- *the central position of Christ, the Good Shepherd*, which demands of the Salesian a particular pedagogical and pastoral attitude, will help the missionary in his approach to those to whom he is sent – beginning with the poor and abandoned – through a dialogue of kindness in imitation of

⁶⁷ RM 87

⁶⁸ RM 91

Jesus the apostle of the Father. The Encyclical emphasizes in fact the need to live the mystery of Christ, the one sent to evangelize, as described by St Paul: "he emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men". An emptying which expresses the love that makes him all things to all men,⁶⁹ living with those to whom he is sent not as objectives of his work but as brothers in Christ in the same communion of hope;

⁶⁹ cf. RM 88

- *educational commitment as our mission*: this is a characteristic note that proceeds from the very nature of the salesian charism: it is a question of a spirituality which gives prominence to educational aspects with the strategy of Don Bosco. It prompts the missionary to take seriously the many elements in the process of human maturing that do not hinder evangelization but rather promote it in realistic fashion. In this connection it would be interesting to glance briefly at the concrete tasks undertaken by our first missionaries in this sense: think, for instance, of the works of development in Patagonia, or the example of Mgr Cimatti who toured the main cities of Japan giving music concerts. The Encyclical speaks of promoting development by the formation of consciences.⁷⁰ The Pope furthermore, writing to the Religious of Latin America, reminds them that many missionaries lived with the native peoples and "became labourers, carpenters, builders of houses and churches, school teachers and apprentices of the indigenous culture, as well as promoters of original arts and crafts".⁷¹

⁷⁰ RM 58

⁷¹ Oss.Rom. (Eng.edtn) 30
July 1990

The salesian style of education implies also the ability to live among the people, austerity of

life, a pedagogical sense of attention to daily duty, and a climate of fellow-feeling and simplicity;

- *the need to be practical in ecclesial matters* situates every Salesian at the heart of the Church, because the missionary lives and works in the Church and for the Church, especially in the delicate work of its development. Convinced adherence to the teaching of the Pope and the Bishops is for us a strong spiritual legacy that we cultivate in every local Church. The Encyclical declares that “only a profound love for the Church can sustain the missionary’s zeal. This love, even to the point of giving his life, is a focal point for him”;⁷²

⁷² RM 89

- *joy in hard work* reminds us Salesians that we were born on the Hill of the Youth Beatitudes, and that happiness is a characteristic note of our youthful spirituality; the missionary feels himself constrained to spread around him an atmosphere of christian joy. The Encyclical recalls that every missionary must be a man of the Beatitudes: “the characteristic of every authentic missionary life is the inner joy that comes from faith. In a world tormented and oppressed by so many problems, a world tempted to pessimism, the one who proclaims the ‘good news’ must be a person who has found true hope in Christ”;⁷³

⁷³ RM 91

- *the Marian dimension*: all salesian activity, and with greater reason missionary activity, is considered in the Congregation as a participation in Mary’s ecclesial motherhood, invoked as the Help of Christians. The Encyclical expresses the hope that on the eve of the third millennium the whole Church may find itself gathered (like the Apostles) “in the Upper Room ‘with Mary the

Mother of Jesus', in order to pray for the Spirit and to gain strength and courage to carry out the missionary mandate...: Mary is the model of that maternal love which should inspire all who cooperate in the Church's apostolic mission for the rebirth of humanity"⁷⁴

⁷⁴ RM 92

If the missionary dimension is really an essential element in our charisma it means, on the one hand, that it demands of our spirituality a special light and force to make it present and operative in the missions, and on the other that the missionary aspect deepens and renders more genuine salesian spirituality itself.

Everyone – in communion and active participation

The salesian missions, from the time of Don Bosco himself, have had the support of a responsibility and cooperation that go beyond the direct commitment of the missionaries; they involve all the Congregation and, through it, the great Salesian Family.

It is important to give due prominence to these two aspects of wide responsibility and vast cooperation.

If our Congregation is missionary, it means that all its members share the responsibility for this -not only those in it who have a role of animation and guidance (and especially the Rector Major and General Council, the Provincials and Provincial Councils), but also local communities and every single confrere. A sense of convinced solidarity must prompt all of us to promote initiatives of information, prayer, support, help and sharing.

In particular those Provinces, and they are many indeed, which are concretely committed in

some region overseas should follow with serious attention and generous collaboration the indications for coordination which, by the will of the GC23 and the decision of the Rector Major and his Council, will be given by the Councillor General for the Missions.

We said in this regard that a new phase is beginning. This does not mean any lessening or suspension of the commitment of the provinces, but rather a more coordinated manner of growth. And this will call for still more generous and competent services of support and intervention, especially as regards the formation of native personnel.

Among the initiatives to be developed in the provinces and houses in view of a large-scale cooperation, there is one very dear to Don Bosco – that of reawakening missionary sensitivity in the various groups of the Salesian Family, through channels of information, youth groups, pastoral work for vocations and, in general, through people who have an admiration for the missions.

And here I think it a duty to recall the importance that has always attached to the Salesian Bulletin in making our missions known. Today it needs to be circulated more widely than ever before, and the missionaries themselves should feel themselves personally involved in this by sending in interesting reports and well chosen and expressive photographs, as is required by modern editorial technique.

Another aspect to be attentively promoted is that of volunteer work, not only among the young but among adults as well. We already have some very positive examples in this regard.

Worthy of praise and further development are the various Procures or Mission Offices which, in their different ways, have helped and sustained in

providential ways so many missionary activities, but which have also become centres of information and animation.

Finally it is worthwhile pointing out that the Encyclical gives pride of place to spiritual cooperation: "Prayer should accompany the journey of missionaries so that the proclamation of the word will be effective through God's grace... Prayer needs to be accompanied by sacrifice. The redemptive value of suffering, accepted and offered to God with love, derives from the sacrifice of Christ himself... The sacrifice of missionaries should be shared and accompanied by the sacrifices of all the faithful... I therefore urge those engaged in the pastoral care of the sick", says the Pope, "to teach them about the efficacy of suffering, and to encourage them to offer their sufferings to God for missionaries. By making such an offering, the sick themselves become missionaries".⁷⁵

⁷⁵ RM 78

We need to recognize that dedication to the missions gives us a good spiritual shake-up, and brings us more closely into the mystery of Christ.

The Lord is preparing a new springtime for the faith

The Holy Father recognizes that the Church is facing a task that is very complex and one that exceeds its unaided strength, but he uses in the Encyclical a tone that is both enthusiastic and optimistic. It is not that he has lost sight of the problems and the aspects that are difficult and not very encouraging: "If we look at today's world", he says, "we are struck by many negative factors that can lead to pessimism". But if our glance is powered by an authentic faith and the contemplation of the

merciful goodness of the Father, the immeasurable solidarity of Christ, and the presence and transforming power of the Spirit, then a perspective opens up of great hope. And the Pope manages to put this hope across; he sees in the great jubilee of the year 2000 a concrete point of reference: "As the third millennium of the redemption draws near, God is preparing a great springtime for christianity, and we can already see its first signs".⁷⁶

We may indeed think that the Second Vatican Council was the great sign of what is coming, followed by so many other indications.

Our own GC23 too describes with optimism in a rapid survey the journey already followed by the Congregation towards the new evangelization.⁷⁷ And the Encyclical adds that "the whole Church is even more committed to a new missionary advent:... the missionary task must remain foremost, for it concerns the eternal destiny of humanity and corresponds to God's mysterious and merciful plan".⁷⁸

On the eve, then, of the third millennium we feel ourselves prompted towards hope, to renew with joy the enthusiasm of the beginnings, to commit ourselves even further, to base the relaunching of all evangelizing activity on our missionary work, to feel infected by what the Council proclaimed to the young, presenting to them the rejuvenated face of the Church which, "rich with a long past ever living in her, and marching on towards human perfection in time and the ultimate destinies of history and of life, is the real youth of the world. She possesses what constitutes the strength and the charm of youth – the ability to rejoice with what is beginning, to give oneself unreservedly, to renew oneself and to set out again for new conquests".⁷⁹

⁷⁶ RM 86

⁷⁷ GC23 1-14

⁷⁸ RM 86

⁷⁹ Message to youth, 8 December 1965

The stimulating statement that "missionary activity is only beginning" is to be interpreted in the light of this attitude of hope for living these "beginnings" with the strong impetus of the origins (of both the Church and our own charism). "The horizons and possibilities of mission are broadening", but we are living in a special time of the Holy Spirit who is the true "protagonist of the mission".

We are asked to imitate the Apostles gathered in the Upper Room "with Mary" to implore and obtain the Spirit's presence and power.

The Holy Father entrusts all missionary work to the motherly love of the Virgin Mary. We place our filial trust in her as Mother of the Church and Helper of all people.

Don Bosco had given to Fr John Cagliero, the future Cardinal who headed the first missionary expedition, a document dated 13 November 1875 containing recommendations for missionary confreres; they included this exhortation: "Do the best you can; God will do what we cannot do. Leave everything to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and to Mary Help of Christians and you will realize what miracles are".⁸⁰

⁸⁰ BM 11, 369

With this trust, which is for us a sacred heritage, let us everywhere intensify our commitment for Christ and his Gospel: by multiplying our missionary endeavours all of us in the Congregation will become all the more "missionaries of the young".

To all of you, and especially to the missionaries "ad gentes", I send grateful greetings and the assurance of a daily remembrance in the Eucharist.

Affectionately in Don Bosco,

Don F. Viganò

2. GUIDELINES AND POLICIES

2.1 THE SALESIAN YOUTH MOVEMENT

Fr Luc VAN LOOY

Councillor for Youth Pastoral Work

In its practical guidelines the GC23 considers the “group” as an important element. Particular attention to the phenomenon of the youth group is given too in the chapter on the journey of faith and on salesian youth spirituality.

Salesian dynamic activity is sensitive to this striking characteristic of young people who seek a linkage between groups of various kinds and of different settings and origins.

We propose to reflect for a moment on the reality of this movement in the salesian world, and on its role and significance in youth pastoral work at the present time.

1. The 23rd General Chapter

The GC23 concentrated its attention particularly on the young person, his tendency to associate with others, and the youth group as an expression of christian community. Groups which have as a point of reference Don Bosco's spirituality and pedagogical principles “form explicitly or implicitly the Salesian Youth Movement (SYM)” (GC23 n. 275).

Its flexibility and openness to the young person in practical settings of all kinds has made it possible for this “youth” movement to develop and offer large numbers of youngsters the opportunity to come together and ‘make community’. The SYM, says the GC23,

“is based on free communication between groups” (n. 277) and “unites many young people: from those farthest away... to those who consciously and explicitly make their own the salesian ethic.” (n. 276).

The GC23 took note of the reality of the youth movement and placed it in salesian educational tradition as a fundamental element, as being the expression of the group experience, specifying that “the group is the setting where educative and religious proposals become personalized; it is the place for expression and responsibility; it is the place for interpersonal communication and the planning of initiatives” (n. 274).

2. The SYM in the Salesian heritage

Don Bosco involved the youngsters in his work of education. The culminating point of their shared responsibility is found in their willing cooperation in the educational plan he put to them. In the oratory at Valdocco the Sodalities came into being as a natural response to the group instinct of the boys. Don Bosco got them actively involved in the progress to holiness of the whole group, giving them a specific role in respect of their peers. He insisted on the threefold adage “happiness, study and devotion” (cf. BM 5, 316-318). In this way he gave the boys themselves an educational task to perform, and at the same time conferred a formative aspect on the whole Valdocco community.

The renewed Constitutions and Regulations give force of law to this salesian heritage when they say: “In our educational work and pastoral settings the formation of groups and associations should be encouraged, according to age and interests”, and their continuity should be ensured” (R 8), and “we promote and animate groups and movements for formation and apostolic and social action” (C 35).

Throughout the Congregation's history it can be clearly seen that, as in the first oratory, groups and movements appear with a decisive apostolic purpose and share with the Salesians the responsibility for education and evangelization. Don Bosco was quite cer-

tain that those best fitted for evangelizing the young are young people themselves; his opinion was endorsed later by Vatican II: "The young should become the first apostles of the young, in direct contact with them" (AA 12). In our environments youngsters feel the need to share experiences and concerns with friends and members of the Salesian Family. This has given rise to linkages and common points of reference that have led to a real "movement of the salesian spirit". From 1980 when the young people themselves became engaged in a deeper analysis of salesian youth spirituality, the SYM began to develop in several provinces. In 1990 with the GC23 it became a reality at world level.

3. Elements which define the movement

It is a movement in which all youngsters and every kind of group can find a place. All of them can feel at home in it. It is an expression of the oratorian reality in many different ways, in which the youngster plays a leading part. "It has no need of a rigid and centralized organization", declares the GC23 (n. 277). As an open reality it is adaptable to circumstances of time, place and members.

There are two definitive elements that characterize the movement: reference to salesian youth spirituality, and some means of liaison for the coordination of common initiatives.

3.1 *The reference to salesian youth spirituality.*

For those belonging to the SYM Don Bosco is the kingpin, the charismatic leader who needs to be better known, especially by sharing his spirituality. By making of his spirit a reference point, different groups in the movement are able to appear under different guises and with different activities. Over and above these obvious and recognized differences, the groups converge in the common objective of salesian spirituality, which gives to the movement the friendly and educational tone associated with the person of Don Bosco and his sons and daughters. And so the SYM includes "groups and associations which develop in our educational settings,

animated by Salesians and Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, and which make certain characteristic educational options; they also adopt the fundamental elements of Don Bosco's style, because they consider them an enrichment of their own specific spiritual or formative line of action" (*L'animatore salesiano nel gruppo giovanile*, p. 63-64).

3.2 *The linkage between the groups*

The various groups with different identities form a "movement" because they communicate with each other, and this allows for coordination and the circulation of shared and constructive ideas and messages. "The circulation of messages and values in the SYM has no need of a rigid and centralized organization. It is based on free communication between the groups" (GC23 277). Young people like organized meetings which give them the opportunity to meet with friends who share the same ideas. Such meetings prompt open dialogue and the sharing of experiences; they often prove also to be festive moments that contribute to christian and salesian formation.

The linkage, in which each group shares freely and responsibly, is a guarantee that the movement remains precisely a movement of the young, and not one organized by others *for* the young.

It is therefore a youth movement, in tune with youth, based on salesian youth spirituality, with open and free connection between the groups, in which the youngsters see themselves as leaders in their own lives and the life of the group, and at the same time at the service of other young people to benefit them. The general aim of the SYM is the commitment to form "good christians and upright citizens, apostles of youth", according to each one's possibilities. They represent a mass of young people who look to Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello so as to relive their spirituality at the present day (cf. *L'animatore salesiano nel gruppo giovanile*, p. 64-65).

The linkage or connection required by the SYM finds expression at local level, in line with the local salesian community with its pastoral and educative plan; at provincial level, between groups from various salesian environments; at interprovincial and also at

international level. The methods can vary a great deal, from the circulation of news-sheets, to spontaneous encounters, and even to meetings organized on a large scale. Such large-scale gatherings give to the participants a strong sense of belonging, and to the movement itself an ever clearer identity. As the Rector Major said in his closing address to the GC23: "The element that will move youth groups to enter into mutual harmony, becoming in this way the dawn of a previously unknown hope involving all of them, will be their common communion in the kind of spirituality which is rightly called salesian, and which will lead to a vital feeling of the bonds of a kind of personalized relationship" (GC23 353).

4. Other characteristics of the movement

4.1 A 'salesian' movement

The SYM is a modern expression of a current begun by Don Bosco in society and the Church. It develops around members of the Salesian Family. The charismatic centre is Don Bosco. The young people in the movement see themselves as Don Bosco's children, even to the extent of speaking easily of themselves as "we salesians".

The Salesian Family finds in the movement a realization of its commitment to help the young to a deeper understanding of Don Bosco's charismatic spirit.

4.2 An educative movement

"Youth for the young" is an expression typical of the movement. It expresses the fact that all young people are welcome, in whatever state they may be. Open to all of them without distinction, the movement is dedicated to the good of each one and creates an educational environment that embraces the entire educative community. Their envelopment in the salesian educational climate makes of the youngsters themselves true educators. Seeking what is good, passing on happiness to others and using their own gifts for

the benefit of friends, are things that make youngsters leaders in fostering human and christian growth. In this way the group becomes a place of education in which all can express themselves and develop.

4.3 A missionary movement

Together with the Salesians, the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians and the other members of the Salesian Family, the young people grow in awareness of the salesian mission, and even willingly appropriate to themselves the title of "missionaries of the young" through the attention they give to their companions, and also to those still at a distance and those on the margin of society and the Church. In this commitment all groups are involved, in whatever way and to whatever extent may be possible. In this way they become sensitive to evangelical values, acquire a strong sense of Church, and undertake initiatives to meet the needs of the weakest members of their own group or of society, who are often characterized by indifference to religious faith or by poverty of various kinds.

The movement expresses itself in this way in its neighbourhood, and makes the young people subjects of social and cultural development. They feel themselves prompted to make a christian and apostolic commitment, and offer themselves as educators to the faith of other youngsters. In this way the movement integrates education with evangelization, faith with life; it develops a climate of trust in man and in God.

4.4 Graduated intensity of membership

The movement is open to all. The fundamental criterion for membership is that of Don Bosco: "it is enough that you are young". Each one participates according to his ability and opportunities, and is respected as an individual at his particular stage of development and as a member of a given group. This confers on the group a structural style of "concentric circles" (cf. GC23 276), in which everyone can find a place. The reference therefore to salesian

youth spirituality will be diversified in line with the different groups and individuals.

The SYM is a developing reality. Of its nature it will never be possible to give it a stable definition. It may be likened to a body which is still growing, and must therefore preserve its characteristic flexibility and adaptability.

5. Elements of the life of the movement

5.1 *Variety of the groups*

We have already said that the movement brings together groups of different kinds. Nothing is excluded that young people like. It does not matter whether they are sporting groups, or groups for spare-time activities, or cinemagoers, tourist groups, of cultural or artistic interest, of social or apostolic character, etc. All that is necessary is that the fundamental elements of salesian youth spirituality be guaranteed, together with the linkage with other groups. Every group follows the path that leads to the “upright citizen and good christian”.

5.2 *The animators*

Those youngsters who live their christian identity and the salesian spirituality more intensely will act as animators within the group and the movement. This animating nucleus is present in the group as an invitation to all to give the best of themselves to others with joy. They prompt their friends to live the gospel beatitudes to the full. They are youngsters who “consciously and explicitly make their own the salesian ethic” (GC23 276).

5.3 *Festivity and meetings*

The sense of festivity, happiness and joy, is an important element in the salesian environment. The Salesian in fact “radiates this joy and is able to educate to a christian and festive way of life” (C 17). Young people seek this joy in being together and sharing their

experiences. The movement finds expression through these communal and joyful gatherings at provincial and interprovincial level. At the same time these are opportunities for the communication of messages, for formation to faith and life, and for assessment of the movement itself. The tone of youthful festivity, which finds its practical embodiment and strength in daily commitment and ideals, is without any doubt the element that most characterizes the movement as salesian.

5.4 Development in community experience

Salesian youth spirituality stems from encounters which breed friendship between young people, and also between the young and adults. Group experience with its friendship leads to the making of an option expressing the desire to stay with Don Bosco (cf. BM 5, 345). The course of the movement brings together the hearts of the young before uniting their minds, as the GC23 declares, recalling that the “experience of christian life precedes systematic reflection on it” (n. 159). This guarantees a typically youthful style of language, expression, group arrangement etc. Development at the pace of the youngsters themselves gives to the movement the characteristics of the Valdocco oratory; it leads to the love of the things young people love so as to reach eventually – with an educative sensitivity inherent in the environment – a state in which the young come to love the things loved by the educator and evangelizer.

5.5 Salesian holy places: sanctuaries for members of the SYM

The “Appraisal 88” encounter manifested the strength of attraction and the fascination of the “Hill of the Beatitudes” and of Valdocco. The members of the SYM felt completely at home at Colle Don Bosco, Mornese and Valdocco, because there they found themselves in direct contact with the plan of holiness of Don Bosco, Mother Mazzarello, and other young people like themselves. These places are part of the movement and provide a vital message to today’s youth.

For young people the pilgrimage phenomenon has acquired an

aspect of christian formation, and is a reminder that also in other countries and continents there should be places where the young members of the SYM can gather naturally for encounters of a spiritual kind.

6. Conclusion: refounding the Oratory

By way of conclusion it will be well for us to look back to the atmosphere that Don Bosco wanted to find in the salesian environment, where young people go seeking friendship, where they are welcomed by adults who understand them and share their lives, where they create a style of behaviour with other youngsters and commit themselves to social, cultural, religious and recreational activities – all in festive fashion. These perennial values of the Valdocco oratory find their full expression in the SYM, which is in fact a new form of oratory. We may recall the words of the Rector Major in his closing address to the GC23: “I would say that in this creative rethinking, we Salesians of Don Bosco have been assigned the responsibility for refounding the Oratory” (GC23 345); it would seem that a decisive formula for such a refounding is precisely the SYM. It is an example of the fact that “the oratory criterion does not destroy structures but goes beyond them” (GC23 350), and reminds us that all Salesians “are called upon to renew a whole kind of animation... stimulated by the challenges of the youth scene... and intrinsically nourished by the clamour of those to whom we are sent” (GC23 351). Young people offer us the method for salesian renewal and for the refounding of the oratory in line with the conditions of the present day. The SYM is evidence of this.

2.2 THE COMPREHENSIVE SALESIAN FAMILY

Fr Antonio MARTINELLI

Councillor for the Salesian Family and Social Communication

1. The beginnings of the comprehensive aspect: the GC20.

The GC23 did not lose sight of either the theme or the substance of the Salesian Family, even though it made only few references to it. The specific consideration of *educating young people to the faith* involves in a direct, explicit and immediate manner, the entire Salesian Family in comprehensive fashion. It was therefore unnecessary to repeat all the preceding doctrine and reflection. But it is important nevertheless that local communities keep continually in mind how its integrated nature originally began.

This includes in the first place everything said by the SGC concerning "The Salesian Family Today" (cf. SGC 155-177); it implies also the fresh discovery each day of Don Bosco's charisma, which has been entrusted by the Spirit to an entire Family for the good of the Church. In this design of the love of God the Salesians of Don Bosco bear a special responsibility.

Two quotations may be useful. "The Salesians cannot fully re-think their vocation in the Church without reference to those who share with them in carrying out their Founder's will. Consequently they seek a greater union of all, while preserving the genuine diversity of each" (SGC 151). "These groups, especially the first three instituted by Don Bosco himself, cannot be considered as isolated entities; they were born and have always lived in mutual interchange of spiritual and apostolic values; and in this they have all been the beneficiaries. The invaluable heritage of Don Bosco was left to all of them together as one single family" (Letter of the Rector Major, 24 February 1982; ASC 304, p. 19).

It is evident, though it may be that many confreres have still to understand the fact, that the integrated nature of the Family does not stem from need, or numerical difficulty, or communal limitations. The root does not lie there. You have to go back to the Holy Spirit, to Don Bosco and to the charisma of foundation. With joyful amazement we have become aware, more now than in the past, of the convergence that exists between Don Bosco's charismatic intuition and the signs of the times in our modern world. To serve the Salesian Family as an integrated whole means to serve Don Bosco the Founder. To be faithful to it in its entirety is to be faithful to our vocation to work for the young and the poor. Unity is the prime concern. The differences highlight the common heritage and acquire meaning and importance in the light of the harmony of the whole.

2. The integrated nature of the Family in the GC23: two important points.

The few references to the Family in the GC23 relate to two significant aspects: the educative community and the lay project.

The organization of the *educative community* (cf. GC23 110-111), in the first place, with the specific presence of lay people highly valued for their collaboration and sharing in responsibility in the whole process of educative and pastoral activity (ibid. 170, 233, 243), is made in the light of the single subject responsible, the single path to be followed, and this with a single spirituality.

The salesian community must not fail in its obligation to be the animating nucleus that draws the groups of the Family together to provide an efficacious presence and evangelizing action in the locality (cf. GC23 236).

The interest too shown by the Congregation in preparing the GC23 and its deliberations concerning a lay project (GC23 238) is a further challenge to the salesian community. The latter must renew its mentality and the practical organization of its insertion and work among the young and people in general, on becoming aware that

lay people have a right to take part in the salesian mission.

The Rector Major, Fr Egidio Viganò, commented on this point in his closing address to the GC23: "A point worth emphasizing is that of the involvement of the laity in the education of youth to the faith. Every community must be able to animate a growing number of lay people, either members of our Family (Cooperators, Past-Pupils), or collaborators in our works. This is a requirement of the ecclesiology of Vatican II on which the Pope and the Bishops have been recently insisting. Involvement of this kind presupposes not only an updated ecclesial mentality in the confreres – an urgent objective we have to achieve – but also an awareness of the unique nature of the salesian spirit, lived as a benefit to be shared with others in a contagious way. This in its turn implies a change of mentality and conversion of heart. But will this be possible in the communities as they are at present? That is a disturbing question and brings home to us how indispensable it is to decide on well prepared initiatives" (GC23 354).

The typical salesian apostolic vocation requires professional, spiritual and missionary qualities; and if the overall salesian work is to be efficacious the whole integrated Family must be salesian.

3. Institutional requirements for integration of the Family.

The integrated nature of the Family will exist and develop, if structures, programmes and means are adopted that help it to express itself.

Art.5 of the Constitutions reminds us of our duty in this regard. "Within this family, by the will of the Founder, we have particular responsibilities:

- to preserve unity of spirit,
- to foster dialogue and
- fraternal collaboration
- for our mutual enrichment
- and greater apostolic effectiveness."

Arts. 36-41 of the General Regulations should also be kept in

mind. They translate into daily practical obligations what must be done to preserve the comprehensive aspect of the Family. The second paragraph of R 36 reads as follows:

- "The community,
- in agreement with those responsible for the various groups,
- with respect for their autonomy and in a spirit of service,
- offers them spiritual assistance,
- promotes meetings,
- encourages collaboration and initiatives in the educational and pastoral fields, and
- cultivates the common commitment for vocations."

The Constitutions and Regulations require that some realities be established. Leaving questions of practical organization to the next section, we recall here the main nuclei which need "structures, programmes and means" for the service of the comprehensive Family and its mission.

The first nucleus to be established concerns the spirit and spirituality. It is this that ensures the foundation of the integrated family, and provides solid and convincing motives for pursuing it. It fosters the manner of thinking, of behaviour, of attitudes, tastes and preferences of the Salesian as indicated in Don Bosco's dream. It makes these things easier of access for all the groups of the Family. It generates an immediate and mutual enrichment of the individual and the group, which prompts further steps towards the integration of the whole Family.

The second nucleus that the community must keep in mind is the broad area of meetings, dialogue and mutual understanding.

We are dealing with a shared project that can be realized only through the convergence of all the elements, and convergence implies in the first place a material coming together. It means heading in the same direction, reading facts, data, situations and sudden requirements, with common criteria. It means the constant seeking for agreement, even when its attainment proves difficult, and not just taking it for granted. Pushing ahead at all costs only creates distances from other groups. Going too slowly on the other hand pro-

duces weariness. But if concrete and practical objectives are laid down, the desire to work comprehensively as a Family increases. The convergence arising from meetings, dialogue and understanding, is capable of different community structures in the different groups, and so the comprehensive nature is preserved while due respect is given to the differences.

The third nucleus concerns the area of action and activity, of effective and efficacious collaboration in and of the Family.

Salesian communion is always directed towards the mission. Art.3 of the Constitutions declares in clear and enthusiastic terms that "our mission sets the tenor of our whole life; it specifies the task we have in the Church and our place among other religious families.

The 'Church' environment, in which we realize the charism of Don Bosco and live the salesian spirit, leads the Family to overall unity, to work and collaboration, to creativity and obedience.

Art.48 of the Constitutions is a constant reminder about communion and tireless work. The efficacy of the Preventive System which embodies pastoral charity, the salesian spirit in daily experience, and the specific mission of Don Bosco among the young: all this is a commitment common to all the groups, because it is beneficial to the entire Family.

4. The organization of the comprehensive Family in practice.

Those responsible for the animation of the communities at local and provincial level are defined in general terms in the first paragraph of R 36: "It is the duty of the Provincial and the Rector, assisted by their respective delegates, to sensitize the communities so that they may discharge their duties in the Salesian Family."

The specific task concerns the three areas described previously. For each of them are needed structures, programmes and means.

A. *How can the comprehensive aspect be realized as regards the area of spirit and spirituality?*

It is well to remember that the comprehensive aspect is not a matter of good will that can be left to the caprice of individuals or the type of situation that obtains. It must be programmed. It has to be ensured by adroit structures agreed on by the groups of the Family.

To remain within the context of "spirit and spirituality" we may ask what precisely can be laid down to launch experiences in this regard?

In many Provinces there is now a 'traditional' *Salesian Family Day*. In this connection the following questions are relevant?

- is this the only manifestation of the overall unity of the Family?
- which area is it meant to cover of those described?
- does it create a mentality? or form new attitudes? or give rise to new initiatives?
- is there any notable progress in the comprehensive aspect of the family from one year to another?

Not many provinces so far have programmed *a retreat for the members of the Family*. Those who have done so express very positive judgements on the initiative.

Provinces which intend to follow this example need first to consider what objectives they want to attain, defining them clearly and expressing them in an official and explicit manner. If the arrangement is to be institutionalized and profitable, it will be well to gather judgements and observations from those taking part.

Some provinces have set up officially a *course of salesian spirituality*, with the active and passive participation of various groups of the Family. Here we are only at the beginnings. A careful study defining the objectives and content, the ways and means etc. can help to bring together in a formal manner the intuitions of a few and the desires of many.

How and to what extent have the relationships between the groups of the Family borne witness to its comprehensive nature,

overcoming the tendency for individual groups to remain closed in on themselves?

How and to what extent does the service given to the separate groups by the Salesians, in virtue of their own Regulations, bring about in a systematic manner a growth in the comprehensive aspect of the Family, and the convergence in "spirit and spirituality"?

A weak point as regards this comprehensive aspect is often the local community. The reasons can be quite varied: lack of reflection on the Salesian Family, lack of initiatives, piling up of work which absorbs time and energy, presence of only some groups of the Family and the absence of others. All of these reasons are insufficient, and indeed they could be said to be inimical to the search for convergence.

May local communities feel themselves challenged by these pages. May they study and start up some sign of the integrated unity of the Family, starting specifically from the area of spirit and spirituality.

B. What can be laid down to actuate this comprehensive aspect in the wide field of convergence?

Some provinces have programmed top level meetings. The yearly SDB and FMA calendars make provision for *meetings between the combined provincial councils*, a praiseworthy initiative that can bring new developments. But what has been done, or is being planned, in connection with the Cooperators? and the other groups of the Family? And why not pass from the provincial level also to the local level in programming joint council meetings?

For years now the Department of the Salesian Family has indicated the *Provincial commission for the Salesian Family* as a means for bringing about convergence.

Many provinces have in fact responded to the indications and are now finding the advantages of being able to get round a table for a reflection and deepening of the salesian charisma. What is

lacking perhaps is a local regulation to give weight and clarity to these organisms.

We wonder whether there are yet any instances at local level of a consulting group of the Salesian Family?

Until something is laid down by regulation in this regard – and provision already exists for the purpose in the rule of life of each group – changes in the personnel responsible for this sector will militate against the creation of a real tradition.

A forum for the integral Family becomes ever more necessary. Problems of youth, development of the salesian presence, the ability of educators and evangelizers to appraise new situations and meet them, mutual support in the field of vocations, all demand a more frequent and intense dialogue between all the members of the Salesian Family. Prompt and precise consultations would be of no small advantage to each group and the entire Family.

C. What can be laid down to actuate this comprehensive aspect in the field of shared pastoral responsibility?

Some events have already shown that it is possible to reach even this level. Everything that was done during the Don Bosco centenary year is a vindication of the comprehensive nature of the Family. There was shared responsibility at every level of salesian presence, from the General Council to local groups.

The concrete objective, insertion in the local neighbourhood, involvement of all the various elements, a careful programming in the light of the needs and possibilities, constant review of the situation, convergence on the great values of the charisma, the determination to overcome difficulties (internal as well as external), and above all else love of Don Bosco, brought about practical collaboration at a comprehensive level.

This is the goal we must aim at. It must be prepared and accompanied by the preceding steps. One point needs immediate clarification: the individual groups are not asked to do all the same things, to work in the same material settings, or to adopt the same roles. But all collaborate to obtain more fruitful apostolic results by the salesian presence in a given locality.

In this perspective there are many steps to be taken, following the stages of a typical pastoral programme: analysis of the situation, charismatic criteria to be shared in common, objectives to be decided on in meeting problems, line of action, revision and evaluation of the process.

It needs to be emphasized once again that the higher the level of responsibility the greater is the need for sharing such responsibility.

The process must be pushed to the levels at which responsibility and shared responsibility are most easily exercised in practical life: provincial level and local level.

Some signposts are needed to indicate the direction towards the realization of the comprehensive integral Salesian Family.

4. ACTIVITIES OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL

4.1 Chronicle of the Rector Major

After returning from Madagascar in mid-January, the Rector Major went to Potenza where, on the 18th, he presented the Strenna of 1991 to the Salesian Family of that area, who followed what he had to say with great interest as a preparation for the feast of Don Bosco.

On the 24th he was present as Grand Chancellor at the solemn celebrations for the 50th anniversary of our University, presiding at the Eucharist in St Peter's Basilica and accompanying the large number of those connected with the University who were afterwards received in a memorable special audience by the Pope.

Then in the last week of January he took part in the Week of Spirituality for the Salesian Family, held – as is now traditional – at the Generalate.

After this he went to the Becchi for the celebrations of the golden jubilee of the Bernardi Semeria Institute. There too he blessed the foundation stone for the new “Mamma

Margaret” restaurant that is being built, and then went on to Valdocco for the feast itself of Don Bosco. He took the opportunity on the following day to make a festive visit to the students of theology at the Crocetta.

In February he went to Nave, of which town he is an honorary citizen, and in one of the town's theatres gave an address to his “fellow-citizens” on youth problems in present-day society. Then he visited the post-novitiate to talk with the students on themes concerning formation and the life of the Congregation.

At various times during the month he also took part in some important meetings of Superiors General.

On 23 February he was at Sondrio, to commemorate with his brothers and many friends the anniversary of the death of his mother, and then went on to Verona to visit the Secretary General, Fr Francesco Maraccani, who is recuperating there from a long and painful operation on his leg.

2-3 March found him in Sicily: first at Trapani for the inauguration of the Theatre and another presentation of the Strenna, and then at Riesi for the solemn celebration with all the inhabitants of the town of the 50th anniversary of the foundation of salesian work there; a monument to Don Bosco was inaugurated in one of the town squares, and the Bishop of the diocese pro-

claimed Don Bosco the "secondary patron" of the town (the first one is Our Lady!).

Immediately after this he was at Bonn in Germany for an interesting meeting on education to freedom in Latin America. He then visited various communities in Italy while preparing to leave for his ninth journey to Africa.

5.1 Papal Brief for the Beatification of Don Rinaldi.

The English translation follows.

“Ero vobis in Patrem et vos eritis mihi in filios” (2 Cor 6,18).

Venerabilis Servus Dei Philippus Rinaldi non solum cum humilitate et gaudio divinae paternitatis donum accepit, sed alacriter munus implendo sacerdotale, eiusmodi paternitatis verus testis fuit, quando quidem animis paterno cum amore et cura sane servivit.

Is natus est die XXVIII mensis Maii anno MDCCCLVI in oppido Lu Monferratensi intra dioecesis Casalensis fines, a Christophoro Rinaldi et Antonia Brezzi, qui eum solida instruxerunt christiana et humana educatione. Puer Sanctum Ioannem Bosco cognovit, qui, eius spiritus magister factus, eum ad inveniendam suam vocationem adiuvit et ad ingrediendam recentem Societatem Salesianam, in qua perpetuam fecit professionem die XIII mensis Augusti anno MDCCCLXXX. Paulo post ordinationem sacerdotalem, quam die XXIII mensis Decembris

accepit anno MDCCCLXXXII, nominatus est rector Domus pro vocationibus adultis, quo in munere sustinendo eminuit uti educator egregiarum facultatum nobilisque animi.

In Hispaniam missus, ubi Domus loci Sarriá superior fuit et postea Domorum Salesianorum Hispaniae et Lusitaniae inspector, impensam et fructuosam industriam explicavit effecitque ut sodalium fratrum numerus novarumque domuum multiplicarentur necnon apostolicorum operum. Anno MCMI Augustam Taurinorum rediit, sui Instituti Vicarius Generalis factus. Cum fidelitate, prudentia et maxima cum sedulitate Rectoribus servivit Maioribus, Beato Michaeli Rua et Paulo Albera. Simul autem studio motus animarum et Christi regni prolata-
ndi singularibus multiplicibusque se dedit operibus praesertim pro laicis. Fovit Consociationi Cooperatorum Salesianorum, Foederationem condidit quondam alumnorum, Magistrorum Catholicorum consociationem, oratoria et circulos iuveniles, in libros edendos incubuit coetumque congregavit puellarum, “in modo consecratarum”, qui

nunc florens est Institutum saeculare.

Electus anno MCMXXII Societatis Salesianae Rector Maior, virtutum suarum exemplo et rerum Dei fervore magister vitae fuit et signum omnibus qui curis eius erant concredit. Verus et gravis Sancti Ioannis Bosco institutionis interpret, peculiari cum diligentia fratrum sodalium curavit spiritalem et apostolicam formationem. Ad necessitates attentus Ecclesiae magnam acremque motionem excitavit pro Missionibus, oratoria apparavit et condendis paroeciis favit in civitatum suburbii. Anno MCMXXIX solacio ei fuit interfuisse beatificationi Sancti Ioannis Bosco, cuius ipse Venerabilis Servus Dei discipulus fuit fidelissimus et spiritualitatis ac gubernandi rationis imitator. Usque ad terminum dierum suorum cum intelligentia laboravit et sedulitate, etsi valetudo celeriter deficiebat. Improviso est vita defunctus die V mensis Decembris anno MCMXXXI Augustae Taurinorum. Eius vita tota pro Christo consumpta erat et pro populo Dei atque non in solam Societatem Salesianam vim habuerat, sed in totam Ecclesiam. Multa praeditus aequabilitate altiores vitae interioris et pietatis necessitates ad industrium apostolatus dynamismum composuit, auctoritatis firmitudinem ad paternam benignitatem, quam omnes propriam eius notam habebant.

Sacerdotibus nostrae aetatis eximio est testimonio, Superioribus religiosiis et educatoribus, laicis, quorum peculiare agnovit munus in Ecclesia.

Sanctitatis fama, quam vivus sibi comparaverat, crevit et confirmata est post eius mortem; quam ob rem Archiepiscopus Taurinensis anno MCMXXXVII Causam iniit canonizationis. Processu Ordinario et processu Apostolico cebratis, ex more de virtutibus quaesitum est. Die III mensis Ianuarii anno MCMLXXXVII coram Nobis est Decretum promulgatum quo agnoscebamus Servum Dei heroum in modum virtutes theologales, cardinales et adnexas exercuisse.

Interea in dioecesi Montis Regalis in Pedemonte Processus celebratus erat de asserta mira sanatione, quae facta est anno MCMXXXV et deprecationi Venerabilis Servi Dei tributa. Qua suetis observationibus inspecta, die III mensis Martiis huius anni est super miro Decretum promulgatum.

Decrevimus dein ut beatificationis ritus insequentis mensis Aprilis die XXIX celebraretur.

Hodie igitur, in Petriano Foro, inter Missarum sollemnia hanc sumus formulam elucuti: Nos, vota Fratrum nostrorum Gabini Dias Merchán, Archiepiscopi Ovetensis, Narcissi Jubany Arnau, Archiepiscopi emeriti et Administratoris Apostolici Barcinonensis Torrella

Cascante, Archiepiscopi Tarracensis et Ioannis Saldarini, Archiepiscopi Taurinensis necnon plurimorum aliorum Fratrum in Episcopatu, moltorum christifidelium expulentes, de Congregationis de Causis Sanctorum consulto, Auctoritate Nostra Apostolica facultatem facimus, ut Venerabiles Servi Dei Cyrillus Bertrán et septem Socii, Innocentius ab Immaculata, Maria a Mercede Prat, Iacobus Hilarius Barbal Cosán, martyres, et Philippus Rinaldi, presbyter, Beatorum nomine in posterum appellentur, eorumque festum die ipsorum natali: Cyrilli Bertrán et septem Sociorum et Innocentii ab Immaculata die nona Octobris; Mariae a Mercede Prat die vicesima quarta Iulii; Iacobi Hilarii Barbal Cosán die decima octava Ianuarii et Philippi Rinaldi die quinta Decembris in locis et modis iure statutis quotannis celebrari possit. In nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti. Quae autem his Litteris statuimus et nunc et in posterum firma esse volumus, rebus contrariis quibuslibet non obstantibus.

Datum Romae, apud S. Petrum, sub anulo Piscatoris, die XXIX mensis Aprilis anno MCMXC, pontificatus Nostri duodecimo.

Ioannes Paulus II

English translation

"I will be a father to you and you shall be my sons and daughters" (2 Cor 6,18).

The Venerable Servant of God Philip Rinaldi not only welcomed with joy and humility the gift of God's fatherhood, but by the generous fulfilment of the priestly mission bore authentic witness to such fatherhood by serving souls with a truly fatherly love and care.

He was born on 28 May 1856 at Lu Monferrato, in the diocese of Casale Monferrato, the son of Christopher Rinaldi and Antonia Rinaldi (formerly Brezzi) who gave him a solid human and christian education. As a boy he came to know St John Bosco, who became his spiritual guide and helped him to discover his particular vocation. As a young man he entered the Salesian Society in which he made his perpetual profession on 13 August 1880. Soon after his priestly ordination on 23 December 1882, he was appointed rector of a house for adult vocations where he distinguished himself as a very capable educator with a great heart.

He was sent to Spain where he was the Superior of the house of Sarriá, and later became Provincial of the salesian houses in Spain and Portugal. During this period he carried out an intense and fruitful activity, increasing the number of confreres and establishing new foundations and apostolic works. In 1901 he returned to Turin as Vicar General of his Institute, and served with fidelity, prudence and absolute de-

dication, the Rector Majors, Blessed Michael Rua and Paul Albera. At the same time, prompted by zeal for the formation of souls and the spreading of Christ's kingdom, he undertook many and original activities, especially for the benefit of the laity. He promoted the Association of Salesian Cooperators, started up the Federation of the Past Pupils, founded an association for Catholic teachers, established oratories and youth circles, gave life to publishing initiatives, and began the formation of a group of young women who were to live a "consecrated life in the world", and which eventually developed into a flourishing secular institute.

In 1922 he was elected Rector Major of the Salesian Society, and by the example of his virtues and fervour for the things of God was a master of life and a point of reference for all those entrusted to his care. As a true and authoritative interpreter of the teachings of St John Bosco, he gave special attention to the spiritual and apostolic formation of the confreres. Because of his concern for the needs of the Church, he promoted a vast expansion of missionary work, set up oratories and fostered the establishing of parishes in the outskirts of cities. In 1929 he had the consolation of witnessing the beatification of St John Bosco, of whom the Venerable Servant of God was a most faithful

disciple and a meticulous imitator of his spirituality and manner of government. He worked with intelligence and zest to the end of his life, despite his rapidly failing health. He died suddenly on 5 December 1931 at Turin. His life had been spent entirely for Christ and the people of God, and he had exercised a good influence not only in the Salesian Society but in the Church at large. Endowed as he was with very balanced judgement he was able to harmonize in himself the loftiest demands of the interior life and devotion with energetic activity in the apostolate, firmness of authority with fatherly kindness – a quality that everyone recognized as characteristic of him. He remains an exemplary model for priests of the present day, for religious superiors and educators, and for the laity whose particular mission in the life of the Church he clearly recognized.

The fame for holiness, which he had already enjoyed in life, grew and became consolidated after his death. On this account the Archbishop of Turin in 1947 began his Cause for canonization. After the ordinary and apostolic processes, there took place according to the norms the discussion on his virtues.

In Our presence on 3 January 1987 the decree was promulgated recognizing that the Servant of God had practised in a heroic degree the

theological, cardinal and other annexed virtues.

Meanwhile in the diocese of Mondovì the canonical process had taken place concerning a presumed miraculous cure that had taken place in 1945 and been attributed to the intercession of the Venerable Servant of God. After the case had been submitted to the usual examination, the decree "super miro" was promulgated on 3 March 1990.

We therefore decreed that the rite of beatification should take place on the following 29 April.

Today therefore during a solemn Mass in St Peter's Square we made the following declaration: In accordance with the desires of our brothers in the episcopacy Gabino Diaz Merchan, Archbishop of Oviedo, Narcisso Jubany Arnau, Archbishop emeritus and Administrator Apostolic of Barcelona, Raimondo Torrella Cascante, Archbishop of Tarragona, and Giovanni Saldarini, Archbishop of Turin, with many other Bishops and members of the faithful, after consulting the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints, We grant by Our authority the faculty that the Venerable Servants of God Cirillo Bertran and his seven companions, Innocenzo dell'Immacolata, Maria della Mercede Prat, Giacomo Ilario Barbal Cosán, martyrs, and Philip Rinaldi, priest, may in future be called "Blessed", and that their feasts may be celebrated each year on the

day of their death: Cirillo Bertran and his seven companions, and Innocenzo dell'Immacolata on 9 October; Maria della Mercede Prat on 24 July; Giacomo Ilario Barbal Cosán on 18 January; and Philip Rinaldi on 5 December; in the places and manner established by law.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Given at Rome, from the Vatican, under the seal of the Fisherman's ring, on 29 April 1990, the twelfth of Our Pontificate.

JOHN PAUL II

5.2 14th Week of Spirituality of the Salesian Family

The 14th week of spirituality took place in Rome at the Salesianum from 25 to 30 January 1991. The sequence had been interrupted for the past two years by the Don Bosco centenary and the GC23 respectively.

The theme for this year was the Strenna of the Rector Major: *The new evangelization compels us to study more deeply the social dimension of charity and to bear witness to it.*

The participants were very numerous and the Salesianum was filled to capacity. Different groups of the Family sent representatives from all over Europe, and there were some present from other con-

tinents also. The different languages heard, even during the presentation of the prepared papers (German, French and Spanish, as well as Italian), gave an indication of the universality and breadth of the salesian mission.

Those who gave the main papers provided a rich input. They gave a lively and penetrating panorama of the problems and perspectives linked with solidarity in the present context of life in the world and in the Church.

All agreed that the atmosphere was a family and fraternal one in its various expressions: from prayer to times of relaxation, from the exploration in the group workshops to the communication and exchange of personal experiences.

The Strenna was illustrated from various aspects.

The work began with a series of statements on the attitude of *young people with regard to politics and political activity*. Then attention turned to *Don Bosco* and the *constitutional requirements* of the various component groups of the Family, for a better understanding of what paths can be followed at the present day or what aspects must be given greater attention, in order to bear witness to and live the social dimension of charity.

Biblical, theological and ethical perspectives were offered to enrich the content of the research the

Week was called upon to carry out. The key question of the Week remained always the educational and social concerns.

Representatives of three different groups (an SDB, an FMA and a DBV) discussed a plan of spirituality for commitment and service in the style of Don Bosco.

The whole assembly first, and then the discussion workshops, worked for two entire days to clarify the educational and spiritual aspects of the social dimension of charity.

The recounting of some experiences showed how much still remains to be done to ensure a full application of Don Bosco's charism, the salesian spirit, and the particular resources characteristic of each group of the Family.

The Rector Major was present during the Week and took part in discussions. Of particular value to the participants were two homilies of Fr Viganò and his closing address and commentary on the Strenna.

Thanks are due to all who by their presence and collaboration helped to ensure the success of the event.

5.3 The Golden Jubilee of the Salesian University (UPS)

The Salesian Pontifical Atheneum was founded on 3 May 1940 at Turin at the wish of the 4th Successor of Don Bosco, Fr Peter Ricaldone,

with the three classical Faculties of Philosophy, Theology and Canon Law. The official celebration of the golden jubilee took place on 24 January 1991, the feast of St Francis de Sales.

Teachers, students, auxiliary personnel, past-students and friends of the University gathered in St Peter's Basilica to take part in the solemn concelebrated Eucharist, presided over by the Rector Major, who was accompanied by some members of the General Council and who wished in this way to express the gratitude of the whole Congregation for the contribution made by the University to the formation of Salesians, and to the vitality of our works.

In his homily Fr Viganò said: "Our University is called 'salesian' because in its objectives and choice of field of work it draws its inspiration from the typically apostolic concern of St Francis de Sales and Don Bosco. It is engaged in deeper study and development in the disciplines of faith and the various human sciences, for the purpose of attaining a deeper and more objective knowledge of the evangelical goodness and kindness of the 'Shepherd' and the existential condition of the 'sheep' (those to whom our work is addressed)." And he went on to explain the significance of the insertion of the UPS among the Roman Pontifical Universities as an original

institution characterized by a particular mission with specific requirements as regards planning, choice of fields of work and coordination: "among the indispensable parameters and criteria for the identity of the UPS are to be found, therefore, the pedagogical and pastoral characteristics of its options and the increasing number of the disciplines involved."

After the Mass the fifteen hundred participants moved to the Hall of Blessings for the Special Audience with the Holy Father. Among those present were the salesian Cardinals Alfons Stickler (a former Rector of the Salesian Atheneum) and Rosalio Castillo Lara (a former professor in the same Atheneum), Archbishop Pio Laghi (Pro-Prefect of the Congregation for Catholic Education), and Archbishop José Saraiva Martins (Secretary of the same Congregation). The Pope greeted in kindly fashion all those present, and by his presence provided the highlight of the jubilee celebrations. He listened attentively to the address of the present Rector Magnificus of the UPS, Fr Tarcisio Bertone, who gave a brief outline of the development of the University from the first beginnings of the nucleus of the Atheneum in 1940. To this was added after the war the Higher Institute of Pedagogy, considered "a particular expression of

the salesian character"; it has now become the Faculty of Educational Sciences.

After the transfer of the Atheneum to Rome it was enriched by Paul VI, by his *Motu proprio* 'Studio latinitatis', with the Faculty of Christian and Classical Literature, which the same Pontiff declared to be a guarantee of the further growth in classical and christian Latin bequeathed to us by the Founder. By the *Motu proprio* 'Magisterium vitae' of 1973, the Salesian Atheneum was given the title and dignity of a Pontifical University. From that time, the University has become progressively more consolidated and has developed further departments. In 1981 the Department of Catechetics and Youth Pastoral Work was created; in 1986 the Higher Institute of Religious Sciences was added, for the organic formation of the laity and religious who are not priests; and finally in 1988 was launched the Institute of Social Communication Sciences, which opens up the University to the vast horizons of modern communication, always with a pedagogical and pastoral dimension following the creativity of Don Bosco, who was a pioneer and apostle of the Catholic press.

The Rector concluded by assuring the Pope of the filial adherence of all to his words, his intentions and his prayers for peace, and of the

commitment of the students, coming from 66 different countries to live as a fraternal community for the exploration and affirmation of human and christian values.

The Pope, visibly pleased at the encounter, recalled his visit to our University in 1981. He emphasized that it was the genial holiness and boundless pastoral charity for the young that had been the inspiration behind the entire mission of the Salesian Pontifical University. After greeting the Rector Major and members of the General Council, he said that "like a tree that is planted beside the flowing waters" (Ps 1,2), the Salesian Pontifical University has been planted in the fertile soil of salesian spiritual tradition, and faithful to the Church's directives, has given proof of its auspicious vitality by the wonderful way in which it has developed. "At the heart of your University's identity," went on the Pope, "lies the charism of Don Bosco. It is and must continue to be Don Bosco's University for the Young: this is what characterizes it in the symphony of the Pontifical Universities of Rome."

And the Holy Father concluded with a pressing exhortation: "Educating the young implies a whole series of well defined objectives, of specific qualifications and skills, of determined and demanding commitments; it implies above all that "pastoral ability" which has its

source in Jesus the Good Shepherd and an outstanding model in Don Bosco. Continue to dedicate all your energy to the delicate and fundamental sector of the formation of shepherds and educators of the young in new ways, drawing on your well tried experience. The students - priests, religious and laity, who are themselves young - should gladly receive and accept as a particular quality of their course of studies a sensitivity, attention and care for the young and give their creative collaboration. The professors through the multiple university structures must bring together in a harmonious synthesis their specific abilities in view of a deeper scientific understanding and the methodical elaboration of a commitment to the human and christian advancement of today's youth. If you succeed in this you will earn the gratitude certainly of the Salesian Congregation to which you belong, but still more of the Church and the whole of society."

Finally the Holy Father presented a medal of his Pontificate to the Professors-emeriti, to the lay collaborators (lay Salesians and Sisters) who had given long service to the University, and to the students who had gained awards.

The propitious event of the Golden Jubilee must be considered as a point of departure for a renewed and fruitful service of the UPS, to-

gether with a renewed and wholehearted collaboration and esteem on the part of the whole Salesian Family.

5.4 New Provincials

We give below some biographical details of the new Provincials for the two Provinces of the USA, appointed by the Rector Major with his Council during the plenary session of September-December 1990.

1. Fr Timothy PLOCH, in the Province of NEW ROCHELLE.

Timothy Ploch was born at Paterson, New Jersey, on 8 June 1946. He came into contact with the Salesians at the school of West Haverstraw and, as his salesian vocation matured, entered the novitiate at Newton, where he made his first religious profession on 16 August 1965.

After studies in philosophy and pedagogy at Newton, and the practical training period, he studied theology at Columbus prior to his priestly ordination on 14 April 1976.

He was a teacher and educator for a number of years, and was well known for his musical ability. In 1985 he was entrusted with the direction of the house of Columbus, the formation community of young students of theology, who were en-

gaged at the same time in various apostolic activities.

He took part in the GC22 as delegate of his province.

2. *Fr William SCHAFER, in the Province of SAN FRANCISCO.*

William Schafer was born at Berkeley, California, on 25 October 1931. He entered the salesian school of Richmond where he became attracted to the salesian way of life. He subsequently made his novitiate at Newton, where he also made his first profession on 8 September 1950.

After philosophical studies and the experience of the practical training period, he was sent to Turin to the Salesian Pontifical Athenaeum for the study of theology, in which he obtained his Licentiate.

Returning to the USA he took a Master's degree in science and was outstanding as an educator and became Principal of the Junior University College of Don Bosco, Rosemead. In 1985-6 he followed a course in salesian spirituality. He was a member of the provincial council since 1983, and at the time of his appointment as Provincial was the director of the community of Los Angeles and animator of the flourishing Youth Centre there.

5.5 New Salesian Bishop

Mgr. José Jovencio BALESTIERI, Bishop of HUMAITÀ (Brazil)

The Osservatore Romano in its issue of 7 March 1991 carried the news that the Holy Father had appointed our confrere Fr José Jovencio BALESTIERI, Bishop of Humaità in Brazil. He succeeds Bishop Miguel D'Aversa SDB.

Mgr Balestieri was born at Alto Guarani, in the province of Santa Caterina, on 18 May 1939. In 1951 he entered the aspirantate of Ascurra and was later admitted to the novitiate at Pindamonhangaba where he made his first profession on 31 January 1959. After obtaining the licentiate in philosophy and pedagogy in the institute of philosophy at Lorena, he studied theology at Sao Paulo where he gained the licentiate.

Some years of pastoral activity followed in the houses of Porto Alegre and Bagé; then in 1972 he was appointed Rector of the house of Bagé. Two years later he moved to Rio dos Cedros as Rector and Novice Master, and remained there till 1980, in which year he became the Provincial Economist of the province of Porto Alegre. In 1984 he became Provincial of the same province.

5.6 S.D.B. Statistics at 31 December 1990

Summarized figures

Esp.	Tot. 1989	Professi temporanei				Professi perpetui				Tot. Professi	Novizi	Tot. 1990
		L	S	D	P	L	S	D	P			
AFC	231	17	29	0	0	23	6	0	148	223	12	235
AFE	64	2	3	0	0	10	19	0	36	70	2	72
AFM	64	1	3	0	0	6	0	0	52	62	2	64
ANT	189	2	37	0	0	16	5	0	121	181	12	193
ABA	216	2	18	0	0	14	9	0	167	210	8	218
ABB	157	0	7	0	0	16	8	0	118	149	2	151
ACO	175	10	24	0	0	10	12	0	115	171	7	178
ALP	124	1	16	0	0	14	9	0	79	119	2	121
ARO	151	3	20	0	0	19	8	0	93	143	5	148
AUL	126	2	14	0	0	22	3	0	83	124	4	128
AUS	161	4	14	0	0	10	2	1	116	147	4	151
BEN	224	1	10	0	0	23	9	0	177	220	1	221
BES	112	1	4	0	0	8	1	0	94	108	3	111
BOL	132	5	35	0	0	14	5	0	71	130	9	139
BBH	171	5	15	0	0	21	1	0	126	168	3	171
BCG	168	4	18	0	0	23	5	0	104	154	6	160
BMA	132	6	24	0	0	20	3	0	73	126	11	137
BPA	114	0	8	0	0	11	5	0	85	109	3	112
BRE	95	1	12	0	0	17	2	0	60	92	1	93
BSP	229	6	21	0	0	32	9	0	145	213	7	220
CAE	35	0	1	0	0	5	1	0	28	35	0	35
CAM	259	11	59	0	0	23	8	0	146	247	10	257
CEB	0	2	31	0	0	12	6	0	106	157	18	175
CEP	0	1	20	0	3	12	10	0	154	200	24	224
CIL	265	5	51	0	0	21	18	0	158	253	11	264
CIN	143	1	5	0	0	37	4	0	93	140	3	143
COB	200	2	33	0	0	38	7	0	118	198	7	205
COM	166	2	33	0	0	21	9	0	95	160	9	169
ECU	263	8	28	0	0	24	14	0	172	246	5	251
FIL	365	26	111	0	0	29	22	1	157	346	29	375
FLY	171	0	3	0	0	35	3	0	127	168	1	169
FPA	242	3	11	0	0	32	0	0	188	234	3	237
GBR	159	0	10	0	0	18	5	0	120	153	3	156
GEK	194	11	14	0	0	38	6	0	118	187	5	192
GEM	311	11	22	0	0	68	6	0	199	306	5	311
GIA	137	3	13	0	0	20	3	0	90	129	6	135
INB	252	9	79	0	0	19	14	0	123	244	19	263
INC	310	9	65	0	0	34	32	0	162	302	6	308
IND	193	1	50	0	0	5	18	0	102	176	11	187

Isp.	Tot. 1989	Professi temporanei				Professi perpetui				Tot. Professi	Novizi	Tot. 1990
		L	S	D	P	L	S	D	P			
ING	302	4	76	0	0	28	18	0	158	284	22	306
INK	317	8	102	0	0	12	46	0	140	307	22	329
INM	378	8	122	0	0	24	36	0	171	361	30	391
IRL	133	0	8	0	0	12	4	0	103	127	5	132
IAD	171	2	7	0	0	31	2	0	124	166	0	166
ICE	351	5	11	0	0	132	4	1	192	345	6	351
ILE	423	6	30	0	0	71	4	0	304	415	4	419
ILT	228	1	13	0	0	41	2	1	167	225	0	225
IME	336	3	23	0	0	50	6	1	247	330	4	334
INE	214	2	8	0	0	42	6	0	153	211	2	213
IRO	328	1	18	0	0	50	6	3	227	305	3	308
ISA	86	0	4	0	0	9	1	0	69	83	1	84
ISI	374	3	21	0	0	37	8	0	297	366	8	374
ISU	462	4	23	0	0	100	10	0	326	463	9	472
IVE	304	3	22	0	0	58	8	1	211	303	4	307
IVO	243	4	13	0	0	50	2	0	170	239	4	243
JUL	152	0	22	0	0	18	6	0	103	149	1	150
JUZ	100	0	15	0	0	7	3	0	71	96	5	101
KOR	56	6	19	0	0	9	6	0	17	57	4	61
MEG	191	11	42	0	0	12	8	0	114	187	12	199
MEM	218	14	62	0	0	15	6	0	106	203	26	229
MOR	156	3	19	0	0	29	2	0	99	152	6	160
OLA	87	0	0	0	0	25	0	1	60	86	0	86
PAR	99	0	19	0	0	9	3	0	62	93	8	101
PER	179	4	33	0	0	13	18	0	101	169	5	174
PLE	390	8	120	0	0	21	20	0	201	370	28	398
PLN	341	2	109	0	0	13	13	0	190	327	23	350
PLO	270	2	58	0	0	1	8	0	183	252	14	266
PLS	284	0	96	0	0	15	16	0	138	265	24	289
POR	202	5	25	0	0	61	4	1	114	200	3	203
SBA	267	2	16	0	0	42	12	0	188	260	5	265
SBI	273	7	30	0	0	57	29	0	138	261	5	266
SCO	156	6	19	0	0	7	4	2	107	145	9	154
SLE	275	11	17	0	0	67	17	0	160	272	5	277
SMA	431	10	39	0	0	102	15	0	249	415	10	425
SSE	193	2	11	0	0	34	7	0	136	190	9	199
SVA	206	3	19	0	0	33	4	0	140	199	4	203
SUE	261	1	11	0	0	54	7	0	173	246	3	249
SUO	120	1	1	0	0	28	3	0	85	118	3	121
THA	108	4	12	0	0	10	6	0	70	102	7	109
UNG	60	1	1	0	2	1	0	0	53	58	0	58
URU	149	2	15	0	0	9	4	0	117	147	4	151
VEN	242	4	24	0	0	20	9	1	169	227	8	235

Isp.	Tot. 1989	Professi temporanei				Professi perpetui				Tot. Professi	Novizi	Tot. 1990
		L	S	D	P	L	S	D	P			
VIE	0	2	12	0	0	11	43	0	20	88	11	99
UPS	123	0	0	0	0	16	0	0	110	126	0	126
RMG	86	0	0	0	0	20	0	0	67	87	0	87
Tot.	17023	343	2338	0	5	2316	742	14	11119	16877	647	17524
Vesc. + Pref.	84									87		87
Non catalogati	420									20		20
Tot.	17527	343	2338	0	5	2316	742	14	11119	16984	647	17631

Nota: Quest'anno sono inclusi nella statistica anche i confratelli di CEB, CEP e VIE. Restano «non catalogati» pochi confratelli.

5.7 Our dead confreres (1991 – 1st list)

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

NAME	PLACE	DATE	AGE	PROV.
E ALVAREZ Ernesto	Quito	12-02-91	65	
<i>Fu per 6 anni Vesc. Aus. di Guayaquil per 13 anni Arcivescovo di Cuenca</i>				
P ASURMENDI Martinez Javier	Barcelona	05-02-91	51	SBA
P BALLEISEN Albert	Augsburg	10-02-91	80	GEM
P BERSIA Felice	Intra	12-01-91	79	INE
P BOTTAI Egidio	Banpong	03-01-91	82	THA
P CALDIROLI Mario	Shindenbaru	04-02-91	78	GIA
L CARRO Pierre	Evreux	12-01-91	81	FPA
P DE GRANDIS Riccardo	Genova	13-02-91	52	ILT
P DAGNA Ferruccio	Varazze	25-01-91	79	ILT
P DEL FABBRO Tarcisio	Santa Cruz (BOL)	31-01-91	77	IVE
P FAUDET Pierre	Neuilly-sur-Seine	10-01-91	82	FPA
P FAVERZANI Albert	La Garde	31-01-91	62	FLY
P FONSECA Calvo Marcos	Calulo (Angola)	04-01-91	45	CAM
P GALBAYV Stanislav	Pezinok	13-12-90	79	CEB
P GARCIA Rubén Darío	Buenos Aires	02-04-90	62	ABA
L GUIDI Franco	Varazze	26-01-91	69	ILT
P ISHIMOTO Francisco Hiroshi	Akabane	22-01-91	60	GIA
P JANSSEN Paul Matthias	Bad-Tölz	12-02-90	81	GEM
L KANEMOTO Miyoli Antonio	Kanagawa	18-02-90	84	GIA
P KRISTANC Evstahij	Trstenik	26-01-91	79	JUL
P KRIZAN Martin	Surianky	06-09-90	77	CEB
P KUBACKI Stanisław	Barlinek	08-02-91	83	PLN
P LE DU André	Saint Brieuc	05-01-91	77	FPA
P LYSEK Pawel	Kopiec	30-01-91	74	PLS
P McLINDEN James	Kawasaki (Gia)	03-01-91	62	RMG
P MENDES do Prado Gastão	Lorena	28-06-90	85	BSP
P MONTANTE Giuseppe	Palermo	19-05-90	76	ISI
L NAVONE Giovanni	Castellamare di Stabia	27-01-91	86	IME
P NICOLAU Juan Pedro	Resistencia	10-01-91	86	ARO
L NIDASIO Giuseppe	Arese	18-02-91	93	ILE
P OLIVERA Leonidas	Calca	22-02-91	87	PER
P PÉREZ GONZÁLEZ José	Valencia	25-02-91	59	VEN

NAME	PLACE	DATE	AGE	PROV.
P PICRON René <i>Fu Ispettore per 7 anni</i>	Butare (Rwanda)	25-01-91	84	AFC
P PISTAGNESI Mariano	Buenos Aires	12-01-91	67	ABB
P PREZIOSO Vicente	Asunción	21-01-91	84	PAR
L RAPISARDA Domenico	Pedara	10-02-91	68	ISI
E RASPANTI Miguel <i>Fu Ispettore per 16 anni per 23 anni Vescovo di Morón (Argentina)</i>	Córdoba	18-02-91	86	
L RIVEROS Diaz Hellodoro	Bogotá	14-07-90	90	COB
P SANTOS López José Maria	Sevilla	06-01-91	54	SSE
P SANTOS Roque André	Cachoeiro do Itapemirim	14-11-90	90	BBH
P SEPTIEN Garcia Justiniano	Lugo	28-03-90	64	SLE
P SITIA Carlo	Totontepec	08-01-91	67	MEM
P SUNDA Ugo	Sassari	09-04-90	60	ISA
P TENEGAL Aimé	Marseille	11-01-91	81	FLY
L VAN VINCK Charles	Gent	24-02-91	91	BEN
L VARGAS Diaz José	Guadalajara	30-04-90	102	MEG
P VECCHI Luciano	Civitanova Marche	03-04-90	68	IRO
E WORKU Sebhatlaab <i>Fu per 13 anni Vescovo di Adigrat</i>	Addis Abeba (Etiopia)	27-01-91	72	
L YARA Feliz Luis	Bogotá	22-01-91	68	COB
P ZANGHI Giacomo	Savona	16-02-91	75	ILT

