



acts

of the general council

year LXXII july-september 1991

N. 337

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

**Roma
Direzione Generale
Opere Don Bosco**

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of the Salesian Society
of St John Bosco

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Editrice S.D.B.

Edizione extra commerciale

Direzione Generale Opere Don Bosco

Via della Pisana, 1111

Casella Postale 9092

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ESSE GI ESSE Scuola Grafica Salesiana - Via Umbertide, 11 Roma - Tel. 78.27.819

Finito di stampare: Luglio 1991

1. ACTS OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL

NEW EDUCATION

* Introduction: the newly emerging scene in the field of education. * Urgent need of "new education". * The challenge of the young. * Distinction between "education" and "evangelization" as such. * Should education come before evangelization? * Don Bosco's choice of a field of work, and his practical example. * Educating by evangelizing. * Looking again at the "Preventive System": - creativity of the "artist"; - in solidarity with the young; - with eyes trained on the New Man; - for a work of anticipation; - seeing "reason" and "religion" in the same light; - with inventive attention given to free time; - towards the reality of life. * Self-sanctification through educating. * Prompted by Mary in her role as Mother of the Church.

Rome, Solemnity of Pentecost
19 May 1991

My dear confreres,

During my visits to various provinces in recent months I have been able to see for myself the efforts that are being made to give practical effect to the deliberations and guidelines of the General Chapter. It is a question of putting into practice the riches the Congregation has amassed in the period that has followed Vatican II.

For us this forms part of that "new evangelization" that is demanded at the present day, and to which we are insistently urged by the Pope, the Bishops and the GC23.

Young people themselves are asking in different ways to be enlightened and followed in the intricate course of their existence. Parents and many of those bearing responsibility at a civil or ecclesial level are turning to members of Don Bosco's Family as experts in education.

In addition a number of confreres have recently asked me to put forward some reflections on the practical manner in which we carry out our educative mission.

Today one sees education as taking on almost emergency proportions in both civil society and in the Church; and on the other hand one hears objections advanced which call for a fitting response.

In a long conversation I had at Havana with a minister of the Castro government, I was struck by something he said about the "youth of the revolution": immorality and lack of mystique among youth are among the greatest concerns of the current regime.

In another context at Prague, in a meeting with the deputy prime minister of the present government I heard the ecclesial situation summed up in these terms: the Church has been compelled to live in a ghetto for the past 40 years, and now if she fails to come out into the open she will have no influence on young people who are no longer linked to a parish or other ecclesial institutions, who are totally ignorant of the Gospel, or who have been led astray by an atheistic ideology and have grown up with a mentality lacking any personal ethic.

In nearly every society education is no longer considered an activity leading to the formation of christians; its cultural environment is secularist in nature, or based on ancient religions.

The Church through Vatican II has taken note of the closing, if that is the right word, of an era of 'christianity' to be followed by a new kind of relationship with the world; and so she speaks of new evangelization and pastoral rethinking. And all this touches deeply the field of education.

If in particular we look at the numerous follow-

ers of other religions, we find pedagogical models of various kinds, permeated by concrete religious aspects with specific positive values, but having in common (and the fact is of significance for us) an anthropology that prescind altogether from the mystery of Christ and, in consequence, from an overall vision of man and from a complex of practical and mysteriously efficacious mediations that contribute to the full maturing of the individual.

The fundamental objection stemming from these varied and complex situations is that the education of the young, so fundamental and indispensable in every society, is not only no longer linked in practice with evangelization but is in fact deliberately separated from it because it is considered a cultural sector with an autonomous field of development.

This emerging fact in the area of education is to be linked especially with the *central position of man in the cosmos and in history: a massive "anthropological turning-point"*. The reference is to man in himself, as a subject open to a thousand and one possibilities. It is one of the expressions associated with that great sign of the times that goes by the name of the "personalization process".

And so a previously unobserved problem arises which directly affects and calls into question the significance and methodology of our educational activity. The GC23 wants us to be able to take up the values put forward by the signs of the times, discerning them in the light of faith. Hence as we come to grips with the present anthropological turnabout we must clearly avoid falling into a narrow anthropocentrism which characterizes it from a cultural standpoint.

In the reflections that follow, it is not our pur-

pose to tackle all the vast aspects of the present educational panorama after its development by the human sciences. Nor is it possible to examine the multiple demands of particular concrete situations and cultural differences. Our interest at this point is to reflect on the mutual relationship between our educational and evangelizing activities. The enlightenment we derive from so doing will call for further efforts on our part at study and discernment. There will in fact be one manner of application in secularized societies; another among peoples engaged in the exhausting process of liberation; and still another in cultures associated with the great religions of the east, etc.

Reflection on the mutual relationship between human development and christian growth we must consider as fundamental and indispensable in every situation. From its correct interpretation depends the proper and efficacious application of the Constitutions themselves (articles 31 to 43).

And therefore: an anthropological turning-point, yes; but with Christ, the New Man, at the vertex.

Urgent need of new education

In his letter "Juvenum patris" John Paul II had already said that "St John Bosco is not something of the past...; he teaches us to integrate the permanent values of tradition with 'new solutions', so as to meet in a creative fashion the newly emerging requests and problems: he continues to be our teacher in the present difficult times, and suggests a '*new education*' which is at once both creative and faithful."¹

¹ IP 13

And in his address to the General Chapter (1 May 1990) he exhorted us in the same sense: "You have chosen well: the education of the young is *one of the key issues of the new evangelization*."²

The GC23 rightly recalled that individuals and society become transformed by a newly emerging culture,³ and this necessarily implies a "new education": education, in fact, is the fundamental sector of every culture. For this reason I remarked in the closing address to the Chapter that "the formation of youth to the faith" presents so many particular aspects at the present day that it requires a "new education".⁴

We are living through a period of epoch-making changes and we are asked, as Christ's disciples, *to leaven the present culture with a living faith*. This is something that requires careful discernment, and the ability to grasp in depth the problems raised by the current changes.

Let us look briefly at the main aspects emerging from the signs of the times: secularization and progress in the fields of science and technology; democratization and the development of a social sense; liberation and the pursuit of justice; personalization and awareness of the dignity of every human being; the advancement of women and woman's role in society; leadership and shared responsibility in an ever more complex world; the hierarchy of values and differing standards of evaluation; education to civic duties and the formative effect of parallel and discordant factors; and the circulation of new fertile and productive themes, like peace, ecology, solidarity, human rights, etc. All these form a vast and growing panorama rich in positive values (and indeed of negative ones as well), that have a pro-

² GC23 332

³ cf. GC23 4

⁴ cf. GC23 348

found influence on ways of thinking and acting and which shape the way of life of individuals, families and social institutions.

At first sight it would seem, unfortunately, that the negative values have the greater effect. The sophisticated communications system, with its emphasis on the pleasant and ephemeral rather than on what is true and important, risks stimulating the cult of what appears on the surface, to the neglect of what lies deeper and of true ideals. There is a danger (and it is by no means imaginary) that in the heads and hearts of individuals, especially the younger ones, there will be an ever more powerful injection of materialistic and hedonistic ideas through the many hidden messages instilled by the mass-media. The psychological rhythm of the passage of time emphasizes the present in contrast to the past, if indeed the past is remembered at all, and looks forward with impatient haste to the future. There is an urgency about what lies ahead, and it is fast approaching. We need to be aware of this state of affairs.

The emergence of the new scene in education brings with it at least two innovations which have an effect on our commitment. On the one side there are the positive values of the signs of the times. They represent a true growth in humanity; they assert man's central position, emphasizing his subjective nature (self-awareness, freedom, ability to act). From this point of view the young person plays the leading role in his maturing process in so far as he is a free and conscious individual, and therefore able not only to receive and assimilate but also to create and modify, forming in this way his personal convictions and beliefs.

But on the other hand this anthropological turning-point is thought of and presented at the present day as a reality that has no need of being related to Christ, because man would have in himself, pre-scinding altogether from the mystery of the Word Incarnate, all the reasons for his own dignity and all that is needed to give sense to history.

These two new factors (positive values and pre-scinding from Christ) which at the present day have a powerful incidence in the field of education, are a direct challenge to us and call for a "new education".

Now *our mission as evangelizers* is carried out through the work of education: if we do not evangelize *by educating* we run the risk of losing our identity. It is urgently necessary that we be experts in the knowledge of new cultural values so as to promote them by wisely overcoming the tragic dissonance between the Gospel and culture, and so establish a broad and solid bridge between education and pastoral work. The Pope's insistence on a new evangelization means for us that we must get down to deepening our understanding of the present anthropological turnabout: we must take up the values of growth in humanity of the personalization process, in the light of the central position of man which is true and integral only in objective relationship to the historical event of Christ.⁵

This is the sense in which we speak of a "new education". Without it we cannot take part effectively in the "new evangelization".

The challenge of the young

The GC23 has given a synthetic presentation of

⁵ cf. C 31

the situation of young people at the present day,⁶ their attitudes as regards the faith,⁷ and the more urgent challenges they put to us.⁸

"But there is one challenge," says the Chapter, "that is a synthesis of all the others and permeates them all: the challenge of 'life'."⁹

Such an all-embracing challenge concerns not only this or that aspect of existence, since these are the deep foundation of personal and community living which are either disregarded or mutilated and impoverished; they are the basic formative values that are either forgotten or misrepresented. The challenge of life demands a *clear seeking of sense and identity* for a new understanding of the very foundations of human existence and activity.

The Chapter concentrated its attention on three important objectives: the formation of the individual conscience, right up to the highest point of its religious dimension;¹⁰ the authenticity of love as the supreme human expression of interpersonal relationships;¹¹ and the social dimension of the individual for a culture of solidarity.¹² In other words, the Chapter is asking us to foster the process of personalization, and consider the young people as true agents in their own formation.

And so it is crystal clear that the "new education" cannot be reduced to a simple method of instruction or indoctrination, or the imparting of erudition, or a knowledge of science and technology; it must aim at the growth and maturing of the person in criteria of judgement, in the ethical sense of existence, in transcendent horizons, in practical models of behaviour, together with a positive evaluation of the progress of science and technology for the humanizing of social life.

In today's culture the coming of the "new man"

⁶ cf. GC23 45-63

⁷ cf. GC23 64-74

⁸ cf. GC23 75-88

⁹ GC23 87

¹⁰ cf. GC23 182-191

¹¹ cf. GC23 192-202

¹² cf. GC23 203-314

is a phrase that is frequently used; and there is indeed quite a collection of cultural expressions that bear witness to this as being an idea of some originality. But if you examine closely the practical directions in which these innovations are moving, you will find that they lack any higher vision and easily lead to subjectivism. The increased rate of change, linked with the overcoming of a particular cultural model that served citizens of yesterday, makes us realize that the "new creature" of the present culture truly needs values which go beyond well-being, beyond an anthropocentric vision overconcerned with efficiency, beyond the indefinite creative capacity of the freedom of the individual, to ensure the inspirational sources of a more genuine human personality. Faith makes us become aware that the changes taking place and the transcendence of the person automatically bring in Christ, in his historical condition of the one and only true "New Man".

We can understand in this horizontal context the relevance of what has been frequently stated by the Holy Father: "Man is the way of the Church. Her sole purpose has been the *care and responsibility* for man, who has been entrusted to her by Christ himself: for *this human person*, who, as the Second Vatican Council recalls, is the only creature on earth which God willed for its own sake, and for which God has his plan, i.e. a share in eternal salvation. We are not dealing here with people in the abstract, but with the real concrete historical human beings. We are dealing with *each individual*, since each one is included in the mystery of Redemption, and through this mystery Christ has united himself with each one for ever."¹³

Evidently it is urgently necessary that we should

involve ourselves in the anthropological turnabout with the same pastoral concern with which the Church addressed herself to man in the Second Vatican Council.

"We must not start," says Cardinal Ballestrero, "from the idea that man is what he is, but from the principle that he must be how God made him. This principle is of the greatest importance... I believe in man not because I know him in his history, in his daily pilgrimage, in his whims, in his daydreams, in his rebellions. When I see an individual, I say to myself: despite everything, this is a creature of God; and this instils in me a certain confidence in him... To this unalterable quality of being God's creature I must give due value at an educational level. I would say that education becomes an art, because the application of this principle is linked with respect for each one's historical identity."¹⁴

The "challenge of life" obliges us to identify the areas for our intervention and to look for new methods, redefining in the circumstances of the present day the great criteria of our commitment to education.

Distinction between "education" and "evangelization" as such

Today the tendency is to present the educational situation in prevalently secularist terms.

Most of us, indeed, will have come across some confrere who is a teacher but has forgotten that he is an evangelizer as well, or on the other hand some other confrere who takes classes in "catechetics, liturgy and religion" but omits the appropriate pedagogical dimensions because he knows little about

¹⁴ A. BALLESTRERO, *Dio, l'uomo e la preghiera*, SEI, Turin, pp. 14-15

educational science and techniques, and is in consequence unable to meet cultural challenges. The danger of our cultural task becoming disjoined from our pastoral commitment is a very real one for us too.

Educating and evangelizing are two activities which in themselves are different, and which can become separated one from the other. But the essential unity of the young person requires that they be not separated; nor is a simple juxtaposition sufficient, as though the normal course would be for them to take no account of each other.

It will be worth our while to spend a little time on clarifying the specific distinction between these two poles. Certainly the intention behind educational activity is different from that behind evangelizing activity; each of them has its own proper objective, methods and particular content. We must be able to distinguish them, but without separating them; we have in fact to bring them together in complementary fashion in our organic practice.

— *Education*, in itself and regarded as educating activity, belongs to the field of culture and is part of earthly reality; it refers to the process of assimilating a collection of evolving human values with their specific aim. In this sense one can speak also of its lay or secular dimension, because of its creatural content that can be universally shared with all men of good will. We may recall in this connection our reflections in the circular on the “new evangelization” concerning the need for deepening our knowledge today about the “theology of creation”.¹⁵

Educational activity is intrinsically lawful, but must not on that account be wrongly exploited or manipulated. Its aim is the development of man, or

¹⁵ cf. AGC 331, p. 15-16

in other words to teach young people the "craft of being individuals". It is a process which takes place over a long and gradual period of growth. It is concerned not so much with the imposition of norms as with rendering freedom more responsible, with developing individual enterprise, with reference to his conscience, the authentic quality of his love, and his social dimensions. It is a true process of personalization to be brought to maturity in each individual.

Educational activity presupposes two items that must be given careful attention. The first refers precisely to its nature as a *process*, i.e. the lengthy period of growth which necessarily involves a well arranged gradual development. The second is that education cannot be reduced to a mere method. Educational activity is vitally linked with the evolving of the subject. *It has something in common with fatherhood and motherhood*, as though sharing in the process of human generation for fundamental values like conscience, truth, love, work, justice, solidarity, sharing, the dignity of life, the common good, the rights of the individual. And for this very reason it is concerned with the avoidance of whatever is degrading and deviant: the idolatries (of riches, power and sex), emargination, violence, selfishness, etc. Its aim is to bring about the growth of the young person from within, so that he will become a responsible adult and behave as an upright citizen.

Education therefore means sharing with a fatherly and maternal love in the growth of the individual concerned, while fostering collaboration with others to the same end: educational relationships presuppose, in fact, a number of different agencies working together.

— *Evangelization*, on the other hand and in the wider meaning of the term, is directed of its nature to the passing on and fostering of the christian faith; it belongs to the order of those salvation events that flow from the presence of God in history; it aims at making them known, communicating them, and making them come alive in the liturgy and testimony. It cannot be simply identified with ethical norms because it is transcendent revelation; it stems from neither nature nor culture but from God, and Christ his anointed one.

Although transcending the sphere of earthly realities, it tends to become objectively embodied in persons and cultures. It is an activity that belongs to the order of incarnation; it depends on the active presence of the Holy Spirit; it involves something more than what is merely human; it goes back ultimately to the very mystery of the Word made man, in the awareness that in this mystery Christ is not presented as some kind of alternative, but as assuming, fostering and saving the whole of human reality. And it should be noted finally that the ultimate point of reference for evangelization is not constituted by a collection of values but by a living Person, Christ the alpha and omega of the universe.

The intention behind evangelizing activity is not simply that of religious instruction about particular christian truths; it consists precisely in the formation of the "believer"; i.e. of a person who lives by faith in Christ and who commits himself with Christ in the pains and sufferings of life. And so evangelizing activity includes not only "proclamation", but also the giving of testimony, dedication - here as elsewhere, a gradual and appropriate service which calls for educational sensitivity rooted in

an anthropological perspective; hence an action which is essentially open and directed to education. In this way the Church, an "expert in humanity", becomes also an "expert in education", because everything in her is directed to man's growth.

— And so the two actions are distinct in themselves, but they work together on the organic unity of the person of the young individual: they are two complementary ways of being concerned about man; they stem from different sources but come together for the purpose of "generating" the new man; they are made for full collaboration in the unified growth of the young person.

And let us not forget a consideration which harks back still further in the process. Between education and evangelization there is of their very natures a very much deeper organic bond. The Pope drew attention to it in his famous Encyclical "Redemptor hominis". This bond comes to light when the mystery of creation is considered in relationship to that of the redemption. The redemption, says the Pope, is a *renewed creation*.¹⁶

¹⁶ RH 8

The Word did not become incarnate in a reality outside God, but in the "image" of God himself projected into created man. The Word therefore did not become incarnate so as to add partially new values, but to purify, make fuller and raise up the human values of creation ("mirabilis reformationi"!); Christ is the "second Adam", the "New Man"; he is more "human" than all others precisely because he is God; he is not alternative, as we have already said, but fullness: he is the Lord of history. The Council put it very clearly: "In reality it is only in the mystery of the Word made flesh that the mystery of man truly becomes clear. For Adam, the first man, was a type of him who was to

come (Rom 5,14), Christ the Lord, Christ the new Adam, who in the very revelation of the mystery of the Father and of his love, clearly reveals man to himself and brings to light his most high calling.”¹⁷

Faith is made to live in man; and man is made to live by faith: faith and life are the binomial of the future. “A faith content to remain on the margins of culture would be a faith that did not reflect the plenitude of what the Word of God manifests and reveals, a decapitated faith and, still worse, a faith in the process of self-destruction.”¹⁸

When the GC23 spoke of “educating young people to the faith”, it was evidently not proposing some anthropocentric form of education. The Chapter’s expression “educating to the faith” means in effect “educating *by evangelizing*”. The word “educating” here is not to be taken in isolation; its true meaning depends entirely on its relationship to the word “faith”. If “educating” were to be taken alone it would indicate nothing more than a commitment at cultural level; but what the Capitular expression means is a *commitment at a pastoral level*: hence to speak of “educating” in its merely cultural connotation, and to speak of “educating to the faith” in the Chapter’s sense, is to use the word with two quite different meanings.

To produce a lasting effect on the living reality of the individual we have to drive home the reciprocal influences of the contributions provided by education and the rich values of evangelization, as concentric factors which do not absorb each other as concepts, but which must converge in harmonious fashion in a combined pedagogical and pastoral activity aimed at the unity of the growing individual.

In the last analysis, *the true final end of the*

¹⁷ GS 22

¹⁸ JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Constitution on Catholic Universities: ECE 44

new creature is one and only and on it the two concerns converge in practice: it is a matter of taking history seriously.

Should education come before evangelization?

Even if we accept the mutual relationship between education and evangelization, we may still ask whether in our commitment one or the other comes first, so that we may know where to begin our journey.

In reality the question is an artificial one; the Chapter requires the simultaneous interaction of both.

We could recall that there are some realities that antecede educational activity. In the first place there is the young person as we find him, in the integrity of his person and the total sense of his life: "Imitating God's patience, we encounter the young at their present stage of freedom", say the Constitutions.¹⁹

¹⁹ C 38

Then there is the contribution of the actual values coming from the emerging cultures in their existential context, which calls for a critical sense and creative intelligence.

And finally the other reality which is necessarily antecedent is the pedagogical and pastoral ability of the educator, prompted by a fervent pedagogical spirituality: and this is where the true secret is to be found of the inseparable nature of the two poles.

Accepting these premises, we must be convinced that education must be evangelically inspired from the very outset; and that evangelization from its first steps must be adapted to the stage of development of young people. Education finds its

full and integral meaning and a further motive force in the Gospel message; and evangelization is totally directed towards the living man and finds its efficacy in pedagogical approaches.

And then the Gospel, which of its nature transcends all human evolution, has always become embodied in the different cultures, taking up their values, purifying them and perfecting them by broadening their horizons, and exerting an influence on their various forms of expression (art, literature, science, law, politics, economy, etc.).

There is an urgent need at the present day to collate the advancement of man with the riches of the mystery of Christ. And so the educational methodology suggested by the Chapter appears simultaneously as a sharing in and a continuation of both the creative work of the Father and the redemptive work of the Son.

It is true that in a change so profound as that through which we are passing on the threshold of the third millennium, evangelization can no longer count (as in the past) on a social context that is religious and christian. But for this very reason it must heed the challenges of the times; it must consider with prophetic care and attention the presuppositions of man's reply to God, and have recourse to natural and cultural dispositions which reveal an opening to *personal* transcendence (the search for a religious sense), to *social* transcendence (the search for solidarity), the transcendence of the *sense of existence* (the search for values), and the transcendence of *spirituality* (the deep search, even though not always explicit, for the mystery of Christ).

Here there is an intuitive recognition of the inseparable nature, the reciprocal attraction, and the

need for mutual and simultaneous interaction between the two poles.

Don Bosco's choice of a field of work, and his practical example

A fact that throws light for us on the significance of the Chapter's expression "educating young people to the faith" is the thought that our Founder was raised up by the Lord for the young, as the *privileged* people to whom his evangelizing activity was directed; this is why he chose education as his field of work. In this way he sited his apostolic mission in the area of human culture. He translated his burning pastoral charity into concrete and practical forms of educational activity, becoming the "father, teacher and friend" of the young.

Through his original experience he has put his own stamp on educational practice; he has imbued it with a principle of permanent vitality; he felt the need to give order and organic structure to pedagogical interventions; he worked for a concrete renewal of society beginning with a renewed and overall plan for the formation of young people of the working classes. His pedagogical method appears as a series of practical and convergent interventions at various levels: culturally, selecting between tradition and the contemporary; socially, working between civil society and convinced adherence to the Church; pedagogically, bringing together instruction, trade apprenticeship, education and evangelization; methodologically, intervening at one and the same time in the case of individuals, groups and the masses. Rigid divisions were ill

suited to his living practice.

What is of special interest to us at this point is to reflect on the harmonious integration and the mutual interchange between education and evangelization.

Educational praxis is an "art"; and it is carried out by an "artist". Art and the artist are not dissociated into the distinct aspects which contribute to the work, but compenetrates in a living dynamism that produces a harmonious convergence of the contributions of the various factors to the expression of the finished product.

Education is evidently not the same thing as shaping a block of marble. It consists rather in the ability to accompany a free subject through his maturing process. The concept of "art" as applied to education has to be interpreted in analogical fashion, as in the spiritual and ascetical order where it is described as the "art of arts"

In anatomy one distinguishes and separates; in the sciences it is in distinction that the identity and autonomy of the different branches find their foundation. In life, on the other hand, the leading idea is the organic structure which brings unity out of many differences; and thus it is in art that comes to the fore the brilliance of one who is able to concentrate several enriching aspects in the elaboration of a masterpiece.

Not only is educational commitment an art; evangelizing activity too, in the intrinsic thrust it receives from inculturation, involves a certain dimension of art, even though one of its vital suppositions is the direct intervention of the Holy Spirit which essentially transcends all human methodology. Evangelization is, in fact, an activity which does not usually prescind from human collabora-

tion; not for nothing did Christ send the Apostles to different cultures and peoples: "Go, therefore, make disciples of all nations, and teach them to observe all the commands I gave you."²⁰

²⁰ Mt 28, 19-20

Don Bosco's pedagogical practice brought together in inseparable unity education and evangelization, not in just any manner, but with a particular harmonious compenetration. The resulting masterpiece was an upright citizen *because* he was a good christian.

If we want to discover the secret behind the compenetration of the two poles, we must *enter into the personality of the "artist"* to try to understand in what his ability consists.

After the GC21 we reflected on this theme, so vital a one for us, in the circular "The Salesian Educational Project" of August 1978.²¹ We now take up once again the thread of that reflection, in the conviction that the GC23 will prompt us to its better realization.

²¹ ASC 290

Our practical commitment is at the same time both educational and pastoral: the pastoral work lives and breathes in the area of education; and our educational activity opens with a constant and competent understanding of Christ's Gospel.

In his own educational and pastoral activity, Don Bosco always ruled out any dissociation between the two poles. The GC21 stated quite clearly that "we are well aware that education and evangelization are specifically distinctive activities of their class, but nevertheless there is a strict connection between them on the practical plane of existence."²²

²² GC21 14

What then is the pedagogical and pastoral characteristic of Don Bosco?

It is to be found in the inexhaustible christian

tradition which has always, but especially since the rise of humanism, found in education the master path of youth pastoral work: Don Bosco cannot be exempted from this tradition of the Church. But he certainly put on it his own particular stamp, and has left to us as a legacy this concrete component of his charisma.

The Constitutions speak of Don Bosco's legacy of the "Preventive System" in two articles (20 and 38) at different though evidently complementary levels: the first is the expression of the "salesian spirit" which permeates the whole person of the educator; the second indicates the "methodological criterion" of our mission for accompanying young people in the delicate process of the growth of their humanity in the faith.

We may say that in these two articles we can find the secret we are looking for. In the innermost sanctuary of Don Bosco's personality, as his first and most dynamic inspiration, there lies "pastoral charity" (the 'da mihi animas' lived in line with the particular original and unique characteristic of the Valdocco Oratory), which is the centre and synthesis of the salesian spirit.²³ And in the perspicacious and creative practical approach of Don Bosco in the line of activity, there is also the "*pedagogical intelligence*" which embodies his pastoral charity in the cultural area of education, with all the requirements called for by an adequate pedagogy.

"*Pastoral charity*" provides animation and a continual *thrust* towards the goal to be reached; "*pedagogical intelligence*" gives guidance as regards *method*, in the determination of areas, the drawing up of the programme to be followed, and the settling of details. "Between the 'pastoral urge' and the 'pedagogical method'," I wrote in the cir-

²³ cf. C 10

cular of 1978, “there is a fine logical distinction that is useful for gaining an understanding of various other facets, but the bond that unites them so radically makes them inseparable in practice. To want to divorce Don Bosco’s pedagogical method from his pastoral spirit would result in the destruction of both.”²⁴

²⁴ ASC 290, p. 11

To be able to say that the educative art of Don Bosco implies the deep union in his person between “pastoral charity” and “pedagogical intelligence”, is to ensure for ourselves the clarity and priority concerning the obligations we must face so as to give effect to the deliberations of the Chapter, and particularly to be aware of what a “new education” necessarily presupposes in ourselves.

But let us press on further still.

Educating by evangelizing

In our discernment process following the Council we expressed Don Bosco’s choice of a field of work in the slogan: “*evangelizing by educating and educating by evangelizing*”.²⁵ I think it is a happy formula and one which is very expressive. Nevertheless it needs to be properly understood, so as to exclude the possibility of forms of disjunction that would over-emphasize one aspect and forget the other, or reduce one to the other, through not attending to the dynamic linkage between the two and their reciprocal relationship.

If this deeper understanding is lacking, we run the risk of falling into naturalism – forgetting the interior action of grace and the intervention of the Holy Spirit –, or of supernaturalism – forgetting the human effort and the necessary pedagogical com-

²⁵ cf. SGC 274-341;
GC21 80-104

petence called for by the art of educating to the faith.

And here it may be well to quote an extract from the Apostolic Exhortation "Catechesi tradendae", where we are invited to reflect on the original pedagogy of the faith: "Among the many prestigious sciences of man," wrote the Pope, "that are nowadays making immense advances, pedagogy is certainly one of the most important. The attainments of the other sciences – biology, psychology, sociology – are providing it with valuable elements. The science of education and the art of teaching are continually being subjected to review, with a view to making them better adapted or more effective, with varying degrees of success. There is also a pedagogy of faith, and the good it can do for catechesis cannot be overstated. In fact, it is natural that techniques perfected and tested for education in general should be adapted for service of education in the faith. However, account must always be taken of the absolute originality of faith."²⁶

²⁶ CT 58

There is no doubt, I think, that this quotation from John Paul II will be of use in enlightening our pastoral and pedagogical practice, and that we should read again in its light some of the requirements of our "Preventive System".

We have already seen that education can never be static, because it is called to adapt itself continually to the future as regards both the subject and the prevailing culture. It must be able to offer to evangelization an existential reading of human values that must be permeated; to deepen the understanding of their specific nature as willed by the Creator, with consistency and finality; and to give rise to a realistic sense of the gradual nature of the process and help to programme its stages. It

must also fulfil a positive critical function with regard to certain methods of evangelization that are defective by reason of ingenuousness and abstraction; it must also be able to stimulate, in pastoral planning, an indispensable pedagogical awareness so as never to prescind from the fundamental positive nature of human values, even though they be damaged by sin.

But "*educating* by evangelizing" means above all never forgetting the substantial unity of the young person. Educational activity, therefore, must be kept intelligently open to the one who can point out to it clearly and objectively the supreme purpose of human existence, and be founded on an anthropology which does not exclude the historic event of Christ.

We know too that *evangelizing activity* is directed to the formation of the believer or, in other words, to fostering the faith of this person redeemed by Christ, in the awareness that revelation "is not, strictly speaking, a book of human wisdom designed to provide solutions to everyday problems; rather is it God's challenging call to us, taken on his own initiative, his gift to us, his questioning of us. Indeed the Gospel questions before it answers."²⁷

²⁷ ASC 290, p. 37

Before all else the evangelizer must always be first and foremost a "prophet" of the Word of God. But the Gospel is meant to be inserted into culture; it has never existed in the abstract; the Word of God is like rain which renders the earth fruitful; faith is not something that exists on its own; the believer is a living individual who includes in the "craft of being a person" the relationship with Christ his brother, the new Adam, as the vertical dimension of his own existence.

Nowadays insistence is laid on the fostering of

an operative faith characterized by the social dimension of charity for the coming of a culture of solidarity; care is taken to consolidate in every believer ecclesial communion and participation, with particular reference to the local Church and a convinced adherence to Peter's ministry; priority is given to the active involvement of the laity, with particular attention to the young, so that they may be in truth "leading characters in evangelization and participants in the renewal of society";²⁸ sensitivity is fostered in respect of those who rank lowest in society (the poor, the marginalized, immigrants), and in general those most in need; and a greater awareness and responsibility is inculcated in respect of missionary activity. These are all aspects which make it urgently necessary for pastoral work to become embodied in the prevailing human condition; it is in very truth a case of being able to "*evangelize by educating.*"

Educational activity, in its turn, finds in the Gospel a formative help for the maturing of freedom and responsibility, a support in the search for identity and sense, an enlightening guide for the formation of conscience, a sublime model for the authenticity of love, a clearer and more compelling horizon for the social dimension of the person, and broader possibilities of intervention and service in the common pilgrimage towards the Kingdom.

In addition the educator, within the process of maturing of the subject, renders pastoral activity more conscious – one might say he "educates it" – to offer to personal growth an appropriate "supplemental animating force". In this way the specific contributions of evangelization (listening to the Word of God, prayer and liturgy, sharing in ecclesial communion, active participation in the obliga-

²⁸ CL 46

tions of charity) can be lived without loss of their specific nature also as "educative mediations" which stimulate, promote and support the authentic growth of the individual.

Don Bosco's pedagogical experience, which has earned him the title of "Educator princeps", has been able to demonstrate in practice that many ecclesial elements of faith (frequenting of the sacraments, devotion to Mary, apostolic commitments) as well as being ways of christian living are also delicately educative mediations, which can lead to a savouring of the riches of freedom and responsibility. They provide a magnificent response to the search for sense and identity, and help to the discernment of true values in the muddled confusion of pluralism.

Don Bosco's preoccupation with evangelization, wrote the Pope, "was not limited to catechesis alone, nor to liturgy alone, nor to those religious practices which call for an explicit exercise of faith and lead to it, but covered the whole vast sector of the youth condition. *It forms an integral part therefore of the process of human formation*, not losing sight of defects but at the same time optimistic about progressive maturing, in the conviction that the word of the Gospel must be sown in the reality of their daily living so as to lead the boys to a generous commitment of themselves in life. Since they are living through a period of particular importance for their education, the saving message of the Gospel must sustain them throughout the educational process, *and faith must become the unifying and enlightening element of their personality.*"²⁹

²⁹ IP 15

Our Founder was convinced that education of the "upright citizen" is rooted in the formation of

the "good christian"; he even went so far as to say that "only religion (i.e. the christian faith) is able to begin and carry through the great work of a true education."³⁰

³⁰ MB 3, 425; cf. 7, 451

"It is true," wrote the Pope, "that his educational message needs to be studied at still greater depth, to be adapted and renewed with intelligence and courage, precisely because of changed social, cultural, ecclesial and pastoral contexts... Nevertheless the substance of his teaching remains intact; the unique nature of his spirit, his style, his charisma are unchanged, because they draw their inspiration from the transcendent pedagogy of God."³¹

³¹ IP 13

Looking again at the "Preventive System"

The GC23, taken as a whole, is a pressing invitation to study more deeply the pedagogical and pastoral criteriology of the Preventive System, concentrating our attention on some key elements as we look for what the "new education" must be for us. The Pope has reminded us that Don Bosco's system "represents the quintessence of his pedagogical wisdom and constitutes the prophetic message which he has left to his followers and to the Church."³²

³² IP 8

In the Preventive System education and evangelization mutually interact in an intimate and harmonious manner. We find the explanation for this in the intuition that in practice Don Bosco's method is a "*pedagogical and pastoral art*". He has translated the ardent charity of his priestly ministry into a concrete plan for the education of young people to the faith.

Art, as we have said earlier, needs to touch directly the objective reality if it is to have any effect on it in the search for sense, for beauty, for a loftier approach. It is a form of activity seen in a genial man; it exalts his inventive talents and the expression of his creativity; because of it the artist modifies even himself while he is carrying out his work. What prompts him in his activity is an interior fire, an inspirational ideal, a passion in his heart enlivened by his genial impulses. Rightly has John Paul II called Don Bosco the Educator a "genius of the heart".

We have seen that this interior fire is called "pastoral charity": an apostolic love marked by predilection for the young; a love which incites "pedagogical intelligence" to translate itself into practical educational projects. From this internal stimulus and from this pedagogical intuition is born the Preventive System. It is not a matter of a static and almost magical formula, but of an ensemble of conditions which lead to educative fatherhood and motherhood. Let us look at some of its more significant aspects, which have their roots in fidelity to the Founder whose charism is of its nature permanent and dynamic, and hence in vital growth. One of Don Bosco's important guiding principles, in fact, was: "we must try to know our times, and adapt ourselves to them."³³

³³ MB 16, 416

Today we feel ourselves involved in the anthropological turnabout, but let us not become drowned in a reductive anthropocentrism.

a. *The creativity of the "artist"*. The task of "educating by evangelizing" presupposes in the one carrying it out an indispensable basic condition. It is one we see very clearly in Don Bosco: it is a "pas-

toral urge" combined with "pedagogical intelligence", the two being intimately united by the "grace of unity". It is a kind of apostolic passion, a pastoral brilliance, directed to the faith of the young. The presently prevailing secular climate, in which also the development of the educational sciences is frequently deflected along a path infected by ideological incrustations, is a deep provocation to our apostolic consecration.

Since methodological principles are of quite exceptional importance in art, pedagogical intelligence has to give a special tone, impress a particular physiognomy on pastoral charity. For Don Bosco the basic principle of this kind for action as an "artist" in education was "loving kindness": the building of trust, confidence and friendship through the ascetical demands of "make yourself loved". The Preventive System involves *the "mystique" of pastoral charity and the "ascesis" of loving kindness.*" From this stems that sense of "spiritual fatherhood" which is addressed to many, but is nevertheless concerned with each one individually, with tact and a personal approach in a family atmosphere.

The Chapter reminds us that this *pedagogical charity* is not only to be an individual trait in each confrere, but it must also be characteristic of the local community, because the latter in the last analysis is the primary subject of our mission. And so a fundamental condition for the success of the "new education" is that every community be in very truth a "sign of faith" with a "family-like atmosphere", so as to become a "centre of communion and participation".³⁴

The creativity of the "artist" is therefore rooted in a lived salesian spirituality!

³⁴ cf. GC23 215-218

b. *in solidarity with the young.* The appeal to "go to the young" is "the first and fundamental need in the field of education."³⁵ It is realized in a life lived together which is an expression of operative solidarity. The youngster, as we have said so often, is an "active subject" in the educational process and must feel himself truly involved as an agent in the work of art to be realized.

³⁵ IP 14

Don Bosco's experience with Dominic Savio (the masterpiece), or with Michael Magone and Francis Besucco, is also both evocative and stimulating for us. He worked with them not as though "tempting" them towards education, but by sharing responsibility with them. In this he was guided by his conviction concerning the primacy of the person of the youngster, and hence of the essential value of his freedom and of the importance of the personal role he must play. In the integral harmony of the person he saw the indispensable need for interaction between education and evangelization, and in his freedom he based the conviction that the work of the educator cannot take the place of that of the pupil, but must rather support and strengthen it.

It was in this kind of shared educational pact that was formed the serene and joyful environment which made all activity fruitful. Today more than ever before, there is need of this educative solidarity when family, school, society and parish settings are not sufficiently in harmony with the formative requirements for youthful growth.

c. *With eyes trained on the New Man.* Like every other art, that of education tends of its nature to the full realization of the end to which it is directed. There is no art without an objective; its lively dynamism is concentrated in the energy with

which it pursues that objective without tiring and giving up at intermediate stages. Forgetting the goal, or the making of a wrong choice, takes away the sense of the whole work of art. In the practical order the final end has just as much importance as has an absolute and evident principle in the speculative area.

Now objectively, through conviction of faith, the end or goal to which educational work tends is Christ, the "New Man"; every young person is called to mature in Him and in his image. The GC23 gives a clear indication of the "overall objective", i.e. "the kind of person and believer we wish to develop, given the specific circumstances of life and society... The goal of the journey put before the young is that of building their own personality, with Christ as the point of reference as regards mentality and life".³⁶

³⁶ cfr. GC23 112-115

Fr Albert Caviglia used to say that no one will ever understand Don Bosco the educator, nor his pedagogy, unless he starts from this methodological principle of the final end and its constant presence throughout the whole process to be gone through.

At the present day the nature of this final end is disputed in various quarters; from the secular sector it is quite common to hear that human education needs no qualifying adjectives, not even "christian"; and from the area of the great religions comes the objection that each of them has a word to say on man's supreme goal.

It is not a case of entering into polemics, but of being convinced that the Christ-event is not simply the expression of a "religious" formulation, but an objective fact in human history which has a concrete reference to every member of the species and

gives a definitive sense to history itself. Every person needs Christ and tends towards him, even if he is unaware of the fact. Everyone has the existential right to be able to reach him, and to put obstacles in the way is in fact to trample upon a human right. The tendency towards Christ, be it conscious or unconscious, clear or confused, is intrinsic to human nature, created objectively in the supernatural order in which the project-man has been conceived in view of the mystery of Christ, and not vice-versa. This consideration should be an unshakeable conviction in the heart and mind of every educator who draws his inspiration from the Preventive System; it will support and enlighten him also in adverse contexts.

Religious relativism and today's inordinate concern for efficiency tend to be more concerned about means than about ends, and this reacts to the detriment of the personality of young people.

d. *For a work of anticipation.* John Paul II has reminded us that "prevention" as used by Don Bosco meant "the art of positive education by putting forward what is good through appropriate experiences which call for the involvement of the pupil and are attractive because of their splendour and lofty nature; the art of producing growth in young persons 'from within' by appealing to their inner freedom to oppose external conditioning and formalism; the art of winning the heart of young people so as to inculcate in them a joyful and satisfied attraction to what is good, correcting deviations and preparing them for the future by means of a solid character formation."³⁷

It is a case of touching the point where are rooted and lie hidden the seeds for the development of

³⁷ IP 8

a personality capable of making decisions and discerning between good and evil, so as to avoid being ensnared by surrounding deviations or inclinations of the passions. In this work of prevention, accompanied by a constant and cordial presence among the young, both pedagogy and faith simultaneously come into play in a practical and concrete way, and not as so much hot air and rhetoric. Through gradual insistence, with revision and encouragement, with humility and realism, with helps from the natural and supernatural order and the patient pedagogical reflection that "the best is the enemy of the good", the goal can be attained.

e. *Seeing "reason" and "religion" in the same light.* Prompted by pastoral charity and guided by the methods of loving kindness, the educator-pastor coordinates pedagogically the great formative lights that come from both reason and faith. They must converge so as to promote the growth of the personality of the youngster, ensuring for him light for his mind and concrete means of help for his will: "enlightening the mind to make the heart good".³⁸

Here a special role is played by the interaction between education and evangelization, by the convergence between nature and grace, between culture and the Gospel, between life and faith. Here too is engrafted the peculiar educative efficacy of the knowledge and use of the sacraments. It will be well to reflect a little further on this point.

We are not in any sense downgrading the Sacraments from the order of mystery to that of pedagogical means, but rather of thinking that the divine efficacy of the Christ-event has a projection also in educational practice. Christ is not only the

³⁸ JOHN BOSCO, *Storia Sacra per uso nelle scuole*, Op. Ed. III, 7

overall objective and the vertex of the new man, but also his "way and life", whose intrinsic efficacy enters also into the methodological level of mediations in the growth of the person.

And in fact, the Preventive System is completely permeated by the care to unite in harmony the activity of the subject ("opus operantis") with the intrinsic efficacy of the sacrament ("opus operatum"). Precisely because the educator-pastor is convinced through faith in the efficacy of the christian liturgy, he fosters pedagogically the qualities and human contributions which dispose towards an adequate participation in it.

Don Bosco always considered the Eucharist and Penance as the two columns on which his educational and pastoral practice was built.

f. With inventive attention given to free time. The Chapter declares that "group experience is a fundamental element in salesian pedagogical tradition."³⁹ Don Bosco's educational work bears the stamp of the oratory initiative; this involves feeling oneself solid with the young and beginning by making educative use even of their free time. This is a typical formative experience that is in no way opposed to formal education and its institutions, but rather precedes them, frequently requires them, and in the latter case permeates them and gives them a particular character of youthful involvement. Oratorian creativity remains even for us at the present day "the lasting criterion for discernment and renewal in all our activities and works."⁴⁰

In this oratorian practice, youth groups are a prominent element with their variety of expressions; they foster interpersonal communication and leadership; in fact they not infrequently constitute

³⁹ GC23 274

⁴⁰ C 40

the only structural element giving young people access to human values and education to the faith.

The Chapter has spoken of the "Salesian Youth Movement", formed by "groups and associations which, while maintaining their organizational autonomy, share the same salesian spirituality and pedagogical principles."⁴¹ The Pope too had made an appeal to us in 1979 recalling the "urgent need, felt nearly everywhere, of the revival of sound models of Catholic youth associations."⁴²

This is a very practical way of re-reading the Preventive System in the light of the oratory criterion. Experience is showing us that the fostering of groups and associations is an initiative to be strengthened and coordinated as an "open reality, in the form of concentric circles, which unites many young people: from those farthest away, for whom the spirituality is something only dimly perceived through an environment in which they feel welcome, to those who consciously and explicitly make their own the salesian ethic. These latter constitute the *animating nucleus* of the whole movement."⁴³

It will evidently be necessary, especially with the "animating nucleus" to go more deeply and specifically into the values of youth spirituality, so dear to Don Bosco.

g. *Towards the reality of life.* One of the characteristics of Don Bosco's pedagogical activity is its practical aspect, i.e. his desire to accustom the young to face the concrete quality of life, whether social or ecclesial. In education, theory is not enough. Formation of mind and heart must be accompanied by practical ability – alone and with others, a spirit of initiative, the sincere ability to make big and small sacrifices, a personal inclination to work with a sense of

⁴¹ cf. GC23 276

⁴² cf. ASC 294, p. 16

⁴³ GC23 276

responsibility, a desire to learn skills and techniques and how to be of service to others; in general, pedagogical activity involves a training in approaching the realism of existence with a growing and serious sense of collaboration.

All this contributes to the formation of the "up-right citizen", and is accompanied also by the fostering of attitudes of communion and sharing in commitments of the ecclesial community (associations, groups, apostolic services).

The practical aspect, therefore, is concerned with giving young people the opportunity to practise social and ecclesial attitudes, opening the development of the individual in various ways towards the common good and the experience of Church.

— In all these pedagogical requirements and conditions that we have indicated, *one thing remains central – the force of the "grace of unity"* which causes education and evangelization to converge harmoniously in mutual interaction.

For an ever better understanding of the dynamism involved, faith prompts us to examine the mystery of Christ, true man and true God; in Him there is a mysterious and vibrant unity between the created order (with the dynamism proper to human values) and the incarnation of the Word (with the richness proper to its divine essence). In Jesus Christ there is a harmonious existential organic unity resting on the inseparable duality of natures. St Thomas Aquinas has given a penetrating analysis of this ineffable convergence into unity: he has deepened the principle of unity of the person by distinguishing the dynamic aspects of the two natures.⁴⁴

In our case we are not applying univocally what is proper and exclusive to Jesus Christ; but the Vatican Council itself compares, in "a somewhat si-

⁴⁴ cf. Summa Theol. IIIa, qq. 18-19

milar way", the ecclesial reality of the faithful with the sublime mystery of the incarnate Word.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ cf. LG 8

Self-sanctification through educating

We reflected in an earlier circular on salesian spirituality for the "new evangelization".⁴⁶ The new ardour, to which the Pope referred, means a strong re-launching of the "interior apostolic conviction" that is at the root of our particular character in the Church.⁴⁷ Here we must add that salesian spirituality represents for us also the force of the sanctifying synthesis of the "new education".

⁴⁶ cf. AGC 334

⁴⁷ cf. AGC 331, pp. 28-33

The GC23 assures us that the work of education is the preeminent context in which we meet God.⁴⁸ This implies a special apostolic spirituality which is simultaneously both pastoral and educational, always attentive to the world context and the challenges of youth: it calls for flexibility, creativity and balance, and seeks seriously the appropriate pedagogical qualifications. The same salesian consecration⁴⁹ which inwardly 'thirsts for souls', assumes the pedagogical values and lives them as a concrete expression of spirituality.⁵⁰ It is not only a spirituality *for* education in general, but a true spirituality *of* education to the faith!

⁴⁸ GC23 95

⁴⁹ C 3

⁵⁰ AGC 334, p. 34

We remember what the Holy Father wrote to us: "I like to consider in Don Bosco the fact that he realized his personal holiness through an educative commitment lived with zeal and an apostolic heart, and that at the same time he knew how to propose holiness as the practical objective of his pedagogy. An interchange between 'education' and 'holiness' is indeed the characteristic aspect of his personality; he was a 'holy educator', he drew his inspiration from a

'holy model' – Francis de Sales, he was the disciple of a 'holy spiritual director' – Joseph Cafasso, and he was able to form from among his boys a 'holy pupil' – Dominic Savio."⁵¹

⁵¹ IP 5

Rightly the Constitutions speak of the Preventive System as a "spiritual and educational experience", passed on to us by Don Bosco "as a way of living and of handing on the Gospel message, and of working with and through the young for their salvation. It permeates our approach to God, our personal relationships, and our manner of living in community through the exercise of a charity that knows how to make itself loved."⁵²

⁵² C 20

Our Founder teaches us that we must *sanctify ourselves by educating!*

The salesian educative commitment asks us to dedicate ample space and time to living with the young, especially at the present day because of the complexities and problems of their environment. The reminder about staying with them, as long and intensely as possible, points to a cardinal point in our obligation to sanctify ourselves, and is also the main reason behind the birth and growth of vocations. Don Auffray, author of the well known biography of Don Bosco (which won for him the applause of the prestigious French Academy), summed up this pedagogical practice as "being there (with the youngsters) – all of us and all the time!"

This demands a heart filled with "pastoral charity" and a mind rich in "pedagogical intelligence", a spiritual and educative solidarity lived in the humdrum life of every day, as well in critical moments of difficulty as in times of exultation. Educative love requires us to be professionally qualified for work of human and christian advancement. Here we can understand all the ascetical and mystical sense of

what Don Bosco said of himself to his boys: "For you I study, for you I work, for you I live, for you I am ready even to give my life. That you are young is enough to make me love you very much."⁵³ He "took no step, he said no word, he took up no task that was not directed to the saving of the young."⁵⁴

In the mind of the Founder his sons should not be persons dedicated only "professionally" to the young, but should make of their educational commitment the "spiritual area" and the "pastoral centre" of their life, their prayer, their professional activity, and their daily living. They are invited to form for themselves a spirituality that does not disjoin their being from their activity, that never separates their evangelizing efforts from their educational activities and vice versa, and that links their own holiness with competent pedagogical work. *This is where the brilliance of the "artist" who is a christian educator is to be found.* The pastoral charity of the salesian spirit carries with it that oft quoted and precious "grace of unity" which the Holy Father told us is "the fruit of the power of the Holy Spirit which ensures the vital inseparability between union with God and dedication to one's neighbour, between depth of interior evangelical meditation and apostolic activity, between a praying heart and busy hands... Any deterioration on this point opens up a dangerous path to activism or intimism, both of which are insidious temptations for Institutes of Apostolic Life. On the other hand, the hidden riches accompanying this "grace of unity" provide clear confirmation... that union with God is the true source of the practical love of one's neighbour."⁵⁵

In this perspective of spirituality, not only does one reach the fundamental trust implied in the expression "Let nothing disturb you", but one also

⁵³ cf. C 14

⁵⁴ cf. C 21

⁵⁵ GC23 332

lives in the daily hope that "believes in the natural and supernatural resources" of the young, and accepts all that is good in the world without bemoaning one's times."⁵⁶ It is a spirituality expressed in optimism and joy, in work and temperance, which gives rise to the appearance of "festive people" who are active and hard-working, creative and flexible, rooted in a tradition but dynamically modern nevertheless, faithful to the supreme novelty of Christ and open to emerging cultural values.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ cf. C 17

⁵⁷ cf. C chap. 2

A spirituality of this kind is without any doubt the fruit of commitment, of dedication, of reflection and study and research, of careful continuous attention; but it is rooted in a constant union with God, expressed in prayer and activity, which is mystique and asceticism. In this way it serves to sanctify not only the person himself, but the young people too. The Constitutions tell us that the witness of our spirituality "reveals the unique worth of the beatitudes, and is the most precious gift we can offer to the young."⁵⁸

⁵⁸ C 25

But nevertheless our sanctification is also a gift that comes to us from young people, because "we believe that God loves the young; that Jesus wants to share his life with young people; that the Spirit is present in them and that through them he wants to build a more authentic and human christian community. We believe that God is awaiting us in the young to offer us the grace of meeting with him and to dispose us to serve him in them, recognizing their dignity and educating them to the fullness of life."⁵⁹

⁵⁹ GC23 95

With them we can make the pilgrimage of faith with an educative spirituality common to both educators and youngsters, even though at different levels and intensities; it becomes translated into a "realistic pedagogy of holiness... The originality and boldness of the plan for a 'youthful holiness' is intrinsic to

60 IP 16

the educational art of Don Bosco, who can rightly be called the 'Master of youth spirituality'.⁶⁰

This is the spirituality on which the Chapter concentrates the attention of all, both Salesians and young people, so that together they may become architects of the vital synthesis between the Gospel and culture, between life and faith, between human advancement and christian witness. We must be able to sanctify ourselves against the background of the new elements of the present times, dedicating ourselves attentively to the "new evangelization", precisely as being experts in "new education", with the art of Don Bosco who had the happy knack of coordinating successfully their mutual interaction.

Don Bosco invites us to make the education of young people to the faith our 'raison d'être' in the Church, i.e. our way of sharing in the Church's holiness and activity: *in her we shall become holy if we are "missionaries of the young"!*

Prompted by Mary in her role as Mother of the Church

Dear confreres, when each one of us thinks back to the birth and growth of his own personal faith he will find that it was historically linked to concrete pedagogical influences: the family, some friend, our local christian community. Certainly faith is a gift of the Holy Spirit; without the divine initiative we should never have had the faith at all. But when we think of our own baptism, and in general of the baptism of infants throughout the Church's tradition, we soon become convinced that the gift of faith is normally accompanied by educa-

tional activity and the testimony of our parents, of some particular priest, certain members of the faithful, or certain men or women religious. It is a gift which uses human collaboration to ensure the birth and development of so precious a vital lymph.

A similar reflection makes us aware on the one hand of the interaction between human concern and the gift of faith, and on the other it highlights the importance of a valid pastoral and pedagogical care and attention that we could describe before all else as "motherly".

In concluding his letter of 1988, to which we have several times referred, the Pope says: "By your work, dear educators, you are sharing *in a wondrous manner in the motherly function of the Church*."⁶¹ There you have a happy expression which well reveals in what the "art" of education to the faith consists: it is an exercise of "ecclesial motherhood"!

⁶¹ IP 20

In the incarnation of the Word Mary was not the cause of the hypostatic union in Christ, but she is nevertheless the Mother of Jesus; she gave him birth, helped him to grow to manhood in history, and educated him according to the local culture. In the motherly action of Mary, and in Jesus himself, very different aspects have to be distinguished, but there is nonetheless an organic unity of life which makes the Church proclaim that Mary is "Mother of God".

This is a truth that provides much material for meditation.

We are already entrusted to Mary and now we turn to her to beg her diligent help in our commitment to the art of education. She it was who suggested the Preventive System to Don Bosco.

"The journey of faith", we are told by the Chapter, "begins under the motherly guidance of Mary."⁶² It says further that "the motherly presence of

⁶² GC23 121

Mary provides deep inspiration throughout the whole journey and in every phase of it... In her the path of everyone meets that of God;⁶³ and recalls further that salesian spirituality reserves a special place for the person of Mary... At the end of his labours Don Bosco could declare with truth; 'Mary has done everything'.⁶⁴

And so, if we live our entrustment to her with sincerity the same thing will happen to each of us, to every local community, to every Province. What is important is to be able to live with frankness and honesty the Marian aspect of our spirituality.

This is the Holy Father's desire for us: "On all of you I invoke the continual protection of Mary Help of Christians, Mother of the Church. May she be for you, as she was for Don Bosco, both Teacher and Guide, the Star of the new evangelization!".⁶⁵

It is Mary who invites all of us to commit ourselves to living and testifying to that interior apostolic conviction that characterizes the Salesian in the Church; from the unitive strength of this spirituality will come forth so many happy and fruitful initiatives for "educating young people to the faith".

I send my fraternal good wishes to each and every one of you, in the joy of being united in a great and common endeavour. May Don Bosco intercede for us!

Cordially in the Lord,

Don F. Viganò

⁶³ GC23 157

⁶⁴ GC23 177

⁶⁵ GC23 335

2. GUIDELINES AND POLICIES

2.1 OLD AGE: A PERIOD TO BE TURNED TO GOOD ACCOUNT

Fr Juan E. Vecchi
Vicar General

1. A new phenomenon

The Lord is blessing us with long life. Many of our confreres reach a ripe old age. Some of them, endowed with particularly strong physical and psychical strength remain fully active in the work they have been assigned by obedience. Others live the period of old age going on working peacefully after years spent in full-time apostolic tasks and community responsibilities. Their presence enriches the educational environment and pastoral work with original contributions.

The salesian mission in fact admits of, and even calls for, the contribution of all age groups. Today we can see, as we have always seen in the past, aging confreres still involved, within the limits of their strength, in assisting the young, in the ministry of reconciliation and spiritual direction, in preaching, or in the diligent care of some important sector of the house (library, archives, secretariat, administration, museum, workshops, church), in receiving guests, in looking after the sick, in some other form of reduced activity which nevertheless provides a precious lesson, and in many other occupations that do not lend themselves to easy classification.

This is a rich situation which has positive effects on the community itself. It is the witness of a life that is moving towards its close; it manifests a wisdom that gives its proper dimension to each aspect of existence in the light of the final homecoming; it is accom-

panied by the experience of people and problems that is given to those who have passed through life's various stages. Memories of the past reveal the interdependence of one generation on another going back to the birth of a charisma or the beginnings of a particular work. This is something that makes such confreres almost indispensable in communities of first formation.

Often advancing years are accompanied by failing health or a terminal illness. Activity becomes progressively less and may have to cease altogether. They become dependent on others, and such confreres then participate in the salesian mission by prayer, suffering and the offering of their life, and in this way become channels of grace and a source of blessings for the community and the young. "They enrich the family spirit of the community," says art. 53 of the Constitutions, "and deepen its unity." Pain and sorrow, in fact, not only purify whoever has to endure them, but provide the confreres with opportunities for sharing and service. Around the suffering member the community gathers in vocational solidarity and brotherly affection.

For all these reasons long life has been spoken of as a "charisma", a gift which sanctifies the one who receives it and becomes a source of sanctification also for others. But this only if it be lived as a grace on the part of the aging confrere himself and of those who participate with him.

2. A proper appraisal

We first need to acquire an adequate view of advancing years. This period of life does not have a good name among the various ages of man. Childhood is full of promise, youth is brilliant and rouses expectations for the future, and maturity is the period of full possession of one's resources which leads to the conferring of responsibilities. But old age has to come to grips with declining physical strength, the risk of psychological regression, the thinning out of relationships, the giving up of responsibilities. And so in our present culture it gives rise at best to a feeling of gratitude, respect and love

which becomes expressed in professional assistance and affectionate attention. Only rarely does it lead to an evaluation of its specific resources.

Underlying this kind of attitude is a concept of life in which what counts above all is manual or intellectual productive ability, and as this slowly diminishes so does human existence itself lose its value.

When an idea of this kind prevails or is merely below the surface, it is quickly discerned by those who are getting on in years and brings about, at least in the more fragile, an undervaluation of their own possibilities. This leads as a consequence to the desire to go into retirement, which in turn means that 'active' years are further curtailed and the resources of old age cannot develop as well as they otherwise could do.

Our religious and salesian experience heads us off from this kind of mentality, but inevitably we may be infected by it to some degree.

Increasing age at community level gives rise to concern in us, and every rise in the average age provokes comments about the future. That is perfectly normal because the Congregation is engaged in activities which call for fresh energy and very often replacements are not proportionate to the demands. But it becomes misleading if the question is seen solely or principally from the standpoint of the work to be carried out in our foundations as they at present exist. Our pastoral commitment to the salvation of the young itself becomes distorted if thought of solely in terms of activities, even though the latter be indispensable and represent a visible sign of our work.

It is our consecrated existence, in its totality and in the concrete circumstances, which is the gift of the Father to young people, the source of words and deeds that help them to mature as men and open them up to the mystery of God. Baptism and religious profession place our entire life under the particular sign of love. The Spirit renders fruitful youthful energy, adult maturity, and the apparent physical decline of old age.

Growth of life in the Spirit is not stopped by sickness or ad-

vancing years. Indeed, as the external man gradually declines through the loss of what is only transient, the interior man grows by reaping the fruits of his entire existence as he approaches the great encounter. In this way old age is always a revelation of life. Its value is to be assessed not only with reference to the approaching end but in the light of the journey made from birth in the perspective of maturing and fulfilment.

Its riches are not just mysterious and invisible. They have practical manifestations of value in our life spent together: spiritual maturity, readiness for friendship, a taste for prayer and contemplation, an unfeigned sense of the poverty of life, and abandonment into God's hands.

Old age therefore will certainly be the object of our affectionate care and attention, but also a human and pastoral resource to be used for the benefit of the community and the salesian mission.

3. Participation in the condition of aging confreres

Those entering the so-called third or fourth age need particular support, and this the confreres and community are invited to offer in the context of our normal fraternal life.

The first kind of support is the giving of due value in the community to the person concerned. It is important at the present day to state clearly the mission that aging confreres have in our common life, and in consequence to foster it. This means among other things helping them to be fully aware of the new phase opening out before them, the resources they have available, new goals at which to aim, and also the detachments and adaptations needed. This is one of the most significant stages in ongoing formation, which the document on formation in religious institutes emphasizes and recommends: "At the time of progressive withdrawal from activity, religious feel more profoundly within themselves the experience which Paul describes in the context of moving toward the resurrection: 'We do not waver; indeed, though this outward human nature of ours may be falling into decay, at the same time our inner human

nature is renewed day by day' (2 Cor 4,16)...Religious can live these moments as a unique opportunity for allowing themselves to be penetrated by the Paschal experience of the Lord Jesus, to the point of wishing to die 'to be with Christ', in keeping with their initial choice: 'that I may know Christ, the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings'." (Directives on Formation in Religious Institutes, Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, 1990, p. 70).

In some parts special provision has been made for confreres of the third age to have the advantage of a special period of preparation with specialist input, and results have been gratifying. In other cases confreres of this age group who have felt the need have spontaneously asked to participate in formation initiatives with the same objectives.

Thought must also be given to kinds of community work that will enable confreres to be fully occupied for as long as possible. It is clear that it is not a question of merely keeping them busy, but of finding useful contributions they can make to the salesian mission according to each one's strength and abilities. Inserted as it is in a vast movement of persons and open to a wide variety of service, the community can incorporate in its pastoral plan even unusual qualities and contributions.

This will lead to greater involvement of the aging confreres not only at times of prayer and community living but also in the shared community responsibility, and will therefore maintain their participation in a broad range of relationships, exchanges and collaboration. As regards medical assistance and health care the provinces have developed criteria and launched initiatives that need to become more widely known, because they constitute a means well suited to meeting the need.

Aging confreres remain in active communities as long as they are able to look after themselves or, if they are sick, as long as the community can take care of them. This is the practice most in line with our family spirit and educative witness. We apply in an analogous form to the community what John Paul II said to specialist social workers: "To take old people away from their home and fa-

mily is often to do them unjust violence. The affection of the family can make the precious period of old age willingly accepted, serene and useful. The aging have valuable resources which can indeed enrich the family, provided they be not forgotten nor overlooked." This agrees with the line taken by medical science which prefers home care when possible, and sustains it with new initiatives to ensure adequate medical attention.

For those on the other hand who need continuous and specialized care, the provinces have set up houses in which medical facilities, the environment and the attention provided are of the best quality. Experience is suggesting ways of making transfer to such houses, admittedly a difficult step for the confrere concerned, more easily acceptable. The confrere needs to be brought to see calmly and in advance the possible desirability of such a move, as something to be welcomed as a sign of the Congregation's love, as a measure conducive to better health, and as a means of collaborating in the community's mission. Aging Salesians find such situations more to their liking when the houses are close to others where there are the normal salesian activities going on; there is then the possibility for the old confreres to collaborate in little ways, to take part occasionally in community events, and even to simply enjoy the sight of youngsters and adults at work and play. Praiseworthy too is the diligence shown by the communities where the confreres have worked in visiting them and keeping them informed about what is happening.

But absolutely fundamental is the ability of the confreres in charge of such houses to animate the individuals, homogeneous groups and entire communities. They have to make suitable arrangements for prayer, encourage whatever work is possible, enliven relationships, provide information, and follow up each one in union with the specialists.

A public expression of gratitude is due to those confreres who accept the obedience of looking after houses of this kind. They express to the old confreres the gratitude and affection of the Congregation. It would be well for them to be given training to enable them to offer competent pastoral and spiritual help to their charges.

4. Preparation for growing old gracefully

Old age, like any other period in life, is not immune to crises, and presents certain risks. All of us have seen examples. Alongside active old people you can come across those who have become old prematurely. As well as those who spread around themselves serenity and trust there are others who are a prey to anxiety and pessimism. There are those who accept with joy occupations and roles suited to their strength, and others who cling to a particular office or work, preventing an opportune replacement.

It is not for us to make judgements in such situations, because the causes of moods, liveliness or depression are frequently beyond the control of the individual concerned. But the increase in the normal life span being witnessed all over the world prompts us to think in advance of how we are going to live it for the Lord and the young in all its possibilities.

In fact the quality of the period of advancing years of each one is not something fortuitous nor completely unforeseen. It depends on what response he is able to make; and the latter cannot be improvised – it is something prepared over the preceding years. It is a period during which ordinarily one gathers the fruits of what one has learned and practised. Growing old becomes in this way an exercise for the whole of life; it consists in facing positively the challenges of maturing, in fidelity to one's vocation.

Some aspects therefore are of particular importance. The first is the constant tendency towards uninterrupted growth as a response to the Lord's call. It implies attention to the spiritual experience that develops in us, through which we come to understand ever more deeply God's action in our life. In a religious educator this is linked with an openness to culture which enables him to accept willingly new situations and implications, and enables him to make the necessary changes without becoming upset. And a second aspect to be considered is work: how one approaches it, how one carries it out, how one applies one's skills with flexibility. It is well known that, physical and psychical factors being equal, those who have acquired a serious professional approach and have then be-

come consolidated in a specific sector of work, continue to produce eminent results even when their strength begins to decline. Long practice, their accumulated experience, the facility they have acquired, make their contribution valuable, even though reduced in quantity. On the other hand, activity begun without qualifications, carried out in a haphazard manner and amidst continual changes of trade, never reaches maturity but leads to a sense of inadequacy and premature retirement.

Attention to this kind of preparation is required of every confrere, but it is also the concern of those who organize the activity of a province and plan its development and work. Two articles of the Regulations remind us of this: "Let every confrere study with his superiors the field of further qualifications best suited to his abilities and to the needs of the province, giving preference to whatever concerns our mission. He should preserve that availability which is characteristic of our spirit, and be ready for periodic requalification" (R 100). Reg. 43, on the other hand, warns against haphazard work and suggests a balanced distribution of duties, relaxation and periods of formation.

The upshot of both articles is the same: on no account can the importance of the work be allowed to come before that of the individuals concerned, and that initial or ongoing formation or the quality of life and activity must never be sacrificed to an urgent need for "sustaining" structures and initiatives. In this way will be realized the thought expressed by the Psalmist:

"The just will flourish in the courts of our God, still bearing fruit when they are old, still full of sap, still green, to proclaim that the Lord is just."

(Ps 92, 15-16)

2.2 CANDIDATES FOR THE SALESIAN MISSIONS

Fr Luciano Odorico
Councillor General for the Missions

This brief communication should be read in the light of the recent letter of the Rector Major: *"The Pope's appeal for the missions"* (AGC 336, pp. 3-44), and in the context of the Encyclical *"Redemptoris missio"* of John Paul II. Both the Holy Father and the Rector Major emphasize the essential role of the missionary, his qualities and the particular nature of his vocation.

Here I want to concentrate attention on the criteria of choice and the *method for sending* candidates to the salesian missions, in the light of our hundred years of tradition and of new events linked especially with *Project Africa*. In particular I want to indicate some practical criteria, approved by the Rector Major.

1. Salesian tradition

It is an established fact that from its beginnings, in the person of Don Bosco himself, the Congregation has always been known for its essentially missionary dimension (cf. AGC 336, pp. 5-10). There has always therefore been concern about the proper choice of candidates for the missions.

Don Bosco was aware that the missionary vocation was a generous expression of the common vocation of all his sons; and so he chose his first missionaries with simplicity, convinced (as the Rector Major has said) that every confrere was essentially available, in virtue of obedience, to be sent to the missions (ibid. p. 12). He chose men who were deeply salesian, men of convinced prayer who were creative, flexible and even heroic, despite their human limita-

tions. Through them Don Bosco began in an irreversible manner the spreading and inculturation of the salesian charisma throughout the world. And salesian missionaries are still the historical instrument of the catholicity of the Congregation.

The manner in which salesian missionaries were chosen and sent from Don Bosco's own time (1875) to the Special General Chapter (1971) are well known.

- The candidates, convinced of their "special vocation", presented their requests directly to the Rector Major.
- The Councillor for the Salesian Missions (and earlier, the Prefect General) took care directly of the necessary discernment, destination and sending of the candidates.
- The great majority received the missionary crucifix in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians in Turin.
- It was clear that the ecclesiological context and that of the salesian Constitutions emphasized the vertical and centrality dimensions as an expression of unity.
- This method greatly fostered the international nature of missionary communities because of the direct intervention of the Rector Major through the Councillor for the Missions.

2. The present practice

In the light of Vatican II, and according especially to the ecclesiological doctrine of *Lumen gentium*, the Salesian Congregation in the SGC embodied in its constitutional text the principles of unity in participation and shared responsibility, subsidiarity and decentralization (C 122-124), with these principles applied not only to authority, but to the life and organization of the Congregation as well; and hence also to missionary life.

At the level of the Congregation, the taking up of *Project Africa* as a common enterprise involving all the provinces made easier a change in the manner of discerning, choosing and sending missionaries. The new practice may be described as follows:

- A good number of confreres present their desire to go to the

- missions verbally or in writing to their own Provincial, who in turn suggests and fosters the choice in a dialogue of obedience.
- The Provincial himself chooses and sends the missionaries to the province's own mission territory (especially in Africa and in the new frontiers of Asia and America). Some are sent for a limited time, others with a permanent and definitive commitment.
 - Usually they receive the missionary crucifix in a community celebration at provincial or local level.
 - But there remains always open the other alternative for candidates to write personally to the Rector Major, who will intervene directly through the Councillor for the Missions: such candidates become available for any project.
- It should be noted that
- This method fosters a rapid expansion of missionary plans at province level, and gives rise to a new missionary enthusiasm in nearly every province.
 - Nevertheless the number of candidates for the service of all the missions is dropping considerably.
 - The decentralization of the ceremony of the presentation of the crucifix reduces the traditional solemnity of the main function in Turin.
 - Some lay volunteer missionaries, linked directly or indirectly with the Salesian Family, are now leaving for the missions.
 - The overall situation reflects an ecclesiological context of unity in diversity, and of unity in decentralization. These latter (unity and decentralization) are two dimensions which are not opposed one to the other, but complementary.

3. Practical guidelines

In the light of the history of our missionary practice, I want to emphasize the following *practical guidelines* which have been approved by the Rector Major, and which should therefore be put into practice throughout the Congregation.

- Candidates should be chosen especially from among those who

manifest a genuine missionary vocation (AG 23).

- They may present their desire either to the Rector Major or to their own Provincial.
- Candidates who make their request to the Rector Major remain at the disposal of the Councillor General for the Missions for wider missionary projects and the internationalization of communities. Discernment concerning their qualities will be made in dialogue with their respective Provincials.
- Their immediate preparation and the presentation of the crucifix will take place in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians at Valdocco.
- The Rector Major can destine certain confreres to urgent specific tasks in the Missions, even without a specific request from those concerned, as did Don Bosco.
- Eventual lay volunteer candidates should be presented by the Provincials of their places of origin: they should be people open to the values of the world, of deep christian convictions, and with a knowledge of salesian style and pedagogy.
- Salesian candidates who make the request to their own Provincial will normally be sent to the mission territories entrusted to their own province. Their names and destinations will be forwarded to the Councillor General for the missions for reasons of information and congregational communion.
- These will normally make their immediate preparation and receive the crucifix in their own province. Those from provinces close to Turin will be invited to take part in the function at Valdocco to emphasize the unity of the salesian missionary project.
- Provincials should remember that they must respect the particular nature of requests to go on the missions, not only because of the universal and sometimes specialized needs of the salesian missions, but especially through deep respect for God's design in every missionary vocation "ad gentes".

To conclude these brief reflections and the presentation of the practical guidelines, I appeal to the large number of young Salesians to think seriously about the concrete possibility that God is calling them to heights of generosity that have no limit. Their forti-

tude and heroism will be always accompanied by a joy springing from the depths of their hearts. May I appeal also to the provinces to become ever more involved in missionary projects: they are one of the most efficacious means for the spiritual and apostolic renewal of the Congregation.

"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" (AGC 336, p. 12). In a word, missionary life, and hence the vocation of candidates to that life, is a daily challenge of holiness and radicality of approach (cf. RM 90).

3. RULINGS AND DIRECTIVES

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE PROVINCIAL CHAPTERS OF 1992

Fr Juan E. Vecchi
Vicar General

The following indications and directives – drawn from the Constitutions and General Regulations and with reference to the GC23 – are given in view of the Provincial Chapters of 1992 (PC 92).

1. Time and convocation

1.1 “The provincial chapter shall ordinarily be called together by the provincial every three years and each time the general chapter is convoked” (C 172).

1.2 Since the preceding PC took place in '89 and the one in preparation for the GC24 will be convoked in '95, *the next PC must be celebrated in '92*. For convenience all the PCs should take place in the coming year (between January and December).

1.3 There is no need for convocation or a proclamation by the Rector Major, since the PC is “called together by the provincial”.

2. Content

2.1 The matters to be dealt with by the PC 92 will be *decided by the Provincial with his Council* within the limits laid down by articles 170 and 171 of the Constitutions.

2.2 C 170: The provincial chapter “deliberates about matters which regard the province, with the exception of whatever is entrusted by the Constitutions and Regulations to other organs of government”.

2.3 C 171: “It is the task of the provincial chapter:

1. to decide on what pertains to the good running of the province;
2. to inquire into suitable means for promoting the religious and pastoral life of the provincial community;
3. to study how the deliberations of the general chapter may be put into practice;
4. to formulate and revise the provincial directory in matters left to be decided at provincial level;
5. to elect one or two delegates to the general chapter and their substitutes, in accordance with the Regulations.”

2.4 With reference to n. 3 of C 171, the Rector Major and his Council remind confreres of the following *obligations that stem from the GC23*:

1. The continuing formation and qualification of the confreres (GC23, 221): the annual programme of the local community and its “community day” (n. 222), the organic plan at provincial level for the ongoing formation of the confreres (n. 223), the formation of rectors for personal and communal spiritual direction (n. 223);
2. Characterization of our works from the point of view of education to the faith and their possible relocation (n. 228); verification and redimensioning of activities, reformulation of the duties of confreres (n. 229);
3. Concerning the plan for the formation of the laity: the setting up of the educative and pastoral community, and the qualification of the laity and particularly those belonging to the Salesian Family (n. 236): the provincial programme for the formation of lay people (n. 237), and its application by local communities (n. 236);
4. Communication and liaison for an organic practical work (n. 242), convergence and roles for the education of the young

to the faith at local level (n. 243), responsibility of the provincial and his council for pastoral work: the delegate and team (n. 244);

5. Vocational guidance, proposal and follow-up, as characteristic parts of the journey of faith (n. 251); on the part of the local community (n. 252), in the province (n. 253);
6. Adequate use of social communication in evangelization and the education of youth to the faith (n. 257): on the part of the local community (n. 258), on the part of the province (n. 259);
7. Verification of education to the faith in the various "programmes" and plans for qualification:
 - environments offering a wide welcome (nn. 262-266);
 - environments of systematic education (nn. 267-273);
 - youth groups (nn. 274-283);
 - the personal encounter (nn. 284-289);
 - communities for youngsters in difficulties (nn. 290-294);
 - large scale gatherings of youth (nn. 295-299).

2.5 In particular it should be remembered that two points from the deliberations of the GC23 indicate this provincial chapter as the time within which they are to be implemented:

n. 230: "Not later than the next Provincial Chapter, every province will revise its Salesian Educative and Pastoral Plan (PEPS). In it:

- it will pay particular attention to the active insertion of the individual works in the local Church and district;
- it will review the educative quality of the same works and their significance from the youth point of view, starting up (if necessary) an investigation into their possible relocation;
- it will single out new and urgent frontiers for our commitment, principally among youngsters in greater difficulty, and starting up for them some work which will be a "sign" of our intention to go after those youngsters we have not yet reached;
- it will translate the journey of faith proposed by the GC23 into

a practical process suited to those we are working for and the contexts in which we operate.”

n. 236. “Not later than the next Provincial Chapter each local community will set up the educative and pastoral community in its work, and get it functioning as well as possible. It will translate into practical local initiatives the provincial plan for the formation of the laity referred to in the following paragraph, giving particular care to the formation of the members of the Salesian Family, who should always be involved and committed in programmes for education to the faith.

At the time of the provincial visitation, the Provincial will verify what has been done by the community in this field.”

3. Approval

3.1 The deliberations of the provincial chapter have binding force after the approval of the Rector Major with the consent of his council, with the exception of what is prescribed by article 171,5 of the Constitutions (C 170).

3.2 Every province will send to the Vicar General – or to the Secretary General – a complete copy of the Acts of the PC in the original language, and at least two copies of the DELIBERATIONS, with their respective motivations, in Italian.

3.3 The province can begin to put into practice those deliberations of which the content is within the competence of the provincial and his council. But the publication of the complete Acts referring to the province must await the approval of the Rector Major and his council.

4. Procedure

As in all provincial chapters, the norms concerning elections, participation and voting, must be strictly observed (Cf. C 173-174; R 161-166. 168).

4. ACTIVITIES OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL

4.1 Chronicle of the Rector Major

From 1 to 13 April the Rector Major visited Togo and Benin in Western Africa. He spent the first few days at Lomé, going on to Porto-novo and Cotonou in Benin on the 8th and 9th. He should then have returned to Togo but was unable to do so because of the political situation, and so he remained in Benin until the evening of the 13th. During these visits he made contact with the salesian communities of the two countries, and especially those of the novitiate and post-novitiate of Lomé; he presided over an important meeting dealing with the formation of African vocations, which dealt especially with the pre-novitiate and practical training period. Some thirty confreres took part, all of them engaged in formation in 11 countries of Western and Central Africa. He also inaugurated the new church in the salesian parish of Lomé, dedicated to Mary Help of Christians.

A special significance attached to the presence of the Rector Major in the Provinces of Bratislava (19-22 April) and Prague (22-26 April): it was the first visit by a successor of Don Bosco to Czechoslovakia! A heavy programme in both Slovakia

and in Moravia and Bohemia took the Rector Major through various towns and places prominent in the salesian life of the area; he was able to meet almost all the confreres, talk with them at length, and present personally to each one the cross or medal which is the sign of salesian profession. He visited with particular attention the two novitiates (with 18 and 20 novices respectively); he met with members of various Groups of the Salesian Family, and engaged in some lively dialogues with young people. Of importance were his contacts with nine Bishops, and especially with Cardinal Tomasek, and with other authorities. In his concluding meetings with provincial councils he emphasized the motives we have for hope, the principal challenges we face, and the gradual steps to be taken for a plan for the future of the salesian presence so as to ensure communion and solidarity with the whole Congregation.

The beginning of May (3 to 5) found the Rector Major in Sardinia for a visit of animation to the salesian communities, a discussion with the combined Rectors and members of the Council of the Vice-Province, and an inspection of the new work begun at Nuoro. In the Town Hall

of Lanusei, in the presence of the civic authorities and local people, he was officially given honorary citizenship of the town.

From 6 to 15 May he took part in the meeting of animators of ongoing formation, except for the 9th when he was at the FMA Faculty of Educational Sciences for the solemn oath-taking ceremony by the students who had finished their courses, and the 11th when he presided at the inauguration of the promising Institute for Educational Research for the whole of the Alpe-Adra region on the island of St George at Venice (Cini Foundation).

From May 22 to 25 he took part at Ariccia in the annual meeting of Superiors General.

Finally on 1 and 2 June he was at Turin for the solemn celebrations of the centenary of the well known Oratory of Martinetto, which has Cardinal Agostino Richelmy as its titular.

4.2 Activities of the Councillors

The Vicar General

On 26 January Fr Juan Vecchi left for India, where he remained until 21 February. At Madras and Bangalore he held meetings with the Rectors to present the GC23. In both provinces too he presided at the inauguration of some significant salesian works: at Madras at the bless-

ing of the Provincial House, and at the inauguration of the new buildings for the elementary and middle schools at the "Don Bosco Beatitudes Centre"; at Bangalore he laid the foundation stone for the workshops intended for street lads.

He then spent eight days in the Province of Dimapur, where he visited the missions in Assam, Nagaland and Manipur. He was obliged to spend rather less time in the three Provinces of Bombay, Calcutta and Guwahati, largely because of disruption of air services caused by the Gulf war. In these provinces he was able to meet confreres in groups and visit some of the formation communities.

On his return to Rome he began the annual visitation of the Generalate community, which continued until 10 March.

Immediately afterwards he left for Spain, to preach two retreats, one at Barcelona and the other at Madrid. He was also able to take part in the presentation to the Don Bosco Volunteers of their new Constitutions.

While in residence at the Generalate he took part in communal celebrations in various Italian Provinces: in the Central Province, a meeting of formation personnel; in the Genoa Province, the Feast of the Salesian Family; in the Naples Province, the Feast of the provincial community; in Sicily, at a meeting

of lay collaborators in Professional Training Centres; and at Sante-ramo-in-Colle for the Silver Jubilee of the work there.

On 24 May he represented the Rector Major at the celebrations in Turin for the Feast of Mary Help of Christians.

The Councillor for Formation

From 30 December to 5 January, Fr Nicolussi visited the theological studentate of Cremisan in the Holy Land, with its 21 students from 9 different provinces in addition to some diocesan students. The studentate is affiliated to the UPS. He took part in a meeting of the "Curatorium", which concluded the verification of the "Cremisan Project", which has the objective of relaunching the studentate for the service of the Congregation. After an experimental four-year period, which produced positive results, the validity of this formation centre was reaffirmed, together with the responsibility of the Congregation to give it due value.

From 7 to 14 February, together with the Regional Councillor Fr Britschu, he visited the communities for initial formation in Zaire. Points to be noted, in connection with the coordination desired by the GC23 (n. 310), are: the setting up of a "curatorium" for the salesian

theological studentate of Lubumbashi, which is the Centre for the theological formation for French-speaking Salesians in Africa. During its three years of existence the studentate has seen a positive development from various points of view. At present it houses 15 salesian students as well as a group belonging to other Congregations. Its affiliation to the UPS is in progress of preparation.

Fr Nicolussi also visited various other provinces to get to know and provide animation for the formation sector, especially through contact with communities for initial formation, provincial formation commissions and provincial councils: Venezuela (23 Feb.- 3 March), Ecuador (3-11 March), North Belgium (16-20 March), South Belgium (20-22 March). From 14 to 16 March, in the context of the extraordinary visitation of the GBR Province being made at the time by the Regional Councillor, he had a day's meeting with the provincial council and another with the provincial formation commission, at Chertsey.

From 1 to 13 April the Councillor accompanied the Rector Major on his visit to Togo and Benin. Of particular importance, in addition to contact with the novitiate and the post-novitiate at the interprovincial study centre at Lomé, was the meeting with formation personnel that was held there. With the Rec-

tor Major presiding and the participation also of the Regional Councillor for Spain and Portugal, the meeting took place from 4 to 6 April. 27 other confreres took part from 11 provinces and 13 countries in Central and Western Africa. It was held in compliance with the directive of the GC23 which asked for special coordination "so as to help the confreres working in Africa to get to know African culture, and thus provide efficaciously... particularly for the formation process" (GC23, 310). The meeting provided an opportunity for sharing formative experiences, a deeper study of criteria, the seeking of convergence and ways of coordination and collaboration in the formation sector, especially in what concerns preparation for the novitiate and the practical training period. The presence of the Rector Major and the responsible and fraternal participation of all present contributed to make the meeting a significant event for formation work in the countries concerned.

From 18 to 26 April Fr Nicolussi accompanied the Rector Major in his visit to the Provinces of Bratislava and Prague in Czechoslovakia.

From 5 to 15 May he presided at the Generalate, Rome, at a Seminar on "Ongoing Formation and the GC23", in which 33 confreres took part from 30 Provinces, chosen in agreement with the Regional Coun-

cillors. Organized to foster the assimilation and realization of the first deliberation of the GC23, the seminar took place in three phases: the first was given over to the acquiring of a knowledge of, and reflecting on, the situation and experiences of ongoing formation in the salesian and other congregations; the second was dedicated to a sharing of experiences at provincial and inter-provincial level; and the third sought ways of bringing about convergence in practice and suitable strategies that could be adopted. Aspects explored in the third phase were: the local community as the place for ongoing formation of the Salesian; ongoing formation of young and of adult confreres; the place of animators in ongoing formation; and structures, teams and instruments for the purpose.

The Councillor for the Youth Apostolate

In the period from January to May 1991, Fr Luc Van Looy made contact with many Provinces, meeting particularly with provincial teams for youth pastoral work and rectors of communities directly involved in such work. The meetings covered such items as study sessions, reflection and verification, retreats and visits of animation.

In the period immediately following Christmas 1990 he preached two

retreats to the Salesians and to the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians in Korea on the theme of "The salesian community and evangelization". He then went on to Japan for a meeting with our parish priests and the youth pastoral team.

From 16 to 20 January he visited many houses in the Philippines; he met at provincial level with those in charge of pastoral animation in the various communities, and dealt on several occasions with the theme of salesian youth spirituality.

He celebrated the solemnity of St John Bosco on 31 January at Reggio Emilia, and on the following day took part in a study session on the theme: "A school suited to the needs of the young". On 2 February he was at Chieri for the celebration of the Feast of Don Bosco there.

From 4 to 9 February he was in Poland for a meeting with the provincial delegates for the youth pastoral sector and for two days of study on the General Chapter with the rectors of the four Polish provinces.

The Councillor was in Andalusia (Spain) from 27 February to 8 March for meetings with the youth pastoral teams of Cordoba and Seville, and subsequently to preach the retreat for the rectors of the two provinces.

He spent Holy Week in Ireland, preaching a retreat to 94 Salesians, Daughters of Mary Help of Christ-

ians, and Cooperators.

From 2 to 4 April he directed a brief course for rectors and confreres of the South Belgium Province, and immediately afterwards went on to Hong Kong where, with the Regional Councillor Fr Thomas Panakezham, he presided at an 8-day study seminar for the rectors from countries in the Far East on the theme: "The pastoral reality in the Far East and the education of youth to the faith". In this encounter particular importance was given to the practical application of some elements of the GC23. The conclusions formulated at the end of the seminar insisted on the role of the rector as a promoter of communion, on the involvement of collaborators in pastoral planning, and on the availability and openness of the communities to local needs.

After this encounter with the rectors the Councillor made visits of animation to the confreres of Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan.

"The technical school and Centre for professional formation" was the theme studied by representatives of countries from the European Community who gathered at the Generalate from 24 to 26 April. The three days were rich in highly qualified contributions and updating on the changing reality in Europe. The Councillor was particularly interested in the results, and it was decided to continue the study by prom-

oting an investigation into the "requirements emerging on the part of the young from professional formation", and on "the formation of lay collaborators to respond to these youthful expectations".

In the first week of May Fr Van Looy was once again in Poland for meetings concerning the national Centre for youth pastoral work, and with the SDB and FMA provincial delegates for the sector, as also for a verification of the experience of teaching catechism in the schools.

On his return to Rome he dedicated the days 10, 11 and 12 to a second meeting at European level at the Sacred Heart, Rome, with SDBs, FMAs and representatives of young people, in preparation for the "Confronto 92".

Finally, from 14 to 24 May he passed through the different parts of the vast Vice-Province of Southern Africa, gathering the confreres together at various centres to study the theme of the "pastoral community" according to the GC23. Subsequently he had a meeting in Zambia and another in Malta to study the same theme, returning to the Generalate on 2 June.

The Councillor for the Salesian Family and Social Communication

SALESIAN FAMILY

Animation kept Fr Martinelli busy

in meetings with various Groups, with the Salesian Family as a whole, and with those responsible for it at provincial and regional levels, in addition to administrative work at headquarters.

He took part with the *Past-Pupils* of Brazil in their second National Congress (27-30 April) for the preparation of the CONGRELAT of September in Caracas. He also met with all the Presidents of the Past-Pupils' Unions of the Argentinean Province of Buenos Aires (18 April).

He was present throughout the National Congress of the *Association of Mary Help of Christians* at Vigo in Spain from 1 to 5 May. The theme of the Congress was "Mary Help of Christians and the New Evangelization". It aroused great interest and indicated a process useful not only for the Association concerned but for the whole Family.

Three meetings with the *Don Bosco Volunteers*, at Cracow (6 February), Buenos Aires (18 April) and Campo Grande (23 April), served to provide the Councillor with a better knowledge of the Institute, and to present the opportunity for a study of ever more committed work in line with the characteristic vocation of the DBV.

He also had meetings with *Coopetrators*, on the occasion of his visits to various provinces, where he was able to make contact with provincial and local centres. In Argentina

he visited the Provinces of Bahia Blanca (10-12 April), La Plata (15-16 April) and Buenos Aires (17-18 April); in Brazil, the Provinces of Porto Alegre (19-20 April), Campo Grande (21-24 April), Belo Horizonte (25-26 April) and São Paulo (27-29 April). In Italy he had a meeting with the National Coordinators' Committee to consider organizational problems and those of formation.

Meanwhile the Cooperators' Central Delegate made an animating tour of the Far East between 13 February and 4 March, visiting Japan, Korea, the Philippines, Hong Kong, Macau and Thailand.

Interesting and of importance also were meetings with *those responsible for the Salesian Family*. At Fortin Mercedes (13-14 April) he met with the persons responsible at the highest level for the Salesian Family in Argentina: SDB and FMA Provincials, Coordinators, Presidents, DBV Superiors and those in charge of other groups of the Family present in Argentina and the zone of La Plata. At Campo Grande in Brazil in two separate meetings (21-24 April) he met first with the SDB and FMA Provincials of Brazil and then the provincial delegates, coordinators, presidents and those responsible for other groups of the Family. In Great Britain at Farnborough (18 May) he had a meeting with the SDB and FMA Provincials, and the provincial delegates for the

Cooperators.

In Poland between 4 and 8 February, a meeting with the SDB and FMA Provincials and their councils allowed some conclusions to be reached after an earlier meeting with the rectors of all four provinces.

At Salamanca in Spain on 19 March he took part in a local Salesian Family Day.

The Salesian Family is clearly a living and varied reality in the different parts of the world.

The call of the Councillor General expressed in AGC 336 to begin from the comprehensive aspect in consolidating the presence of the Family emphasizes a necessary foundation for animation.

SOCIAL COMMUNICATION

The main commitment of the Councillor and his collaborators, and especially the Central Delegate, has been the organization of the Department and its future programming. The work of ordinary administration has meanwhile continued normally with all the daily obligations linked with communication in the Congregation.

A particular activity of the Councillor has been a series of visits to our publishing houses with a view to possible interventions by way of help and renewal.

In Italy he has had several meetings in this first period with those

responsible for the SEI (9 January and 6 May), for the LDC (9 January), and for the CITS (9 January and 6 May) at Turin. The early salesian structures were examined, which have their roots in the animation and interventions of Rectors Major of the Congregation as regards decisions.

In Spain he visited the two publishing houses of Barcelona (11-13 January) and Madrid (22 March), with their respective printing establishments and bookshops. Meetings with the Salesians in charge of structures and publishing, and with all those involved in the organization and management of the two publishing houses, made clear how valid is the activity of the various sectors into which the work is divided.

In Poland he had a meeting with those responsible for the publishing houses at Warsaw (6 February) and Cracow (7 February). The present moment in history, with its social and political aspects, merits special care to give appropriate direction to a development which will certainly take place in the communications sector in the coming years.

In Argentina Fr Martinelli visited the publishing house at Buenos Aires (17-18 April), with its associated printing press and bookshop. Interesting aspects here are the structural and scholastic aspects, and the organization for the formation of

speakers for radio and television and of future journalists: COSAL.

In Brazil he visited the Gaúcho Centre at Porto Alegre (19-20 April), which provides a highly esteemed educational, catechetical and promotional service. At Belo Horizonte he visited the Salesian Audiovisual Centre (26 April): a modern structure with a carefully thought out organization. At São Paulo (29 April) he visited the publishing house, printing press, and the associated school for young apprentices. At Campo Grande (21-24 April) he visited the Province's structures for alternative means of communication.

A significant moment for social communication in Brazil was the meeting with SDB and FMA Provincials in Campo Grande on the theme of: "social communication and the shared commitment of the two Institutes".

A final aspect that it may be useful to record is that in all the provinces the Councillor General investigated the situation of the country's Salesian Bulletin: its compilation and editing, the practical collaboration of provinces in this connection, its circulation among the whole Salesian Family and the sharing of responsibility, particularly with the FMA, in its development and consolidation.

The Councillor for the Missions

Fr Odorico's activities between

November 1990 and the end of May 1991 can be summed up in visits to Salesian Mission Offices, meetings for missionary animation, seminars and international congresses, specific visits to certain mission territories, and publications. The following is a synopsis.

At the end of 1990 he visited for the first time the Mission Offices of Madrid, Bonn, New Rochelle and Canada. In April he went for the first time also to Comide in Belgium. These visits enabled him to see at first hand how the offices are run, their various plans and the situation as regards missionary animation. While in the United States he also made a visit to Los Angeles in the USA western province which is juridically responsible for the salesian presence in Sierra Leone in Africa.

In January, after a brief stay in Portugal for purposes of missionary animation, he visited the missions of Mozambique accompanied by the Regional Councillor for Spain and Portugal, and saw for himself the tragic economic, social, cultural, political and religious situation of that country. In hopes of a coming peace the Salesians are preparing to diversify their work and make a greater commitment to promoting local vocations.

In the first part of February he took part at Lima, Peru, in the fourth Missionary Congress of Latin

America – COMLA IV – together with 40 salesian provincial delegates for the missions from all over Latin America. The Congress laid great emphasis on the responsibility of Latin America itself for missionary projects in the continent, as well as appealing for a generous commitment “ad gentes”. After the Congress, Fr Odorico presided over the first meeting of the Latin-American provincial delegates for missionary activity, during which he explained the role and tasks of such delegates, the various kinds of activity for missionary animation, and the relevant structures that are necessary. The results of this meeting will be published in the near future. In Latin America, as indeed in the whole of Europe, provincial missionary animation is already well advanced as far as organization goes. In February too Fr Odorico spent a short time in the Vicariate Apostolic of Puerto Ayacucho (Venezuela), and made a visit for missionary animation to Malta, a provincial delegation of the Dublin province which has the task of realizing the missionary project in Tunisia.

In March and early April the Councillor visited the missions of the provinces of Bombay and Guwahati in India. He was able to observe with joy the excellent state of many provincial missionary projects on account of their number, the quality of the work of evangeliza-

tion (first evangelization and re-evangelization), the scientific reflection involved, the enormous efforts being made in the field of education and human advancement, the spirit of generosity among the missionaries, and the abundant vocational fruits that are being produced.

In mid-April Fr Odorico coordinated at Brussels in Belgium a meeting of 50 Procurators and provincial delegates for missionary animation of Europe and North America on the theme: "*The context of the GC23 from a missionary standpoint*". The missionary approach of the Chapter document, together with the rich content of various international contributions, greatly enhanced the quality of the meeting. A report on this meeting too will shortly be published by the Department.

In the second half of May the Councillor visited the salesian missions of Ecuador, where he was able to visit all the mission centres and meet personally the missionary confreres. The first evangelization may be considered at an end, the quality of the planting of the Gospel is high, and the initiatives for human advancement are novel.

As well as the above-mentioned activities, Fr Odorico had various meetings with personnel in formation for the purpose of missionary animation. On June 1 he returned to Rome.

The Economist General

On 16 January Fr Paron had a meeting with the provincial council of the Roman Province in which the restructuring of the sanctuary was discussed of the Temple of Don Bosco in Rome.

On 21 January he met with the council of the East Venice Province for an update on the financial situation of the new work at Mestre.

On 23 January he was at the Monastery of the Visitandine at Treviso to take part in the celebrations for the feast of St Francis de Sales with the East Venice Salesian Family.

The solemnity of St John Bosco he celebrated with the combined communities of St Tarcisius and St Callistus in Rome, and received the temporary profession of two young confreres.

He had a meeting with the rectors, parish priests, and local economists of the East Venice Province on 11 February at Mestre, to explain some aspects of the "Administrative Report".

17 February found him at Lugano in Switzerland on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the founding of the Don Bosco Work for emerging countries.

From 22 February to 13 March Fr Paron was in Brazil where he met with the provincial economists of the country's provinces, gathered at

Campos do Jordão (São Paulo) together with the local economists of the area and their lay collaborators.. He dealt with the theme of the administration of the Congregation's goods, with special reference to the Administrative Report. This was followed by a meeting with the rectors of the province, whom he addressed on the topic of "the Rector and the administration of the community's material goods." He then went on to visit three more provinces: in Campo Grande he spoke (again on the matter of administration) with the rectors and local economists. At Manaus he had a day's meeting with the local economists on matters concerning administration, and then visited some of the houses in the Recife Province.

From 16 to 22 April he was in the North Belgian Province, where he examined and discussed the economic situation of the province and of the individual houses with the provincial council. He also availed himself of the opportunity to have a meeting with the local economists at Antwerp.

On 16 May, accompanied by a group of confreres from East-Venice, he went on pilgrimage to the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Monte Santo, N.Gorica. This was followed on 17-18 May with a meeting at Mestre of the provincial economists of the CISI (the Italian Provincial Conference).

On 25 May, when the feast of Mary Help of Christians was celebrated at the Gerini Institute in Rome, Fr Paron was present for the unveiling of a commemorative stone to mark the first anniversary of the death of the Marquis Alessandro Gerini, founder of the Institute.

The Councillor for the Atlantic Region of Latin America

Fr Carlos Techera began the first semester of 1991 in the company of a group of SDBs, FMA, Cooperators and young people who had gathered at Uribellarea (Argentina) for the work of gathering material on salesian youth spirituality for use by various groups of the Salesian Youth Movement of the Plata zone. He then went on to Cordoba where 180 youth leaders from various sectors of our work were making a communal living experience and studying the theme of salesian youth spirituality. Both of these were excellent experiences on the lines of the GC23! He spent the rest of January visiting the confreres in Southern Patagonia, from Tierra del Fuego to Comodoro Rivadavia.

In the month of February he took part at Lima in the 4th Latin-American Missionary Congress, which was followed by the first meeting of the provincial delegates for missionary formation of the Latin-American provinces. This meet-

ing was presided over by the Councillor for the Missions, Fr Odorico. This too proved to be a valuable experience and very important for the future of the particular Churches in the continent and for the salesian vocation in these provinces.

Returning from Lima, he had a meeting in Uruguay with 150 young animators of oratories, who had come together to look more deeply into and improve the apostolic animation of the very many oratories in the country.

On 21 February he left for São Paulo to take part in the meeting presided over by Fr Paron of the provincial economists of Brazil, with other Salesians and lay collaborators involved in this sector.

After this he went to the Province of Cordoba in Argentina to begin the extraordinary visitation of that province. This kept him occupied with occasional breaks until the end of May.

On 14 and 15 April Fr Techera was at Fortin Mercedes for a meeting with SDB and FMA Provincials and those responsible for the different groups of the Salesian Family in the Plata region. Present at this meeting were also Fr Anthony Martinelli and Mother Ciri Hernandez of the FMA General Council. They studied the theme: "The Salesian Family in the face of the challenges of the New Evangelization". Still at Fortin Mercedes from April 15 to 17

he had a meeting with the formation personnel of the Plata area to study the theme of the salesian priest. Finally, from 18 to 20 April the Regional Councillor presided at a meeting of the Plata provincial conference, where the main question dealt with was that of ongoing formation in the provinces after the GC23.

The next meeting was at Campo Grande with the SDB and FMA Provincials of Brazil, with Fr Martinelli and three members of the FMA General Council present. Immediately afterwards there was a further meeting of formation personnel of Brazil on the subject of ongoing formation and the GC23. When this was over the Regional Councillor chaired a meeting of the provincial conference of Brazil, where ideas were exchanged and various proposals studied for the application of the GC23, and some thought was given to the preparation for the next provincial chapters. Still in Brazil, he took part on 27 and 28 April at São Paulo in the Second National Congress of Past Pupils in preparation for the coming Latin-American Congress at Caracas.

After concluding the visitation of the Cordoba Province, Fr Techera spent a few days with his sick parents and then returned to Rome, taking with him a general impression, gained from the various meetings, of growth in the salesian voca-

tion and especially of the serious intention to embody in practical life the guidelines of the GC23, with clear objectives concerning greater depth of life, better pastoral quality in our work, and of greater service to the particular Churches. In this last connection the Regional had noted in the Cordoba Province a great appreciation of the salesian work by both the Bishops and the Laity. He also noted the intention to work together more effectively as the Salesian Family.

The Councillor for the Pacific-Caribbean Region of Latin America

In the period from January to May 1991, Fr Garcia visited various countries in eight different provinces.

After his lengthy journeys he finished with the conviction that the polarization between rich and poor is getting steadily worse day by day, but on the other hand areas of violence seem to be getting fewer, except in Colombia and Peru where the opposite is the case. It would seem that all the efforts at modernization in very many countries in Latin America have come to nothing, and the continent can count only on itself to emerge from such a situation.

The Salesians are faced by the following realities:

1. In *Mexico* the Salesians and the

whole Salesian Family have decided to celebrate the centenary of the arrivals of the Salesians (1992) and of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians (1994) with a large-scale mission to youth throughout the country.

2. In the *Antilles*:

– In the *Dominican Republic*, where the new Provincial (Fr Juan Linares) has now taken over, a new enthusiasm is evident concerning evangelization, on the eve of the great events of the 5th centenary of the evangelization of the continent and the holding of the IV Assembly of CELAM.

– *Porto Rico* is a Delegation, rich in works for the poor in disturbed areas, with a quite extraordinary educational and pastoral projection for the future.

– The Regional visited *Haiti* twice in this period. He found the confreres and the FMA living in peace, even though there is still some apprehension about what the future has in store for the country and the Church. The trials they have undergone have strengthened our confreres in their fraternal and apostolic communion. They are more sensitive and endowed with a great spirit of self-denial. Much is asked of them.

3. In *Venezuela* the Regional spent twelve days. He got to know all

the woks he had not previously visited and was able also to reach the Vicariate Apostolic of Puerto Ayacucho, where Mgr. Ignacio Velasco has his residence. Next September Caracas will be the scene of the CONGRELAT (Latin-American Congress of Past-Pupils). The Salesian Family is united in its work.

4. *Colombia* is living through an important period in its history; it is engaged on the reform of its political Constitution. In view of this reform, the Church has put forward six precise proposals concerning life, education, the family etc. The "dirty war" of "narcoterrorism" continues to claim victims. The Salesians respond with their work for the very poor, ragamuffins and those who live on the streets. The missions in the Choco and Ariari districts give dynamism to the missionary endeavours of the two provinces. Reference must also be made to the Sanctuary of the Infant Jesus at Bogotá, with its social work and publishing of good literature; these are indeed spectacular, as also is devotion to Mary Help of Christians throughout the country.
5. In *Ecuador*: the Regional Centre for Ongoing Formation has organized various courses for the provinces. Significant too is the work done by Salesian Brothers

at San Salvador and Lima. The Regional spent some time with the missionaries in the Vicariate of Mendez and visited some of the missions in the higher Andes. The province has some truly vigorous works. In this province too, Fr Garcia made the consultation for the appointment of a new provincial.

6. In *Peru* he made the extraordinary visitation. In very unfavourable conditions (amid terrorism, extreme poverty, earthquakes, cholera etc.) our confreres provide a wonderful example of dedication and tenacity. They make great efforts and have multiplied the "Don Bosco Homes", where they give shelter to boys who come to study in the towns and get away from the insecurity of the rural areas. And the charisma of the oratory is spreading steadily!

There remains with the Councillor the positive image of the Region exemplified by the confreres of Peru: a province that is responding to today's great challenges by "refounding the charisma of the Oratory". Where there is an oratory violence disappears and a culture of life and solidarity grows in its place. It gives hope for the future.

The Councillor for the English-speaking Region

During this period Fr Martin McPake made the extraordinary visitation of the Province of Great Britain. He began the visitation in mid-January and concluded it in mid-May. He profited by the closure of the schools at Easter and the fact that many confreres were engaged in retreats at that time, to visit the Salesians in Sierra Leone and Liberia.

The Visitor noted that in Great Britain, in common with some other countries of western Europe, are reflected certain negative aspects of christian life, especially the crisis in vocations. He was glad to see, however, that the Salesians who evidently suffer from the dearth of vocations are entering with faith and zeal into the decade of the new evangelization proclaimed throughout the country by all the christian churches. Some of the Bishops told the Visitor that our parishes show proof of vitality and that while the national picture shows a notable decline in assistance at Mass (20% in the last six years in one of the big archdioceses), the trend is in the opposite direction in some of the parishes where the Salesians are working. And this despite the fact that they are working in very poor areas where the social context tends to foster alienation from the Church.

Certainly the coming decade will not be an easy one: the province is an aging one and the number of young Salesians is small; but in the meantime new initiatives are being courageously developed, especially in Liberia.

The Regional was able to spend some days in Liberia, though to get there from Sierra Leone required great patience: a flight cancelled at the last minute meant returning the next day and hoping – but this time hope was rewarded, because he was able to leave on an Air Cargo flight with a number of other passengers and travel amidst a large quantity of parcels, packages, suitcases etc. But all this was nothing compared with the hardships undergone by the Salesians who have recently returned to Monrovia. Without light, without running water, and with the minimum of necessary food, they were living quite happily and preparing to take in a group of street children and to start up an oratory, both of which enterprises have now been realized. At the time of the visit there were only five Salesians in Liberia, but by the time the canonical visitation came to an end two more confreres had left for Monrovia together with two women volunteers, both of them Cooperators.

A week spent at Lungi in Sierra Leone allowed the Visitor to witness the sacrifices made there too by the

Saleians working in our mission, mainly in the secondary school built by one of the two Brothers who, together with one priest, constitute our only presence in Sierra Leone. The country is obviously poorer than Liberia, but possibilities for salesian work are not wanting: all that is lacking are the workers. The Visitor was glad to hear therefore that another priest will arrive there in the near future.

The visitation was brought to an end with a meeting with the members of the provincial council (9-10 May) and of all the rectors (11-12 May).

Fr McPake returned to Rome on the 18th.

The Councillor for the Asian Region

Fr Thomas Panakezham left Rome on 22 December 1990, and went directly to Thailand to begin the extraordinary Visitation of that province which has St Paul as its titular; the visitation continued until 22 February. Because of the period chosen, the Visitor was able to see at first hand how Christmas is celebrated in a country which is conspicuously Buddhist as regards religion. Catholic in the country number no more than 400,000, but the presence of the Church is nevertheless far from being negligible in its effects. The Salesians carry out an

excellent work, especially through professional schools.

After concluding the visitation at Bangkok Fr Panakezham presided over a meeting of the Provincials of India at Calcutta from 25 to 27 February; among the subjects discussed were some problems of the professional schools, the specific formation of lay confreres, the planning of an assembly of Indian Brothers in October 1992, and the formation of an education committee for the whole of India. After the meeting Fr Thomas visited some of the Calcutta communities, including the novitiate at Siliguri and the postnovitiate at Sonada.

He then went on to Hong Kong to prepare for entry into Vietnam where he was to carry out the extraordinary Visitation. He left Hong Kong on 12 March and was able to remain in Vietnam until 5 April. Although the authorities would not allow him to live in salesian houses, he was able nonetheless to meet all the confreres and novices. We have 87 confreres and 10 novices in that country, and it can be said that the government appreciates the work carried out by the Salesians for the poor. Even with the Visitor the authorities were courteous and understanding, but because of government restrictions on priestly ordinations of religious, we have 13 deacons who have been waiting up to 17 years to be or-

dained priests. These deacons and the other clerics who have completed their theological studies ask all who read these Acts for a special prayer for them and for Vietnam.

From 7 to 12 April the Regional took part in a meeting of all the rectors of the Far East at Cheung Chau (Hong Kong) with Fr Luc Van Looy, Councillor General for Youth Pastoral Work, and then accompanied Fr Van Looy and the Hong Kong Provincial (Fr John Zen) on a visit to the salesian houses in the island of Taiwan, where they were able to take part in the diamond jubilee celebrations of Fr Peter Pomati, a veteran missionary in China.

Between 22 April and 27 May Fr Panakezham was back in India again. He visited some of the salesian works at New Delhi in the Calcutta Province and the new foundations in the Madras Province, especially those in the southern part, and the new foundations in the Bangalore Province. He was able to see at first hand the recent developments in the work in all these provinces.

On 24 May he received the first professions of 18 novices at Nashik, and 7 perpetual professions at Matunga, both in the Province of Bombay.

On 28 May the Regional returned to Rome.

The Regional Councillor for Central Europe and Central Africa

In addition to the so-called "extraordinary visits", in the juridical sense of the word, there can be other visits, no less extraordinary, brought about by unusual circumstances. An example of these would be the visit of Fr Dominic Britschu in May to the Province of Bratislava. With full freedom to move about and meet people the Councillor succeeded in making contact with numerous confreres whom he had met years earlier in the most clandestine conditions. At the present time this province has 175 members, among them being some twenty novices who will make their first profession in early August. It should be noted that less than 15% of the confreres lead a regular community life. Only with great difficulty can communities be put together again. This is due in large measure to the difficulty of getting back works that were taken over by the State in 1950. There is also the dramatic situation of the Church in Czechoslovakia: many parishes have been without a priest for years, and our confreres have been called upon to provide a contribution to the revitalizing of the parishes.

The other large-scale visit made by the Regional was to the Flemish-speaking part of Belgium. This began at Groot-Bijgaarden with a

meeting attended by the rectors and vice-rectors of communities and by the provincial and provincial council. For two days they discussed together what should be the practical priorities in the province's commitments for the following months. This encounter served as first verification of the deliberations of the GC23, and at the same time as a remote preparation for the next provincial chapter in 1992. The subsequent visits of the Regional to the individual communities allowed for an application to the local realities of the decisions made at the earlier meeting.

A similar work had already been carried out in respect of the three French-speaking provinces, meeting at Francheville, near Lyons, in the previous December. The German-speaking provinces too had carried out work in the same sense. Their efforts were summed up in an inter-provincial meeting held in Berlin in mid-May, a meeting in which also took part the Provinces of Prague, Bratislava, Budapest, Ljubljana and Zagreb, and also the provinces of Brussels and Lyons. It made one think that something was moving in salesian Europe.

Alongside these high-level meetings Fr Britschu was able to insert in his programme of journeys around the Region, shorter but no less important meetings with members of the Salesian Family and con-

freres of Belgium, France, the Low Countries, Switzerland and Germany. The two German provinces are about to make new foundations in East Germany: one in the town of Heiligenstadt, and the other at Chemnitz.

Mention must be made also of a brief visit to Zaire and the confreres in the houses of formation at Kansebula and Lubumbashi. The studentate of theology is about to move into full activity with some thirty students now in residence. Together with their teachers they express their gratitude to the European provinces that have contributed to the expenses of building and the essential equipping (still to be completed!) of this new African centre of higher studies and salesian formation.

The Councillor for the Region of Spain and Portugal

During the past months the main work of Fr Rodriguez has been the extraordinary Visitations of the Provinces of Portugal and Bilbao. That of Portugal began on 2 January and ended with a meeting of the rectors and members of the provincial council on 16 March. This visitation naturally included also the houses in African countries that depend on Portugal: Mozambique and Cape Verde. The Regional was in Mozambique at the same time as the

Councillor for the Missions, Fr Luciano Odorico, and together they preached the retreat to the confreres and FMA in that country.

At the end of the Visitation of Portugal, Fr Rodriguez met with the Iberian Provincial Conference on March 19 and 20 at Madrid.

On 22 March he left for Benin (Africa) to begin the Visitation of the Province of Bilbao and spent the period from 24 March to 3 April with the four communities in Benin. Unfortunately he met with some difficulties of a social nature because of the second round of the presidential elections which took place on 24 March.

In the period 4 to 6 April he accompanied the Rector Major and the Councillor for Formation in the meetings dealing with formation held at Lomé in Togo, and took part on the 7th in the inauguration of the Church of Mary Help of Christians at Lomé.

In the evening of 7 April he returned to Bilbao in Spain to continue the visitation which went on until the end of May and concluded with a meeting with the rectors and provincial council.

From 1 to 4 May Fr Rodriguez took part in the IV National Congress of Mary Help of Christians, which brought together more than 1,500 people, the majority of whom belonged to groups of the Association of Mary Help of Christians in

Spain and Portugal.

Finally, on 1 June he was present at the ordination of 5 priests and 8 deacons for the Bilbao Province, a sign of hope for the future.

The Councillor for Italy and the Middle East

The greater part of the Councillor's time was taken up by the extraordinary visitations of the Central Province (23 December - 15 March) and that of Rome (16 March to 9 June).

During these visits Fr Fedrigotti presided at significant meetings of the provincial councils of Salesians, Cooperators and Past Pupils, and of rectors, parish priests and other categories of confreres.

The two visitations also provided an opportunity for making the consultation for the appointment of two new provincials who will succeed later this year Fr Angelo Viganò (ICE) and Fr Ilario Spera (IRO). In these circumstances the Visitor illustrated the manner in which the General Council works and the great weight it gives to the consultations as an indispensable and efficacious means of discernment, especially when the participation is high and leads to a convergence, thus expressing a clear evaluation of the candidates.

So as to create communion between the salesian communities and

the Rector Major with his Council, the Visitor emphasized in every community the priority which, in the light of the GC23, the General Council is giving during the present six-year period to formation, the "new evangelization", the lay project, and vocations.

Fr Fedrigotti was also present at some important meetings of the Italian Provincial Conference:

- A meeting of the Presidency (7-9 January), to prepare for a meeting with the analogous Conference of the FMA, to study at national level elements of common interest emerging from the recent General Chapters of the two Institutes.
- An assembly (20-21 May) with a large number of formation personnel on the theme "the life of young confreres throughout the whole range of formation".

He took part in the celebrations for the golden jubilee of the "Bernardi Semeria" Institute at Colle Don Bosco (27 January), and accompanied the Rector Major at the inauguration of the Higher Institute for Educational Research (ISRE), set up by the East Venice Province on the Venetian island of St George.

The Councillor was present also: at Turin (2 March) for the national assembly of the VIS; at Rome (8 April) for a meeting to prepare for the national conference on emargination, to be held next November; at

the Generalate (13 April) for a meeting of the national council of the past-pupils for the approval of their national regulations; at the Generalate once more (12 May) for a meeting of the confreres chosen to accompany the young people who will be working as volunteer missionaries during the summer; again at the Generalate (19 May) for a meeting (at which the Rector Major presided) of provincials with works in Madagascar. In this last meeting the Rector Major's delegate for Madagascar (Fr Zuppini) took part.

Fr Fedrigotti was present also for the "Feast of Youth" in the Province of Verona (Schio, 17 March) and in the Roman Province (Latina, 14 April). He was also at the FMA Auxilium Faculty for the Feast of St Mary Mazzarello (13 May), and at the Temple of Don Bosco in Rome for the solemn procession of Mary Help of Christians on 26 May.

The Rector Major's Delegate for Poland

Fr Augustyn Dziedziel left on 22 December for Poland where he spent the greater part of the time on the extraordinary visitation of the Breslau Province of "St John Bosco".

In addition to the visitation, other commitments included the accompanying of the General Councillors Frs Luc Van Looy and Anthony Martinelli in their visits of anima-

tion to the country. With the two Councillors the Delegate was present at a meeting of all the Rectors of the four Polish provinces to study problems relating to the sectors of youth pastoral work, the Salesian Family and social communication. Fr Dziedziel on two other occasions met with the four Provincials to study the new situation in the country and the possibility of development of salesian works. He also presided over a meeting of the provincial conference to consider problems in the field of initial formation. He also found time to make visits of animation, to the formation communities in particular and to various groups of the Salesian Family.

The Delegate spent almost the whole month of May in visiting the Soviet Republic (Byelorussia, Lat-

via, Lithuania and the Ukraine). He was able to meet almost all the confreres and members of the Salesian Family living in the USSR, and amongst other things made the monthly retreat with them. He had the pleasure of receiving the profession of two confreres and assisting at the priestly ordination of one of the three who will be ordained this year. He also visited various bishops, some of them recently appointed for new dioceses, where our confreres are working. Several bishops are asking for Salesians to come to their dioceses.

Returning to Poland, Fr Dziedziel once again called the Provincials together to consider possibilities for providing help for urgent needs.

On 1 June he returned to Rome.

5. DOCUMENTS AND NEWS

5.1 150th anniversary of St John Bosco's ordination to the priesthood

The 150th anniversary of Don Bosco's priestly ordination was solemnly commemorated on 5 June 1991.

The Rector Major with all the members of the General Council took part in a special eucharistic celebration organized in the Temple of St John Bosco in Rome. Present also were numerous confreres from the Roman Province (about 200 priests concelebrated), together with the Vicar General of the FMA and some members of their General Council, many members of the Salesian Family (DBVs, Cooperators and Past Pupils), and a very big crowd of people (especially from the local parish) who had come together to honour Don Bosco.

We print here the homily of the Rector Major, addressed especially to members of the great Salesian Family, bearers of the charisma which the Lord willed to make grow in the Church from the priestly heart of Don Bosco.

The antiphon which opens the eucharistic celebration in honour of

St John Bosco on his "dies natalis", is a beautiful expression from the First Book of Kings: "God gave him wisdom and understanding, and a heart as vast as the sand on the seashore."

More than to Don Bosco's natural gifts, this significant declaration refers to the indwelling in him of the Holy Spirit, with the many gifts that accompanied him in his mission. A hundred years after his death Pope John Paul II summed up his historic figure by defining him as a "genius of the heart".

Today as we remember in this great Temple built in his honour in the city of Rome the 150th anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood, we may wonder what particular event in his life impressed such magnanimity in his heart. I think today's commemoration points to the answer. His priestly ordination on 5 June 1841 consecrated him as a priest of the New Covenant, or in other words a minister of Christ, the eternal Shepherd and Head of the Mystical Body which is the Church.

The Council tells us that whoever is ordained priest is taken from among men and constituted in favour of men for a universal mission of salvation; he is promoted to the

service of Christ - Priest, Teacher and King - and endowed with a sacred power, in virtue of which he is able to act in the name and person of Christ the Head. The fullness of this gift was given by our Lord to the Apostles and their successors, the Bishops, with the mission of feeding and extending the flock through the threefold ministry of Prophecy, Liturgy and Community. Priests share in this same sacramental power as collaborators of the Bishops.

Hence priestly ordination placed Don Bosco at the centre of the Church's mission in the world, and filled his heart with special charismata in view of the work of salvation. The sacramental grace of Order is called "pastoral charity"; it deeply unites to Christ, the Good Shepherd, the one who has been ordained, and enriches him with possibilities of good for others.

Let us try to understand some aspects of Don Bosco's priestly existence.

The youthful years preceding his ordination were a time of seeking and preparation; the decades that followed were an abundant and fruitful demonstration of his priesthood. Rightly was it later said of him that always and in every circumstance he was a true priest.

We shall look briefly, first at the personal feelings he expressed in his mature years concerning this event,

and then at ourselves in whom the permanent riches of his charisma must be reflected.

Looking back in his later years

Don Bosco himself makes it possible for us to scan his thoughts as he looked back on his ordination.

The 5th of June in 1841 was a Saturday, and the eve of the feast of the Blessed Trinity. The following day, Sunday, he celebrated his first Mass in the church of St Francis of Assisi in Turin, with Don Cafasso; on the Monday he said Mass in the Sanctuary of the Consolata with great devotion to Mary, whom he considered his Teacher and Guide in the matter of his vocation; on the Tuesday and Wednesday he offered Mass at Chieri, where he had so many motives for gratitude; and finally on the Thursday, the feast of Corpus Christi, he celebrated in his own parish of Castelnuevo with great solemnity amidst the joy of his family and the local people.

That evening, on the way back to the Becchi with his mother and other relatives - as he writes himself - "when I drew near the house and set eyes once more on the place where I had had that dream at the age of nine, I could not hold back my tears as I thought: 'how wonderful are the designs of God's providence!'"

For the following five months, a

vacation period, he carried out his priestly ministry as a curate in his home parish.

On Wednesday, 3 November, on Don Cafasso's advice he moved to the ecclesiastical Institute of St Francis of Assisi in Turin, to complete his formation: "here in this Institute," he wrote, "you learn to be a priest." Don Cafasso guided him in the acquisition of a knowledge of the social reality, and especially the youth sector, in the prisons and in the squares and streets. This was a formative experience that made a great impression on him, and set him on the way to learning to be a "priest for the young."

A month later, on Wednesday 8 December, Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, the sacristy of the church of the Institute was the scene of his famous meeting with Bartholomew Garelli. He always looked back on this episode as a motherly indication from Mary of what was to be his concrete choice of priestly mission. Later he was to write: "this in fact was the beginning of our Oratory which, with God's blessing, grew in size at a rate beyond my wildest imagination at the time."

The concise chronological listing of these facts opens the way for us to emphasize some particularly significant facts that affected Don Bosco to the heart and remained indelibly in his memory.

— In the first place there was *Mamma Margaret*. She certainly occupies a very decisive place in John's preparation for ordination. He learned from her to be a believer, to pray and work, to do good to all, to be self-sacrificing, to want to be always practical, and to act always with the good sense of reason and faith. How could one ever forget the advice of this mother, her ability to prescind from possible advantages that could accrue to various ministries of her son, her lesson about poverty, her vision of the total self-sacrificing donation inherent in the life of the priest. Later she herself was to collaborate with motherly dedication in her son's apostolate, embellishing it with many family touches. Mamma Margaret died on 25 November 1856; her death caused Don Bosco much suffering and he dreamed of her more than once: he saw her "beautifully arrayed" in paradise. When later he heard Don Lemoyne reading a biography of her, he was moved to tears. What a magnificent figure of a mother for our vocational pastoral work at the present day!

— Another important fact is the *dream at the age of 9 years*. As I have already said, in the evening of the day of his solemn Mass at Castelnuevo he meditated on his way home and wept at the place of his dream, which he always looked

upon as a revelation of his vocation. In May 1887, almost at the end of his priestly ministry, on the occasion of the consecration of the Church of the Sacred Heart in Rome, he was celebrating Mass at the altar of Mary Help of Christians and broke down in tears "at least fifteen times". Asked afterwards the reason for his emotion, he said: "There came to my mind the scene when I was nearly 10 and dreamed of the Congregation. I remembered it clearly and also what my mother and brothers asked me about it afterwards. Since then 62 years have gone by, years of toil, years of sacrifice, years of struggle...". It was like a sudden beam of light, bathing with its radiance the implications of that dream.

— And then a further fact to consider is *his ministerial predilection for the young*. He had given evidence of this proclivity before he became a priest, but in the six months that followed his ordination, while he was thinking over what kind of ministry he should undertake, we see him directing his ministry by preference towards the young. In his work as a curate, he recalls, "my greatest pleasure was to teach catechism to children, to be in their company and talk to them." He was always in their midst, and many of them in turn became his "companions and friends". In Turin too, "I had no sooner entered the Institute

of St Francis of Assisi," he wrote, "than I found a troop of youngsters following me about in the streets and squares and even into the sacristy of the church." And it was precisely there in the sacristy on that famous 8 December that the seal from on high was placed on his ministerial destiny. This was the symbolic date, linked with his priestly ordination, and it came when he was still learning to be a priest.

The sentiments of Don Bosco's priestly heart were revived throughout his life by the memory of these events; they combined to give sense and historical direction to his Ordination.

In our reflection as bearers of his charisma

What considerations can the priestly ordination of Don Bosco give rise to in us at the present day? We may choose a few of them which can serve to throw light on the identity of our Salesian Family. We know how admirable is the work of the Holy Spirit in embellishing the Church with his gifts. Our salesian charisma appears in history as linked, in fact, to Don Bosco's priestly heart, to that "pastoral charity" which animated his triple ministry of teacher of the Gospel and of spirituality, of guide of consciences towards holiness, and

of agent and coordinator of communion for a mission among the young and the poor.

– In the first place then, he was a *teacher of the Gospel and of spirituality*. Priestly ordination had caused Don Bosco's heart to burn with a pastoral charity characterized by a particular predilection for the young. This was the perspective and driving force behind his prophetic service. He re-read the Gospel from the standpoint of its application to young people, giving rise to internal and apostolic attitudes that nowadays we call "salesian spirit". It is an experience of evangelical life with its own particular characteristics, which have as their motive power "pastoral charity" as lived by him under the influence of his newly acquired priesthood. In this he is the model and inspiration for all who follow him, even if they are not priests, as is the case with the majority of his followers. Two of the principal groups among his followers are Religious: the Salesians and the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. For them the primary inspiration for their apostolic life is drawn historically not from the hermits and anchorites of the desert in the third and fourth centuries, but rather from the Lord's Apostles themselves, of whom Don Bosco as a priest was an active collaborator. In fact the outpouring of the salesian spirit from Don Bosco's priestly

heart, prompts all the members of his Family to commit themselves generously in the mission of salvation entrusted by Christ to the shepherds of his flock in the world.

– In the second place: *he formed and guided consciences towards holiness*. It is to the heart of Don Bosco the priest that we owe the importance given in the Preventive System to the christian formation of consciences and the pedagogical use of the sacraments. He did not downgrade Penance and the Eucharist to simple "means of education"; what he did was make them the columns of a pedagogy raised to the level of a pastoral art and of the Church's role as a father and mother. His tireless dedication to the ministry of reconciliation reached each individual in a patient service of formation of conscience and of sanctification, which helped to build up in the individual a practical and vital synthesis between faith and life; the Eucharist was the centre and summit from which began and to which tended all the intense, varied and joyful educational activity.

This is a reflection that gives us food for thought and prompts us to relaunch in a new and genuine form the precious heritage of his Preventive System.

– Finally: he was the *agent and coordinator of communion for a mission among the young and the*

poor. The "pastoral charity" of his service as a coordinator and inspired organizer led him to the foundation of our Family. The apostolic ardour that drove him on, and the urgent need of the ever growing number of those to whom his work was directed, compelled him -under divine stimulation - to look for collaborators, in a variety of forms and commitments, to share his spirit and mission. A priest's duty is to animate and coordinate a large number of people, to get them to exercise the priesthood they have in common, so as to raise up among those of good will a way of doing good in an organic and coordinated manner.

The Holy Spirit led him to understand that the mission to the young and the poor, to which he had been called, was to be shared with many others and continue in time. And so, as a priest he has become our "patriarch". His ordination makes us meditate too on the significance of our mutual communion in the Congregation and the Salesian Family, and is an invitation to intensify it with the same purpose and apostolic generosity that he displayed himself.

And so, dear brothers and sisters, as we celebrate today the 150th anniversary of Don Bosco's priestly ordination, we offer our lively feelings of gratitude to the Lord and to Mary his Mother for this truly pre-

cious gift to the Church, to the young and to the Salesian Family. Today we sing a hymn of praise and thanksgiving; we address ourselves to God within the intimacy of this eucharistic celebration, during which we feel that we are representatives also of the innumerable young people who have drawn and continue to draw fruit from the "pastoral charity" loosed by that gift.

And to our praise we add our heartfelt petitions.

So that ever more fruit may follow from the charismata of this ordination, we ask with insistence for ourselves and our young people an increase in that salesian spirituality, vitalized by pastoral charity, which makes possible and continuous the far from easy process of education to the faith.

To this end we ask to be enabled to renew in pedagogical fashion the frequent use of the sacraments of Reconciliation and the Eucharist in our educational work, so as to bring about the formation of consciences in such a way that "reason and religion" become vitally united in mutual symbiosis in line with the mystery of Christ.

We ask further for the light and help to intensify our fidelity to the origins of the various Groups of the Salesian Family and their mutual communion, so as to make ever more relevant Don Bosco's spirit

and mission in favour of the young and the poor. May the priestly charisma of the Founder reawaken our prophetic and educational activity and our apostolic organization!

And finally, we feel the need to insist in a particular way on imploring from God a genuine holiness in our priests, a greater evangelical quality in the candidates to that end, and a greater number of vocations.

May Mary Help of Christians intercede for us and present our petitions to the Lord.

In his address to the priests of Turin during the centenary year of the death of Don Bosco, John Paul II recalled that "his priestly vocation had always the Madonna as its polestar from his very childhood, and his ministerial efficacy and apostolic courage had their deep and authentic root in his sure trust in her. Through his intercession therefore, and with the help of the Blessed Virgin, who smiles down on us from the big painting at Valdocco which shows her surrounded by the Apostles, the first collaborators and ministers of the New Covenant", may we be given the grace to draw fruit from the charismata of the priestly ordination of St John Bosco for the christian education of the young and for an increase in faith of people in general.

5.2 New Salesian Bishops

We give below some details of three of our salesian confreres who have been appointed Bishops in recent months.

1. Mgr. José Jovêncio BALESTIERI, Bishop of Humaitá (Brazil).

The Osservatore Romano of 7 March 1991 published the news of the appointment of Fr José Jovêncio Balestieri as Bishop of the Diocese of Humaitá in Brazil. He succeeds the salesian bishop Mgr. Miguel D'Aversa.

The new bishop was born at Alto Guarani Acu, in the state of Santa Catarina (Brazil) on 18 May 1939. He was a pupil at the salesian college of Ascurra, made his novitiate at Pindamonhangaba where he also made his first profession on 31 January 1959. After philosophy and practical training he studied theology at São Paulo-Lapa, and was ordained priest on 29 June 1968. Subsequently he gained the Licentiate in Pedagogy, Philosophy and Theology.

He was soon called to posts of responsibility: in 1972 he was appointed rector of the house at Bagé, and in 1974 became rector and director of novices at Rio dos Cedros, posts which he held for six years.

In 1980 he became Provincial Economist and in 1984 was called to

lead the province as Provincial. Now, at the end of his mandate and after taking part in the GC23, the Holy Father has appointed him Bishop of the missionary diocese of Humaitá.

2. *Mgr. Agustin RADRIZZANI, Bishop of Neuquén (Argentina).*

The Holy Father has appointed Fr Agustin Radrizzani to succeed Mgr. Jaime Francisco De Nevares as Bishop of the Diocese of Neuquén in Patagonia, Argentina.

Agustin Radrizzani was born at Avellaneda, in the Province of Buenos Aires, Argentina, 22 September 1944. He made his salesian aspirantate in the house of Bernal and his novitiate at Morón, where he also made his first religious profession on 31 January 1962.

After studying philosophy at Bernal and the experience of practical training, he was sent to Turin-Crocetta for the study of theology, at the end of which he obtained the Licentiate and was ordained priest on 25 March 1972.

He then returned to Argentina to engage in educational and apostolic work. In 1975 he became rector of the «San Miguel» Institute at La Plata, and in 1977 a member of the provincial council. At the end of his six years as rector he was appointed by the Rector Major with his Council as Provincial of La Plata in 1981.

Since 1989 he had been once

again rector of the house of «San Miguel» in La Plata, and director of novices in the interprovincial novitiate for Argentina and Paraguay.

3. *Mgr Tarcisio BERTONE, Archbishop of Vercelli (Italy).*

The Osservatore Romano of 5 June 1991 carried the official news of the appointment of Fr Tarcisio Bertone as Archbishop of Vercelli, in the Piedmont Region of Italy.

Born in that region at Romano Canavese in the province of Turin on 2 February 1934, the young Tarcisio Bertone was a pupil at the Turin Oratory, where his salesian vocation matured. He entered the novitiate at Pinerolo, and made his first religious profession on 3 December 1950.

After the study of philosophy and practical training he studied theology at Bollengo and was ordained priest on 1 July 1960. He continued his ecclesiastical studies and obtained the Licentiate in Theology and the Doctorate in Canon Law.

Soon afterwards he was appointed to the staff of the Faculty of Canon Law in our Salesian Athenaeum in Turin, and later at Rome when the Faculty was transferred there.

In 1974 he became Rector of the community and in 1979 was appointed by the Superiors Dean of the Canon Law Faculty and Councillor of the UPS Delegation.

For several years he worked as a consultor for the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and for the Pontifical Council for the interpretation of legislative texts.

Since 1989 he had been Rector

Magnificus of the Salesian Pontifical University, and has now been called to be Archbishop of Vercelli, where he succeeds Mgr. Albino Mensa who ordained him to the priesthood.

5.7 Our dead confreres (1991 – 2th list)

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

NAME	PLACE	DATE	AGE	PROV.
P ARACKAL Thomas	Jorhat	16-05-91	63	IND
L BARDZINSKI Józef	Przemysl	24-03-91	83	PLS
P BERGMANS Clement	Bonheiden (Belgio)	14-03-91	79	AFC
P BIGLIA Mauro	Casale Monferrato	25-04-91	74	INE
P CABANO DOMINGUEZ Modesto	La Orotava	10-05-91	78	SCO
P CERIOTTI Giuseppe	Belluno	09-05-91	85	IVO
L CHIESA Teresio	Torino	09-03-91	71	ICE
P CORTÉS Elberto	Tunja	09-03-91	79	COB
L D'ANDREA Ernesto	Pordenone	11-03-91	83	IVE
L DARDANELLI Francesco	Varazze	18-03-91	68	ILT
P de MELO Genario	Recife	06-06-91	58	BRE
P DE ROSSO Enrique	La Plata	26-03-91	65	ALP
P DI MODUGNO Francesco	Mar Del Plata	12-04-91	97	ALP
P DUDUŚ Wiesław	Zakopane	14-04-91	65	PLS
P EVARISTO Julio	Evora	08-03-91	66	POR
P FELTRIN Alessandro	Mogliano Veneto	01-04-91	81	IVE
P FISTAROL Virginio <i>Fu Ispettore per 6 anni</i>	Brasilia	19-03-91	81	BBH
P FRANCELLA Osvaldo	Bahía Blanca	11-06-91	76	ABB
P FRANÇOIS Léon	Esneux	31-03-91	70	BES
L GABUSI Angelo	Arese	21-03-91	82	ILE
P GANDINI Juan Antonio	Tucumán	22-05-91	86	ACO
P GERMANO Guerrino	Torino	10-05-91	75	ISU
P GIACOMETTO Luigi	Asti	10-03-91	92	INE
P GOMEZ MEDINA Miguel	Cadiz	23-05-91	90	SSE
P GRANADOS RUIZ Francisco	Santiago de Chile	05-06-91	71	CIL
P HEERE Koos	Nijmegen	31-05-91	61	OLA
P HERNANDEZ LOPEZ José Miguel	Caracas	11-03-91	66	VEN
P HERNANDO GARCIA Emilio <i>Fu Ispettore per 6 anni</i>	La Plata	07-04-91	77	ALP
P IGLESIAS Eduardo	Montevideo	14-03-91	71	URU
L KŁODA Piotr	Oświęcim	06-03-91	83	PLS
P LAPALO Stefano	Torino	17-04-91	75	ISU
P LATTUCA Giuseppe	Melbourne	06-06-91	51	AUL

NAME	PLACE	DATE	AGE	PROV.
P LITZ Karl	Pfaffenhofen	11-05-91	78	GEM
P MAGYAR István	Székesfehérvár	07-04-91	83	UNG
P MONTEN Mathieu	Liège	08-06-91	81	BES
P MASSIMINO Luigi	Hong Kong	09-03-91	84	CIN
<i>Fu Ispettore per 6 anni</i>				
P MISQUITTA Oscar	Bombay	09-03-91	76	INB
L MORENO MANCILLA Miguel	Cadiz	28-02-91	90	SSE
P ORÓSTEGUI Rafael	Bogotá	10-03-91	55	COB
P PARODI Pedro	San Isidro	08-04-91	80	ABA
P PASCUAL Amílcar	Montevideo	08-05-91	81	URU
<i>Fu Ispettore per 10 anni</i>				
P RAPISARDA Antonino	San Gregorio di Catania	05-05-91	90	ISI
P RASSIGA Giuseppe	Il Cairo	02-04-91	77	MOR
L REY ADUA Jorge	Barcelona	21-03-91	61	SBA
L ROBALDO Pietro	Torino	26-04-91	83	ISU
L ROJAS FERNANDEZ Rafael	Cartago	28-02-91	66	CAM
P SANCHEZ GARCIA Gabino	Sevilla	06-04-91	77	SSE
P SANTAS PAREDES Joaquín	La Coruña	13-04-91	64	SLE
P SIKORA Jan	Gdynia	12-05-91	62	PLO
P SPADA Francesco	Valperga	22-05-91	79	ISU
P SZOLLAR Lajos	Wien	25-02-91	75	AUS
L TURCHETTA Tommaso	Pontecorvo	11-04-91	76	IME
P VREYS Albert	Hechtel	18-03-91	73	BEN
P WASZUT Jan	Kraków	22-03-91	55	PLO
P WRANGHAM Harold	Macclesfield	19-04-91	85	GBR







