



# acts

**of the general council**

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**year LXXII october-december 1991**

**N. 338**

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

**Roma  
Direzione Generale  
Opere Don Bosco**





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

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OFFICIAL ORGAN OF ANIMATION AND COMMUNICATION FOR THE SALESIAN CONGREGATION

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**N. 338**

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## 1. ACTS OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL

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### **“CHARISM AND PRAYER”**

- Introduction. - Fascination of charisms. - The individual in a praying dialogue. - The originality of christian prayer. - Through Christ with Christ and in Christ. - The cornerstone of christian prayer is “mental prayer”. - The “goal” of prayer according to St Francis de Sales. - Let us renew our prayer. - Three cardinal points to be given priority. - May the Holy Spirit and Mary give us their help.

Rome - Solemnity of Assumption of Our Lady  
15 August 1991

My dear confreres,

During the recent months of June and July we have examined in the plenary session of the General Council various aspects of the life of the provinces at the present day. One of these, linked to some extent with our renewal, is the following: “Salesian spirituality and ecclesial Movements”. This is a topic that can give us food for thought which will intensify our identity and, in some cases, save us from deviations.

A survey of the situation led to the conclusion that it is difficult to be exact concerning the consistency of the numerical participation of confreres in specific Movements. Some are involved in them in the role of ecclesiastical assistants (especially in our parishes); others take part in meetings only spora-

dically for information purposes; still others take part regularly, with the declared purpose of recharging their spiritual batteries; and finally there are some – few in number, I hope – who are so strongly attached to them as to imply a disaffection as regards the spirituality of their own proper charism.

We wondered what the reason was for this attraction towards such Movements. It seemed to us that in some cases it could be a reaction against a certain style of superficiality that may obtain in some houses: a kind of lack of religious authenticity in apostolic consecration, a felt need for greater interior conviction as against certain forms of activism. Some of those taking part in such movements feel a certain satisfaction because they claim to find in them a kind of immediate contact with the gospel, a deep rationality, a spiritual protagonism. But among the causes can also be an insufficient grasp of the nature of our own spirituality, which is realistic without excessive emotional aspects, balanced and practical, and aimed at developing educative activity in daily life. It is a spirituality in no way inferior to the others because, different modes of expression apart, every model of spiritual life approved by the Church represents an authentic road to holiness. Externally it appears quite ordinary; it has often been said that it is extraordinary precisely in being ordinary, composed of apparently small items which form nevertheless a vital organic whole rooted in a strong spiritual personality.

I invite you, therefore, to consider again and with greater attention the plan of our salesian spirituality (which for many years now we have been studying more deeply), and to concentrate your at-



<sup>1</sup> Cf. P. RICALDONE, *La Pietà: Vita di Pietà; l'Eucaristia*, vol III, in the series «Salesian Formation» - Colle Don Bosco 1955

tention on the life-giving element in all interior activity, which is that of prayer or, as we used to put it at one time, of the "spirit of piety".<sup>1</sup>

In considering so vital a matter we shall be spurred on by the commemoration of the 150th anniversary of the beginning of the charisma of Don Bosco's Oratory which occurs on 8 December of this year.

### **Fascination of charisma**

It is a wonderful feeling to be involved in the renewing presence of the Holy Spirit. The People of God are at present in a charismatic period.

For years our renewal has followed this line, as also has that of many other religious Institutes. But in the Church have arisen also new charismata, like "ecclesial Movements". The Synod on the Laity (1987) dealt explicitly with this question.<sup>2</sup>

The Pope and the Bishops consider them in general as something positive: they dispel apathy and generate enthusiasm, they prompt creativity and lead to the acceptance of gospel responses to the challenges of the times.

But as in all human concerns, even spiritual ones, this phenomenon can give rise to erratic expressions of a strongly emotional kind, markedly intimistic in form, and insisting on the direct "guidance" of the Holy Spirit, without the need for mediation by authority or the community. It can even pose a risk at times at a pastoral level: either by substitution, or confusion, or monopolization by certain groups.

In this present number of the Acts the Vicar General, Fr Juan Edmundo Vecchi, indicates some

<sup>2</sup> CL 24

criteria for discernment in the light of the influence that participation in such movements can have on our identity.

Contact with other charismata should always serve to intensify attachment to our own.

The motivation underlying the participation of confreres in these Movements is especially that of seeking a greater interior spirit and more genuine prayer. For this reason let us reflect a little on "salesian prayer". *Charism and prayer* are inseparable from one another and together form a trait with a particular physiognomy. Every charism gives a particular tone to prayer, and at the same time demands its intense exercise.

Now to reflect on prayer we must first move beyond charisms, but nevertheless it will be useful to make some basic points about the relaunching of our own; they shake us up a good deal: without prayer no one can have a synthesis between faith and life; for us there is no reciprocal relationship between education and evangelization; there is no unity between consecration and professional work; there is no correspondence between interior disposition and external activity. In other words, without a prayerful interior: work is not sanctifying, human competence is not evangelical witness, educative commitments have no pastoral effect; and daily life is not religious. These statements may seem extreme or excessive, but they touch a sore point.

Lack of true prayer would be, for us, defeat on every front. Don Bosco himself has told us in writing: "Church history shows us that religious orders and congregations have all flourished and promoted the good of religion, as long as piety was maintained in vigour among them; on the other hand, we have seen not a few fall into decay, and others

cease to exist – and when? Only when the spirit of piety grew lax and their members began to seek the things that were their own and not the things which are of Jesus Christ (Phil 2,21), as St Paul lamented concerning certain christians”.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> *Regole e Costituzioni della Soc. di S. Francesco di Sales, «Introduzione»* - Turin 1885.

### **The individual in a praying dialogue**

But the fundamental attack on prayer comes from outside: it springs from the secularist interpretation of the present anthropological turnabout that characterizes cultural changes. The evolution of the signs of the times has a direct incidence on prayer: in both a bad and a good sense. Let us look at the two opposing results.

One effect is the secular interpretation that understands the emerging values only in anthropocentric form: it leads to agnosticism or various kinds of unbelief. In the secular world prayer is belittled; activity leads to a forgetting of the essential.

The other effect is the christian one which accepts the anthropological turnabout and considers man as the centre of the world; it interprets him in a way that makes sense; he is the protagonist of history; he bears in himself the mystery of being God's image; “you chose to create man in your own image,” we read in the Fifth Preface for Sundays in Ordinary Time, “setting him over the whole world in all its wonder. You made man the steward of creation, to praise you day by day for the marvels of your wisdom and power, and glorify you, Father and Creator, through Jesus Christ our Lord”.

And so Christ is, with us and for us, the “Man of Prayer”.

The christian faith has an all-round concept of man; it considers him not only as superior to other animals ("homo sapiens"), it not only admires his industrious nature ("homo faber"), nor his organizational and administrative ability ("homo oeconomicus"), nor does it stop at the progress he has made in science and technology ("homo technicus"), but detects the supreme dignity of his being in his ability to dialogue with God, in whose image he was formed. Endowed with such dignity, man discovers in the Creator and Saviour the "transcendent You" with whom he enters into relationship; he considers the world as a gift received from him and so feels himself loved and is filled with gratitude; this attitude makes him the "liturgist of the universe". Rightly has he been defined by one scholar (B. Haring) as "homo orans". A man who certainly esteems intelligence and culture, who dedicates himself to science and technology, who promotes social organization and political association, but who is also convinced that everything is not merely an "object" to be known, developed and exploited, but also the "gift" of Someone who loves him.

### **The originality of christian prayer**

Among the many definitions that have been given of prayer, a popular one is that of St Augustine: prayer is a dialogue with God.<sup>4</sup> But what kind of God? and what kind of dialogue?

<sup>4</sup> cf. PL 22, 411

In replying to this question we discover the originality of christian prayer. At the basis of everything is the objective nature of the world, reality and history. Praying does not mean evading reality, but rather penetrating it.



A religion with a concept of no more than an anonymous transcendence could result in a kind of alienation and reduce prayer to mere formulas of words to be repeated (or shouted, as Elias suggested to the false prophets). Who listened to them no one knows; idols – says the psalm – have eyes but do not see, and no sound comes from their mouths.

Christianity is specifically a “faith”: i.e. a glance that penetrates the reality and adheres to the mystery to be found in historical persons and events. This encounter gives rise in man to prayer as a dialogue of response to the “You” of the Creator and Saviour who loves him and continually challenges him.

This faith is completely centred on the man Christ and, in him, on the history and reality of the world. In Christ one understands who God truly is, and what the relationships are of the world and history with him; man feels himself to be in the situation of the prodigal son; he discovers that a pact of friendship exists, a Covenant to be lived in thrilling dialogue.

And so if we are to speak adequately of prayer we must go back first of all to the praying attitude of Christ, as the mature development of the experience of the former historical Covenants: Adam, Noah, Abraham, and Moses.

We must recognize the fact that Israel was the people of true prayer; it taught how to pray as a dialogue with God the Provident Creator; it was a very realistic people, that enjoyed the experience of God in its life. The blessings, psalms, various rites and festivals – the expressions of the prayer of this people – made the presence of God in time and in the world something that was felt: they had a taste for blessing and joy, adoration and thanksgiving,

praise and supplication, lamentation and asking for pardon, bold sentiments and the burden of obscurity, distress on account of the many difficulties and the living and convinced sense of trust, a whole universe of human and religious sentiments opened towards God.

A Jewish author, Robert Aron, describes in detail the intensity of his people's prayer: It made the day, the week and the months sparkle with stars; it filled the temple with dialogue with God. The study of this author can help us to imagine how assiduously pious Jews like Jesus, Mary and Joseph, used to pray.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> cf. ROBERT ARON, *Così pregava l'ebreo Gesù* - Mondadori 1988

To live without praying in an authentic and truly significant form leads to the sad result that we are not aware of the mystery of history and of the genuine significance of the world.

In the phenomenon of the Movements can be discerned, with special relevance to the present day, a strong reaction against the prevalent anthropocentrism, so terribly destructive of human dignity and vocation. To react against a climate which would seek to make the "homo orans" something merely marginal is certainly a fundamental part of teaching the faith at the present day.

### **Through Christ with Christ and in Christ**

Against the background of this complex overview of prayer, the question arises: but what kind of dialogue is christian prayer? Since it is something that takes place within the New Covenant, it must be said that at the centre is Jesus Christ, the Mediator. Faith unites us to him. With the Father he sends his Spirit who incorporates us into him:

"Remain in me as I in you. I am the vine, you are the branches. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, you may ask for whatever you please and you will get it".<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> cf. Jn 15,1-7

Like faith, true prayer is a gift. It is at one and the same time personal, communal and liturgical. It has its own particular identity; to understand its essential elements it will be helpful to concentrate our attention on the *celebration of the Eucharist*.

Here we find the characteristic stages that reveal the dynamics of christian prayer.

— First there is a period that begins with a *penitential self-criticism*, supported by faith in the Father's mercy: of great importance is a sincere attitude of humility in the face of one's own shortcomings and limitations.

— Then there is a space for *listening to the word of God*, "who first loved us",<sup>7</sup> with a comment of meditation which applies the Lord's suggestions to the actual circumstances of life (the enlightening role of the homily!).

<sup>7</sup> 1 Jn 4,10

— This is followed by the *convivial symbolism* of the offertory and setting of the table, which leads to the dialogue in which ourselves and our work are offered through the symbolism of bread and wine (things small in themselves but of great significance: they will become food and drink for eternal life!); the prayer gives shape to the attitude of self-donation.

— Then begins the *personal dialogue* with the "You" of the Father ("Te igitur"): he is the great Friend to whom the whole celebration is directed and of whom are proclaimed the wonders of a creative, liberating and transforming love (adoration, praise, thanksgiving, trust).

— And so is reached the culmination of the cele-

bration in the "*memorial*" which, by the power of the Holy Spirit, makes present here and now the Passover event of the death and resurrection of Christ, the brother who is solid with everyone: this is the supreme human act of self-donation in man's response to God; the supreme liturgical moment of all in Christ; the high point of the Covenant; it is the existence conferred upon us: "Grant that we who are nourished by his body and blood, may be filled with his Holy Spirit, and become one body, one spirit in Christ. May he make us an everlasting gift to you".<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Eucharistic Prayer III

— Then is recited the "*Our Father*" with its two aspects of adoration and request. In the first part, after listening to what has been said of the Father's infinite kindness the heart erupts in a wonderful proclamation of hope: hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done. In the second part, a clear awareness of the concrete situations of our existence leads spontaneously to that "Give us this day" which includes in the prayer in a realistic manner both the present and past history, offences, forgiveness, temptations, etc.); the good Lord well knows how frail we are.

— Finally, we make our "*communion*" with the sacrament of the bread and wine, so as to form together a single Body and live and work for the salvation of others. And rightly the celebration ends with being *sent out in "mission"* to collaborate through our life and works for the full realization of the Covenant.

I think that this synthetic glance at the eucharistic celebration may prove enlightening to us as we try to go more deeply into the particular nature of christian prayer. We are struck at once by the fact that the starting point is in the humility of "listen-



ing” and leads eventually to being sent on the “mission”, passing through a living incorporation into the mystery of Christ: we become sons in the Son and solid with all our brethren. In this way the “homo orans”, brought back to the dignity of his first origin and far beyond it, causes God’s image to shine out in him.

### **The cornerstone of christian prayer**

On the part of the believer, it is indispensable that the dialogue of the Covenant begin with a listening attitude, prepared by penitent humility. The authenticity of prayer, as the beginning of a first response, is rooted in a *personal experience* of God: think, for instance, of Moses before the burning bush. His attitude was one of discovery and almost of surprise. It is the Lord who says: “Look, I am standing at the door knocking. If one of you hears me calling and opens the door, I will come in to share a meal at that person’s side”.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Rev 3,20

This attitude of attentive listening is found to be particularly fruitful in the form we know as “mental prayer”, to which the great Spanish saints of the sixteenth century gave its most developed form. Mental prayer is not in fact a practice reserved to monks and hermits, but the very foundation of all prayer; in fact faith is before all else an act of *listening*.

There is no prayer – just as there is no life of faith – without the intervention of the conscience and freedom of each individual. We know from experience that the most intense moments of prayer are often those involving our personal interior: moments of meditation more than of feelings; mo-

ments of silence rather than speaking; moments of contemplation rather than of reasoning; in fact: "the word of God is something alive and active: it cuts more incisively than any two-edged sword".<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Heb 4,12

"When you pray, go to your private room, shut yourself in, and so pray to your Father who is in the secret place, and your Father who sees all that is done in secret will reward you".<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Mt 6,6

This in no way detracts from communal prayer, which is so important and has its most perfect ecclesial expression in the eucharistic celebration, but emphasizes the prior condition for an authentic participation in that too.

Mental prayer evolves gradually from meditation to contemplation; it is an interior attitude through which one enters into relationship with the love of God. St Teresa has described it as dealing with the Lord on friendly terms.

Paul VI gave it the following fine description: "The effort to fix the eyes and heart on God, which we call contemplation, becomes the most lofty and complete of all acts of the spirit, the act which even today can and must give hierarchical order to the immense pyramid of human activity".<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> PAUL VI, 7.12.65

We must not think that "contemplation", to which meditation leads, is something granted only to a few privileged souls. It is not our purpose here to present it with difficult abstract definitions, nor to list its different kinds and degrees with their delicate problems, but to look at the example of those Saints who have lived our own spirituality. To form a concrete image it is enough for us to look at Don Bosco: "we study and imitate him, admiring in him a splendid blending of nature and grace. He was deeply human, rich in the qualities of his people, open to the realities of the earth; and he was just as

deeply the man of God, filled with the gifts of the Holy Spirit and living 'as seeing him who is invisible'.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup> C 21

Meditation becomes contemplation when the love, born of listening, gains the ascendancy and penetrates directly into the Father's heart.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup> cf. C 12

### **The "goal" of prayer according to St Francis de Sales**

Having now reached this point, we can make a further step forward in an effort to understand more deeply the *intensely prayerful element in the "da mihi animas"*, which reflects Don Bosco's own prayer. We refer to the deep and enlightening testimony of St Francis de Sales. His prayer led him to a "union with God" translated into a life of tireless apostolic work, while at the same time plumbing the depths of its nature with penetrating doctrinal reflection.

This he did with impressive originality in the sixth and seventh books of his "Treatise on the love of God", a work that was dear to the first generations of our Congregation. In his reflections he uses the word 'ecstasy', but does not give it the meaning of loss of consciousness and disjunction from reality, as is the case in certain paramystical phenomena; the holy bishop had no time for emotional escapism which can be hallucinatory and reduce to false illusions.

"When you come across a person," he writes, "who gets so carried away in prayer that he seems to leave himself and get raised so high above as to reach God; who nevertheless has no similar ecstasies in his ordinary life, i.e. does not lead a higher life linked with God through the mortification of

worldly desires and of his will and natural inclinations through a disposition of interior kindness, simplicity and humility, and especially through unfailing charity, believe me, Theotimus, all his ecstasies are very dubious and dangerous; they are more likely to create wonder among others than to increase the holiness of the person experiencing them".<sup>15</sup>

By the use of the term 'ecstasy' St Francis de Sales gives a deeper indication of the goal that mental prayer should reach. The objective is the "getting outside oneself" through which God draws us and raises us up to himself; and this he calls ecstasy in so far as through it we remain above ourselves.

In these reflections St Francis attains the deepest aspects of his analysis of the kind of spirituality that after him has been called "salesian".

Prayer leads to the development of an interior attitude which goes beyond dialogue and becomes *unitive love*. The response of the one to the Other is no longer either words or feelings but an exchange of life: moving out of oneself towards the Beloved; not as an emptying but a joyful replacement which leads to the experience of what the Apostle describes when he says: "It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me".<sup>16</sup> It is a life that exceeds human motivations and forces, because it is nourished by God. In this way *prayer develops into love*; it is the indispensable way to it; it is its fruitful mother, so to speak, but a mother forgetful of herself for the fullness of life of what she has generated, i.e. "union with God".

St Francis de Sales goes so far as to declare that this "unitive love" is not to be measured by prayer alone (which could become quietism); nor is it to

<sup>15</sup> S. FRANCIS DE SALES, *Treatise of the love of God* - Ed. Paoline 1989, p. 527

<sup>16</sup> Gal 2,20



be simply identified with some activity (which could lead to activism), but translates into *a life and activity of love*; it fosters intentions rather than words. It means living not in ourselves but above ourselves; "and since no one can get out of and above himself in this way unless the eternal Father draws him (Jn 6,44), it follows that such a manner of life must be a continual rapture and a perpetual ecstasy of action and activity".<sup>17</sup> Hence the necessity for continual renewal of prayer to ensure unitive love, which is not difficult; it begins from the lowest degrees to grow without limit.

<sup>17</sup> o.c. p. 525

St Francis de Sales lists three kinds of rapture in prayer, three "ecstasies": "one regards the intellect, a second the affections, and a third activity". The third ("the ecstasy of life and action") is the crown of the other two, which would remain incomplete without it: "there has never been a saint who did not experience ecstasy or the rapture of life and action, overcoming himself and his own natural inclinations".<sup>18</sup>

<sup>18</sup> o.c. p. 528

It is true that the "ecstasy of the intellect" through encounter with enlightening truth can foster a special contemplation. And also "ecstasy of the affections" can stir up an enthusiasm of fervour far above normal. But both are naturally ordered to touch off witness of life and collaboration of action; they are linked to the third, but unfortunately not necessarily so.

If the rapture of the intellect, says the Saint, is more froth than substance, more speculative than affective, based more on knowledge than experience, more on appearance than underlying substance, it remains very questionable. And if rapture of the affections is more a matter of feeling than of commitment, smacking more of fervent admiration than self-sacrifice, owing more to sensitivity than to

industrious activity, more pretty theory than practical application, it looks dangerously superficial.

There are two principal ways", he writes, "of exercising our love for God: one affective and the other effective. By virtue of the first we love God and what God loves; in virtue of the second we serve God and do what he commands... Through the first we *conceive*, through the second we *generate*; with the one we insert God in our heart..., with the other we put him on our arms, like a sword of predilection by which we can carry out every act of virtue".<sup>19</sup> And he goes on further to say: "there are heavenly inspirations for the fulfilment of which it is not only necessary that God should raise us above our own strength but also that he raise us above our natural instincts and inclinations as well. Such inspirations, in fact, though not opposed to human reason, surpass and overcome it; they are superior to it: so that in such cases we live not only a civil life that is upright and christian but one that is superhuman, spiritual, devout and exuberant, or in other words a life which is in any case outside and above our natural condition...

<sup>19</sup> o.c. p. 427

To abandon all our goods, to love poverty and call and regard it as a glamorous master; to consider ignominy, disdain, abasement, persecutions, and martyrdom as joys and beatitudes; to keep oneself within the limits of an absolute chastity; and finally to live this mortal life in the world against all its maxims and opinions, and against the worldly tide with continual resignation, renunciation and self-denial, is to live not according to human nature but far above it".<sup>20</sup>

<sup>20</sup> o.c. pp. 523-4

Union with God is therefore *the true goal of prayer*; it has many degrees and is in continual growth; it begins in a small way with many defects

and gradually increases: it is "a light that expands like the dawning of the day".

These reflections of St Francis de Sales plunge us into the realism of salesian prayer.

One expert on St Francis de Sales, Andre Ravier, asserts that this deep vision, fruit of the Saint's personal experience, implied in his own time a kind of mental capsizing: "at one fell swoop 'devotion' (i.e. spirituality) was set free from controversial views that saw opposition between contemplation and action, internal and external cult, piety and canonical norms, asceticism and mystique, the service of God and that of men and, at a deeper level, the monk and the lay person".<sup>21</sup>

Here we may recall some statements by Don Bosco and his successors on the importance for us of the testimony and doctrine of St Francis de Sales.

"If the Salesians were really to live their faith," said Don Bosco in a conference to the confreres, "as St Francis de Sales understood it in his zeal, charity and meekness, I could be truly proud, and there would be reason to hope for a vast amount of good to be done! In fact I might say that the world would come after us".<sup>22</sup>

Don Albera, the second successor, spoke frequently of our Patron; in his circular on the "spirit of piety" he dealt with the practice of "continual prayer" and insisted especially that there should be practised in the Congregation the "active piety to which St Francis de Sales often refers, and which was the secret of Don Bosco's holiness".<sup>23</sup>

And Don Rinaldi, the third successor, speaking of the indulgence for sanctified work wrote: "Note that this favour was bestowed on us on the third centenary of the death of our heavenly patron St

<sup>21</sup> St. FRANCOIS DE SALES, *Oeuvres - Bibliothèque de la Pleiade* - Ed. Gallimard, 1986: "Introduction à la vie de votes", p. 8

<sup>22</sup> BM 12, 630; cf. 18

<sup>23</sup> *Lettere di don Paolo Albera*, ediz. 1965, p. 40

Francis de Sales, whose gentle doctrine is entirely permeated by this comforting thought. He could also be called the *apostle of the sanctification of the present moment*".<sup>24</sup>

<sup>24</sup> ACS 1923, n. 17, p. 36

For St Francis de Sales, therefore, prayer is indispensable for attaining, in Christ, to unitive love with the Father; this leads to the loosing of the energy which is *pastoral charity*: "that charity," says Vatican II, "which is, as it were, the soul of the whole apostolate".<sup>25</sup> Yes: the soul of the salesian apostolate is pastoral charity!<sup>26</sup> That is the objective to which we must give pride of place in the renewal of our prayer!

<sup>25</sup> AA 3  
<sup>26</sup> cf. C 10

It is not characterized by special external expressions; there is no affectation in its attitudes; it does not emphasize high intellectual reflections, even though it draws nourishment from them; it does not give priority to singular or unusual sentimental manifestations, even though it moves deeply the affections of the heart; it concentrates on effective identification with the saving will of God so as to translate it into practical attitudes. Its intellectual contemplations and fervent feelings orientate everything about it to the mission of salvation: as St Francis de Sales says: with it one "conceives" in order to "generate", or in other words to cause blood to flow from the heart to give strength to arms and hands.

And here I think it will be useful to recall how this doctrine of our patron coincides substantially with that of those two great teachers of union with God: St Teresa and St John of the Cross (the fourth centenary of whose death will be celebrated next December). They bore witness to and communicated the experience of God which accompanied them in the arduous task of reforming religious.

Despite the profound differences between the Carmelite and Salesian charismata, they are at one in having the way of unitive love as their objective. It is a coincidence that proclaims a truth: that of a union with God who has become “everything” and of the emptying of oneself who has become “nothing”; as though to say: “I live, but no longer in myself”.

It is another way of speaking of one and the same “ecstasy”.

### **Let us renew our prayer**

In the light of the reflections of St Francis de Sales we can see very clearly that Don Bosco’s charism and salesian prayer are inseparable; they constitute a vital unity in such a way that neither aspect makes sense without the other, because they are fused in a single spiritual expression.

Our recent General Chapters had as their objective the relaunching of the Founder’s charism in the new conciliar orbit; and Vatican II has given rise to its own providential shake-up with its renewal of the Church’s prayer. The conclusion was inevitable that the relaunching of every charism called for priority to the renewal of prayer, giving back to it its vitalizing role in the ecclesial communion of believers.

And so we are obliged to make a qualitative leap in the renewal of our prayer. The excellent “Introduction” to the Italian manual for community prayer<sup>27</sup> provides a careful synthesis of the process that has been followed in the Congregation with respect to the “practices of piety”: there you will find emphasized the genuine thought of Don Bosco, the profound substantial renewal desired by the Special

<sup>27</sup> *In dialogo con il Signore*  
- LDC 1990, pp. 7-15



General Chapter, and the continuity of a living tradition which comes from the Founder and is able to adapt itself to new ecclesial eras.

It has been a delicate work that was crowned with success; and after the practical experience extending over two six-year periods, it was codified by the GC22 in the renewed Constitutions.

Certainly, christian prayer – like the global vocation of the Church and the specific nature of the faith – is substantially common to all believers; but, just as cultural differences and sound historical heritage have an influence on the liturgy, in a similar way the particular facets of the Founder's charism, and the well tried genuine traditions which have established it in the world, have influenced the various kinds of prayer.

In face of the challenge of the prevailing secularism and the courageous examples of christian reaction provided by various ecclesial Movements, we must ask ourselves in what renewed prayer consists for us, and how we live it: what are the vital nuclei we must foster so that it may be truly the animating principle of our vocation.

"Prayer," we read in the above-mentioned Introduction,<sup>28</sup> "is the place of the absolute, the place of God; or, to be more precise, the place in which the "Word of God" assumes its true sense and, with it, our entire existence. It is the place of identity and true dialogue, in which our own mystery touches the mystery of God... And if prayer must be a human reality it cannot fail to emerge in history at a determined place and time; it cannot fail to become a practical exercise."

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.* pp. 20-21

If we now look at the text of that part of the Rule which deals with "dialogue with the Lord", we can better emphasize its more characteristic and vital aspects.

We may begin by pointing out that Chapter 7 of the Constitutions was not put at the end because it dealt with something of minor importance, but it is at the end of the second part as a kind of vertex containing a synthesis of everything that had gone before; it is as though to say that the “mission”, “community” and “practice of the evangelical counsels” (or in other words our ecstasy of life and action), because of the very nature of their participation in the mystery of the Church, cannot live without the energy of the union with God and of the pastoral charity that proceed from prayer.

The first thing to emphasize is that the model to which we must turn our attention is certainly Don Bosco: “we learn from him”.<sup>29</sup>

Let us read together once again a page from the Commentary on the Constitutions: “Don Bosco is generally put before us as a model of activity and less frequently as a model of prayer... (but) many have borne witness to Don Bosco’s spirit of prayer. It can be said, declared Don Barberis, ‘that he was always praying. I have seen him hundreds of times in prayer as he went up and down stairs. He prayed as he went from one place to another. On journeys, when he was not correcting printers’ proofs, I saw him always praying’. And Don Rua added: ‘Many times I came across him absorbed in prayer during his brief moments of respite’... He gave it absolute priority. ‘Prayer is the most important thing’, he used to say; ‘nothing is begun well unless it starts from heaven’. Prayer was for him the work par excellence, because ‘it obtains everything and triumphs over everything’.”<sup>30 31</sup>

Cardinal Cagliero declared: Don Bosco prayed always, because everything he did was directed to God’s glory and done in his presence. And so for him prayer included also his continuous, holy and

<sup>29</sup> C 86

<sup>30</sup> *Guide to the Salesian Constitutions* - Rome 1986, pp. 672-3

<sup>31</sup> *Note:* It would be well to read again from time to time CERIA’S study on «Don Bosco con Dio».

incredible amount of work; he united to perfection the contemplative and active lives”.

The fundamental trait that shines forth in our Founder is that in him “praying and living were spontaneously united”.<sup>32</sup> It is a characteristic insisted on in various articles of the Constitutions,<sup>33</sup> which go so far as to say that we must accustom ourselves to “celebrate the liturgy of life, attaining that ‘tireless industry made holy by prayer and union with God’ that should be the characteristic of the sons of St John Bosco”.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>32</sup> C 86

<sup>33</sup> cf. C 86, 87, 89, 92

<sup>34</sup> C 95

Such a characteristic presupposes a style of prayer with elements of simplicity, joy and hope; without resorting to emotive manifestations of a rather strange kind, but fostering that attractive atmosphere (the splendour of the liturgy) which leads unconsciously to a taste for sacrifice in self-donation.

Art. 12 of the Constitutions provides an explicit description of the goal of our prayer: working for the salvation of the young, the Salesian gains a living experience of the Covenant: he “prays without ceasing” and “does everything for love of God”!

It will be worth our while to quote some further lines from the Commentary already referred to: “To plumb the depths of this kind of union with God, we must hark back to that ‘grace of unity’ of which we spoke in connection with our vocation. It is not found primarily in activity, nor even in the ‘practices of piety’, but in the interior of a person of whom it pervades the whole being; before finding expression in activity or in praying, it is a kind of ‘spiritual dynamism’, in so far as it is a conscious participation in the very love of God through self-donation in practical availability for the work of salvation. It is an interior attitude of charity direc-

ted towards apostolic activity, in which it becomes concrete, is made manifest, grows and is perfected".<sup>35</sup>

<sup>35</sup> *Guide to the Salesian Constitutions*, p. 174

And so it finds a place at a higher level than the famous distinction between "contemplation" and "action": two terms which tradition itself have always passed on to us together, as though the sense of each of them depended on their being joined and not separated. The Council too affirmed this when dealing with the ministerial priesthood.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>36</sup> cf. PO 14

The meaningful expression of the Jesuit Girolamo Nadal: "simul in actione contemplativus" applied to his Founder St Ignatius (MESI, *Epistolae et Monumenta* P.J. Nadal, V, 162), we can interpret in the light of the experience of Don Bosco, our model, who translated "da mihi animas" into the witness of his whole life, both in contemplation and action, and very much in "passion" too, i.e. in the constant attitude which he called a "martyrdom of charity and sacrifice for the good of others".<sup>37</sup>

<sup>37</sup> cf. ASC 308 (1983)

This salesian way of doing things shines with special brilliance in the life of Mother Mazzarello, co-foundress of the Institute of the FMA.<sup>38</sup> She was able to quite naturally make her own the secret of Don Bosco's apostolic interior feelings, already evident in his first pieces of advice: "pray by all means, but do all the good you can, especially to the young"; "Grow in the exercise of the presence of God; love work; bring kindness and joy to everyone; be helpers in the Church for the salvation of souls".

<sup>38</sup> cf. ASC 301 (1981)

He once summed up the most characteristic trait of an FMA in the words: "In her the active and contemplative lives should go side by side, recalling Martha and Mary, the life of the Apostles and that of the Angels".

It is a stimulating fact for us Salesians to see in Mother Mazzarello the characteristics of our interior life, carried to great heights in intense simplicity, by a heart enriched with precious feminine values.

"Truly," wrote Fr Ricaldone, "there was evident in Mother Mazzarello such a spirit of piety that she was always aware of being in the presence of God, not only at times of vocal prayer and meditation, but also in material work". Her daughters testified of her: "to see the Mother *was to see a soul that revealed God himself...* with such limpid simplicity that the love of God seemed like second nature in her".<sup>39</sup>

<sup>39</sup> P. RICARDONE, o.c. p. 316

And so, if we want to renew our prayer at the present day, we must first become convinced that Don Bosco's apostolic charism requires us to *concentrate strongly on union with God* or, in other words, to foster all those expressions of prayer "in simple and cordial dialogue" which lead us to the *love of charity*. Rightly did Pope John Paul II in his famous address to the members of the GC23 on 1 May 1990, declare: "The more a Salesian reflects on the mystery of the Father who is infinitely merciful, of the Son who so generously became our brother, and of the Holy Spirit who powerfully renews the world by his presence, so much the more does he feel impelled by this unfathomable mystery to dedicate himself to the young for their maturing as human beings and for their salvation".<sup>40</sup>

<sup>40</sup> GC23 332

### **Three cardinal points to be given priority**

But we have to ask ourselves whether the renewal of prayer has been effective on the part of all the confreres and in every community. It is not by



any means fanciful to recognize that there are backward areas in the Congregation which give rise to problems and difficulties. Instead of profiting by the experiences of others, assimilating them and harmonizing their values with the requirements of our charism, communities approach them negatively and in a half-hearted fashion. Formalism in the practices of piety, ingrained mentalities, the negative effect of occasional examples of neglect of the practices of piety, the absence of the vital theme of prayer in ongoing formation, little attention given to important items of our prayer life, lack of concern about a genuine liturgical renewal, the crisis of penance and the falling off of asceticism – and this precisely at a time when a special period of the Holy Spirit is being experienced in the Church – can easily lead us to understand why in certain cases something more vital is sought.

There is an urgent need to give greater attention to the renewal of prayer. To bring this about we must concentrate our efforts on three dynamic points, complementary among themselves though at three different levels: that of the *individual* in mental prayer and asceticism; that of the community in incorporation to Christ through the liturgy; and that of *ministerial presence* in apostolic and loving activity among those to whom our mission is directed. Among these three points arises a kind of dynamic and mutually reciprocal circle for the intensification of pastoral charity.

But first of all let us make a preliminary observation that will help us to a greater appreciation of the need to develop these three points.

Union with God, which is at the centre of everything, is capable of a wide gradation of expression; they range from the so-called acquired contemplation (in various degrees) to so-called infused con-

temptation (even to high mystical levels). All can reach it in some degree.

The reflections of St Francis de Sales help us to appraise the intensity of our union with God so as to strive to raise its intensity. We have already considered the significant use he makes of the term "ecstasy": it implies getting out of oneself so as to live in Christ. Now, if we apply the concept of "ecstasy of life" to the way we live in community, to our practice of the counsels, to our communion in one heart and one soul, it will not be difficult to assess how far the truth of "ecstasy" has progressed when we detect in ourselves elements of individualism, arbitrariness, coldness, dangerous compensations, etc. So too, if we apply the concept of "ecstasy of action" to our work, an objective evaluation will easily lead us to discover more than a few defects which oppose our getting outside ourselves: selfishness, touchiness, intentions that are merely natural, yielding to pride and concupiscence, activism shorn of witness, etc.

Such an examination of conscience prompts us to continual concentration on the three points indicated, so that they may truly express our pastoral charity of union with God: more prayer, a better consecrated life, greater pastoral quality, are things that *go together*. In this way we come to understand that the matter of prayer must, in fact, be a constant and always renewed commitment to which the attention of every confrere and every community must be directed. This is the most vital formative aspect calling for attention, revision and a permanent pedagogy of growth. It will compel us to decide on practical criteria for coordinating "community life" and "apostolic activity" in intimate harmony with the practice of prayer. Failure

to do this would not only be harmful to the witness of the praying community, but also to the reality of its consecrated life and pastoral efficacy.

We have three points, therefore, that are mutually inclusive; their vitality is measured by their constant reciprocal relationship, which has its source in prayer and its goal in charity.

Don Bosco used to say – as we have already seen – that “nothing is begun well unless it starts from heaven”. As we read in the *Imitation of Christ*: “left to ourselves we sink and perish. But if you are with us we live and rise again. Yes: truly we are weak and inconstant, but you give us stability. We are prone to go cold, but you give us new fire”.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>41</sup> *Imitation of Christ*, III, n. 2

Let us look more closely, therefore, at some aspects of these three fundamental points.

1. – *The cardinal point of the person or individual* refers evidently to every confrere and is at the foundation of all the rest. Without the individual there is no prayer.<sup>42</sup> This cannot be evaded by placing the blame on others.

<sup>42</sup> cf. C 93

This is a commitment which demands its own elbow-room, distinct from that of ordinary working activity and dedicated entirely to direct conversation with God. His word must be listened to anew each day (meditation, the reading of God’s word, taking part in communal prayer, individual initiatives); particular times must be set aside for interior renewal (monthly, quarterly and annual retreats); a living participation is needed in the liturgical year with its celebrations of the events of salvation history; there must be a sedulous consideration of the mysteries of Christ in the recital of the rosary; etc.

The fundamental attitude is always one of listening through mental prayer. The Word of God is

precisely Jesus Christ, whom we contemplate as the Good Shepherd.<sup>43</sup> He speaks to us in many ways and always in a manner relevant to the prevailing circumstances. But his central and supreme proposal – which constitutes his Memorial – is his paschal testimony: “this is my body which is given up for you; this is my blood which is shed for you”. This is the most sublime “ecstasy of life”!

<sup>43</sup> cf. C 11

We cannot listen to this Word of God, reflected in all the challenges we meet, and remain passive. Life unfolds in a complex manner, but Christ’s Memorial is crystal clear. A kind of listening that leads to pastoral charity cannot avoid sacrifice, and still less can it let itself be carried away by ideologies and fleeting fashions. In all the many vicissitudes we repeat always with the psalmist: “I seek your face, Lord; do not hide yourself from me.”

A personal aspect, intimately united to mental prayer, is the responsible commitment to asceticism and penance that must be made by every confrere. Let us never forget that *sin, the lack of self-discipline, lukewarm and unmortified conduct, and a worldly spirit are the death of prayer*. The self-criticism implied in examination of conscience for a sincere attitude of personal conversion and a keen “sense of sin” – so out of line with today’s anthropocentric mentality – fosters an indispensable awareness of the mystery of the Father’s mercy, and bestows the joy and hope of pardon.<sup>44</sup> This in turn will give rise to many personal initiatives for intensifying the particular asceticism of “make yourself loved” that characterizes us as apostolic educators.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>44</sup> cf. C 90

<sup>45</sup> cf. AGC 326 (1988)

Moses, the Prophets, Jesus himself, the Saints and in particular the great founders (Benedict, Francis of Assisi, Ignatius of Loyola, Dominic Guzman, Teresa of Avila, etc.) united intense prayer

with fasting, ascesis and penance. When we look carefully at Don Bosco we are deeply impressed by his practice of humility, his spirit of sacrifice, his concrete sense of mortification, his acceptance of physical and moral suffering, and the incalculable demands of his motto "work and temperance".<sup>46</sup>

Here I would like to recall the importance St Ignatius of Loyola gave in spiritual direction to personal efforts at ascesis and penance; it was clear that he esteemed mortification of the passions greater than the time spent in prayer; he used to advise "greater mortification of self-love than abstention from meat; and more mortification of the passions than prayer"; and he added: "*for a person who keeps his passions mortified, a quarter of an hour should be sufficient for an encounter with God*".<sup>47</sup>

Whenever, therefore, conversation turns to the indispensable nature of the "personal" aspect in prayer, a vast horizon of commitments is opened before every single confrere.

2. – *The cardinal point of the community* demands a second vital level linked with the liturgical renewal. At its vertex is incorporation to Christ through the Eucharist: that is where the community builds itself as such and receives from the Holy Spirit the daily energy it needs to be a true "sign of faith", "school of faith" and a "centre of communion and participation".<sup>48</sup> The community becomes in Christ an *animating nucleus*, like a small basic church called to bring about evangelical fermentation in the locality and in those for whom we work.

It is true that without personal prayer there can be no praying community, but there is more to be said. It is not a question of an agglomeration of individual prayers, but rather of prayer made together. The Council has asked us to make a qualita-

<sup>46</sup> cf. C 18

<sup>47</sup> MI, *Fontes narrativi*, II 419, 24; and I 644, 196

<sup>48</sup> GC23 216-7

tive leap of a communal kind. And so we need to foster a liturgical animation appropriately brought up to date.

The hoped-for "community day", promoted by the GC23<sup>49</sup> for an ongoing formation that is lively and practical, should have at its centre in every house the most significant weekly concelebration. Time must be given to its preparation, and to promoting the participation in it of everyone.

<sup>49</sup> GC23 222

Liturgical prayer makes us feel that together we form a little Church, and reveals to us the charismatic originality of our consecration, through which "our apostolic mission, our fraternal community and the practice of the evangelical counsels are the inseparable elements of our consecration which we live in a single movement of love towards God and towards our brothers".<sup>50</sup>

<sup>50</sup> C 3; cf. also C 24, C 50

It is from the awareness of this "apostolic communion" that arises our commitment to the common "pastoral project".

A practical observation, that I am anxious not to overlook, is that in every house there should be a *worthy chapel* enlivened by the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. "Gathered together in the Lord's name", wrote the Pope in a message to the plenary assembly of the Congregation for consecrated life, "religious communities have their natural centre in the Eucharist. It is normal therefore that they be visibly gathered together in an oratory (i.e. place of prayer), in which the presence of the Blessed Sacrament expresses and realizes what should be the main mission of every religious Family".<sup>51</sup>

<sup>51</sup> SCRIS 1980, n. 1, pp. 7-12

3. – *the cardinal point of ministerial presence* among those for whom we work is the other level which is indispensable for the renewal of our prayer.



It is not an entirely simple matter to live the “grace of unity” and understand the mutual bond between interior disposition and external activity in our presence among our beneficiaries. We must be able to reply to two substantial questions. The first is: what significance do our beneficiaries (*Italian: ‘destinatari’*) have for us? And the second: what kind of presence and what kind of activity is ours meant to be?

In seeking a response to these questions we become aware that the word of God presents itself with continually new requirements. In the last ten years there have been innovations under the headings of: the relaunching of Don Bosco’s charisma,<sup>52</sup> the new Evangelization,<sup>53</sup> the new Education.<sup>54</sup> In other words, a vast field has been opened which is inseparable from a careful listening to what the Lord is saying also through the signs of the times, the teaching of the Bishops and the guidelines of the Congregation.

The “*destinatari*” are for the Salesian a kind of “burning bush” which throws light on his special Covenant: he sees in them the image of God; their material needs become his spiritual concern.

The GC23 tells us with reason: “We believe that God loves the young. This is the conviction which is at the origin of our vocation... We believe that Jesus wants to share ‘his life’ with young people: in their expectations they bear the seeds of the Kingdom. We believe 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. In this way

<sup>52</sup> AGC 312 (1985)

<sup>53</sup> AGC 331 (1989)

<sup>54</sup> AGC 337 (1991)

our work of education becomes *the preeminent context in which we meet him*".<sup>55</sup>

<sup>55</sup> GC23 95

This is the first response: in our "destinatari" we seek the countenance of Christ!

And then too, *the presence and activity* of the Salesian make him the sign and bearer of the love of God for the young. It is not, therefore, a matter of just any kind of presence. There are kinds of presence which could take us a long way from prayer; here it is a matter of a "ministerial presence" which makes us hear from the mouth of Christ those words: "I was hungry and thirsty and you gave me food and drink".

As well as this, the presence must be accompanied not by just any kind of activity, which could easily be simply of a humanitarian, cultural, social or political nature, but (as the Council said) by "apostolic and charitable activity",<sup>56</sup> drawing its origin and animation from the Holy Spirit. Only activity of this kind "is of the very nature of religious life, as a holy ministry and work of charity entrusted to the Institute by the Church and to be performed in its name".<sup>57</sup>

<sup>56</sup> PC 8

<sup>57</sup> *ibid.*

"Apostolic and charitable activity" leads of its very nature to union with God and makes for more intense prayer. It is not an occasion of distraction, but a place of special meeting. But if activity is to be truly apostolic, it must be animated by the fire of pastoral charity: it is in truth the soul of the apostolate, but apostolic activity becomes in its turn the animator of pastoral charity! And in the heart of the Salesian must be found the great secret that feeds this fire.

And so there should be no dualism between work and prayer, because prayer becomes translated into apostolate, and apostolic work intensifies prayer.

This was also emphasized by the Pope in his above-mentioned address to the members of the GC23, speaking of our mission as educators: "First of all I want to emphasize as a fundamental point the *strength of a unifying synthesis* that stems from pastoral charity. It 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. Those two great Saints, Francis de Sales and John Bosco, have borne witness to this wonderful 'grace of unity' and brought it to fruition in the Church. 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, as amply demonstrated by the lives of these two Saints, that union with God is the true source of the practical love of one's neighbour".<sup>58</sup>

<sup>58</sup> GC23 332

### **May the Holy Spirit and Mary give us their help**

Dear confreres, these reflections are an invitation to us to intensify in the Congregation our commitment to a renewal of prayer in harmony with Don Bosco's charism. In these years that have followed the Council, we have certainly made good progress. Vatican II brought us a new atmosphere: the sense of mystery, the multiform presence of God, of Christ and of the Holy Spirit, the vitality of ecclesial communion, the invaluable renewal of the liturgy, the wonderful significance of creation and also the "world" itself with all its complexities and

the eschatological dimension of history. The General Chapters have presented Don Bosco's charisma anew in this immense orbit of renewed spirituality.

For some time now we have all been undergoing conversion, but there is still much to be done before we are fully converted, especially in the delicate sector of prayer. The secret of praying is to be found in the first place in the individual, whose basic attitude is mental prayer. In this each of us must discover his own "hermitage" for contemplation; and it may be that Providence, at certain periods of our life, may assign us to some "monastery" where our life will be more passion than action, as in sickness or old age.

But if we are to attain to a certain practical facility in salesian mental prayer, each province will need to see to the provision of capable animators, especially as regards the liturgy and the various community practices. The Provincial and the Rector in particular must accept the responsibility for ensuring the means for all to experience an authentic renewal.

If this be done Don Bosco's charism will shine with a particular brilliance. And everything that serves to bring about a greater esteem for its identity and to rejuvenate its deep roots can be welcomed with profit and gratitude. And on the other hand whatever tends to obscure its primacy in our hearts and lessen its attractiveness we should carefully avoid.

Salesian prayer is neither difficult nor complicated; it is made for everyone: for the young and for people in general; it makes plain that the call to holiness is not intended for only a chosen few, nor only for monastic settings; it is inserted in daily life, in ordinary and extraordinary events, in activity

and sickness, in every profession and way of life, in every age and every situation.

Among the Groups that constitute the Salesian Family there are examples of different ways in which their members dedicate themselves to prayer; we rejoiced, for example, when the Visitation Sisters of St Francis de Sales in Italy wanted to be included among our Cooperators; and we admire the designs of God who raises up here and there groups who dedicate more time to a kind of prayer which aims at ensuring in the whole Family an intense pastoral charity. At the Becchi, for example, on Colle Don Bosco, an initiative of permanent prayer has been launched in favour of youth holiness. It takes place alongside the little house of Mamma Margaret where our charism began, at the very place which John Paul II called the "Hill of the youthful beatitudes" and a "school of spirituality". When pilgrims, and especially young ones, come there in search of a message of hope, they willingly join in the adoration and listening, and come to understand that in life it is necessary to be able to pray.

But in particular we must give greater attention in the provinces to promoting youth prayer groups with characteristics proper to the salesian charism. Indeed our pastoral work for the young should be able to foster real schools of active prayer to fight against the loss of the sense of God in so many youngsters. No fostering of a youth spirituality will succeed unless it cultivates the spirit of prayer.

We know, dear confreres, that Don Bosco's charism is a precious gift of the Spirit and of Mary to the Church. In fact, throughout the centuries, the life-giving action of the Holy Spirit has always been accompanied by the motherly intervention of Mary: in the case of our own charisma we have

been explicitly assured of this by the Founder himself.

May the Holy Spirit and Mary teach us therefore to pray with that same salesian style they inculcated in Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello.

I am writing these reflections in the atmosphere of the Solemnity of the Assumption of Our Lady into heaven: the great personal "Passover" of the Madonna, the mystery which began in her on a universal scale her maternal role of Helper in the course of history.

When the Spirit brought about in Mary the capacity to be a mother, there was born in her Jesus, our Lord and Brother, to whom the Father could say in very truth "You are my beloved Son";<sup>59</sup> and the praying heart of Jesus could respond "Behold, Father, I come to do your will".<sup>60</sup>

<sup>59</sup> Heb 1,5

<sup>60</sup> Heb 10,5

Resembling this attitude of Christ is that of Mary at the Annunciation: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to your word".<sup>61</sup> This is a praying, "filial" and "missionary" attitude, which extends from a union of love with the Father to the realism of active daily life.

<sup>61</sup> Lk 1,38

Let us ask with insistence of the Holy Spirit, the first Author of our charism, that through the intercession of Mary his Spouse he may enable us to grow constantly in that interior disposition which may bring us too to a state "in which praying and living are spontaneously united".<sup>62</sup>

<sup>62</sup> C 86

Let us have an enthusiastic love for the identity of our vocation and nourish it each day by the authentic "spirit of piety" we inherited from Don Bosco: this is the way that leads us to Love!

Cordial greetings to you all.

With esteem and affection in the Lord,

*Don F. Viganò*



## 2. GUIDELINES AND POLICIES

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### 2.1 SALESIANS AND ECCLESIAL MOVEMENTS

Fr Juan E. VECCHI

*Vicar General*

For some time now questions have been reaching the General Council concerning spirituality movements existing in the world at the present day and their relationship with the salesian identity. Of particular interest is the presence of such movements in pastoral and educative settings for which we are responsible, and the personal involvement of the confreres.

In its recent session (June-August) the General Council examined the matter, after first obtaining information concerning the dimensions of the situation in the different regions of the Congregation. The conclusions reached can be of use to the provinces and local communities for an opportune discernment.

#### 1. A positive assessment

The Apostolic Exhortation "Christifideles Laici" points out the riches inherent in today's ecclesial aggregations and movements, and notes in them the "versatility of resources that the Holy Spirit nourishes in the ecclesial community..., the capacity and initiative and the generosity of our lay people" (n. 29). It recognizes too that "the actual formation of groups of the lay faithful for spiritual purposes or for apostolic work" (cf. *ibid.*), though stemming from multiple cultural and sociological motives, has a deeper reason: the fact that the Church is a communion and that this is expressed in

many forms to build a unity existing not only at the Church's beginning but also at its fulfilment.

The document goes on to set out criteria for discerning the validity of ecclesial movements, and the service that pastors are called upon to render to communion, both as regards the relationships of esteem, cordiality and collaboration between the various groups, and as regards "a fruitful contribution in building the common house" (n. 31), i.e. the visible Church in a particular locality.

The movements and aggregations not only offer a community experience, but also propose a style of christian presence in the world and inspire a form of apostolic activity linked with a typical spirituality which emphasizes particular aspects, sometimes in spectacular ways: spontaneous and shared prayer, the expression of mutual love; social and cultural militancy. Such spiritualities spread also through associated ecclesial events and literature, and become a scheme for responding to the needs experienced in the modern world.

The phenomenon deserves our own attention and positive evaluation. We have no kind of reservation in its regard. We Salesians and other Congregations are included in this current of communion, as the document says: "Lay associations have always been present throughout the Church's history as various confraternities, third orders and sodalities testify even today. However in modern times such lay groups have received a special stimulus, resulting in the birth and spread of a multiplicity of group forms: associations, groups, communities, movements." (n. 29).

In this exchange of ecclesial gifts we are called upon to make the contribution of our own spirituality and our own pastoral style.

## **2. The presence of the movements in salesian educative and pastoral settings**

The pastoral and educational environments for which we have responsibility are the places where we most frequently come in contact with the various movements and associations of the Church.

These in fact spread in the parishes through the inventiveness of their members or by recommendation of the local Hierarchy. We note too the multiplicity of the groups and the differences that exist between their spiritual orientations and their kinds of activity.

The parish is the union and expression of all the People of God living in a particular area. It must be attentive to the various expressions of ecclesial communion. For this reason it is often presented as a "communion of communities". The movements contribute to giving it a communal activity and capacity of intervention in the locality. In so far as it is "salesian" the parish contributes to the particular Church those gifts and sensitivities characteristic of our own charisma.

This double consideration gives rise to the presence and participation of ecclesial groups in our parishes.

The first criteria to which we must give our attention are those found in CL 30. They serve not only as a first discernment for acceptance, but also subsequently to moderate tendencies, balance peculiarities and correct possible deviations through a work of pastoral control.

A second indication follows. It is unthinkable that the entire dynamic activity of a parish should hinge on a single movement. No single movement in fact represents the totality of the People of God, nor is it called to rule them. Plurality of expressions, a plan of visible communion, service to the community starting from its needs and requests, and the sense of a proper relativity, should be the shared convictions and principles for constituting a pastoral orientation.

Spiritual guidance should be ensured for all the groups in the measure in which they have need of it, or to the extent that those responsible for the pastoral care of the parish see it to be required. This priestly service addressed to all groups calls for knowledge and understanding, and is more appropriate for pastors than would be a full-time and exclusive attachment to a single movement or group, which is to be deprecated.

It would also seem necessary that anyone fostering the insertion and development of a movement in a salesian parochial setting

should be motivated not by personal preference but by the overall pastoral plan. The parishes are entrusted to the Congregation which rotates its personnel and has to guarantee a substantial continuity in its identity. A general convergence at provincial level on options and guidelines is not merely desirable but indispensable. Situations of disturbance and conflict in fact are prone to arise where options have been made on the basis of personal preference, while art.44 of the Constitutions involves the whole community under the guidance of the Superior in the discernment of the lines to be followed in pastoral work.

In addition to, and at the foundation of, these particular indications should be the commitment to serve the parish community and the particular Church by the application of all the rich qualities of the salesian charism. The latter will find expression, according to the characteristic physiognomy of the parish, in the spiritual orientation of all the groups, and especially in the constitution and animation of associations specifically linked with the salesian spirit. It would be unthinkable that a salesian parish in deciding on its groups should exclude, subordinate or altogether ignore, the vitality of those groups which express its own riches.

The panorama is a bit different in *educative programmes destined principally for the young*. The settings are more homogeneous, the groups tend to be more convergent as regards a common objective, and their availability and collaboration can be better and more easily coordinated into a common project. Some of these groups are open to salesian pedagogical input and exert an educative, spiritual and apostolic influence on the locality. Others, on the other hand, require only the material space for their own particular activities and programme, which sometimes has no more than a single dimension.

What criteria can be put forward therefore, without pretending to cover the whole of what is quite a complex phenomenon? The objectives, style and programmes of the different groups (our own included) must be compatible and convergent with those proclaimed and followed by the respective youth centres. This includes purpose, levels of selection, integration of evangelization and hu-

man advancement, a proper balance between formation and commitment, educative intention, and many other points.

If different movements are to function in a youth community, each of them must be asked to manifest its membership by accepting responsibility for its own animation and sharing actively in the common programme. Less suitable therefore, even though not necessarily to be totally excluded, are groups which intend to keep to themselves, existing alongside the community of the oratory, youth centre or scholastic community.

The formative guidance of all the groups, with their own needs and style of operation, must be undertaken without fail by the Salesians and animators. This provides the possibility of permeating the programmes of the different groups with salesian spirit, without detriment to the originality of each.

### **3. The involvement and membership of confreres in ecclesial movements**

Knowledge of movements and the assistance given to them frequently leads to deeper involvement with them and even, at times, to joining them to the extent of adopting their spirituality.

This calls for some comment, together with a preliminary observation that is obvious but none the less indispensable: movements are many in number, and so are their intentions, requirements and plans. There are different forms of involvement with them, and various too are the reasons why confreres become attached to them. It would not be practical to generalize about the matter, nor to go into a long discussion about it. On the other hand it is neither useless nor impossible to make an effort at discernment. Just as there are certain signs that serve to judge of the ecclesial validity or otherwise of groups and movements, so there are indications which reveal whether participation in such movements is in harmony or disaccord with religious profession, which already involves a membership, a spirituality and an apostolic style.

A knowledge of the associations and movements operating in

its own Church is certainly indispensable for a pastoral community, and it is advantageous to maintain with them a vital exchange of sensitivities and experiences. There is nothing to fear in meeting and exchange. Our identity does not imply defence and separation, but the ability to compare and assimilate in accordance with our own originality.

Quite different is the situation of those confreres who, as a pastoral service, take on the spiritual assistance of some movement or association, even outside our own structures. This naturally implies a certain harmony with them and participation in their significant moments and events. Even in this case there are no particular difficulties when the commitment has been made in agreement with the Rector and in harmony with the community's project, and when the salesian spirituality and pastoral style continue to be the inspiration of the confrere's life.

But there can be also a third situation: that of confreres who, in a desire for greater spiritual intensity or through apostolic choice, become completely involved in a movement with forms of participation that supersede and threaten the demands of the salesian vocation. To the possible causes of this phenomenon the Rector Major makes reference in his letter in this issue of the ACTS, and points to the fundamental remedy in the recovery of salesian spirituality. The deepening of this at personal and community level, and its reflection on our pastoral approach to our work, are a condition for the greatest openness and exchange of spiritual goods with other movements to be of advantage to both us and them.

It is precisely in connection with this fundamental line of thought that it may be opportune to give some indications.

Both superiors of communities and salesian animators are asked in particular to provide a service for communion and identity. This implies on their part doctrinal competence and effort at animation. To this task the Regulations call for total dedication (R 172). They should not therefore take on stable membership in movements, nor should they encourage confreres to do so. Rather they should foster other aspects indicated among the preceding criteria: the ecclesial spirit of all movements, pastoral guidance, and

the salesian contribution.

Particular attention needs to be given to confreres in initial formation. They are passing through a stage in which salesian spirituality is not a sector of the objective, but something that should permeate the whole of their daily life, inspire pastoral practice and even shape their view of more than a few human and ecclesial realities. They should therefore live it in the most complete and untroubled way possible, and become aware also of its doctrinal background. Though occasional contacts with movements may be of advantage, systematic participation and deeper involvement are not fitting, and still less is actual membership.

Finally, because situations vary so much from one to another, it is desirable that in those places where the phenomenon of the spirituality movements and ecclesial associations have an influence on the life of the community and its pastoral work, the confreres carry out a discernment to establish lines of intervention consistent with their vocation as salesian pastors and educators.



## **2.2 THE FORMATION OF THE SALESIAN PASTOR-EDUCATOR: REFLECTIONS OF THE GC23 ON INITIAL FORMATION.**

Frs Joseph NICOLUSSI and Luc VAN LOOY

*Councillors General for Formation and Youth Pastoral Work*

For the six-year period 1990-1996 the Congregation has taken on as its priority obligation "the continuing formation and qualification of the confreres" (GC23, 221). This it considers a demand of the mission and an indispensable condition for responding to the challenge of educating young people to the faith in the context of the new evangelization.

In speaking of formation and qualification the Chapter indicated some practical objectives: spiritual renewal, pastoral qualification, educational and professional competence; and more precisely, the preparation of confreres for work as educators to the faith, animators of pastoral communities, and in the formation of lay people (cf. GC23, 223).

This commitment, which the Congregation has made a priority, affects all confreres but touches with greater reason those in initial formation; and this not only because the latter period must be seen in the perspective of ongoing formation to which it gives in some degree its basic shape, but because it is precisely the task of initial formation to prepare the salesian who must be both educator and pastor. In this sense, even though the GC23 did not refer explicitly to initial formation, all the Chapter said is essentially connected with it.

We recall below some of the points made by the Chapter. They provide a stimulus for assessing the contribution that must be given

by the intellectual preparation of the salesian pastor and educator and his insertion into educative and pastoral work.

### 1. Some points made by the GC23

The GC23 combines formation with qualification, defining internal apostolic conviction as being “both pastoral charity and pedagogical ability” (GC23, 231). The formation of the salesian pastor-educator aims at bringing together in him the qualities of a pastor and educator with a deep spirituality encompassing at one and the same time the relevant human, professional, christian and salesian aspects. It is a lifelong process carried out through the acquiring of deeper theoretical knowledge and reflection on lived experience.

The GC23, in spelling out this task, asks that the salesian be formed “for the work of education to the faith, the animation of pastoral communities, and the formation of lay people” (GC23, 223). Here we want to point out three requirements that this task implies:

a. *Professional qualification* in the fields of education and evangelization. The priority decided on by the Chapter for this six-year period includes explicitly “the qualification of the confreres” (GC23, 221).

Guiding the whole of the educative process towards the model of the “new man in Christ” is a task that cannot be left merely to good will or sporadic interventions, and still less to improvisation (cf. GC23, 220). Professional competence and religious life must concur in training the Salesian for the work of education to the faith. It is not enough to pick up fragments of knowledge; what is needed is a theoretical framework with serious scientific elements, the fruit of an organic know-how made up of the union of many dimensions which foster in the Salesian a pedagogical and pastoral mentality (cf. FSDB, 231).

The qualification of the Salesian is not limited to this basic formation, because it is not just a matter of maintaining the level that has been reached but requires a permanent effort at further progress through creative interventions of a professional and educative nature in the various contexts (cf. FSDB 231).

b. *Ability to collaborate* in a common plan of organic pastoral work.

Salesian pastoral practice is expressed in the activity of a community which, faced by a multiplicity of incentives, works according to a unified and organic plan (cf. GC23, 240), and draws up and realizes with shared responsibility an educative and pastoral project that is constantly reviewed and improved (cf. GC23, 89-90). This calls for clarity as regards concepts, knowledge of the context, ability to make suggestions, and flexibility and creativity in the process of realization. It requires in the Salesian the ability to plan and to share with others the responsibility for what is done.

c. *Ability to animate*.

"The setting up of the educative and pastoral community means that all the members are directly involved and are made to share responsibility for the educational experience and christian formation" (GC23, 232). The Salesian seeks the collaboration of lay people and in particular young people, develops a style of working with them and creates an atmosphere of shared responsibility.

To attain this experience of communal activity, a serious process of formation must be undertaken to foster "professional approach, educational ability, and witness as regards education to the faith" (GC23, 237). It belongs to the Salesian to start up such a process. For this purpose it is indispensable to prepare Salesians who will be open to collaboration and valid animators of formation experiences. Confreres are needed also, who are experts in the different sciences, to give competent guidance to the lay people involved.

The ability to animate is severely tested in the important field of experience in groups and movements: starting them off and following their development, seizing the opportunities they offer for personal and communal guidance, exploiting the vocational sensitivities to which they can give rise, opening them up to the characteristics of salesian youth spirituality and getting them committed to it, are in no way services that can be improvised without preparation and competence.

The above-mentioned points on which the Chapter insisted form part of the priority commitment for the continual formation and qualification of the confreres, and must be kept in mind when drawing up

the organic provincial plan for ongoing formation (cf. GC23, 223).

What response can be given by initial formation to this capitular deliberation? Here it will be to our purpose to look again at some considerations concerning pastoral formation during the stage of initial formation and indicate some points for assessment purposes. A more complete evaluation of the formative practices in the provinces can start from a consideration of the Ratio (FSDB) and provincial directories.

## 2. "Pastoral formation" during the initial formation process: some fundamental points.

*The whole of salesian formation has a pastoral perspective, since its specific orientation is determined by the religious and apostolic nature of the salesian vocation* (cf. C 97).

In particular, *initial formation* aims at the preparation of "a pastor and educator of the young in the lay or priestly state which he has embraced" (C 98), and at developing in him an attitude of ongoing formation which will enable him to respond to the ever new demands arising from the situation of the young and the poor" (C 118).

In formative experience *four elements* become harmonized in a vital unity: human maturity, intellectual preparation, deepening of consecrated life, and insertion in educative and pastoral work (cf. C 102). All four are indispensable for pastoral formation, and for the development of charity and of pastoral sense and ability (cf. FSDB, 74-78). Pastoral formation therefore cannot be reduced to mere pastoral experience, nor can apostolic formation be identified with direct apostolic activity.

During the formation process the *emphasis* on these aspects differs according to the specific character of each phase. Different too are the balance and dosage of each, without detriment to the unity and continuity of the experience. The various periods of formation, in fact, imply different rhythms of presence and detachment (cf. FSDB, 162, 167, 171, 288, 289). In the immediate post-novitiate, for example, the accent is on intellectual preparation, and in the practical training

period on insertion in apostolic work (cf. GC21, 262). To make of the post-novitiate a period for practical training, and of the latter a time characterized by commitment to intellectual preparation, would be to distort the formative sense of both phases.

*Intellectual formation and insertion in educative and pastoral work*, as determining aspects of pastoral formation, merit a particular reflection.

In both these sectors, intellectual formation and “pastoral experiences”, the *reality of the situation* in the different provinces varies from one to another for many reasons.

On the one hand there has been an increased effort to improve the quality of *intellectual preparation* and to bring studies into line with the requirements of the salesian vocation: programmes have been drawn up and curricula given structures (often officially recognized by civil authorities); attention is given to the formation of a robust pastoral and pedagogical mentality; care is taken to develop a disposition for study and reflection which will not come to an end with the “period of studies” but continue as a component of the attitude to ongoing formation and qualification.

On the other hand a decline in the general level of the quality of studies, the small number of vocations and of prepared formation personnel, the absence of qualified salesian study centres or of someone responsible for adequate programming, the frequenting of study centres that provide only a poor response to our specific requirements, and other factors too, can lead to a weakening of intellectual formation and so also to that of pastoral formation, and constitute a challenge that must be faced as a matter of urgency.

In his report to the GC23, the Rector Major referred several times to the necessity of a specific preparation and the need of a professional educational approach to respond to the obligations of our mission. While recognizing the efforts that have been made and the progress achieved, he points out that “the new subjects and fields of education, the new ways of animation and management, demand a specific preparation of personnel”. It was an established fact that “the initial formation in some study centres provides no qualification for educational work, and later specializations are determined by urgent

needs of other kinds" (RRM GC23, 181, 288).

In the case of what is referred to as "gradual introduction to educational and pastoral work" (cf. C 102), or to "pastoral experiences", there is observable in many provinces a practical concern to ensure formative conditions: the choice of environment (community, work, kind of commitment), the element of diversification and progressive development, programming, follow-up and assessment, balance with other dimensions of the formative experience, etc.

As the Rector Major wrote in the report referred to above: "Pastoral training has improved as a sector of formative experience: in many cases options have been made and programmes lived and evaluated" (RRM GC23, 166). But there are still some situations which call for greater attention if the formative dimension of these experiences is not to be weakened (cf. RRM GC23, 273).

### 2.1 *Intellectual formation and pastoral formation.*

The text of the Chapter deliberation speaks explicitly of pastoral qualification, educational and professional ability, professional formation, pedagogical capacity, the updating of expertise, etc. (cf. GC23 220-223). These expressions, though not referring exclusively to formation or intellectual preparation, certainly include it directly and are in harmony with what is stated in the FSDB: "The conviction of Don Bosco in his own time, and of the Congregation at the present day, is that *a serious intellectual preparation* is of indispensable assistance for a full and efficacious living of the characteristics proper to the salesian vocation and its mission" (FSDB, 210). And again: "The Congregation recognizes the fact that studies are an indispensable means for the formation of confreres who are called to be pastors and educators of youth" (FSDB, 204).

The salesian *mission* requires, and at the same time *characterizes and gives direction* to a *solid intellectual formation*. This is explicitly stated in the General Regulations: "Our salesian mission orients and characterizes at all levels the intellectual formation of the members in a way that is original and unique" (R 82). This presupposes an indispensable *unity in programming* (cf. FSDB, 211), and

"a programme of studies must preserve a balance between serious and scientific reflection and the religious and apostolic dimensions of our way of life" (R 82).

The orientation required by the salesian mission has an effect also on the choice of certain of its *contents*, made in such a way that "those branches of study shall be cultivated with special care which deal with the education of and pastoral work for youth, catechesis and social communication" (ibid.; cf. FSDB, 36-43).

The characteristic arrangement of salesian intellectual formation finds *typical expression* in the immediate post-novitiate where "the deepening of the life of faith and of the spirit of Don Bosco, together with an adequate philosophical, pedagogical and catechetical preparation that interacts with the prevailing culture, disposes the young confrere to a progressive integration of faith, culture and life" (C 114; cf. FSDB, 269, 340).

## 2.2 "Pastoral experiences" and pastoral formation.

In the formation of the salesian pastor and educator educative practice has a central place, and the "gradual introduction to educational and pastoral work" (C 102) is *one of the constituent elements*. For this reason importance must be given to the pastoral activity of the mission throughout the whole range of formation (cf. C 115). Salesian tradition has always emphasized in a characteristic manner this formative line of action, which finds typical expression in the practical training period (cf. ibid.).

The *FSDB* gives special attention to this point and, among other things:

- points out the relationship between pastoral charity, pastoral sense, and pastoral ability (cf. FSDB, 74-78);
- emphasizes the importance of introduction to the methodology of apostolic action (cf. FSDB, 230, 235) and to the formation of a pastoral and pedagogical mentality that is both open and critical (cf. FSDB, 234-236);
- explains the formative incidence of a process which fosters relationships and activities lived in the interaction between theory and



practice with gradually increasing commitments, in a properly programmed and balanced manner, followed up and evaluated, and designed to lead to the experience of a "wise activity based on faith" (cf. FSDB, 166-171).

As far as "*pastoral experiences*" are concerned the FSDB specifies criteria, conditions and concrete methods (cf. FSDB, 200-203), and gives precise indications for each stage: preparation for the novitiate (cf. FSDB, 310), novitiate (cf. FSDB, 322-3, 382), post-novitiate (cf. FSDB, 336-337), practical training (cf. FSDB, 352-8, 415), and specific formation (cf. FSDB, ch.9).

These indications, inserted in the organic panorama of the formation process and referred practically to each of its stages, ensure the conditions for the qualification of the salesian pastor and educator and for his professional competence, and contribute to overcoming superficiality and genericism in the realization of the mission.

The Congregation has emphasized the importance of "pastoral experiences", specifying in R 86:

- its purpose: to foster "the development of an apostolic spirit and of the educative and pastoral potential of the salesian in formation";
- the criteria and conditions for formational validity:
  - "they should be diversified and graded so that they respond to the personal and religious development of the individual confrere and to the phase of formation he has reached";
  - "they should be carried out in activities proper to our mission";
  - they should be suitably programmed, followed up and evaluated by the community.

### 3. Suggestions for an evaluation

The document of the GC23, and the first deliberation in particular, provides an occasion for the evaluation of some important aspects of initial formation.

Such an appraisal can be made at various levels: by the provincial council, by the provincial formation commission jointly with that for youth pastoral work, by those in charge of formation and teachers in

the same field, by the individual communities concerned with initial formation, by rectors and communities with confreres in practical formation, etc.

A reading of the norms and guidelines of the FSDB, to which reference has been made earlier in this article, and of the provincial directory, can constitute a broad and practical starting-point.

The following questions, taken from the General Regulations and the FSDB, can stimulate an evaluation:

- In what way does the salesian mission “orientate and characterize the intellectual formation of the members in a way that is original and unique: arrangement, programming, content, etc. (R 82; cf. FSDB, 36, 43, 205)? If they frequent salesian study centres, how is this “orientation” and “characterization” carried out? If their study centre is not salesian how is the integration or specific complementary formation ensured?
- What place is given to the disciplines that deal with education, pastoral work for youth, catechesis, communication (cf. R 82) and “the contents of salesianity” (history, spirituality, pastoral practice, etc.) (cf. FSDB, 233; R 85)?
- What relationship exists between the intellectual preparation of the confreres and the pastoral commitments of the province?
- Is there a plan for the qualification and specialization of the personnel (cf. FSDB, 481-487)? On what criteria is it based?
- Are the “pastoral experiences” realized throughout the formative process part of a programme? Are they “graded so that they respond to the personal and religious development of the individual confrere and to the phase of formation he has reached” (R 86)?
- Does the manner in which the “pastoral experiences” are programmed and carried out correspond to the criteria and indications of the Congregation:
  - capacities and experiences which allow for the expression of the pastoral sense (cf. FSDB, 78);
  - times and conditions which make possible the interaction of theory and practice (cf. FSDB, 166-171);
  - criteria and conditions for the formative quality of pastoral expe-

riences (cf. FSDB, 200-203)?

- How are activity and reflection integrated in the various moments of the formative experience?
- In what way is it sought to attain the formative objectives of the practical training period?
- How is growth brought about in the attitude of collaboration with lay people and in the capacity for animation?
- How does the community periodically programme, follow up and evaluate “pastoral experiences” (cf. R 86)?

## **2.3 SOCIAL COMMUNICATION: DELIBERATION N.6 OF THE 23rd GENERAL CHAPTER**

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### **Preliminary**

The deliberation concerned reads as follows: "*The journey of faith of the young demands from the community a new form of communication*" (GC23, 254).

The chronicle of the GC23 makes evident the manifest will of the capitulars to deal with the theme of communication in the context of "educating young people to the faith". Such an approach had not been contemplated in the preparatory work for the Chapter, but the members deemed it opportune not to overlook so significant an aspect of contemporary culture; and so were born the few paragraphs from 254 to 260 of the Acts of the GC23.

What happened is in some way indicative of the practical history of the salesian communities as regards social communication: there was need of a 'supplementary' decision and a further stimulus for an efficacious insertion into a process which today's world is following at high speed.

A careful re-reading of the few pages concerned will help us to a fuller realization of our mission as educators and evangelizers.

What follows should be considered as a first 'aid' towards a deeper understanding of the Acts of the GC23. It is directed primarily to the communities so that they may rediscover their commitment to education to the faith through social communication; and then also to those working in communication at provincial and local level, to enable them to verify the effectiveness of the service they are rendering.

## Communication in the perspective of educating young people to the faith

A rapid consideration of the capitular text concerning communication must be linked with all the work that went before. To separate the theme of 'communication' from a deeper consideration of 'educating young people to the faith' would only impoverish its content and perspectives, and so also the relevant reflections and practical directives. It would lead to a certain disappointment in the treatment of a reality so wide and vast as is social communication in today's world. In all three of the fundamental parts that make up the capitular text can be found *cultural data* and *evidence of educational problems* which refer back urgently to communication, and the latter must find a new way (cf. GC23, 254) for meeting today's urgent needs.

We can point out some of the references occurring in the Acts of the GC23.

The *cultural data* seem to emphasize the fact that society continues to exist not only *through* communication but that it exists and lives in communication. And the young are not extraneous to this situation. Indeed:

- young people look intensely for interpersonal communication, so as "to overcome isolation and establish contacts" (GC23, 51);
- the young perceive how and to what extent their personal maturity is linked with communication, positively because of the help it offers and negatively because of the conditions to which it gives rise (cf. GC23, 63. 125. 183);
- finally, many aspects of the personal and communal life of the young believer are linked with experiences in relationships and communication (cf. GC23, 143-145).

All this, of course, opens up new qualitative commitments for the salesian community, as well as new work-perspectives starting from the field of communications. And in this line let me point out an immediate and practical linkage between communication and education to the faith. The clarifications given in an earlier edition

of the AGC concerning the first deliberation of the Chapter about ongoing formation and the weekly community-day, should be read and realized, keeping in mind the needs and problems of communication in the context of evangelization and education to the faith at the present day.

The *educational problems* that emerged during the capitular discussions are a stimulus to the pastoral charity of the Salesian, who must be the first to live the commitment of educating young people to the faith. New “cultural trends, fashions and ways of life become widespread” (GC23, 17) through more rapid communication, and faster means of travel bring into contact persons previously unknown to each other because of geographical distance apart.

Speedy passage of news brings individuals, groups and institutions face to face with events that demand urgent responses and decisions.

Continual cultural inter-penetration between distant parts of the world highlights the need for a critical capacity and for ideological and practical comparisons in the daily life of an educator.

Education today, and education to the faith, call for new skills in interpersonal relationships and group communication. Every educative action, in fact, can be considered as a communication through the mediation of symbols. And we are directly involved in all this as “communicators” by the very fact that we are educators.

If this “new” communication is wanting, the challenges of the youth world appear at once:

— *‘distance’*.

“Young people far from the Church are numerous and present a big challenge to salesian communities, who are aware that the gap between them and the community is very often based on a difference of mentality and a lack of communication” (GC23, 77);

— *irrelevance of the faith*.

“Youngsters tend to live their faith ‘in private’, without linking it with the real life that rejects it. These situations of isolation, of



restriction to private practice, of being extraneous, are met with more or less everywhere and especially in the mass media" (GC23, 84).

The salesian community is aware of its nature as "missionaries of the young", but experiences at the same time how difficult it is to *communicate* to them efficaciously the rich qualities of the faith. The organization of the community along the lines requested by the General Chapter through its first five deliberations, will find concrete expression in the search for a "*new communication*".

### **The global aspect of the new form of communication**

The few paragraphs of the Acts of the GC23 are full of significance for the matters they deal with. They are not concerned with a technical definition of communication, such as can be derived from theories of information to be found in specialized manuals on the means of communication or on linguistic sciences.

They refer to the *global* aspect of communication, but this is considered as an interpersonal and institutional relationship, i.e. between persons and between institutions. "It not only passes on information, but communicates ideas, creates easy agreements and puts forward models of life and behaviour" (GC23, 254). Attention to the global aspect shapes the presence and action of the individual Salesian and of the community and makes it possible to meet the new needs of youth.

The global element also has reflections on the *settings* in which the Salesian works, and affects the educative, cultural, religious and spiritual dimensions of what he does, because communication "touches on every area of social life and every dimension of the life of the individual" (GC23, 254). The community must learn to grow in its ability to communicate, so as to use "a kind of language adapted to the young and to people in general, especially in the liturgy and catechesis" (GC23, 258). This is a challenge for the salesian educator. He will have to learn many kinds of language and will have to use in the most adequate manner the means of communication.



Don Bosco "initiated original apostolic undertakings to defend and sustain the faith of the people" (GC23, 256).

The global element indicates an objective for the Salesian engaged in pastoral work. The GC23 was guided in its reflections by the image of Emmaus. The charity of the Good Shepherd on the way to Emmaus is the model for the salesian communicator. "We repeat his attitude: we take the first step in approaching the young and joining them; we travel with them along the same road, listening to them and sharing their hopes and anxieties; we patiently explain to them the demanding message of the Gospel; and we stay with them, to repeat the gesture of breaking the bread and stirring up in them the ardour of faith that will transform them into credible witnesses and proclaimers of God's word." (GC23, 93)

This is in line with the salesian spirit, centred on the charity of the Good Shepherd. To neglect the new communication with all its possibilities of a verbal, cultural and symbolic kind, or in the use of gestures and body-language (cf. GC23, 255), would be to say good-bye to educational efficacy and to lose a means of education to the faith.

### **Some contents of the new form of communication**

The global dimension of communication has some testing grounds at the present day. The GC23 examines three of them which represent certain objectives and express some contents to ensure the success of communication: interior freedom, interpersonal relationship, and social solidarity. "The incidence of faith on life, or its practical irrelevance, is clear today in some aspects of the existence of individuals or of culture, which therefore become its acid test" (GC23, 181). These aspects always include communication.

The first is the *formation of conscience* (GC23, 182-191). John Paul II wrote in his message for the World Day of Peace, 1 January 1991: "Among the many other institutions and bodies which play a specific role in forming consciences, the means of social communication must also be mentioned. In today's world of rapid communi-



cation, the mass media can play an extremely important and indeed essential role in furthering the search for the truth, provided that they avoid presenting merely the limited interests of certain individuals, groups or ideologies. For more and more people the media are often their only source of information. How important, then, that the media be used responsibly in the service of the truth!"

The second is *education to love* (GC23, 192-202). This is a typical theme of interpersonal communication which requires for the rich development of the persons concerned affective human maturity, a decisive option, and the recognition of certain existential values of primary importance: autonomy, creativity, respect, dialogue, solidarity and self-donation. It is quite superfluous to point out the incidence of the means of social communication on education to love, but many believing communities need to make a determined practical effort to oppose a contemporary culture which makes use of the mass media to distort values and weaken the forces of resistance of the young in the face of the rampant hedonism.

As salesians we can boast of a significant number of works and activities in the field of communication, and they find in the GC23 a stimulus for an efficacious work of high quality.

The third is the *social dimension of charity* (GC23, 203- 214). Relationship must develop into shared responsibility. Experience of salesian life brings us in contact with "new and tragic forms of poverty: delinquency, emargination, exploitation of persons, and drugs" (GC23, 203). And in the meantime "new problems are emerging which require the active participation of individuals: peace, the environment and the use of goods, the moral question in every single country, international relationships, the rights of the defenceless" (GC23, 204).

A different culture must come into being. Education is needed to the value of solidarity. "The salesian community tries to bear witness to justice and peace before the youngsters and to promote them everywhere. And so it lives in deep harmony with the world's great problems and is attentive to the sufferings of those in the setting in which it is placed" (GC23, 208).



**From the broad horizons to the indispensable working structure**

The GC23 did not stop only at communication as such. It addressed also a few pointed statements to social communication. Alongside relational aspects it considered also typical processes for the communication of messages. For this reason it believed it opportune to indicate a working structure, with a provincial delegate for social communication (cf. GC23, 259). The precise statement in the Acts which brings the whole discussion about social communication very much down to earth runs as follows: "*The Provincial will appoint someone to be responsible for social communication in the province*" (GC23, 259).

In many provinces this directive will probably do no more than confirm an already well-established practice. In others, on the other hand, it may require the remedying of a delay which is certainly unhelpful from both a community and apostolic point of view. It represents an important option, in fact, for every province, because it brings the theme of social communication within the compass of the provincial organization, as regards both responsibility and pastoral outlook. It is a further step in line with the sensitivity needed in connection with articles 6 and 43 of the renewed Constitutions.

Indeed a further degree of realization is still needed of the General Regulations (in particular R 31-33), according to the practical possibilities of each province and with a greater understanding in the various Regions. For convenience of reference the articles concerned are quoted here in full:

*"As far as local possibilities permit, the provincial with his council should promote our pastoral presence in the social communication sector: he should prepare confreres to enter the fields of publishing, the cinema, radio and television; he should establish and build up our centres for the publishing and diffusion of books, aids and periodicals, and found centres for the production and transmission of audio-visual, radio and television programmes. These services should be established on secure juridical and economic foundations, and there should be liaison and cooperation between those in charge of them and the Councillor General*



*for the Salesian Family and Social Communication" (R 31).*

*"Salesians should take care to educate their charges to an understanding of the language of the social communication field, and to a critical aesthetic and moral sense. They should also encourage musical and dramatic activity, and promote reading circles and cineforum groups" (R 32).*

*"The channels of information and dialogue, both inside and outside the Congregation and Salesian Family (bulletins, ANS, short films, video-cassettes, etc.), should be developed, with appropriate use also of the means offered by recent advances in technology. Publishing houses in the same country or region should devise suitable methods of collaboration, so as to adopt a unified plan" (R 33).*

The degree of commitment and activity linked with social communication is vast and demanding, and calls for commitment and proper qualification; but it has given the impression of being left to the goodwill of a few persons and the initiative of well-deserving pioneers. The Chapter's decisions should give a further impulse, as regards both organization and qualification, to the whole of the work of this sector. The indication that there should be someone responsible at provincial level was the least that could be asked for in the General Chapter; but it was the first and indispensable step for stirring up fresh attention on the part of the communities to this "apostolic priority" (C 43); beginning a coordination between persons and activities; foreseeing linkages between forces working within the Salesian Family, the locality and the local Church; the promotion of new initiatives linked with modern culture which owes so much to communication.

Each province now has the task of revising its own organization in the light of the new requirement.



## **The figure and role of the provincial delegate for social communication**

A reflection on the figure and role of the person responsible for social communication in the province is not something new. In the previous six-year period three study seminars were organized for the purpose by this Department in three different Regions; they gathered information about what was being done in the salesian communities and pointed to what was still needed to keep abreast of the times and the tradition of Don Bosco. I do not refer specifically to all this material, because it was updated to some extent by the GC23 and because various continental meetings are foreseen for the not-distant future which will go more deeply into the matter.

I do no more than recall, with a brief practical comment, n.259 of the GC23: "*The Provincial will appoint someone to be responsible for social communication in the province. This person will:*

- *assist the individual communities in promoting various communicational realities;*

- *offer his services to the various sectors of activity and will maintain relations with local ecclesiastical and civil organizations.*

*In everything concerning the education of the young, he will work with the team for youth pastoral work".*

And here are the simple conclusions to be drawn from the capitular text:

- Every province must have its provincial delegate for social communication: this is the most immediate way for ensuring the realization of all the province's obligations in the social communication sector which are mentioned in the articles of the General Regulations. The organizational requirement obviously implies the other necessity – the preparation of qualified personnel for the sector. The appointment of the provincial delegate is not a purely formal act; it reminds Provincials of the urgent need to prepare persons to whom this task can be entrusted;
- The provincial delegate for social communication is a member of the team which assists and collaborates with the provincial



delegate for youth pastoral work, because the social communication plans are not something extraneous to the programme of the province and of its pastoral work for the young. This will prevent any conflict or duplication of interventions or criteria that would prove harmful to those to whom our mission is directed.

— The work of the provincial delegate for social communication will be aimed in three main directions:

- *the salesian communities.*

These need help and guidance in promoting and developing the knowledge and multiple activities of communication. In the communities great potential forces already exist: what is lacking is some competent stimulation.

- *ecclesiastical and civil organisms.*

This is a work that goes by a variety of names; it may be called public relations; it may be called building the official image of the salesian community; it may include salesian representation in institutions concerned with social communication. It will include membership of ecclesiastical and civil organisms with the task of confrontation, collaboration, and the offering of our own particular charisma.

- *the various sectors of activity.*

The delegate will provide a well qualified service to the different sectors of salesian activity, in so far as the social communication dimension is common to all of them; he is available to all of them for the purpose of assessing such things as content, means and manner of realization.

## Conclusion

The GC23 did a great deal with regard to social communication, not in quantity but in quality. To become aware of this is to be already involved in its realization in one's own area of work.

It is the responsibility of the communities to unveil to the confreres the new and interesting horizons that the Congregation is opening before them.



## 4. ACTIVITIES OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL

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### 4.1 Chronicle of the Rector Major

On 15 and 16 June the Rector Major was in Malta for the closing of the retreat held on the island with happy results.

Later in the same month (30th) he went to Sassari in Sardinia to bless a new chapel, and to Alghero to inaugurate a youth centre run by the Salesians for the service of the local hierarchy.

In July he was able to meet personally and as a group the recently appointed provincials gathered at the Generalate, and to animate a course of ongoing formation for French-speaking confreres. On the 21st he went to L'Aquila to address the members attending a week of reflection of the VIS (International Volunteer Movement for Development).

At Vercelli on 1 August he took part in the solemn episcopal ordination of Mgr Tarcisio Bertone SDB, the new Archbishop of that ancient diocese. He then went on to Turin where 630 young people from Spain, mainly animators of other groups, who had come for the «Camp Bosco '91» were awaiting him.

Between August 13 and 24 Fr Viganò made his eighth journey to Af-

rica, going this time to Angola and Mozambique where he met with all the confreres and also as usual with the Cardinals and Bishops, the FMA and the Cooperators. In Angola he was able to visit various towns, but in Mozambique he was not able to move outside the capital, Maputo, because of the political situation. This was the first visit of a Rector Major to these two missionary countries and was particularly significant because of the special difficulties that our confreres must face and for the flourishing of local vocations.

Returning from Maputo he was able to profit by the need to change flights at Johannesburg to spend half a day with a good group of SDBs and FMAs waiting for him at Daleside.

Early September (6-8) found him in Hungary for his first visit to those confreres who had been so sorely tried. He was able to observe the rapid progress recently made in that country where five communities have already been established (three in Budapest, one at Balassagyarmat and one at Szombathely). In this last town he was able to bless the novitiate which has been able to open again with five novices after 40 years.



Finally on 14 September he set out on a journey to three countries of Latin America: Chile, Ecuador and Peru.

#### 4.2 Chronicle of the General Council

The plenary session of the Council, the third since the GC23, began on 4 June 1991 and continued until 26 July. As always, the work of the Councillors was heavy, not only during the 31 sittings, but also in group meetings and personal commitment to study and for discernment in view of the animation of the Congregation.

The session opened with a special remembrance of our Founder, Don Bosco; the 150th anniversary of his priestly ordination occurred on 5 June. As already reported in the previous issue of the Acts (cf. AGC 337), the entire General Council with the Rector Major celebrated the event by taking part in a solemn concelebration in the Temple of Don Bosco in Rome, in the presence also of numerous confreres from the UPS, the formation communities in Rome, the houses of the Roman province, and a large representation of other groups of the Salesian Family.

The agenda for the Council's session, in addition to the usual practices concerning communities and

confreres (especially the appointment of provincial councillors, the opening of new salesian works, items of an economic and administrative nature, and personal matters concerning individual members), the examination and study of various important questions, of which the following is a summary.

1. *Appointment of Provincials.* After careful discernment on the basis of previously made consultations and the needs of the respective provinces, the Rector Major with his Council proceeded to the appointment of the following four new Provincials: Fr Domenico Rosso for the Central Province (Italy), Fr Gian Luigi Pussino for the Roman Province, Fr Victor Bocalon for the Cordoba Province of Argentine, and Fr Luis Sanchez for the Province of Ecuador. Biographical notes on the new Provincials will be found at 5.1 of this issue of the ACTS.

2. *Reports on Extraordinary Visitations.* The Council gave particular care to the examination of the reports on the reports on the extraordinary visitations carried out in the period January-May 1991 and presented by the respective Councillors concerned. The Visitations had been made in the provinces of Argentina-Cordoba, Great Britain, Italy - Central Province, Italy - Roman Province, Poland-Wroclaw, Peru, Portugal, Spain-Bilbao, Thailand and Vietnam. Also examined



was the visit that had been made to the Bratislava Province of Czechoslovakia.

3. *The deeper study of particular questions in view of an ever more efficacious animation.* In the light of the general principles adopted at the beginning of their period of office, and considering the principal requirements that had emerged, the Council went more deeply into some topics considered of greater and more immediate importance for their task of the animation and government of the Congregation. The following themes were studied, not necessarily in the order given.

a. – The practical realization of the first deliberation of the GC23: *the continuing formation and qualification of the confreres: the primary obligation for the period 1990-1996.* Starting from an examination of the capitular deliberation and what it calls for from the provinces and communities, the Council dwelt particularly on the interventions the Council itself should make to ensure the realization of the objectives intended.

b. – *The significance of the salesian presence* (the second deliberation of the GC23). The GC23 asks the Congregation for «a new pastoral quality», a renewed «significance» to its presence and action, with regard to the education of young people to the faith. Starting from the concept of «significance»

and what it demands, forms of intervention were assessed from the point of view of their greater consequences. In particular consideration was given to what action could be taken in this connection by the General Council itself. Subsequent numbers of the ACTS will give further details in this connection.

c. – *Vocational guidance* (5th deliberation of the GC23). Vocational guidance is a strategic element in the journey of faith of the young, and for this reason the GC23 asks every community to give particular attention to it (GC23, 247). After considering the options made by Salesians throughout recent years and the specific needs for adequate vocational guidance, the Council evaluated especially the proposals for an intervention of animation of its own. Every Department is concerned to keep the theme of vocation at the centre of its own programme.

d. – *Outlines for a lay project.* Taking up again a theme already studied in part in the preceding plenary session, and keeping in mind the observations that had been received on the indications then suggested, the Council prepared a new document which has been sent to the provinces. It is an aid containing material that will be useful for the drawing up of the provincial plan to meet the requests of the Chapter (GC23, 238). The document



is in four parts: I. The «Lay Person»: the term and the reality. II. Lay people in the Salesian Family. III. Our commitment as regards the laity. IV. Salesian working environments and the presence of the laity. e. – *Salesian spirituality and ecclesial Movements*. In connection with a deeper examination of salesian spirituality, desired by the GC23, requests had been received from various parts for a reflection on our spirituality in relationship to the new «Movements» being raised up in the Church by the Holy Spirit. The Council approached the theme by first making an assessment of the situation, as far as relationships with our communities are concerned, and evaluating it with reference to our own spirituality. The result was the adopting of some practical criteria and guidelines that are presented by the Vicar General at n.2.1 of the present number of the ACTS.

f. – *The «aging» phenomenon*. Starting from an overview of the Congregation and the reality of the «aging» factor, more visible in certain areas, the Council studied both the consequences of the phenomenon (as regards persons, community and pastoral activity) and the most suitable means for meeting it. In particular the Council concentrated its attention on what animating action it could take on its own part to help the provinces (especially

those in greater difficulty) and the confreres in facing this problem.

g. – *Further examination of some aspects of our government: the «extraordinary visitation»*. To render more effective its work of animation in this significant circumstance, the Council reflected on the indications given in the Constitutions and Regulations and came up with practical guidelines for the methods to be used in its own work.

h. – *The role of the Director of the Salesian Bulletin (Italian)*. Referring back to what had been said in other circumstances with respect to the Salesian Bulletin (which is linked with the Department for Social Communication in being an organ of information, but is linked also with the Salesian Family as regards its contents), it was decided to define more clearly the figure of the Director of the Italian edition: to him is entrusted the responsibility for its editing (under the control of the Councillor for the Salesian Family and Social Communication), while in other respects he collaborates with the management group linked with the Department of Social Communication.

i. – *Animation and support of the Provinces of Eastern Europe*. Having in mind the particular situation in which the provinces of Eastern Europe are placed (i.e. those of Bohemia and Slovakia in Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland and the sale-



sian presences in the Soviet Republics), after the recent events which have so changed the social, political and religious physiognomy of the region, the Council studied ways of special intervention for helping these provinces to take up their salesian life and activity once more.

4. *Administrative Report.* In accordance with art.192 of the General Regulations, the Economist General presented his annual report for the year 1990, with the budget for 1991. The Council discussed the report and approved it.

5. *New juridical circumscriptions.* To meet the requirements that had arisen in certain regions, the Council studied and launched the process for the constitution of new juridical circumscriptions: in India the division of the Province of

Bangalore; in the Philippines the division of the present province; and in Haiti the setting up of a vice-province. The Council set in motion the machinery necessary for the constitution of the new circumscriptions. It also examined a plan for the eventual better arrangement of the salesian provinces of Piedmont (Italy).

In addition to the work described above, some other important moments for the General Council were:

- the course for new provincials (24 June to 3 July);
- the day of retreat (22 June), animated by Fr Aldo Giraudo;
- a community day (15 July) that the Council passed together at Perugia, where they were the guests of the generous local salesian community.



## 5. DOCUMENTS AND NEWS ITEMS

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### 5.1 New Provincials

*We give below some biographical details of the new Provincials appointed by the Rector Major with his Council during the plenary session of June-July 1991 (cf. chronicle of the General Council, n. 4.2).*

1. *Fr Victor BOCALON, in the Province of Cordoba (Argentina).*

Victor Bocalon was born at San Girolamo, Cordoba (Argentina), 14 November 1933, and was a pupil at the college of Vignaud. He made his novitiate at Moron and his first religious profession on 31 January 1951.

After the practical training period he studied theology at the studentate of Cordoba and was ordained priest there on 20 November 1960. Subsequently he studied at the UPS in Rome, where he obtained the Licentiate in Philosophy and Pedagogy.

He carried out educative and apostolic duties in various houses of the Cordoba Province. In 1981 he was appointed Rector of the house of San Francesco Solano at Salta. In

1984 he became a member of the provincial council and in 1985 Vice-Provincial. For several years he was also provincial delegate for the youth apostolate.

2. *Fr Gian Luigi PUSSINO, in the Province of Rome (Italy).*

He was born at Guspini in Sardinia on 24 June 1951. He was a pupil at the college of Cagliari where his salesian vocation matured, and entered the novitiate of Lanuvio where he made his first profession on 16 August 1967.

After his first salesian experience he studied theology at Rome (UPS) and gained the Licentiate in Theology and Catechetics. He was ordained priest at Cagliari on 24 March 1979.

Soon he was entrusted with posts of responsibility in the provincial community. For several years he was provincial delegate for youth pastoral work; in 1982 he became a provincial councillor and in 1986 Vice-Provincial (and rector of the provincial house), a post he held till



1989. From September 1989 he had been rector of the «Pius XI» community in Rome and in 1990 was a delegate to the GC23.

3. *Fr Domenico ROSSO, in the Central Province (Italy).*

Domenico Rosso was born at Turin on 5 January 1934. He frequented the school at Colle Don Bosco and was admitted to the novitiate at Chieri (Villa Moglia), where he made his first profession on 16 August 1950. After the practical training period he followed the course of theology at Bollengo and was ordained priest on 1 July 1960. Subsequently he took the Licentiate in Theology and obtained his Teaching Certificate for Secondary Schools.

An educator and animator, he was called in 1967 to direct the house of Ivrea, and in 1972 was appointed rector at Colle Don Bosco. In the same year he became a provincial councillor,

In 1978, at the end of his mandate as rector, he was given the responsibility for the «Radio Incontri» at Rebaudengo (Turin) and continued in this work until 1986 when he was appointed to direct the retreat house at Caselette, a work he was doing at the time of his appoint-

ment as Provincial.

4. *Fr Luis SANCHEZ ARMIJOS, in the Province of Quito (Ecuador).*

He was born at Olmeda, Ecuador, on 27 June 1943, and his salesian vocation matured while he was a pupil at the college of Cuenca. He made his novitiate at Cayamba, and his first profession on 16 August 1963.

After the study of philosophy and practical training he was sent to Santiago, Chile, for theological studies. There he gained the Licentiate in Religious Sciences. Returning to Ecuador, he was ordained priest at Quito on 31 January 1975.

He subsequently did further studies at the UPS in Rome and took the degree of Doctor in Dogmatic Theology.

Going back once again to his own province he became a teacher and formation guide. In 1981 he was appointed rector of the theologate at Quito, a post he held for six years. In 1986 he became a provincial councillor and in 1987 Vice-Provincial, an office he still held at the time of his appointment to succeed Fr German Delgado, who was compelled by ill health to leave the task of Provincial.



## 5.2 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 BOGO Generoso	Jaraguá do Sul	25-08-91	74	BSP
L BOETTI Giorgio	Torino	10-07-91	91	ICE
P BONGIOVANNI Pietro	Torino	02-08-91	73	ICE
P CARABELLI Saturnino	Asunción	22-05-91	81	PAR
L CHAMBERS Thomas	Warrenstown	21-08-91	88	IRL
L CHIAUDANO Nicola	Gerusalemme	12-07-91	74	MOR
P CIURCIOLA Alberto	Macerata	19-06-91	76	IAD
P CUCCO Giulio	Borgo S. Martino	01-09-91	68	INE
P DERGAM Chafik Miguel	Montevideo	05-08-91	75	URU
P DUFFY John Patrick	Cape Town	28-06-91	76	AFM
L FERNANDEZ POZUELOS Marcelo	Arevalo	29-07-91	89	SMA
P FERRITO Mark	New Rochelle	22-07-91	75	SUE
L FLOTATS SELGA Ramón	Alicante	13-08-91	86	SVA
P FRACZEK Henryk	Kutno	11-07-91	65	PLE
L FRANCESIA Domenico	Hong Kong	19-07-91	85	CIN
P GAMBIRASIO Emilio	Arese	02-08-91	69	ECU
P GIOBBIO Luigi	Torino	22-07-91	68	ISU
L GOMES RODRIGUES José	Lisboa	12-07-91	77	POR
P HASELSTEINER Rudolf	Horn	28-06-91	79	AUS
P HEMELAER Frans	Hoboken	09-08-91	76	BEN
P JEREB Carlos	Lima	26-06-91	83	PER
P KOSCIELNIAK Bronisław	Kamyk	15-06-91	61	PLO
P KUBALA François	Swäty Jur (Cecoslovacchia)	09-08-91	86	FLY
P MAPELLI Aurelio	Cuenca	04-09-91	80	ECU
P MASPER Celso	Civitanova Marche	24-07-91	77	IAD
P MELE Pietro	Castellammare di Stabia	05-08-91	86	IME
L MILANI Francesco	Roma	10-09-91	67	UPS
L MINJ Venantius	Guwahati	26-07-91	64	ING
P MONTEN Mathieu	Liège	08-06-91	81	BES
P PAOLI Igino	Nanno	21-06-91	77	ANT
P PAZZINI Antonio	Sorocaba	12-05-91	89	BSP
P PELIZZON Nicola	Gorizia	31-08-91	68	IVE
P PILBEAM Alfred	Farborough	26-07-91	84	GBR

NAME	PLACE	DATE	AGE	PROV.
<b>P POLI Bartolomeu</b>	Belo Horizonte	27-04-91	80	BBH
<b>P SARDON RODRIGUEZ Antonio</b>	Sevilla	27-06-91	82	SSE
<b>P SCHIOPPI Enrique</b>	Montevideo	31-07-91	69	URU
<b>L SILVA Geraldo</b>	Cruzeiro	21-08-91	86	BSP
<b>P SMITH Erberth Jonh</b>	San Isidro	20-06-91	86	ABA
<b>P VETTORE Anselmo</b>	Santiago de Chile	23-07-91	76	CIL
<b>P VOGEDS Josef</b>	Leonding bei Linz	09-06-91	75	AUS









