

acts

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of the Salesian Society
of St John Bosco**

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1. LETTER OF THE RECTOR MAJOR

THERE IS STILL GOOD GROUND WHERE THE SEED CAN FALL

- Introduction. - 150 years since Bartholomew Garelli. - A pressing appeal of the GC23: faith and vocation. - The new perspective of youth pastoral work. - Challenges of the present day. - Reawakening of transcendent values and processes to be developed. - Communities with ideas. - Making the journey of faith something personal. - Fostering experiences that develop maturity. - Knowing how to call and follow up. - Conclusion: those who bear the primary responsibility.

Rome, Solemnity of Mary Immaculate
8 December 1991

My dear confreres,

My cordial greetings to you, together with those of the members of the General Council. Some weeks ago we came back from the Holy Land where we made a special annual retreat and were able to live a deep experience contemplating the history of salvation.

We were able also to celebrate the centenary of Salesian work in Palestine with our well-deserving Salesian confreres and the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, of those provinces which have been so sorely tried. We prayed for all our communities

and for every single confrere, as we became absorbed with Mary and Joseph in the mystery of the Incarnation and felt ourselves involved in the Passover events of the passion and death of Jesus, his resurrection and the Pentecostal gift of the Spirit.

We came back with Christ in the forefront of our minds and a renewed determination to commit ourselves to the fulfilment of his mission in history.

With what great joy would our father Don Bosco have contemplated so ardent an experience in the land of the Holy Family and the Apostles, if on his visits to Rome he had already shown such interest in the witness of the early Christian martyrs and the tomb of St Peter. His first successor, Blessed Michael Rua, went twice on pilgrimage to the Holy Land (in 1895 and 1908) as an expression of gratitude and in search of a sure stimulus for the Congregation's future.

We too felt ourselves in the Holy Land as representatives of Don Bosco's whole Family. The conferring on the Rector Major and Mother General of honorary citizenship of Bethlehem was a symbolic gesture which brings all of us more closely together with the Lord's davidical roots.

For my own part I asked for the Congregation in the Church of the Nativity at Bethlehem the gift of being able to bring about an efficacious renewal in the vocational dimension of our pastoral work.

The Holy Land is the home of the richest and best documented story of vocations. God gave preference to this region when taking on his human experience. He called many collaborators who differed widely one from another: patriarchs, leaders, prophets, judges, kings, priests, champions, men and women for specific missions. He called them at all ages, from the mother's womb (as John the

Baptist) or in the fullness of manhood (like the twelve Apostles and Saul of Tarsus).

It was exhilarating at Bethlehem, Nazareth and Jerusalem, to meditate on our Lord's exhortation: the harvest is rich but the labourers are few, so ask the Lord of the harvest insistently to send out labourers to his harvest.¹ It is inspiring to think that Jesus himself is the first of the workers in the vineyard, looking always for collaborators; he it is who taught us in the parable of the sower that some of the seed fell on good ground and bore fruit. We need to realize that throughout the centuries, and therefore also in our own day, there is still good ground where the seed sown by the Lord, who is always alive and active in his Church, can germinate and bear fruit.

¹ cf. Mt 9,37

150 years since Bartholomew Garelli

On 8 December this year, the Solemnity of Mary Immaculate, I was at Turin to commemorate the 150th anniversary of that humble event that Don Bosco always looked on as the beginning of the work of the Oratories. He was always convinced that at the origin of the work there had been the motherly intervention of the Virgin Mary. She did everything, he would say later. Through Mary's intercession Don Bosco's meeting with Bartholomew Garelli had been like the tiny mustard seed which had developed into a profuse charisma in the Church; a charism which, among other things, entrusts to the Madonna the entire vocational guidance of the young. She it was who guided Don Bosco himself in the foundation of a Congregation with the involvement of youthful vocations: those

twenty-two young men who, on 14 May 1862 made together with him the first Salesian vows, are the best historical proof of the vocational dimension, sustained by Mary, which is present in the whole Salesian future. Don Bosco gave himself intensely to the promoting of vocations, not only for the work of the Oratories but for the entire Church in all her different ministries, charisms and services.

In his tireless vocational activity our Founder was also pioneering and creative, especially in the maturing of candidates. He took care of so-called "late vocations"; despite the numerous difficulties met with (even on the part of Mgr. Gastaldi), he set up the Work of Mary Help of Christians, precisely for the cultivation of the vocations of young men already mature in age. Philip Rinaldi was one of them, and later became an excellent former of others.

It is true that times have greatly changed since then, but the creativity of the Holy Spirit and the motherly help of Mary will never be wanting to us: the sower will always cast seed on good ground.

A pressing appeal of the GC23: faith and vocation

The last General Chapter presented faith to us as the energy of life and as the apex of our educational activity, enlivened and crowned by an atmosphere of spirituality.

One of the chapter deliberations reminds us that "the journey of faith of the young demands that the Salesian community give particular attention to their vocational guidance."²

The text speaks of the "journey of faith of the young" in its unity and totality, i.e. the whole of the

² GC23 247

journey, considered in every phase of educative activity; if at some stage of the journey vocational guidance were to be left aside, our work of education to the faith would no longer be genuine.

For quite some time the theme of vocations has been the object of careful reflection by our General Chapters; Fr Luigi Ricceri, as Rector Major, wrote a special circular letter in this connection.³ The GC21⁴ in particular presented a summary of the situation which is still valid at the present day; and, following up one of its indications,⁵ the Youth Pastoral Department offered in 1982 a useful aid to the provinces.

The novel element introduced by the GC23 is that of inserting the vocational dimension into the journey of faith of the young, and of having understood the journey itself as a gradual and progressive response to a personal call. Think of the four areas indicated by the Chapter; they are simultaneous, even though with different emphases and intensities. Each of them has vocational overtones, while the fourth one – that of commitment for the Kingdom – concentrates explicitly on the vocational call as an indispensable condition for the authenticity of the entire journey.

And so, from the very beginning of education to the faith attention is directed from a pedagogical point of view to the vocational dimension: the steps the young person is taking towards human maturity (first area), the objectives at which he is aiming in his knowledge and sharing in the mystery of Christ (second area), his gradual insertion into the life of the Church (third area), should all lead him to a personal interest for the Kingdom (fourth area) “committing his own life to the cause of God, the Saviour of mankind.”⁶

³ ASC 273

⁴ GC21 106-119

⁵ *ibid.* 119d

⁶ cf. GC23 149 ff.

The vocational process is not to be equated with a single final fortuitous and vintage moment of a quite exceptional nature, but the main axis of the whole journey and of each of its stages.

Vocation and vocations

It is useful to recall, albeit briefly, that at the origin of the life of faith lies the sacrament of Baptism: it implies a fundamental option for Christ and involvement in the working plan of his Kingdom.

Vatican II has brought out the baptismal foundation of the common vocation of all the People of God, thereby upending to a certain extent the former manner of understanding the vocational reality. This must be considered, in fact, starting from God's overall plan for the salvation of mankind. At the foundation of this there is Christ and his Church with its mission of leading humanity to the goal of salvation: the building of the Kingdom.

The sacrament of Baptism brings about incorporation to Christ and the Church, investing every Christian with the great vocation of the People of God. Being a lay person, becoming a priest or religious, means adopting a special way for serving the common vocation and collaborating in the Church's mission. All "vocations" have their root in the one fundamental vocation which gives light to them. This is of special importance with regard to the planning of our pastoral work for vocations.

It is true, of course, that when we speak of "vocations" we refer in particular to that of the various groups of consecrated life, of the priestly ministry, or of a lay person explicitly committed in a concrete manner. For the care of these vocations it is

but a generous collaboration with Christ to enable man to attain the fullness of his potentiality. The world without Christ would mean the total defeat of history; vocation and vocations exist to avert such a catastrophe. There is nothing more precious for the course of human history than the vocation of Christ and the vocations of his disciples.

The new perspective of youth pastoral work

If we look at Don Bosco and at the objectives assigned to our Congregation, we see that the vocational perspective is at the centre of our educational concerns. The Constitutions in fact indicate that "special attention to apostolic vocations"⁸ is one of the purposes of the Salesian mission.

And then, speaking of those to whom the mission is directed, they go on to say that among these a privileged place is occupied by those who show signs of a special vocation;⁹ they further point to vocational guidance as indispensable in the content of educative plans for the service of all young people.¹⁰

The GC23 rightly considers the "salesian community" as the overall subject of vocational commitment; the community involves each of its confreres in active communion with the Provincial and Rector, in following out a detailed educative and pastoral plan at both provincial and local level. It is a youth pastoral plan for education to the faith, particularly permeated by efficacious vocational guidance.

It is clear that a present-day approach to the problems of the "new evangelization" and the "new education" must include the consideration of

⁸ C 6

⁹ C 28

¹⁰ C 37; cf. R 16-17

more than a few innovations in drawing up the plan of youth pastoral work, and hence also of vocational guidance. It will not be sufficient merely to continue with the methods of the past; there is an urgent need for new communal reflection and intelligent creativity in the search for new initiatives in the vocational field. We could say that the yardstick for measuring the effectiveness of Christian pastoral work for the young is its vocational results! Unless the common Christian vocation is formed and special vocations cultivated in its service, all education of young people to the faith will remain sterile!

And so in our case it becomes more urgent than ever to give our minds to the development of specific vocations for the groups of the Salesian Family, and in particular to those for our own Congregation: clerics and brothers. The parable of the sower should imbue our hearts with hope.

It is true that many new obstacles have arisen, but there are also consoling motives for revival. The times have become particularly difficult, but the power of the Holy Spirit is stronger than the difficulties; and rightly do we speak of Mary Help of Christians as the "Madonna of difficult times".

But let us see in what sense the outlook has become darker for vocational possibilities at the present day.

Challenges of the present day

Without any doubt there are contexts at the present day which make the birth and growth of vocations difficult. There is a web of negative con-

ditions, even though accompanied by new resources, which call for our communal attention and the planning of systematic (not just sporadic) activity to provide new and appropriate responses which are not mere repetitions of statements that have now lost their incisive effect. Contexts vary from one region to another, but it should be kept in mind that everywhere is growing to some extent a type of culture with certain universal characteristics. Some of the difficulties we shall list briefly below will be present with greater intensity in some places than in others, but to consider them will provide us with some reflections useful everywhere for planning vocational guidance.

— We may begin from the *secularization of society* which is spreading throughout the world like an oil-stain on water.

In the past many social and cultural expressions were permeated by a religious dimension. But now, whatever is religious is becoming increasingly more irrelevant in society, a situation which renders more difficult and prolongs the process by which faith matures, both as regards its content and still more as a living practice.

To be Christians, i.e. to live out the baptismal option, in a pluralist society becomes just one manner among many others to which every citizen has a right. The result can be the development of a climate of relativism, of the obscuring of traditional ideals, of a loss of the sense of life: many young people seem to be afloat in a ship without a compass. They lose the perspective of what is transcendent, which is the firmament of faith, and cocoon themselves in short answers about the sense of life which are quite insufficient for meeting the great yearnings of the human heart. Even the responses

offered them by science finish up meaningless, because they have no connection with the ultimate end of life and the global sense of history.

We must urgently help them to feel the need for the experiences of silence and reflection, to pray and hearken to the mystery, to face up to the truly meaningful events of existence so as to meditate on them in the depths of their spirit.

— Another difficulty is caused by the *multiplicity* of messages, with an abundance of suggestions, based on various philosophical and religious concepts, combined with an acceleration in changes in nearly every social field: politics, economy, science, ethics, life-style. Bombardment by so many messages, some of them contradictory, renders vocational discernment particularly difficult. The consequence is a concept of freedom as a “possibility always open to new options”, which carries with it a marked disinclination for making definite options; it is easy to be generous for a limited period, but very much more difficult to undertake to be so “for ever”, because the continual changes taking place could at some future date produce some other novelty with a greater appeal.

In such a fluid atmosphere two extreme reactions are possible: in many it will be “indifferentism”, because no ideal excites any enthusiasm in them; in others it will be the gut reaction called “fundamentalism”, i.e. the feverish desire to recover lost certainties by the wishful reaffirmation of old styles of judgement, without any regard for the objective demands of the signs of the times.

Neither indifferentism nor fundamentalism provide a favourable backdrop for Salesian vocational guidance.

— Another difficulty is caused by the cultural fact of the *lengthening of the period of youth*, which leads to personal decisions being customarily deferred. The traditional phases of Christian initiation, considered in the past as opportune moments for a personal faith-plan, frequently appear at times that are inappropriate and insufficient. In fact, the situations which determine life choices (entry into the world of work, university, etc.) now take place at a period well after adolescence. The experiences and evangelical content associated with Christian initiation retain all their importance, but they do not cover (at least systematically) the period of youth. And so in a certain way the “young” are not specifically followed up in the period when they are in full evolution, in the years when they are thinking about their future lives.

On the other hand they have a higher cultural level, as regards both studies and experience, and so need a more adequate follow-up, and moreover one that will be different for different individuals.

Hence vocational guidance needs to be much more consistent and convincing, witness needs to be crystal clear and suggestions more concrete and convincing. And this is certainly a challenge to the ability of our communities to dialogue with young people to promote the maturing of their faith into plans of life.

— Another challenge that can lead to difficulties starts from a fact that in itself is very positive, but not always fully enlightening as regards its consequences. It is what we might call the challenge of “*generator themes*”: they are new values which stir up enthusiasm among young people at the present day – like peace, solidarity, justice, ecology, the

world brotherhood of man, the plight of the down-trodden, etc. They open up fascinating panoramas but could affect conscience only in a horizontal perspective, fostering a temporalistic attitude that can easily become prey to exploitation, passing fashions and ideologies which very soon lead to disappointment and embarrassment.

Vocational guidance must not outlaw such "generator themes", but must be able to enlighten them with the supreme and absolute value in which is rooted every faith option. It is indispensable to link these themes with the person of Christ, the only true Liberator: his resurrection, which makes him the Lord of history, is the greatest innovation of all time.

— Finally we must not overlook among the present difficulties a widespread *loss of social esteem* (at least in the West) in respect of specific ecclesiastical vocations. The crisis in the priesthood and religious life over the past decades has led in various environments to disaffection and suspicion. Even our own communities have not always presented an attractive, welcoming and apostolic appearance, they have not always proclaimed with clarity and enthusiasm the identity of their own particular gospel plan of life, they have not always fostered the development of leaders in the Christian commitment of the young. And so the correlation with vocation and vocations, instead of being something compelling, has become progressively weaker and less positive, until in some cases it has lapsed into a passive silence. It is evident that in such a case reaction is needed with all the strength that can be mustered: conversion is imperative. Without living witness valid care for vocations will inevitably become a dead letter.

The multiplicity of problems and difficulties is a clear indication to us of the urgent and indispensable need for a new and careful community reflection on vocational guidance, with a view to drawing up new and practical plans for the following up of vocations, plans that must be continually submitted to verification.

Reawakening of transcendent values and processes to be developed

The difficulties are far from few, but there are also promising signs of revival. The religious horizons of the young are showing a marked reawakening to new possibilities. It is a revival which is not universal nor entirely clear; it shows a certain ambivalence but it is opening up ever more to the search for a transcendent perspective. The event of Czestochowa (August 1991) was of great significance and the harbinger of an increasing number of young people who are discovering with contagious enthusiasm the mystery of Christ.

An esteem for religious experience is growing among many youngsters as a noble quality of human existence; it appears in a strongly subjective form, it is true, but is nevertheless an invaluable opening to the transcendent. There is also an intensified search for meaning, seen especially in groups that are closely knit and well motivated; it is a factor which disposes others for moments of reflection and spirituality. Participation in solidarity initiatives of various kinds, some of them of an apostolic nature, are becoming more widespread. It is clear,

in fact, that an atmosphere of innovation open to the Gospel is spreading; and this leads almost naturally, and hence in a form that makes it easily accepted, to a series of vital questions concerning the sense of life.

In such a climate it is not difficult to insert the question of vocational guidance. Many youngsters allow themselves to be challenged; and if the matter be introduced with sensitivity and openness to the positive innovations already referred to, it awakens real interest.

It is also possible to see the present crisis in vocations as being itself linked with the signs of the times, and hence permitted by God to reawaken in Christian communities a dynamic conversion, a sense of creativity and innovation which will tailor the care for vocations to the social and cultural challenges.

And so let there be no giving way to discouragement nor any relaxation in our efforts; let us be determined to intensify vocational guidance within renewed pastoral work for youth centred on objectives appropriate to the present times!

Among particular points of reference suggested by the religious situation through which we are living, we may list the following:

- the presentation of the mystery of Christ as the central value in history, accessible to everyone through a life inspired by the evangelical values of love, service, austerity and universality;
- the attraction of fraternal experience within a group, as a manner of introduction to ecclesial communion;
- esteem for ideals of service, such as a preferential option for the poor, the pursuit of justice, the courage of non-violence, peace initiatives, etc.;

- the urge to be a leader in taking on practical responsibilities in respect of projects useful to society;
- experience of volunteer work with its demands in the fields of organization and sacrifice.

The possibility of making an efficacious suggestion to today's young people to undertake a Christian commitment in a vocational journey is linked in the first place with our own genuine spirituality, as individuals and as communities, so as to manifest in unequivocal terms the value of life in Christ. From this will derive the quality of our education of young people to the faith; to this must be added a special and constant attention to those who show signs of a special vocation.

Spirituality, pastoral quality and vocational follow-up are three aspects that are both necessary and inseparable. If even one of them be missing, the vocational process becomes sterile.

I think it opportune therefore to indicate some practical points which call for a renewed effort in the houses for the proper application of the directives of the last General Chapter. But for this purpose we must first of all keep in mind some basic principles which constitute the practical guidelines for every vocational commitment.

- The first and foremost is that every vocation is an initiative on the part of God and the gift of his love; hence all activity must be supported by prayer, and its spiritual nature never forgotten.
- To God's initiative must be joined the *indispensable and active part played by the young person* in the whole vocational process; he personally must enter into dialogue with God and he personally must make decisions; hence the importance of enlightening his freedom and fostering his

ability for reflection and discernment.

- Hence also the need for appropriate educative mediation both of individuals and of the community. To make proposals and to call by name is the mark of the good educator who feels his role as a mediator chosen by God to reveal his noble plan to the young person.

These principles must be kept carefully in mind during the vocational journey one hopes to make together with the young. They are an invitation to us, as individuals and communities, to make a careful examination of our vocational guidance in our pastoral work for the young.

Here then are some practical points on which to concentrate our attention and planning.

Communities with ideas

A first point is strongly emphasized by the GC23 itself: the Salesian community as a “sign” and “school of faith” and as a “centre of communion and participation”. It is in fact the place and form of life to which is invited the young person who shows signs of a vocation. It is a mediating factor of importance: in its daily routine it becomes an attraction which helps the youngster to feel that it is close to him and to accept and interpret God’s interior call; it offers him concrete points of reference for the realization of his desire for self-donation. It puts at his disposal a web of relationships, imbued with family traits and commitments, and an environment of sharing, in which the young person can live and better develop his own faith, feel the fascinating attraction of the mission, and

come to understand too that the defects of himself and others are not an obstacle to the realization of a life-plan authentically linked to Christ and evidently efficacious in doing good.

But the community cannot be just a topic to be explained when speaking to young people about vocation; it must be a living and shared reality. From this derives the need to give careful attention to the various concrete ways in which we express our community, religious and apostolic life. For this purpose it may be well to re-emphasize some aspects of Salesian common life already fully set out in other documents; it will not be difficult to study them once again in community, especially that of spirituality.¹¹ Here we shall limit ourselves to referring to only a few of them.

¹¹ cf. AGC 334

A first aspect to think about from the standpoint of practical renewal is that of centring our attention on what characterizes our community, i.e. on the vitality of our mission to the young. The community is called upon to create and give life to an "environment" and a wider "educative community", where young people come in contact with each other and with adult Christians who are aware of their own baptismal option or, in other words, of the common vocation of the People of God. The environment will become fertile ground for the seeds of particular vocations if it involves the young people as active participants in the common mission of all in the Church, providing possibilities for dialogue on current problems in evangelization and initiatives for harmonizing human growth with Christian commitment, and becoming a centre for meeting and for inculcating in the locality a feeling of solidarity and the willingness to be leaders in the face of concrete needs.

This brings us to the question of *participation in the life of the local Church* (parish, diocese, bishops conference), which projects Christ's mission on all those living in the territory concerned, as well as on courageous missionary activities. In the local ecclesial environment an invitation to specific vocational commitments is more easily understood and finds more willing response. Proposals for doing good to those near and far are more easily put across, as are messages about the sense of life, about religious experiences of prayer, meditation and apostolic preoccupation. The very premises are effective factors, as are its symbols and of course the persons who are its representatives.

It is not difficult to make comparisons between the strength of the Church's appeal and that of other worldly attractions whose worth in the search for meaning is objectively irrelevant. The Church makes up for the limitations of witness and apostolic decisiveness in individual educators. Young people become aware that in the global mystery of the Church there is a living energy which surpasses that of its agents. To feel and act with the Church is therefore, as far as vocational objectives are concerned, a strongly efficacious method that our communities would do well to keep very much in mind.

And then, in recent years, several houses have made positive experiments in welcoming into our community young people showing signs of a vocation. They share in community prayer, apostolic responsibility, fellowship and the joy of Salesian life. This is an initiative used also by other congregations of both men and women, active and contemplative. This is evidently not the first phase of a vocational process, but it is certainly an opportune

experience for those already showing precise intentions and ability, and able to share responsibly in a communal way of life. It also gives the community an idea of the reassessment and revision to which it needs to submit itself.

Summing up, we are invited to revise in the community itself its role as the cradle and nursery where the seed of vocations can be planted and germinate. In the gestures of the community and the attitudes of its members, in the values it expresses, in its apostolic concern, and above all in its spirituality in the following of Christ, the young person finds the nutrition that guarantees a strong and undisturbed growth of the seed sown in baptism.

Making the journey of faith something personal

The grace of Baptism automatically carries with it vocational energy, even in respect of special vocations: God calls and the baptized person responds – there is a gift and its willing acceptance, an invitation that meets a positive response, a proposal and a plan.

This faith dialogue finds a growing concrete expression as the believer gradually comes to understand the reason for his own existence and decides to play his part in the history of salvation. This in turn gives rise to motives and enthusiasm for choosing more radical commitments. If the baptismal faith is not fostered and fails to mature, not only is the personal vocation neglected but vocations in others do not flourish either.

But what are the conditions for the birth, preservation and growth of faith in today's young peo-

ple? We have already indicated some phenomena that prevent it maturing.

The GC23 sees the response to this complex situation in a *gradual "journey"* which keeps the sense of faith in continual communication with the life of the young. The chapter document draws its inspiration from the event of Emmaus: walk in the company of Jesus.

The image of a journey suggests the drawing up of travel plans that include personal follow-up, especially in the case of young people whose faith is more mature. They must absorb values and proposals in such a way that these develop into a clear guiding light for their future and the energy to pursue it. Beginning a journey means thinking about the starting point of each of the travellers, but also not stopping at intermediate stages nor moving at the pace of the slowest; it means rather pressing always ahead with those who can keep up, presenting further goals until a solid and consistent personal spirituality is attained.

To render a journey personal for each traveller, there must be in the environment interaction between basic proposals for those just beginning and more demanding ones suited to the possibilities of individuals and groups.

It sometimes happens that in our work explicit vocational suggestions are by no means lacking and may indeed be abundant, but the response is poor; at the same time one may observe other ecclesial experiences that are much more fruitful. A key for overcoming sterility is certainly the "personalization" of growth in faith. When an individual has not been prepared for listening to the Lord's voice, and followed up in giving attention to it, suggestions and mediations prove meaningless because

they are not understood. This is why we think it urgent to check up on the consistency of the education to the faith that we offer to young people; we must go further than working for the whole group (valid though this be, and even indispensable), and follow up each individual at the level he has reached.

The different rates of progress of young people on the journey means that a personal dialogue is called for in every case. We must aim at the maximum overall development, which is vital in every sense: as a baptized person in dialogue with Christ, as the maker of one's own decisions, as an intelligent observer seeking to discern God's will. To suggest a plan for the journey helps the person to pass from vague desires and first notions about faith to a systematic initiation into the mystery of Christ and the Church, and from this to a practical and organic spirituality.

To make the journey something personal means also to involve the "traveller" more directly, as he passes from gospel values in general to a responsible contact and dialogue with Christ, and then on to true friendship with him and the conscious sharing, albeit gradual, of his mission in the world.

In connection with this assistance in following a path leading to mature faith, more importance needs to be given to sacramental experience with Christ for the laying down of solid foundations of evangelical convictions and attitudes. Special vocations are the result of God's free choice; sometimes the latter may be made evident suddenly, like a flash of lightning, but this is exceptional. Normally it happens calmly over a period, through a slow maturing process. A pedagogical effort is required to enlighten the young person by the word of God,

by experience of the sacraments, and by the contacts of communion with other believers; and this implies a plan of prayer, ascetical purification and eucharistic life. Spontaneous generosity, the desire to spend oneself for others, a taste for evangelical values can all be short-lived unless they are integrated into a consistent personal process leading to the placing of the mystery of Christ at the centre of one's own existence.

And so if it is true that a process of vocational guidance involves different aspects, all of which are important for the giving of a fully conscious response, it is equally true that the key to the whole process is to start the freedom of the young person growing towards a conscious spirituality.

It is precisely here that mistakes must be avoided; it is here that the efforts of the community and the individual educators need to be concentrated.

Fostering experiences that develop maturity

An assessment of vocational efforts made in the Congregation in recent years shows that in the journey of faith some particularly fertile moments are to be found: they are like so many refreshing oases or filling stations, or like lofty vantage points from which new panoramas can be seen. Young people who are led to them discover very forcibly the characteristics of a plan of life with Christ, and are attracted by its beauty and by its novelty and depth. Such moments are like a desert experience, far from the racket and uproar of the city, where it is easier to find those moving experiences which touch an individual deeply. They were experiences

of which even Jesus and his disciples were fond. They respond to the desire of youngsters to have direct contact with the transcendent, to set their gaze on the immense firmament of the heavens, on lights that far surpass the neon signs blaring out propaganda in the streets of our cities.

¹² AGC 338

In the circular letter on "Charism and prayer"¹² I pointed out how ecclesial Movements attract through their capacity for personal involvement, for faith commitment and for conscious sharing. An analysis of the Salesian Youth Movement animated by our own spirituality is objectively positive in this sense. What we have to do is increase the experiences that develop maturity, giving depth and consistency to their constituent elements, and making them something permanent in daily life and not events that occur at sporadic intervals.

Let us recall some experiences of this nature:

— One of them is what is called the "*school of prayer*": learning to listen to God and converse with him. Prayer and mental prayer are genuine expressions of faith; they move a person from the periphery to the centre of his existence, to the place where he meets his very self, where he discovers the significance of what he really is, with its transcendent and social dimensions. It is not a question of lessening the importance of practices of common prayer in use in the environment, but of coming to realize the indispensable need for an apprenticeship and experience lived and felt in a truly personal way.

It is certainly a good thing that these prayer experiences and schools of the word of God should be multiplying among young people. They are times, places and groups which serve to open the individual to the voice of the Spirit who lives within him,

to learn different forms of dialogue with the Lord, to feel himself permeated with the truths of salvation. Young people are going in search of such experiences as special occasions for getting themselves together interiorly and deepening the sense of what they really are.

Such moments, if they are well prepared, give rise to a positive effect in the flourishing of vocations. In some cases the main theme of such events may be explicitly vocational, even in a radically evangelical sense. Prayer leads spontaneously to a dialogue of discernment and to spiritual direction. In this way centres of prayer become also centres of vocational guidance, complementing other initiatives in the journey of faith.

— *Diligent use of moments of special significance is also a particularly effective factor in developing maturity.* Among us such use is traditional, and is usually an experience of conversion and renewal. The fruitful results of retreat houses and centres of youth spirituality, that have grown up in many provinces in recent decades, are widespread and encouraging, especially when the houses concerned are organized not as holiday homes, but as true spiritual centres with an efficient team for guidance, prayer and special celebrations of revision of life and of reconciliation. In particular they offer a deeper and more frequent use of the sacrament of penance which plays a role of extraordinary importance in vocational guidance.

— Another experience that develops maturity is found in a variety of *initiatives of service and of apostolate*. If they can get away from the temptation to mere activism and be solidly based on motives of faith and evangelical solidarity, such experiences open youngsters to the great needs of peo-

ple and of the Church, and lead to a clearer understanding of the strength of the love Christ showed us.

— The *animation of environments* or activities, *various commitments* of a cultural and social kind, *volunteer work at home or abroad*, *collaboration in work for the missions*, etc. are all opportunities and stimuli for a reflection on one's own existence and openness to others. In all these initiatives a pedagogical and spiritual follow-up is indispensable if their use is to become a process of growth and not end up as a flash in the pan. An important maturing initiative is that of the "group": it is a special experience which takes in some of the initiatives already mentioned and puts them in a context of shared organization and responsibility. The groups can be of various kinds, but should be permeated by a spiritual atmosphere; it is worth our while to point out as particularly fruitful in our own case those of the Salesian Youth Movement and the Young Cooperators. Statistics confirm what is already obvious at first sight concerning the effect of group experience on the birth of vocations. But, as I have said already, it is not a question of just any kind of group, but of those that promote a feeling of belonging, an ecclesial sense, rooted in faith and apostolic preoccupation.

In the activities of these groups, in fact, various factors converge, all leading to vocational maturity. Seeing and judging together, realizing well organized activities, are things that create a reflex action of analysis and discernment. Apostolic activity in particular leads to self-donation, putting those concerned in contact with the situation of those in need. Personal contact with the animators (priests, religious, lay people and the better prepared among

the youngsters themselves) strengthens the possibility of choice.

In this way every committed group becomes “vocational”, not only in the general sense that it fosters membership and active participation in the baptismal option, but in a specific sense too, because it offers a road to clarification and initial experiences.

Not without reason did the GC23 dedicate a practical guideline to the “group”¹³, pointing out the effect of group activity on the maturing of faith.¹⁴

¹³ GC23 274-283

¹⁴ *ibid.* 143-145

We have work to do in this regard; we shall recover a vital oratorian aspect of our youth pastoral work.

Knowing how to call and follow up

Silent testimony and implicit invitations are not always sufficient to awaken vocations. The witness of Jesus himself was completely transparent and he prompted a fascination in others, but he gave a direct and personal call to each of the apostles.

The Pope and the teachings of the Bishops speak explicitly of the “courage to make the call”; and our GC21 had already invited us “to have the courage to expose young people also to the most challenging vocations”.¹⁵

¹⁵ GC21 113e

There has been unfortunately, and maybe it still lingers on in some confreres, a doubt or negligence about giving appropriate open expression to personal invitations. Failure to do so becomes, in fact, a pernicious “vocational silence”; one might even speak of cowardice or unawareness in respect of one’s own ministry, because a young Christian has

an objective right to know of the Church's vocational possibilities. The excuse for this lazy attitude is usually given as respect for freedom: vocational decisions should be left to mature on their own. But this is just an irresponsible rationalization. It is not the teaching of Jesus and the Church. We may recall the concrete invitations that Don Bosco used to make, and his tireless dedication to hearing the confessions of his boys, especially the older ones, even when he was old and sick. We can think of the extraordinary way in which he called Philip Rinaldi – an exceptional case certainly but one which reveals his normal practice in this regard, always carried out with keen discernment.

The courage to give the call stems from faith, from spiritual fatherhood, from a conviction of the beauty and indispensable nature of Christ's mission in history, and from an intimate knowledge of the candidate. "Calling" is the noble action of one who has something of great value to offer, of one who is concerned about developing the maturity of the young person called, of one who feels concern for the greater good of society and the Church.

This courage is already expressed in a general way in the organic vocational activity that forms a living part of youth pastoral work; it is addressed in the first instance to all, but attention tends to be more progressively concentrated on, and more specific care given, to those who show certain indications.

This is the direction in which the GC23 leads us when it indicates¹⁶ the phases of vocational growth in the young: the discovery of their own possibilities,¹⁷ their training in generosity,¹⁸ vocational suggestion,¹⁹ explicit invitation,²⁰ discernment²¹ and initial choice.²²

¹⁶ GC23 151-156

¹⁷ *Ibid.* 151

¹⁸ *Ibid.* 152

¹⁹ *Ibid.* 153

²⁰ *Ibid.* 154

²¹ *Ibid.* 155

²² *Ibid.* 156

The appeal to be courageous in making a call is addressed not only to the Rector but also to the other confreres. It takes for granted that in everyone a keen eye and family style of life will lead to the identifying of signs of a vocation, so as to begin or bring about a personal dialogue. "Do not be afraid to call", the Pope has told us. The new vocational climate is marked by Christian loyalty and by candour in presenting to young people vocations of special commitment. Many of them will not succeed in interpreting the Lord's voice unless they are helped through a specific suggestion. Today, unfortunately, disinformation about priestly ministry, religious life and other forms of special commitment, makes it difficult to obtain an objective knowledge of their social and ecclesial importance. They may appear to young people as things remote from their own existence and even extraneous to the emerging culture. And thus many generous dispositions remain without expression, even in the presence of very valid testimony; it is therefore necessary to show in a convincing manner the ways and settings which ensure and endorse the quite extraordinary validity of special vocations for the future, and to make them flourish once again.

To abstain from giving invitations would be an outdated manner of abandoning our pastoral and educative ministry. The Lord continues to place in our path boys and young men with admirable dispositions, sometimes already fostered in their own families and matured through early catechesis. An educational friendship, a combined seeking process, the request for spiritual direction, the sharing of some apostolic commitment, provide us with an enviable opportunity for crowning the sequence with a suitable personal suggestion.

To the courageous giving of a call must also be added the planning of a careful, constant and friendly "*follow-up*". In the final document of the 2nd International Congress for Vocations (1981) it is stated that "when a young person or an adult has become aware of the divine call and has asked for and received advice, he feels the need and value of a helper and guide to discern the right path with greater clarity and to follow it: this is the question of follow-up."

As well as the organization, where possible, of specially suitable environments (aspirantates of a new kind, reception communities, etc.), personal follow-up before the pre-novitiate has become more and more indispensable, and may indeed be at times the only possibility because of certain local and cultural requirements, or because of age or family circumstances.

The criteria to be applied in such circumstances need to be decided and agreed at community level, so as to obviate any risk of arbitrariness and individualism regarding aspects that are central to the development of a vocation.

Convergence and agreement should be sought especially with respect to three requirements: the authenticity and consistency of motivations, the proper presentation of the spiritual life, and the ability for relationships. To follow divergent criteria in meeting these requirements will sooner or later prove harmful to vocational maturing of a Salesian kind.

The follow-up must also help to overcome possible limitations in basic Christian formation, which may appear in some candidates as lacunae regarding either necessary knowledge or Christian living. A healthy follow-up can also prevent the pernicious

tendency to continually put off the making of a decision; fickleness and indecision, so widespread at the present day, lead unconsciously to an abandonment of the goal.

In a word, follow-up is a delicate task, but one that is most effective; it leads to the consolidation of some key principles essential for the further vocational process.

In drawing up the educative and pastoral plan for the province it will be well to assign space also to the criteria that should guide the follow-up process, the objectives at which it aims, and the gradual nature of the process to be followed.

Conclusion: those who bear the primary responsibility

In concluding these reflections, dear confreres, I see the importance of adding a further word on three factors which are vital for our pastoral work for vocations: the role of the Provincial, the responsibility of the Rector, and contact with candidates' families .

— In the role of the Provincial (with his council) the exercise of the pastoral ministry is linked naturally with vocational commitment. The ensuring of the future of our charism, the preparation of new generations of confreres, the regeneration of resources of personnel, are vital aspects of his animation and government. It would be quite pernicious were his ministry to be reduced solely to considering how he could best deploy the forces already existing without considering whether the fronts on

which we are working are apt for the generation of new members.

Concern for vocations can never become something merely marginal in the exercise of government. On the contrary it must be the subject of deep thought and practical measures which have their effects on the local communities, the persons of the confreres and the functioning of our works. It is a matter of converting communities and confreres into animators. The ability to provide animation is the clearest sign of the conciliar renewal of our mission, our ministries and charisms. Thanks to the practice of animation a new stage has begun in the Church, in religious Institutes, in Movements, in Associations and Groups. It would be incomprehensible were the same not to take place in our own settings.

It is a question of motivating confreres and communities, of stimulating and preparing them so that each one is able to carry out a work of guidance in his own field of labour; of backing up vocational initiatives by suitable aids; of relaunching spiritual direction and the practice of the ministry of the confessional; of programming ongoing formation to produce better pastoral competence.

– The responsibility of the Rector is well set out by the GC21: “Because of his position as community leader, the Rector is the first one responsible for vocation promotion on the local level: in a climate of faith and prayer let him periodically make a thorough study of the vocation apostolate.”²³

He makes the effort to effectively involve the whole community, according to the duties of each confrere. It is not a matter of delegating a particular person but of getting each one to accept respon-

²³ GC21 114

sibility in a common plan, by bringing about the assimilation of criteria for discernment and agreement on forms of intervention, and by indicating the kind and gradual nature of his own personal action. He will be careful to follow up attentively the choice and coordination of enterprises in the field of youth to ensure their sense and purpose, and will see to it that initiatives to promote vocational guidance are not lacking.

For the Rector and his community it would also be reckless and wanting in foresight to think only of the functioning and extending of the work, allowing less influential sectors to have supremacy over the maturing of young people in the Christian sense of life.

The role of the Rector also includes in a particular way, his ability and availability for personal conversations with the youngsters, especially those who are more mature and show signs of a vocation. "The Rector," says the GC23, "must take to heart the personal encounter with the young people, and especially with those who are approaching a point of decisive importance in their lives."²⁴ This is in fact an invitation to recover the pedagogical method proper to the preventive system and of the pastoral figure Don Bosco wanted the Rector to present.

²⁴ GC23 287

– Finally, contact with candidates' families has a specific importance in the following-up of young people heading towards a Salesian vocation. Those bearing the real first responsibility for the vocation of their children are the parents themselves. At the level of youth pastoral work in general there is already a movement in the Church towards a greater complementary relationship with pastoral work for the family; the point is made in the Apos-

tolic Exhortation "Familiaris consortio" (cf. especially n. 74).

Our obligation also to bring about the effective functioning in our own works of the educative community and the lay project (especially in respect of our many Cooperators and Past-pupils) is an invitation to a greater and constant harmonization between pastoral work for the young and for the family.

In an atmosphere of greater coordination, the result of the conciliar ecclesiology of communion that is so difficult to spread, a special vocational importance attaches to knowledge of the candidates' families, and to contact and dialogue with them. Motivations are deepened, some unfortunate difficulties come to light, but especially an effort can be made to foster the radical interest of the family in the same setting in which baptismal faith was born. Contacts of this kind lead to greater quality and cooperation and to the avoidance of surprises. The life style of parents, their educational action and their witness, are indeed the best ground for the growth of a Salesian vocation. Christian parenthood is one of the prime objectives of pastoral work in the Church at the present day. How many vocations have been and continue to be born in the Church in believing families. Rightly is vocational pastoral work concerned also, in communion with the efforts of the local Church, to provide serious help to families in their renewed Christian awareness and their educational task. To launch initiatives in this sense, to foster the faith of interested parents, to bring them into the orbit of our charism, to recall and develop what Don Bosco said in their favour, is certainly a fertile field to which we should give greater consideration.

There is a growing need today to help families to resist the subtle secularist atmosphere which is spreading in society. Only a broader pastoral work of cooperation will nurture the tiny seeds, rich in promise, that are becoming ever more numerous in this springtime of the Church. The Gospel, though teaching us that children are not the property of parents, proclaims that they are a gift of God entrusted primarily to the parents for the renewal of society through the mission of Christ. Even Jesus himself, the Word incarnate, was entrusted for the good of all to a holy family.

Let us look with admiration on Joseph and Mary, and invoke them with trust and constancy. They are undoubtedly the main intercessors on behalf of a more efficacious pastoral work for vocations. Let us entrust to them the present needs of the Church and the world; let us speak to them of the immensity of the harvest, of the growing need for education of the young; let us thank them for what they have already done for the benefit of Don Bosco's charism, and let us ask insistently for their assistance in helping us to increase the number of labourers in the vineyard.

The final document of the above-mentioned Congress of 1981 called the Virgin Mary the "mediatrix of vocations". "model of each one of those called", and "Mother of all vocations". Let a special recourse to her, dear confreres, be always at the foundation and centre of the renewal of our pastoral work for vocations.

I wish all of you a fruitful new year in your labours and hope. The Gospel assures us that "some seed fell on good ground, where it took root, grew and bore fruit."²⁵ Let us therefore dedicate our efforts to the better cultivation of the good ground. I

²⁵ Mk 4,8

offer to all of you my best wishes that you may
have more numerous vocations.

Affectionately in the Lord,

Don F. Viganò

2. GUIDELINES AND POLICIES

2.1 THE VOCATIONAL ASPECT IN YOUTH PASTORAL WORK

Fr Luc VAN LOOY

Councillor for Youth Pastoral Work

Introduction

The letter of the Rector Major highlights the basic foundations and some reference points of all work for vocations, and lays emphasis on certain practical items.

Without repeating what he has already said and without pretending to be in any way exhaustive, I think it may be useful to reflect on some vital aspects of pastoral work for vocations from the standpoint of youth pastoral work in general in the Congregation.

The revision of the pastoral and educative plan (PEPS) that each province will be making by the next Provincial Chapter, means that the houses and coordinating organisms of the province will be able to assess the effectiveness within that plan of their manner of vocational guidance. The GC23 asserts: "Vocational guidance, proposal and follow-up, will become a characteristic part of journeys of faith at all their stages" (GC23 251).

In the Salesian pastoral and educative plan there are *four dimensions* which together guarantee the authentic Salesian nature of interventions made by the Salesian community or the educative and pastoral community. One of these is "vocational guidance" as a choice for life. (The others are: education and culture, evangelization and catechesis, social growth and group activity. Cf. "*Salesian Youth Pastoral Work*", Youth Pastoral Department, 1990, pp. 66-73).

The GC23 identifies four dimensions in the journey of faith; in the fourth of them, "towards a commitment for the Kingdom", is found the vocational dimension (GC23 153-156).

Pastoral work for vocations is not the final stage of the journey of faith, as some may be led to think from the expression in art.37 of the Constitutions that speaks of it as the "crown of pastoral activity". It is not simply a series of activities carried out with young people who show signs of a special vocation, but "*an element always present and one that must characterize every stage and every area of intervention*" (GC23 247).

Pastoral work for vocations is something intrinsic to youth pastoral work in general. Each implies the other. In any province the animator and coordinator of vocational work cannot be thought of outside the team for youth pastoral work (cf. GC23 253).

1. A single educative and pastoral movement

The unity of the young person requires that the elements of education be not separated one from another. This is strengthened by the fact that the principal subject of education is the young person himself. The objective is that he should reach and hold his proper place in society in a conscious, competent and responsible manner, and thus realize his vocation. Through many forms of intervention he has to attain that goal, with the help of educators and the community.

The convergence as regards the individual and the purpose to be achieved, stemming as they do from the human model coming from the Gospel and from culture, brings together in a single educative and pastoral movement all the initiatives and activities launched in favour of the development of the young person. The Salesian does not limit his interventions, be they of a material, cultural or religious kind, to the benefit of the youngster, but his attention is directed in various ways to the young person himself.

Vocational work finds its place within this educative and pasto-

ral movement, influencing every activity, enlightening and supporting every youngster in making his life choice. The aim of the educator is to prompt in the young person the efficacious desire to develop the gifts he has received and reach full self-realization in line with the model put to him.

2. Significant moments

The gradual development of every youngster suggests the making of interventions at different levels and intensities. It is a process in which are to be found initiatives of particular form and consistency. Pastoral work for vocations gives special attention to boys and young persons who are looking for something beyond the normal sensitivities of daily life; it offers concrete possibilities for experiences of service, reflection, spirituality and Christian formation. By taking the youngster out of his ordinary environment, by creating homogeneous groups of persons looking for a deeper commitment in life, and by offering the possibility of travelling with "models of life" before him, each individual is helped to discover the person of Christ the Good Shepherd.

These significant moments develop in particular two important aspects of Salesian pedagogy: *group activity*, in which young people come together to exchange experiences and seek common values that stir up enthusiasm, and *spiritual direction*, a deep and personal dialogue with the Salesian who is at his side on the journey.

There is a great variety of these significant initiatives in the Congregation at the present day, but the form that appears most effective for creating enthusiasm appears to be the formation of young animators. Youngsters from our own settings, who are open to values suggested to them, meet together for days of study and reflection, and organize themselves for an oratorian style of service to young people who are poor and in need. The Salesian Youth Movement creates the space needed for such activity.

School camps and other camping activities for the young, pilgrimages, big international gatherings, experiences of service freely given, commitments at the level of the local Church, followed up always by members of the Salesian Family, become occasions for looking more deeply into the sense of one's own life and availability, and the consideration of what the Lord is asking for in one's own life.

The experience of communal living, in a simple and open relationship with the Salesians, is without any doubt the strongest incentive and appeal as regards a religious and ecclesial vocation.

Some provinces have been able to devise structures for offering such powerful experiences to young people through retreat houses, regular meetings, vocation groups for likely candidates, prayer groups, and Bible circles. Sometimes these experiences are centred on particular houses which have this special purpose, or organized around a group of confreres who are available for this kind of service for schools, parishes and local Church structures.

3. Salesians prepared for vocational work

We wonder whether we are living our Salesian identity to the full, with everyone fully committed for a wholehearted endeavour in this task for vocations in the Church and society.

The GC23 has asked every Provincial "to foster the preparation of the confreres as regards both vocational guidance and spiritual direction" (GC23 253).

It seems opportune to repeat that "*each Salesian accepts responsibility for his own formation*" (C 99). Confreres who are able to guide the young in their vocational search must increase in number, experience and quality, in our communities and provinces.

Many provinces give the impression that vocational guidance is simply "*delegated*" to the one appointed at provincial level. Maybe it is precisely here that we find one of the many reasons for the crisis, because the idea of "delegation" in this context is evidence of

an irresponsible way of being Salesian. The Salesian is often described as being enthusiastic, happy, congenial, attractive, infectious, etc. He is convinced that religious profession "is one of the most lofty choices a believer can consciously make" (C 23). Let us make that evident to others!

Staying amongst young people, speaking their language even in matters of faith, or as the GC23 puts it "removing the gap between us and them" (GC23 97), with the express intention that the grace of vocation may reach them and be accepted, is a good expression of "Salesian ability". Remember Don Calosso who kept a watchful eye on the young John Bosco, and the deep impression it made on the boy (cf. *Memoirs of the Oratory*, New Rochelle, Don Bosco Publications, pp. 38-39). If he thinks of his own vocation, no Salesian can be excused from this obligation of "calling".

4. Infectious communities

It is said that some young people feel an attraction for our life when they are in a group, or sharing some commitment with Salesians, or when they are working for other youngsters, but that they lose heart when they come in contact with communities. This, they say, is not so much because of the age of the confreres but rather because of the way they live their Salesian life.

To become "infectious", the community must recover some specific traits: *openness and joy in inviting young people* to share the community life and events (cf. GC23 252); *the visible and intelligible testimony* of community prayer, in which lay collaborators and youngsters can freely join; *the vocational dimension expressed and lived in the educative and pastoral plan* and, through the latter, in the entire educative and pastoral community.

Its need to respond to youthful challenge stimulates the community to become filled with the spirit of Don Bosco, said the Rector Major in his closing address to the GC23 (cf. GC23 351). Youngsters want to feel, recognize and experience Don Bosco; this they

ask for openly, and it implies an obligation that no community can fail to meet.

5. Clarity concerning the Salesian "mission"

In the Church and society the Salesian presence is certainly a grace. Not in every country is today's environment an invitation to trust in Christ and the Church. Many provinces have had to abandon their "aspirantates"; for others they are still valid. There is a search for new ways of living together: reception communities, family seminars, living with the community for short or longer periods, etc.

Experiments have met with varying degrees of success and the search goes resolutely on. Some provinces run an "office for information and advice", through which their vocational work can lead to personal contacts. Such offices send out circulars, letters, leaflets, telephone messages, with articles and insertions in newspapers and magazines, and literature of other kinds. But personal contact remains indispensable, together with follow-up and discernment.

The age at which young people show signs of a vocation is higher now than it was some time ago. But the general feeling is that the seed must be sown in the preadolescent stage (12-13 years) if it is to flourish at a more mature age. Can we detect an example of this in the care of the old Don Calosso for John Bosco as a boy?

We need to ask ourselves: what message should the Salesian work be sending out to the locality?

- The trump card is certainly the personal relationship, the journey made together (without counter-testimony on the part of the community).
- Young people are exposed to "frontier" experiences: these are an invitation to generosity and availability.
- A poor life-style and gratuitous self-donation, especially to youngsters most in need and/or at risk, stirs up enthusiasm.

- The youngsters must meet outstanding people and gain lived experience; they must get to know key persons who are living examples of the integration of religion with human ability.
- The work itself should be transparently clear in its options and achievements: a plan that is lived out without any ambiguity.
- The work should manifest through its purpose the story of the Congregation, the pastoral and missionary vocation of the Salesians.
- The formation of young workers and the invitation to collaborate in our mission should arouse an educative and pastoral capacity leading to new horizons for commitment.

Remaining alongside the young person, and drawing on the enthusiasm engendered by the grace of one's own vocation in every activity or initiative, is the best way for the Salesian to give the vocational dimension to the educative and pastoral plan.

The Salesian follows up the youngster at every stage of his development, helps him in his human, social and spiritual maturing process and in his personal commitment to the common good. Starting from whatever is already positive in the boy or young person, he creates an environment and opens the door to participation in personal and communal vocational efforts.

Every environment, every sector of the work, every individual, every role should exude a vocational aura for all young people by all Salesians.

The local plan, which expresses the manner in which the community "will provide guidance for all youngsters in discovering their vocation" (GC23, 252), and the provincial delegate, serve not only as a means of keeping in touch with likely candidates, but rather for keeping up enthusiasm among the confreres and coordinating the efforts of the various communities and works.

The search for and trying out of new structural forms continue to prove fruitful if coordinated with youth pastoral work in general and integrated into the educative plan, directed to all young people but with graded itineraries adapted to those who are more open and show signs of a special vocation.

Practical conclusions

In conclusion, some pieces of advice for individual confreres and for communities may perhaps be useful for fostering attention to vocations and creating a favourable environment.

The Salesian in a community which is committed to vocations will:

- live and bear witness to his conviction that vocation is an eminent manner of realizing human aspirations to the full;
- pray with young people, and teach them to pray using the Bible;
- lead them to the formation of deep and true friendships (groups, Salesian Youth Movement, etc.);
- offer and share experiences of freely given and ongoing service (volunteer work, etc.);
- present Saints of the Congregation and the Church as models who lived lives of self-donation;
- put forward the life of faith, clearly explaining its demands;
- bring to bear the educative and pastoral plan of the community on life experience with the young.

In an atmosphere of trust discernment is carried out, and the youngster is guided to the point at which he is ready to receive and accept a specific proposal, and can be encouraged to continue on the path of vocational growth.

4. ACTIVITIES OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL

4.1 Chronicle of the Rector Major

During a stay of three days (15-17 September) at Santiago, Chile, the Rector Major met with the confreres, took part in meetings of the Provincial Council, and blessed the new premises of the Provincial Office and the site in the diocese of Rancagua where the temple is to be built in honour of Blessed Laura Vicuña. He was also present at the centenary of 'La Gratitude Nacional' and various youth rallies. The President of the Chilean Republic, Patrick Alwin, a salesian past-pupil invited him to lunch at the 'La Honrada' Palace, together with Cardinal Raul Silva Henriquez.

Ecuador welcomed him from 18 to 24 September, a period he spent in the neighbourhood of Quito, where he visited the young Salesians in formation, various groups of confreres and members of the Salesian Family, and preached a three-day retreat to a group of 38 rectors. He was also able to take part in the celebrations for the diamond priestly jubilee of Bishop Candido Rada SDB, and went on afterwards to visit the Marian Shrine of El Guayco, which owes a great deal to our well deserving bishop.

From 25 September to 9 October

he was in Peru, going first to Lima for the centenary of the salesian presence in the country, an event in which both Church and State authorities played a prominent part. To the usual commemorative features which mark these solemn occasions were added a special message from the Holy Father, another from the Peruvian Bishops Conference, and various decorations conferred by city councils, the upper and lower houses of parliament, and by the President of the Republic himself. Then the Rector Major went on to Cieneguilla, near Lima, to preach a retreat to 42 rectors coming from Peru, Bolivia, Chile and Colombia.

Fr Viganò was back in Italy for 10 October and gave conferences to the salesian parish priests of southern Italy (meeting in Rome) and northern Italy (meeting in Como).

On 23 October he left Italy again, this time for the Middle East to visit the Salesians and Daughters of Mary Help of Christians in Lebanon, Syria and Turkey. He then went on to the Holy Land, another place where the centenary of the arrival of the Salesians was being celebrated. To mark the occasion the Mayor of Bethlehem conferred on the Rector Major honorary citi-

zenship of Bethlehem – an event of significance for the confreres in the Middle East and indeed for the entire Congregation. There too in the Holy Land the Rector Major and the members of the General Council made their annual retreat together.

From 11 November, after returning to Rome, Fr Viganò was engaged in ordinary administrative work, with a break at Verona (15-17) for the centenary celebrations of the Don Bosco Institute there and of salesian work in that city. On 12 November the plenary session of the General Council began. In the period from 28 November to 14 December he took part in the special European Synod of Bishops of which he had been elected a member.

During the weekend of 7-8 December he was able to go to Turin to preside in the church of St Francis of Assisi at the solemn Eucharist commemorating the 150th anniversary of Don Bosco's meeting with Bartholomew Garelli.

4.2 Activities of the Councillors

The Vicar General

Fr Juan E. Vecchi took part in the course organized every three years by the Spanish Provincial Confer-

ence for rectors; this time it took place at Avila from 5 to 13 August.

In September he was present at the study days of the Southern Province of Italy, dedicated to the spiritual direction of young people by Salesians. This was followed by a similar study period in Sicily where the province had just begun to launch the "Lay Project", guidelines for which had recently been sent out to the provinces. Fr Vecchi was asked to present the project and guide the reflections.

On 8 October he left for the Atlantic Region of Latin America to study with the Provincial Conferences of Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay, criteria and practical plans for enabling the salesian presence to make a greater impact. The same theme was subsequently studied with the six provinces of Brazil, meeting at Cachoeira do Campo from 23 to 28 October.

A previous examination had been made of the situation in the various provinces by the respective provincial councils in response to a questionnaire sent out by the Vicar General or the Regional Councillor. A survey was also made of the experiences relating to the reshaping and relocating of salesian works already carried out. On the basis of these elements further short-term and long-term plans were made.

The Councillor for Formation

Fr Giuseppe Nicolussi spent the greater part of the period since the previous plenary session in visits to provinces of the Pacific-Caribbean and Asian Regions; the visits included meetings with provincial councils, provincial formation commissions, those in charge of formation, initial formation communities, organisms for interprovincial collaboration, and contacts with other groups of the Salesian Family.

From 16 to 31 August the Councillor visited the two Colombian provinces of Bogotá and Medellín. At Medellín he took part in a seminar on the pre-novitiate organized by the Pacific-Caribbean Region for those responsible for this phase of formation in the eleven provinces of the Region. Every year the Pacific-Caribbean Region arranges at least one seminar on formation.

From 18 September to 25 October Fr Nicolussi visited the provinces of the Far-Eastern part of the Asian Region: China (Hong Kong and Macau), Korea, Japan and Thailand. He spent some days with the post-novitiate community at Jakarta, Indonesia, and made contact with the communities of Timor. Particularly useful too was a week spent in Vietnam.

The last stage of his journey enabled him to be present with the Regional Councillor at the 2nd Con-

gress of Salesian Brothers of the Far East, held at Hua Hin (Thailand) from 15 to 21 October. More than 60 Brothers were present from five provinces, together with all the provincials and some other confreres. Because of the number and quality of those taking part and for the objectives it dealt with, this Congress was a clear manifestation of the commitment of the provinces concerned to the vocation and formation of Salesian Brothers.

The Councillor for Youth Pastoral Work

After a short visit to his family at the beginning of August, Fr Van Looy went to Poland for the meeting of the Pope with young people at Czestochowa. On 13 August he presided with Mother Georgina McPake at a meeting of salesian youth in Poland.

He then went with Fr Odorico to the Ivory Coast in Africa from 22 to 28 August, for a meeting with members from African French-speaking countries to consider the coming African Synod and the programming of youth pastoral work.

Various engagements followed in Italy: at L'Aquila for a meeting with young salesian priests on the theme of the spiritual direction of the young; at Auronzo for the provincial assembly of East Venice, and the day of the Salesian Youth Move-

ment; and at Messina for a study-day on pastoral work for vocations.

On 7 September he left for America, where from 7 to 10 he took part in the Latin-American Past-Pupils Congress at Caracas; he then went on to the province of New Rochelle in the U.S.A. where in five different cities he spoke to assemblies of SDBs, FMAs, with other members of the Salesian Family, on the subjects of the educative-pastoral plan and the educative-pastoral community.

He then went on immediately to Brazil for two meetings for pastoral planning on the process of education to the faith and on salesian youth spirituality, at Manaus (22-25 September) and Belo Horizonte (26-29 September) respectively.

In the province of San Francisco, California, he had a two-day meeting with the rectors and provincial council, and spoke to the assembled confreres of the San Francisco area and later to those of Los Angeles.

After this he was in Bolivia from 6 to 12 October to preach a retreat to the provincials of the Pacific-Caribbean Region, and to study the educative pastoral plan and the journey of faith with the Salesians and Salesians Sisters of Bolivia. On his way back to Rome he stopped for a day at Lima, Peru, to meet the pastoral team of that province.

In Kenya he had a second meeting to study the African Synod and

pastoral planning, this time with representatives of the English-speaking provinces, and again in the company of Fr Odorico.

In Rome he had a two-day meeting (19-20 October) with representatives of countries of the European Community to examine the present state of the professional schools. It is proposed to set up a permanent organism for coordinating such schools and institutes at the level of the European Community.

From 21 to 23 October Fr Van Looy had a second meeting with the delegates for youth pastoral work and members of their teams from the provinces of Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia and Hungary. This time the meeting took place at Szombathely in Hungary in the novitiate newly inaugurated by the Rector Major in September. The theme of the meeting was the pastoral identity of the communities in salesian parishes and the involvement of lay people in our work.

At Rome on 25 and 26 October the Councillor and Mother Georgina McPake held a meeting with the group-leaders preparing the "Confronto '92", to study some of the details of the event. On this occasion the permanent secretariat of the Confronto was set up, with headquarters at the Sacred Heart in Rome.

At the end of October (30-31) Fr Van Looy met with those in charge

of pastoral work in the Munich Province of Germany on the theme of the education of young people to the faith, and was afterwards present at the annual meeting of the German-speaking provinces (SDB and FMA) on salesian youth spirituality. Together with Mother Georgina McPake, he was able to note at first hand the deeper understanding achieved by the confreres, sisters and young people of these provinces as regards youth spirituality.

From Munich the Councillor went directly to the Holy Land for the annual retreat of the General Council.

The Councillor for the Salesian Family and for Social Communication

Visits made in the period : 2 September - 30 October.

Visits were made to the provinces in the following order: Venezuela (4-9 September), Uruguay (10-14 September), Argentina-Rosario (14-21 September), Bolivia (23-28 September), Colombia-Medellín (29 September-4 October), Peru (5-10 October), USA-New Rochelle (13-15 October), Colombia-Bogotá (18-23 October), Chile (23-30 October).

Meetings were numerous and of various kinds. They included the following categories: provincials;

the salesian provincial councils of all the provinces visited, except one; provincial delegates (and sometimes local delegates) of the Cooperators, Past-Pupils, Don Bosco Volunteers, and Associates of Devotees of Mary Help of Christians (ADMA); those responsible for the Salesian Bulletin in countries which have a national edition; provincial delegates for social communication; groups working in the field of social communication, such as publishing houses, radio transmitters, bookshops, professional centres of graphic arts; in each province, with rectors assembled to evaluate the last year's work and prepare the coming year's programme; in each province having some phase of initial formation, with the young confreres: novices, postnovices, practical trainees, and students of theology; various provincial councils of the FMA or their representatives; all the provincial councils of the Association of Salesian Cooperators, even if not all the members could be present; numerous local groups of Salesian Cooperators; some councils of national or provincial federations of the Past-Pupils; some groups, large or small, of the Don Bosco Volunteers in all the provinces; in the Province of Santafé in Bogotá with the General Council of the Sisters of the Sacred Hearts, founded by Don Variara SDB; the local superiors of the Salesian Oblates, founded by Bis-

hop Cognata, in the countries where they have houses; some communities of the Japanese Sisters of Charity; some leaders and members of groups of ADMA, wherever they are beginning to grow and show some vitality; the central Directing Council and a large representation of the Association of "Dame Salesiane" in the province of Venezuela; and representatives of other groups which are coming into being through the work of certain confreres and which draw their educative and spiritual inspiration from Don Bosco.

Salesian Family

Fr Martinelli took part in two events of considerable importance for the Salesian Family.

1. At Caracas (5-9 September) the VIII Latin-American Congress of Past-Pupils took place.

All the countries of Latin America were represented during the days of intensive work and research on the presence and contribution of the Past-Pupils at this particular moment in the history of Latin America, which marks the fifth centenary of the beginning of evangelization in that part of the world.

A significant moment during the Congress and a sign of hope for the future of the Confederation occurred during a meeting of young members from all the countries,

when it was decided to promote congresses of young past-pupils in preparation for the next general Congress. The positive experience gained in Europe in this regard provided a spur to active confidence in this initiative. Its purpose is not to give a new structure to the Confederation, but to make the best possible use of the strength and intuitions of the young members for the enrichment of the Congress.

2. At Lima (5-9 October) the Second National Congress of Salesian Cooperators took place, as part of the centenary celebrations of the Salesian Family in Peru.

The theme of the Congress was: "The Cooperator and the new evangelization", and involved the large assembly in a search for the role of the Salesian Cooperator in a country which is living through and suffering an evil period which can be overcome only by the presence of a laity that is willing and seriously committed. The large number of young Cooperators present were noteworthy for the christian and salesian responsibility they manifested.

And so begins the second century, with excellent signs of an extension of the charism of Don Bosco.

The main objective of all the visits of the Councillor for the Salesian Family was centred on the animation and verification of a single

point: the comprehensive aspect of the Salesian Family in the provinces.

An overall judgement on this point is certainly positive. Very many individuals feel themselves involved, and numerous activities are taking place through the initiative of different groups of the Family. The name, the educative and pastoral experience of Don Bosco, and the direct reference back to his person and activity provide individual and communal nourishment for the whole Family.

Moreover every group is foreseeing and organizing particular activities as an expression of its vitality and as an indispensable means for the growth of the group itself.

Many and varied examples could be given to illustrate this point. The fields of preventive work for the young and the development of the human and civil advancement of the common people, the organization of schools, oratories and reception centres, can all count on the active support and collaboration of the Family.

In the matter of the development of the comprehensive aspect of the Family, the process is a long one and the results difficult to assess with any accuracy. Mutual knowledge of each other among the different component groups, openness towards other groups without fear of losing one's own autonomy, the

experience of collaboration and sharing in apostolic responsibility, the desire to communicate in the way normal in families, the sharing of the gift of Don Bosco's charism in its varied manifestations, the generous living by the Salesians of their role as animators of the Family, are all aspects capable of continual development as a sign of fidelity to Don Bosco.

Some recommendations made by the Councillor to all the component groups may help to a deeper understanding of the comprehensive aspect. 'Salesian spirituality' must become a theme for deeper study and sharing among all the members of the Family. Don Bosco's preventive system, as pointed out in the letter of Pope John Paul II 'Iuvenum Patris', contains new incentives and guidelines that the Family should take up. And the "Outlines for a Lay Project" prepared by the General Council provide a propitious opening for making a journey "together" along the road of conciliar renewal and development of the Salesian Family.

Social Communication

As Councillor for Social Communication, Fr Martinelli was able to visit publishing enterprises producing works of a catechetical, pastoral, cultural, scholastic and popular kind; bookshops of all sizes; initiatives aimed at depicting the history of

salesian work in particular areas (e.g. museums); radio transmitters with a wide or limited range of services, according to the area in which they are operating, but without prejudice to their usefulness in every case; and some television relay stations with sporadic daily or weekly transmissions.

All the countries visited have an edition of the Salesian Bulletin. After being dormant for some years the USA edition is being relaunched as a joint effort by the two SDB and the two FMA provinces.

All the provinces too have some kind of informative newsletter, though the format and criteria vary from one to another. In general there is an impressive amount of activity in this field, especially in the light of the poverty of means available in most cases.

Many possibilities are opening before salesian communities in the field of social communication. In some countries, notably Peru, the local Church has asked for the intervention of the Congregation in this regard. In others, e.g. Uruguay, it seems to be understood that only the salesian community can give an adequate response to the urgent need for the Church to be present in the communications sector.

All the meetings of Fr Martinelli revolved about the same point: the aspect of quality in the manner of organizing social communication.

From the guidelines offered through the various meetings, one may construct the following brief compendium of the elements of "quality".

a. There should always be a *group responsible* for what is produced. The seeking and adequate presentation of the matter to be communicated by various means (which is implied by 'quality') requires the presence of several workers.

b. Those responsible should be properly *qualified*. This implies two basic requirements: the preparation of confreres for the sector through training for the specific work they will have to do, and the giving to all confreres in formation a sufficient understanding of the phenomenon of social communication, its incidence on pastoral work, and its accord with the salesian vocation.

c. A suitable *reorganization* should be made, with well defined roles and tasks. When a single person has to carry out different tasks which call for specific and different skills, the result is always unpredictable, and it is difficult to ensure the quality desired.

d. There should be a *coordination* of efforts, contributions, personnel and sectors in the field of communication. Different provinces working in the same country or territory cannot ignore each other. Countries operating in the same cul-

tural milieu should seek a linkage with each other. Coordination and unity add strength to the message which is offered.

The Councillor for the Missions

The activities of Fr Luciano Odorico were concerned mainly with journeys to get to know our missions in the different continents and to bring animation to them, with the coordination of Project Africa, and with the activities of various sectors of the Missions Department.

In August he made a first visit to the missions in the Indian province of Bangalore, and especially those in the future new province of Andhra Pradesh, the works in Bangalore itself and in Kerala. There were meetings for missionary animation in all these places. He then went on to visit our missions in the southern part of the Madras province and all the works in Sri Lanka. In this latter Island he was able to observe at first hand the particular nature of our presence, the continuing difficulties resulting from the civil war, and also the possibilities for positive vocational development.

After a brief stopover in Rome he next went to the Ivory Coast, where in the period 24-27 August he presided at a meeting of Salesians working in the French-speaking coun-

tries of Africa and of Madagascar. There were about one hundred persons present with the Salesians and FMA. A similar meeting took place in Nairobi from 15-18 October for the English-speaking countries of the same continent. Both meetings had the same theme: *The Salesians and the African Synod; the Salesians and Project Africa*: assessment and future prospects. The Department has already drawn up a dossier (in English and French) covering each meeting, and copies have been sent to the confreres working in Africa and to their respective provincials.

The participation of the Salesians in the discussion on the questions in the 'Lineamenta' was rich and specific. Suggestions were made on the various topics from the standpoint of sensitivity to our charism for the young and the poor. A synthesis of the results has been sent to the Secretary of the Synod as a contribution from our Congregation to the Church in Africa and Madagascar.

As far as Project Africa is concerned there was substantial agreement on the extent of the growth of our work, on the involvement of almost the whole of the Congregation, on the growth of indigenous vocations, and on the positive situation regarding the building of houses of formation. A growing conviction was emphasized concerning the urgency of providing a

response to the dramatic youth situation, and the need for decisive pastoral planning. The presence of Fr Luc Van Looy, Councillor General for Youth Pastoral Work, was of great help during the reflections on pastoral aspects. With an eye to the future, suggestions were made concerning greater consolidation and quality, new frontiers, and efforts at greater local, regional and international coordination. On these meetings there will be further communications in subsequent issues of the Acts of the General Council.

Between the end of August and the middle of September Fr Odorico made brief visits to the missions in the Mexican province of Guadalajara (with particular attention to the project of Tijuana, where an international group of lay volunteers is at work), and to the other missions in Mexico and in Guatemala. In the latter country should be noted the existence with very positive results of two indigenous lay congregations, one of men and one of women, which take their inspiration from the salesian charism.

In the second half of September the Councillor visited parts of the missions in Zambia and Zaire. The political and social situation in Zaire unfortunately made it impossible for him to visit those in Burundi and Rwanda.

In the first part of October Fr Odorico was at Turin for the practi-

cal and spiritual formation of some twenty missionaries about to leave for various parts of the world; this was followed by the presentation of the missionary crucifix in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians. Prominent among the new missionaries were a group going to Odessa in the Ukraine, another group going to begin a new work in Ghana, and a group of FMAs going to Albania.

After the meeting at Nairobi already referred to, and which had been preceded by a brief visit to the site of the future novitiate and post-novitiate for East Africa at Moshi in Tanzania, Fr Odorico went to Asia with a programme that involved a visit to Cambodia as well as to Thailand, Hong Kong and Taiwan.

In Cambodia he noted the urgent need for a salesian presence, which is now in existence, as a very necessary response to the needs of that tormented country now open to a new moral and social reconstruction. At Hong Kong he had a meeting dealing specifically with Project China: it involved a comprehensive review of the present situation which is almost at a standstill; short-term and longer-term plans for the future were considered.

The Councillor returned to Rome on 1 November, but mention should also be made of a meeting on 1 December at Colle Don Bosco regarding the Salesian Missionary Museum, and the dossier for the 1992

Salesian Missions Day, which will be published in five languages and sent out in the near future.

The Economist General

Fr Omero Paron was in Poland from 31 August to 6 September for a meeting at Cracow with the provincial economists of the four Polish provinces. He then went on to visit various building projects in progress in the provinces of Cracow, Breslau, Pila and Warsaw.

He accompanied the Rector Major (who visited Poland from 6 to 8 September) and saw the first work of reconstruction and repair in the property recently restored to us by the State.

The following day (9 September) he went to Bratislava to see the work of restoration of the buildings at Mileticova, partly handed back to us by the civil authorities, and was pleased to see the good progress made. This will be the site of the Provincial Office and Catechetical Centre.

On 10 September Fr Paron visited Prague to examine the equipment at the "Portal" printing establishment and the plans for the building work.

Returning to Italy the Economist General took part in a meeting of the provincial economists of the Italian Provincial Conference held

at Pella in the Novara province on 27-28 September.

In the following month (16-24 October) he was in Spain for a meeting with the provincial economists of the Region of Spain and Portugal at Madrid, after which he visited some of the houses of the Madrid province, and almost all of those of the province of León.

The Councillor for the Atlantic Region of Latin America

The main activities of Fr Carlos Techera during the second semester of 1991 included the following.

He first went to Manaus in Brazil, for the purpose of making the consultation preceding the appointment of the new provincial of that province.

Afterwards he began the extraordinary visitation of the Recife province of St Aloysius Gonzaga in Northeast Brazil. The visitation had to be interrupted for a brief period to enable the Regional to participate in the Latin-American Past-Pupils Congress at Caracas.

After bringing the visitation to a close with a meeting with rectors and parish priests and with the provincial council, and after taking part in the opening of the National Eucharistic Congress at Natal (Rio Grande del Nord), he went on to Paraguay. There, in the retreat

house at Ypacarai, he had a meeting with all the provincial councillors of the Plata provincial conference. This meeting was presided over by Fr Vecchi and reflected on some of the commitments that followed from the last General Chapter concerning the giving of a specific physiognomy and significance to each of our works in the different provinces. The same theme was subsequently the object of study and discernment at Cachoeira do Campo with all the provincials and members of the provincial councils of Brazil.

These two meetings had been considered of great importance for bringing about in the provinces both the ongoing formation of the confreres, and a commitment to the task of giving a new pastoral quality to the work and promoting more vocations.

After these meetings Fr Techera returned to Rome for the Retreat of the General Council and the beginning of the Council's plenary session.

The Councillor for the Pacific-Caribbean Region of Latin America

Fr Guillermo Garcia began his journey round his region in Africa at Guinea-Conakry. The five Salesians working there are engaged principally in the animation and

strengthening of the "Don Bosco Formation Centre" at Dabadouqou, with its boarders and external students, the parish of Siguiri-St Alexis, and the printing centre in Conakry. In this work a decisive part is played by five laymen: three from Mexico, and one each from Ecuador and Bogotá.

The Regional then went on to Mexico to meet the provincials of the two Mexican provinces and discuss with them the mission in Guinea, the interprovincial community for social communication (CICS), the opening of new works, etc.

In Haiti Fr Garcia was able to hold an assembly of the confreres and to meet the Council of the Delegation to inform them of the erection of the new Vice-province. A programme was drawn up for the inauguration of the new circumscription on 31 January 1992, and to carry out a consultation for the appointment of the first Superior.

In Guatemala he visited the missionary centres entrusted to the Salesians at Alta Verapaz. It is wonderful to see the courageous and apostolically efficacious way in which the confreres tackle the challenges posed by their inculturation and insertion among the Kekchies, without recourse to ideologies and with great charismatic success, as is witnessed by the founding of two young native congregations: the Don Bosco Missionaries and the Sis-

ters of the Resurrection.

In the studentate at Guatemala City he met the students from Peru and was able to tell them of the visit that had been made to their home province.

At San Salvador he visited the campus of the Don Bosco University and of the Ricaldone Institute, in the search for a suitable place for a regional centre for the formation of young lay Salesians. He then made a rapid visit to our works in Panama, the "city of Don Bosco", i.e. the parish and school that bears our Founder's name. Here he became aware of a request to make a salesian foundation in the missionary area of the Darién Forest.

Fr Garcia then moved on to the province of Medellín to take part with Fr Giuseppe Nicolussi at a meeting of those in charge of the pre-novitiates of the Region. At Medellín he was able to observe the progress of the Dominic Savio College, run by the Salesians in conjunction with the Past-Pupils in a lair of the cut-throat gangs in the southern part of the city.

After this he spent a week visiting the SDB and FMA works in the Ariari mission area in the province of Bogotá, where he received a fraternal welcome from Bishop Hector Lopez SDB, Pontifical Delegate to the CLAR, and from all the confreres responsible for the various works in that hot undulating plain

with its rugged inhabitants.

From Santa Fe of Bogotá the Regional went on to Caracas in Venezuela, to take part with Frs Martirelli, Van Looy and Techera in the Latin-American Past-Pupils Congress. He also made a rapid visit to the "Dame Salesiane".

Following this he spent three days at Quito with the new provincial and his council; he was also able to meet there with the confreres of the "Higher Institute" and those of the Regional Centre for ongoing formation, and observe the progress in the reconstruction of the latter's premises. He also got as far as Cayambe, an important salesian work for the advancement of the natives and the site of the graphic art workshops of the ABYA-YALA Publishing House.

In the Chilean province Fr Garcia was able to visit the salesian works in the southern part of the country, and also those of La Serena, Valdivia, Concepción and Iquique.

With the Rector Major and Mother Rosalba Perotti, FMA Vicar General, he took part in the celebrations marking the centenary of the salesian work in Peru.

After this the Regional went on to Santa Cruz in Bolivia, to visit the aspirantate for coadjutors and other works in the area reaching as far as Sagrado Corazón, and then on to the region of peasants and mine-workers at Independencia and

Kami to see the works animated by the Salesians in those parts. In this way he finished his tour of the province with a visit to the ancient cultural capital of Sucre, accompanied by the Provincial (Fr Carlo Longo).

Fr Garcia was next present at Cochabamba for the retreat of the provincials of the region and their meeting afterwards. The retreat was animated by Fr Luc Van Looy, and the meeting facilitated by Fr Sergio Cuevas. Of the decisions made at the provincials' meeting, two call for special emphasis:

1. The approval of the opening in January 1993 of a formation centre for coadjutors who have just finished their practical training period; the centre will be at San Salvador.

2. The approval of a regional solidarity project: all the provinces committed themselves to making available every three years at least one confrere to help Guinea, the regional centre for ongoing formation of coadjutors, Cuba, the vice-province of Haiti, and eventually some salesian work for the Hispanics in the U.S.A.

An event of particular significance in the Region was the 'Taller-Seminar' for outlining the 'journey of faith' called for by the GC23 from every province. For this purpose fifty confreres from the eleven provinces with nearly all the provincials met at Santiago, Chile.

The last stage of Fr Garcia's jour-

ney was at Cuba. He arrived there three days after the IV Congress of the Cuban Communist Party. The country is living through a period which has been called "a special stage in the time of peace", and which has brought the country almost to a standstill. Transportation difficulties prevented the Regional from going to Santa Clara, and he was able to visit only our works at Havana and Santiago, where the Sanctuary is situated of "Our Lady of Charity", patroness of the nation. The Cuban confreres are very pleased about the arrival from Guadalajara of the recently ordained Fr Rodolfo Godínez. In this way Guadalajara has given the other provinces a practical example for the realization of the solidarity project, approved at the earlier meeting of the provincials. Three other confreres are awaiting the approval of their provincials and the granting of the necessary visas by the Cuban authorities before leaving for that country.

The Councillor for the English-speaking Region

In the months of August, September and October, Fr Martin McPake was able to visit all the provinces of his Region, but dedicated the greater part of his time to the extraordinary visitation of the Vice-province of Eastern Canada.

He began his visits in Australia to the houses in the neighbourhoods of Sydney and Melbourne, and made a brief excursion to Tasmania. He was able to bless the renewed and enlarged provincial residence at Oakleigh, the new community chapel at Engadine, and the new confreres' rooms at Sunbury. He met with various groups of Co-operators, and noted with pleasure the collaboration of all branches of the Salesian Family in supporting christian family values in the country.

The Councillor was particularly impressed by the work of transformation carried out by three confreres for the benefit of the local Church at Bairnsdale, where they have restored the Catholic ethos to a school which had lost nearly all its Catholic aspects except the name. It provides evidence not only of the ability of the three Salesians concerned but also of the perennial efficacy of our system of education.

Still in the same province Fr McPake visited the Samoan Islands where he preached a retreat to the diocesan clergy and spent some days with the Salesians. A group of three representatives of the German "Misereor" organization were visiting Samoa about the same time, and did not hesitate to describe our school as the best in the South Pacific Region. They were referring not so much to the buildings, well

equipped though they certainly are, as to the educational approach. It was a further indication of the efficacy and relevance of the salesian system, and evidence of the ability of our confreres.

The Councillor then went on to the United States, where the two provinces were at the beginning of the scholastic year. The moment was not a suitable one for seeing the different works in operation, and he had to be content with rapid visits to the communities. Nevertheless, in California the Regional was able to have a meeting with the provincial council and rectors, preside at the installation of the new provincial, and note the increasing importance in the province of the work of the Oratories and Clubs at Watsonville and Los Angeles.

In the province of New Rochelle he stayed mainly at the Provincial House, from where he made brief visits to other communities: South Orange, Goshen, West Haverstraw and North Haledon – the provincial house of the FMA. He was also present at a short meeting of the New Rochelle provincial council.

The extraordinary visitation of the East Canada Vice-province lasted six weeks, including a five-day visit to Western Canada to the two communities of Edmonton and Vancouver that belong to the San Francisco province.

On his way back to Rome Fr

McPake passed through Ireland, where he visited the formation communities, and Great Britain, to carry out the consultation preceding the appointment of the new provincial.

The Regional Councillor for Asia

Fr Thomas Panakezham left Rome on 24 July for the Vice-province of East Africa, where he made a rapid visit to the Nairobi communities and those of Makuyu and Embu which depend on the Central province. He was also able to observe the progress made in the building of the novitiate and post-novitiate house at Moshi in Tanzania.

On 1 August, after a brief stop at Bombay, he reached Madras to take part in a three-day seminar on the theme: "The Human Face of Clergy", at which were present all the provincials of India with the members of their councils. The seminar emphasized three areas of particular importance: a more careful selection of candidates for the salesian life, greater attention to formation, and the fostering of community life and care of the mental health of the confreres.

The seminar was followed, still at Madras, from 5 to 7 August by a meeting of the Indian Provincial Conference. Among the topics con-

sidered were: a report prepared by the Indian national council for the young on the education of young non-Christians to the faith; a programme for the formation of coadjutors after their practical training period; the preparation of a congress for perpetually professed brothers, to take place in October '92; and the general question of ongoing formation.

The Regional then went on to the Philippines where he carried out the extraordinary visitation between 10 August and 18 October. This province has 350 confreres and is in a state of growth, with 160 young Salesians in formation. The confreres carry out with great zeal work that calls for generous self-sacrifice. In the recent natural catastrophes that have afflicted the country (the earthquake, the eruption of Mount Pinatubo, and a typhoon of exceptional intensity) the confreres did their utmost to help the poor people who were in need of everything.

During the period of the visitation Fr Panakezham presided over a meeting of the provincials of the Far East at Crystal Springs, Laguna, from 14-16 September. The provincials considered amongst other items the coming provincial chapters, the education to the faith of young non-Christians, and ongoing formation (in the light of the results of the meeting in Rome of those in charge of this phase of formation).

After completing the visitation the Regional left for Thailand to take part in the Congress of Salesian Brothers of the Far East (15-21 October) at which Fr Giuseppe Nicolussi (Councillor for Formation) presided, and in which also Fr Luciano Odorico (Councillor for the Missions) took part.

After a brief visit to other communities in the country and a meeting with the provincial council and formation commission, the Regional returned to Rome on 26 October.

The Regional Councillor for Central Europe and Central Africa

The activities of Fr Dominic Britschu in the period between the plenary sessions of the Council fall into three main groups:

1. He took part in the ongoing formation course for French-speaking Salesians from 18 July to 10 August. Some thirty confreres took the course, which was animated by eminent experts in religious life and the salesian heritage: Xavier Thénot, Jacques Schepens and Yves Le Carrères.

2. The extraordinary visitation of the Netherlands province from mid-September to mid-October.

3. The interprovincial conference of German-speaking provinces from 7 to 11 November, which met in the

new provincial house at Ljubljana. Taking part in the meeting was also the provincial of Zagreb, Croatia, recently released from the prison at Knin where he had been held with another confrere by the Serbs for over a month.

In addition to the above activities he had meetings with various international organizations (e.g. the Red Cross) and many and repeated contacts with the provinces of Bohemia-Moravia, Slovakia and Slovenia; these contacts were greatly facilitated by the active and practical interest of the Vienna province.

The Councillor for Italy and the Middle East

On 27 August Fr Giovanni Fedrigotti was at the house of San Tarcisio, Rome, to speak on salesian youth spirituality during the course for those about to make their perpetual profession. On the same day he was also at the Sanctuary of Divine Love where he presided at the closing Mass of the national "Primavera" congress, organized by the FMA.

On 31 August he took part in a meeting for the ongoing formation of salesian priests in their first five years after ordination.

Sunday, 1 September, found the Regional at San Giovanni Ilarione (Verona) for the solemn inaugura-

tion of a monument to Don Bosco erected through the initiative of the local Past-Pupils Association; and on the following Sunday he was at the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians to receive the profession of 24 novices from Pinerolo and to welcome their successors, who were also 24 in number.

The period from 11 to 21 September he spent in Kenya to finish the extraordinary visitation of the Central province; he made contact with all the flourishing missions for which the Central province is responsible (Embu, Makuy, Siakago and Thiba), and met at Nairobi with all the confreres of the postnovitate, both individually and collectively.

From 21 September to 2 October he visited the salesian foundations in Ethiopia. The ending of hostilities has finally made it possible to make contact with all the works, those in the northern part of the country entrusted to the Middle East province (Addis Ababa, Adigrat, Makallè), and those in the south belonging to the province of Milan ((Addis Ababa, Dilla, Zway). The newly restored freedom, the new political and social climate, the appearance of strong and well motivated vocations. the new initiatives (like the projected house at Adua), the tireless and courageous commitment of the Salesians and FMA, and the beginning of a movement towards un-

ity, are all signs giving rise to great hopes.

On 7 October Fr Fedrigotti began the extraordinary visitation of the Adriatic province with a meeting of the rectors and provincial council.

From 14 to 18 October at Rome, and from 21-24 October at Como, he was present for part of the time at the national meetings for the updating of salesian parish priests, and gave the concluding address in each case. On 24 October he was at Schio to launch the celebrations connected with the 90th anniversary of salesian work there.

After the retreat of the General Council in the Holy Land he was at Turin on 15 and 16 November as a member of the "Piedmont Commission" set up by the General Council to plan the rearrangement of our work in that area.

On Sunday, 17 November, he was at Verona-Don Bosco with the Rector Major for the centenary celebrations of the salesian presence.

From 20 to 23 November Fr Fedrigotti took part in the Italian Bishops Conference's meeting on the Catholic school, and afterwards in St Peter's Square read the address of greeting to the Holy Father in the name of men and women religious working in such schools.

In the period November 23-25 he took part in the national assembly of the Italian Provincial Conference, which had as its theme "Emargina-

tion and the problems that follow in its wake", and at which he gave the opening and closing addresses.

From 29 November to 1 December the Regional was at Zafferana for a meeting with the Salesian Family of Sicily to whom he spoke on the subject of the "Salesian Family and the new evangelization", and related it to the European Synod of Bishops then meeting in Rome.

The Regional Councillor for Spain and Portugal

Fr Antonio Rodriguez Tallón dedicated the period from August to October in visits and meetings in various provinces of his region for the animation and encouragement of the confreres and communities in their life and mission.

From 26 July to 4 August he visited the 'Colegio Dom Bosco' in Macau, a work of the Portuguese province which he had not been able to visit when making the visitation of that province. In addition to meeting the confreres and community, he made a close examination of the practical procedures for the transfer of the community and work to the province of Hong Kong, a move now under consideration by the two provincials in agreement with the Rector Major and his Council.

On returning to Italy he took part

in the national 'Camp Bosco' organized at Turin by the Spanish provinces as the last stage of a visit to the places of the salesian origins; there were 630 participants.

Next he was present at Avila in Spain for the meeting of rectors, at which Fr Juan Vecchi, Vicar General, presided. This was followed by a journey to Mozambique (9-23 August) with the Rector Major, who was making his first visit to that country. The Regional stayed on to make the extraordinary visitation and study the evolution of the communities and the further obligations to be accepted at this particular time.

Still in Africa, he took part in the meeting for the coordination of Project Africa organized by the Councillor for the Missions at Abidjan in the Ivory Coast (25-26 August), and visited the salesian foundations in that country and in Mali (27 August-13 September) with a view to the extraordinary visitation to be made in 1992.

Back in Spain, Fr Rodriguez had a meeting with the provincial delegates for formation, and subsequently visited houses and confreres in the provinces of Seville (1-6 October) and Portugal (7-13 October).

On 16 October he had a meeting with the administrative group of the Iberian Provincial Conference, and the Spanish Commission for Social Communication (CSSE), to study

the possibilities for developing the salesian presence in the field of social communication in the Region.

On 17 October he was present with the Economer General at a meeting of the provincial economers, and on 21 October had a further meeting with the management group of the Salesian Catechetical Centre of Madrid.

Finally, on 23 and 24 October, Fr Rodriguez presided at the 24th Session of the Iberian Provincial Conference. Among the items on the agenda were: a reflection on the average age of the Salesians of the Region; the approval of a plan for interprovincial activity to follow up in the Region the decisions of the GC23; a reflection on the annual retreats, to study how their contribution to the ongoing formation of the confreres and communities could be improved; a first exchange of views about the "Team Visit" to be made at some future date; items and structures involved in a coordination of the works in Africa depending on the Spanish provinces.

The Rector Major's Delegate for Poland

Fr Augustyn Dziedziel was based in Poland from 29 July to 14 September. During this period he took part in meetings with the Presidency of the Polish provincial conference and made various visits of

animation, especially to the formation communities.

He presided at various functions: at Sroda Slaska, at the perpetual profession of a Daughter of Mary Help of Christians of the Breslau province; at Rumia, at the perpetual profession ceremony of 59 confreres from all the Polish provinces; at Olcza, for the closing of the DBV retreat and the beginning of a meeting of local DBV superiors from Poland and Russia. At Breslau he presided at the installation of the FMA provincial of that province. At Lad he was present for the course for new rectors of the four Polish provinces. At Cracow he took part in the meeting of provincial economers at which Fr Omero Paron presided, and subsequently accompanied the Economer General in his visits to the formation communities and other salesian foundations.

During the visit of Pope John Paul II to Poland, Fr Dziedziel was present at the gathering of salesian youth from many countries, organized on 13 August in the salesian parish of the Sacred Heart at Czeszochowa, which was attended also by Fr Luc Van Looy and Mother Georgina McPake FMA. He also took part in the celebrations on the VI World Youth Day itself in the Marian Sanctuary of Jasna Gora at Czestochowa.

From 14 September to 19 October the Delegate was in the USSR. Dur-

ing this period of five weeks he visited the confreres, animated days of retreat and had meetings with groups of the Salesian Family. The following items refer to this period.

– In *Bielorussia* he visited the seven parishes where twelve confreres are working, and also the first FMA community in the area at Smorgon; it is made up of three Sisters from Warsaw in Poland.

– In *Russia* he visited the parish of the Immaculate Conception at Moscow which has been entrusted to the Salesians. Two confreres are working here, of whom one is teaching religion in a youth centre and in a professional school of the State. He was able to meet Mgr. Tadeusz Kondrusiewicz, Archbishop of Moscow and Administrator Apostolic of European Russia, and spoke with him about the plan of the Italian province of East Venice for the foundation of a possible school of graphic arts (at St Petersburg or Moscow), and also about the desire of the FMA to be involved in the salesian parish at Moscow. We now know that three FMA from the Breslau province of Poland arrived in Moscow on 29 November 1991.

– In *Georgia* he visited the two parishes of Armenian Catholics where two confreres are working; the parishes have many centres attached to them.

– In *Ukraine* he visited our two Latin-rite foundations where there are six confreres and two novices; and also the first salesian presence in the Byzantine-Ukrainian rite (at Leopoli). It is at its beginnings and at present has only one confrere.

– In *Lithuania*, where we have eleven confreres working in seven parishes and the FMA have a single foundation with eight Sisters and two novices, Fr Dziedziel gathered together representatives of all the Salesian Family. He also animated the monthly retreat of the Don Bosco Volunteers in the USSR.

– In *Estonia* he visited the diocesan seminary at Riga, and met four student confreres who are following the course there.

Returning to Poland from his journeys in the USSR, the Delegate also met other confreres from the USSR (5 confreres and four novices) who are carrying out their formation in Poland.

In the final period of his stay (19-29 October) Fr Dziedziel presided at the national meeting of rectors from the four Polish provinces, held at Lutomiersk, and called a meeting of the Presidency of the CISP with the two FMA Provincials to study the more urgent problems and work out a plan for collaboration.

On 29 October he returned to Rome.

5. DOCUMENTS AND NEWS ITEMS

5.1 Young people and the new education.

Intervention of the Rector Major at the European Synod.

As an elected representative of the Superiors General, the Rector Major took part in the Special European Bishops Synod, convoked by the Holy Father at the Vatican from 28 November to 14 December 1991. The following is the intervention he made in the general assembly; it relates to our mission among young people.

I refer to n. 12 of the Summary (and also to nn. 16 and 22 which touch on the same topic). I shall speak of the education of the young from the standpoint of the service rendered by religious congregations (men and women); they are mentioned in the same number.

Education is a cultural and pastoral task in which human advancement and Christian formation are inseparable: a unifying synthesis is necessary between the two, and it is not easily achieved during the period when the young person is maturing.

The Church, with its maternal responsibility for the faith, accompanies parents – on whom rests the primary and fundamental responsibility for education (LC 94) – by means of the charisms she has received from the Holy Spirit. Among

these must be included many religious Institutes.

Now, in the exchange of gifts for the future of Europe, I would like to draw attention to a twofold theme: – on these religious Institutes of apostolic life, – and on the new education of European youth.

1. Having in mind the three great patrons of Europe (all of them religious), I want to emphasize *the importance of religious life in the continent*; my colleagues in this assembly have tried to develop this theme in a brief written intervention. In this connection I think there is need to take once again the document “Mutuae relationes” and go more deeply into it from the point of view of the conciliar ecclesiology, especially with reference to Eastern Europe; this will need an accurate knowledge of the oriental Churches and their various rites. The pattern of ecclesial life needs rethinking in relationship to the social and cultural reality of the people; the role of parochial and charismatic mediations need to be redefined in mutual and complementary coordination: it is not only a matter of “pastoral” interventions with the faithful, but also of “missionary” activity among non-believers. Among these peoples there is many an areopagus to be evangelized.

This implies the need to consider different apostolic tasks, not all of

which can be nicely tucked in to a parish organization.

2. A vast sector to be considered from the point of view of "areopagi" to be evangelized is the *education of the young*. New evangelization requires for young people that there be also a new education.

This is a field in which a pastoral approach and outlook is not sufficient; an updated pedagogical ability is needed too, and one appropriate to the emerging culture being forcefully presented at the present day by the signs of the times.

It is a culture in a state of growth, after the collapse of various ideologies. Young people are looking for something; they want to learn to be free and responsible citizens. But what sort of citizen, and for what sort of Europe? The question is a complex one. Christian education does not aim at making proselytes; its purpose is rather to introduce the leaven of the Gospel into the evolutionary growth of the young person.

Through the notions of "homo sovieticus" and "homo occidentalis" an attempt was made to replace Christianity by secularist ideologies through many different currents of thought. In the West there has also appeared a rationalized humanism, in which relativism would be raised to the status of a philosophy of democracy. And all this has led to a complex pathology of the individual and society, which needs to be treated with all the elements of Christian anthropology.

There is an urgent need to rediscover the fundamental plan of God the "creator", the historic value of the event of Christ the "liberator", and the transforming power of the Holy Spirit who "makes all things new".

A new theological vision of creation reveals the true sense of the laity and of human cultural values. A renewed Christological outlook leads at the present day to a new "theology of liberation", appropriate to the present European situation and in line with the "kairós" of Vatican II. And a new "pneumatological vision of hope" throws light through constructive criticism on the eschatological situation of every culture in need of rectification. Hence the importance of the vocation and mission of lay people, and consequently the urgent need for a new education of the young.

The new aspects of this education mean that we must keep clearly in mind that the cultural outlook of tomorrow's Europe will certainly be that of a humanist approach in relationship to a context that is multicultural, multiracist and multireligious. There is also, of course, a Christian legacy, but its leavening energy needs to be urgently rethought. A new evangelization capable of animating the new education will have to combine simultaneously the memory of a priceless heritage with the prophetic and creative project of a fundamental and relevant Gospel message: a demanding task for a period of history still to be related.

In the limited experience of my Congregation I have to say in this regard that in the West and the East there are two serious difficulties in different senses, both of which reduce the efficacy of educational work. *In the West* the difficulty consists in striving to give a truly evangelizing dimension to cultural commitments for human advancement; *in the East*, on the other hand, the difficulty lies in being able to give a cultural and social dimension to catechesis and other pastoral activities.

The new evangelization requires that in the education of youth we be able to ensure a *pedagogical synthesis between evangelizing and educating*. This is not an easy thing to do, but it is precisely here that we begin to bridge the famous divide between the Gospel and culture.

For this reason it is important to ensure that greater consideration be given to religious life in general, and in it to the charisms raised up by the Spirit as bearers of the "grace of unity", both interior and methodological, which make it possible to "educate by evangelizing".

This is a theme which certainly requires an interchange of gifts.

5.2 Salesian Vice-Province of Haiti

Prot. n. 001/92

THE RECTOR MAJOR

of the Salesian Society of Saint John Bosco

- after careful consideration of the situation of Salesian Work in the Republic of Haiti,
- in accordance with articles 156 and 158 of the Constitutions,
- and after obtaining the consent of the General Council in its ordinary meeting of 16 July 1991, as required by Articles 132, 2 and 156 of the Constitutions,

HEREBY DECREES

1. The Provincial Delegation for the Salesian Houses of Haiti belonging to the "St John Bosco" Province of the Antilles, with headquarters in Santo Domingo is abolished.
2. The "BLESSED PHILIP RINALDI" VICE-PROVINCE, with headquarters in Port-au-Prince – Thorland is erected, composed of the houses mentioned in 1. above, which are precisely the following:
 - CAP-HAITIEN
"Maria Ausiliatrice"
 - CROIX DES MISSIONS
"Santa Croce"
 - PETION-VILLE
"San Domenico Savio"
 - PORT-AU-PRINCE (ENAM)
"San Giovanni Bosco"

- PORT-AU-PRINCE "San Giuseppe"
 - PORT-AU-PRINCE - THORLAND "San Giovanni Bosco" and also the Salesian presence in LES CAYES.
 - 3. To the Blessed Philip Rinaldi Vice-Province will belong the confreres at present assigned to the houses of the Delegation indicated in 1. above, and the confreres from that Delegation now in formation.
 - 4. The present Decree will take effect on 31 January 1992, Solemnity of St John Bosco, Founder of our Society.
- Rome, 2 January 1992.

Fr Egidio VIGANO

Rector Major

Fr Francesco MARACCANI

Secretary General

5.3 Publications of the Salesian Historical Institute

The Salesian Historical Institute, desired by the Rector Major and his Council for the fostering of historical studies on Don Bosco and the Salesian Congregation, is ten years old. In the past decade numerous studies have been carried out, with great attention to historical accuracy, and published in "Ricerche Storiche Salesiane" or in specialized publications.

In the past year the Historical Institute has published, through the LAS Publishing House, Rome, three

studies on texts that are fundamental for a knowledge of Don Bosco and Salesian origins. They are a critical edition of the "*Memorie dell'Oratorio di S. Francesco di Sales dal 1815 al 1855*"; the first volume of the "*Epistolario di Don Bosco*", new edition with critical and historical notes; and a study on "*Il linguaggio della prima storia salesiana*."

Because of the importance of these works for a knowledge of the sources of Salesian history, we give below a brief presentation of each of the publications.

I.

GIOVANNI BOSCO, *Memorie dell'Oratorio di S. Francesco di Sales dal 1815 al 1855*. Introduzione e note a cura di Antonio da Silva Ferreira, Istituto Storico Salesiano, Fonti, Serie prima, IV. LAS - Roma, 1991. Duplicata edizione: edizione critica (pp. 256), edizione divulgativa (pp. 260).

Salesians and those interested in Salesian work should not overlook the importance of a work like this, written by Don Bosco in the seventies of the last century and now published for the first time in a critical edition; it provides through the notes the possibility of rebuilding the history of the text, and is a handy source of brief profiles of the persons quoted in it.

The *Memoirs of the Oratory* present a particular kind of story that

obliges the reader to do more than just enjoy an attractive autobiography of Don Bosco. It takes him into the field of the pedagogical and spiritual principles of the Saint, and is in fact the best of Don Bosco's books on Salesian pedagogy and spirituality.

To foster a wider distribution of the work among Cooperators, past pupils and friends of Salesian work, a popular edition has been published with fewer critical notes but more abundant notes of a historical nature.

II.

GIOVANNI BOSCO, *Epistolario*. Vol I (1835-1863), lett. 1-726. Introduzione, note critiche, storiche ed indici a cura di Francesco Motto. Istituto Storico Salesiano. Fonti, Serie prima, VI. LAS - Roma 1991, pp 718.

Collecting together the letters of Don Bosco proved to be a work that has gone on for years ranging over all five continents, and is still not complete. It has finally found expression in the publication of the *first volume* of the *Epistolario*. The plan for the completed work is that it will form a series of 8 volumes, each with a minimum of 700 pages (format 165 x 260 mm.) and more than 700 letters including some 20-25% that have not been found but can be constructed with the help of other sources that have been preserved.

It is a completely new edition as compared with that edited by Fr Eugene Ceria (and Fr Eugene Valentini in the years 1955-1959). Apart from a number of duplications, there are in hand at the present stage of the work more than 5,000 letters, which works out at an average of about two letters a week. These are published without being corrected or touched up in any way. For each letter too is given its present location, archival reference, and place where it occurs if found in the *Biographical Memoirs* or Ceria's *Epistolario* etc. The critical notes too make possible a brief reconstruction of the circumstances of each letter, the people mentioned in it, the events quoted or taken as understood in the published text and give an explanation of expressions in dialect or otherwise not easily understood by non-Italian readers. Finally the more than 80 pages of index material enable references to items of personal interest to be quickly found.

It is clear that a volume of this kind (and those that will follow at an estimated rhythm of one every two or three years), while being indispensable for the libraries of formation communities, should find a place in all Salesian communities. For a knowledge of Don Bosco's human and spiritual environment, for a deeper study of his spirituality and method of education, there is

no better source than the correspondence he maintained with thousands of people from the 1840's to his death.

As a useful instrument for the formation of the various groups of the Salesian Family, the first volume can be already of great help to friends of our works, and a very suitable gift for persons of culture, libraries and cultural centres.

The cover price has been kept to a minimum to foster a wider distribution.

III.

NATALE CERRATO, *Il linguaggio della prima storia salesiana. Parole e luoghi delle "Memorie Biografiche" di Don Bosco*. Istituto Storico Salesiano - Studi, 7. LAS - Roma, pp. 447.

The "Biographical Memoirs", because of their importance as a diligent and devoted account made by his followers, constitute an obligatory point of reference for a knowledge of Don Bosco and will always continue to do so. The growing difficulty experienced by the new generations of young Salesians in grasping the exact significance of local expressions now fallen into disuse, and in achieving a proper understanding of places and institutions in Piedmont of the 1880s and of the numerous Latin quotations given without translation, were the main factors prompting the publica-

tion of the present volume. It now becomes an indispensable companion to the 19 volumes (plus Index) of the *Memorie Biografiche* themselves.

Since such local expressions and quotations are found also in the "Memorie dell'Oratorio" and in the "Epistolario", it is clear that the understanding of such texts is rendered easier and more profitable by the help offered by Cerrato.

The volume can be recommended also, and may indeed be necessary, to those using the "Memorie Biografiche" in the English and Spanish translations.

5.4 New Provincials

We give below some biographical details of the new Provincials appointed by the Rector Major with his Council during the winter session of November-December 1991.

1. Fr Michael CUNNINGHAM, in the Province of GREAT BRITAIN.

Michael Cunningham, who succeeds Michael Winstanley in the guidance of the Province of Great Britain, was born at Radcliffe, Lancashire, 30 July 1944. He entered the Salesian school at Bolton and soon afterwards transferred to the aspirantate at Shrigley; he subsequently made his novitiate at Bur-

wash, where he also made his first profession on 8 September 1964. After the practical training period and study of theology, he was ordained priest at Bolton on 29 March 1974.

After obtaining the B.A. of London University, and the Master's Degree in Religious Education, he was a teacher and educator for several years in the Salesian School at Bootle.

In 1989 he was appointed Rector of the school at Bolton, and in the following year Vice-Provincial, a post he still occupied at the time of his appointment as Provincial.

2. *Fr Franco DALLA VALLE, in the Province of MANAUS (Brazil).*

As leader of the missionary Province of Manaus, Brazil, has been appointed Fr Franco Dalla Valle, in succession to Fr Beniamino Morando who is finishing his six-year mandate.

Franco Dalla Valle was born at Crespano del Grappa, Treviso, Italy, on 2 August 1945. He entered the Salesian aspirantate of Penango, Piedmont, and made his novitiate at Chieri - Villa Moglia, where he also made his first profession on 16 August 1963.

At the end of his studies in philosophy he felt a missionary call and left for Brazil where he joined the Manaus Province. There he did his practical training and made his perpetual profession at Bel. He retur-

ned to Italy for the study of theology at Castellammare di Stabia, and on 26 August 1972 was ordained priest at Colle Don Bosco.

Returning to Brazil, he carried out important pastoral work in several houses, and in 1982 was appointed Rector of the aspirantate at Manaus. At the same time he became a provincial councillor and delegate for pastoral work for vocations, a post he occupied until 1988 when he was sent as Rector to Jiparana. In 1990 he was appointed Rector and Director of Novices at Porto Velho - Candeias, where he was still working at the time of his new appointment.

3. *Fr Jacques MESIDOR, in the Vice-Province of HAITI.*

The first Superior of the new Vice-province of Haiti is Fr Jacques Mésidor; for some years he has already been delegate of the Provincial of Santo Domingo for the Salesians in Haiti.

Born at Limbé Cap-Hatien. on 30 July 1928, Jacques Mésidor first came to know the Salesians at the school of Port-au-Prince and in due course entered the novitiate at La Navarre, France, where he made his first profession on 14 September 1949. After his practical training period in Port-au-Prince he returned to France for the study of theology and was ordained priest at Lyons on 13 July 1958. Subse-

quently he obtained the Licentiate in Catechetics and Pastoral Work at Brussels.

Returning once again to Haiti after ordination he was soon called to take on tasks of responsibility in the Salesian communities of the island. From 1961 to 1966 he was Rector at Cap-Hatien, then from 1966 to 1972 and again from 1978 to 1984 Rector at Port-au-Prince. From 1975 for various periods he was a provincial councillor, and from 1988 Provincial Delegate for Haiti. He was one of the observers invited by the Rector Major to take part in the GC23.

4. *Fr Joseph PRATHAN, in the Province of BANGKOK, Thailand.*

Fr Joseph Prathan Sridarunsil, the new Provincial of Thailand, was born at Nam Deng, Vat Pheng, Thailand, on 9 February 1946. He came in contact with the Salesians at Hua Hin, where he subsequently made his novitiate and first profession on 2 October 1965.

After the study of philosophy and practical training in Thailand, he was sent to Cremisan in the Holy Land for theology; there he received the ministries and diaconate, and was ordained priest in Rome on 29 June 1975 by Pope Paul VI. At Rome he also obtained the Diploma in Spirituality from the UPS.

Returning to Thailand he was appointed in 1979 Rector of the house of Haad Yai. In 1980 he was trans-

ferred as Rector to Bandon, and three years later to Hua Hin; in 1984 he was appointed a provincial councillor. In 1986 he became Vice-Provincial and at the same time Rector of the provincial house at Bangkok. In 1989, while remaining Vice-Provincial, he became Rector of the community and work in Banpong-Sarasit, an office he still held at the time he was appointed Provincial.

5. *Fr André ASMA, in the Province of HOLLAND.*

The Rector Major with his Council has confirmed Fr André Asma in office for a further period of six years as Provincial of Holland.

Biographical details will be found in AGC 317, p. 57.

5.5 Salesian Bishops

We publish some details of two new Salesian Bishops.

1. *Mgr Giuseppe FORALOSSO, Bishop of Guiratinga, Brazil.*

On 21 November 1991 the Osservatore Romano carried the news of the appointment of Fr Giuseppe Foralosso SDB as Bishop of Guiratinga, in Brazil. He succeeds Mgr Camillo Faresin, also a Salesian.

Mgr Foralosso was born at Cervarese Santa Croce, in the diocese of

Padua, Italy, on 15 March 1938. After his aspirantate at Castello di Godego, he made his novitiate at Albar and his first profession on 16 August 1956.

After studies in philosophy and pedagogy, and the practical training period, he studied theology at the PAS, first at Turin and later at Rome, where he was ordained priest on 22 December 1966 and obtained the Licentiate in Theology.

Attracted by the missions, he left for Brazil where he was assigned to the Province of Campo Grande in Mato Grosso. For many years he was engaged in pastoral work, and also in teaching and formation in various houses of the province. From 1972 to 1978 he was a provincial councillor, and took part in the GC23 as delegate of his province. For the past year he had been teaching theology at the interprovincial studentate of Lapa, São Paulo.

2. Mgr Joan GODAYOL I COLOM, Bishop-Prelate of Ayaviri, Peru.

The Osservatore Romano of 5 December 1991 reported that the Holy Father had appointed Fr Joan GODAYOL I COLOM, Bishop of the territorial Prelature of Ayaviri, in Peru.

Born at Mataró in the province of Barcelona, Spain, on 4 November 1943, Joan Godayol was a pupil at the Salesian college of "St Anthony

of Padua" in Mataró before going on to the aspirantate at Girona, and later to the novitiate at Arbós.

After his first profession on 16 August 1960, he left at once for the Salesian Province of Peru, where he completed his philosophical and pedagogical studies, and did his practical training. For theology he returned to the studentate of Martí-Codolar, where he was ordained priest on 13 August 1972.

Returning once again to Peru he was soon appointed to positions of government. In 1974 he became Rector of the house of Lima-Santa Rosa, a large work including a Polytechnic for young people, and in 1977 Rector of the house of Arequipa with its professional schools.

In 1983 he was sent, once again as Rector, to the missionary work in Yucay and Calca. At the time of his appointment as Bishop he was once again Rector of the work in Arequipa, the Metropolitan See from which depends the Prelature of Ayaviri, to which he has now been appointed by the Holy Father.

5.6 Rector of the Pontifical Salesian University

The Congregation for Catholic Education, on the proposal of the Rector Major and in accordance with the Statutes, by a decree of 3

December 1991 has appointed *Fr Raffaele FARINA* Rector Magnificus of the Salesian Pontifical University, in succession to Mgr Tarcisio Bertone now an Archbishop. The new Rector took up office on 1 January 1992.

Fr Farina was born at Buonalbergo, Italy, 24 September 1933; he made his first profession at Portici-Napoli on 25 September 1949, and was ordained priest at Turin on 1 July 1958.

After obtaining the Licentiate in Theology and the Doctorate in

Church History (Gregorian University, Rome, 1967) he became Professor of Church History in the Salesian University, of which he was also Rector from 1977 to 1983. Fr Farina was also Moderator of the GC21 and for several years Director of the Central Salesian Archives. In 1981 he was appointed a member of the Pontifical Commission for Historical Sciences, and in January 1986 Under-Secretary of the Holy See's Pontifical Council for Culture, an office he still held at the time of his present appointment.

5.7 Our dead confreres (1991 – 3rd 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.
L ALMINI Ambrogio	Torino	03-12-91	84	ISU
P BACZEK Stanisław	Kopiec	28-09-91	79	PLO
P BATTAGLINO Vicente	General Rocha	13-11-91	71	ABB
P BATTISTELLO Domenico	Tampa	31-10-91	89	SUE
P BELLONO Paolo	Bosconero	28-09-91	85	INE
P BIANCHI Eliseo	Lonavla	02-12-91	77	INB
E BONAMIN Vittorio	Funes (Argentina)	11-11-91	82	—
<i>Fu per 22 a. Vescovo ausiliare di Buenos Aires e Provicario Castrense</i>				
P BONSIGNORE Giuseppe	Messina	20-05-91	80	ISI
P BRUDZ Viktor	Biala Górna	19-10-91	80	PLO
P CASIQUE Pedro	Caracas	19-07-91	76	VEN
P CASTEJON CASTRO Benito	Valencia	26-12-91	70	SVA
P CHINNICI Calogero	Catania	14-11-91	62	ISI
P CONNELLY John	London	13-11-91	71	GBR
P CRAVIOTTO Vincenzo	Savona	05-11-91	83	ISU
P CUADRADO Rogello	Morón de la Frontera	02-10-91	60	SSE
P D'ALESSANDRO Paolo	Ebolowa	03-12-91	54	ILT
P D'SOUZA Cyril	Sulcorua	06-12-91	80	INB
P DIEZ GALLO Eduardo	Madrid	23-09-91	74	SMA
P FANTOZZI Aldo	Roma	08-11-91	76	IRO
P GALLENGA Antonio	Torino	01-11-91	68	ISU
P GERACE Italo	Castellammare di Stabia	19-12-91	55	IME
P GHIGO Michele	Manaus	10-12-91	89	BMA
<i>Fu Ispettore per 4 anni</i>				
P GILABERT Oscar	Ramallo (Bs. As.)	29-12-91	63	ARO
P GONZALEZ CARRASCO Manuel	Río Gallegos	30-11-91	80	ABA
P GONZALEZ LOPEZ Luis	México	24-10-91	85	MEM
<i>Fu Ispettore per 10 anni</i>				
P GRIFFIN Leo	Bolton	04-12-91	78	GBR
P GUILLAMET Josep	Barcelona	01-10-91	71	SBA
L GUTIERREZ VANEGAS Jesús	Medellín	30-11-91	81	COM
L HOEFLER Ludwig	Waldwinkel	11-11-91	73	GEM
L HOFFMANN Jan	Przemysl	09-12-91	78	PLS
P HOULIHAN John	Bolton	29-10-91	57	GBR
P JESZKE Józef	Wejherowo	16-08-91	77	PLN
P KILIAN Wincenty	Lutomiersk	21-11-91	86	PLE

NAME	PLACE	DATE	AGE	PROV.
P KOSINSKI Stanisław	Łąd	15-07-91	67	PLN
P KUBARA Józef	Kraków	19-09-91	84	PLO
P LASAGNA Luigi	Torino	25-11-91	86	ISU
P LI VIGNI Natale	Trapani	05-10-91	84	ISI
P LINDENBERGER Johannes	Algasing	26-09-91	74	GEM
P MALAGOLI Angelo	Roma	07-10-91	78	IRO
P MAROCCHINO Umberto	Nasugbu	17-10-91	82	FIL
P MAUCEC Antonio	Manique-Estori	18-09-91	79	POR
P MED Oldřich	Rosicich	23-09-91	77	CEP
P MORGANTI Primo	Roma	28-10-91	78	IRO
P MORINO Cesare	Torino	21-10-91	80	INE
P MÖLDERS Josef	Hildesheim	24-05-91	76	GEK
P MURARI Arturo	Milano	03-12-91	77	ILE
P OLEDZKI Stanisław	Kobylnica	14-11-91	45	PLN
P PAVIOTTI Oreste	Udine	11-10-91	80	ING
<i>Fu Ispettore per 8 anni</i>				
P PLYWACZYK Ignacy	Czaplinek	14-11-91	57	PLN
P POPULIN Firmino	Ibagué	07-10-91	74	COM
L PRETE Francesco	Bivio di Cumiana	06-11-91	86	ICE
P REALI Giulio	Roma	26-12-91	90	IRO
P REDAELLI Cesare	Arese	24-11-91	69	ILE
L REILLY Peter	Warrenstown	10-09-91	69	IRL
L RIVOLTA Francesco	San Doná di Piave	24-09-91	66	IVE
P RIZZATO Giovanni	Manila	20-09-91	80	FIL
L SACCO Enrico	Novara	20-09-91	88	INE
P SANCHEZ Juan	Del Valle	19-10-91	83	ALP
L SEPTIEN GARCIA Agustín	Barcelona	29-08-91	82	SBI
P SŁOMKA Artur	Warszawa	07-09-91	85	PLE
L TORRES Gerardino	Bogotá	14-06-91	82	COB
P TOURINHO Adriano	Pará de Minas	15-11-91	95	BBH
L TRAINA Joseph	New York	18-10-91	71	SUE
P UREÑA ARROYO Antonio	Barcelona	21-10-91	82	SBA
P VALLA Héctor	Rosario	03-10-91	68	ARO
E VALLEBUONA Emilio	Lima	28-11-91	61	—
<i>Fu per 6 a. Ispettore, per 10 a. Vescovo di Huaraz e per 6 a. Arcivescovo di Huancayo</i>				
P VAN DE VIJVER Louis	St. Denis-Westrem	13-11-91	77	AFC
P VERWEIJ Gerard	Etterbeek	07-10-91	74	BEN
P ZAREMA Edward	Brunów	08-11-91	45	PLO
P ZEMAN Jan Kanty	Sciborzyce Wielkie	30-09-91	79	PLO
P ZERWAS Sebastian	Bell	10-12-91	80	GEK