



acts

of the general council

year LXXIII july-september 1992

N. 341

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

**Roma
Direzione Generale
Opere Don Bosco**

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of the Salesian Society
of St John Bosco**

OFFICIAL ORGAN OF ANIMATION AND COMMUNICATION FOR THE SALESIAN CONGREGATION

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1. LETTER OF THE RECTOR MAJOR	1.1 Fr Egidio VIGANÒ Our prayer for vocations	3
2. GUIDELINES AND POLICIES	2.1 Fr Luciano ODORICO The African Synod and Project Africa	31
3. RULINGS AND DIRECTIVES	None in this issue	
4. ACTIVITIES OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL	4.1 Chronicle of the Rector Major 4.2 Chronicle of the General Council	38 39
5. DOCUMENTS AND NEWS ITEMS	5.1 Meeting of European Provincials 5.2 Appointment of Confederal President of Don Bosco Past Pupils 5.3 Appointment of Director of Salesian Central Archives 5.4 New Salesian Bishop 5.5 Deceased confreres	58 60 61 61 63

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OUR PRAYER FOR VOCATIONS

- Introduction. - The Holy Spirit is more powerful than secularism. - Initiatives for our prayer for vocations. - Special care to involve young people as well. - Themes to be included in our prayer.
- The Salesian praying in the light of "Pastores dabo vobis". - Don Bosco's prayer for vocations.
- Intensifying our explicit prayer. - We entrust ourselves to Mary.

Rome, Feast of the Sacred Heart
26 June 1992

My dear confreres,

Grateful and fraternal greetings from all the members of the General Council now gathered in plenary session. In the past months they have made visits of animation to many provinces in different continents. Affectionately they have given their health and their gifts of animation and sharing to you their confreres. It is an admirable thought to consider their service of communion in the charisma of Don Bosco as an act of selfgiving, made with joy and simplicity so that we may grow and bear common witness to the same pastoral charity in many different contexts.

In this plenary session of the Council you are in our thoughts and considerations, together with the state of your provinces and some particularly ur-

gent problems. We have also had a special meeting with all the Provincials of Europe concerning the challenges in new evangelization emanating from this dynamic continent with its many problems.

One of the most burning concerns throughout the Congregation continues to be that of vocations.

Quite recently I wrote a circular in this connection,¹ but I think it opportune to return again to the same topic, not merely for the sake of repeating exhortations, but to look more deeply at the most vital aspect of what we have to do.

¹ AGC 339

It has been pointed out to me that in the previous circular the theme of prayer for vocations was taken for granted rather than developed at any length. We are well aware, as I said in the previous letter, that among the 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 be never forgotten".²

² AGC 339, p. 19

And we have also reflected together on salesian prayer.³ The letter on "Charism and Prayer" could by itself be sufficient to shed light on how we pray for vocations.

³ AGC 338: Charism and Prayer

But we also have to recognize that circulars of past months can easily become so much water under the bridge, and I invite you therefore to reflect more attentively on our "prayer for vocations": let Provincials and Rectors help the confreres to be more aware of this.

I have finished writing this letter on the feast of the Sacred Heart, a feast which reminds us of how much Don Bosco wanted to do and did for the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and how he has taught us to

foster in ourselves the same sentiments of the Good Shepherd. Our formation communities used to have the Sacred Heart as their special patron.

The Holy Spirit is more powerful than secularism

In our present-day society, so obsessed with efficiency, little space is left for prayer, as though it were an unproductive activity, a kind of waste of time. Precisely as a reaction to this perverse mentality the Church has witnessed a notable reawakening of the practice of prayer. We too are called to give new life to our identity as consecrated persons by a powerful reawakening of salesian prayer.

We can say without fear of contradiction that without prayer any charism will lose its vitality. Hence the first strategic move to fight off secularism is the relaunching of personal and communal prayer. It is not a matter of simply fostering a kind of intimism, but of cultivating in ourselves a realistic sort of contemplation which puts us in dialogue with a God who is objectively present in creation and history, and who speaks to us in life's context; a God who never remains silent.

It is a question of being true "believers", of perceiving the Holy Spirit in our existence and in that of others, of being convinced that meditating on the interventions, small and great, of "Providence", as it is called by the simple faithful, is not something obsolete. It is distressing to see how some people smile and speak of "providence" as though it were a thing of the past. When one reads the Bible one becomes aware that the principal personage in history is God. Faith is wholly founded on the historical existence of Jesus Christ and the

events of his life: the Church is a Pentecostal reality continually renewed through the centuries by the Holy Spirit working in us.

In our own small world we need only think of the concrete happenings of our salesian origins: of Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello, and of their first collaborators; we find ourselves facing a vast number of facts and coincidences which constitute a real organic web woven by Providence. How could we fail to see, for instance, that the vocation of Don Rinaldi, guided in so unique and unusual a way by our Father, was the result of an intervention by Providence? Don Rinaldi knew it, though he was always discreet in speaking of it; sometimes he would refer to the phenomenon of Don Bosco's countenance – when he spoke to him of vocational discernment – which shone with a radiant light, both at Mirabello and at Borgo San Martino.⁴ St Paul has told us: "What I spoke and proclaimed was not meant to convince by philosophical argument, but to demonstrate the convincing power of the Spirit, so that your faith should depend not on human wisdom but on the power of God".⁵ Which of us has not felt himself to be an instrument of the Spirit in many ministerial activities, to an extent far beyond his own personal ability?

⁴ cf. AGC 332, p. 11

⁵ 1 Cor 2, 4-5

It is easy to dismiss as so many exaggerations many signs, big and small, of hidden interventions of the Spirit, so as to avoid seeming ingenuous and seeing the supernatural in everything – something to be avoided, but to fail to take account of such interventions of Providence is dangerous and smacks of a subtle pride.

The Holy Spirit is objectively active in history; even if he cannot be reached through specific scientific approaches, he certainly can with the eyes

of faith. He is present and active; is it possible that a believer can never be aware of it?

God makes his Providence known to us by means of the Spirit: "The Spirit (says St Paul) explores the depths of everything, even the depths of God. Now the Spirit we have received is not the spirit of the world, but God's own Spirit, so that we may understand the lavish gifts God has given to us. And these are what we speak of, not in the terms learnt from human philosophy but in terms learnt from the Spirit".⁶

⁶ 1 Cor 2, 10-13

If we are convinced of this constant presence of God and the permanent intervention of his power, albeit in a gentle and hidden way, we shall find it easier to feel ourselves moved each day to dialogue with God in prayer; and our prayer, therefore, will not be just subjective escapism, a kind of flight from concrete realism, but rather a dialogue instigated by the Spirit who is alive and present in persons and events; a contemplative attention to reality, and a collection of practical requests from every confrere who must feel himself to be the one chiefly responsible for an indispensable work for the promoting of vocations.

Initiatives for our prayer for vocations

One of the characteristic aspects of the intervention of the Holy Spirit in history is precisely that of vocations. No authentic vocation ever arises without the movement of the Holy Spirit. To recognize this by intuition of faith, and dialogue with Christ about it is at the foundation of prayer for vocations; not only as a general topic, valuable though that is, but also with concrete application to

persons and situations: a prayer which is a realistic encounter between living persons. The one leading off is the Holy Spirit; through him our faith is awakened to discern God's initiatives, and we learn to read the chronicle of daily events. First we become aware of God's proposals and listen to them, and then we engage in dialogue with him.

Prayer in general is a conversation capable of a thousand different perspectives, because it refers to a God who is wonderfully fertile in initiatives: in the immensity of the universe, as its Creator; in the complexity of human vicissitudes, as Saviour; in the creativity of the transformation of hearts, as Sanctifier.

Specific prayer for vocations has a specific objective in view – the seeking out and preparation of close collaborators of Christ in the building of the Kingdom. From this standpoint we are particularly interested in perceiving and fostering the Spirit's initiatives for the growth and ecclesial vitality of the charism of Don Bosco.

The first model of prayer for vocations we find in Christ himself; when he saw the crowds like sheep without a shepherd he said to the disciples: "The harvest is rich but the labourers are few, so ask the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers to his harvest".⁷ Several times he himself has given us an example; so for instance when choosing the Apostles: "Jesus went on to the mountain to pray, and he spent the whole night in prayer to God. When day came he summoned his disciples and picked out twelve of them; he called them 'apostles'".⁸

⁷ Mt 9, 35-38

⁸ Lk 6,12

We should think frequently of this entire night of prayer before making a vocational decision: it is a fact of quite extraordinary significance which em-

phasizes the divine origin of the vocation and its importance for the mission of the Church.

Our prayer for vocations is not to be considered as a rather lame concern, an expression of *esprit de corps* for the social standing of the Congregation, but as a response to the explicit invitation of Christ and the convinced, joyful and self-sacrificing acceptance of the vast and urgent mission to the young and the poor given by the Spirit to our Founder as an apostolic gift for the whole Church. Prayer for salesian vocations is prompted by seeing, in the words of the Evangelist, the throng of young people hungry for the truth and the Gospel and wandering like sheep without a shepherd.

Prayer for vocations extends of its nature far beyond the growth of a particular charism: it has in view all workers in the Church. We know that Don Bosco wanted one of the main purposes of our Congregation to be that of a constant commitment for all vocations: "Let us remember", he told us, "that in securing a genuine vocation we are giving the Church a treasure. It is unimportant whether this vocation be for a diocese, the foreign missions or a religious order. What matters is the gift made to the whole Church". And to this end he exhorted us to accept sacrifice in order to foster good vocations: "Never turn down a promising boy for lack of means. Spend all you have; if necessary, beg; and if you are still hard pressed, do not be afraid, for the Blessed Virgin will come to your aid somehow, even miraculously".⁹

Hence salesian prayer for vocations is universal as regards its destination; it has particular characteristics in that it arises from a pastoral charity committed apostolically in a particular manner; it implies in us a sharing and almost a continuation of

⁹ BM 5, 257

the burning sentiments of salvation nourished by Christ in his own heart.

But let us look at some initiatives of personal and communal prayer to be cultivated in our houses. It is indispensable that our concern for vocations find an explicit place in the moments of prayer we are accustomed to spend daily or in particular circumstances of our community life. This is something that must be fostered ever more at various levels. We can give examples, without pretending to be exhaustive, if we want to be practical and intensify our renewal in this regard. In many houses it is the custom to make such prayer in suitably but widely varying forms, which tend to make us become – as individuals and as a community – living promptings by the Lord who calls others through the witness we give “to be in the Church signs and bearers of the love of God for young people”.¹⁰

¹⁰ C 2

At a personal level every confreres is called to be sensitive to the urgent need arising from the size of the harvest and the scarcity of workers. This will lead the Salesian to give greater space to prayer for vocations in the many moments of his day. It will be a concern that will accompany the whole of his union with God: in the moments of greater intimacy, e.g. during meditation, in the action of grace after communion, in moments of spontaneous conversation with the Lord, in visits, in the recital of the rosary (I know more than one confrere who every day offer at least one decade of the rosary explicitly for vocations), during apostolic work by means of ejaculations, and in the offering of personal sufferings and trials. Sick and aging confreres, who live in a kind of enforced Trappist's existence, can in truth do a great deal in this regard!

They form a reserve of prayer, a real hidden treasure of valid impetration!

At local community level each house will be able to think up its own concrete programme. Interesting examples already exist, e.g.: the choosing of a special day each week in which all the daily prayers of the community will be directed to vocations; a weekly period of eucharistic adoration; the daily inserting of a prayer for vocations in the invocations at Lauds and the intercessions at Vespers (there was a time – and vocations were not as scarce then as they are now – when after the community spiritual reading we prayed: ‘ut bonos et dignos operarios...’); the monthly celebration of the votive Mass for religious and priestly vocations; special celebrations of the Word; particular prayer-meetings with young people and the faithful in general, etc. What is important is the creation of a community climate with frequent commitments to special prayers for vocations. This aspect should be fostered particularly in houses of formation where great importance should be given to praying for vocations.

At Provincial level the preparation of programmes should be stepped up for sensitizing local communities, following them up, encouraging them in their initiatives, and leading them to convergent projects at particular moments, e.g. for the provincial day for vocations, for which special aides could be provided for the Eucharist or for a celebration of the Word; the same could be done for the annual salesian missions day, another occasion for planning communal prayer activity. At this level too what is vital is the sensitivity and animation that stems from a dynamic centre which reminds confreres in due time of the objectives of our mission.¹¹

¹¹ Cf. C 6. 28

At the level of the Salesian Family it is easy to facilitate the convergence of the various Groups in vocational initiatives. Special opportunities are offered by the feasts of our Saints and Beati: Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello, Dominic Savio and Laura Vicuna, the martyrs Versiglia and Caravario etc. Prayer groups should be cultivated among the Clients of Mary Help of Christians, the Friends of Dominic Savio, the youngsters belonging to the Salesian Youth Movement, the special initiatives of prayer that arise in various places also among parents of SDBs and FMAs, Cooperators and providential groups for the purpose of adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. I think that much more could be done in this environment.

At ecclesial level we should willingly take part in initiatives of prayers for vocations of the local Church. We should not forget Good Shepherd Sunday (4th of Easter) which is the "world day of prayer for vocations" throughout the Church, and is always accompanied by a message from the Holy Father. So also the novena for the Holy Spirit, which accompanies his coming amongst us as the protagonist of vocations, makes us appreciate availability for his desires and helps us to discern them. The World Missions Day is another propitious occasion. These are all moments of prayer that need to be carefully prepared if they are to provide all their vocational potential.

This broad survey of examples and possibilities is a further reminder of the need for explicit prayer, both personal and communal, for vocations that need to be promoted with enthusiasm.

Special care to involve young people

It is particularly important and efficacious to be able to extend the commitment to prayer for vocations beyond the confines of the religious community, and involve other groups of the Salesian Family and of the faithful, especially young people. The vocational project is addressed primarily to the young and is of personal interest to them; it is an admirable means of interpreting life itself as a vocation, of helping them to discover their own place in the building of the Kingdom and taking it up with full and generous awareness. Through prayer the Word of God descends into the heart, and the movement of the Spirit renders it fertile: "The word of God is something alive and active; it cuts more incisively than any two-edged sword; it can seek out the place where soul is divided from spirit, or joints from marrow".¹²

¹² Heb 4,12

It is precisely in prayer that the youngster learns to accept this Word, and apply it practically to his own person. It is in this that is verified what Don Bosco used to say, that "even the most callous boys have a soft spot, and the first duty of the educator is to locate that sensitive spot, that responsive chord in the boy's heart, and take advantage of it".¹³

¹³ BM 5, 237

This has been verified positively in the maturing experiences of what has been called the "school of prayer",¹⁴ in the meetings and encounters of the Salesian Youth Movement (at provincial and inter-provincial level), in the great youth concentrations with a spiritual content and the World Youth Days instituted by Pope John Paul II. These are true moments of grace in which young people come together to pray and publicly express their desire for christian commitment.

¹⁴ cf. AGC 339, p. 27-29

In particular it is indispensable to involve in vocational prayer those youngsters who are more spiritually mature and show signs of being willing to make a more generous commitment to Christ.

But in this task one must give due attention to the style of prayer; it should be lively and modern from an ecclesial standpoint, based on the joy of being friends of Christ, showing forth the indispensable historical mission of Christ in the world, and will lead to generosity and availability.

To this end we will do well to listen together to some declarations of the last General Chapter.

"Prayer is the language given us by the Spirit to approach the Father. In times past it was expressed in forms pedagogically suited to the conditions of contemporary youth. Today there is an urgent need for a rethinking of the best times and forms of initiation to it".¹⁵

¹⁵ GC23 139

In the process to be followed for maturing in faith, "a more intense sharing in the mystery of the Church is realized through prayer, listening to the Word, and the celebration of salvation".¹⁶ It is in these moments of interior recollection that the young person can perceive the initiative of the Holy Spirit directed particularly to him; in fact "prayer and meditation enable one to pass from a superficial view of life to something deeper within it: the individual comes to grips with himself and feels more easily the call God is addressing to him".¹⁷

¹⁶ GC23 148

¹⁷ GC23 155

And so we must give to prayer with the young forms that are deeply genuine and pedagogically adapted to them, which will go to their heart; the Chapter emphasizes indeed that "salesian prayer is able to accept new styles which help youngsters to meet the Lord in daily life, i.e. it is flexible and

creative, and attentive to the Church's guidelines for renewal".¹⁸

¹⁸ GC23 176

Animators and communities that have experienced this involvement know that youngsters like it and that it has a deep influence on them, especially on the more committed ones. If in recent years in the Church there has been a return of young people to prayer, it is urgent that we be able to programme further initiatives to promote it. In the fervour of prayer it will be truly felt that the Holy Spirit is the great protagonist of vocations and that his presence is manifested in the "mystery of vocation", as an ineffable dialogue between God and the particular young person causing him to emerge from his superficial anonymity and his passing selfishness.

Themes to be included in our prayer

Salesian prayer cannot prescind from the practical initiatives already indicated, but its origin from pastoral charity compels us to go much further. As we have already seen,¹⁹ it becomes mature and perfected in the union with God that leads us live pastoral charity as hard-working witnesses for the Kingdom. Its horizons therefore extend also to us and our activities.

¹⁹ cf. AGC 338

What precisely does praying for vocations mean for us in practice? Since we are apostles for vocations, it is of interest to us to be using an appropriate pastoral and pedagogical methodology. In this sense various reflections were put forward in the circular "There is still good ground where the seed can fall".²⁰ This is why we cannot be satisfied only with exercises of devotion – valid though they be,

²⁰ AGC 339

but we must aim at concrete objectives which suppose a whole personal and community involvement to be put into practice. It will not be only a question of praying that we may have new vocations, but also of praying and working for the perseverance of vocations now come to maturity, beginning with those of the confreres in each community, and of committing ourselves to the ongoing formation which renews us in docility to the Holy Spirit.

For this reason it will be to our purpose to go back for a moment to the methodological guidelines given in the circular of 8 December 1991; the processes to be programmed need to be supported by intense and specific prayer for their concrete realization. And so those indications become particular themes of our commitment to be included in our dialogue with the Lord.

Let us recall them briefly:

— *being a calling community*: praying that the community may be a “sign” and “school of faith”; this brings together the vital spirituality of all youth pastoral work, emphasizing its inseparable vocational dimension. This theme can nourish personal and communal prayer, e.g. on particular occasions or during special periods, to the extent of bringing about in the confreres a true conversion;

— *personalizing the journey of faith*: this is where prayer turns our gaze and concern on the individuals one by one, to the need for personal contact of an apostolic nature, to spiritual direction, to the vocational use of the sacrament of Penance, to guiding the freedom of the young person towards growth in a convinced apostolic spirituality, suitably developing the 4th area of the journey of the GC23 “towards a commitment for the Kingdom”;

— *creating maturing experiences*: here prayer prompts a spirit of initiative and helps the concrete programming which helps the young person to grow in faith, in the choice of God, in apostolic and missionary commitments, and in group experience, renewing in prayer the oratorian mission;

— *being able to call and follow up*: certainly prayer first of all stimulates our courage to call in a delicate but penetrating way as an aspect inherent in the personalization of education to the faith, and then ensure a constant friendly follow-up, both for the purpose of overcoming various difficulties that will arise and of gradually maturing towards a christian ideal of existence;

— *those primarily responsible*: to pray for those who called in a special way to exert an educative influence on young people with signs of a vocation: for parents, for the rector, for the provincial and for whoever has the task of following the candidate more closely.

Hence our dialogue with the Lord in response to his appeal to pray for vocations extends to very many practical themes. The latter broaden the content of our prayer for vocations; they serve also to show that for us prayer must be linked with vocational activity, so that both combine in a vital union to proclaim the truth of a union with God that explodes in pastoral charity.

But for all this there is need of a new sensitivity, of abandoning certain outworn practices that have become merely superficial, or rethinking and relaunching the charisma in depth, or in other words a spiritual and apostolic conversion.

"The Word of God", say the Constitutions, "calls us to continual conversion", and the frequen-

tation of the sacrament of Reconciliation becomes also a vocational commitment: "it gives us the joy of the Father's pardon, rebuilds brotherly communion, and *purifies our apostolic intentions*".²¹

²¹ C 90

²² C 95

And so our prayer for vocations, made concrete in fruitful youth pastoral work, truly leads us after our conversion "to celebrate the liturgy of life",²² or in other words to bring it about that our work for vocations becomes in truth the complete salesian prayer.

To prayer is added also the spirit of mortification which goes with fidelity to work; the truth of prayer is reflected in apostolic sacrifice. Don Albera, speaking of this need for mortification, used to say that the validity of supplications was ensured because "desires consisting in no more than words cost little and are of little value".²³ It is certainly a fine thing to talk about the theology of creation and the theology of the incarnation, but it is indispensable to add also the theology of the cross. We are invited to acquire an ever deeper understanding of the value, importance, and central position of the passion and death of Jesus Christ. Don Bosco lived this aspect with great generosity.

²³ Circulars of D. Albera, Turin 1965, p. 513

The phenomena of aging, of sickness, of such great suffering, could become a very fruitful treasure if lived in a prayerful attitude. The relationship between the theology of the incarnation and the history of salvation must be contemplated in the light of the paschal mystery. Speaking of mortification and the cross does not mean that we become pessimists or opposed to joy, but rather imitate and participate in the prayer of Jesus mingled with the realism of that hope which led him to his total self-donation on the cross.

The Salesian praying in the light of "Pastores dabō vobis"

Don Bosco used to say that prayer is the first of all works; it leads to union with God, from whom proceeds the intensity of pastoral charity with the vital gift of the "grace of unity". Without prayer there can be no synthesis between faith and life. Prayer, in fact, is a personal experience of God, it leads from listening to sharing; it lifts from meditation to contemplation; it unleashes an internal process by which love gets the upper hand and leads us directly to the heart of God, bypassing dialogue to become "unitive love".

We have already seen that St Francis de Sales is a master in this vision of prayer which leads the one praying to the liturgy of life. Unitive love is situated deeply within the person and permeates his entire being with its intrinsic practical force; it generates in the heart a spiritual dynamism, as "conscious participation in the very love of God through self-donation in practical availability for the work of salvation. It is an interior attitude of charity directed towards apostolic activity in which it becomes concrete, is made manifest, grows and is perfected".²⁴ Our prayer for vocations should reach this level, which is the level proper to salesian prayer which leads to the ecstasy of life and activity.

The Constitutions tell us that the salesian spirit is summed up and centred in pastoral charity,²⁵ the bearer of that uniting force which can transform our work into prayer: a pastoral charity that Don Bosco has taught us to express in the slogan "da mihi animas" and which Don Rinaldi has translated in masterly fashion as "thirst for souls".²⁶ To the

²⁴ AGC 338, p. 24

²⁵ cf. C 10

²⁶ cf. AGC 332, p. 37 ff.

level of this "thirst" we must lift our prayer for vocations, cultivating within us the sentiments of Christ's own heart. In other words, we are not speaking of a prayer that is limited to particular moments (indispensable though this is), but of one that permeates and incites the heart in such a way as to transform the whole of life into a joyous witness to one's own vocation, and all apostolic activity into a vocational commitment.

I invite you, dear confreres, to take the Apostolic Exhortation "*Pastores dabo vobis*" and read carefully what it says about pastoral charity.²⁷ In n. 21 and subsequent paragraphs the document offers us a valuable and authentic teaching on configuration to Christ the Shepherd, which constitutes precisely the ideal and soul of the salesian spirit of Don Bosco.

It is a wonderful and stimulating thing for us to see the spiritual life (and hence the practice of prayer) situated within apostolic commitment and to hear it stated that between consecration and mission (between prayer and work) there is a mutual organic compenetration: "Mission is not extraneous to consecration or juxtaposed to it, but represents its intrinsic and vital purpose: consecration is for mission. In this sense, not only consecration but mission as well is under the seal of the Spirit and the influence of his sanctifying power. This was the case in Jesus' life. This was the case in the lives of the Apostles and their successors".²⁸ The essential and permanent demand for unity between interior life and the many activities and responsibilities of the apostolate finds its full and adequate response precisely in the energy of pastoral charity, to which our prayer tends of its very nature.

We may note how the document presents this

²⁷ cf *Pastores dabo vobis*, 21 ff.

²⁸ PDV 24

famous pastoral charity. The model to whom we can look for an indication of its characteristics is Christ the Good Shepherd, who reveals the love of God by witnessing to it to the last extreme by his self-donation in service, humility and the most generous solidarity. Pastoral charity is a living participation in Christ's saving love: it is "a gift freely bestowed by the Holy Spirit and likewise a task and a call which demand a free and committed response".²⁹

²⁹ PDV 23

Looking at the mystery of Christ we can see very clearly that its essential content is the total gift of himself in the mission, a gift without limitations, a gift given with joy and cheerfulness, a gift expressed in empathy and amiability, because he loves those to whom it is given "with a heart that is new, generous and pure, with genuine self-detachment, with full, constant and faithful dedication, and at the same time with a kind of 'divine jealousy' (cf. 2 Cor 11,b), and even with a kind of maternal tenderness, capable of bearing the 'pangs of birth' until 'Christ be formed' in the faithful".³⁰ We may recall Don Bosco's words: "That you are young is enough to make me love you very much. For you I study, for you I work, for you I live, for you I am ready even to give my life".³¹

³⁰ PDV 22

³¹ cf. C 14

Pastoral charity, says the Pope, "is not just what we do, but our gift of self, which manifests Christ's love for his flock. Pastoral charity determines our way of thinking and acting, our way of relating to people. It makes special demands on us".³² We may say that in a sacrificial sense it denotes our entire existence as consecrated persons for the salesian mission; in this way it finds its source and destination, its self-donation and ability to live it, in the Eucharist as the sacramental expression of our

³² PDV 23

existential incorporation into Christ.

If therefore our prayer for vocations is directed to the maturing of pastoral charity, it means that it must extend far beyond a practice of devotion. It leads us to work for vocations with widely varying initiatives (beginning with those already indicated in the themes mentioned earlier); it is a question of bringing them to a genuine pastoral charity in response to the appeal of Jesus for labourers for the harvest. And so every confrere and all communities are called to foster with greater apostolic conviction their activities and projects regarding vocational suggestions: "vocational guidance", in fact, "constitutes the vertex and crown of all our educational and pastoral activity. But this is not the terminus of the faith-journey; it is an element always present, and one that must characterize every stage and every area of intervention".³³

³³ GC23 247 ff.

If salesian prayer leads to pastoral charity and if the latter, by the power of the Holy Spirit, translates into life and action, it means that the authenticity of our prayer for vocations will be measured by the educative and pastoral quality of our life and activity. In other words, the authenticity of prayer for vocations requires endorsement by our daily witness, while on the other hand our vocational activity will be genuine and fertile only if it really stems from a living, personal and communal prayer which nourishes it continually through its serum.

This, I think, is the yardstick for measuring the sincerity of our prayer for vocations. To it must be applied the words of the Apostle James: "The heartfelt prayer of someone upright works very powerfully. Elijah was a human being as frail as ourselves; he prayed earnestly for it not to rain, and no rain fell for three and a half years; then he

prayed again and the sky gave rain and the earth gave crops".³⁴

Without prayer there can be no fruitful pastoral work for vocations. But prayer which leads to pastoral charity, by animation of the three poles of "individual", "community", and "ministerial presence",³⁵ becomes a daily commitment of life and action.

It is symptomatic that Don Bosco said he had given the name of "Oratory" to his work to make it quite clear that prayer was the only power on which he could rely: his union with God was expressed in his oratory work!

Don Bosco's prayer for vocations

When did Don Bosco pray for vocations? One could answer the question by the famous assertion of Pius XI during the canonization process of our Father. To the objection: when did he pray amidst such active commitments, the Pope replied: "And when did he not pray?" The vocational activity of Don Bosco is the measure of his prayer for vocations.

His second successor, Fr Paul Albera, has left us two important circular letters which touch on our theme: one at the beginning of his period of office in May 1911 "On the spirit of piety", and the other, almost at the end of his term of office, "On vocations" on the Solemnity of Pentecost, 15 May 1921. In them one has a clear view of the heart of Don Bosco praying for vocations. "It could be said", wrote Don Albera, "that Don Bosco and continual prayer were the same thing, uninterrupted union with God. Whenever we had recourse to him for

³⁴ Jas 5, 17-18

³⁵ cf. AGC 338, p. 26 ff.

advice, he seemed to interrupt his converse with God to give us his attention, and that all the thoughts and encouragement he gave us were inspired by God".³⁶

³⁶ Circulars of D. Albera, Turin 1965, p. 37

His expression "Don Bosco and continual prayer were the same thing" is a significant one. God certainly listens with predilection to the prayer that becomes transformed into self-donation in life and its activities; the one who prays shares in this way in the mystery of Christ, who became a priest and oblation in the concrete realism of his human existence. In Don Bosco there is no separation between prayer and action; together they constitute the beatings of his heart; but the source is his prayer that matured into unitive love. He showed his love for the Church by dedicating himself constantly, among other things, to the seeking and formation of vocations. He prepared dozens of them every year, and the total eventually reached thousands. Don Albera, recalling his example, wrote: "we should glory in being called 'beggars' or 'seekers of vocations' among the people".³⁷

³⁷ *ibid.* p. 498

In his life among youngsters he created an environment favourable to vocations; scrutinizing the boys one by one looking for vocational signs; he invoked the Holy Spirit for the light of discernment; he dedicated hours and hours to the ministry of the sacrament of Reconciliation, in which his spiritual guidance led so many boys to the ideal of self-donation; he inculcated enthusiasm for the great missionary horizons and committed himself to concrete apostolic initiatives; even during his famous autumn outings he was always alert to discover and encourage vocations. He sought them especially in poor christian families where the faith was practised daily.

He gave great importance to an atmosphere of piety; he was realistic in keeping at a distance certain worldly dangers and in fostering purity of heart; he considered morality as the seedbed of vocations. He prompted Dominic Savio in the foundation and development of the Sodality of the Immaculate Conception. He steered the preventive system in the direction of vocational pastoral work. And he kept at all this with great solicitude and no discouragement, in the conviction that the Lord proportions vocations to current needs.

As we have seen, he would never repel a possible vocation because of the poverty of the candidate or his family, but always went himself in search of means of support. Whenever he wrote to his missionaries – Cagliero, Lasagna, etc. – he always insisted that they should seek out and foster vocations.

Perhaps the initiative which best manifests his dynamic prayer for vocations is the “Work of Mary Help of Christians” for so-called “late” vocations. This was a work begun under the auspices of Our Lady and the prophetic expression of a pastoral creativity which did not in fact meet easily with the support of others, and in particular of Archbishop Gastaldi; but Don Bosco was able to gain the support of the Holy Father and of various bishops, and he continued with the work amid sacrifices but with wonderful results. The older candidates ran into hundreds. He called them “Sons of Mary”, and they were the joy of his last years of life. Fr Philip Rinaldi, who had been one of the first of them and subsequently became their director, informed him periodically of their progress.

This initiative had been a daring innovation in vocational pastoral work of the time: it was an in-

novation as regards the age of the candidates, as regards their background ("between the hoe and the hammer", he used to say), their courses of study and their style of formation. But it became the source of excellent priests and scores of missionaries: "These young adults have good judgement", said Don Bosco; "and as soon as they are priests they will do a lot of good".³⁸ The work was flanked by an association whose members undertook to help to defray the expenses of the candidates by their donations and other means. All this gives us an idea of the practical nature of Don Bosco's love for the Church and of his pastoral charity: "God will help us", he used to say, "if we do all we can for vocations".

³⁸ cf. *Annali*, I, p. 212

If in union with God, the source of all pastoral charity, the most intimate and fruitful commitment is prayer, we must recognize the fact that the activity of our Father for the fostering of vocations is the most irrefutable sign that within him there was an incessant and most special prayer for vocations.

Intensifying our explicit prayer

There is no doubt that at the present day the Congregation must return to a greater intensity and authenticity of prayer for vocations. Insistence on the salesian characteristic of a prayer that leads to life is indispensable and helpful for the identity of our charism.

But taking for granted our awareness of this identity, we still have to reckon with the state of fervour and the depth with which this charism is being lived in the communities.

Why in recent years have we declared war on superficiality? Why did Vatican II remind us that consecrated life is ordered primarily to bringing its members to follow Christ and be united with God, and that they are therefore called at the present day to a strong spiritual renewal, and that this has pride of place even in external apostolic works? Is there not a danger that we shall get entrenched in work and action, with greater attention to the work of our hands than the vitality of our heart? "Ecstasy of action" and "excuse of action" are not the same thing at all. "Excuse of action" can be just a harmful trap; it is a caricature of the "ecstasy of action" described by St Francis de Sales and lived by Don Bosco.

Today the times demand a more explicit return to prayer. A reawakening in this regard can be seen throughout the Church, also among the young as I noted earlier. It is a kind of prayer that is in harmony with the reawakening of faith: to be committed believers and not just people of habit, implies a dialogue with the Lord which is more explicit, more frequent and more intense. In an atmosphere of secularism a pressing need is felt for meditation and a deepening of faith; many of the faithful, young people among them, are led to listen with greater attention to the Word of God and to converse more deeply with God himself. Religious, who are called to be in the words of Paul VI "specialists in prayer", must make every effort to grow in this their particular characteristic: "Mission requires, in fact, of all who are sent that they stimulate their love in the dialogue of prayer".⁴⁰

Well indeed did Blessed Luigi Versiglia, our bishop and martyr, write: "The missionary who does not remain united with God is like a channel

³⁹ cf. PC 2a

⁴⁰ MR 16

detached from the source: if he prays a great deal, he will also accomplish a great deal".

We must restore quality and priority to the moments of explicit prayer, fostering ways of renewal and suitably highlighting its importance. Such moments are a vital reserve for stirring up real enthusiasm for our own charism and contribute to making the confreres living suggestions of Christ to the young.

Precisely because our prayer leads naturally to witness in life and apostolic activity, we must take care that it be genuine, renewed, frequent and involving. Every confrere should feel himself directly challenged in this matter because, as I said once before, "without the individual there is no prayer".⁴¹

⁴¹ AGC 338, p. 29

But *Provincials and Rectors* are asked to take on special initiatives in this regard; their interest and interventions can bring about a true leap forward in this vital task. The GC23 commits the Provincial to making a practical evaluation, and asks him to appoint to the provincial team for youth pastoral work an animator who will shape, coordinate, promote and maintain the necessary linkages between vocational initiatives.⁴²

⁴² Cf. GC23 253

And the Rector is asked to develop and lead a new pastoral quality among his confreres, so that they may become animators of educative communities and the Salesian Family, ensure the functioning of the various roles of service, make vocational suggestions and follow up the more committed; and that the Rector himself may take up again the role of guide of the young through personal and group contact, and get them involved in specific moments of prayer.⁴³

⁴³ cf. GC23 218, 216, 232, 234, 243, 249

We entrust ourselves to Mary

Don Bosco experienced at first hand the efficacious motherly help of Our Lady in seeking vocations, in their discernment and in their maturing. To her he entrusted that original initiative of pastoral creativity that he called the "Work of Mary Help of Christians". He always cultivated an extraordinary trust in her solicitous intercession, especially in times difficult for finding vocations..

We must continually relive in the Congregation that solemn act of entrustment made by the GC22, in which we entrusted to her among other things "an increase in vocations",⁴⁴ in the conviction that with her we can undertake great things for the good of the young. In fact, as the Constitutions tell us, "we believe that Mary is present among us and continues her mission as Mother of the Church and Help of Christians".⁴⁵

In particular we are convinced that Our Lady, intimately united with the Holy Spirit, is in history also the mother and educator of vocations. She has been defined by the Pope as "the human being who has responded better than any other to God's call";⁴⁶ She nourished and educated Jesus, who we could say was the "vocation supreme". When in the Temple at Jerusalem Mary found the twelve year old Jesus and told him of the pain endured by Joseph and herself during three days of searching for him, she received the reply: "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?"⁴⁷ We can consider this response as the confidence of an adolescent son manifesting his vocation to his parents. How much

⁴⁴ cf. AGC 322, p. 15-22.

⁴⁵ C 8

⁴⁶ PDV 82

⁴⁷ Lk 2, 49.

Mary must have meditated on the vocation of Jesus, and on her own!

My mind was running along these lines when I chanced to hear a Marian hymn being sung by a group of young oratorians; the words ran something like this: "How much I would like to speak with you (Mary) of the Son you loved; I would like to hear you tell me of what you thought when you heard him say that you were no longer his alone nor he yours."

The generous acceptance and full realization of her own vocation made Mary happy and blessed in her heart, and made her a protagonist in the history of humanity, more important and beneficial than many wise and powerful personages.

Her hymn of the Magnificat reveals the personal joy and historical importance that accompanies a vocation; it is in fact the realization of a plan of God. God's plans are all of them expressions of love for the person he calls and are pledges of good for the fellowship and salvation of others. When in the "Our Father" we pray "Thy kingdom come", we are asking that we may be collaborators in his plans, as was Mary to the fullest extent. From her we learn to look upon a vocation as a treasure to be valued, proposed, defended and brought to fruition in every young person with whom we come in contact.

Let us ask Our Blessed Lady to be at our side as a solicitous Mother, especially in the intensification and improvement of our prayer for vocations, made with the same sentiments as were in the heart of Jesus Christ her son. Don Bosco reminds us that if we entrust ourselves to her we can undertake wonderful things.

Let us renew our prayer, dear confreres, for labourers for the harvest; it will help us to bear joyful witness each day to our vocation.

Affectionately in the Lord,

Don F. Viganò

2.1 THE AFRICAN SYNOD AND PROJECT AFRICA

Fr Luciano ODORICO
Councillor General for the Missions

Introduction

In this communication I want to comment on two recent meetings of salesian missionaries working in the African continent. They took place at Abidjan (Ivory Coast) from 24 to 26 August 1991, and at Nairobi (Kenya) from 15 to 18 October 1991.

Dossiers referring to the two meetings have already been published and sent respectively to the French-speaking and English-speaking communities in Africa.

My purpose here is to present a brief synthesis, because the two themes on which reflections were based have an ecclesial significance which extends beyond the boundaries of Africa. In a certain sense we can say that the African continent, from both an ecclesiastical and salesian point of view, represents a reality of new hope and dynamic life for the universal Church and the Salesian Congregation.

The two themes, though distinct, cannot be separated, because the Salesians in Africa today cannot be authentic pastors and missionaries without feeling themselves involved in the present and future of the Church in Africa and Madagascar.

The ecclesial character of the African Synod enriches the salesian charism with a new pastoral inculturation, and in turn the specific nature of the salesian mission makes a new contribution to the variety of the African Church.

1. The African Synod

This continental Synod, as was the case with the recent European Synod and will be again with the upcoming assembly of the Latin-American Bishops at Santo Domingo, represents a particularly significant moment of the union of the Church in Africa with the universal Church (cf. *Lineamenta* - Introduction). It also represents a step forward towards a clearer ecclesial and pastoral identity of the African Church on the eve of the third millennium.

The main themes presented in the *Lineamenta* are: Evangelization (its history, content and method), Inculturation, Ecumenical and Inter-religious Dialogue, Justice and Peace, and the Means of Social Communication. It is immediately evident that these are the global themes through which the wide range of the Church's mission is expressed.

In the two meetings, one in French for the French-speaking zone and the other in English for the English-speaking zone, there were two enlightening conferences, one by Mgr Bernard Agré at Abidjan and the other by Fr Cecil McGarry SJ at Nairobi. Both emphasized the christocentric and ecclesiocentric perspectives of the *Lineamenta*, adding further comments and explanations for a better understanding of the content.

Subsequently the themes put forward in the *Lineamenta* were discussed in various groups following the questionnaire provided in the Appendix (pp. 91-99). The salesian missionaries made a valid summary from a salesian point of view of the five main themes already mentioned, in the light especially of the GC23. They also made suggestions concerning some other themes that could perhaps be integrated with the main ones, e.g. youth, religious life, the laity, and systematic catechesis applied to the local culture (cf. Dossier of the Nairobi meeting, pp. 34-40).

All the contributions, suitably synthesized and redrafted, were sent to the Secretary General of the Synod of Bishops on 30 November 1991, as a contribution to the African Synod by the salesian missionaries working in that continent. The majority of the Salesians had already taken part in meetings for study in their own parishes

and dioceses, but this sharing of salesian missionary experience at an African and international level proved to be an enriching event for those taking part. Following Don Bosco's example, the aim was to emphasize the sensitivity of the Salesians to participation in an ecclesial event of great significance.

It is hoped that the African Synod will take place in 1993, or at the latest in 1994. The Preparatory Commission is at present drawing up the working document to be presented to the Synodal Fathers.

In both our meetings we committed ourselves to follow with interest the final stages of the preparatory phase and especially to the celebration of the Synod itself. It was also decided to have two further meetings, one in each language, after the Synod to study its final document from a salesian standpoint, and consider its implications and pastoral priorities. This would be done towards the end of 1994 or in 1995.

Both Salesians and Daughters of Mary Help of Christians want to be leaders and not mere passive receivers in this salvific event for the Church in Africa and Madagascar.

2. Project Africa

In these two meetings the Salesians were also invited to do some stocktaking in respect of *Project Africa* at a distance of twelve years from its launching by the Rector Major, Fr Egidio Viganò, at the GC21 in 1978.

It was a mature evaluation based on the practical experience of the planting of the salesian charisma in many nations of Africa. From a methodological point of view maybe the time was too short. More elbow-room and more comparisons would have been desirable.

We know that the GC23 (n. 310) entrusted to the Rector Major and his Council the task of a special coordination of Project Africa. In turn the Rector Major and Council entrusted the realization of this coordination to the Councillor General for the Missions (cf.

AGC 335). In the light of this task the three areas of the coordination of Project Africa have been presented, analyzed and evaluated. They are:

- the pastoral and missionary project;
- the growth and consolidation of our works;
- the geographic and cultural siting of the formation structures.

The three areas have as a common denominator the growing awareness of working in an African culture.

a. *The Pastoral and Missionary Project*

The Councillor for Youth Pastoral Work, Fr Luc Van Looy, guided and facilitated the reflection concerning the following aspects:

- the study of the African pastoral reality, especially as regards young people;
- the drawing up of an outline salesian pastoral and educative plan in an African context;
- emphasis on the role of the salesian community in the elaboration and realization of the project.

The great variety was noted of the situations in the different nations of Africa. Accepted too was the indispensable need to consider, programme and revise salesian work with the help of an educative pastoral plan. In some communities and in some countries this already exists, albeit in provisional form. In other parts however there has not yet been any serious effort at reflection and programming.

b. *The growth and consolidation of salesian works.*

In the two dossiers already referred to (English pp. 59-60, French pp.61-63) will be found the final summary of the principal impressions, positive and negative, concerning salesian work in Africa.

The analysis was objective and realistic and the results full of hope. By way of example I give some general impressions, both positive and negative:

★ *Positive impressions:*

In general Project Africa has been seen as a clear manifestation of the presence of the Holy Spirit in the Congregation.

- The general picture of the development is decidedly positive.
- There has been a growing sensitivity and awakening as regards missionary animation in the various provinces of origin.
- There is a marked growth in African salesian vocations.
- There is an equally marked and growing manifestation of solidarity with the very poor.
- There is a growing sense of Salesian Family.
- A clear compatibility is seen between the salesian charism and the African reality, especially as regards young people.

★ *Negative impressions:*

- Inadequate preparation of the missionaries.
- Not enough pastoral planning at community level.
- Insufficient personnel.
- The fragile nature of salesian works started up in too great haste without adequate previous planning.
- A certain superficiality as regards content and methods of inculturation.
- Insufficient internationalization in communities.

★ *The more significant suggestions:*

- Improvement in the quality of the missionary vocation as an authentic and free option.
- Improvement in coordination at levels of country, region, language, inculturation, and financial assistance.
- The desirability of possible new juridical circumscriptions (provinces, vice-provinces and delegations) without loss of linkage with the provinces of origin.
- Improvement in the quality of the communities, and emphasis on their internationalization.

- Ongoing revision of youth pastoral work, and the drawing up of a salesian pastoral and educational project.
- Strengthening and consolidation of salesian works.
- The promoting of meetings at national and international level for ongoing formation.
- The cultivation and growth of the Salesian Family.
- Improvement in the discernment and choice of vocations to the salesian life.
- The development for Africa of salesian literature in English, French and Portuguese.

c. *The siting of formation structures.*

General impressions in this regard are almost wholly positive. The growth of vocations and the structures of initial formation (7 novitiates, 5 post-novitiates and 2 theologates) are considered a real blessing from God. Nevertheless the need is felt of a structure for the formation of young coadjutors.

d. *Various other suggestions*

It was also suggested that meetings or assemblies of this kind should take place every two years; that there should be yearly meetings of rectors; that courses of ongoing formation be organized on various themes, especially on the catechesis of young people and on the reality of the Salesian Family.

Conclusion

As a concluding reflection on these meetings it could be said that the realization of Project Africa is at present in a state of massive consolidation, of qualitative pastoral improvement at community level, and of synthesis between the enthusiasm of the beginnings and the realism of subsequent growth.

The Holy Spirit has not only kindled the initial flame of Project Africa, but has also accompanied these first years of foundation and

expansion. Don Bosco is becoming the Saint of the young Africans. They feel an immediate attraction to him which is spontaneous and almost magical. They are the youngsters of Don Bosco's dream whom he saw as appealing to him in so many different ways with the plea: "We have waited so long for you!" Certainly many of the salesian missionaries working in Africa have this deep awareness of fulfilling the prophecies of their Father.

In conclusion I recall that the Missions Department, with the knowledge of the Rector Major and his Council, has recently prepared a dossier on a "Global hypothesis of possible forms of coordination and circumscriptions in Africa and Madagascar".

All Provincials involved in Project Africa have received a copy of this dossier and have been invited to study it with their provincial councils, and with the members of the African missionary communities depending on them. The Department awaits their response to the specific questions set out in the dossier; these will be of help in making decisions in connection with this second phase of the consolidation of Project Africa.

With an eye to the harmonious development of Project Africa, two essential factors must be safeguarded:

- the progressive and irreversible africanization of the salesian charism (as regards content, methods and structures),
- and the bond of missionary animation with the provinces of origin.

With the collaboration of all involved, these two objectives will certainly be attained. May Mary Help of Christians, the guide of our missions from the very beginning, protect this important phase of the growth of our presence in Africa.

4. ACTIVITIES OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL

4.1 Chronicle of the Rector Major

The Rector Major spent 29 March at Capriglio with over 300 descendants of the Occhiena family, among them Mr. Peter Secchia, USA Ambassador to Italy, and at Colle where he inaugurated the monument to Mamma Margaret. The following day he went on to Turin, where he took part in the presentation to the press and the public of the book "Don Bosco ritorna".

On 11 April he took part in the meeting of teachers of theology at the UPS, and on 22 April conversed with the presidents of our Study Centres gathered at the Generalate. On the 24th he concluded the course of Marian formation of the FMA by celebrating the Eucharist in the sanctuary of Divine Amore, Rome.

The end of the month found him at Corigliano d'Otranto and Lecce (25-26 April), for the solemn commemoration of the 15th anniversary of the birth of Dominic Savio, marked by a large and significant presence of young people. Immediately afterwards he returned to Rome to be present (April 27-29) at the plenary session of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, of which he is a member, and for the confederal assembly of the Past-

pupils and the election of the new confederal presidency (April 30 - May 6).

The Province of Barcelona (Spain) welcomed him from May 8-11, for the celebration of the silver jubilee of salesian work at Andorra, and for various functions in Barcelona itself. May 16 and 17 were divided between Caste dé Britti, where he inaugurated the "Gavinelli" Centre, Bologna - Don Bosco, for the blessing of the new gymnasium, and Reggio-Emilia, to see the youth work recently begun in that town.

On Saturday, 23 May, he took part in the symposium of religious Superiors for the Roman Synod, and left the same evening for Turin for the solemn celebration of Mary Help of Christians in the Basilica, and the big procession.

On 27 May he went to Ariccia, for the annual meeting of Superiors General, and returned to the Generalate on the 30th, just in time to fly back once again to Turin. This time he went to Chieri for the centenary of our work there, to Cuorgnè for a commemoration of Blessed Callistus Caravario, and to Fossano to visit the new plant of the SEI.

After the beginning of the plenary session of the General Council the Rector Major was in Belgium from 7-9 June for a period characterized

by brotherly communion between the two Belgian Provinces to celebrate the centenary of salesian work in that country. From June 13-15 he took part in the meeting of the Provincials of Europe to foster greater communion and collaboration, as requested by the Special Synod of Bishops of 1991. Finally on 14 June he spent the day at Borgo San Lorenzo for a festivity organized by the local Past-pupils who, 25 years after the closing of the salesian work there, still remember with love and gratitude their salesian educators.

4.2 Activities of the Councillors

The Vicar General

After the winter plenary session of the Council, Fr Juan Vecchi carried out the annual visitation of the community of the Generalate.

In February he preached a retreat to a group of confreres of the Province of Ljubljana with some others from the neighbouring Province of Zagreb. He then moved on to Portugal to provide the same service for the rectors of that Province and then on to Martu Codolar (Barcelona) for the rectors of the Valencia and Barcelona Provinces.

On 5 March he left to make the extraordinary visitation of the Vice-province of East Africa, including

the communities of Sudan, Kenya and Tanzania. The work kept him busy until 21 April.

At the beginning of May after returning from Africa he made a rapid journey to India to settle some details concerning the division of the Bangalore Province. For this purpose he had a meeting with the provincial councils of the two provinces concerned – a meeting at which the Regional Councillor, Fr Thomas Panakezham, was also present – and subsequently spent a few days in the new Province of Hyderabad (Andhra Pradesh) to see the various works and have meetings with the provincial council, the rectors and the parish priests.

The remainder of the month of May he spent in preparations for the coming session of the General Council, for the meeting with the European Provincials due to take place in June, and in attending to administrative matters.

The Councillor for Formation

In these months Fr Giuseppe Nicolussi visited the eight Provinces of Spain and Portugal, the two Provinces of Mexico, and that of Central America. In each Province he had a meeting with the provincial council and the members of the provincial formation commission, with the formation guides and teachers in

the salesian centres of study, and with the communities for initial formation.

He made contact also with the studentate at Benediktbeuern (Province of Munich) with its departments of pedagogy, philosophy and theology, with the studentates of theology of Turin-Crocetta and Messina (Sicilian Province), and with the studentate of pedagogy and philosophy at Nave in the Milan Province.

He emphasized the importance of interprovincial collaboration and linkage as he took part in the annual meeting of the Provincials and formation personnel of Brazil, who were studying the theme of the formation of the salesian brother. He did the same also at the meeting of the delegates for formation of the Iberian Region and at the meeting of the formation sector of the Italian provincial conference.

From 21 to 27 April he was involved in the congress on the *Theological and intellectual formation of the salesian priest*, organized jointly by the Formation Department and the UPS Faculty of Theology, which took place at the Salesianum sector of the Generalate. In this 42 conferences took part, presidents or those in charge of studies in communities of students of theology from all over the salesian world. The meeting provided an opportunity for a positive exchange of views concerning

different situations and experiences; it emphasized the formative importance of the intellectual preparation of the salesian priest in present-day circumstances, and hence the indispensable service provided by study centres and teachers; it also revealed the need for greater coordination at interprovincial and world level.

The Councillor for Youth Pastoral Work

Immediately after the Council's plenary session, the Generalate was the venue in January for a meeting on pastoral work for vocations, with the provincial delegates and coordinators of youth pastoral work of the provinces of Europe and Latin America.

The need was realized for the integration of vocational pastoral work in the general pastoral programming of the provinces and local communities.

From 13 to 20 January the Councillor organized a short course on salesian pastoral activity for 18 confreres of the Provinces of Prague and Bratislava. The purpose was the study of the various pastoral documents and also the making of practical contact with the significant realities of oratories, schools and parishes in Rome, and also with the UPS.

After a short visit to Santo Do-

mingo and Puerto Rico, Fr Van Looy went on to Haiti to prepare the confreres through a retreat and to preside at the erection of the new Vice-province separated from the Antilles Province. He was also able to see at first hand the situation of our communities and the country's difficulties.

There followed a brief stay in Rome and then the Councillor left for Asia. Between 15 and 28 February he first took part at Lonavla in a meeting of all the rectors and parish-priests of the Bombay Province on the theme of the oratory; he then preached a retreat to the rectors and parish-priests of the Calcutta Province in the Marian Centre at Bandel. Finally he concluded his stay in India by animating a 4-day study session on pastoral planning for the rectors and parish-priests of the Guwahati Province.

From 6 to 11 March he was in the Philippines, where he visited some houses in the new Province of Cebu. He presided at a joint meeting of the two provincial councils, held to define some points concerning the division of the two provinces of Manila and Cebu. He ended his visit to the Philippines with two days of study with all the rectors of the two Provinces on the pastoral community.

Back once again in Rome, he gathered together the Italian provincial delegates for youth pastoral

work at the Generalate on March 13, and from 20 to 22 March had a meeting with a representative European group for a reflection on professional schools. The idea is maturing for a more detailed coordination between the various salesian professional schools in Europe.

From 23 to 30 March Fr Van Looy made a rapid visit to all the salesian communities of Sardinia, discussing with each of them the local pastoral reality and the response they are giving to it.

The Councillor then went on to preach a retreat to the confreres of the North Belgian Province, with a second retreat in the month of May.

At Easter he was in Argentina for a meeting with the Provincials and delegates of seven provinces on vocational pastoral work. He then went to Mexico to spend a week of animation in both provinces (Mexico and Guadalajara). The new works of these provinces have a typically oratorian aspect, with a notable and competent collaboration by young volunteers.

In May, for the third time in two years, he met with the delegates and pastoral teams of the provinces of Central Europe (Prague, Bratislava, Budapest, Ljubljana and Zagreb). This time the venue was Hodonovice, at the novitiate of the Prague Province. The specific theme of the meeting was 'the oratory'. Immediately afterwards, from

20 to 23 May, he had a meeting at Brno on the theme of 'the salesian parish' with a group of 55 confreres working in parishes of the Prague Province.

Noteworthy too was the celebration of the Solemnity of Mary Help of Christians at Maria Puchheim with two thousand members of the Salesian Family of Austria. Present also at this event was Mother Graziella Curti of the FMA General Council.

The concluding item to this intense period of activity took place at the Generalate. It was an international congress for men and women religious on the theme "*the education to the faith of young workers*", organized jointly by the JOC Movement and our own Youth Pastoral Department, under the auspices of the Pontifical Council for the Laity.

The Councillor for the Salesian Family and for Social Communication

The Salesian Family

Fr Martinelli took part in various meetings concerning the Salesian Family or one or other of its constituent groups.

At world level there were three meetings of considerable interest:

- *The Week of Spirituality* for the Salesian Family. From 20-25 January, in line with what has by now become a tradition, representatives

of the different groups of the Family met at the Generalate to reflect on the Strenna of the Rector Major. The results were very positive, and have already been reported in the Acts of the Spirituality Week.

- *The first ordinary assembly* of the Don Bosco Past-pupils. Representatives of Provincial and National Federations from all the salesian world met at the Generalate from 29 April to 6 May with three main points on their agenda: the programming of the coming six years, the revision of some points in the Confederal Statute, and the election of the new Confederal Council. Some further information will be found elsewhere in this issue of the AGC.

- *The meeting of central representatives* of the various groups of the Salesian Family. Members of the respective General Councils met from 5 to 7 June at our Generalate to reflect on a document on the theme *Communion in the Salesian Family*. The meeting was rich in salesian characteristics because of the theme itself and the atmosphere it created among all the participants.

At national level Fr Martinelli took part in the following meetings:

- In ITALY the Provincial Delegates for the Cooperators and Past-pupils organized two days of reflection on common aspects of provin-

cial and national commitment, and on particular aspects concerning the individual groups. This meeting took place at the Sacred Heart, Rome, on 18 and 19 February 1992.

– In INDIA at Madras the First National Congress of the Don Bosco Past-pupils took place in the period 21-23 February, on the theme: *The Preventive System in a multi-religious context*. Numerous past-pupils took part. The National Congress was organized with a view to the Regional Congress due to take place at Macau next October.

– In ENGLAND at Ushaw on 21 and 22 March 1992, the Cooperators Council of Great Britain met with representatives of the various zones into which the Association is divided, to study particularly the formation of aspirant Cooperators and those beginning their commitment within the various Unions.

– In FRANCE at Lyons on 8-10 May, 150 Cooperators met in a National Congress to study more deeply the Cooperator's vocation from a particular standpoint: a positive approach to youth. The large number of participants and the addresses given by qualified speakers, salesian and non-salesian, helped to produce a meeting of great interest.

At *provincial* level the Councillor took part in the following events, to the extent that his other commitments permitted.

– 12 January 1992 at Mestre:

At a meeting of rectors of salesian communities help was given in their reflections on the General Council's document "Outlines for a Lay Project".

– 9 February 1992 at Leghorn:

The Province organized a day of spirituality, based on the Rector Major's Strenna: "Education to the faith and the social doctrine of the Church".

– 20 February to 10 March 1992:

While visiting Madras, Bangalore and Bombay in India, the Councillor took the opportunity to meet separately in the different provinces with the provincial councils of the FMA, the provincial councils of the Cooperators and those of the Past-pupils. He was also able to meet two young women who, we hope and pray, will be the beginning of the Don Bosco Volunteers in India, despite the many and deep-rooted difficulties that stand in the way.

At *local* level Fr Martinelli was able to meet at Oxford on 29 March 1992 with Cooperators from a former centre where the Salesians or FMA are no longer working, and at Salerno on 25 May with a group of past-pupils from a centre where there is a rich salesian presence.

Don Bosco's family is evidently numerous and has many possibilities for further development.

Social Communication

The Chronicle of the Councillor for Social Communication lists the following items:

1. *Reflection on the GC23.*

The few references in the Acts of the GC23 to the theme of Social Communication can offer new perspectives for the commitment of salesian communities working in education, evangelization and pastoral activities.

The Department has examined the essential ways for putting these into practice in the life of the provinces, indicating the results of the work in the Acts of the General Council.

2. *The organization of the Department of Social Communication.*

In line with the indications set out in the present six-year programme, the problem of the internal organization of the Department is an essential aspect of its future work, not only at its centre at the Generalate, but also in the various provinces.

The possibility of offering help and incentives, together with effective practical and technical guidelines, depends very much on the personnel working at the Generalate.

Following the normal practice of seeking personnel to assist in the various Departments, Fr Paul Cherut-

hottupuram has been brought in to run a specific Information Sector. We must thank the Calcutta Province for making him available, and the confrere himself for his willing collaboration.

3. *The information project in the Congregation.*

The drawing up of a salesian information project has taken up most of the Department's time. Collaboration with SunicSA, a French and Spanish based agency expert in communication projects, has required several meetings for explanation, research and elaboration. For this purpose the Councillor travelled to Madrid several times with Fr Garulo.

In addition two meetings were organized in Rome with the SunicSA experts: January 2-4 and February 5-7, so as to make contact possible with the members of the General Council and those working in the various Departments, and with others involved in modern means of communication. The project was presented in June to the General Council for approval and for its actual launching.

In due course an opportune description of the project will be given for the purpose of involving the provinces directly in its operation and development.

4. *Meetings in India.*

In the Province of Madras, in the

period 23-29 February, the Councillor met those responsible for the various products existing in this sector:

- the Salesian Bulletin in English for all the Indian Provinces;
- the Salesian Bulletin in Tamil;
- Intercom, the Provincial Newsletter;
- the SIGA Centre, the school of graphic arts, which supports the various publishing activities of the province.

Together these have possibilities for further development and of integration with other initiatives, even at national level.

In the Province of Bangalore, visited between 29 February and 5 March, there are many possibilities for the development of social communication. Present initiatives are linked with the various Centres with which the Province is endowed: the Theological Institute of Bangalore, affiliated to the UPS; the Catechetical Centre and the National Centre for Ongoing Formation (both of them in Bangalore), which form a basic nucleus for incentive also in the communications sector.

In the Province of Bombay are situated some of the most efficacious works for communicating knowledge of the salesian presence and spirit. One need think only of Don Bosco-Matunga and the activities linked with the names of Fr Mas-

chio, Fr Alessi, Fr Moja and so many others, as well as other smaller but effective initiatives.

Between 5 and 10 March Fr Martinelli was able to meet those responsible for:

- the service centre for youth pastoral work and catechesis. Bombay-Matunga has a small stock of audiovisual material and other simple and immediate aids which are available for pastoral workers and catechists;
- the audiovisual centre at Poona. The one in charge of the Youth Centre works efficaciously in the communications field, and prepares aid material for educators and teachers;
- the centre for salesian periodicals in Bombay; this works prevalently in the field of popular devotion, with various publications destined for the public at large.

There is an urgent need for a greater linkage between the many initiatives.

The Councillor for the Missions

In the period between January and May 1992 Fr Odorico's work was concentrated on the coordination of Project Africa, together with visits to various missions in Africa, Latin America and Asia, on meetings for missionary animation (espe-

cially in Europe), and in following up seminars and publications.

1. *Coordination of Project Africa.*

At the end of the winter session the Councillor had drawn up and presented to the General Council a global hypothesis for the geographic distribution of our works in Africa. He suggested eleven possible groupings with different proposals for coordination (informal, semi-autonomous, and juridically autonomous).

The resulting dossier was studied in the General Council and a copy was sent to all the Provincials involved in Project Africa. Their comments and suggestions are due to arrive by the end of June 1992.

At the end of December he completed visits to all our works in Zambia, and noted their growth, strength and variety. A consoling factor is the appearance of local vocations.

In April he made a detailed visit to our foundations in Madagascar which depend on five Italian Provincies. With all the confreres he made an evaluation not only of the rapid and diversified expansion of the work but also of prospects for the future organization of the salesian missions in Madagascar. Here too the appearance of local vocations is an encouraging factor.

Still in the context of Project Africa, the Councillor for the Missions, in dialogue with the Council-

lor for the Salesian Family, has announced the celebration of two large meetings of the Salesian Family, for the French-speaking zone to be organized in the Ivory Coast, and for the English-speaking zone in South Africa respectively.

2. *Latin America.*

In February Fr Odorico visited the missions of Chaco Paraguayo, accompanied by the Vicar Apostolic (Mgr Zacarias Ortiz Rolon SDB) and the Provincial, Fr Ascensio Zabala. He had meetings with the communities and missionaries, especially on the topics of evangelization and inculturation, and on the delicate problem of the proprietorship of land by native groups.

In Uruguay too he made a brief visit for missionary animation, especially in the houses of formation, and to get to know part of the Uruguayan Province.

3. *Asia.*

In March the Councillor visited the numerous missions of the Province of Calcutta, spending some time especially in the Delegation of Hindi-Belt. He noted the great increase in missionary activity in this Province, the Mother-Province of other Indian Provincies, the great efforts at evangelization, and the growth of native vocations.

In May and still in Asia he made a visit to the missions depending on

the Philippines, in Papua New Guinea and Indonesia-Jakarta. The missionary project of the Philippines has undergone considerable growth – there are now thirteen foundations, with an average of a dozen novices a year coming from the missionary territories.

In the Philippines too he gave some time to missionary animation, met with the provincial council, and presided at the installation of the first Provincial of the new Province of Cebu. He also made a two-day stay in Singapore to discuss with the local authorities the present state of affairs concerning the proposal for a salesian presence in that small country.

4. *Europe.*

In Europe in January Fr Odorico made a visit of missionary animation to the four provinces of Poland, passing especially through the houses of formation. He met with the four Provincials and with them studied the problems of the African Missionary Project (Zambia and Uganda) of the Polish provinces. He also took note with them of the new commitments that had been assumed by Poland in respect of the countries of the former Soviet Union.

He was also able to make a brief visit of missionary animation to Holland, concentrating especially on the Missions Office in that country. He made a further visit also to

the Missions Office at Bonn where he presided at a meeting with a restricted group of Salesians working among Lay Missionary Volunteers.

In Italy in mid-February he took part in a meeting at the Festival of Youth in the Venice Province on "Missions: the World View" at which young people from various countries of Eastern Europe were present.

In early May he was at Valencia in Spain for a celebration marking the tenth anniversary of the missionary project of Mali, in the context of the Provincial Community Day.

Finally, at the Salesian University in Rome he gave an open interview to the confreres of the UPS Vice-province on the programme and activities of his Department in the present six-year period.

5. *Publications.*

Continuing its series on missionary spirituality, the Department has published a sixth volume 'Spiritualité Missionnaire Salesienne', and a small catalogue of the 'Salesian Presences in Africa'.

On 2 June the Councillor returned to Rome for the plenary session of the General Council.

The Economist General

From 13 January to 4 May the

Economer General carried out the extraordinary visitation of the "San Zeno" Province of Verona. This occupied him full-time apart from an occasional brief return to Rome to deal with administrative matters, and a visit to Portugal on 2 February to take part in the festivities in honour of Don Bosco at Mirandela for the inauguration of the new Church.

The Councillor for the Atlantic Region of Latin America

Fr Carlos Techera dedicated the greater part of the first six months of 1992 to the extraordinary visitation of the San Pio X Province of Porto Alegre, Brazil. Before beginning the task he presided in January at a concelebration for the closing of a retreat at Montevideo at which various Don Bosco Volunteers made their perpetual profession.

Some days later, on the feast of St Francis de Sales, in the first house of the FMA in America at Villa Colon, Uruguay, he presided at a Eucharist at which several Sisters gave thanks to God and our Blessed Lady on the occasion of their golden and silver jubilees of profession. And on 31 January he shared the joy of five salesian novices who made their first profession on the Solemnity of St John Bosco.

In the following months, in the course of the Visitation of the Pro-

vince of Porto Alegre, Fr Techera was able to see and admire the work done by the Salesians in the three States of Southern Brazil: Parana, Santa Caterina and Rio Grande del Sul. This was evident from his meetings with the communities, with the rectors and parish-priests, with the economers and the members of the provincial council, and particularly from what the Bishops said as they thanked Don Bosco for all the Salesians were doing in their territory. In addition to these meetings the Councillor naturally met also the FMA, the Cooperators etc. as he visited the various communities or took part in celebrations.

The Regional also had meetings with the formation personnel and with the Brazil provincial conference at Manaus. Corresponding meetings took place also in the town of La Plata at the end of April. There he met with those in charge of pastoral work for vocations, which is given the highest priority in the Region. He met also the formation personnel, and had a special meeting with the members of the La Plata provincial conference; mention should also be made of a meeting with the 'Curatorium' of the interprovincial novitiate, and the combined Provincials of Argentina.

Fr Techera returned to Italy to spend 24 May at Turin to thank Mary Help of Christians for her as-

sistance and to ask for her continued help for the many intentions of the work of the previous months. He then returned to Rome for the plenary session of the Council.

The Councillor for the Pacific-Caribbean Region of Latin America.

In the five months he spent in the Pacific and Caribbean Region, Fr Guillermo Garcia was mainly occupied in carrying out two extraordinary visitations (MEG and COM) and a consultation for the new Provincial of Peru.

1. Extraordinary visitation of the Province of Mexico-Guadalajara

The urge towards modernization has driven Mexico, like other Latin-American countries and indeed countries throughout the world, into making important changes. In this country two of these are of particular significance: changes in the Constitution, and the Free Trade Treaty with the USA and Canada.

The Catholic Church has finally been recognized and given juridical standing. But the present-day situation still poses some serious challenges to the Church and the salesian mission. The Church, for instance, cannot allow the concessions she has received to lead to her domination by the civil power; she must retain the freedom to fulfil her proper

role and criticize, when necessary, society, the modern world and the power of the State, and to remain at the side of the workers, the peasants, and young people belonging to the needy classes.

The confreres of the Guadalajara Province are living through a period of charismatic consolidation, as is clearly seen in a gradual and encouraging growth in personnel and in the number of works. Efficacious responses are being made to the numerous and urgent needs of young people who are very poor. A great deal of ingenuity is shown in educational and pastoral planning, and programmes for street-children are functioning in the most important towns of the Province and of the territory adjoining the United States. The programmes are attractive from a pastoral point of view and adaptable to differing situations. Lay volunteers play a significant part in the animation of these programmes.

For several years the Province has been giving particular attention to the quality of formation, and now the fruits of this can be seen.

It must also be stated that this Province has been very generous with respect to the Missions, and to it has been entrusted the responsibility for Guinea-Conakry in Africa. It is quite certain that this generosity has brought down many blessings from heaven.

During the period of the Visitation of the Guadalajara Province, the Region celebrated one of the most important events of the last decades: the inauguration of the new Vice-province of Haiti on 31 January. Fr Luc Van Looy accompanied the Haitian confreres in their spiritual preparation for this event, and represented the Rector Major and General Council at the inauguration.

2. Consultation for the appointment of the new Provincial of Peru.

From 22 to 25 March Fr Garcia was at Lima. With the rectors he first made an assessment of what had been done to observe the priorities laid down by the Rector Major after the extraordinary visitation of last year; this served too to set in motion the consultation preceding the appointment of the new Provincial.

The Retreat preached to the rectors last October by the Rector Major himself, on the occasion of the centenary of the salesian presence in Peru, has been a strong stimulus and valid help to the Salesians of this country so greatly tormented and so strong in its struggle. Our confreres in the Peruvian Province are working with persevering dedication to the organization of hope, in line with the Rector Major's indications.

3. Extraordinary Visitation of the Province of Colombia-Medellin.

From 26 March to 26 May the Regional carried out the extraordinary visitation of the Province of Medellin.

Colombia has a new Political Constitution and is finding it hard to persevere along the difficult and tortuous road of peace. This is indeed a great challenge for the country!

This background enhances the splendour of the salesian work in Colombia, and highlights the joy and moral uprightness that can be found in Colombian youth! It would be difficult to find another place where there is to be found the strong living devotion to Mary Help of Christians that exists in Medellin. Her statue or picture can be found not only in individual dwellings, but on the open roads, in shops and workplaces. As was the case in Don Bosco's time, one can feel everywhere the presence of the Help of Christians, and especially so wherever there is a member of the Salesian Family. Barranquilla and Tulua are towns 100 per cent redolent of Mary Help of Christians!

There is no space in this brief chronicle to describe all the positive and original items the Visitor became aware of in the works of the Medellin Province, but some of the more striking ones deserve mention:

– The interprovincial meeting of Salesian Brothers. It was the first occasion in ten years that all the Brothers of Colombia had gathered together. More than 40 of them were present, with several young ones among them. Colombia wants to regain its characteristic of being one of the world's provinces with most Brothers, and there are great hopes that it will succeed!

– The Medellin Province has a significant number of works for the poor. Outstanding among these are those of *Condoto* in the Choco zone where the gold and platinum mines are situated; the *Ciudad Don Bosco* at Medellin, known throughout the world because of its care for street-boys and older lads; the *Centro Social Don Bosco* at Barranquilla, which offers its services to more than 3,000 boys and older youths in one of the most emarginated areas of the city; the *Diamante* Institute at Cali which prepares young men and women for the world of work. This latter Institute is situated in one of the most restless areas of a city which is the “capital of Colombian sport”, and which has more than 150,000 abandoned youngsters among its population. Popayan and Ibague are among other works that take care of the very poor.

– In the schools each morning is given over to the education in salesian style of young people of the middle classes. In the afternoons or

evenings the same education with the same characteristics is offered to those who are poor. The majority of these are employed persons who are at work during the day.

– As well as all this our schools are beginning to produce vocations!

Colombia is not only a very rich and beautiful country which produces coffee and flowers of the finest quality and is well known for its footballers, cyclists, etc., but it also has young people that other countries could well envy: they are generous, healthy, religious, cheerful and courageous. In Colombia Don Bosco has indeed become incarnate!

The Councillor for the English-speaking Region

After spending a few weeks in the Province of Lyons to brush up his French, Fr Martin McPake went on to the Province of Paris where, at the bidding of the Rector Major, he carried out the extraordinary visitation of the Province, taking the place of the Regional (Fr Dominic Britschu). The latter was heavily involved with the problems of the needy countries of Eastern Europe, which call for much time and attention because of the difficulties following in the wake of the collapse of the former Marxist regimes.

The visitation of the Paris province involved journeys in six coun-

tries: France and Switzerland in Europe, and four in Africa: Cameroon, Congo, Gabon and Morocco. The province has 230 confreres spread over 34 communities, and the Visitor was particularly struck by the large proportions of many of the works, held in high regard by the local people and greatly appreciated by the Bishops, as for example the Institut Lemonnier at Caen, the ESTIC at Saint-Dizier, the EAH of Pouille, and the professional school of Giel. At the same time he acquired a great admiration for the works in the Provincial Delegation of Central Africa (Cameroon, Congo and Gabon).

He could not fail to note the evident good spirit of the confreres, who despite the notable decrease in new vocations and the lack of youthful energy, continue to work with faith, intelligence and courage.

Outstanding among his memories of Central Africa are the days 23 and 24 May, when he was able to celebrate the feast of Mary Help of Christians with thousands of parishioners, and had the joy of baptizing 82 catechumens.

While thanking the Lord for the excellent lay people he has sent to our various communities to work alongside the confreres, the Visitor (who now feels a certain bond with the Paris Province) prays that this province may once again experience the grace of a growth in "good

labourers", so that the Lord may continue to be glorified through the sons of Don Bosco in a country which he held so dear.

The Regional Councillor for Asia

Fr Thomas Panakezham left Rome on 12 January, heading straight for Jakarta in Indonesia to begin the extraordinary visitation of the Provincial Delegation of the Philippines Province.

The following day he began the visitation at Jakarta at the temporary residence of the post-novices from Timor – their new house has since become ready for occupation. Three days later he went on with the Delegate (Fr Jose Carbonell) to Timor-Timur to visit the eight foundations in that area. Timor-Timur is rather disturbed from a political and social point of view, though the Visitor had no problems in carrying out his visit. On 31 January in fact he was able to celebrate a concluding Eucharist for all the Salesian Family at Dili, the capital of East Timor.

The Indonesian Delegation has 53 confreres and 11 novices. It has experienced a development in its works and an increase in young personnel. The mission is flourishing, with the confreres generous and self-sacrificing and very much attached to Don Bosco.

On 5 February Fr Panakezham

passed through Calcutta on his way to Dimapur to preside at a meeting of the Indian Provincials, which went on for three days (6-8 February). At this meeting the Provincials approved amongst other things the Statutes of the *All India Don Bosco Education Board*, the details for the organization of the national congress of Brothers, etc.

On 10 February the Regional began the extraordinary visitation of the Province of St Francis de Sales, Dimapur, which continued until 23 April. During this period (4 March) Bishop Mathai Kochuparampil died, and the Regional was present at his funeral.

This too is a province disturbed by political factors. There is a group that wants to be separated from the Indian Union and causes no small problems to our missionaries, from whom it tries to extort money. Recently they shot twice at one of our confreres. Fortunately his wounds were not fatal; but the member concerned had to be changed to another house, lest worse things should befall him. The confreres are very self-sacrificing and hard-working; they are zealous missionaries and lead a very frugal life.

After finishing the visitation of Dimapur, the Regional moved on to the neighbouring Province of Guwahati on 24 April. After a brief visit to the novitiate and studentate of theology at Shillong, he went two

days later to Agartala in the State of Tripura, the scene of the first missionary work.

From 30 April to 4 May Fr Panakezham was at Bangalore to take part, with Fr Juan Vecchi, in a meeting of the Provincials and provincial councils of Bangalore and Hyderabad to settle details about the division of the Bangalore Province. During this visit he was able to see for himself the very positive work being done by the "Don Bosco Yuva Prachodini" Centre for Ongoing Formation for the confreres of Asia, and particularly of India.

On 5 May the Councillor reached Hong Kong, where he stayed for a short time with the elderly confreres and the formation community at Shauiwan before having a meeting with the Provincial Council.

Two days later he began the extraordinary visitation of the Vice-province of Korea, a circumscription in full development. The number of Salesians and of foundations are both on the rise. Today, in fact, there are 66 confreres and 7 novices. It is a young and enthusiastic Vice-province with the family spirit reigning in its communities.

With the Korean visitation behind him, Fr Panakezham made contact with the Province of Japan where, with the Provincial, he visited some of the communities which have building projects in progress. He celebrated the feast of Mary Help of

Christians on 24 May at the Provincial House of the FMA at Akabe, with the pupils, parents, supporters and other members of the Salesian Family. After a final meeting at Chofu with the formation community there he returned to Rome.

The Regional Councillor for Central and Northern Europe and for Central Africa

Austrian, Belgian, German and Slovenian, French and Moravian confreres who read this chronicle will be well aware of the omissions of the Regional in their regard; personal meetings held during the first part of this year, are not mentioned here, even though some were important and decisive.

A choice has been made instead of some of the events considered significant for the life of the Region: among these were:

- the intensive course in ongoing formation held at Rome in January, in which the two Provincials of Prague and Slovakia took part, together with their provincial councils and provincial secretaries;
- in March, the visit of the Regional to the formation communities of Central Africa, despite a series of obstacles caused by the tragic events which so disturbed the social and economic life of Zaire;
- on his return to Europe, Fr Britschu broke a journey from Brussels to Rome at Strasbourg, to investigate

the possibilities for contact and collaboration with the various European Organisms;

– the month of April he dedicated to the Hungarian confreres, with whom he celebrated their provincial chapter, the first after 45 years of oppression and dispersion. The meaning of terms used half a century ago were brought up to date – a whole sitting was given over to the name “Salesian of Don Bosco”, not easily expressed in Hungarian; in the course of a lively discussion, concepts and commitments were developed which involve the Salesians in the problems of the Hungarian Church;

– from 29 April to 3 May there was a meeting of the Interprovincial Conference of German-speaking Provinces, with 11 Provincials taking part. As well as those of the “German” Provinces, also present were those of Holland, Belgium, Hungary, Croatia and Slovenia, who had gathered to prepare for the meeting of European Provincials (Rome, 12-15 June);

The calendar of this first part of the year ended with the extraordinary visitation in May of the Province of Zagreb. From various points of view this was indeed an “extraordinary” visitation, because it was carried out in a climate of war which still has in its grip the confreres of Slavonia, the Dalmatian coast, Bosnia and Herzegovina

- 55 per cent of our Croatian confreres come from the areas of Sarajevo, Mostar and southern Bosnia.

Our confreres look to the Congregation, and in particular to our Region, for concrete gestures of fraternal solidarity and of communion in hope.

The Regional Councillor for Spain and Portugal

In the period January – May 1992, Fr Antonio Rodriguez Tallón was engaged mainly in the extraordinary visitation of the two Provinces of Barcelona and Valencia.

On 11 January, immediately after the plenary session of the General Council he took part at Madrid in a meeting of the provincial delegates for Formation, at which the Councillor General for Formation (Fr Giuseppe Nicolussi) was also present.

Immediately afterwards, on 13 January, he had a meeting with the provincial council of Valencia and began the visitation of that Province, beginning with the house of Zaragoza, and passing through the sanctuary of the “Vergine del Pilar”. The feast of Don Bosco he celebrated at the centre of professional formation at Alcoy.

From 17 February to 7 March the Regional was in Africa to visit the communities in the Republic of Mali (where there are three communities that depend on the Pro-

vince of Valencia), and in the Ivory Coast (where there are a further three communities, depending this time on the Province of Barcelona).

On 14 March he accompanied the Rector Major at the concluding Eucharist of the Retreat preached by Fr Viganò to the local superiors of the FMA of Spain, on the occasion of the celebration of the golden jubilee of the three FMA Provinces of that country.

Immediately afterwards (March 16-17) Fr Rodriguez presided at a meeting of the Iberian Provincial Conference at which was present also Fr Giuseppe Nicolussi who was visiting a number of formation communities in Spain and Portugal.

The visitation of Valencia continued until 28 March, when a final meeting was held with the rectors of the province, after a meeting on the previous evening with the provincial council.

On 29 March, a meeting with the provincial council of Barcelona launched the visitation of that Province. During the visitation, on 8-9 May, the Regional accompanied the Rector Major to Andorra, where the silver jubilee of the arrival of the Salesians was being celebrated. He stayed on afterwards to carry out the visitation of the same house.

The feast of Mary Help of Christians he spent at the house of Ciudadela (Menorca in the Balearic Islands), where there is great devo-

tion to the Help of Christians who is the Patroness of the town; this is the site of the first sanctuary to Mary Help of Christians set up in Spain in 1913; it predated the arrival of the Salesians.

The visitation of Barcelona came to an end on 29 May, with a meeting with the provincial council, and with a meeting of the rectors on the following day.

After a brief stay at Madrid on 31 May, to fulfil various engagements, the Regional returned to Rome on 1 June, for the plenary session of the General Council.

The Councillor for Italy and the Middle East

The main task of the Regional during the first part of the year was the visitation in the name of the Rector Major of the Adriatic and Milan Provinces. The first one began last October and was completed in January and February. The second occupied the period from 17 February to the end of May.

At the beginning of the year, as has now become the normal practice, Fr Fedrigotti met with the Presidency of the Italian Provincial Conference and also took part in a joint dialogue with the latter and the corresponding Provincial Conference of the FMA. The former approved a "working plan" for a re-drawing of the boundaries of the Italian provinces, to be presented to

the General Council. The second meeting discussed, corrected and adopted 'ad experimentum' the "Educative Project for Schools and Professional Formation of the SDBs and FMAs in Italy."

On the same occasion the two conferences also approved the pastoral plan for 1993-1994: "Social and political formation, based on conscience", and sanctioned the production of a common periodical for the animation of the Salesian Youth Movement.

On 10 February the Regional was at Mestre to take part in a meeting of the Provincial Council of the San Marco Province to carry out a discernment regarding a possible presence in Russia – should it be at St Petersburg or Moscow? Barring unforeseen difficulties, Moscow seemed to offer the best possibilities.

On 20 March at Arese Fr Fedrigotti attended a special meeting to celebrate ten years of exchange between the CNOS and Germany. On 2 April, the 150th anniversary of the birth of St Dominic Savio, he accompanied 2,000 pupils from the Middle Schools of the Milan Province to Colle Don Bosco where, together with the Provincial (Fr Arnaldo Scaglione), he presided at the solemn Eucharist at the Basilica of Don Bosco.

From 5 to 13 April, together with the Provincials of Italy and the Middle East, he took part in the retreat (organized in the Holy Land for the sixth year running) preached by Fr John

Vernet, and made memorable by the wonderful reception provided by the confreres and the FMA working in that blessed but tormented land.

At Caravaggio on 25 April the Regional was present with the Provincial at the Salesian Family Day of the province, and presided at the solemn concelebration.

He presided too at meetings of the Italian Provincial Conference and of its presidency, held at the Generalate from 11 to 13 May. These meetings were dedicated to the deeper study (with the provincial economists taking part) of juridical matters concerning finance, such as: economy, poverty and initial formation; economy and group activity; economy and institutional matters; the use of basements and other free space in our houses; the financial management of the Italian Provincial Conference.

On 1 June, after finishing the visitation of the Milan Province, Fr Fedrigotti returned to Rome for the session of the General Council.

The Rector Major's Delegate for Poland

In the month of January, Fr Augustyn Dziedziel, accompanied the Postulator General, Fr Luigi Fiora, who went to Poland for the inauguration at Warsaw of the process for canonization of Cardinal Augusto Hlond, and subsequently attended

with Fr Fiora the funeral of the father of Fr Mieczysław Kaczmarzyk at Leszno; subsequently he also accompanied Fr Luciano Odorico, Councillor General for the Missions, in his visit of animation to Poland.

He then set in motion the consultations needed for the appointment of new Provincials for the Provinces of Breslau and Pila. In the latter province he made the extraordinary visitation during which he also met groups of the Salesian Family and other groups collaborating in our works. During the visitation he was able to make in addition a rapid visit to the confreres and FMA in Lithuania for animation purposes.

He presided at the function for the inauguration of the Provincial Chapter at Cracow, and twice gathered the Provincials together to take stock of affairs at national level and draw up programmes for the future.

On 30 May he was present at the episcopal ordination of Mgr Adam Smigielski, the former Provincial of Breslau, who had been named Bishop of the new Polish Diocese of Sosnowiek.

Immediately after this, and before returning to Rome, he made a brief journey to Leopoli in the Ukraine to meet the confreres and make contact with the sixteen Ukrainian postulants who are preparing for the next stage of their formation in Italy.

5. DOCUMENTS AND NEWS ITEMS

5.1 Meeting of European Provincials

The first meeting of the Salesian Provincials of Europe took place at the Generalate, Rome, from 13 to 15 June. All 40 European Provincials were present, together with the Provincial of the Middle East, the Superior of the UPS Vice-province, and the Rector Major with his Council who had organized the initiative in response to a request that had emerged during the GC23, and in line with the European Bishops Synod.

The meeting was the starting point of a procedure which, by decision of the participants, will be an ongoing process. Its essential objectives were: to examine what common action could be taken after acquiring a knowledge of the different contexts; to plan means of collaboration and practical linkages in well defined areas of work; to agree on criteria for coordination of activities by sectors; and to take note of desires and expectations, of proposals and points of view useful for drawing up a common future plan.

For the attainment of these objectives the meeting was arranged in

four phases, coordinated and animated by the Vicar General, Fr Juan Vecchi. In each phase there was a concise presentation of the respective themes, followed by ample time for group discussion before a reporting back to the full assembly for the making of decisions.

The *first phase* was introduced by the Rector Major who referred to the Bishops Synod and to the fundamental points from his circular of March '92 (AGC 340); he indicated the many areas for consideration and possible commitment which call on the Salesians of Europe for a response to the challenges of the 'new evangelization'.

Enlightened by the great ecclesial guidelines and the tasks of our mission, the Provincials exchanged information and experiences on the European situation and on what is being done by the Salesians; in particular they singled out the challenges posed to our activities as animators and educators in Europe. After emphasizing the *change of mentality*, which calls for continual new responses on our part, some of the greater challenges were identified: that of a complex and fragmented

culture in great need of the recovery of its profound christian roots, which prompts us to draw up faith proposals capable of winning acceptance; the challenge (which goes right to the heart of our particular charism) to visualize and construct "educational journeys or processes" capable of leading, through the myriad paths of youth interests, to contact with the Lord, mankind's Redeemer; and the challenge to recognize the old and new kinds of youth poverty with all their wretched consequences, and to develop efficacious responses.

The *second phase* consisted of an exploration of two areas, among many possibilities, in which it is possible to bring about communication and collaboration between the European Provinces: "seeds" of initiatives already begun in various fields were gathered, with the purpose of planning their development and discovering other possibilities in the years ahead. The two areas concerned were the following:

In the field of youth pastoral work the aspect chosen was one in which a shared process could be tried out at European level: that of *committed young people*. Discussion in the groups and the assembly, followed by a presentation by Fr Luc Van Looy, made evident the great strength represented by such young people for the salesian mis-

sion and the service they render, despite certain difficulties of a formational and vocational kind.

Concrete proposals were made for the formation of such youngsters and their possible linkage and coordination, especially through the groups of the Salesian Youth Movement and adequate structures for exchanges between them. In this connection there emerged the importance of the places associated with salesian beginnings as a charismatic point of reference for young people, and the desire to make of such places a welcoming centre for experiences of salesian youth spirituality.

The other area chosen for deeper reflection was that of the *laity*. Prompted by considerations put forward by Fr Antonio Martinelli, the groups (and then the assembly) formed interesting conclusions as regards both growth in the understanding at local and provincial level of the presence of lay people as collaborators and sharers of responsibility with salesian communities, and in the plans for communication and linkage at interprovincial and European level. Specific attention was given to groups and associations, particularly those of the Salesian Family (Cooperators, Past-pupils, the Association of Mary Help of Christians).

The *third phase* of the meeting

involved a more direct assessment of resources in personnel: the *formation and qualification of Salesians* for the purpose of meeting the challenges and tasks to be carried out in Europe. The appraisal was introduced by a reflection on the part of Fr Giuseppe Nicolussi, and found a convergence of views on some points in harmony with the indications of the GC23 concerning ongoing formation, with special reference to: the person of the Salesian, the community, and specific salesian characteristics. Various common initiatives and forms of coordination were listed for the different stages of formation.

The *fourth phase* was that of expressing the conclusions: impressions, suggestions and concrete indications were assembled together for a process of communication and collaboration.

The entire meeting was characterized by the lively involvement of all the participants, and by the family atmosphere which is ours, and which led to a closer sharing in the sufferings of many of our confreres who (especially in some particular countries) are still living through days of war and violence. As was emphasized more than once, the meeting was a Congregation experience, not limited to Europe but open and alert to the whole reality of the salesian world in a climate of communion and service.

5.2 Appointment of President of Don Bosco Past-Pupils

The following is the decree of appointment of the Confederal President of the Past-Pupils of Don Bosco, who was proclaimed by the Rector Major at the conclusion of the meeting held at Rome from 29 April to 6 May 1992 (cf. Chronicle of the Councillor for the Salesian Family.)

Prot. N. 92/1100

APPOINTMENT OF THE CONFEDERAL PRESIDENT OF THE PAST PUPILS OF DON BOSCO

The undersigned
Fr EGIDIO VIGANÒ

Rector Major of the Salesian Society of
St John Bosco,

in accordance with art.33a of the Statute
of the World Confederation of the Past-
Pupils of Don Bosco

- promulgated on 31 January 1990 -
having noted the names proposed by the
Confederal Presidency

- elected in the ordinary Assembly of
May 1992 -

by virtue of the faculty given him by the
same Statute

A P P O I N T S DOCTOR ANTONIO GUILHERMINO PIRES CONFEDERAL PRESIDENT OF THE PAST-PUPILS OF DON BOSCO

for the six-year period 1992-1998
with all the powers inherent in his
office

from 4 May 1992.

While offering my heartfelt thanks to the members elected to the Confederal Presidency for their generous collaboration, I wish them and their President the greatest success in an ever more fruitful development of the mission of the Don Bosco Past Pupils in the world in the spirit of Don Bosco.

Rome, 4 May 1992.

Fr Egidio Viganò
Rector Major of the Salesian Society
of St John Bosco

Fr Francesco Maraccani
Secretary General

5.3 Appointment of Director of the Central Salesian Archives

The Rector Major, after consulting the General Council, has appointed the new Director of the Salesian Central Archives. He made the announcement on 11 June 1992, on the occasion of the blessing and inauguration of the recently restructured Archives premises. The following is the decree of appointment.

Prot. N. 92/1339

THE RECTOR MAJOR OF THE SOCIETY OF SAINT FRANCIS DE SALES

– in accordance with the Regulations of the Central Salesian Archi-

ves, promulgated on 24 May 1985 (AGC 314, p. 54 ff.), and
– after hearing the opinion of the General Council and the Secretary General, according to the same Regulations (art.6,I);

a p p o i n t s

Fr. Mieczysław KACZMARZYK
Director of the Central Salesian Archives

with all the powers and duties indicated in the above-mentioned Regulations (cf. art. 6-7)

I wish the new Director fruitful work in the service of the Salesian Society, with the Lord's blessing.

Rome, 11 June 1992.

Fr Egidio Viganò
Rector Major

Fr Francesco Maraccani
Secretary General

5.4 New Salesian Bishop

Mgr. Adam SMIGIELSKI, Bishop of Sosnowiec (Poland)

On 25 March 1992 the news was published that the Holy Father had appointed Fr Adam Smigielski SDB to be Bishop of the new Diocese of Sosnowiec.

Adam Smigielski was born at Przemyśl, Poland, on 25 December 1933. After study of the humanities and the year of novitiate at Kopiec,

he made his first vows in the Salesian Society on 2 September 1952. Subsequently, after the usual course of formation, he was ordained priest at Lublin on 30 June 1957. He then followed courses in Scripture at the Catholic University of Lublin and continued them at the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome, where he obtained the Doctorate in Sacred Scripture.

Returning to his own country he became a teacher in the theological studentate of Cracow, and in 1975 also its Rector. At the same time he

was appointed a provincial councillor and in 1984 took part in the GC22 as a delegate. In 1982 he was he was appointed Rector of the house of St Hyacinth in Auschwitz, and in 1986 was called to lead the Province of Breslau as its Provincial. Now, at the end of his mandate as Provincial, he has been ordained a Bishop (30 May '92) at Sosnowiec, with the heavy task of leading a new Polish diocese, erected to provide in a better manner for the pastoral care of the faithful.

5.5 Our dead confreres (1992 – 2nd 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 ALDEGHERI Luigi	Marzana (VR)	23-04-92	62	IVO
P BALLESTRIN Vittorio	Castelfranco Veneto	20-03-92	90	IVE
P BAERNFEIND Friedrich	Neulengbach	13-03-92	82	AUS
P BAZALA Josef	Bratislava	22-03-92	70	CEB
P BELLO MARCO Heliodoro	Barcelona	26-03-92	51	SBA
L BOTTERO Carlo	Torino	17-05-92	82	ICE
P BRAGANZA Thomas	Bombay	08-04-92	60	INB
P BRISSIO Cristobal José	Córdoba	07-03-92	83	ACO
L BRIZGYS Jorge	Rosario	23-05-92	77	ARO
L BRÖRING Gerhard	Helenenberg	27-05-92	85	GEK
P BURKARD Georg	Ebermannstadt	29-04-92	83	GEM
P CAGNONI Pietro	Sesto S. Giovanni	08-05-92	81	ILE
L CAMPORINI Angelo	Cremisan	08-05-92	91	MOR
P CESOLINI Adalberto	Roma	05-05-92	83	IRO
P CHACON CASTELLANO Antonio	Querétaro	08-06-92	60	MEM
P CHIARELLI Tercilio	Bagé	19-05-92	78	BPA
L CINGOLANI Mario	Roma	05-04-92	80	UPS
P COPPO Candido Luigi	Chertsey	22-05-92	83	GBR
L DANZER Johannes	Ensdorf	11-04-92	79	GEM
L DEMESMAY Jean	Toulon	20-05-92	73	FLY
P DOBROVODSKY Francisco	Puerto Lleras	01-03-92	78	COB
P DRGON Pavol	Senohrad	21-01-92	80	CEB
P FAHNER Friedrich	Forchheim	25-03-92	82	GEM
P FEDE Calogero	Catania	16-04-92	66	ISI
L FERIA CAMACHO Rafael	Morelia	24-05-92	64	MEM
P FERNANDEZ CONDE Luis	Granada	15-04-92	54	SCO
P FERNANDEZ Rinaldo	Río Tercero	11-05-92	58	ACO
P FIEDLER Josef	Hausen-Langquaid	29-05-92	60	GEM
L FRANZ Massimo	Gorizia	12-06-92	82	IVE
P GARBERO Pietro	Manila	14-04-92	90	FIL
P GEROSA Pietro	Ananindeua	22-02-92	63	BMA
P GIOVINE Giuseppe	Pietrasanta	25-04-92	77	MOR
P GIRAUDO Costanzo	Cairo	21-06-92	79	MOR
P GIROLIMETTO Mario	Roma	09-04-92	86	IRO
P GURSKI Heinrich	Helenenberg	04-04-92	90	GEK
P HLAVACEK Josef	Ostrava	12-04-92	69	CEP
P HODCHAMPS Marcel	Saint-Georges-sur-Meuse	18-05-92	81	BES

NAME	PLACE	DATE	AGE	PROV.
P JEHL Louis	Montpellier	08-03-92	78	FLY
P KAVANAGH John	Bootle	06-06-92	66	GBR
P KETCHEDJIAN Rafael	Montevideo	13-05-92	61	URU
P KUBIN Josef	Praga	22-03-92	79	CEP
P LUCCHINI Pietro	Arese	29-05-92	84	ILE
L LUQUE CASTRO Antonio	Sanlúcar La Mayor	14-04-92	67	SSE
P MAREK Cyril	Linz	28-02-92	78	AUS
P MARTINELLI Eduardo	Bahía Blanca	13-03-92	77	ABB
L MORA Guido	Manaus	25-04-92	81	BMA
P MORAN GONZALEZ Celso	Salamanca	09-04-92	75	SMA
P MORLIN Marino	Juan Díaz (Panama)	20-04-92	79	CAM
P MOSTOWIK Józef	Wrocław	12-06-92	56	PLO
P MOTTA Fausto	Paterson	03-06-92	68	SUE
P MURARO Osorio Caetano	Porto Alegre	03-05-92	69	BPA
L MUTTI Umberto	Darfo	25-04-92	80	ILE
P NOVELLO Teodolindo	Belém	03-06-92	68	BMA
P PANEK Józef	Sroda Slaska	03-04-92	66	PLO
P PAWLACZYK Stefan	Szczecin-Zdunowo	29-05-92	73	PLN
L PELLITTERI Giuseppe	Torino	28-05-92	71	ISU
P PENNOCK Piet	Rijswijk	21-04-92	74	OLA
L PRESTON John Edward	Daleside	07-05-92	84	AFM
P QUARANTA Pierangelo	Manila	12-04-92	75	FIL
P RABOLINI William	Napoli	25-06-92	62	IME
P RADOSOVSKI Anton	Nitra	05-06-92	70	CEB
P RICHER Pierre	Beaupréau	24-05-92	75	FPA
P RUSSO Enrico	Randazzo	02-04-92	56	ISI
P SANCHEZ Rafael	Los Angeles	02-05-92	72	SUO
P SANTOS Ernesto	Los Palos-Timor	04-06-92	44	FIS
P SCHMITT Heriberto	Itajaí	05-05-92	76	BPA
P SCHROH Enrique	Córdoba	02-05-92	80	ACO
P SCIURI Khalil	Nazareth	12-04-92	85	MOR
P SILVA Eleazar Antonio	Caracas	07-05-92	39	VEN
P SIMÕES Ismael	São Paulo	13-06-92	78	BSP
L SPÄH Hermann	Köln	26-04-92	85	GEK
P TOGNINO Josef	Berlin	09-04-92	78	GEK
L ULLA Blas	General Pico	14-03-92	71	ALP
P VALENTE Bruno	Negrar (VR)	07-04-92	80	IVO
L VAN DER LINDEN Norbert	Boortmeerbeek	26-04-92	83	AFC
P VANSTEENKISTE Jacques	Remouchamps	12-03-92	65	BES
P VETTORE Armando	Beitgemal	11-06-92	77	MOR
L VITTURI Luciano	Vercelli	04-05-92	60	INE
L von KIELPINSKY-MANTEUFFEL Siegfried	Ensdorf	09-04-92	52	GEM
P ZAGARIA Savino	Castellammare di Stabia	04-06-92	86	IME
P ŽAK Jan	Oświęcim	27-06-92	56	PLS









