



acts

of the general council

year LXXIV july-september 1993

N. 345

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

**Roma
Direzione Generale
Opere Don Bosco**



acts

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

OFFICIAL ORGAN OF ANIMATION AND COMMUNICATION FOR THE SALESIAN CONGREGATION

N. 345

Year LXXIV

july-september 1993

| | | |
|---|---|----|
| 1. LETTER OF THE RECTOR MAJOR | 1.1 Fr Egidio VIGANÒ And Mary laid him in a manger | 3 |
| 2. GUIDELINES AND POLICIES | 2.1 Fr Luc VAN LOOY The journeying mentality | 51 |
| | 2.2 Fr Omero PARON Render an account! | 58 |
| 3. RULINGS AND DIRECTIVES | None in this issue | |
| 4. ACTIVITIES OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL | 4.1 Chronicle of the Rector Major | 62 |
| | 4.2 Activities of the Councillors | 63 |
| 5. DOCUMENTS AND NEWS ITEMS | 5.1 Canonical erection of the Institute of So- cial Communication Sciences at the UPS | 85 |
| | 5.2 New Salesian Bishop | 86 |
| | 5.3 Deceased confreres | 87 |

Editrice S.D.B.
Edizione extra commerciale
Direzione Generale Opere Don Bosco
Via della Pisana, 1111
Casella Postale 9092
00163 Roma Aurelio

ESSE GIESSE Scuola Grafica Salesiana - Via Umbertide, 11 Roma - Tel. 78.27.819
Finito di stampare: Luglio 1993

1. LETTER OF THE RECTOR MAJOR

AND MARY LAID HIM IN A MANGER

- Introduction. - At the core of salesian "*significance*". - Light from the Word of God. - The humble frontiers of Christ's Kingdom. - The radical nature of self-donation in profession. - Don Bosco's poverty. - Three Rector Major interventions. - The evangelical project of our Rule of Life. - Suggestions for a "*scrutinium paupertatis*". - Conclusion: the beatitude of the poor in Mary.

Rome, Solemnity of Mary Help of Christians,
24 May 1993

My dear confreres,

You may be surprised at the title of this letter. I am certainly not asking you to think of Christmas in the month of July; my intention is rather to take up with you again the theme of "poverty": it can help us to review our renewal with greater courage. When you come to think of it, this is a topic intimately linked with the obligation of educating young people to the faith as required by our General Chapter. It may be that the confreres who asked me to deal with this theme had in mind an exhortation to stir up our consciences against certain abuses, without realizing how dense the topic could be, and the spiritual richness it contains.

We are living in the midst of a world which loves wellbeing, and pursues it through ever more pressing and attractive ways of life, and there is a

very real danger that these will find their way into our own houses, gradually developing a bourgeois mentality.

Without denying the possibility of a harmful influence of this kind, the reason that prompts me to speak to you about poverty is centred on a meditation in depth on the mystery of Christ, his Gospel and his Kingdom, and on the particular gospel option of Don Bosco. Before going into ascetical considerations, let us seek enlightenment by a reflection that will awaken in us sincerity and enthusiasm.

We may think of poverty as a "generating theme" of our particular character. In fact, "we are called to a life closely modelled on the Gospel. We choose to follow 'the Saviour who was born in poverty, lived deprived of everything and died stripped on the cross'." This quotation from art. 72 of the Constitutions is from Don Bosco in his Introduction to the Rule.¹

I think that a reflection of this kind may stimulate us to renew our testimony of life and action and to understand more realistically the oratorian criterion² which is for us the true parameter for discernment and renewal in every place and activity.

This will also help us to make a specific preparation for the great days on the consecrated life that will be the Synod of '94. For that matter the Church's magisterium has frequently insisted in the years following the Council in putting forward the theme of poverty.³

¹ 1875; cf. Const. 1984, Eng.edn. p. 231

² C 40

³ Some of the more significant documents of the magisterium are the following:

Lumen gentium, especially n. 44;

Perfectae caritatis, nn.

2, 5, and esp. 13;

Ecclesiae sanctae, II,

nn. 23, 24;

Evangelica testificatio,

nn. 16-22;

Evangelii nuntiandi, n.

69;

Redemptionis donum,

nn 4, 5, 6, 9-10, 12;

Religious profession

and human develop-

ment, n. 4;

Code of Canon Law,

can. 600, 640;

Essential elements of

the teaching of the

Church on religious life,

cf. III, n. 20;

Directives on forma-

tion in Religious Institu-

tes, n. 14;

etc.

At the core of salesian "significance".

From the time of Vatican II we have been looking for overall ways for directing the process of renewal. We can list some of them: like "redimensioning",⁴ "insertion among the socially poor", the "ongoing formation" of individuals, the "planning" of community activity, etc. Finally we have reached the all-embracing criterion of "*significance*" (Italian "*significatività*") which includes various aspects,⁵ among them those we have already cited, in an organic and more comprehensive form. The poverty of which we are about to speak is situated at the very heart of this organic significance of our life and work.

Evidently we need to understand what the term "poverty" means for us; its connotation is multiple and tends to fluctuate. As currently used it expresses a sociological idea; in fact it is customary to use it to indicate an aspect of want, especially of a financial kind; and in this sense it is certainly relative: it differs from one region to another and from one century to another. Nowadays too there is reference to "new kinds of poverty" to indicate forms of want that do not refer only to economic aspects, e.g. refugees, immigrants, drug-addicts, etc. It could be said that poverty is linked with human life in various ways; as well as material aspects it also has others of a psychological, moral, social and cultural kind. But in any case there is primarily the economic division between rich and poor which has greatly increased and reveals the inadequacy of certain economical and commercial structures divorced from moral principles. The consumer mentality fosters individual and collective selfishness.

⁴ GC19

⁵ cf. AGC 340, pp. 35 ff.

One feels the urgency of committing oneself to bringing about a new world order.

Without any doubt all this has a practical importance that goes beyond an ascetic witness for a social impact; it is rather a "sign of the times" which calls for the relaunching of the prophecy of evangelical poverty; today the Church feels herself strongly committed to this task and carries it out constantly, not least through her social doctrine.

But how are we to reflect on evangelical poverty? If the meaning in which we are interested is no more than temporal want, we would not be justified in presenting poverty as an element at the heart of our significance.

Already during the 3rd session of Vatican II, in the discussion on the scheme on "The Church in the modern world" (which eventually became the Constitution *Gaudium et spes*, our Cardinal Raúl Silva H., who at the time was president of Caritas Internationalis, had insisted on the great difference between "evangelical poverty" (a fruit of grace) and "social and economic poverty" (a consequence of sin): the first, an outstanding value to be fostered; the second, a disorder to be fought against through a process of social commitment animated precisely by the christian dynamism of evangelical poverty.

The Latin-American Bishops too, concerned in their General Assembly at Puebla to offer a pastoral criterion for liberation from the unbearable social discrimination, insisted on the specific significance of "christian poverty"⁶ as the animating element of an integral liberation in Christ. "In today's world", they wrote, "this poverty presents a challenge to materialism, and it opens the way for alternative solutions to a consumer society";⁷ all christians

⁶ cf. Puebla: nn.1141-1152

⁷ Puebla, 1152

should know that "evangelical poverty combines the attitude of trusting confidence in God with a plain, sober and austere life that dispels the temptation to greed and haughty pride" or, in other words, to the idolatry of riches.⁸

⁸ *ibid.* 1149

Poverty in its evangelical sense not only has a deeply spiritual value for the person of Christ's disciple, but is also a social projection for the evangelization of the present complex and difficult economic and political field; it implies nothing less than a specific vision of the world so as to illumine with the light of the Gospel social projects for change.

This is why we say that it is situated in the very heart of salesian 'significance' which is the overall criterion of our renewal. Pope Paul VI wrote that: the evangelical witness of the religious life clearly manifests to men the primacy of the love of God; it does this with a force for which we must give thanks to the Holy Spirit".⁹

⁹ ET 1

This is an endorsement of what had already been said by the Council about the significance of the religious life within the sacramental nature of the Church: "All the members of the Church should unflaggingly fulfil the duties of their christian calling. The profession of the evangelical counsels shines before them as a *sign which can and should effectively inspire them* to do so. For the People of God has here no lasting city but seeks the city which is to come, and the religious states of life, in bestowing greater freedom from the cares of earthly existence on those who follow it, simultaneously *reveals more clearly* to all believers the heavenly goods which are already present in this age, *witnessing to the new and eternal life* which we have acquired through the redemptive work of Christ *and prelude* our future resurrection and the glory of the heavenly kingdom".¹⁰

¹⁰ LG 44

Light from the Word of God.

We must not, therefore, allow ourselves to be led astray by the many senses of the term "poverty". There has been a certain rhetoric in this connection which we must avoid so as to not fall into commonly used ways which are more sociological than evangelical. We know that earthly goods belong to the order of means and not ends; they are an expression of the love of the Creator for man: "God destined the earth and all it contains for all men and all peoples so that all created things would be shared fairly by all mankind under the guidance of justice tempered by charity".¹¹ All goods, even those forming part of private property, have in themselves a social dimension which evangelical criteria must be able to bring out. Today the christian perspective of poverty acquires its practical meaning especially in the face of social data and its effective approach to the poor, especially those suffering economic oppression; this requires a revision also of the roles played by structures.

¹¹ GS 69

Unfortunately human selfishness has introduced into the lives of peoples and nations a dramatic inequality, which becomes evident in so many examples of injustice and distress. And so it becomes indispensable to read again and study more deeply what is stated by the Word of God.

In Scripture the theme is a vast one, and is both rich and complex; to make here an adequate summary of it is neither possible nor desirable. It will be sufficient for us to recall the basic framework: God is on the side of those who are poor and in need of help. Man in his condition of need is the measure of the authenticity of christian love; the poor constitute a privileged condition for shaping

the option of believers: "as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me", says the Lord.¹² As we consider this picture, we can highlight two very clear aspects which shed light on our meditation about possessions and the use of earthly goods: one a warning and the other a beatitude.

— *The WARNING*: the Word of God laments the destruction of human solidarity through greed for riches. Let us pick out some brief but telling indications.

Psalm 48 declares: "In his riches man lacks wisdom; he is like the beasts that are destroyed"! He who sets his heart on riches no longer understands the sense of total and exclusive entrustment to God; and so he becomes ever more entrapped in the service of idols.

In the Gospel the rich get a hammering: "it will be hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven";¹³ "woe to you that are rich, for you have received your consolation";¹⁴ "he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty".¹⁵

Severe judgements are expressed which make us think: the tiny contribution of the widow compared with the offerings of the wealthy;¹⁶ the vocational call to follow Jesus addressed to the young man who rejected it because he was very rich;¹⁷ the episode of the precious ointment poured over Jesus' feet at Bethany, and the exclamation of Judas: "Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor!"¹⁸ — one author has pertinently remarked: "What would the Church be now if Judas' purse had been full for the poor and the house at Bethany empty of perfume?".

¹² Mt 25,40

¹³ Mt 19,23

¹⁴ Lk 6,24

¹⁵ Lk 1,53

¹⁶ cf. Mk 12,42

¹⁷ cf. Mt 19,22

¹⁸ cf. Jn 12,1ff

The Apostles well understood the message of Jesus: of St John we may recall the words: "If anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?";¹⁹ St James' statement: "The flower falls and its beauty perishes. So will the rich man fade away in the midst of his pursuits";²⁰ and St Paul's famous hymn of charity: "If I give away all I have, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing".²¹

¹⁹ 1 Jn 3,17

²⁰ Jas 1,11

²¹ 1 Cor 13,3

In the Acts of the Apostles there is also the dramatic episode of Ananias and Sapphira, which may give cause to Religious to reflect on their free choice to put all their goods in common.²²

²² cf. Rev ch.5

We know that in the Scriptures earthly goods are considered a wonderful gift of God; it would be a mistake to look down on them. We cannot prescind from their use as means for living and doing good to others, and it is a blessing to know how to use them well. The *warning* is directed against the selfishness that amasses riches and in so doing hardens the heart and obscures the intelligence: riches tend to shut out God from the mind. What Jesus condemns in the rich is the petty selfishness and lack of solidarity, but he does not discriminate on the basis of class distinction. One need only think of his relationships with tax-collectors, with Zachaeus, with Joseph of Arimathea, with Nicodemus, etc. His teaching is that each one should decide carefully where to place his treasure, for where his treasure is there will his heart be also.²³ And so both rich and poor, according to the Gospel, are judged in the last analysis by their attitude of heart. A brilliant author wrote: "Rich or poor, look at yourselves rather in the mirror of poverty; because there you will see reflected your deepest

²³ cf. Lk 12,34

²⁴ BERNANOS, *Diary of a country curate*, p. 71

disappointment; for here below poverty still keeps its place in the Paradise we have lost".²⁴

— *The BEATITUDE*: the Word of God acclaims those who, while not having or seeking after riches, cultivate in their hearts the greater values of piety, solidarity, life-commitment, and self-donation for the service of others.

Jesus begins the Sermon on the Mount by saying: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven".²⁵ He links their condition of poverty to the coming of the kingdom within them, and hence with something grandiose which will be entirely for them. The consideration of the kingdom of God and Christ is therefore a decisive factor for the correct interpretation of the beatitude of the poor.

And this kingdom, says the Holy Father, "is not a concept, a doctrine, or a programme subject to free interpretation, but is before all else a person with the face and name of Jesus of Nazareth, the image of the invisible God".²⁶

At the present day you sometimes hear the kingdom spoken of as though it were in some way opposed to the Church, with reductive concepts of an anthropological kind which tend to present it in practice as "something completely human and secularized; what counts are programmes and struggles for a liberation which is social and economic, political and even cultural, but within a horizon that is closed to the transcendent".²⁷

The Gospel teaches us, certainly, that the socially poor are God's favourites: this is the great theological presupposition underlying the Incarnation. God privileges the concrete situation of poverty beyond moral preoccupations or virtuous merits: he chose this situation in which to become

²⁵ Mt 5,3

²⁶ Red. Miss. 18

²⁷ *ibid.* 17

man; when he was born his Mother “laid him in a manger”;²⁸ and from this so humble situation he dedicated himself to the salvation of the world by evangelizing the poor.

²⁸ Lk 2,7

The reign of God therefore has come and is growing among the poor; no one who wishes to have part in it can fail to be interested in the poor and learn like them to receive Christ.

But we need to probe the matter more deeply still; the kingdom is born and grows among the poor, but is not simply identified with those who are socially poor; among those same poor is also present unfortunately sin, which is constitutionally opposed to God's kingdom. This kingdom has its fullness in the poor Christ and from there spreads in opposition to evil, the evil of each one and the evil of all.

Jesus Christ is not only the prophet of the kingdom but is also its fullness. In him and through the work of his Church the kingdom expands throughout the world. With the communication of the Gospel, the kingdom of Christ grows – that kingdom which at the end of time will be handed over to the Father as the definitive kingdom of God.

The Beatitudes are not only “Jesus’ Manifesto”; they must be considered as a kind of “autobiography”; for a correct understanding of the beatitudes one must look at Christ. In this way the poor-Jesus appears not only as the first and fertile field where was sown and from which springs forth the love of God, but also the model of that deep attachment of the poor heart with which is received the Gospel of the kingdom and through which it grows.

In brief, the Beatitude of the poor is clearly understood when referred to Jesus Christ. It is in

him that we receive fully the illumination of the Word of God, in him we understand what, in fact, the kingdom is that fills the longings of the evangelically poor.

The humble frontiers of Christ's Kingdom.

The frontiers of the kingdom are situated in the territory of the poor, and from there they extend to all. The Council has reminded us that "the world cannot be transfigured and offered to God without the spirit of the beatitudes".²⁹

²⁹ LG 31

The Beatitude of poverty is the leaven for every truly human society and is called to overturn a materialist economic order. It belongs intrinsically to the christian option of every baptized person and is at the foundation of all the transforming energy of humanity. It is not therefore a secondary aspect that can be left aside: the Lord's poor are protagonists in the expansion of the kingdom. Christ has poured into their hearts an abundance of love which brings about in them the growth not of a simple concern for renunciation, but especially the love of solidarity and a vision of faith in the total significance of the world, of society and of economic goods, stimulating a concrete social dimension of overall charity.

To be evangelically poor, to go to those who are socially poor for the purpose of taking the Gospel to them, to direct the attention and solidarity of all to these who are the last because most in need, to proclaim the mystery of Christ as a sure and efficacious source of genuine social renewal – all this is to defend the image of God as impressed in every human being and to combat materialism – in its various expressions of indifference to the dignity of

the individual – so that history may be guided by charity and not by selfishness and hate; it is to invite everyone to collaborate in the building of the “civilization of love”, overcoming the narrow-mindedness of those who have possessions, and the methods of violence.

This is an immensely difficult task, begun by Christ and left as a legacy to his Church. Recall the first time Jesus preached in the synagogue of his own native place: opening the scroll of the prophet Isaiah, he read and commented on the passage: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor”.³⁰

³⁰ Lk 4,18

It is not that God blesses distress and inequality of a social and economic kind; these things remain an evil and a scandal. But a careful consideration, for example, of the parable of Lazarus explains the danger that follows from riches: the possessor who finds in himself the foundation of his security can find no place for God and for his neighbour. It is an indisputable fact that Jesus demands from those most committed to the building of his kingdom their renunciation of the goods of this world. Simon Peter and Andrew, when they were called by the Lord, “immediately left their nets and followed him”; James and John “left their Father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and followed him”;³¹ “as he passed on Jesus saw Levi, the son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax office, and he said to him ‘Follow me’. And he rose and followed him”;³² and, finally, “whoever of you does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple”.³³

³¹ Mk 1,16-20

³² Mk 2, 14

³³ Lk 14,33

We may recall the profound reflection of John Paul II: “Poverty actually enters into the interior structure of the redemptive grace of Jesus Christ. (...) Evangelical poverty reveals to the eyes of the

human soul the perspectives of the whole mystery hidden for ages in God. The poverty of Christ conceals in itself the infinite richness of God; it is indeed an infallible expression of it. A richness, in fact, such as the Divinity itself, could not have been adequately expressed in any created good. It can be expressed only in poverty. Therefore it can be properly understood only by the poor, the poor in spirit. Christ, the God-man, is the first of these: he who 'though he was rich became poor' is not only the teacher but also the spokesman and guarantor of that salvific poverty which corresponds to the infinite richness of God and to the inexhaustible power of his grace".³⁴

³⁴ Red. Don. 12

And so, when Jesus asks for this saving poverty in the apostles as builders of the kingdom, he does not invite them simply to imitate a particular exterior kind of life, but he prepares them to participate in the mystery of the Incarnation in a manner after his own, or in other words to foster constantly in their hearts his own sentiments as bearer of the kingdom. The hearts of his more committed disciples and collaborators must be realistically detached from all that is not God; they must remain "free", like his own, from so many terrestrial bonds. You cannot serve both God and mammon.³⁵

³⁵ cf. Lk 16,13

³⁶ cf. 1 Jn 4,8-16

³⁷ cf. 1 Jn 3,14

If God's very nature is love³⁶ and if Jesus has brought this love to man so that he may pass from death to life,³⁷ it is immediately clear why Jesus proclaimed the beatitude of poverty; he wanted to emphasize the joy of being evangelically poor so as to have in one's heart the love which prompts one to give one's life for one's brethren.³⁸ Cutting the many ties of greed for riches is a saving operation which frees the heart of the Lord's disciples and renders it open and generous for solidarity with others.

³⁸ cf. 1 Jn 3,16

The frontiers of Christ's kingdom are humble, but they enclose within them the energy of salvation. Within these frontiers one can be poor in different ways, but always with the Lord. This is a thought to which attentive consideration must be given after the relaunching of the vocation and mission of the Laity in the Church.

We must not forget that Christ is also the author of creation, of earthly goods, of the family and of society. When he became incarnate he did not come to change the laws inherent in human nature and in creation; he chose as a fundamental service for the liberation of man from sin the path of the Servant of Yahweh for the redemption. His is a historic vocation which is not an alternative to various human commitments (marriage, economy, politics, culture, etc.), but is the light of their truth and the energy for what is good in them. Certainly there is sadly also active in the world, and in dramatic fashion, the mystery of evil; but the latter, rather than disqualifying commitment in the temporal order, demands it with particular intensity in harmony with the indispensable redemptive mission of Christ. Just as, for example, his virginity does not prevent the lay faithful from marrying, but guides them to live their family life in charity; in an analogous manner his poverty does not avert the lay faithful from commitments of the temporal order but helps them in the purification and right ordering of the economic, political and cultural world.

It should be noted in particular that the historic context in which we are living at the present day is built from social and economic aspects on options that are false, that have caused a great deal of injustice and are at present increasing the economic distance between North and South which is an offence to human dignity.

This situation is a strong challenge to christians who should be able to proclaim with priority the prophetic dimension of evangelical poverty, or in other words bring to a focus for everyone the Beatitude of poverty centred, as we have seen, on the kingdom of Christ and of God.

The horizons of this kingdom urge us to overcome the ponderous immanence of materialism and so foster a moral and cultural transformation which can shift the present order.

The evangelizing mission of the Church must be directed in a form suited also to those who belong socially to the "non-poor", if we are serious about the birth of a new order. And so there arises as an urgent challenge and as a specific objective the ability to exert a christian influence on the "non-poor" (e.g. on Northern society, and also on many cities of the South). Hence the pastoral option for the Beatitude of the poor becomes, in fact, not a matter of class-struggle against the "rich", but an urgent requirement for the evangelization also of the "non-poor", guided by the kingdom aspect.

Now in reflecting on the *particular kind of poverty that is proper to us as consecrated persons* we must be able to discern its specific nature in the following of Christ and its function as a sign and stimulus for all – in every country in line with the local prevailing conditions –, ³⁹ and then be able to harmonize it, as an evangelical light and concrete christian stimulus for the young people we are educating to the faith, so that they may be in the world as generous leaders precisely in the lay vocation.

Hence we have seen that one can be poor according to the Gospel in different ways; our specific choice of the *radical religious option* must appear in the Church as an authentic sign of Christ, and be

³⁹ LG 44

a bearer to all (poor and non-poor alike) of the message of the Beatitudes.

The radical nature of self-donation in profession.

Among the disciples of Christ, some commit themselves to follow him in a radical manner. In this way we see that religious consecration implies a particular witness of poverty.

It is worth recalling at this point that the three evangelical counsels professed by vow do not constitute three parallel paths running alongside each other; rather are they three complementary and concrete aspects of a single gift of oneself to God, of a single following of Christ to bear witness to his mystery, and of a single commitment to the building of his kingdom. Certainly each of the counsels has its proper significance and its specific content, but nevertheless it is "together" that they testify to the *sequela Christi*. There is a permanent and mutual interchange between them, so that the profoundly radical nature of each will be found to include the other two in a vital way. To profess the three evangelical counsels means giving oneself to God fully and radically, as though by a single global vow, a single "yes", expressed under a triple evangelical aspect which embraces one's whole person and all one's life.

The salesian practice of the evangelical counsels is centred on the obedience of Jesus as the Son sent for the mission of the kingdom; this obedience in the mission gives a special touch to the radical aspect of poverty and chastity. But because of the mutual inter-relationship of the three, both poverty and chastity bring a particular slant to obedience,

and indeed to the entire mission to be fulfilled and the community dimension of life.

In a particular way poverty renders us keen and anxious to follow the option made by God himself to be poor and to evangelize the poor, it frees the heart from attachment to earthly goods so as to fill it with love and proclaim to the world a prophetic paradox unknown to the rich; this explains in what consists the originality of Christ's kingdom: "I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears my voice!"⁴⁰ This is the great paradox of the Gospel; all worldly kingdoms are built in another way, with many riches and violence; that of Christ takes its rise from the poor, and will finally crush all the others: we may recall the famous huge statue of the dream of Nebuchadnezzar reduced to rubble by a stone detached from the mountain without either conspiracy or plotting by powerful conquerors.⁴¹

If we look at consecrated life from the standpoint of poverty, we are compelled to be very concrete in our obedience to God, and to give a daily historical dimension to the kind of life lived by individuals and communities: this so as to give competence to our work, to choose those to whom we shall direct it, and to give life to the mission to be realized through a most genuine application of our identity. If we have inherited from our Founder an "experience of the Holy Spirit" linked in so many ways with poverty, it means that an examination of conscience on our manner of living the evangelical witness of poverty will help us to improve the whole process of renewal and deepen the criterion of "significance" with which to guide it.

According to different places and groups, pres-

⁴⁰ Jn 18,37

⁴¹ cf. Dan ch 2

ent-day society is or tends to be a consumer society; wellbeing is in general one of the principal aspirations of citizens. This is a mentality that pays homage to certain idols which oust the true God and intensify everywhere to some extent a conquering materialistic mentality. It would indeed be harmful if consecrated persons were to offer to the young and to people in general any counter-witness to the possession and use of temporal goods.

Paul VI reminded us explicitly that people of today challenge Religious on this point with particular insistence: "In a civilization and a world marked by a prodigious movement of almost indefinite material growth, what witness would be offered by a religious who let himself be carried away by an uncurbed seeking for his own ease, and who considered it normal to allow himself without discernment or restraint everything that is offered him? At a time when there is an increased danger for many of being enticed by the alluring security of possessions, knowledge and power, the call of God places you at the pinnacle of the christian conscience. You are to remind men that their true and complete progress consists in responding to their calling 'to share as sons in the life of the living God, the Father of all men'." ⁴²

⁴² ET 19

The salesian consecration places us in this environment of radical followers of Christ, and at the same time urges us to be very practical in bearing witness to it; it will be nourished less by reason than by the model of the Founder, and by his options.

Don Bosco's poverty

"The Lord has given us Don Bosco as father and teacher. We study and imitate him, admiring in him a splendid blending of nature and grace".⁴³ The Holy Spirit wove the tissue of his life out of real poverty, embraced with evangelical awareness, treasured for its holiness and surpassing in its dynamism in view of a special apostolate for the benefit of the poor.

His was a testimony both clear and original. To begin with let us recall the moving words said to him by Mamma Margaret before he entered the seminary: "Remember this: I was born poor, I have lived poor, and I want to die poor. What is more, I want to make this very clear to you: if you decide to become a secular priest and should unfortunately become rich, I will never pay you a single visit! Remember that well!"⁴⁴

The historical circumstances of his childhood at the Becchi, followed by the years of his youth at Chieri, left their mark on him and led him to understand that the Lord was guiding him explicitly towards a vocational choice directed wholly to the poor for the animation and defence of their christian faith. In fact the style of his apostolic activity was immediately in the direction of needy youth, and his poverty was of a kind always accompanied by an extraordinary trust in Providence for finding, through a thousand and one initiatives, the means necessary for their education. An enterprising poverty therefore, accompanied by tireless work and aiming even at grandiose projects, but always faithful to the Beatitude of the Gospel. When the Marchioness of Barolo offered him a situation that would have ensured him his means of liveli-

⁴³ C 21

⁴⁴ BM 1, 221

hood but would also have taken him away from his poor boys, he decisively refused it: "God has always helped me, and he will help me also in the future".⁴⁵

It must be said that his style of apostolic poverty differed from that witnessed to by various saints or in other religious institutes: "He lived his poverty in detachment of heart and generous service of others; his manner was marked by austerity, hard work and much initiative".⁴⁶

Evangelical poverty can be manifested, as we have said, in different ways. That of Don Bosco was an evangelical poverty of an active and creative kind, linked with work and a spirit of initiative. He used every means, and was not above humbling himself at times, to find the wherewithal needed for his plans for development (recall the content of his countless letters and the boldness of his enterprises), and he considered organizing ability a good thing. In some activities he wanted to be in the vanguard of progress; he was convinced that for the education of poor youngsters and to defend the faith of the ordinary people he needed to obtain and use adequate and efficient means. Pope Leo XIII himself, even though Don Bosco was advanced in years and not without both ailments and debts, called him to entrust him with the construction of the Basilica of the Sacred Heart at Castro Pretorio in Rome, precisely because he saw and valued in him his enterprising kind of poverty.

Justly Don Rua wrote of him: "Our venerated Father lived in a poor manner to the end of his life and had an intrepid love for voluntary poverty. He was glad when on occasion he had to do without even necessary things. His detachment from earthly things was evident in the fact that although

⁴⁵ *Memoirs of Oratory*,
Eng.edtn., p. 251

⁴⁶ C 73

such huge sums of money passed through his hands, he never showed the least desire to procure any temporal satisfaction for himself. He used to say: you must have poverty in your heart if you want to practise it. And God greatly rewarded him for his poverty and trust, for he was able to undertake works before which even princes would have quailed, and to bring them to a successful conclusion".⁴⁷

⁴⁷ RUA: Letter circolare, Turin 1965, p. 435

In founding the Congregation Don Bosco wanted this kind of poverty to be preserved and practised by his followers. An industrious poverty, without disdain for temporal goods but rather with intelligent initiative in using them for the service of the poor and never for the acquiring of ease and tranquility. He, the Founder, from a humble and needy background, brought up in times which for many people were marked by straitened circumstances of both a financial and cultural kind, wanted a Congregation that would itself be of a popular kind, with members dedicated to work, experts in sacrifice and renunciation, open with greatness of heart to courageous apostolic and missionary initiatives, witnesses to a dynamic poverty, and rooted in a complete trust in the intervention of Providence.

It was an evangelical poverty of a somewhat original kind but authentic and demanding nevertheless, even though in a different form from that of St Joseph Cottolengo, for example.

Let us listen to some wise words of our Father, spoken in an ordinary conversation about why we should be poor: "Poverty is our asset! It is God's blessing. And we should ask the Lord to keep us in voluntary poverty. Did not our Lord begin his life in a manger? The wealthy seek leisure, which in

turn generates a comfortable life of idleness. The spirit of sacrifice then vanishes. Read church history and you will find countless instances when wealth proved the ruination of entire religious communities. They suffered the saddest misfortunes when they failed to abide by their original poverty. On the contrary those who kept themselves poor flourished wonderfully. The poor man leans on God and has recourse to him; and I assure you that on his part God always provides all one needs, whether little or great. Do not be afraid! Whatever we need for ourselves or our boys will never be wanting".⁴⁸ We may also recall his insistence on the motto "work and temperance", so strategically placed on the mantle of the personage in the famous dream of the ten diamonds.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ BM 6, 177

⁴⁹ cf. ASC 300

Especially should we meditate on what Don Bosco has left us in his spiritual testament: "Our Congregation must always glory in its vow of poverty. Divine Providence has prepared a happy future for it and its glory will endure as long as the rules are faithfully observed. When the desire for ease and comfort grows up among us, our pious Society will have run its course. The world will always welcome us as long as our concern is for under-developed peoples, for poor children, for those members of society most in danger. This is our real wealth which no one will envy and no one will take from us".⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Const. and Reg. p. 269;
cf. MB 17 272

Don Bosco's poverty is not only a clear personal trait, but is also a deliberate choice for his mission: a concrete project left as a spiritual legacy to his Congregation.

Three Rector Major interventions.

The Salesian Society has grown rapidly through the years, with a particular intensity at certain historic moments, and with some delicate problems of renewal in the period following Vatican II. We can single out three such moments:

- a first occasion, at the beginning of the present century with Don Rua;

- a second, following the first world war, when first Don Rinaldi and then Don Ricaldone was Rector Major; both of them witnessed an extraordinary explosion of growth;

- and finally, the situation following the Council, with Don Ricceri at the helm in the difficult and uneasy period of the beginnings of the renewal process.

It may be of interest to note that at each of these strategic moments, as we may call them, the Successors of Don Bosco intervened in a concerned and profound form on the subject of poverty, precisely to ensure the preservation of the Congregation's identity during its process of evolution.

With Don Rua the number of confreres rose from 773 to 4,372, with houses rising from 57 to 345, in countries which increased in number from 10 to 29. With Don Ricaldone, continuing the thrust that started during the rectorate of Don Rinaldi, the confreres increased from 8,954 to 16,364, and the houses from 646 to 1,071. With Don Ricceri there began the laborious process of the entry of the Congregation into the orbit of Vatican II, while still to some extent under stress from the 1968 difficulties. All three, as I say, wrote an important circular letter on poverty, which they considered a vital theme for ensuring in practice a linkage with

our origins.

Don Rua, the first Successor of Don Bosco (1888-1910) concluded his circular in symbolic fashion on 31 January 1907, 19 years after the Founder's death: on the anniversary of the "great loss" he thought that "the memorable date would give his words a particular efficacy, and that they could celebrate the anniversary of the death of Don Bosco in no better way than by renewing the vigour of his spirit and the promise to imitate his virtues".⁵¹ Don Rua was convinced that his exhortation would prove to be "of particular importance because of the topic it dealt with". This was in fact confirmed in his next circular which said that many confreres "had not been satisfied with hearing the letter read in public, and had expressed the desire to have a personal copy, so that they could read it again and meditate on it at leisure. And I have hastened to have it reprinted and copies sent to every house."⁵²

⁵¹ RUA, loc.cit. p. 430

Don Ricaldone, the fourth Successor of Don Bosco (1932-1951), set about the task of producing a series of salesian readings. Sometimes his circulars took the form of a commentary on the year's Strenna, and so it was in 1936 with the Strenna on poverty. Once again in symbolic fashion, he finished the lengthy work in the humble house of the Becchi, "the true temple of salesian poverty" and the fruitful source of the great tree of the Congregation. That little house had always been a place of pilgrimage for very many confreres, and rightly it could be called "the salesian Bethlehem". It is a place for meditation and deep emotion: "kissing those poor walls, each one felt himself bound to the Father by ties of greater love, and all went away with the purpose of becoming more worthy of him.

⁵² RUA, loc.cit. p. 449

⁵³ RICALDONE, *I voti*,
LDC 1952, vol 1, p. 202

Now more than ever before we are convinced that only by following him in his poverty shall we be able to attain the heights of his greatness, and gather in the copious fruits of his apostolate".⁵³

The little house is a symbol that can lead us to think in some way of the "manger" of Bethlehem. Don Ricaldone dealt with the theme at length, in its evangelical and spiritual aspects on the one hand, and in its practical and ascetical applications on the other; his reflections throw much practical light on our vow of poverty.

Don Ricceri, sixth Successor of Don Bosco (1965-1977), wrote his circular letter "Our Poverty Today" soon after the closing of the Council, at the beginning of the great work of renewal; he wrote it in point of fact in 1968, the year which saw so much contestation and challenge. It was a question at that time of putting into effect the guidelines of Vatican II. We are, he wrote, "volunteers of poverty"; "poverty makes us free"; "the Congregation was born in poverty, it has grown with poverty, it was founded for the poor"; "outright atheism is born in wealthy countries"; evangelical poverty carries with it "the disavowal of the primacy of economic considerations and the ability to possess temporal goods for satisfying the human heart". Fr Ricceri makes strong references to salesian work, to the missionary spirit, and to the sense of brotherly solidarity. He then goes on to practical considerations and concrete examples, warning us not to be carried away by rhetoric on poverty, when it is not matched by living witness: "Let me say with fraternal frankness: today the virus of comfort is entering in many ways into our communities; life is becoming worldly, and unconvincing excuses are being sought to justify this; and this too

even on the part of those who should be on their guard, intervening or preventing such things. Meanwhile the evil spreads like an oil-stain, the religious level is lowered, worldliness makes great strides and with it the love of ease and comfort that leads on to practical laicism". And he accompanies the circular with a scheme for a "scrutinium paupertatis" to prompt a careful examination of conscience on the practice of the vow.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ cf. ASC 253, pp. 3-56

Fr Ricceri's exhortations were examined more deeply and assessed in the work of the historic Special General Chapter of 1971, with a valuable document in three chapters which gave sound modern guidelines to the process of renewal together with some very practical suggestions.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ cf. SGC, nn. 577-623

These few remarks should induce all confreres to read over again these so meaningful documents that form part of the spiritual heritage of the life of the Congregation.

I think it also a duty to add here some special reflections on the *letter of Don Rua*: it could be considered his masterpiece; it was republished by Fr Ziggiotti in 1957, as an act of homage on the 50th anniversary of its original publication. It manifests a solemn promise to Don Bosco to preserve intact the spirit of the origins. His responsibility as Don Bosco's successor was a cause of great anxiety to Don Rua. "To tell you the truth", he wrote from an open heart, "I made our good Father a solemn promise. Seeing myself obliged to accept his legacy and put myself at the head of the Congregation, the greatest of his works, and the one that cost him so much in fatigue and sacrifice, I promised that I would spare no effort to preserve to the best of my ability his teachings and the most minute traditions of his family".⁵⁶

⁵⁶ RUA, loc.cit. p. 431

The reflection on poverty came to be for him the yardstick for the measurement of fidelity. He had practised it for many a long year, ever since he had decided to stay with Don Bosco; he called them "heroic times" and said that extraordinary virtue was needed to remain faithful and "to resist the pressing temptations to abandon it, because of the extreme poverty in which they were living".⁵⁷ Don Rua recognized that "the practice of poverty involves big sacrifices, as we have many times found for ourselves. It is not surprising therefore if poverty is always the most important and at the same time the most delicate point with regard to religious life; it is not surprising if it becomes the touchstone for distinguishing a flourishing community from a lax one, a zealous religious from a negligent one. It will unfortunately be the stumbling block against which so many magnificent intentions will come to grief, so many vocations which promised so well in their origin and development will be shipwrecked".⁵⁸

⁵⁷ RUA, loc.cit. p. 445

⁵⁸ RUA, loc.cit. p. 432

To provide a solid foundation for his reflections, in addition to the Gospels Don Rua had recourse to some authoritative witnesses to the faith. With *St Bernard* he recalls that "the Son of God, not finding in heaven the poverty that is so abundant on earth (where however it is not esteemed), desired it so much that coming down from heaven he wanted to embrace it himself to teach us how precious it is in his sight".

He reminds us of *St Francis of Assisi* and *St Ignatius of Loyola*; he offers for our meditation the profound words of *St Thomas Aquinas* that "the first essential for reaching the perfection of charity is voluntary poverty, by which one lives without possessing anything of one's own".

He gives us the example of our own St Francis de Sales, who "although he was a bishop and as such had to maintain a certain exterior decorum, nevertheless had a holy terror of riches", and observed that "not only are the poor evangelized, but the poor themselves are evangelizers".

He recalls that *St Ambrose* "calls poverty the mother and nurse of virtue"; and that *St Vincent Ferrer*, speaking of the efficacy of the apostolate, declares that a religious who does not put earthly things underfoot does not practise true poverty because, being put off by the slightest inconvenience, he does not have the strength to put up with the privations that poverty brings with it in the exercise of the apostolate".

And finally, with *St Alphonsus Liguori* he criticizes the religious who, after making his profession, becomes attached to little things; they "will be like so many stones in his shoes: is it surprising that he cannot walk on the way of perfection?"

He then goes on to insist on concrete aspects of the practice of poverty, and makes it a matter of conscience for each one, and especially for Provincials and Rectors. It could be said that this letter of Don Rua, at a distance of almost a century, preserves all its force and freshness. Still relevant also is his mild fatherly outburst: "Salesians who want to lead an easy life will certainly not be the ones to undertake truly fruitful works, those who go among the natives of Mato Grosso or Terra del Fuego, or who put themselves at the service of poor lepers. This will always be the merit of those who observe poverty with generosity".⁵⁹

⁵⁹ RUA, loc.cit. p. 438

The evangelical project of our Rule of Life.

At the present day, sensitivity in favour of the poor has become one of the "signs of the times" which challenges the mission of the Church and sparks off the processes of social reform. To prescind from this sensitivity would be to cut oneself off from the future. It constitutes a special modern criterion which belongs inseparably to the new evangelization and is very beneficial for the renewal of religious life, because it helps to revise styles of common life and to give greater thrust to apostolic commitments.

Nevertheless we cannot close our eyes to the fact that in this connection there are some distorted views which could have a negative influence on the identity of the salesian mission; and so it will be useful to see them against a careful reading of our Rule of life. In the latter we find our sensitivity in respect of the poor as a constituent element of the significance of our manner of life and work, within an overall organic balance of all the values inherent in our identity. The Rule is not a collection of abstract dissertations, but the description of a lived evangelical experience.

The first point to emphasize is that the Rule concentrates our attention on Don Bosco as a "model".⁶⁰ It is true of course that times have changed and that today social sensitivity is much more developed than it was in the last century, but nevertheless attachments, basic choices and criteria, remain always those of the Valdocco Oratory;⁶¹ like Don Bosco, so we at the present day contemplate and imitate the faith of Mary, her humble life and concern for the poor:⁶² an educative option in their favour, with a particular motherly zeal.

⁶⁰ cf. C 21

⁶¹ cf. C 40

⁶² cf. C 92

Our Rule assures us that the nature and mission of our Congregation hark back to the apostolic project of the Founder,⁶³ with a courageous and varied educative commitment for the benefit of poor youth and poor people in general.⁶⁴ This commitment of ours is placed in the very heart of the Church⁶⁵ which today asks all the faithful to intensify a practical preferential love for those most in need. On the other hand this is a modern aspect which renders us "deeply united with the world and its history".⁶⁶

⁶³ cf. C 2

⁶⁴ cf. C 24, 33, 41

⁶⁵ cf. C 6

⁶⁶ cf. C 7

The situation of the people varies from one continent to another. In the developed countries, in addition to the need for the evangelization of the "non-poor", new and alarming kinds of poverty are appearing. In the countries of Eastern Europe there is a special situation calling for a new evangelization and an urgent need for the rebirth and the restructuring of Religious Life itself.

In the so-called "third world" the condition of social injustice has become worse, and is challenging our mission in practical ways, especially on the part of young people. There is no space here to develop the multiple requirements of each of the different situations; what we are concerned about at the moment is to point to a more committed reading of our Rule of Life.

We profess a specific form of the Religious Life as we follow the poor Christ,⁶⁷ in which the practice of the evangelical counsels is clearly lived in the spirit of the Beatitudes,⁶⁸ witnessed to as a sign of the power of the resurrection.⁶⁹ This particular aspect is developed in the Constitutions, especially in the articles from 72 to 79; I invite you to meditate on them again so as to examine more deeply, both as individuals and communities, our fidelity to the

⁶⁷ cf. C 60

⁶⁸ cf. C 62

⁶⁹ cf. C 63

profession we made with sincere generosity. We need to recognize the fact that a reading of the Rule from the standpoint of poverty leads us to range over concrete horizons of our significance and of our responsibility in the mission.

Here we limit ourselves to a synthetic presentation of the relationship that exists in the Rule between evangelical poverty and the main elements of the whole of our plan of life.

The valuable Commentary⁷⁰ on the renewed Constitutions, made in 1986, declares: "We can say that the general plan of the Constitutions draws its inspiration *from the basic third article*: the overall structure and the arrangement of the parts and chapters was chosen so as to provide an organic treatment which would make immediately clear the unity of our vocation".⁷¹ Now from this point of view it is important to recognize that our evangelical poverty is vitally present in the whole Rule, even if not specifically in evidence throughout; it characterizes the entire salesian physiognomy, but must be harmonized with various other significant and relevant traits.

The third article speaks of consecration, of mission, of community, and of evangelical counsels, and it is interesting to reflect how in each of these elements the poverty we profess is dynamically incorporated.

In the first place it is intrinsically linked with "*consecration*"; it is not identified with it, and much less does it exhaust it; rather it is characterized by it and makes it concrete in practice through a mutually circular process. Consecration, in fact, implies a covenant with the Lord which demands a heart filled with pastoral charity: "*da mihi animas*". "I promised God", Don Bosco tells us, "that

⁷⁰ *Commentary on Constitutions*, Eng. edtn. 1986

⁷¹ *ibid.* Eng.edtn. p. 68

I would give of myself to my last breath for my poor boys";⁷² the preventive system is a "spontaneous expression of love inspired by the love of God".⁷³ On the other hand our sensitivity towards the poor is linked to the vitality of consecration, moved especially by a convinced concern and vision of Christ's kingdom, but nourished by contact with the poor and a practical commitment to them as those for whom God has a predilection, the "living sacrament" of the Lord who suffers and has such great need: "I was hungry and you fed me". The grace of unity brings about a common growth of the two poles of God and the needy.

⁷² cf. C 1

⁷³ cf. C 20

Our poverty finds its place in practice in the "*mission*", even though it does not define it in a univocal and exclusive manner. The mission, in fact, is essentially of wider extent and is closely linked with educative options; the Constitutions describe its various component aspects in such a way that it "sets the tenor of our whole life, specifies the task we have in the Church, and determines our place among other religious families".⁷⁴

⁷⁴ C 3

The Valdocco experience assures us that it is precisely our mission among young people in need that has given its particular tone to the whole of our charism, to its spiritual originality and to its educational methodology. Dedication to poor youngsters ensures the authenticity of our mission in which we become signs and bearers of the love of Christ.

Next, the practice of our poverty is embodied in the "*community*". This is something personal, but also something lived day by day in brotherly communion: a family manner of living together which seeks expression in the *koinonia* of goods. Placing everything in common is a great help in building

community, even from an affective standpoint; there can be no simple and austere community without this sign. It is well to note, nonetheless, that fraternal community has other values and aspects too, which embellish poverty and give it that family aspect that was so dear to Don Bosco.

Finally, poverty is evidently one of the three *evangelical counsels* which, as we have seen, combines with the other two to give a unified tone to the fullness and radical nature of the gift of oneself to God who is totally loved and to the needy youth to whom he sends us. It is clear, however, that the other two counsels contribute their specifically different values and influences, which have their effect on the manner of living and applying the sensitivity towards the poor through a love of chastity and in organic docility to the Congregation's mission.

Poverty indeed, as far as the constituent elements of our evangelical project are concerned, sheds light on the project's organic nature and, while strengthening the identity's entire patrimony, avoids distorted interpretations.

Even if poverty does not, in itself, constitute the single criterion for renewal, it belongs nevertheless, as we have seen, to the very heart of our *significance*; poverty it is that in the ambit of the grace of unity demands the other important aspects of our apostolic consecration. We can say that the consideration of poverty brings, without any doubt, a determining value to our renewal, even though by itself it is insufficient. The overall vision of the Rule, in fact, describes the totality of Don Bosco's charism; it is the identity card of the whole project of salesian life, with various other criteria organically linked with it that for years now have been pointing us towards the future.

There is also another aspect to consider: that of art. 7, referring to our solidarity with the world and with history. Today, in fact, sensitivity to those to whom our mission is addressed requires us to take a more practical view of human situations like abandonment, emargination and social injustice. Through such things as these the Lord himself is challenging us, and hence they too become for us a stimulus to renewal. Here we have a criterion of evangelical discernment which requires us to revise our works to make them pastorally more relevant and more in keeping with the Founder's options.⁷⁵ Since the mission, with its educational approach, commits us to a plan of integral human advancement⁷⁶ which takes us also to so many of the "non-poor", we need to make sure we are competent as regards our knowledge of the *Church's social doctrine*, and be able to communicate it to others as an indispensable element in the conscience of every christian who lives the Gospel in a manner relevant to the present day. Religious poverty must nourish in our heart a kind of spiritual relationship with the poor⁷⁷ so as to offer to them and others those educative values which lead them to the search for an integral liberation.

⁷⁵ cf. C 77

⁷⁶ cf. C 31, 32

⁷⁷ cf. C 78, 79

Already in his own time Don Bosco "saw clearly the social implications of his work".⁷⁸ That is why "we share in a way appropriate to religious in the witness and commitment of the Church to justice and peace. While not getting involved in ideologies or party politics, we reject everything that encourages deprivation, injustice and violence. We cooperate with all who are trying to build a society more worthy of man's dignity".⁷⁹

⁷⁸ C 33; cf. also C 73

⁷⁹ C 33

Rightly has the GC23 included among the key points of education to the faith "the social dimen-

⁸⁰ cf. GC23, 203-214⁸¹ cf. Commentary of RM on Strenna of 1991 and 1992

sion of charity",⁸⁰ which we have tried to study more deeply and put into effect in the Strennas for the years 1991 and 1992.⁸¹

We must readily admit, therefore, that our Rule of Life reveals how vitally religious poverty is grafted into the entire charism of Don Bosco, strongly shaping his identity and consequently his particular way of looking at the world, his life-style and his commitment to action.

Suggestions for a "scrutinium paupertatis".

We are invited by the Rule to make a periodic verification of the testimony we give by our salesian practice of evangelical poverty,⁸² indicating also the ascetical aspects that characterize each confrere and each community. They define a life-style and we are asked to put them into practice, in the awareness that in this way we are following the "way that leads to Love".⁸³

This verification not only ensures fidelity to a well defined religious profession we have freely made in a public and ecclesial manner, but enlightens and purifies a whole way of thinking, planning and working in trusting dependence on God and in joyful solidarity with those for whom we work. Certain practical norms, small though they may seem, have a particular sign value, and their transgression can have a negative effect on everything: "Fidelity to the commitment made at our religious profession is a response which we continually renew to the special Covenant that the Lord has made with us".⁸⁴

It will be fitting if the verification to be made sets out from an overall view of the demands of

⁸² cf. R 65⁸³ C 196⁸⁴ C 195

evangelical poverty in our charism, along the lines we have tried to set out in the preceding pages. It should have as its objective the fostering and development of a greater evangelical sensitivity in our renewal process. There is in the Congregation, by God's grace, a practical sense of poverty with some admirable personal and communal examples: generous initiatives for the benefit of poor youngsters, enthusiasm in new missionary commitments, the establishment of oratories in the most densely populated and needy areas, works of various kinds for street-children and young people at risk, solidarity with Provinces of Eastern Europe and the third world, etc. But there are also continuous dangers which call for sincere and constant verification.

The principal aspects to be considered should be the following: evangelical detachment; fraternal communion; religious witness; the administration of temporal goods; active commitment. And all this with reference to the person of each individual confrere and to the witness of the whole community, not only at local level but also as regards the Province as a whole and all the Congregation.

Let us try to suggest some items to be included.

— *Evangelical detachment.* We need to check whether detachment from goods stems from the fullness of harmony with the Gospel. Hence it is a matter in the first place of fostering the interior spirit with which one lives the Beatitude of the poor; or in other words of cultivating a manner of listening to the Word of God and of prayerful meditation centred on Christ's option in the mystery of the Incarnation, from the manger to the cross. It is a deepening of that freedom of heart which stems from the awareness that selfishness is the root of all

⁸⁵ Jn 8,32

slavery and injustice: only "the truth will make you free", as Christ has said.⁸⁵

We are "poor in the following of Jesus Christ"; we want to be free like him who, through the fullness of his love, is the supreme model of true liberty; he is completely free because totally poor. The supreme love of charity is what confers freedom from the slavery of the passions, from deviations of the intelligence, and from small-minded egoism.

The first and fundamental sense of true liberation is the redemptive dimension of liberty. Selfishness and sin are, in fact, always the source of oppression, disorder and the idolatry of goods; they lead to a prescinding from God and the development of a disordered love of self and creatures. Experience teaches that all materialism feeds a false emancipation of freedom.

Anyone who does not pray or meditate, a confrere whose heart is not full of "da mihi animas", can never understand the Beatitudes.

The Lord has given us a new commandment to love our neighbour and a desire for justice that transcends every ideology and is opposed to all methods of violence. This is very important for us Salesians who have made, with Don Bosco, the educative option in our social commitment: an evangelizing mission of salvation which, with a preferential love for the poor, dedicates itself to communicating to them the truths of the Gospel; for us this goes hand in hand with concrete human advancement which, while not overlooking the complexity of the problems, keeps in mind the priority of persons over structures. Hence it is well to verify what kind of meditation and prayer fosters the enthusiasm of "da mihi animas", bringing

about in us a growth in the conscious and practical attitude of the choice of the poor in our educative commitment.⁸⁶

Don Bosco gave continual witness to this kind of attitude, both with a daily filial trust in Providence and with a life of "work and temperance". Art. 18 of the Constitutions describes the demands of this practical aspect: the interior conviction of the Salesian becomes translated into an industrious and self-sacrificing manner of life: "work and temperance will make the Congregation flourish, whereas the seeking of an easy and comfortable life will instead bring about its death. The Salesian accepts the daily demands and renunciations of the *apostolic* life. He is ready to suffer cold and heat, hunger and thirst, weariness and disdain, whenever God's glory and the salvation of souls require it".

In his life he depends on Providence after the manner of Don Bosco, i.e. he does not expect everything to fall down from heaven but pursues with zeal what is needed for life and work, in the certainty that he will find it if he remains "evangelically free".⁸⁷

— *Fraternal communion.* Our evangelical poverty is an important value which helps in the practical daily building of the community. Which goods are to be placed in common? The reply is quite simple: all of them except the family patrimony we brought into the Congregation or subsequently inherited.⁸⁸ The Rule tells us: "After the example of the first christians, we share together our material goods, the fruits of our work, the gifts we receive and whatever comes to us from pensions, subsidies and insurance policies. We do the same with our talents, our energies and our experience".⁸⁹

⁸⁶ cf. Doc: Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation, 1986

⁸⁷ C 79

⁸⁸ C 74

⁸⁹ C 76

The placing of goods in common also governs the use of instruments for work, means of transport,⁹⁰ and copyrights;⁹¹ it covers also the simple arrangement of one's room, so that it does not become a bourgeois-style refuge;⁹² it covers also the fraternal carrying out of "domestic work and services".⁹³

Next comes solidarity with the other houses and with the Province.⁹⁴ Solidarity in the Congregation requires all members to contribute practical help to the numerous missionary works and to the needy foundations of the so-called "Don Bosco - East". We have seen some wonderful examples in this regard, but there is no doubt that more still could be done if a renewed sense of solidarity were to grow in every house and Province. The special periods during the year, like Advent and Lent, could stimulate particular initiatives for acts of self-denial and sharing that could augment the possibility of communion of temporal goods.

The Code of Canon Law⁹⁵ speaks of religious institutes doing all in their power to donate something from their own resources to help the needs of the Church and the support of the poor. The word used is "donate" (*Translator's note: the USA translation says "contribute what they can"*). Hence it is not a question of waiting till the end of the financial year to see if something is left over, but of assigning something in advance, putting it in the budget! This is a criterion to be kept in mind even with regard to salesian solidarity.

And we do not stop at the sharing of material goods: "In an atmosphere of mutual trust and daily forgiveness", say the Constitutions, "the need and joy of sharing everything is experienced."⁹⁶ "we share our joys and sorrows and we are partners in

⁹⁰ R 63⁹¹ R 57⁹² R 55⁹³ R 64⁹⁴ R 58⁹⁵ can. 640⁹⁶ C 16

our apostolic plans and experiences".⁹⁷ The GC21 insisted on this totality of communion: "Poverty means sharing all that we have, all that we are, and all that we do".⁹⁸

⁹⁷ C 51

⁹⁸ GC21, 40

This list of goods placed in common is fittingly concluded by the phrase: "In the community the good of each individual becomes the good of all".⁹⁹ And the community accepts the responsibility of providing what is necessary for each member in time of both health and sickness.

⁹⁹ C 76

— *Religious witness.* The essence of evangelical poverty is unquestionably rooted in detachment of heart, but to facilitate its authenticity and defend its concrete nature, religious life through the centuries has seen a variety of structures for its practical living; and our own Congregation has its particular methods described in the Rule of Life.

It is a collection of concrete norms, some of them quite small, which manifest publicly (in the order of "*significance*") the evangelical attitude of the heart: "temperance in the use of food and drink, simplicity in dress (recall C.62), the moderate use of holidays and amusements, abstaining from smoking (one of our characteristics!) as a form of salesian temperance and as a witness in his personal work of education".¹⁰⁰ The fact of being "consecrated educators" calls for a salesian style also in a specific decorum in dress, in a dignified external appearance and in particular ways of communal living.

¹⁰⁰ R 55

It is a question of an ascetical methodology explicitly adopted after accepting the relevant demands. Today the signs of the times challenge Religious with respect to the prophetic dimension of their witness; and this is particularly the case as re-

guards poverty. The evangelical values we live, as well as being for the benefit of those we are working for, must also be accessible to them, i.e. they must be "signs" they too can read. In particular "the witness of our poverty helps the young to overcome their selfish possessive instinct".¹⁰¹

¹⁰¹ C 73

Our practice receives light from art. 77 of the Constitutions: attention to the conditions in the environment in which we live; a simple and frugal way of life in unpretentious dwellings; making it evident to others that the use of the means required by our work is for the service of others; our choice of activities and of their location made in response to the needs of those in want; the criterion for our buildings – that they be simple and functional.

Then there is the need to observe carefully a principle and practice common to all forms of Religious Life, i.e. that of administrative dependence. "By the vow of poverty", say the Constitutions, "we undertake not to use and not to dispose of material goods without the consent of the lawful superior".¹⁰² The Code of Canon Law reminds all Religious of this: "The evangelical counsel of poverty in imitation of Christ, who for our sake was made poor when he was rich, entails a life which is poor in reality and in spirit, sober and industrious, and a stranger to earthly riches. It also involves dependence and limitation in the use and the disposition of goods, in accordance with each institute's own law".¹⁰³ The verification on this point should be made carefully by each one, and the Rector and Provincial will know how to guide the confreres in sincerity and observance.

¹⁰² C 74

¹⁰³ can. 600

The Code of Canon Law specifies: "Whatever a religious acquires by personal labour, or on behalf of the institute, belongs to the institute. Whatever

comes to a religious in any way through pension, grant or insurance also passes to the institute, unless the institute's law decrees otherwise".¹⁰⁴ Subterfuges or a disguised dependence open the way to a gradual decline in the fervour of adherence to the charism of the Founder.

¹⁰⁴ can 668 3; cf. C 76

It may be well to recall that nowadays the Church allows Religious to live in complete detachment even from their own patrimonial goods: "Religious congregations may, in their constitutions, permit their members to renounce their inheritances, both those which have already been acquired and those which may be acquired in the future".¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁵ PC 13

Our own Rule accepts this indication and specifies that the renunciation may be made "after serious reflection"¹⁰⁶, and "after at least ten years of perpetual profession and with the consent of the Rector Major, and in accordance with the prescriptions of the civil law of his own country".¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ C 74

¹⁰⁷ R 53

— *The administration of temporal goods.* Here too there is reference to the structural aspect in houses, Provinces, and the Congregation, in all of which there should be a system of administration which certainly has its own regulations, but which is at the same time animated by a living sense of trust in Providence. The Rule dedicates two entire chapters to the matter, one in the Constitutions¹⁰⁸ and the other in the General Regulations¹⁰⁹. This is a service carried out directly by the local and provincial economers, and by the Economer General, "under the direction and control of the appropriate superiors and councils".¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ C ch. 14

¹⁰⁹ R ch. 13

¹¹⁰ C 190

It will be well to read over together the articles of these two chapters; they give precise indications for remaining faithful, even in the indispensable organization of structures, to the vocational criteria of the salesian profession.

Today the service of an economer becomes ever more complex and delicate, because of the increasing quantity of civil legislation covering the sector. It requires a harmony between competence and virtue which is not easily attained, and a continual updating with specific meetings for the purpose. Let us show to the confreres who are economers our gratitude for the valuable work they do for all of us.

In the part of the Provincial Directory dealing with economy there should be norms "with a view to establishing throughout the province a modest and effectively uniform level of community life".¹¹¹

The administration should be regulated also by *good family sense*. It is part of our salesian tradition to live our poverty in a family spirit.

It may be well to recall that *real estate* needed for purposes of service must be preserved with care through adequate maintenance; this will ensure saving and the preservation in efficient working order of instruments of work, while those no longer necessary should be disposed of with due consideration.

As far as *movable goods* are concerned a distinction must be made between necessary and superfluous equipment, so that the latter can be suitably disposed of.

Finally, with reference to money, bonds, and the like, it is important to keep in mind the prohibition against permanent capitalization, avoiding anything that smacks of speculation.

Don Rinaldi, speaking to the confreres of the Oratory in December 1930 on the occasion of the exercise for a happy death, recalled a hard-hitting conference of Don Bosco on poverty, while at the same time "he was equipping his printshops with machinery as up to date as anything in the best of

Turin's printing establishments". And Don Rinaldi commented: "We are not to lump together the interior, personal poverty of the Salesians with the requirements of the salesian mission which calls for Don Bosco to be always in the forefront of progress", as he himself had said when speaking with the future Pope Pius XI".¹¹²

¹¹² cf. BM 14, 435

— *Active commitment.* Here we are entering a much wider social field. First of all we have to cultivate an apostolic sensitivity towards the poor, making every effort to stay close to them, to alleviate their needs, making our own their lawful aspirations for a more human society". Don Bosco tells us "Remember well that what we have is not ours; it belongs to the poor; woe to us if we do not use it well".¹¹³

¹¹³ C 79

But then we have to actuate salesian "*significance*" in the revision and planning of the places where we are working. The Provincial and his Council need to carry out a gradual but courageous discernment process, so that "our choice of works and of their location is made in response to the needs of those in want".¹¹⁴

¹¹⁴ C 77

In this era of new evangelization, a very important aspect of our active commitment concerns the renewal of our mission in the education of young people to the faith. The present state of inequality between rich and poor has given rise to different ways of thinking about the renewal of society. The times demand of us a "new education" which will enable us to form young people to "be aware of the role they must play in the christian transformation of social life".¹¹⁵

¹¹⁵ C 27

The Latin-American Bishops at Puebla, as we have seen, considered christian poverty as a powerful evangelical value able, if properly understood

and taken up by the faithful, to give rise to successful alternatives to the interpretations of an exclusively economic type which had guided the social forces of the world in the past. The Church's doctrine on the significance of material goods and their lawful use, according to the universal destination given them by the Creator, needs a substratum of christian formation in all the faithful, and especially in the young. Here then is an active commitment on which to reflect in community: how can we educate young people to understand the social dimension of charity through evangelical poverty; how can we form them to moral, professional and social responsibility;¹¹⁶ how can we pass on to them the social doctrine of the Church?

¹¹⁶ cf. C 33

We are called upon to "help young people to acquire an adequate knowledge of the complex social and political reality".¹¹⁷ But education cannot stop at simple knowledge, it must introduce the young to some concrete kind of solidarity where they can gain the experience of self-donation to those most in need.

¹¹⁷ GC23, 210

It will be worth the trouble to share this active commitment with the *lay members of the Salesian Family and with the collaborators in our various activities*, so that they too may discover more clearly the specific significance of their vocation and christian mission which is precisely to "permeate and perfect the reality of the temporal order with the evangelical spirit".¹¹⁸

¹¹⁸ AA 5, 7

The beatitude of the poor in Mary.

Mary, full of grace, is, after Jesus, the most admirable model of the spirit of the Beatitudes. Her

heart was always filled with joy, even though she had much to suffer: "a sword will pierce your soul".¹¹⁹ She was always happy and "blessed", because always "poor". ¹¹⁹ Lk 2,35

She it was who at Bethlehem laid the child Jesus in a manger. This was not done with any feeling of aversion on either her own part or that of St Joseph, but rather in the joy of motherhood, intensified by the surprising visit of the humble shepherds to whom the angel of the Lord, when announcing the great event of salvation, had given as a sign: "You will find the child wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger".¹²⁰ ¹²⁰ Lk 2,12

Taking the child to Jerusalem to offer him to the Lord in the temple, she took with her the sacrificial offering of the poor,¹²¹ and here too marvelled at the manifestations of God. ¹²¹ cf. Lev 12,8

And all she had heard, first from the shepherds and now from the aged Simeon and Anna, she would never forget: "she kept all these things, pondering them in her heart".¹²² It was a meditation that never brought to her mind even the slightest suggestion that she should change her way of life and the humble social condition of her environment, which she considered as having been explicitly chosen by God; she felt that with Joseph it was her task to bring up Jesus in poverty. ¹²² Lk 2,19

Of itself, Nazareth was a place of no great significance;¹²³ Joseph supported the little family by his work as a carpenter; he was a just man and experienced with Mary the beatitude of the poor in the hope of the kingdom. ¹²³ cf. Jn 1,46

The choice made by God in the persons of Mary and Joseph at Nazareth manifests very clearly the path he wanted followed in his divine plan of salvation; in fact, in the incarnation of the Son "who, though he was rich, yet for your sake became poor

¹²⁴ 2 Cor 8,9

so that by his poverty you might become rich.¹²⁴

Then, at the moment of the greatest human poverty of Jesus Christ, stripped and in the throes of death on the cross, Mary received as an inheritance not temporal goods but a universal motherhood for the salvation of the world. And so, as the "handmaid of the Lord" now nailed to the cross in total poverty, she became the Mother of all in a new paschal event, in which she would participate fully through her assumption into heaven.

And from there throughout the centuries, Mary has exercised her motherhood especially in favour of the poor; we may recall the comparatively recent examples at Guadalupe, Lourdes and Fatima, where she appeared to poor persons. And if we look at our own charism, we see that it was to the Becchi (the "salesian Bethlehem") to a humble family that she went to seek the poor young John who was brought up and educated in an environment permeated by the hope of the kingdom.

Against the background of the history of salvation, Mary appeared before Christ. She preceded him also in the prophecy of poverty; and she still continues to precede and to accompany him at the present day. Her heart of the "poor woman of Yahweh" is clearly reflected in her *Magnificat*, which we recite and sing, often with great emotion.

On the occasion of the Marian Year, 1987-1988, Pope John Paul II in the Encyclical *Redemptoris Mater*, declared that the Church in obedience to Christ follows the path of Mary our model: "The Church's love of preference for the poor is wonderfully inscribed in Mary's *Magnificat*. The God of the Covenant, celebrated in the exultation of her spirit by the Virgin of Nazareth, is also he who 'has cast down the mighty from their thrones and lifted up the lowly, filled the hungry with good things,

sent the rich away empty, scattered the proud-hearted, and his mercy is from age to age on those who fear him'. The Church is thus aware that there is a duty to safeguard carefully the importance of 'the poor' and of 'the option in favour of the poor' in the word of the living God. These are matters and questions intimately connected with the christian meaning of freedom and liberation. 'Mary is totally dependent upon God and completely directed towards him, and, at the side of her Son, she is the most perfect image of freedom and of the liberation of humanity and of the universe. It is to her as Mother and Model that the Church must look in order to understand in its completeness the meaning of her own mission'.¹²⁵

¹²⁵ Red. Mater 37

Today we are living in an era of epoch-making change which commits us to a New Evangelization; as a Congregation we have made a solemn act of entrustment to Mary, that she may accompany us as Mother and Teacher as she did at our origins. It was she who "showed Don Bosco his field of labour among the young and was the constant guide and support of his work, especially in the foundation of our Society".¹²⁶ Let us ask her to help us to build up the kingdom of Christ and be efficacious evangelizers and educators in these new times by witnessing and communicating to the young and the poor the great message of evangelical poverty.

¹²⁶ C 8

Through her intercession and guidance, may Don Bosco the educator, poor and enterprising as he was, be always our model!

I send my cordial fraternal greetings to you all.
Affectionately in the Lord,

Don F. Vigano

2. GUIDELINES AND POLICIES

2.1 THE JOURNEYING MENTALITY

Fr Luc VAN LOOY

Councillor General for Youth Pastoral Work

A great preoccupation for the *pastoral quality* of our work is something inculcated in us by the GC23. Many initiatives at provincial, local and personal level point to the fact that the confreres are aware of the need to become formed and competent as educators and pastors. The education of young people to the faith, within our educative plan, directs in a special way the efforts we are making in the present years. Salesians and laity, animators and groups, are all committed to a combined involvement in a journey of and towards the faith. Local communities are more or less accustomed to a regular rhythm of reflection by means of the “community day”, and rectors are giving ever more emphasis to the ongoing formation of the confreres in comparison with their other duties.

Provincial chapters have faithfully carried out the revision of their educative and pastoral plan, in line with the indications given by the GC23 (cf. n. 230). More than one province has set about translating “the journey of faith into a practical process suited to those we are working for and the contexts in which we operate” (GC23 230). The two Latin-American Regions have made an intensive study of this process and are acquiring a journeying mentality. Provinces and confreres, who have introduced into their planning programme the method of specifying steps in the journey, are finding that the method makes them concrete in their decisions and attentive to the reality of the youth situation. One accustomed to think with this kind of approach is aware of the point at present reached by the

young person or the group, recognizes the influences at work on young people, and learns to take constant but gradual steps towards the progressive attainment of the overall objective. Maybe the Salesian is accustomed to working automatically in line with this sort of scheme, but he needs to share it with the educative and pastoral community so that they use it in common.

1. The journey as a single process involving everyone

“Translate” is the word used by the GC23 (l.c.) to indicate that the educative and pastoral community, as the subject of the educational process, intends to embody the indications of the project in a concrete manner and in the local context, applying it to a specific group or individuals by means of gradual steps and intermediate objectives.

There are three mutually linked elements involved: *the educative and pastoral community* (within which the SDB community acts as the animating nucleus); *the educative and pastoral plan which* involves everyone in the pursuit of a single objective; and the *process or 'journey'*, which applies the plan in varied and appropriate ways according to the context and the particular young people concerned.

2. A process that is gradual and diversified

The process concentrates on a particular section or studies a partial element of the plan. It could examine how well education is realized in a particular period of a youngster's growth, keeping in mind the conditions specific to that period. A certain area, e.g. that of group activity, or involvement of the laity, or the fostering of vocations, could be studied from the standpoint of the practical reality of the personnel available, bearing in mind that all growth is gradual and starts from the situation presently obtaining.

Many are the people and situations that exert an influence on the young person from different angles. The foundation of the educative project guarantees its unity, while particular attention to various sectors and areas by means of the process ensures that it is practical. The process supposes a constant follow-up on the part of the educator, who knows the goal to be achieved and moves towards it at the pace of the youngster, inciting him to give it all he has got. It is a well-tried road and while moving along it reflection continues (the "journeying mentality"), so as to be able to continually adjust the road when the path needs alteration.

3. A process that leads to competence.

The process analyzes the situation and situates in this reality the objectives at which it is aiming and the targets to be achieved in the various areas.

Because of the need to take into account the project itself, the reality of the concrete situation, the conditions and the personnel available, the elaboration by the community of the process become a training exercise for both community and individuals. They learn to link together many factors in a realistic process of growth. To produce a unified whole many paths are available, and several precise questions must be answered: what kind of youngster we have in mind, what point he has reached at present, to what stage we want to bring him, what influences are exerted on him, what his interests are, what agencies are available, what path is to be followed, and how do we get across to him the necessary fundamental values as the journey proceeds.

Working with a journeying mentality is not the same thing as using a map to reach a geographical location; it is rather the making of the map itself on the basis of what is needed, of what we know of the terrain, etc. so as to reach the "proofs" and correct them before printing and putting the "map" on sale. Whoever enters on the process eventually becomes something of an expert in its every phase.

If the process is to be elaborated with true pastoral sensitivity, due attention will have to be given to the norms of the educational sciences and their application. These will include, for instance, anthropology, pedagogy, sociology, catechesis, and also documents of the Church and the Congregation. An awareness will also be needed of the inter-relationship between personal and social development in the young person.

The communal verification of the process is a further aspect that leads to the increased competence of both the educator himself and the community.

4. A process to be drawn up, realized and verified together

The educative journey and education to the faith are a task for all of us in common. The elements of cohesion in the educative community are love for the young and the preventive system, lived by all the components of the salesian work.

Hence the need for all to become competent in the gradual process of the positive following up of the youngsters. All have worked together in the elaboration of the project; now it has to be made something dynamic; now, we might say, it must be given teeth.

On the basis of our experience and knowledge of the reality, we want to undertake a journey towards the same objective, adults and young people together in a common experience. It is a case, in fact, of living together the project's indications.

We give below in schematic form a manner of procedure for the drawing up of such a process, applicable to any area, level or context, and one which will lead confreres and community to try out the experience for themselves. Those who have already done so will be able to lend a hand to those just beginning.

4.1 *Defining the parameters*

The first step is to clarify what kind of process is aimed at: its

purpose (e.g. the involvement of the laity), which lay persons it is intended to reach (the lay parishioners, the lay teaching staff of a school, the lay animators of an oratory), and how soon the objective is to be achieved.

4.2 *Points of reference to be emphasized*

It is of vital importance to be properly situated in the context.

- a) Know the *situation of the neighbourhood*, of the people with reference to the process: e.g. what is the youth context like, what attitude prevails with regard to the Church, what special conditions exist in this particular area, what social conflicts are in evidence there. etc.
- b) The point of *doctrinal reference* should give us the *raison d'être* for the process. We are not alone: the Church, the Congregation, history itself, all provide basic indications to be taken into consideration.
- c) *Methodological guidelines*: we work from within the preventive system, using our educative style of animation and follow-up and applying the oratory style to the various settings, etc. Our methods should always reflect the concept of Church as communion and of an educative community present in a given area as a sign and indication.

4.3 *Objective to be made clear*

Once the context, content and methods have been settled, the objective to be reached must be clarified in the particular setting concerned, with *which* youngsters and in *what* period of time. This is the target the community puts before itself and which it wants to achieve without delay. *Note.* At this point it is well to check up on the work so far done, because what follows depends on how clearly and precisely the objective has been expressed.

4.4 *The goals to be attained*

Now must be specified: what criteria are to be followed to get

the work done, and what results are sought in each of the areas of the journey of faith: human formation, relationship with Christ, the christian community, and the commitment to others and for the kingdom. What point should be reached in each of these four areas for the comprehensive realization of the objective proposed?

4.5 The movement and the steps to be taken

Dynamic progress towards the goal to be achieved in each area requires that certain intermediate steps be taken in logical order. Beginning from the point at which the youngsters are now situated we move forward step by step in specific stages: we go from situation (a) to situation (b). Once arrived there we take stock, regroup our forces and take the next step, which is to move from situation (b) to situation (c), and so on. In deciding on such steps one must take into account the psychological, social and christian growth brought about in the youngsters.

4.6 Contents to be communicated

Each step corresponds to an element to be communicated. The educator must be able to motivate the interventions he intends to make on the basis of sound principles of education and evangelization. In involving lay people, for example, in the work of evangelization, at a certain point one reaches the formation of the moral conscience; another example: the community sense of human nature and its place in history is another element to be communicated at the same step.

4.7 Ways and means to be used

At this point a list can be made of things to be done and things to be avoided, of attitudes and approaches to be adopted, of activities and initiatives to be undertaken. Against the background of daily life, and in the making of the common journey, there are instruments to be used and strategies to be applied for the communication of values and for helping the passage from one level to another. Practical

suggestions are required for both environments: attitudes and activities.

4.8 Times of particular significance and the verification to be planned

The realization of the journey will require that at certain moments a boost be given to the whole process. Such times also provide an opportunity for a communal and serious check-up on what has been done.

At such moments one is able to see more clearly the overall project, to understand the interconnection between its various elements, and the overall progress simultaneously made in the four areas. Pauses for this purpose need to be planned at intervals throughout the journey so as to give to it a more intense and deeper significance.

The educative journey becomes a practical instrument for the educative community and for the individual educators, a means for ongoing reflection on the journey being made with young people. Because the process is not a stable one made once and for all, the educator is obliged to make constant verifications to see whether his work is bearing effective fruit for the benefit of the youngsters concerned.

At the start Don Bosco introduced the "Regulations for the Oratory", through which he expressed the importance of certain values, objectives and means, for his work of education. He made these regulations known to all and constantly reviewed them. For him the point of departure was the reality of the young and his experience with them. The present-day journey reflects this same preoccupation, i.e. of responding to the concrete situation of the youngster with a journey, a process, that is practical, flexible and adapted to his particular situation. In the course of the journey adults and young people together question themselves about their present position with respect to the objective they are trying to reach, and on the steps that still remain to be taken.

2.2 RENDER AN ACCOUNT!

Fr Omero PARON
Economer General

“Render an account”. Startling words! If said in a peremptory and stentorian tone they bring to mind that “Render an account of your stewardship” that makes everyone quake to some extent. Let us soften them down a bit, strip them of their imperative tone and make them sound more pleasant. Let us interpret them as asking us to give a satisfactory explanation to others of our use of goods and money.

Another point. They may seem to be addressed only to those skilled people who manage goods and property of considerable value, but that is not true. They involve everyone, because in an open society everyone uses money to some extent, at least for those “small individual needs” that the General Regulations speak of in art. 56. But when we come to think about it, should we not be imitating Don Bosco’s “zeal” (that is the word in Const. 79!) in asking and accepting help for the service of those in need? We are all involved; this is something that concerns each one of us.

Let us take things in order.

The Code of Canon Law says that temporal goods of religious institutes are ecclesiastical goods (can. 635 1). As such they are goods of the Church (can. 1255). Even if they belong to a juridical person in lawful possession of them, they are subject to a supreme authority (can. 1256). And the juridical person then has administrators who, in line with can. 1279, are normally those who exercise government. To put it simply, this means in our case the Rector Major and his Council; the Provincial and his Council; the Rector and his Council. And it is well known that every administrator of goods must render an account of the

administration to the competent authority (can. 636 2). When and in what way this is to be done is set out in the institute's own law.

And so at provincial level, as far as the time is concerned Reg. 196 says that the economist periodically informs the Provincial and his Council about the administration. "Periodically" implies that there are fixed times when this information should be given. Such moments immediately come to mind, like times of programming, drawing up of the annual budget, the assessing of contributions to be made to the province by the houses, and other times when decisions have to be made concerning financial problems or initiatives of considerable importance.

With regard to the method: the report is to be sent in on the forms sent out in advance by the Economist General, or extracted from a computer according to an agreed form. Everything, duly signed by the Provincial and his Council, is then sent to the Economist General. The provincial economist should be "solicitous" in doing this, and a reminder to those who are always late may not be out of place.

Similar considerations apply to local level. Here things seem to get more forthright: the economist "will keep himself always ready to give an account of his management" to the House Council, and "whenever he is asked to do so" to the provincial council (cf. Reg. 202). And a "prompt submission" is required of the forms used in the province.

There is also an obligation to give an account by way of information and interest to the local community. Reg. 202 says as much: "As opportunity offers, and especially when the programme for the year's work is being discussed, the economist will interest the entire community in the ordinary and extraordinary expenditure involved in the running of the house". For that matter Reg. 184 emphasizes that "the principal tasks and duties of the assembly of the confreres are:...(5) to be informed and reflect on the financial situation, in view also of community poverty". This is a good opportunity for maintaining the spirit of evangelical poverty; for rooting out certain infidelities that may have been introduced; for reflecting on the incidence of economy in the life of the poor; a

time for making plans for sharing with the needy; an occasion for expressing in deeds our desire to follow the poor Christ.

There is no norm in our own law which speaks of an obligation to render an account to the provincial community. But the long accepted practice in many provinces is that on the occasion of the provincial chapter there be a report on the financial situation of the province. Indeed in some provinces this is done annually in a Rectors' meeting.

Those words "*render an account*" we find once more in the third paragraph of Reg. 198: "Even confreres in charge of works which by statute or agreement have a separate administrative council, must *render an account* of their administration to the religious superiors". To go more deeply into this would take up too much space and time, but fortunately it has already been done. It can be found in AGC 323 of 1987 and is still relevant and valid. It would be well to read it again, especially by Rectors and Parish Priests in those communities which have parishes to serve.

We are all, in fact, invited to "*render an account*" every time any sum of money, even though small, passes through our hands "to carry out our work or for small individual needs" (Reg. 56). To facilitate the making of this "report", some provincial chapters have included in the provincial directory a model form to be used each month by the confreres for stating what they received from the community and the personal expenses it was used for under various headings.

This does not imply any distrust on the part of the superior who asks for such a report; he is not afraid that the confrere lacks a sense of responsibility which makes necessary a detailed and disagreeable control. It is I who in the name of poverty have deliberately chosen to dispose of nothing without the superior being aware of it. It is an expression of my freedom in the face of earthly goods to which the world pays such homage at the present day.

And it is true that this is a matter of education and habit. And so the "Ratio" at n. 121 reminds formation guides: "The young confrere should be trained in the responsible use of money, which he receives on request from the superior; he should become

accustomed to giving an account of his expenses...”.

Is there really any satisfaction in “*rendering an account*”? There surely is. When the accounts balance, there is also that sense of beatitude promised to the just: Blessed are you, faithful servant.

4. ACTIVITIES OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL

4.1 Chronicle of the Rector Major

On his return from Mexico at the beginning of March, the Rector Major was present at our University on Thursday, 11th, for the solemn presentation of the "Catechism of the Catholic Church".

Two days later he left for Asia, and in Thailand (13-16 March), Vietnam (16-22), Hong Kong and Macau (23-24) he met as usual with SDBs, FMAs, other groups of the Salesian Family, Bishops and Apostolic Nuncios. He spent a longer time in Vietnam because it was his first visit to that country as Rector Major; he found that salesian life was flourishing there despite the considerable difficulties, and among other things he was able to take part in a great youth rally of more than 1,500 young people in honour of St Dominic Savio.

In April he went to various towns in Italy for animation purposes, sometimes to other religious institutes. On the 18th he gave an address on "Consecrated life in the run-up to the year 2000" to more than 800 men and women religious, meeting in the Ligurian Regional Congress at Genoa-Quarto in preparation for the Synod of '94.

On April 24-25 he was invited to the office of the Pontifical Council for the Laity at Palazzo San Callisto, for a high-level symposium on "present experiences of collaboration and reciprocal expectations between the lay faithful and members of Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life in the various fields of ecclesial life".

Cordoba, Seville and Valencia in Spain welcomed Fr Viganò between 28 April and 10 May. At Cordoba and at Palmar del Rio he was able to meet with thousands of young people, and give animating addresses to the Provincial Council, Rectors and members of the Salesian Family.

The main reason for the journey to Seville was the centenary of the house "La Trinidad", in grateful remembrance of Fr Peter Ricaldone, who had been responsible for the extraordinary beginnings of salesian work in that city. Particular cause for satisfaction was provided by his visit to Valverde del Camino on the occasion of the centenary of the arrival there of the FMA, with the veneration of Sister Eusebia Palomino.

Three days in Valencia, beginning at Villena which was celebrating the 75th anniversary of salesian work, gave him the opportunity for the usual basic meetings for reflection, study and animation.

In all three Provinces he was able to admire the great popularity of devotion to Mary Help of Christians, the vitality of the Cooperators and Past-Pupils, the promising beginnings of the "Hogares Don Bosco", and the preparation and collaboration of so many young "animators".

Returning to Italy for a brief period, he presided on 13 May at the solemn academic function at the "Auxilium" Faculty of the FMA in Rome.

On 22 May he left Rome for Grasse, in France, to take part in the closing session of the XV Congress of the Past-Pupils and Friends of Don Bosco of France, an occasion enriched by the inauguration of the new holiday-village "Les Cedres". From there he went on to Toulon to preside at a significant profession of faith by more than 70 young people, and addressed a large group of confreres and collaborators from the Province.

After a visit to St.Cyr, where he was able to discuss with the FMA the hopes of our Family, he returned to Italy to Turin to take part in the celebration of the Solemnity of Mary Help of Christians at Valdocco on 24 May with the grandiose

procession in the evening. On the following day he went to Châtillon for the inauguration of the splendid covered playground.

From May 26-28 he was at Arricia for the half-yearly meeting of the Superiors General; the theme was: "Religious in the evangelizing mission of the Church".

Immediately afterwards (29-31 May) he was in the Province of Bilbao, Spain, for the centenary of salesian work at Santander.

On 1 June, the day following his return to Rome, he opened the plenary session of the General Council and presided at the community thanksgiving day of the Generalate community.

4.2 Activities of the Councillors

The Vicar General

In February Fr Juan Vecchi concluded the annual visitation of the "Blessed Michael Rua" community of the Generalate.

He then went to Spain to preach a retreat to the provincial councils and rectors of the Provinces of Bilbao, Madrid and León, gathered at Loyola.

On 26-27 of the same month he represented the Rector Major (absent on a visit to Mexico) at a meet-

ing of the Pontifical Commission for the distribution of clergy in the world.

From 5-10 April he spent some days of study at the Generalate with the Councillors in charge of Departments, to prepare the themes to be considered more deeply in the coming session of the General Council.

Towards the end of April he left for a stay of six days in Croatia. With the provincial council and rectors he studied some problems felt in a special way in that province. He then visited the communities of Zagreb and neighbourhood, and was also able to meet the confreres working at Split and Rijeka. Everywhere he also made contact with youth groups and the faithful in general. He was able to see for himself the destructive effects caused by the conflict in the country, and witnessed also in the refugees the consequences of the war still going on in Bosnia.

Still in April he took part in a study-seminar organized by the Rogationist Fathers, and gave an address on vocations and culture.

At Salerno he presented the Strenna for the present year to the Salesian Family; he then went to Hungary for the inauguration of the premises destined for the post-novitiate at Budapest "San Luigi".

For the remainder of the time he was in residence at the Generalate to follow the daily affairs of the Congregation and the conduct of

ordinary business, especially during the visits of the Rector Major to various parts of the salesian world.

The Councillor for Formation

From 7-12 February Fr Nicolussi took part in the Team Visit to the Italian Provinces.

During Holy Week he was at the Generalate for the meeting of the Departmental Councillors with the Vicar General.

From 13-18 May he was in the Prague Province, where he visited the initial-formation communities and was present at a precapitular meeting in which more than 160 confreres took part.

The greater part of the period was dedicated to the extraordinary visitation of the UPS Vice-province, which began on 22 February and ended on 27 May. The Vice-province is made up of six communities, three of them composed of confreres permanently belonging to the Vice-province and engaged in the fulfilment of its mission, and three composed of confreres studying at the UPS. At the time of the visitation the total number of confreres was about 235.

This visit had a particular importance, given the unique function of the UPS "within the framework of the salesian reality, at the service of the Congregation and as a qualified

expression of its mission in the Church, with its specific cultural and formational potential" (GC21 346).

The Councillor for Youth Pastoral Work

Even before the ending of the plenary session of the General Council, Fr Luc Van Looy, together with his FMA counterpart, had already held a meeting from 21-23 January 1993 on group sporting activity in Europe. The objective was to take stock of the present situation in this field with a view to setting out some salesian criteria to guide linkages between the various European countries. A draft Statute was drawn up.

The Youth Pastoral Department was responsible this year for the organization of the XVI Week of Spirituality for the Salesian Family from 25-29 January on the theme: "Education for love".

From 7-13 February the Councillor took part in the Team Visit to the Italian Provinces.

He then left immediately for Latin America where, in conjunction with the Youth Pastoral Department of the FMA, four study seminars had been organized with each of them lasting five days. They took place in Argentina, Brazil, Colombia and Mexico, and brought together SDBs, FMAs, and young people

from the Latin-American provinces. In each case the proportion of those present was approximately 50% young people, and 50% SDBs plus FMAs. The purpose of the meetings was to study the Santo Domingo document from a salesian standpoint. They were days of study, celebrations, pastoral orientation and the drawing up of pastoral guidelines for a salesian presence that would respond to the requirements of the youth of the continent. They were days animated by the Holy Spirit, and a great capacity for reflection and collaboration was shown by the Provincials and all present, with a great sensitivity for the social and cultural realities of the continent.

From 28 February to 3 March, between two sessions in Latin America, Fr Van Looy presided at a meeting in the Province of New Rochelle (USA) for rectors and lay collaborators to study the educative and pastoral community.

In the week from 13 to 20 March he was in Australia to study with those in charge of the various sectors the commitment of the Province in the pastoral field. On the last day of his visit he was present at the inauguration of a new Youth Centre in Sydney.

From 21-26 March he preached the annual retreat to the confreres of the Netherlands, and on 29 March presided at a day of animation for all the personnel of the

work "Les Minimes" at Lyons on the salesian response to the realities of the multicultural and multireligious situation in France.

He spent Holy Week in Rome for the meeting of the Departmental Councillors.

From 30 April he was travelling once again. After a brief visit to the works in Scotland at Glasgow and Edinburgh he took part in Great Britain's Salesian Family Day on our charismatic dynamism ("Focus on the Flow"). He then went to Venezuela for two meetings of three days each, one on the process for the development of group activity and the other on the process for the development of the lay project.

On May 10-11 he visited our works in San Salvador and met with the youth animators of the country, and did the same in Honduras (Tegucigalpa) on May 12.

At Vienna on 14-15 May he guided the Salesian Family of Austria in a study of salesian youth spirituality, with particular attention to ordinary youngsters and how to accompany them in their spiritual growth.

Immediately afterwards (17-19 May) he directed a meeting of representatives of the five countries of Central Europe (Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia and Slovenia), to study the theme of the educative and pastoral community in the setting of the SDB and FMA Provinces of those countries.

At Brussels on 23-24 May he had a meeting with some SDB and FMA Provincials and Coordinators to study a manner for linkage and coordination between different salesian realities and with various organisms at European level. The proposals emanating from this meeting were passed on to the SDB and FMA General Councils for further consideration.

Finally Fr Van Looy took part in a meeting at European level, organized by the Religious Superiors of Europe, to reflect on the spiritual guidance of the young and of young religious.

The Councillor for the Salesian Family and for Social Communication

SALESIAN FAMILY

This report details especially the work carried out at the Generalate in the period February-May 1993. It includes the work of all who collaborate in the department.

1. The common identity card of Don Bosco's Salesian Family.

In February a new draft of the document was prepared, with the help of all members of the department, and with an authoritative and efficacious contribution of the Rector Major.

The text has not yet been circulated. It is being examined by the Ge-

neral Councils of the various groups of the Family in view of the coming meeting from 9-11 July. For this meeting a member of the General Council of each group has been invited to the SDB Generalate for a revision and improvement of the document.

What happens next will be decided at the July meeting.

2. *The figure and duties of the Provincial Delegate for the Salesian Family.*

In March a group of confreres from six European countries examined the handbook destined particularly for provincial delegates of the Salesian Family. The contents were the result of a course in ongoing formation in July 1992. The first draft had been read by many who took part in that course, and the observations subsequently received were incorporated by the department in a second draft.

From 28-30 March the text was further examined by a working-group, and the latest draft was finished at the end of May. It is being sent to the Provinces as soon as possible.

3. *The Manual for the leaders of the Association of Salesian Cooperators.*

For several years the World Consulting Body of the Association has had it in mind to produce a "Lea-

der's Manual". The World Consultants and others in the regions they animate were asked for comments and suggestions, and much useful material was collected together.

Finally, at the beginning of 1993 the various contributions had been brought together and integrated. Thus the first draft of the Manual came into being.

From 14-16 May a group of Cooperators was assembled to revise the contents, and from 18-20 June there was a further meeting of a group to put the final touches to the work.

During the Regional Congresses of the Association due to take place between 1993 and 1994, the Manual will be presented and distributed to the various Provincial Councils of the Cooperators.

4. *English translation of the Statute of the Confederation of the Past-Pupils of Don Bosco.*

In the Asian-Australian Congress of the Don Bosco Past-Pupils held at Macau in October 1992, in a subsidiary meeting of the Congress it was decided to speed up the English translation of the new Confederal Statute.

The experience of the Federations that have been able to use the new text shows that it has been an efficacious instrument for defining the identity and for the renewal of the local Unions. A large number of

English-speaking Federations asked that the translation be made available.

By the end of March it had been completed and sent to the English-speaking Provinces.

5. *Preparation of the Regional Congresses of the Cooperators Association.*

The decision made by the World Consulting Body to hold not a single World Congress but thirteen Regional Congresses of the Association has involved the whole department in the organization.

A quantitative and qualitative verification of the Association was set in motion through a carefully prepared questionnaire on the needs of the Cooperators.

The geographical boundaries of the Cooperator regions were redrawn in order to facilitate the greatest possible participation in the congresses; the approval of the Holy See was obtained for the modification of the article concerned in the Regulations of Apostolic Life.

Regulations for the Congresses were drawn up to facilitate the meetings and the work to be done.

Study was begun of certain themes more in line with each particular region.

The Congresses provide a significant moment for promoting in everyone a growing awareness of the world dimension of the Association,

and of calling attention to the need for a practical commitment to a more lively and profound work of promotion and evangelization.

6. *Ordinary administration of the Department of the Salesian Family.*

From the standpoint of organization the following points are of interest:

- the restructuring of the Secretary's and Treasurer's roles in the Past-Pupils section. The new Delegate, Fr Henry Alen, in his first months in office examined various problems and has set on foot some practical solutions.

From the standpoint of communication between the centre and periphery, it has been decided:

- the Past-Pupils Confederation will use the publication *Don Bosco Past-Pupils* to communicate with the National Federations throughout the world. It will be sent out at two-monthly intervals and will carry an account of meetings of the Confederal Council;
- the Cooperators Association will continue to publish the monthly *Cooperatores*; the possibility is being studied of transforming it into a spirituality review.

7. *Fraternal gratitude to Fr Rinaldo Vallino.*

The Department for the Salesian Family expresses its gratitude to Fr

Rinaldo Vallino, who died on 26 April 1993. His collaboration in the department's activities was always of great value. The witness of his salesian life, expressed in every circumstance, remains a vivid message and a precious legacy which he has left us. His deep and painstaking work with the Institute of the Don Bosco Volunteers was of service to the whole of the Salesian Family, which remembers Fr Vallino with appreciation and affection.

SOCIAL COMMUNICATION

It may be of interest to list the items of work that have been carried out in and by the Department for Social Communication in the period from February to May 1993.

1. *The work of organization and equipment of the projected information agency.*

The approval given by the General Council to the plan presented by the Department for *Information in the Congregation* led to the beginning of the work for its realization.

It was necessary in the first place to make some structural alterations in the working area to meet the organizational needs of such an agency.

Next, provision was made for indispensable equipment needed to

maintain sure and immediate contact between the Department's centre and the twenty correspondents scattered around the world.

The work was a lengthy one, running from the beginning of January to the end of May. The organization involved constant attention to technical aspects, for which the services of experts were obtained from both inside and outside the salesian environment.

2. *The ideological part of the plan for the information agency.*

At the same time the Department has studied the underlying principles involved in the work of information.

In our specific case, the project foresaw the accompaniment of an expert throughout the whole process of defining key aspects in the information field, and for the qualification of those responsible at the Centre in Rome.

The services of an expert who is the director of an information agency at national level have been obtained for training purposes. He took up his work at the beginning of May. With him it has been possible to finalize the plans, already drafted in advance, for the course at the Generalate from 3-24 July for the formation of the correspondents.

This has been a very interesting creative phase for all who have taken part in it.

3. *The qualification course for provincial correspondents of the salesian world.*

The two parts of the course (10 June – 3 July and 4-24 July) have been carefully prepared.

A member of the department has supervised the first part, looking carefully into the possibilities offered in Rome as regards the teaching of Italian to foreigners. This would seem to be a simple task to be handed over to a specialized agency and not requiring further thought. On the contrary it was found necessary to give a great deal of time to finding a suitable agency, more time still to defining the objectives attainable in three weeks of study of a foreign language, and still more time for all the logistic details.

The second part involved all the collaborators of the department in a work of research, of learning or organization, and of the didactics of communication concerning the course's content.

Here the contribution of the tutor proved of great importance. Because of his direct and immediate experience and his overall view of the objectives of the project, he has been able to point with certainty to the path to be followed and experiences to be made during the course.

The most important result of the qualification course has already been attained with the department's

collaborators.

4. *The provincial conferences helped to reflect on the theme of social communication.*

One of the objectives of the department's programme was to meet with the provincial conferences of the various salesian Regions, for a deeper examination of the reality and commitments deriving from the salesian option for social communication.

In the recent months, from February to May, it has been possible to meet with the following provincial conferences:

- India, 10-12 March at Calcutta;
- Brazil, 19-21 April at Porto Alegre;
- Plata, 24-26 April at Cordoba, Argentina.

These meetings have a particular significance, not only for the work carried out and the conclusions reached, but also because of the new mentality being inculcated: the need to face up to the theme of social communication not from a particular and limited perspective but from the significance that as Salesians we can and must have in a particular country, fostering the growth of 'culture' and offering occasions for 'salvation' of the young.

5. *The fostering of linkages between communication structures.*

A particular commitment taken on by the department within the

great structures of communication concerns some of our publishing houses: we want to create the conditions necessary for them to "dialogue" with each other. It is a question of a dialogue which does not remain at a purely verbal level, but involves also aspects of qualification, personnel, shared projects and financial considerations.

Taking the occasion of the San Domingo Conference as a starting point and responding to some of its indications, we have thought it well to establish relationships between some publishing houses of Europe and those of Latin America. The help of the department has been instrumental in establishing contacts between Barcelona and La Plata, and between Barcelona and Mexico and Guadalajara.

These are first steps in this direction. Let us hope that they will prove to be the correct ones for creating convergent mentalities and experiences of real communication.

The department has in hand also another plan for linking together the different radio transmitters which operate in Latin America.

6. Ordinary administration of the Social Communications department.

In recent months instances have multiplied of rapid consultations for guidance purposes between the department and various European

provinces.

The work with ANS and the Salesian Bulletin has continued. Data has also been gathered for some interventions in the areas of formation and social communication. This is a sector to which it is proposed to give further impulse in the near future.

The Councillor for the Missions

Between January and May 1993 Fr Luciano Odorico was involved in various activities concerned with missionary animation: seminars and meetings for the deeper examination of certain questions, ongoing formation of missionaries, visits to various missions, and activities connected with Project Africa.

In January he dedicated three weekends to the missionary animation of the Provinces of Ljubljana (Slovenia), Léon (Spain), and Budapest (Hungary). Particularly interesting was this last visit on the occasion of the Feast of Don Bosco. Salesian work is beginning to flourish once again after so many years of suffering.

In February the Councillor took part in the Team Visit to the Italian Provinces, in which he emphasized the constant positive commitment of the Provinces of Italy to missionary activity.

From 5 to 20 February he presided in Rome at the Generalate over

the work of an international seminar on "*Educating to the missionary dimension*", in which was drawn up a draft document on the following arguments: aspects of missionary work, missionary aspects of salesian youth spirituality, and the involvement of young people in missionary animation.

Towards the end of February he went to Ghana, where he presided over a meeting of rectors of the communities of the English-speaking Western African communities of Nigeria, Ghana, Liberia, and Sierra Leone. Guidelines were laid down for an informal coordination in certain sectors of the structures of initial and ongoing formation.

He then went on to make a short visit to Ivory Coast (with a meeting with the Delegate for French-speaking West Africa), and to Sierra Leone and Liberia. The Liberian situation, although improved in the capital (Monrovia), where the Salesians are working with dedication in an atmosphere of relative peace, remains difficult because of the civil war. The community at Tappita in northern Liberia is suffering the consequences.

In the first part of March Fr Odorico visited the missions of the Province of Bolivia. There he found a real missionary commitment in five foundations, with enthusiasm and creative imagination in pastoral work and provincial awareness of

the missionary dimension. The Subalpine and Venice Provinces have made a very positive contribution to this important missionary reality in Bolivia.

In the second half of March and the early days of April, the Councilor presided, with Mother Lina Chiandotto, the FMA Councillor General for the Missions, at a seminar on "*Misiones entre Mapuches*" (Bahia Blanca, Argentina) and "*Misiones de Alturas*" (Quito, Ecuador). The two meetings were well prepared in advance by the two departments and the fundamental topic dealt with was evangelization according to "Redemptoris Missio", in line with the indications of Santo Domingo and the concrete situation in the respective missionary territories. Subsequent evaluation showed that the encounters had proved positive in both content and methodology.

Fr Odorico also took the opportunity to visit the sites of the first salesian missions in Patagonia and the places of pilgrimage represented by the sanctuaries of Zeferino Namuncurá and Laura Vicuña.

In early April he was in Rome for the meeting of Departmental Councillors called by Fr Vecchi to study various topics. He then spent three weeks on a visit to the missions of the Dimapur Province of Northern India. There he was able to note the impressive missionary dimension of

the Province, which is rightly called a missionary province, and the generous self-dedication of the missionaries despite difficulties of a social and political kind. With the Provincial he also visited the new missionary frontiers of Arunachal Pradesh, where the Province is hoping to open two new missions.

After a brief stay in Rome, the Councillor went at the beginning of May to Bonn in Germany, to preside over the annual meeting of the Salesian Mission Procurators. Further study was given to the identity of a Salesian Missions Office, seen against the background of the "First World" and the "Third World". Criteria were specified concerning projects and requests for help.

From Germany he went to Africa, to Kenya, for a meeting with the Salesians of the Central Province working in that country as regards the future unification of salesian work. He also had a meeting with the Superior of the Vice-province of Southern Africa and the Provincial Delegate for Zambia. He went on to make a week's visit to Mozambique to obtain first-hand information concerning the Church and the Congregation after the peace agreement signed in Rome in October 1992. He noted the positive development of salesian activity towards a clearer idea of the identity of Don Bosco's charism. He also discussed

with the Salesians the future of Project Africa, with particular reference to their own specific area.

At the end of May Fr Odorico visited the salesian works in Burundi and Rwanda. He found, unfortunately, that the political and social situation in Rwanda remains very delicate, and this has its effect on the missionary development of our work. Nevertheless the commitment and dedication of the confreres remains at a high level, especially for the benefit of those most in need. With the assembled confreres he discussed the development of Project Africa.

On 29 May he returned to Rome via Brussels.

The Economist General

Fr Omero Paron was in Latin America from 9-31 March for a meeting with the provincial economists of the Pacific-Caribbean Region at Yucáy, Peru.

He took the opportunity to see the salesian works in San Salvador (Central American Province) and Caracas (Venezuela). He also visited some communities in the Provinces of Medellín and Bogotá (Colombia); he then spent most of the time in Peru, with a brief visit to Bolivia. He concluded with a rapid visit to the Chilean Province.

From 15-17 April he accompanied Fr Nicolussi in the extraordinary visi-

tation of the UPS Vice-province, in connection with financial and administrative problems.

At the invitation of the Provinces of Venice and Verona, he went on 25 April to Bevadoro (Padua) for the commemoration of the centenary of the birth of Fr Renato Ziggotti, 5th Successor of Don Bosco.

On 7 May Fr Paron made a flying visit to Hungary: first to the FMA at Mogyoród and then to O'Buda where the final preparations were being made for the inauguration of the postnovitiate. The following two days he spent at Bratislava, Slovakia, in connection with the future work at Petržalka.

Finally, with the confreres of the Venetian Province of St Mark he made a pilgrimage on May 20 to Maria Wörther in Austria, and was present at Cumiana, Italy, for the community feastday at the end of the scholastic year.

The Councillor for the Atlantic Region of Latin America

At the end of the plenary session of the General Council, Fr Carlos Techera left for South America to begin the extraordinary visitation of the Buenos Aires Province in Argentina.

He went at once to Tierra del Fuego where the confreres working in Southern Patagonia were concluding a week of ongoing formation; he

also received the religious profession of a young confrere in practical training.

Thus began the visitation at the salesian mission of "Nuestra Señora de la Candelaria" (now an agricultural and technical school) at Rio Grande, at present in its centenary year. He then went on to the other communities of Tierra del Fuego and the Santa Cruz province, before arriving at Buenos Aires where the majority of the works of the Buenos Aires Province are situated.

During the visitation he also carried out the consultation for the appointment of the new Provincial for the Province of La Plata.

On 19 March, Solemnity of St Joseph, he returned to Patagonia to Comodoro Rivadavia, to be present at the episcopal ordination of Mgr Pietro Ronchino. The Archbishop of Buenos Aires presided at the function, in the presence of the Apostolic Nuncio, and with several Bishops (some of them Salesians) and many priests concelebrating. This was the first episcopal ordination to take place in Patagonia, an event of more than usual significance since this was the land dreamt of by Don Bosco for the work of his first missionaries.

From 19-21 April the Regional Councillor presided over a meeting of the Brazilian Provincial Conference at Porto Alegre; the main theme of the meeting was social communication,

with the guidance of Frs Carlos Garulo and Patrick Egan. Other topics discussed were the "team visit", the suggestion to hold a meeting of retreat preachers, the national commission for formation, the missions of Rio Negro, and other items.

He then went on to Cabana, Argentina, from 24-26 April to preside over the Plata Provincial Conference with the same agenda concerning social communication. Here too other topics were discussed, including the coming visit of the Economist General, a meeting of retreat preachers (to be animated like the one in Brazil by Fr Vecchi), the study of salesianity in the initial formation phase, the activities in ongoing formation at Conca del Plata, etc.

The meeting of the Provincial Conference was followed at Córdoba by a meeting of the SDB and FMA Provincials of Argentina to examine problems of common interest.

The extraordinary visitation of the Buenos Aires Province ended with meetings with the teams and animating groups at provincial level and with a meeting with the provincial councillors and rectors, at which gratitude was expressed to God for all the good done by the confreres, a point specifically mentioned by the various Bishops whom the Councillor was able to meet.

Fr Techera returned to Rome on 22 May to make his retreat and take part in the June-July plenary session

of the General Council.

The Councillor for the Pacific-Caribbean Region of Latin America

Fr Guillermo Garcia began his first journey of 1993 on 8 February, going first to Tlaquepaque at Guadalajara in Mexico to greet the students of theology from Ecuador, where he was later to carry out the extraordinary visitation.

As always when passing through Mexico, he was able to dialogue briefly with the two Provincials: Fr Pascual Chávez at Guadalajara and Fr Francisco Javier Altamirano at Mexico City.

Next he went on to the Republic of El Salvador where he had a meeting with the new Provincial, Fr Heriberto Herrera, and his council; they singled out some strategies of work for the coming six years. One point was a reaffirmation of the decision to proceed with the realization of a project for a house of formation to follow the practical training period for coadjutors from all twelve Provinces of the Region. Fr Garcia visited the proposed site, which is near the "Ciudadela Don Bosco".

Continuing his journey to Ecuador, he stopped for a few hours at San José de Costa Rica, to greet the two salesian communities.

From 14 February to 22 May the Regional Councillor concentrated all his attention on the extraordinary vi-

situation of the 40 communities of the Province of Ecuador.

Together with a geographic configuration that varies widely from one place to another, this Province presents also a panorama of salesian work that is equally broad and diversified. In each of the forty communities, some of them linked with other presences, excellent programmes and activities are carried on with true dedication and fidelity, several of them highly original.

Among other things the missionary vigour of the Province is such as to create enthusiasm; almost half of the communities and a third of the confreres are working for the Quechua, the Shuar and Ashuar, and among the Afro-Ecuadorians. The Province of Ecuador has always had a well-defined missionary physiognomy! The Vicariate of Mendez, which had Mgr James Costamagna for its first Vicar Apostolic, is celebrating this year its first centenary.

Worthy of note too is the large number of works of a popular, educational and promotional kind, among which are those for young workers and for street children and those at risk. The latter programme involves various young people, even from abroad, as volunteers who dedicate at least a year of their life to this apostolic service, prompted by their own christian faith.

The specifically educational works

are the most numerous, with these too giving attention to poor youngsters. There are even schools carried on by radio, with bilingual educational programmes that extend to an ever greater number of neglected and abandoned areas of the country, especially the native areas.

Impressive too is the publishing work covering all fields: education, catechetics, biblical studies, pastoral work, family matters, youth topics, liturgy, anthropology, etc.

Noteworthy also is the presence of some salesian professors in the Catholic University of Quito, and also in ecclesial organisms. At the moment the President of the CIEC (Inter-American Federation of Catholic Schools) is a Salesian from the Ecuador Province.

During the visitation the grave catastrophe occurred that was caused by the detachment of a piece of a mountain which fell on the Rio Paute, burying numerous inhabitants, roads and communication services, as well as widespread cultivated areas; the territory of our agricultural school at Uzhupud was buried, as also that of the neighbouring house of Yugmacay. The Rector Major immediately sent a letter of support and encouragement to the confreres, offering salesian solidarity in so great a disaster. Any assistance sent to the confreres will help to relieve the situation, which will inevitably remain very

difficult for a long time to come.

Fr Garcia suspended the visitation one week before the end of April, so as to be able to take part with the Provincials and representatives of every Province of the Region in a meeting arranged at Copacabana (Medellin) to examine more deeply the Santo Domingo document. The purpose was to consider the salesian aspects and applications of the conclusions of the Fourth Assembly of Latin-American Bishops, thus enriching the directives of the GC23 and sensitizing once again the Provinces of the Region in the work of educating young people to the faith.

After the final meeting with the provincial council that closed the visitation, Fr Garcia returned to Rome, stopping for two days at Santafé di Bogotá to meet with the provincial council and the members of an ad hoc commission that had been set up to make a theological, pastoral and financial study of the work of the Sanctuary and Parish of the "Infant Jesus" in the "20th July" quarter of the city. The purpose of the study is to see how best to profit by the popular nature of this devotion, which in a few years has spread far and wide in almost the whole of the Latin-American continent, and harness its energy for the evangelization of the Latin-American peoples.

The Economist General too, Fr Omero Paron, was in Bogotá in the

month of March and had contributed valid elements for a clear focusing of the work being done, in which the Congregation has a particular interest because of the importance of popular Catholic devotion in Latin America at the present time.

The Councillor for the English-speaking Region

Between 12 February and 1 May Fr Martin McPake carried out the extraordinary visitation of the Irish Province, which also includes the Provincial Delegation of Malta, i.e. the salesian work in Malta and Tunisia.

At the time of the preceding visitation the Province also included the part of Africa which has since become the Vice-province of Southern Africa. At that time too we were not present in the Islamic country of Tunis. It is interesting to note the modifications brought about in the Province by this change in the geographical physiognomy: there is now greater diversification in the works, one school has been transferred to the management of lay people, many of whom were formed by the Salesians and are now running the school in accordance with our educational system.

The most noteworthy innovation, however, is the work at Manouba in

Tunis where, over a period of four years, our Maltese confreres have become established and are already recognized and esteemed. Under the guidance of the new Bishop, Mgr Fouad Twal, they are cooperating well in the building up of a sense of solidarity among the various missionaries scattered here and there through the country. One of the Salesians has been invited by the Bishop to become a member of the Priests' Council. It is by no means easy to find confreres for this new initiative, but today the community numbers four members.

Both Ireland and Malta are among the most Catholic of countries, but each of them has its difficulties, especially for the scarcity of vocations; there are nevertheless initiatives which inculcate hope for the future. The pastoral projects are sound and promising. If they are put into practice with vigour and enthusiasm, not only will they eliminate the present difficulties but they can provide the basis for a new launching of our apostolate.

The Councillor for the Asian Region

Fr Thomas Panakezham left Rome on 6 February for the Provincial Delegation based in New Delhi, where he carried out the extraordinary visitation. Although the Dele-

gation forms part of the Province of Calcutta, the Visitor thought it well to make the visitation of this part separately, given the vast geographic extension of the Province. Next August the visitation will be continued of the rest of the Calcutta Province.

The Delegation has 43 confreres and 12 salesian foundations. The territory is conspicuously missionary, with great hopes for native vocations. While the Salesians look after Catholics already converted since the time of Fr Levens, a famous Belgian missionary, they try to become involved too in the work of first evangelization. It is consoling to find Catholics truly attached to the faith, who participate in the Mass and in other Church services with a good deal of sacrifice. In general they are poor from a social standpoint but rich in christian faith. The confreres are generous, self-sacrificing and dedicated to missionary work.

From 7-9 March the Regional took part in a meeting of the Salesian Conference of the Indian Provincials (SCPI), in which some of the points discussed were the team visit which will take place at Hyderabad in November 1994, coordination of formation at local level, and the appointment of a delegate for missionary animation at national level.

On 10 March Fr Panakezham left

for Bangkok, Thailand, where he was able to visit some of the communities and the place to which the Provincial Office will be transferred. He then accompanied the Rector Major on his brief visit to Thailand, and on his subsequent visits to Vietnam (16-22 March) and Hong Kong (22-24 March).

After the Rector Major had left to return to Rome, the Regional went to Osaka in Japan to begin the extraordinary visitation of that Province. The visitation lasted from 25 March to 16 May. The Japanese Province has 25 foundations and a total of 136 confreres (with an average age of 59 years). An important point is that the majority of the confreres are Japanese, and there are a good number of novices: a remarkable fact when one recalls that Japan has only 400,000 Catholics. In the Province there is an extraordinary spirit of work, with much self-dedication, committed pastoral work for vocations, and a strong desire for missionary work.

After finishing the visitation, the Regional made a brief visit to Korea on 22 May to meet the communities. An important initiative there is the setting up of a new place for the novitiate at Daejon, 180 km. from Seoul. There are eight novices, and the new site gives them the possibility of contact with young people.

On 23 May Fr Panakezhm returned to Rome.

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

At the end of January a worsening was foreseen of the political situation in Zaire. All flights to the country had already been suspended. Fr Dominic Britschu managed nevertheless to land at Kinshasa a few hours before the total closure of all frontiers. In the capital, part of the army had revolted while inside the country scenes of violence and pillage were multiplying. Despite all this the Regional Councillor managed to take part in the celebrations in honour of the new Bishop of Kilwa-Kasenga, Mgr. Jean-Pierre Tafunga, formerly the first African salesian provincial.

On his return to Lubumbashi Fr Britschu installed Fr Mario Valente as the new Provincial. Unfortunately the lack of security on the roads and the inclemency of the weather restricted him to contacts with only the houses in the neighbourhood of Lubumbashi itself. In the Studentate of Theology he presided at a meeting of the Council of Administration, with half of its members absent – they had been refused permission to enter the country.

On his return to Europe the Regional made brief contacts with the Provinces of Austria, Hungary and Slovakia. Then, between 27 March and 30 May, he made the extraordinary visitation of the 22 houses and 300 confreres of the Southern Ger-

man Province. The visitation suffered three interruptions:

- From 30 April to 3 May to allow the Regional to preside at the Interprovincial Conference of German-speaking Provinces at Prague, in the old house of Kobylisy recently restored to the Salesian Congregation. Ten Provincials of the Region took part, accompanied by the Vice-provincial in each case.

- On 23 and 24 May for a meeting at Groot Bijgaarden in Belgium of animators of youth pastoral work at European level.

- Finally, almost as a conclusion to the visitation, the Regional took part in the great annual pilgrimage of the Salesian Family of Germany to the Marian Shrine of Rottenbuch.

On 31 May, Fr Britschu returned to Rome for the plenary session of the General Council, while maintaining his contacts and support for the Provinces of the Region.

The Regional Councillor for Italy and the Middle East

After the winter session of the General Council, Fr Giovanni Fedrigotti took part from 7-11 February in the team visit to the Italian Provinces at the Generalate, and on the following day presided at a meeting of the CISI to consider the results of the team visit.

On 14 February he was present at

a meeting at Frascati of those responsible for SDB and FMA schools in Italy, and at another on the 28th at the Generalate with the participants in a national congress on youth pastoral work. The rest of February was given over to the concluding of the extraordinary visitation of the Sicilian Province and final meetings with the Provincial Council.

From 2 March to 28 May the Regional was engaged in the extraordinary visitation of the Middle-East Province. Of this the principal phases were as follows:

- *2-14 March: Ethiopia and Eritrea.* A friendly visit was made to the houses of the South, entrusted to the Milan Province (Dilla, Zway and Addis Ababa), with more time then given to the houses of the North (Addis Ababa, Makallé, Adigrat, Adwa) which belong to the Middle-East Province.

He had an audience with the Archbishop of Addis Ababa, Cardinal Tzadua, who would like to have a great salesian work in that city, which is rapidly becoming a metropolis. He also spoke with the Bishop of Adigrat, Mgr. Kidane Mariam, who wants us to work in the town of Adwa from next autumn. He had a conversation too with the Archbishop of Asmara, who is interested in having a salesian foundation in Eritrea.

- *14-30 March: Egypt.* After visiting the salesian houses of Cairo

(Rod El Farag and Zeitun) and Alexandria, the Regional went to Upper Egypt (at present under siege because of the dangers posed by the fundamentalists), to see the sites of proposed foundations, in dialogue with the Bishop, Mgr. Morkos. Attention is concentrated on Tachta and Sohag.

– 30 March - 6 April: *Lebanon*. The Visitor met with the Nuncio, the Vicar Apostolic (Mgr. Bassim), and the Maronite Bishop of Jbeil (Mgr. Rai), who talked at length about the foundation at Biblos/Jbeil of a professional school which would be complementary to the work at El Houssoun.

– 6-22 April: *Syria*. Fr Fedrigotti met the Greek Catholic Bishop with whom our work at Aleppo is connected. He also met the Armenian Bishop (Mgr Malayati) with whom we collaborate in Kamishly; the Chaldean Bishop (Mgr Odo), with whom we work in service to the community of Derrik, near the Tigris; the Bishop of Tartus, who asks us for a greater support of the community of the "Valley of the Christians" and of Kafroun. The Visitor then went down to Damascus where he presided at the inauguration of a new salesian oratory in the city; it has been entrusted to the FMA who continue to collaborate with us.

– 22-30 April: *Iran*. After being received in audience by the Aposto-

lic Nuncio (Mgr Panciroli) and by Mgr Bedini SDB, the Visitor became aware that, despite the difficulties, the confreres are carrying out a most valuable pastoral work. The community at Teheran, which lives in close collaboration with the Bishop and Nuncio, can dedicate itself only to the care of the Christians (most of them foreigners) in the city or in the labour camps of the South.

– 30 April - 5 May: *Istanbul*. In a conversation with the Vicar Apostolic (Mgr Pelâtre), the latter expressed his gratitude for the salesian presence, which animates the parish of the Latin Cathedral, manages a school and oratory, and looks after various chaplaincies.

– 6-28 May: *the Holy Land*. The Visitor was received by the Bishop who is the Vicar of the Patriarch at Nazareth (Mgr Caldany); by the Apostolic Delegate (Mgr Cordero di Montezemolo); and by the Latin Patriarch (Mgr Michel Sabbah), who expressed his great appreciation for the ceding by the Salesians of eight hectares of vineyards which the Patriarch will use for the benefit of the Christians of Bethlehem.

After visiting the four salesian communities (in the order: Nazareth, Cremisan, Beitgemal and Bethlehem), Fr Fedrigotti had a meeting with the Provincial Council to conclude the extraordinary visi-

tation. He returned to Rome on May 28.

On Sunday, 30 May, Pentecost Sunday, with Fr Maraccani and Fr Liberatore, he represented the Rector Major and General Council at the celebrations for the episcopal ordination of Fr Vincenzo Savio, which took place in the Church of "Santa Maria del Soccorso" at Leghorn. Bishop Savio had been Rector of the community of Alassio, and had been appointed Auxiliary to the Bishop of Leghorn, Mgr Ablondi, with a special task for the "Synod of the young".

The Regional Councillor for Spain and Portugal

During the period from January to May 1993, Fr Rodriguez Tallón made the extraordinary visitation of the León Province in Spain.

For health reasons he was not able to go, as he had wished, to Senegal, and the visitation of these missionary foundations was done by Fr Luis Maria Oliveras, Delegate of the Provincials for West Africa.

The visitation of León began with a meeting with the Provincial Council on 5 March.

On 23 and 24 March the Regional took part in a session of the Iberian Provincial Conference which dealt with several important themes, e.g. that of interprovincial solidarity. For the first time Fr Luis Maria Oli-

veras was present, and gave a report on the various works in West Africa as he saw them in the first months of his work as coordinator. Also present for part of the session was the Provincial of Mexico-Guadalajara, because the work in Guinea-Conakry (carried out by confreres from Guadalajara) forms part of the task of coordination of the Delegate for West Africa. Another item considered by the Iberian Conference was a study presented by a firm of specialists on the manner of organizing the Salesian Catechetical Centre to make it more effective from a publishing standpoint.

The Regional spent the weekend 26-28 March in Portugal to set on foot the consultation for the appointment of the new Provincial and to participate in the final day of the Salesian National Games at Vila do Conde.

Taking up the visitation again he joined groups from all the houses of the Province in a salesian pilgrimage to St James of Compostela to gain the indulgence attached to this special Year of St James. More than 2,000 persons took part between young, middle-aged and old, and some did the last few miles on foot, the traditional way of arriving at this place of pilgrimage; through the centuries it has brought together citizens from all over Europe to confirm their faith by "embrac-

ing" the holy Apostle and receiving the "great pardon".

On May 21 the Visitor had a meeting with the Provincial Council to communicate to them his impressions at the end of the visitation, and on the following day had a meeting with the Rectors for the same purpose.

On May 24, Feast of Mary Help of Christians, he took part in the collegial celebrations in León and, after lunch, left the Province for Madrid, where two days later he had a meeting with the Governing Body of the Catechetical Centre and the new Council of Administration, to examine the details of the changeover in the running of the enterprise; it was necessary to specify when the responsibilities of the former administrators ended and those of the new ones began.

On 30 May he was at Villena, Alicante, for the external solemnity of the Feast of Mary Help of Christians. This town had been visited some weeks earlier by the Rector Major for the celebration of the 75th anniversary of the beginnings of salesian work there. In the Eucharist and procession the people gave thanks to Our Lady for all the good that had been realized through those years and asked her continuing help for the years to come.

On 31 May the Regional returned to Rome for the plenary session of the General Council.

The Rector Major's Delegate for Poland

Immediately after his arrival in Poland in early February, Fr Augustyn Dziedziel presided over the regular meeting of the Consulting Group of the Polish Provinces (the four SDB and two FMA Provincials), to pass on information and guidelines from the Centre and for the programming of various activities at national level.

Later, in the period from February to May he carried out the extraordinary visitation of the Southern Province of Poland, with headquarters at Cracow.

During the visitation he held meetings with confreres and groups, including some from the countries of the former Soviet Union; he took part in various functions and had meetings for animation with various groups of the Salesian Family. A significant encounter was one with the "Savionalia" Youth Congress at Cracow.

At the end of the visitation he had a further meeting with the combined SDB and FMA Provincials for a verification of the service of animation and coordination rendered by the National Delegates responsible for various sectors of activities.

The Secretary General

In February and March 1993, Fr Francesco Maraccani, by mandate

of the Rector Major, carried out the extraordinary visitation of the Vice-province of Sardinia.

The visitation began on Sunday, 14 February, with his participation in the "Adolescents Day" of the Salesian Youth Movement, celebrated at Sanluri, and with a first contact with the local councils of Cooperators meeting in the same town.

On the following day, after a meeting with the Provincial Council, Fr Maraccani began the visitation of the individual communities, beginning with that of 'Don Bosco' at Cagliari, an educational and scholastic work with various activities and enjoying great esteem in that city.

As he passed from one house to another the Visitor was able to note at first hand the difficult situation through which Sardinia is living from both a social and religious point of view because of the great changes that have come about. At the same time he was able to see how much the Salesians are doing with great dedication and sacrifice through their works for the young and the poor, which are highly appreciated by both the local people and the local Churches (as the Visitor was told by all the Bishops he met). The communities in different areas, with some of the latter in places of great need, e.g. Sassarese, Nuorese and others, commit themselves to providing a response to the

ever greater needs of young people at the present day.

Difficulties and problems are not lacking, prominent among them being the scarcity of new vocations and the lack of an incisive and involving pastoral work for the young. In the pastoral plan drawn up by their recent Chapter the Salesians have committed themselves to redefining the significance of their presence in the light of the new evangelization and according to Don Bosco's charism. This is the line they are now following.

After visiting all the communities the Secretary General brought the visitation to an end on 5 April with a meeting with the Council of the Vice-province. In the course of the visitation there had also been two meetings with the Rectors and various contacts with the FMA and other groups of the Salesian Family, whose members work together in a true spirit of communion.

On 6 April Fr Maraccani returned to Rome. Later, in a brief visit to Sardinia on 15-16 May, he was able to preside at a ceremony at Cagliari - San Paolo, when four new Cooperators made the Promise, and take part in the pilgrimage of the members of the Salesian Youth Movement to the shrine of "Santa Maria ad Acquas" near Sardara: a joyful and inspiring youthful manifestation of love for the Madonna!

5.1 Canonical erection of the Institute of Social Communication Sciences at the UPS

The following is the text of the Decree of the Congregation for Catholic Education, officially erecting the Institute of Social Communication Sciences at the UPS.

"The Catholic Church was founded by Christ our Lord to bring salvation to all men. It feels obliged, therefore, to preach the gospel. In the same way, it believes that its task involves employing the means of social communication to announce the good news of salvation and to teach men how to use them properly" (*Inter mirifica*, n. 3).

No one is unaware that such means, especially in our own day, take on an extraordinary importance, because of their nature "they can reach and influence not merely single individuals but the very masses, and even the whole of human society" (*ibid.* n. 1).

The Very Reverend Grand Chancellor of the Pontifical Salesian University who, following the example of St John Bosco, watches with diligent care over so vitally important a phenomenon, has petitioned the

Congregation for Catholic Education for the erection in the same University of the Institute of Social Communication Sciences, after assuring the Congregation that all the necessary provisions have been properly made for its erection as an academic faculty.

In order that greater incisiveness may be given to the formation of experts who can use these instruments correctly and with full mastery, this Congregation, after carefully weighing every factor and seeking advice of those competent in the sector, in consideration of its letter of 17 December 1988 gladly accedes to the request in accordance with art.61 of the Apostolic Constitution "Sapientia Christiana", and erects and declares erected by virtue of this Decree, in the Pontifical Salesian University

THE INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL COMMUNICATION SCIENCES,

granting to it the faculty of conferring the academic degrees of Licentiate and Doctorate on properly inscribed members of the Institute who have already received the Baccalaureate in Sacred Theology or who have obtained an equivalent academic degree in accordance

with the Statutes, once they have completed the required study curriculum, and have observed the general Statutes of the University and the particular norms of the same Institute, approved by this Congregation, and after obeying all the other necessary norms and meeting with no other difficulties.

Given at Rome, in the Offices of the Congregation, 9 March 1993.

Pio Cardinal Laghi
Prefect

José Saraiva Martins
Secretary

5.2 New Salesian Bishop

Mgr Vincenzo SAVIO, Auxiliary Bishop of Leghorn, Italy.

On 15 April 1993 the news was published that the Holy Father had appointed *Fr Vincenzo SAVIO SDB* Titular Bishop of Garriana and Auxiliary of the Bishop of Leghorn.

Vincenzo Savio was born on 6 April 1944 at Osio di Sotto in the province of Bergamo. In 1955 he entered the salesian aspirantate of Strada Cosentino, Arezzo, where he did his early studies. He was later admitted to the novitiate at Pietrasanta, Lucca, and made his religious profession as a Salesian on 16 August 1961. After studying philos-

ophy at Nave, Brescia, and the period of practical training, he followed the theological course in Rome, first at the Salesian Pontifical University and then at the Lateran University. He was ordained priest in the Basilica of the Sacred Heart, Rome, on 25 March 1972.

After ordination he was assigned first to Savona (1972-76) as vocational animator and director of the oratory, and then to Leghorn where he first spent a year in the boarding section and was then parish priest of the salesian parish of the Sacred Heart from 1977 to 1985. During this period he also served as secretary of the Leghorn diocesan Synod.

From 1985 to 1986 he completed his theological and spiritual formation in Rome at the Salesian Pontifical University, obtaining the Licentiate in Theology with specialization in spirituality.

Returning to his province he was assigned to Florence as youth animator in the salesian parish of the Holy Family, and in 1987 was appointed by Cardinal Silvano Piovanelli, Archbishop of Florence, secretary general of the Florentine Synod.

He took part in the GC23 as delegate of his province and was afterwards appointed Rector of the community of Alassio, an office he held at the time of his appointment as Bishop.

5.5 Our dead confreres (1993 - 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." (C 94)

| NAME | PLACE | DATE | AGE | PROV. |
|--|-----------------------|----------|-----|-------|
| P ABBONDANZA Vincenzo | Anzi | 16-03-93 | 44 | IME |
| P AMIL Michel | Nice | 16-06-93 | 81 | FLY |
| P AVENATTI Ferdinando | Torino | 30-04-93 | 81 | ICE |
| E BARBOSA Antonio | São Paulo | 03-05-93 | 82 | — |
| <i>Fu Ispettore per 6 anni, per 35 anni Vescovo, di cui 28 anni come Arcivescovo di Campo Grande</i> | | | | |
| P BASSINI Colodetti Gervasio | Vitória | 30-04-93 | 76 | BBH |
| P BAVA Mario | Torino | 07-04-93 | 72 | ILE |
| <i>Fu Ispettore per 6 anni</i> | | | | |
| P BESIO Aldo | Savona | 12-03-93 | 86 | ILT |
| P BISWAS Cajetan | Calcutta | 07-05-93 | 67 | INC |
| P BITTOLO Umberto | Tolmezzo | 19-05-93 | 85 | IVE |
| P BONOMI Agostino Elio | Addis Abeba (Etiopia) | 13-05-93 | 50 | ILE |
| P BORGH Wilhelm | Calhorn | 07-04-93 | 80 | GEK |
| L BORUCH Stanisław | Carrasquero | 11-04-93 | 55 | VEN |
| L BROGGIATO Giovanni | Udine | 11-03-93 | 89 | IVE |
| P CHUDÁREK Rudolf | Lipník nad Bečvou | 29-05-93 | 72 | CEP |
| P COLOMBINI Gaetano | Varazze | 28-03-93 | 78 | ILT |
| L DEMEL Mojmir | Moravec | 19-03-93 | 81 | CEP |
| P DEMMI Alfonso | Catania | 19-03-93 | 76 | ISI |
| P DESIMONE Roberto | Mendoza | 18-03-93 | 83 | ACO |
| S DIGHERO HERNANDEZ Nery | Guatemala | 08-03-93 | 22 | CAM |
| L DOMASZAK Tadeus | Viamão | 06-05-93 | 65 | BPA |
| P ERRATH Jacobus Peter | Cochabamba | 16-03-93 | 77 | BOL |
| <i>Fu Ispettore per 2 anni</i> | | | | |
| P FERNANDEZ PANAMEÑO Narciso | Santa Tecla | 23-04-93 | 87 | CAM |
| P FERRERO GRAMAGLIA José | Vignaud | 15-06-93 | 91 | ARO |
| P FRANK Alejandro | Córdoba | 30-04-93 | 82 | ACO |
| P FUZYNSKI Andrzej | Różanystok | 10-06-93 | 81 | PLE |
| P GARCIA CANTOS Emilio | Rota (Cádiz) | 05-01-93 | 66 | SSE |
| P GAUDILLIERE René | Praz-Coutant | 04-05-93 | 84 | FPA |
| P GHISONI Luigi | Cuiabá | 24-04-93 | 86 | BCG |
| L GIOIA Giovanni | São Paulo | 20-03-93 | 75 | BSP |
| P GIOVANNINI Ernesto | Watsonville | 14-03-93 | 88 | SUO |
| <i>Fu Ispettore per 14 anni e Consigliere del Consiglio Superiore per 13 anni</i> | | | | |

| NAME | PLACE | DATE | AGE | PROV. |
|---|--------------------|----------|-----|-------|
| P GULEŠIĆ Franjo | Prvic Luka | 24-05-93 | 92 | CRO |
| P GWIŹDŹ Franciszek | Kraków | 21-06-93 | 59 | PLS |
| P HIDALGO CORIA Joaquín | Puebla | 15-04-93 | 74 | MEM |
| P HIRA John Sushil | Calcutta | 17-05-93 | 58 | INC |
| P JANSSEN Christian | Bonheiden (Belgio) | 08-04-93 | 79 | AFC |
| L KUGLIN Henryk | Oświęcim | 18-05-93 | 81 | |
| E LEHAEN Frans | Bonheiden (Belgio) | 25-04-93 | 85 | — |
| <i>Fu Ispettore per 6 anni, Vescovo per 34 anni (per 14 anni Vicario Apostolico di Sakania)</i> | | | | |
| P MANENTE Giacomo | Mogliano Veneto | 08-04-93 | 82 | IVE |
| P MATURANA Pino Augusto | Santiago del Cile | 17-06-93 | 81 | CIL |
| P MEDICA Giacomo | Varazze | 25-04-93 | 82 | ICE |
| P MONTECCHIAN Walter | Torino | 08-06-93 | 44 | ISU |
| P MUŁA Eugeniusz | Kraków | 31-03-93 | 58 | PLS |
| L MUÑOZ MARTINEZ Clariso | Santiago del Cile | 07-04-93 | 96 | CIL |
| L MÜLLER Heinrich | Steinebach | 08-06-93 | 50 | GEM |
| P NACHER LLUESA Ricardo | Valencia | 19-03-93 | 90 | SVA |
| L ORYSIUK Jan | Gloucester | 27-04-93 | 77 | GBR |
| P PAIXÃO da SILVEIRA Antonio | Salvador | 07-04-93 | 80 | BRE |
| L PECNIK Stanislaus | Muhldorf am Inn | 16-04-93 | 80 | GEM |
| P PERIS MUÑOZ Vicente | Guayaquil | 16-03-93 | 85 | ECU |
| L PICCINNO Virgilio | Manduria | 17-05-93 | 62 | IME |
| P PILATO Raimondo | Catania | 28-05-93 | 75 | ISI |
| L POLATO Guerrino | Muzzano Biellese | 11-03-93 | 73 | INE |
| P PÓS Edgard | Belo Horizonte | 18-05-93 | 62 | BBH |
| P PUYADENA GARMENDIA Luis | Azkoitia | 21-06-93 | 66 | SBI |
| <i>Fu Ispettore per 6 anni</i> | | | | |
| P RESTELLI Emilio | Varazze | 02-04-93 | 77 | ILT |
| L REY PALLARES Marcelino | Barcelona | 23-03-93 | 74 | SBA |
| P ROCHE Joseph | Toulon | 20-06-93 | 83 | FLY |
| L ROLO de ALMEIDA Dario | Manique do Estoril | 09-04-93 | 82 | POR |
| P ROSA Vittorio | Sesto San Giovanni | 15-06-93 | 73 | ILE |
| P TISCORNIA Jorge | Buenos Aires | 07-03-93 | 78 | ABA |
| P TRAVERSO Arnaldo | Montevideo | 12-06-93 | 72 | URU |
| P VALLINO Rinaldo | Roma | 26-04-93 | 67 | RMG |
| <i>Fu Ispettore per 6 anni</i> | | | | |
| P VASCONCELLOS VIEIRA José | Barbacena | 18-03-93 | 76 | BBH |
| P VELLE Steven | Gent | 14-04-93 | 29 | BEN |
| P VERRI Camillo | Torino | 13-04-93 | 78 | ISU |
| P WEHT Jorge | San Justo | 30-04-93 | 83 | ABA |
| P WELZEL Franz | Calhorn | 21-04-93 | 87 | GEK |
| P ZVER Joze | Roma | 19-03-93 | 79 | UPS |

