

acts

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of the Salesian Society
of St John Bosco**

OFFICIAL ORGAN OF ANIMATION^g AND COMMUNICATION FOR THE SALESIAN CONGREGATION

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1. LETTER OF THE RECTOR MAJOR

IN THE YEAR OF THE FAMILY

- Introduction - Challenges of the new evangelization - Difficulties at the present day - the Pope's letter to families - The great mystery - The genealogy of the person - Formation and animation of the marriage covenant - Sexual education - Preparation for marriage - Don Bosco's charism and the family - The Holy Family of Nazareth.

Rome, Solemnity of the Sacred Heart
10 June 1994

My dear confreres,

In recent months I have been able to see for myself the goodness shown us by the Lord in various parts of the world. In some places he is helping us to begin with great drive and energy – as for instance in different countries of the former Soviet Union. In others he is giving growth and strength to our fidelity to Don Bosco with courageous creativity – as in Paraguay, Argentina, Brazil, Spain and Italy, from which I have just returned. Long journeys of animation and communion have been involved, some of them dedicated to Team Visits which, in Argentina and Brazil, have revealed the extraordinary quality of the first roots laid down by Don Bosco himself with far-sighted decisions and noble courage.

Whether one looks to the future (as in Russia) or contemplates the development of the seed sown

in earlier times (in Latin America, Spain and Italy), one has a vivid feeling of the Lord's predilection, and we give thanks to the Risen Christ ascended into heaven who continually sends upon us the Holy Spirit with his power and creativity, with his unique plan of saving truth for shedding light on the epoch-making changes involving the New Evangelization.

The Congregation in the world is clearly experiencing the action of the Holy Spirit. He is preserving its vivacious charismatic nature through renewal and enterprising beginnings, as though Don Bosco were living at the present day in the various geographical situations so as to respond generously to the requirements of needy youth. At least this is how it has seemed in the countries I have recently visited.

Together with this vitality of growth, the Spirit is leading us to an ever better understanding of the mystery of the cross, and to feel ourselves disciples of Christ with in our hearts even a readiness for martyrdom.

With feelings of intense solidarity we are accompanying in spirit our confreres of Rwanda and are following with distress but also with hope the terrible lot of the Rwandese people, and especially the young; and we ask the Holy Spirit to show us soon some practical way in which we can help and establish a new presence in that beloved country.

Let us all feel called to pray, to renew ourselves, to share in their sacrifices, and to give our collaboration.

Challenges of the new evangelization

As you know, dear confreres, in society and in the Church we are at present in the *Year of the Family*. I have wondered what exactly this means for us. And I feel that I must invite you to reflect with me on its importance and on the demands it implies for our educative and pastoral renewal.

Why did the United Nations Organization proclaim 1994 the *International Year of the Family*? It was surely to emphasize the fact that the question of the family is a fundamental one for every State.

The Church has welcomed the initiative with joy and has given to it official adherence: on the feast of the Holy Family of 1993 (26 December) at Nazareth, in a solemn celebration presided over by a Papal Legate, the Church announced its association with this enterprise which is so vital for the ecclesial community in the world.

In the past months we have witnessed many activities which have concentrated our attention on the family at the present day, and many salesian provinces have realized praiseworthy initiatives in this connection.

Will this somewhat general sensitization be sufficient? The matter of the family is too important for us to allow it to finish with the ending of this particular Year. We must rather consider 1994 as a window opening onto vast horizons which touch on the relevance of our charism and suggest many new and urgent aspects of our mission of New Evangelization.

It is opportune therefore that we consider seriously how this theme of the family impinges deeply on our process of renewal. It will help us to

feel ourselves more deeply "at the heart of the Church"¹ and more solidly united "with the world and its history".² The Holy Spirit has raised us up among the People of God with a specific task of pastoral work for the young. We know very well, and we have said it on several occasions, that no authentic pastoral work for the young is possible without a practical and interrelated pastoral work for the family.

¹ C 6
² C 7

We have to ask ourselves: can an educator at the present day form the person of his youngsters without deepening, clarifying and reliving family values? Is a new evangelization possible in the Church without taking up in depth and in new ways the themes of sexuality, marriage and conjugal life?

Difficulties at the present day

Much is heard nowadays about broken families, even though the breakdown is generally short of total. It is true that a glance around us reveals a sad situation. The crisis strikes us the more when we think back to our own families of years ago, replete with Christian love, overflowing with life and witnessing to wisdom in simplicity. Certainly times have changed and there is need to rethink the manner of married life, provided always that the perennial nature of the family be not destroyed.

If we look at certain new forms of living together, at the elastic nature of the marriage bond so much emphasized in the mass media, at the alarming fall in the birth-rate, at the permissive mentality concerning abortion, at the continual in-

crease of "orphans with living parents", and even the legal recognition of homosexual couples, it is not difficult to understand why there is reluctance to define or describe an official concept of the family for legal or social use: many people do not accept that the family is founded on the conjugal love of a man and a woman united in indissoluble marriage as a sanctuary of life. But if the family loses its identity it can be no longer considered as the fundamental cell of society.

The GC23 recalled that: "At the present day many families in different contexts are passing through a grave crisis marked by a weakening of internal bonds and an exaggerated desire for autonomy. Many young people are suffering the consequences of this kind of family breakdown, caused by infidelity, superficial relationships, divorce, distress, alcoholism and drugs. A growing number of people are psychologically unprepared to be fathers or mothers, and are incapable of showing affection for their partner or their children. Situations like these create in many young people serious consequences which appear as an enormous affective inadequacy, insecurity, maladjustment, and the risk of aberrancy".³

³ GC23 55

The doors are being opened unfortunately to a modern view which is false, with a dangerous permissiveness, ethical distortions, transitory cohabitation, sexual licentiousness, lack of educative responsibility, etc., with the grave loss of the so-called "rights of the family" which are strictly linked with "human rights". We are witnessing, in consequence, a social decadence with irreparable negative effects; there is reason to fear the realization of a post-Christian era, i.e. a social situation of paganism which, after twenty centuries of the Gos-

pel, is abandoning the light and grace of Christ. It brings to mind spontaneously that gloomy page of St Paul in his letter to the Romans: "God has left them to their own irrational ideas and to their monstrous behaviour; and so they are steeped in all sorts of depravity; they are rude, arrogant and boastful, enterprising in sin..."⁴ The apostle presents a dire description of pagan Rome in ancient times, but even today there are many environments (and unfortunately they are increasing in number, especially when the specific function of the family is rejected) in which living conditions are disgraceful and inhuman: an "anti-civilization".

⁴ Rom 1,24 ff.

These modern difficulties highlight the urgent need to take remedial measures; the family must remain the vital horizon of every individual; its crisis implies a loss of humanity in the world. Rightly "the Church considers serving the family to be one of her essential duties. In this sense both man and the family constitute 'the way of the Church'"⁵.

⁵ John Paul II, *Letter to families* (LF), 2

At the present day we are witnessing a growing clash between the Vatican and the United Nations Organization on this matter. What is at stake is the presentation of the final document of the 3rd Conference on Population and Development, due to open in Cairo on 5 September next.

On the part of the Pope and the Apostolic See there has been a sequence of public interventions and initiatives with a severe criticism of the draft of the final document. The Pope has written: "It is for me a cause of great concern"; "there is a tendency to promote an internationally recognized right to abortion on demand"; "the vision of sexuality, which inspires the document, is totally individualistic"; "marriage is ignored as though it were a relic

of the past"; "the family cannot be manipulated...".

If in the Conference at Cairo the ideas of the preparatory Committee prevail, a style of life will be made legal which is far from the Gospel, a style that will facilitate contraception, abortion, free unions, and homosexuality, all in direct conflict with the renewal of the family according to the Gospel.

We Salesians must follow this "cultural" contest with a pastoral heart, and be able to strongly defend the family in line with Christ's truth and the demands of our prophetic duty as educators.

Unfortunately a strong crisis of truth is emerging, especially of the truth of salvation: "modern rationalism does not tolerate mystery. It does not accept the mystery of man as male and female, nor is it willing to admit that the full truth about man has been revealed in Jesus Christ".⁶

It will be well for us, therefore, to look again briefly at the Christian truth concerning the family.

The Pope's letter to families

On 2 February, feast of the Presentation of the Lord, Pope John Paul II addressed an invaluable letter (of some one hundred small pages in length) to "families": it begins in fact with the affectionate expression "Dear Families!".

In it the Pope takes up with courage, depth and clarity the complex problems at present causing worry and distress to families, and puts forward a vigorous summary of Christian truth in their regard. It is indispensable that we apply its rich content to our awareness as educators. We need to read again and study this letter. There is no sense

⁶ *ibid* 19

in hiding behind the usual excuses; too many documents, not conducive to reflection, complexity in style, not addressed directly to us.

The family is certainly one of the *new frontiers* of evangelization and is deeply linked, as we have already said, with the mission to the young and the poor inherent in our charism. Moreover in the letter itself the Holy Father specifically appeals to us: "to religious families and consecrated persons, to movements and associations of the lay faithful":⁷ the theme of the family is of the greatest importance for all, and is so in a particular way for educators in the faith.

⁷ *ibid* 23

Striking is the declaration of ⁴high responsibility expressed in the text by the Pope himself: "I speak with the power of Christ's truth to all people of our day, so that they will come to appreciate the grandeur of the goods of marriage, family and life; so that they will come to appreciate the great danger which follows when these realities are not respected, or when the supreme values which lie at the foundation of the family and of human dignity are disregarded".⁸

⁸ *ibid* 23

He assures us that the Christian doctrine on the family is a real "treasure of the Church"; it is "the great revelation: the first discovery of the 'other' person"; it is "placed squarely at the centre of the New Covenant; and he notes with astute pastoral vision that "*the family is at the centre of the great struggle between good and evil*". That is where the truth of Christ shines out in all its brilliance, and there too the falsehood of error can bring about the darkness of night.

We have before us, therefore, a letter of particular importance, which offers to those charged with education in the faith the principal guidelines

for a new evangelization (and hence for a new education).

But let us have a look at these fundamental elements. We can deduce them from the letter itself in a concentrated and stimulating form, which brings us back to meditate directly and with greater attention on the precise words of the Pope. The doctrine is well known and is presented also in the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) but, gathered together synthetically as it is around the present theme, it becomes a "*Gospel of the family*" for people of today in a practical aspect of their lives which is found precisely "at the centre of the great struggle between good and evil".

The great mystery

It is symptomatic to note that from the beginning of either the creation or redemption of man, the family is to be found; and in contemplating it we come to a true understanding of what man is and in what his mystery consists.

The Pope's letter speaks of *mystery* not only in reference to the individual man, but also and basically in reference to the family. It is the "great mystery" of which St Paul speaks in the Letter to the Ephesians.⁹ The Apostle gives a new slant to the argument, still founded on Adam and Eve in line with the tradition of the Old Testament, but with a particular relationship to the spousal love of Christ for his Church.

"The Church cannot therefore be understood as the Mystical Body of Christ, or the universal sacrament of salvation", comments the Holy Father,

⁹ Eph 5,32

“unless we keep in mind the ‘great mystery’ involved in the creation of man as male and female and the vocation of both to conjugal love, to fatherhood and to motherhood. The ‘great mystery’, which is the Church and humanity in Christ, does not exist apart from the ‘great mystery’ expressed in the ‘one flesh’ (cf. Gen 2,24; Eph 5,31-32), i.e. in the reality of marriage and the family”.¹⁰

¹⁰ LF 19

A deeper analysis of the Christian doctrine of the family leads also to a response to the fundamental question: what is man?

The *mystery* from which we set out is God, not simply as the supreme being attainable by reason, but in the intimacy of his divine essence and life attained by faith through revelation. For us “mystery” does not mean an enigma or problem, but the finest, most intense, most enlightening, most fascinating truth, so great that we cannot contemplate it directly to exhaust its treasures, but without which all reality remains obscure for us.

This supreme truth is the Love of the Three in One, far richer and more abundant than anything we can deduce from metaphysical reflection on the supreme Being. It is to this intimate divine reality that the “image” and “likeness” of human reality is compared:¹¹ something original in an absolute sense which transcends the analogy of “subsistent being” to rise to an analogy of “trinitarian love”.

¹¹ cf. Gen 1,26

But God does not have a body; he is pure spirit; he is life. The human characteristics proper to masculinity and femininity, of fatherhood and motherhood, are expressions of his mystery manifested in analogical and complementary form in man and woman: “God created man in the image of himself, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them”.¹²

¹² Gen 1,27

“No living being on earth except man”, says the Pope, “was created ‘in the image and likeness of God’. Human fatherhood and motherhood, while remaining biologically similar to that of other living beings in nature, contain in an essential and unique way a *likeness to God* which is the basis of the family as a community of human life, as a community of persons united in love”.¹³

This duality of origin – masculine and feminine – requires a conjugal covenant in love, totally directed to the fullness of life: “Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth and conquer it”.¹⁴

This mystery at the origin of Adam and Eve is taken up and perfected by the second Adam (Christ) and the second Eve (Mary and the Church). Here the ‘bridegroom’ is God made man who loves the Church “to the end”,¹⁵ and the bride is the Church which continues to regenerate humanity with the *sacramental gift* of new life, especially through Baptism and the Eucharist which are “the fruits of the love with which the Bridegroom has loved us to the end, a love which continually expands and lavishes on people an ever greater sharing in the supernatural life”.¹⁶

We are led to the conclusion that the great mystery consists in considering the family as a particular sharing in the divine love to be deepened in the sexual dimension of individuals, in the conjugal covenant of marriage, and in the fruitfulness of the gift of life lived in line with a responsible fatherhood and motherhood. Rightly the Pope speaks of a “civilization of love” which begins from the deep renewal of families and constitutes precisely the “heart and centre” of such a civilization.

To this end we must be convinced that “there is no true love without an awareness that God is

¹³ LF 6

¹⁴ Gen 1,28

¹⁵ cf. Jn 13,1

¹⁶ LF 19

Love, and that man is the only creature on earth which God has called into existence 'for its own sake'; otherwise true love in the family and society will never be achieved. "Created in the image and likeness of God, man cannot fully 'find himself' except through the sincere gift of self. Without such a concept of man, of the person and the 'communion of persons' in the family, there can be no civilization of love; similarly, without the civilization of love it is impossible to have such a concept of person and of the communion of persons".¹⁷

¹⁷ LF 13

Without Christian truth the door is opened (indeed it has been already thrown wide) to an "anti-civilization" which destroys true love "in its various expressions, with inevitable consequences for the whole of life in society".

The genealogy of the person

The letter of the Pope introduces us to the fundamental theme of the mystery of every man: that of his *being a person*. "The genealogy of the person", he tells us, "is inscribed in the very biology of generation".¹⁸ We know, as we are assured by the Catechism of the Catholic Church, that "every spiritual soul is created immediately by God – it is not 'produced' by the parents – and also that it is immortal".¹⁹ On the other hand "the unity of soul and body is so profound that one has to consider the soul to be the 'form' of the body: i.e. it is because of its spiritual soul that the body made of matter becomes a living, human body; spirit and matter, in man, are not two natures united, but rather their union forms a single nature".²⁰

¹⁸ LF 9

¹⁹ CCC 366

²⁰ CCC 365

²¹ cf. GS 14

The body of man represents the highest perfection of the material world²¹ and “shares in the dignity of the ‘image of God’: it is a human body precisely because it is animated by a human soul”²².

²² CCC 364

The person is constituted by everything that is human, which certainly also includes sexuality (the male-person and the female-person), but is characterized by a dimension of transcendence which refers it directly to God-who-is-Love because it is made in his image and likeness.

And so the fatherhood and motherhood of parents, though evidently rooted in biology, rise above it because of the spiritual quality that proceeds from the soul. Human generation is different from every other generation on earth: it is “the continuation of creation”²³.

²³ LF 9

In human fatherhood and motherhood God himself is present; and so, says the Pope, “the genealogy of the person is inscribed in the very biology of generation. Like his parents, the new human being is also *called* to live as a person: he is called *to a life in truth and love*. This call is not only open to what exists in time, but in God it is also open to eternity. This is the dimension of the genealogy of the person which has been revealed definitively by Christ, who casts the light of his Gospel on human life and death and thus on the meaning of the human family”²⁴.

²⁴ LF 9

Rightly then did Vatican II declare in crystal clear terms that man “is the only creature on earth that God has wanted for its own sake!”²⁵

²⁵ GS 24

“To be man”, male or female, is the fundamental vocation of every person, which exists for itself even though inscribed at the same time in the family and society. Every child is the crowning of

married love and a precious gift for the family; it crowns the vibrant desire of the parents; but they must want the child in the same way that the Creator wants it, "for its own sake": "the genealogy of the person", repeats the Pope, "is thus united with the eternity of God and only then with human fatherhood and motherhood, which are realized in time".²⁶

26 LF 9

From this mysteric vision of the family, important consequences evidently follow for the person of the child, for the parents and family, for Society and for the Church.

And here we come face to face with a whole field of practical educational and evangelizing activities, which call for deeper thought on some aspects of our apostolic commitment in a period of new evangelization.

We can concentrate our attention on three aspects linked with pastoral work for the family; they are three aspects of a delicate nature which touch explicitly on our mission and to which, in my opinion, we have not always given sufficient attention in our educative and pastoral commitments. They certainly constitute a frontier of the new evangelization and the new education.

They are: the formation and animation of the matrimonial covenant between married couples; the sexual education of the young; preparation for marriage in educative pastoral work.

Formation and animation of the marriage covenant

It falls to us for various reasons (parishes, associations of cooperators and past-pupils, conditions

of activities with lay collaborators, etc.) to be concerned with the evangelization of various groups of married couples; we cannot avoid the animation of their marriage covenant in line with the Gospel. It is a matter of their daily life. We are called to offer them an apostolic service by concerning ourselves with their problems, especially concerning the education of their children.

At the basis and foundation of every family there is the marriage pact by which a man and a woman "mutually surrender themselves to each other"²⁷ in a profound matrimonial covenant of service to life. Their mutual love is confirmed and perfected by the respective fatherhood and motherhood which makes them collaborators in the wonderful creative power of God. The marriage covenant implies the full and complete mutual gift of themselves to each other. Unfortunately we know by experience that this sublime plan of the Creator has been wounded by the selfishness of sin. And so in the course of history sexuality, marriage, the family and the education of children have all suffered great deviations and decadence.

In this year of the family the Church calls upon us to be evangelizers of the marriage covenant.

The Gospel of Christ proclaims explicitly that the self-giving of husband and wife to each other is so profound and intimate that it involves "the indissoluble character of marriage as the basis of the common good of the family".²⁸

Marriage is a "communion of persons" open to the "generation of persons"; "only persons are capable of living in communion".²⁹

This communion is oriented in marriage to the fatherhood and motherhood rooted in the biology of male and female, but humanized and raised up

²⁷ GS 48

²⁸ LF 7

²⁹ LF 7

by the spiritual breath of their souls and launched towards even more sublime objectives by faith in God's saving plan, as we may contemplate in the Holy Family of Nazareth.

We Salesians have been talking for some time now about our lay project, and the coming General Chapter (GC24) will take up this precise theme. When we look at lay people we are thinking, without any doubt, also of a good number of families. I have in mind, for example, the parents associations attached to our works, the mothers who engage in catechetical work, and among the Cooperators the many young couples who have formed (e.g. in Spain) the special groups of "Hogares Don Bosco", which are 'fireside' groups animated by our confreres for the growth and deepening of the human and Christian values of their marriages; and then there is all the pastoral work to be carried out in our numerous parishes.

Rightly does the Pope declare, in the Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris consortio*, speaking of the contribution of Religious in favour of the family: "I would like to add a most pressing exhortation to the heads of institutes of consecrated life, to consider – always with substantial respect for the proper and original charism of each one – the apostolate of the family as one of the priority tasks, rendered even more urgent by the present state of the world".³⁰

³⁰ FC 74

Our programmes of ongoing formation must include in an appropriate manner this aspect of the new evangelization; the need for it is felt everywhere.

"In our own time", says the Catechism of the Catholic Church, "in a world often alien and even hostile to faith, believing families are of primary

importance as centres of living, radiant faith. For this reason the Second Vatican Council, using an ancient expression, calls the family the *Ecclesia domestica* – the domestic Church. It is in the bosom of the family that parents are ‘by word and example the first heralds of the faith with regard to their children. They should encourage them in the vocation which is proper to each child, fostering with special care any religious vocation’”.³¹

³¹ CCC 1656

The family is included in the essential tasks of the Church’s mission: it is indeed “the way of the Church”. It is the first school of man; husband and wife are educators precisely because they are parents; fatherhood and motherhood represent a task, a responsibility and a right which is both cultural and spiritual. God who creates a person for his own sake, then entrusts him in fact and to the full extent to the family.

And it is there “that the father of the family, the mother, children and all members of the family exercise the *priesthood of the baptized* in a privileged way ‘by the reception of the sacraments, prayer and thanksgiving, the witness of a holy life, and self-denial and active charity’. Thus the home is the first school of Christian life and ‘a school for human enrichment’. Here one learns endurance and the joy of work, fraternal love, generous – even repeated – forgiveness, and above all divine worship in prayer and the offering of one’s life”.³²

³² CCC 1657

The mutual relationships between husband and wife, and with the children, “are inspired and guided by the law of ‘free giving’. By respecting and fostering personal dignity in each and every one as the only basis for value, this free giving takes the form of heartfelt acceptance, encounter and dialogue, disinterested availability, generous service

and deep solidarity".³³

³³ FC 43

In the marriage covenant is found the first and most propitious environment for "humanization and personalization", collaborating in this way in the building of the Church and society. In the Synod of 1980 the Bishops asked the Pope that the Apostolic See take on the work of drawing up a "Charter" of the rights of the family. The Holy Father accepted the request,³⁴ and the Charter, with 12 articles, was published in 1983... It is a document with very practical guidelines, especially at the level of those responsible for society, and is well worth reading again today. In presenting it, the Apostolic See addressed "a particular appeal to all the members and institutions of the Church to give clear testimony to Christian convictions concerning the indispensable mission of the family, and ensure that parents and families receive the necessary support and encouragement to fulfil the task entrusted to them by God".³⁵

³⁴ FC 46

³⁵ *Oss. Rom.* 25.11.1983

In our salesian tradition there is a characteristic family atmosphere that qualifies us as experts in the communion of persons. We can think of the "family spirit" on which each of our houses must be modelled as regards affection, welcoming reception, and sharing: "In an atmosphere of mutual trust and daily forgiveness, the need and joy of sharing everything is experienced, and relationships are governed not so much by recourse to rules as by faith and the promptings of the heart."³⁶

³⁶ C 16

We must consider this genial aspect of our spirit not as a treasure to be kept hidden, but as a valuable gift to be shared with others. Not only will this be of benefit to large numbers of families, but we ourselves shall be enriched by values, even of a new and cultural kind, that are developing in the better

families.

Unfortunately it can happen not infrequently that, independently of the will of one of the partners and of the preparation they have received, a family finds itself in a painful and far from ideal situation. Our experience of the common life, of patience and forgiveness, can help those concerned to handle such situations so as to reach the best possible results, without distancing themselves from the Gospel and from the Church.

This is a delicate pastoral task that is by no means rare. It is a question of saving persons in danger of shipwreck.

Sexual education

One of the fruits of the Synod of 1980, dedicated to the family, was an emphasis on the urgent need for evangelizing the sexual education of the young: "Faced with a culture that largely reduces human sexuality to the level of something commonplace", writes the Pope in the Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris consortio*, "since it interprets and lives it in a reductive and impoverished way by linking it solely with the body and with selfish pleasure, the educational service of parents must aim firmly at a training in the area of sex that is truly and fully personal: for sexuality is an enrichment of the whole person – body, emotions and soul – and it manifests its inmost meaning in leading the person to the gift of self in love".³⁷

We must recognize that a simply biological interpretation of sex becomes partial and reductive, since it leaves aside the fundamental unity of the

³⁷ FC 37

person and of his integral advancement as being the image and likeness of God. The Christian perspective puts at the vertex of the perfection of the person the ability to love, overcoming selfishness and the deviations of eroticism. Authentic sexual education must be clearly included in the fuller education to love as the gift of oneself. Certainly there is a whole delicate field in the biological and psychological areas of sex that are very important and must never be considered taboo, but which are not genuinely human if considered only at animal level.

Sexuality is a dynamism pervading and operating in the whole of the integral male and female being; the human person is totally sexual, even though sexuality is only one of its constituent aspects. Sex characterizes the ego of every human individual and has an influence on his development as a primordial force, especially for bringing the formation of personality to true love, even to the level of self-giving in the form of oblation.

In any case, when we think of the aspect of "image and likeness" of God we have to remember that the analogy implies an incalculable distance, and hence must be applied with proper criteria: God by his love *creates* what is good; man, on the other hand, when he loves is aroused and attracted by what is good, in the many levels in which it may be observed.

Fortunately the Word of God became man and has taught us the self-sacrificing love of man as an image of God. But if there is one field where the tragedy of sin has sown ruin, it is precisely that of love. Hence the importance and urgency of an accurate sexual education with respect to the formation to love of every person.

Here arises also the delicate problem of coeducation, now accepted in many cultures – a manner of educative activity more complicated from a pedagogical standpoint. The two sexes, complementary as they are one to the other, require that persons be formed according to the specific requirements of each sex on the one hand, and on the other that a type of reciprocity be cultivated in them which strengthens and makes possible the growth of sexuality in line with the specific dignity of the persons.

Experience shows that this will not be effective without a youth spirituality: love, sexuality, spirituality are all intimately united in the process of education to the faith. And here must necessarily be included education to vocation which, in whatever state of life, is precisely a concrete formation to love as self-giving.

In *Familiaris consortio* the Holy Father, speaking of sexual education, declares: “In this context *education for chastity* is absolutely essential, for it is a virtue that develops a person’s authentic maturity and makes him or her capable of respecting and fostering the ‘nuptial meaning’ of the body. Indeed Christian parents, discerning the signs of God’s call, will devote special attention and care to education in virginity or celibacy as the supreme form of that self-giving that constitutes the very meaning of human sexuality”.³⁸

Seen in this integral perspective, sexual education unites and makes concrete various aspects of the formation to the faith which belongs to our mission and tradition. We may recall how many recommendations the GC23 gave us when speaking of education to love. It would be well worth reading over again the section on *Education to love*

³⁸ FC 37

(nn. 192-202). Consider, for instance, n. 195: "The Salesian who is diligent about his educational activity in fostering the maturing process of young people, feels today a *special commitment to educating them to love*. He is convinced that the mystery of Christ and the events of his life provide the full and normative revelation of true love. The typical experience of Don Bosco and the educative and spiritual content of the preventive system guide him towards some simple but efficacious methods".³⁹

³⁹ GC23 195

There are some who have pointed out, somewhat pedantically, that all the concern shown by Don Bosco for purity in adolescents and older boys would not have the same priority at the present day. This is a serious mistake! Because of the cultural changes there has been unfortunately some scaling down in this regard; but it is indispensable to revise and recover it, in harmony certainly with cultural evolution. If in formation to purity we speak competently of sexual education in the integral sense in which the Pope speaks of it, including it in youth spirituality for the growth of the person in self-sacrificing love, I believe we would bring about in an updated manner a revival of Don Bosco's insistence on a central aspect of the good of young people.

The new evangelization concerning sexual education, concerning formation to friendship, concerning the custody of the heart, concerning the proper evaluation of marriage and of virginity or celibacy, constitutes for young people the most valid service of education to love; it shows day by day throughout the process of education, that every human person is a "call", and that the sexual drive is not something taboo but a dynamic thrust willed by God in the overall context of the grandeur and

dignity of the person.

Well does the Catechism of the Catholic Church recognize that "sexuality affects all aspects of the human person in the unity of his body and soul. It especially concerns affectivity, the capacity to love and to procreate, and in a more general way the aptitude for forming bonds with others".⁴⁰

⁴⁰ CCC 2332

Preparation for marriage

The extension of the period of youth has introduced into our works of education (oratories, parishes, hostels, lay associations, etc.) a more detailed attention to preparation for marriage. Even before the stage of engagement and apart altogether from such aspect, the formation of the person to love, which is the essence of all education, should be a guiding factor in the educative plan for a good preparation for marriage.

Since marriage is the ordinary vocation of the majority of our young people, this is an aspect of vocational pastoral work to be considered alongside vocation to the consecrated life, even though in a different way and with different emphasis.

For the development of every vocation a good and constant formation to love is indispensable. Love, in fact, is a fundamental and innate dynamism, but it can be easily turned aside to the detriment of the person; instead of a self-sacrificing gift it can easily develop into selfishness, dominance, craving and passion. The disaster provoked by sin has caused damage especially in the field of love, which it has made the realm of selfishness.

Now marriage is a communion of love between

two persons, a man and a woman; it is directed to the common good of their permanent matrimonial covenant and to the fostering and growth of life through procreation.

Marriage is not an institution of purely human origin; "it does not depend on human decision alone, for God himself is the author of marriage and has endowed it with various benefits and with various ends in view: all of these have a very important bearing on the continuation of the human race, on the personal development and eternal destiny of every member of the family and of the whole human race".⁴¹

⁴¹ GS 48

From this authoritative description it is immediately evident that marriage far surpasses the merely biological context and the drives of instinct and passion; it is a reality which involves the whole of the person to lead it to a giving of self without any selfishness and open to profound responsibilities in direct relationship with life and society. If one thinks also of its value as a sacrament of the Church, its importance and dignity becomes even more manifest.

It is clear therefore that preparation for marriage takes a long time of serious dedication, and involves a commitment in the vast areas of the pedagogy of vocation.

All vocational maturing is dedicated to education to love or, in other words, to the committed gift of oneself for others, in sacrifice, in inculcating joy, in being able to forgive, in solidarity, in the cultivation of great ideals avoiding the temptations of hedonism, in overcoming discouragement, in the courage of repentance, in initiatives of greater communion, etc.

It is a question, as you can see, of the education

of a Christian vocation with a common basis in all the baptized and with characteristic values to be assured. The gift of self is a goal to be reached either in matrimony or in celibacy for the Church: "Both the sacrament of Matrimony and virginity for the Kingdom of God", says the Catechism of the Catholic Church, "come from the Lord himself. It is he who gives them meaning and grants them the grace which is indispensable for living them out in conformity with his will. Esteem of virginity for the sake of the kingdom and the Christian understanding of marriage are inseparable, and they reinforce each other".⁴²

⁴² CCC 1620

And so in youth pastoral work there are specific values to be developed by intensifying the daily spirituality so much recommended by the GC23.

It must be kept in mind, however, that although the Christian vocation must be cultivated for all, there are important differences to be followed up and developed with appropriate pedagogical concern: the difference arising from the male or female sex, the specific preparation for marriage and the pedagogy of celibacy, discernment of the various vocational possibilities, the different stages of maturing in love (e.g. the period of engagement or the decision already made for a specific vocation of ecclesial consecration).

What it is important to emphasize here is that concern for a true preparation for marriage must not lessen the care given to other vocations, but neither must the importance given to the promotion of celibate vocations make us neglect or diminish the preparation for marriage. In insisting on the specific content of formation to love, it will not be difficult to find a healthy balance in the educative programme.

The point on which we need to insist, for a practical renewal in a greater exchange between pastoral work for youth and for the family, is to place firmly at the centre of educational planning a programme for continued initiatives for the development and strengthening of self-donation, linked with the demands of sexual and vocational differences. Hence once again the urgent need to incorporate in all educative activity an authentic youth spirituality, including also an adequate ascetical pedagogy and a practical sense of personal resilience and of reconciliation with God. It should be kept in mind that the presence in the life of youth of various forms of egotism militates, in fact, against a valid education to love. In the last analysis it must be recognized that a better preparation for marriage demands that in our educative activities (and not only in parishes) we must give priority to a whole concrete programme of youth spirituality.

In this delicate commitment too we have to consider many realistic and new requirements: together with the fundamental doctrine and the attractive Christian ideals of married love, young people need to be prepared in a practical manner to face and overcome the frequent crises that can arise between couples, so much stressed by the mass media.

Don Bosco's charism and the family

It may be enlightening to recall some reflections on the deep and vital sense of continuity which exists, in our history and in personal experience, between life in one's own family and life in the Congregation.

Many of us have existential experience of this, and have felt precisely a kind of continuity of atmosphere, of kindness, of spontaneity, even though in different ways, between the "house" of our parents and the salesian "house"; it fostered a kind of mutual relationship between religious community and family which, in fact, is characteristic of our spirit.

It is good to see in the provinces interesting initiatives of meetings of parents and relatives of confreres, the association of mothers of Salesians (begun in Uruguay), the insistence on mutual relationships even in our Rule of life itself. We have already recalled art. 29 of the Constitutions, and here we may add what is laid down in the Regulations: "The community maintains cordial relations with the family of each confrere, and shows them love and gratitude. The Salesian who has left his home to follow Christ loses none of his love for his relatives and especially for his parents; he gives it expression by his prayers, letters and visits".⁴³ Speaking later of the services of the Rector to the religious community, the Regulations remind him explicitly to "take an interest also in the parents of confreres, and consider them as united to the community in a special way".⁴⁴

This genial 'family' style has its origins in the life of the Founder himself, in his experience in his own family under the guidance of Mamma Margaret. Her heroic removal to Valdocco served to permeate the environment of those poor boys with the same family style, from which has sprung the substance of the preventive system and so many of our traditions that go with it. Don Bosco knew by personal experience that the formation of his own personality was vitally rooted in the extraordinary cli-

⁴³ R 46

⁴⁴ R 176

mate of dedication and kindness ("self-giving") of his family at the Becchi, and he wanted to reproduce its most significant qualities at the Valdocco Oratory among those poor and abandoned youngsters.

He had a clear conviction that his mission must be able to reproduce that of the best of parents, under the living and manifest sign of genuine love. In a letter of 1883 to the confreres on the particular kindness of the preventive system, he told them: "Never forget that you *represent the parents* of these lads, that this was always the tender objective of my labours, of my studies, of my priestly ministry and of our Salesian Congregation. If you are going to be *true fathers* of your pupils, you must take them to heart... The *fatherly heart* which we must have is opposed to all angry ways of acting... Those over whom we have to exercise authority we must regard as our sons. Let us place ourselves at their service as it were, following Christ who came to obey and not command, and be ashamed of anything that could make us seem to be domineering; let us never dominate them except for the purpose of serving them with greater pleasure... Since they are our sons let us do away with all signs of anger when we have to reprove them, or at least let us moderate it so that it does not show externally. No agitation of mind, no displeasure in the eyes, no harsh words on the lips; but let us feel compassion for the present moment and hope for the future, and then you will be *true fathers* and will bring about real conversion... Remember that education is a thing of the heart. Let us study how to make ourselves loved".⁴⁵

It is my sincere impression that we are all convinced of this evangelical relationship with the

⁴⁵ *Collected Letters of Don Bosco*, SEI Turin 1959, vol. 4, pp. 201-209

families. The problem lies at the present day in the demands of the New Evangelization which gives the family pride of place among the objectives of our pastoral care. We need to give special attention to a revision of this sector of our commitment which touches vitally on our educative activities, the care of lay people in our associations and our collaboration in the pastoral priorities of the local Church.

The letter of the Pope to families must have an impact on our sense of fidelity to the mission of the Founder and render more dynamic the educative and pastoral plans and programmes in our salesian works, even long after the present *Year of 1994* of special celebration by the UNO and by the Church.

⁴⁶ cf. GC23 203 ff.

Education to the social dimension of charity⁴⁶ certainly contributes to ensuring internal union in the family, and initiatives of commitment between families, which serve to strengthen in a concrete way love as the gift of oneself.

The Holy Family

In conclusion let us turn our thoughts to the Family of Nazareth. There we see highlighted in a wonderful way the intensity of the marriage covenant, the offering of the person to God in self-donation, the perfection of sexuality in love, and the specific educative environment of the family. We become immersed in the mystery of the genealogy of the Person and there emerges, in education, the care of the vocation.

If we want to contemplate the fullness of the fidelity and peace of the family home, we must look to Nazareth. The same is true if we want to admire

the satisfaction and joy of living together, the daily availability for sacrifice, the dedication to work, the living sense of prayer, the immense gratitude for God's initiatives, the simple but heroic adherence to his concrete plans, his constant intervention in people and in history, his central presence in the home.

At Nazareth we discover, in the great mystery of marriage, the role of the spiritual soul which bestows on the married couple the image and likeness of God above all merely biological values. But especially we are opened up to the horizons of faith, which raises up in the soul an ineffable participation in the very life of God, infusing in the persons of the couple the highest gift of self-sacrificing love, both in the virginal motherhood of Mary and in the special fatherhood of Joseph.

The richness of their sexuality far exceeds in joy its biological use, to be expressed in a married love, maternal and paternal, which becomes a model for all believers, whether in married or consecrated life. Faith perfects their sexuality by raising it to the sublime experiences of the love of the Trinity.

The generation and education of the Son bears, in the family of Nazareth, the genealogy of the person to the highest pinnacle of love, introducing the faith of the married couple into the divine fertility of the supreme mystery of God.

The faith of Mary and Joseph ("they who have believed") results in a family spirituality which permeates and gives fragrance to the family home of Nazareth as the admirable "house of God in history"; from there comes forth the new humanity, there is the starting point of the victory over evil, egotism and concupiscence; and there is revealed all the mystery of man in the newness of the Sec-

ond Adam who will bring everyone to the goal of the resurrection.

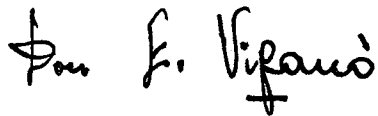
The unique nature of the Family of Nazareth prompts us to consider that the perfection of the human person in Mary and Joseph is the fullness of love, and that education to faith and love constitutes God's purpose in history, leaving this precise mission to the Church and placing our own charism at the present day among the outposts of the new evangelization.

Don Bosco is expecting from us a true and practical renewal in the light of this *Year of the Family*.

May the Holy Family of Nazareth help the Church to renew human love and obtain for us the ability to collaborate in so urgent a mission with a specialized educative commitment.

With heartfelt greetings and every best wish.

Affectionately in Don Bosco,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Don F. Viganò". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly stylized script. The "Don" is written in a smaller, more compact style, followed by a large, flowing "F.", and then "Viganò" in a similar cursive style with a long, sweeping tail on the "ò".

2. GUIDELINES AND POLICIES

2.1 THE EDUCATIVE AND PASTORAL PLAN OF THE PROVINCES

Fr Luc VAN LOOY

Councillor for Youth Pastoral Work

The GC23 asked that not later than the next Provincial Chapter every province should revise its Salesian Educative and Pastoral Plan ("PEPS" in Italian). As a result of this, after the celebration of the Provincial Chapters of 1992-1993, the provinces have sent their revised plan to the Department for Youth Pastoral Work, thus providing an opportunity for the study and comparison of the various plans. Together with appreciation and high regard for the work done, it is now time to indicate the main points emerging from the plans and to assess the mentality in the Congregation concerning the project.

The Department has conducted two surveys to get a clear idea of the manner of working in the provinces and in the houses with the plan as the starting point. It is of interest to us especially to understand how PEPS serves as a point of reference in educational work and to assess its effective value in the educative community.

It is important to note from the outset that *the mentality of the project is growing* in the Congregation. In many provinces there has been a serious work of revision and application of the plan, and this not only at provincial level but at local level as well.

Verification in the individual provinces will be able to indicate *the relationship between the plan on paper and its application in the concrete circumstances of the different works*. Its realization will have as an immediate result the acquiring of a more convinced

concept of integral educative and pastoral work. Not all the confreres, in fact, are aware that the attainment of the integral formation of the person is more important than the good management of one's own particular sector. Perhaps we have become accustomed to concentrating on our own personal work without seeing it in the overall framework of the educative and pastoral task, and in this way giving rise to a sectorial approach to the mission.

The *project mentality* leads us to keep in mind the four dimensions in which we are working and which we have to bring together to ensure the homogeneous and unified growth of the individual. Education and evangelization, insertion into society, and personal option in life are the four fundamental aspects under which the Salesian is concerned to prepare the young and people in general to grow from a human and Christian standpoint.

In the realization of our educative and pastoral mission, we may wonder what influence has been exerted by the drawing up of the provincial and local plan, but that is not the objective of the present contribution. We may leave the point for consideration by the Provincials and provincial teams for pastoral work, with the reminder *not to forget the periodic verification at fixed times* of the application of the plan and of difficulties that have emerged.

This present article refers only to the plans as they appear on paper. We see how and by whom they were drawn up, and how they were evaluated by those coordinating pastoral work in the province. We are not referring, therefore, to the manner in which the communities are working and how the works are progressing following the adoption of the plan.

For some years now the Congregation has been aiming at the bringing together of confreres and lay collaborators *in a unified plan of reference*. The GC21 (1978) says: "At a provincial and local level an *organic project* is to be developed, capable of orienting the work of the whole community to the task of evangelization; it needs to be periodically evaluated and revised" (GC21 30c).

1. Examination of the provincial plans

An aspect which emerges quite incidentally from a study of the plans is the importance given to the figure of the coordinator of pastoral work in the province and in each house. In fact, if the project mentality is to be kept alive the educative communities must be given help. Of great importance is the figure of the provincial delegate, the person who in the Provincial's name follows up the whole of the sector of education and evangelization.

For several years it has been insisted that this is a *full-time* task, and that the delegate must concern himself with the educational and pastoral qualification of the confreres and of the lay collaborators, and also of the qualification of the works themselves. It has been suggested on various occasions that the delegate should be a member of the provincial council, helping the Provincial in this way to ensure that the Council acquires the habit of pastoral reflection, and does not confine itself to tasks of administration and organization.

The survey reveals that at the present day, *in 28 provinces* (of the 66 that replied), the delegate for youth pastoral work does not have this as a *full-time task*, and that *in 16 provinces* he is *not a member of the provincial council*. If we add also that in 9 provinces there is no team to help the delegate for pastoral work (cf. GC23 244), it seems that in these provinces there is *no one* promoting the concentration around an educative plan.

2. The value given to the educative and pastoral plan

Cultural complexity, pluralist composition, the different activities of the pastoral community and the sharing by lay people in responsibility at all levels of education and pastoral work, prompt us as a matter of urgency to follow a path shared by all. Not only is there need for an integral and common plan as a point of reference which lends itself to verification, but in a work which has an

objective of such importance as life guidance for young people, one cannot go ahead without having first given serious study to the processes and common path to be followed. If this be not done it is inevitable that groups and individuals will lose their unity along the way.

In the survey made on the drawing up of the plans and their incidence on the life of the province and houses, some important facts emerge. The figures speak for themselves:

- 8 provinces of the 66 which replied say that no house has a written plan; of 1,214 houses, *464 do not have a written plan.*
- To the question about who drew up the provincial plan, 42 of the 66 replied that it was done by "*some Salesians*". This means that those who jointly carry the burden of the educative and pastoral mission were introduced to the plan after it had been already completely formulated, and hence they could only accept it, without sharing responsibility for the plan itself.
- 11 provinces state that the plan was not submitted for the approval of the provincial chapter. 7 provinces say that the provincial organs of government (committees, coordinating groups, etc.) do not make use of it.
- The realization of the plan is entrusted to the educative community, and many houses are deeply aware of this; but *13 provinces* say that *the educative community does not exist in any of their houses.* In other words, of a total of 1,114 houses, 440 have not yet set up the educative community. This means that the formation of lay personnel is neglected, or at least is not programmed and is reduced to occasional initiatives. In fact 24 provinces say that the formation of lay collaborators *is not planned at all.*

3 The PEPS and the significance of the salesian presence

The survey that was carried out aimed at *an examination of the provincial plans as they appear on paper*; for the moment it did

not go into the application of these plans in the various works. *Provincial teams for youth pastoral work* were asked to provide an *evaluation of their own plan*, on the basis of a detailed questionnaire.

The first limitation of the plan that emerges is that it has remained enclosed within the salesian religious; the majority were drawn up by a small group of Salesians (as said above), and the qualitative evaluation also was made by a team of the same kind.

The absence of the *lay dimension* is quite striking; little importance seems to have been given to the laity in the plan as a whole.

In the plans too there are very few references to a relationship with the social and family environments, and in connection with the social and political aspects it is evident that consideration was very weak. In general, it is clear that before entering into any particular matter the plan becomes cocooned in a primarily religious reality, giving attention to the religious aspect of those for whom we work, and displaying a very limited opening of the community to the surrounding neighbourhood.

A comparison between different regions and continents reveals a difference in sensitivity from one zone to another. It is significant, for example, that in the two regions of Latin America attention to the youth condition and to the social and political situation, is markedly higher than in other areas.

4. Some points needing emphasis

4.1 *Clarity of principles*

Once again it must be kept in mind that we are dealing with the written plans, and not making a verification of their application in individual realities. This explains the *great attention given to principles*, which are generally clear and well expressed. It is evident that there is a good knowledge of our educative and pastoral patrimony and that there is a strong sensitivity concerning

the charismatic salesian identity.

Those also to whom our mission is directed are clearly identified. The concept of man on which the plan is based is the mature and committed man, open to a journey of faith. Less importance is given to professional preparation or to his ability for insertion into society.

Examining the concept of Church found in the plans reveals that the primary concept is that of the ministerial Church or of the Church as communion, with the concept of the missionary Church lagging behind.

With regard to the concept of education, emphasis is on educative orientation, capacity for animation, and the preventive aspect. In connection with the salesian mission emphasis is on the witness given by the SDB community before that of fidelity to the charism or the educative option.

4.2 *The main deficiencies*

It remains to analyze the reality of the works to verify whether the picture presented by the written plans corresponds with the life of the Congregation. By indicating the deficiencies noted in the plans, we would like the provinces, and in particular the pastoral teams or committees, to make this verification.

— *The relationship of shared responsibility between SDBs and laity*

The GC23 decided that we must “set up the educative and pastoral community wherever we work. In it will be fostered in particular the *qualification of lay people...*” (GC23 235). Let us see how far we have got with this.

We have already noted that in the majority of the provinces lay people were not brought in for the drawing up of the plan. Moreover it is clear that in the educative community attention given to the formation of lay collaborators is about 22%, to their educational competence about 25%, to their professional approach about 20%, to their lay spirituality about 22%, and to their sharing

in responsibility about 20%.

The limited responsibility given to lay people emerges also in the vocational dimension: only 12% of the provinces give great importance to vocational collaboration with other groups of the Salesian Family, and only 6% consider collaboration with the laity in pastoral work for vocations as important.

— *Presence in the locality*

The salesian mission is addressed to the young in their own context. The GC23 examined very carefully the youth reality as a challenge to the salesian community, and deliberated as follows: Young people “call on us to have the courage to *insert ourselves more actively in their world and in the social context in which they live*” (GC23 225).

Study of the plans shows that this deliberation was indeed necessary. In fact there is hardly any attention to the youth context evident in the planning. Even though in some continents there is greater sensitivity to an analysis of the realities of the situation in which we work, it can be said that in general the plans reveal that little attention is given to the local youth context. In describing, for example, the task of pastoral work for vocations, there is no reference to the family or to the context of young people who are taken out of their own environment and cut off from their historical reality.

We cannot shake off the impression that the salesian presence still remains closed in on itself. Perhaps we know fairly well those for whom we work immediately, but we do not know the environment in which they live and their own social context.

In the area of education there is lacking, in particular, social and political guidance. There is a discrepancy between the principle of education which highlights the need to “transform society” and the frightening absence from the social and political environment through our educative efforts. An examination of the indications relating to the relationship with the surrounding reality gleaned from the plans, leads to the conclusion that few consider important

relations with the local Church (19%), with local educational organisms (14%), with the families of those for whom we work (11%), and much less still with cultural organisms (4%), with social organisms (3%), with civil society (3%) and with the political reality (3%).

— *The salesian community as animator of the educative community*

Three of the deliberations of the GC23 indicate the tasks of the local community with regard to its role in the educative community: "Each local community will set up the educative and pastoral community in its work, and get it functioning as well as possible" (GC23 236); "roles will be established so that education to the faith becomes a shared commitment for which all the confreres are responsible" (GC23 243); "each local community will express in its own educative and pastoral plan the manner in which it will provide guidance for all youngsters in discovering their vocation..." (GC23 252).

Analysis of the results of the survey shows that the role of the community as the *animating nucleus of the educative community* is still far from clear.

It is not that the community is unaware of its duty. The unclear aspects are: 67% of the provinces say they do not understand how to share responsibility with lay people; 78% are confused about the function of the community in the formation of lay collaborators (required by the GC23, n.223); and 78% do not know how the educative community must guarantee the educative charism.

The most positive element is the need that is felt for creating a family atmosphere (84%).

5. The path to be followed

The analysis of the plans has been a very interesting undertaking, though not an easy one. We hope to make available in

the near future with precise and more complete data the lines that have emerged. The work done by the provinces in an effort to understand what is implied by the drawing up of a provincial plan, has provided a very positive opportunity for increasing our awareness of the full significance of an integral education and evangelization. The young people themselves will profit by the work that has been done.

At the present time many communities are working on the local plan. The results of the survey suggest that attention be given to the *manner of drawing it up*. In the first place a clear awareness is needed of the *context* of the young people for whom we are working. The emerging cultures and rapid social changes mean that we cannot ignore what is going on around us. The responses that the plan gives to educational and pastoral questions must correspond to the local reality of the area where the work is situated. Every work, in fact, must provide a plan for the cultural and evangelical growth of the young people in its locality.

Moreover the drafting of the local plan cannot be reserved to the local community, but must *bring in from the outset* persons who represent the various *components of the educative community*: lay collaborators, parents, the young people themselves, etc., so as to guarantee that the plan is adequate for meeting the complexities of the educative and pastoral work concerned.

A question we must certainly put to ourselves is what influence our educative and pastoral work has on the ability of our youngsters to become integrated into the social and political milieu. The objective is that of entering with freedom, ability and competence into society so as to transform it in the light of the gospel". It will be necessary to bring this principle down to the prevailing reality and study the *manner of its application*. The decisive element for attaining this end will be without any doubt the effort to render all the collaborators (SDB and laity) better qualified, by giving greater attention to the professional approach in educational and pastoral work.

2.2 THE SALESIAN COOPERATORS

Reflections after the Regional Congresses of the Association

Fr Antonio MARTINELLI

Councillor for the Salesian Family and Social Communication

An initiative rich in promise

Between 1993 and 1994 13 Regional Congresses took place in various parts of the world. 2,000 Cooperators participated in them and at least a further 2,000 were involved in their preparation: a considerable commitment involving a large number of persons.

We may say therefore without any doubt that they were successful and gave great satisfaction to all concerned: Cooperators, Salesians, and Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.

It now remains to bring to maturity the seed which has been so richly sown, and this is the point at which some reflections must be inserted which involve Salesians as communities and individuals.

First, let us read again Art.38 of the General Regulations: "Every community

- should feel it its duty to increase and support the Association of Salesian Cooperators for the good of the Church.
- It should help in the formation of its members,
- promote and spread knowledge of this particular vocation,
- especially among our more committed young people and
- among our lay collaborators".

(The division shown is not in the text of the Regulations. I have added it so as to highlight the various elements in the official text).

Another text from the Regulations completes the perspective. It comes from art.36:

“The community, in agreement with those responsible for the various groups,

- with respect for their autonomy and
 - in a spirit of service,
 - offers them spiritual assistance,
 - promotes meetings,
 - encourages collaboration and initiatives in the educational and pastoral fields,
 - and cultivates the common commitment for vocations”.
- (Here again the division into separate points is my own).

As Salesians of Don Bosco we are asked to think back over the results of the Cooperators' Regional Congresses from our particular point of view of responsibility for the Salesian Family.

Let every community be aware of its duty (*Reg. 38*)

We are dealing with an obligation which the community cannot avoid: the references in the Constitutions and Regulations are clear. Art. 5 of the Constitutions has a very important phrase: “Within this family, by the will of the Founder, we have particular responsibilities...”

The first responsibility, among others, is to give life to the Association in the sense of promoting a local Centre of the Cooperators.

But not all the communities have always fulfilled this duty imposed by the General Regulations; they have not given life to the Association.

Various reasons have been given for not doing so:

- the impossibility of following up every activity,
- the amount of work the community already has to carry out,
- the lack of a Salesian who can take on the task,
- the fear of “salesianizing” all the works and activities of a house, etc.

But despite all this there still remains the directive of the

Constitutions and Regulations, and this should prompt communities to rediscover the positive reasons for the presence of the Association attached to all salesian houses.

It is indispensable to foster the conviction that the Cooperators, to use a phrase of immediate significance and of authoritative source, are "blood relatives" of the Salesians of Don Bosco.

The Cooperators for their part, as brothers and sisters, recognize and assert their particular bond of union with the Salesian Congregation. Art. 24 of the Association's Regulations of Apostolic Life states:

"§1. The Association has in the Salesian Congregation a 'sure and stable bond of union', and relations with it take place in an atmosphere of brotherhood and mutual confidence. Every salesian community, provincial and local, feels itself involved in the 'increase and support' of the Association, in the formation of its members and in promoting and making known their plan of life.

§2. It is the express will of the Cooperators to preserve and develop the relationships which bind them to the Salesian Congregation. In particular they hold sentiments of sincere affection for the Rector Major and are faithful to his guidance".

Can we, as Salesians, ignore these declarations? Can we fail to realize the plan of the Congregation which points out to all communities the duty of working in conformity with these norms of the Constitutions and Regulations? Can we be satisfied without the Cooperators at our side?

Fidelity to Don Bosco clearly indicates the path we have to follow.

It is the duty of the Delegate to sensitize the communities (*R 36*)

The Regulations state: It is the duty of the provincial and the rector, assisted by their respective delegates, to sensitize the communities so that they may discharge their duties in the Salesian Family.

'The delegate and delegates' are at the heart of the problem.

Their presence and activity become decisive.

The choices made by the Provincials in designating members for this salesian service will be an indication of the importance, acceptance and support given to the Cooperators by the salesian community.

The delegate and delegates, in fact, are those more evidently responsible for the vitality of the Centres: they must be considered as the point of reference for both the salesian community and the Association.

When the delegate has been appointed he must then work with the salesian communities. I do not say that he must work only with the communities; what I mean is that his work is directed also and perhaps primarily to the Salesians. He is called to sensitize them, follow them up, motivate them and suggest ways of proceeding with the Cooperators, as regards formation, the mission and fellowship. The delegate for the Cooperators cannot work without feeling the backing of the confreres and community as support and reassurance.

To imagine a process into which the community did not enter would be not only utopian, but sterile as well. And even more certainly, if the organization of the activities and life of a Centre are out of tune with the life of the community, no enduring results will be achieved.

The delegate, whether provincial or local, must feel himself intimately linked with the Provincial or his representative. And the local delegate will have this same relationship with the rector. In other words the delegates

- must be concerned not only with the groups of Cooperators with whom they are developing the programmes foreseen by the Association,
- but also with the Salesians who share their obligations of activities and support,
- and with others interested in and responsible for the life of the Cooperators.

The Delegate is responsible for salesian apostolic formation (RAL 46)

The Regulations of Apostolic Life (RAL) indicates the tasks assigned to the delegate within the Association:

“Every Centre and every provincial grouping of Centres has its own SDB or FMA Delegate. They are the spiritual animators, responsible especially for salesian and apostolic formation”.

The official commentary describes the sense of the expression in some detail. Without any doubt the provincial and local delegates will be well acquainted with the text quoted below. It may be useful to read it together, because not all those responsible at provincial or local level for communities are up to date with respect to what is required of Salesians.

The commentary reads as follows:

“Specific tasks at provincial level

At the level of the Provincial Council (the point being discussed is the Provincial Council of the Cooperators, not of the Salesians), the tasks of animation and of salesian apostolic formation proper to the delegates include all the initiatives and activities laid down by the complex of the Regulations and the inventiveness of the Holy Spirit, and all the creativity the salesian charism can suggest for the spiritual good of the Cooperators.

In the provincial environment such tasks are more properly those of promotion and coordination of the initiatives of the various Centres belonging to the provincial grouping, according to what is stated in art. 44,1.

For the SDB Provincial Delegate the following specifications should be added, arising from the Agreement with the FMA:

- his tasks of spiritual animation and responsibility for formation apply to all the Centres of the provincial grouping for which he has been appointed (art.11,1);
- he works in agreement with the FMA Provincial Delegate to ensure a fruitful apostolic activity and in view of the overall

pastoral work (art. 11,3);

- he visits the Centres erected in connection with works of the FMA, in the conditions indicated, for the purpose also of preserving and developing the relationships (...) which unite the Cooperators to the Salesian Congregation (art. 11,3).

For the FMA Provincial Delegate the Agreement specifies the following tasks:

- to arrange with the SDB Provincial to have a salesian priest appointed for their own Centres (art. 5);
- to visit the Centres erected in association with works of the FMA (art. 10); the formulation of the article ('it belongs also to the Provincial Delegate') indicates that the task properly belongs to the Provincial; nevertheless it falls also within the competence of the Provincial Delegate;
- to work in agreement with the SDB Provincial Delegate to ensure a fruitful apostolic activity and in view of the overall pastoral work (art. 11 §2)

Specific tasks at the level of the local Centre

Within the framework of the Council of the Centre, the duties of spiritual animation and of salesian apostolic formation are carried out by local SDB and FMA Delegates not only at the level of the spiritual guidance of the Centre as a competent group of Cooperators, but also and more particularly as direct and immediate animation addressed to the individual aspirant and every Cooperator: theirs is the primary responsibility for initial and ongoing formation of both individuals and group according to what is laid down in RAL art. 38 §2.

In this connection the following statement of the Agreement should be kept in mind: 'Local Delegates who are not priests should try to obtain for their Centre, in agreement with the SDB Provincial, the appointment of a salesian priest, for particular moments of prayer and discernment and for the sacramental and liturgical life of the Cooperator (art. 5)'."

This quotation has been a long one, but it is opportune and useful for a consideration of the practical consequences.

In the first place the delegate must be aware that not all of the formation depends on his own activity. Art. 38, which is frequently referred to, must be kept in mind. It reads as follows:

“§1. The Cooperators themselves bear the first and principal responsibility for their own formation. Convinced that this calls for docility to the Holy Spirit, they give importance to the life of prayer and to spiritual direction.

§2. The Association fosters and sustains the personal and group formation of its members, through the action of competent Cooperators and of the Delegate with whom they share responsibility”.

The delegate takes care in particular of the ‘salesian apostolic’ formation. This covers the whole vast field of typical salesian spirituality with its character of the spirituality of an apostle. It is also evident that his task of ensuring the overall salesian formation is by direct intervention, as a response to art. 5 of the Constitutions: “to preserve unity of spirit”.

Here two factors come into play. The first is the autonomy proper to a lay association. The second relates to the charismatic source and hence to the necessary salesian linkage.

The delegate concerns himself with formation understood in its overall sense, not reducing it to intellectual elements alone nor merely providing help for the fulfilment of religious gestures. The spirituality of daily life, typical of the apostle in the style of Don Bosco, touches and transforms the whole of life.

Effective and competent activity in this field calls for the active presence of confreres who understand the role of the laity in the life of the Church and of the Congregation, and are able to stimulate growth and communion.

In this way the prospects of the thirteen Regional Congresses of the Cooperators will be able to attain to full maturity.

The true Salesian Cooperator in the world (*RAL art. 3*)

A further element became clearly evident during the Congresses: the love of the Cooperators for Don Bosco: for his person and spirituality.

This is not a question of a recent discovery. It is a reality that has its roots in the very foundation by Don Bosco and is taken up by the Association, which has the following article in the RAL:

“Cooperators are Catholics who, while living their faith within the framework of their own secular condition, draw their inspiration from Don Bosco’s apostolic project:

- by committing themselves to the same mission among the young and the poor, in partnership and a brotherly way;
- in close communion with other members of the Salesian Family;
- working for the good of the Church and of society;
- to the best of their ability” (*RAL art. 3*).

I come back now to the opening paragraphs of the present reflections, where the community is committed to competent activity in favour of the Cooperators. The most profound reasons are found precisely in this art. 3 of the RAL which we have just quoted.

Salesian communities that want to have lay people seriously committed from a Christian standpoint, are obliged to give thought to the formation of the Cooperators.

Salesian communities that intend to spread the spirit of Don Bosco in society and in the world must be able to count on a considerable number of Cooperators.

Salesian communities that in the present ecclesial context want to share their mission with the laity must encourage the salesian apostolic preparation of a large number of Cooperators.

The Association represents a richness in and for the Church, both universal and particular. It is in fact one of the central cores of Don Bosco’s project which “inspired the start of a vast movement of persons who in different ways work for the salvation of the young” (C 5).

The Association is a presence of the Gospel in the world, in a salesian style. The Cooperators know this and we, as Salesians, must become more deeply aware of their rich reality. "The Cooperator's personal life style, characterized by the spirit of the Beatitudes, is also a commitment to bring the Gospel to bear on culture and social life. For this reason the Cooperators:

- use their freedom in obedience to God's plan of creation, which leads them to appreciate the value and rights proper to the secular sphere and to direct them to the service of people;
- in the spirit of poverty outlined in the Gospel they administer their possessions with simplicity and a generous sharing; they reject all outward show and think of them in the Christian light of the common good;
- they live their sexuality according to the gospel vision of chastity, which prompts them to delicacy in behaviour and to a celibate or married life which is complete and joyful, and centred on love.

In a world which is over-concerned with efficiency, aggressive and divided, they bear witness to the primacy of the spirit and believe that suffering can be fruitful, that non-violence is the leaven of peace, and that forgiveness builds brotherhood" (RAL art.12).

This is an exacting programme that calls for support and encouragement from their Salesian brothers with whom the Cooperators share the 'salesian' name and reality.

Conclusion

In some of the Regional Congresses of the Cooperators Association, all the Provincials of the Region took part, together with provincial and local delegates. In others it proved difficult to organize the presence of all those responsible at provincial level. That is why I have set out at length my impressions derived from the Congresses in different continents. I entrust them to the Provincials and all the delegates.

They can be summarized as follows:

1. Let every community be conscious of its duty to support and promote the Association of Salesian Cooperators.
2. Let Provincials appoint as provincial and local delegates confreres who, in addition to having the necessary time for an efficacious and meaningful activity, will be awake to a double requirement:
 - 2.1 communion with the salesian community,
 - 2.2 the organizational autonomy of the Association.
3. Let provincial and local delegates fulfil their specific service as spiritual animators, responsible especially for the salesian apostolic formation of the Cooperators. All the rest should be primarily and directly the obligation of the Cooperators themselves.
4. Let provincial delegates play the part of 'intermediate animators' in respect of the local delegates and salesian communities, so as to increase the number of those aware of their responsibility for the Association.
5. Let local delegates remember in particular the need for spiritual follow-up of the individual Cooperators and of the Centre, so as to achieve a Christian and salesian maturing suited to the prevailing circumstances.

4. ACTIVITIES OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL

4.1 Chronicle of the Rector Major

On Easter Sunday, 3 April, the Rector Major blessed at Colle Don Bosco the 14 artistic stations of the "Via Lucis", the final stage of the spiritual itinerary of the Resurrection in our centre of spirituality. He then took part in the centenary celebrations of the house of Avigliana.

From 8 to 28 April he was in Paraguay, Argentina and Brazil. At Asuncion he was present at the final session of the "First Congress of the Salesian Cooperators of the Southern Zone", a promising meeting with many participants. Immediately afterwards at La Falda (Cordoba) he presided over the Team Visit to the Provinces of Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay. This was followed by meetings with Salesians, Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, and other groups of the Salesian Family and youth groups in Cordoba and Buenos Aires, the meeting with young people at Cordoba being especially memorable.

He then went on to Sao Paulo for the Team Visit to the Provinces of Brazil, where he also met with the Salesian Family and several Salesian

Bishops. He then took an active part at Campo Grande and Cuiaba in the celebrations for the centenary of the arrival of the Salesians in Mato Grosso. He was not able to go to Recife because of the need to return to Italy for the beatification of Mother Morano, which had subsequently to be postponed because of the Holy Father's accident.

Another centenary took him to Lombriasco on 7-8 May, and the possibility for a very positive meeting with the novices at Pinerolo. This was followed soon afterwards by centenary celebrations at Malaga in Spain, which occupied the Rector Major from the 13th to the 17th and provided an opportunity for a series of meetings and rapid visits to the FMA at Marbella and to the Salesians at Ronda and Antequera.

On Thursday 19 May he left for Gatchina (St Petersburg) for the inauguration of our new school of graphic arts. He then went on to Moscow (21-22 May) where he was able to meet with various confreres working in the countries of the former Soviet Union.

On 24 May Fr Viganò was at Valdocco for the Feast of Mary Help of Christians, and then went to Ariccia for the meeting of Superiors General (25-28) which gave further consideration to the preparation for the coming Synod on consecrated life next October.

From the beginning of June the Rector Major was busy with the work of the plenary session of the Council, but was able to take part in some other engagements at weekends. Thus on 4-5 June he was at Vibo Valentia, in Calabria, for the celebrations for our 90 years of work there, and from 10-13 he presided at the UPS over the Team Visit to the Vice-province of the University.

4.2 Chronicle of the General Councillors

The Vicar General

Between 13 and 25 January Fr Juan Vecchi made a visit to the Provinces of Bratislava and Prague. At Velehrad he had a four-day meeting with the Rectors of the two provinces to study themes of community animation and salesian spirituality. Before and after the meeting he was able to make contact with communities and foundations that are at present getting established in their localities and beginning to function

normally.

In February he made the annual visitation of the Generalate, verifying the functioning of its various sectors and the situation of the confreres belonging to the community. On 9-10 of the same month he was at Zagreb at a congress on "Pluralism in education and public instruction", to which he contributed a paper on: "*Salesian pedagogy as a possibility in educative pluralism*". Next he took part in a day of formation for Councils of the Cooperators and Past-pupils of the Roman Province, at which he presented the Strenna for the year. On February 25 he addressed those in charge of formation in the Italian Provinces on "*The challenges presented by vocational animation to salesian formation*" for a more adequate attention to the requirements of the new generations.

In March he had a two-day meeting with the Rectors of the Sicilian Province on the theme "*Spiritual direction in the salesian community*". From 18-26 he preached a retreat to the FMA Superiors of the Mexican Province of Our Lady of Guadalupe, on the occasion of the centenary of their arrival in the country.

This was followed by a series of meetings at the Generalate with the Councillors heading the various Departments to consider certain themes and clarify some points of

organization.

In April at Ragusa he took part in a day of the "World Youth Movement" and gave an address on "*Social crisis. Adaptation of our presence*". On the 24th of the same month he spent the day with the national committee of the Spanish Provinces for youth pastoral work to study the theme of "The first evangelization of the young".

From 2-6 May he took part in the Team Visit to the Provinces of Central and North Europe at Benediktbeuern, and subsequently met with the Rectors of the Adriatic Province for a day of formation on vocational pastoral work. On the 21st of the same month he studied with those in charge of the university hostels of Italy the theme: "*The fundamental elements for a formative plan in salesian university hostels*".

The remainder of Fr Vecchi's time was dedicated to ordinary administration and some situations entrusted to him by the Rector Major.

The Councillor for Formation

Participation in Team Visits or their preparation kept Fr Nicolussi busy for various weeks of this period. It should be remembered that all such visits in the present six-year period have the common theme of ongoing formation. He

took part in the Team Visits to the Atlantic Region of Latin America (Plata 10-16 April; Brazil 17-23 April), and to North and Central Europe (Benediktbeuern 2-6 May), and also in the preparations for those to the UPS and to India. In connection with the latter he was at Bangalore from 24-27 January to meet a group of confreres engaged in the preparation of a study on the "contextualization of salesian formation in India", which will be one of the themes of the Team Visit.

A second concern of the Councillor has been to visit certain provinces facing new situations with regard to formation. From 29 January to 9 February he was in the Philippines where the former single province has now become two. From 6-12 May it was the turn of the Provinces of Ljubljana (Slovenia) and Zagreb (Croatia), two provinces which for different reasons are living through new situations with new challenges and new possibilities, with strong repercussions on the initial and ongoing formation of confreres and communities.

A visit to the studentate of Cremsan, where there are 27 students of theology from 12 different provinces, and a meeting with Rectors at Cairo were the main reasons for Fr Nicolussi's presence in the Middle East from 6-14 March. The Cairo meeting concentrated on the animation of the local community and on

the relationship between vocational pastoral work and the immediate preparation for the novitiate.

From 24 to 28 March he was present at Vienna with more than forty formation personnel from post-novitiate communities, those of students of theology, and salesian study centres of Europe. 30 provinces from 15 different countries were represented. Because of the diverse and changed situations in Europe, which affect salesian and formational aspects, the meeting proved to be a welcome opportunity for communion and sharing and the necessity was seen for greater collaboration and coordination. Dialogue was stimulated by the exchange of experiences (in Europe there are 40 provinces or other salesian circumscriptions), and by three papers on the reality of the youth situation, the formative response, and the formative experience of young confreres. Before the meeting the Councillor had spent some days in the Vienna Province.

The Councillor for Youth Pastoral Work

Fr Luc Van Looy took part in the Team Visits to Argentina, Brazil and Benediktbeuern already mentioned; in addition his activities include the following.

10 January – 27 March: Visitation of the Province of North-Belgium,

which had to be interrupted from time to time for the engagements that follow.

– 4-11 February: a retreat at Seville (Spain) for the local superiors and provincial councils of the FMA.

– 12 February: episcopal ordination of Mgr Adrian Van Luyn at Rotterdam, representing the Rector Major.

– 12-13 February: meeting on salesian youth spirituality organized by the German-speaking provinces at Fürstenried, Germany.

– Holy Week: in Rome for the meeting of heads of Departments to coordinate activities.

– 8-9 April: meeting at Leusden, Holland, for rectors and salesian and lay animators of the works of the province. More than half of the 45 participants were lay people, who manifested a great sense of shared responsibility for the salesian mission in the country, with the perspective of a deeper formation and added thrust for the future.

– Returning from Brazil he spent a day with the confreres compelled to leave Rwanda because of the civil war. He arranged a period of ongoing formation for them to enable them to profit by their enforced absence from their mission.

– 15-30 April: retreat at Irun, Spain, for Rectors of the Bilbao and León Provinces.

– 1 May: meeting with Italian animators of the salesian youth move-

ment at Sacro Cuore, Rome, for a verification of the past year and the preparation of the Italian "Confronto" of August 1995.

– 11-12 May: Leghorn, Italy, for a meeting with a group of young people on the prayer of salesian youth, and for a meeting with the community.

– 14-24 May: study meeting at Cumbaya, Ecuador, together with Mother Georgina McPake, on "*The salesian educative process and the emerging cultures of Latin America*". This meeting was the first of its kind in Latin America and was attended by 119 persons, between SDBs, FMAs, and Cooperators. The objective was the study of the youth situation, and the cultural, educational and religious reality of the continent, so as to examine the educational response being given by the Salesian Family through scholastic works. The meeting made clear the great need to be in constant touch with the realities and examine means of response; it also made abundantly clear the need to work together in the American continent as the Salesian Family.

– 26-30 May: in Colombia to visit two works at Bogotá: that of the "Infant Jesus", which is a sanctuary of great importance in both the city and the country. Every Sunday more than 100,000 people gather there, and the intense work includes help to the poor, catechesis,

education, etc. The other work visited was that of Bosconia-La Florida, which is an activity for street children. In its various levels it reaches some 1,500 youngsters in a programme that extends from first reception to the "Boys Republic" in the house of La Florida. It is a work of great value recognized all over Colombia and Latin America.

Fr Van Looy then returned to Rome for the plenary session of the Council.

The Councillor for the Salesian Family and for Social Communication

Fr Antonio Martinelli's chief commitment in this period was the extraordinary visitation of the East Venice Province, which began on 7 January 1994 and continued till the middle of May with intervals for the items noted below. He took part in all three team visits already mentioned, during which he was concerned in particular with the participation of the laity in the salesian mission and salesian social pastoral work.

The Salesian Family

The chronicle of activities of the Councillor with respect to the Salesian Family include the following:

– 24-29 January: 17th Week of Spirituality for the Salesian Family, with the theme of this year's

Strenna on evangelical hope.

– 6-10 April: Regional Congress of the Cooperators at Ypacarai, Paraguay. Among the more than 150 people present were all the SDB and FMA Provincials. It proved to be an interesting manifestation of combined salesian commitment with the Cooperators.

– 15 May: meeting of the Italian Provincial Conference, during the discussion on the Salesian Family, with particular attention to Cooperators and Past-pupils.

– 21-30 May: pilgrimage days of the Salesian Family of Portugal to Fatima;

The Department was involved in many other initiatives of national and international interest, among them the following:

– Two Regional Congresses of the Salesian Cooperators in Africa, one in English and the other in French. These were unique events which it is hoped will provide the basis for the life of the Association in the countries where Salesians and Daughters of Mary Help of Christians are working.

– The first reflection at provincial level at Bologna with the Salesians and Daughters of Mary Help of Christians; at national level at Rome with the national executive council of the Cooperators and all the provincial coordinators of Italy; and at international level with the World Councillors of the Association from

Austria, Great Britain, Italy and Spain, to prepare for the international meeting to commemorate the centenary of the 1st World Congress of Cooperators at Bologna.

– The “Eurogex” at Malaga, which brought together a hundred past-pupils to study the theme of the family in Europe at the present day.

– Meetings between the Presidency of the Past-pupils of Mary Help of Christians and the World Council of the Past-pupils of Don Bosco in view of the Latin American Congress (CONGRELAT) of September 1995.

To the above must be added all the ordinary administration of the Department in its worldwide relationships, and in the preparation of material useful for the animation of Centres and Unions.

Social communication

The main activities in this field took place at the Generalate, with a view to the further realization of the indications in the Information Project. They included:

- the launching of the new form of the ANS, the periodical publication for the salesian community;
- the General Councillors, scattered in various Regions and Provinces, received a two-page fortnightly update of the life and activity of the Centre;
- installation has begun of the new

product which will be of direct interest to Provincials through the salesian world;

- the possibility is being studied of offering two or three times a year to Directors of Salesian Bulletins in the various editions, so as to prepare common plans for all the Bulletins.

We have become aware of the practical difficulties that have to be faced daily in providing an efficient and efficacious service. We have also noted the usefulness of having timely information at first hand; one need only think of the communications passed in two particular circumstances to the Rector Major and General Councillors absent from Rome: the postponement of the Beatification of Sister Maddalena Morano, and the daily more serious situation of the confreres in Rwanda.

The three Team Visits gave the Councillor the opportunity to check at first hand on the following points of interest to the Department:

- The *EDEBE project in Latin America*, in a meeting with the Provincial Council of La Plata;
- the situation of the *Salesian Video Centre of Belo Horizonte*, in a meeting with the Provincial, Fr Carrara, to study the future of the Centre.

The visits of the Councillor to Paraguay and Portugal provided an

opportunity for studying the setting up of planned communication structures in the two provinces. The publishing houses of Asuncion and Porto, and the bookshops managed by the salesian communities in the respective countries were the object of careful examination.

Some fundamental criteria were established for similar enterprises:

- professional competence in the personnel involved and in the products produced;
- involvement of the provincial community and a group immediately responsible; such complex initiatives should not be entrusted to an individual;
- a renewed mentality in those destined by obedience to the structures of social communication, which should be managed in line with the particular laws for this sector;
- concern to realize the salesian mission through the mass media: education and evangelization.

The salesian presence is expressed at very different levels and very varied content in the field of social communication; the support of development in line with Don Bosco's charism is the first concern of the Department.

The Councillor for the Missions

Fr Odorico began the activities of this period with a visit to Thiès in

Senegal, where he took part in the final phase of the meeting of the Delegate and Councillors of the Delegation of French-speaking West Africa. The central theme of the meeting was the revision of the different aspects of Project Africa and the plans for the future of the area.

He then went on to the Recife Province of Brazil where, from 10 to 14 January, he visited the two missionary communities which are "twinning" with the Italian Province of Verona. With the Provincial and the local confreres he made an evaluation of the experience which proved positive as regards missionary reciprocity, and gave some guidelines for the future.

From 15-21 January the Councillor was in Mexico, in the Ayutla Prelature, where he and Mother Lina Chiandotto presided jointly over the 4th meeting for ongoing formation of the SDB and FMA missionaries of Mexico and Guatemala. The theme was: "*Evangelization and culture in the context of Central America*". The participation was excellent, as regards both numbers and the quality of the contributions.

From 22 January to 1 February Fr Odorico visited the Ariari missions in the province of Colombia-Bogotá, and from 1-4 February the Chokó missions in the Province of Medellin. In both provinces he also reviewed the state of the provincial

missionary animation. He emphasized the growth of these two missionary areas of Colombia and praised the contribution made by the two provinces to Guinea-Conakry in Africa by sending missionaries there.

On leaving Colombia the Councillor made a brief stop on 5 February at Caracas in Venezuela, where he presided at a meeting of young animators of the SDB and FMA from all over Venezuela.

After a brief period in Rome, between 12 and 22 February he visited all the missions of Thailand, accompanied by the Provincial and Bishop Praphon SDB. He shared with them their hopes and problems concerning the *first evangelization* of the Thai world. He also had a meeting with the Papal Nuncio, with whom he discussed the possibility of a new foundation in Laos.

Between 22 February and 1 March he made a rapid visit to all the works in Vietnam, and was able to see for himself the growth in both confreres and works, and the new prospects for development in the context of a more positive political situation. He went also to Hanoi to assess the possibilities for making a foundation there too.

After a further brief stay in Rome the Councillor returned once more to Asia (Hyderabad, India, 5-11 March; Manila, Philippines, 12-22 March) for two meetings for the

ongoing formation of SDB and FMA missionaries on the theme: "*Evangelization and inter-religious dialogue*". It was an enriching experience as regards both content and sharing of experiences.

On returning to Rome, Fr Odo-rico took part in the meeting of the heads of Departments, and then from 10 April to 8 May took part in the role of 'expert' in the African Bishops Synod; this involved the cancellation of all his previously made engagements in the provinces of Latin America. He subsequently sent a dossier of information on the Bishops Synod to all the communities working in Africa.

From 9-12 May he presided at Rome over the annual meeting of Salesian Mission Procurators on the coordination of projects and new techniques in the matter of fund raising.

Immediately afterwards, from 13-16 May, he presided at the meeting of provincial delegates for missionary animation of the provinces of Europe, USA and Canada: the main theme of this meeting was: "*The process of education to missionary concern, and salesian missionary spirituality*".

In the second half of May Fr Odo-rico went to Ethiopia and then Gabon to be present, as Coordinator of Project Africa, at the Cooperators Regional Congresses for the English-speaking and French-speaking

regions of Africa; he was able to note that the Association is already a reality in embryo and is likely to develop in quality, especially after these two congresses.

Before returning to Rome he made a brief visit to the missions of Equatorial Guinea (Bata and Mikomeseng) and of Gabon (Oyem and Libreville).

The Economist General

The more important visits and meetings of the Economist General in the first period of 1994 were as follows:

– 23-24 January: Meeting at Muzano with the Rectors of the new Piedmont Circumscription, on the theme: salesian poverty – a commentary on the recent letter of the Rector Major, and associated problems.

– 11-14 February: Meeting with the provincial economists of the Italian Provincial Conference, at Zafferana Etnea. The meeting dealt exclusively with themes of finances, insurance, taxes etc. Updating was provided by experts in the sectors concerned.

– 13-15 March: Meeting at Mestre with the East Venice Provincial Council for the discussion and approval of the financial report of the Province and individual houses for 1993. There was also a meeting with

the Rectors and local economists for the presentation of the balance sheet.

- 18 April: A similar meeting at Naples for the Southern Province.
- 11-13 May: A further meeting at Alghero, Sardinia, with the provincial economists of the Italian Provincial Conference.
- 15-19 May: A meeting at Warsaw, Poland, with the provincial economists of the Polish provinces, to examine their first financial administrative returns sent to the Economist General's Department. At Lutomiersk Fr Paron had a meeting with 50 Rectors, economists and parish priests to discuss economic and administrative matters arising from the Constitutions. He also took the opportunity to see for the first time some new buildings in the Provinces of Warsaw and Pila.
- 19-21 May: He accompanied the Rector Major on his visit to Russia for the inauguration of the school of graphic arts.
- 21-23 May: he saw once again our parish of the Immaculate Conception and the local community, and inspected at a place 30 km. outside Moscow the building recently acquired for a future novitiate.
- Finally, at the end of May, the Economist General took part in the annual pilgrimage of the over-seventies among the confreres of the East Venice Province to the

Sanctuary of the Madonna of Strugnano in Slovenia.

The Councillor for the Atlantic Region of Latin America

The main commitments of the Regional Councillor during this period were the Visitation of the Province of Campo Grande (Brazil), the two Team Visits realized in the Region, and the consultation for the appointment of a new Provincial of Paraguay.

The Visitation began in February with a meeting of the Provincial Council of Campo Grande and a conversation with the Provincial, to enable the Visitor to obtain a first overall view of the province. The Visitation took place while the province was celebrating the centenary of the arrival of the first Salesians, and for this reason the Rector Major was present on Sunday 24 April at Campo Grande (capital of Southern Mato Grosso) and on the following Monday at Cuiabá (capital of Mato Grosso itself). Solemn festivities and celebrations took place to recall the sacrifices and heroism of the first Salesians in those parts.

In the first week of April Fr Techera made the consultation for the new Provincial of Paraguay, taking part at the same time in the regional Congress of the Cooperators held in Paraguay.

10-16 April was the period of the

Team Visit to the Provinces of Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay, already referred to in these pages. The themes dealt with were: the new evangelization and the education of young people to the faith, the participation of the laity in the salesian mission, and ongoing formation. This was followed by the second Team Visit – to the Brazilian Provinces. Here the themes were: pastoral work for vocations, salesian social pastoral work, and ongoing formation. At the end of the second Team Visit the Salesian Family of Sao Paulo organized an act of homage to the Rector Major in the theatre of the Sacred Heart School.

After the centenary celebrations in the Province of Campo Grande, the Regional Councillor accompanied the Rector Major in a brief visit to Manaus, for a meeting with the Salesian Family, those in formation, the salesian and lay animators of pastoral work, and for a solemn concelebration in the Temple of Don Bosco.

In the evening of 28 April Fr Techera reached Recife, which was also celebrating the centenary of the arrival of the first Salesians in that city, to preside at the concelebration for the opening of the Third National Congress of the Don Bosco Past-Pupils in Brazil.

After these interruptions he returned to the Campo Grande Province to visit the remaining communities

and to conclude the Visitation with a meeting of the Rectors and Provincial Council.

On 23 May he reached Turin to thank Mary Help of Christians for the growth of the salesian vocation in his region and pray for the needs of all the provinces. On 25 May he returned to Rome for the plenary session of the Council.

The Councillor for the Pacific-Caribbean Region of Latin America

Fr Guillermo Garcia left Rome for Mexico on 18 January. The following is a list of his activities in various countries:

In Mexico

He made a rapid tour of all fifteen houses of the southern Mexican Province, and met with the Provincial Council and Rectors to help in the realization of the conclusions of the Extraordinary Visitation made by Fr Antonio Rodriguez in 1993.

He visited the work in South-East Mexico, area of the military uprising on 1 January, and assured the confreres of the solidarity of the Rector Major and Congregation in their time of uncertainty and tribulation. Together with the Provincial he had a meeting with Mgr Samuel Ruiz to obtain more reliable information. The following day the Bishop came to the salesian house to

say Mass for more than 200 natives who had taken refuge in our youth centre. The number of refugees increases daily, but there are few young men among them: they have all joined the rebellion and are fighting for justice. Their heroism will certainly produce positive results for their country, but the situation is a problem for our mission as educators, in so far as in nearly all Latin America the only alternative for the poor natives is to die fighting for their rights which they have asked for more than a hundred years to be respected.

In Venezuela

Here in February Fr Garcia began the Extraordinary Visitation. It took him fifteen weeks to visit all 35 houses of the province.

Venezuela is preparing to celebrate the first centenary of salesian work in the country. Since 1989 the Province has begun a renewal in both quantitative and qualitative growth. The confreres have been sensitive to the challenges of the national reality in all its aspects. Recent provincial chapters have analyzed in depth the country's situation from the standpoint of the salesian charism, and have fixed certain objectives to be pursued in the coming years.

To meet new and urgent requirements of the youth situation, the

Province is opening new frontiers of work, concentrating on youngsters most in need and at risk in densely populated areas and native sectors. Work-training centres do a great deal to help those who drop out of ordinary school structures, and a programme for which the Cooperators share responsibility aims at offering a home and education to those with no family.

Worthy of special mention is the missionary work in the Amazonian region. It is still young (60 years) but is vigorous and consistent; it is also beset by trials associated with the struggle for justice, and our missionaries share the sufferings of the natives. Constant efforts have obtained, through the Department for the defence of human rights and other agencies, not only their own territory for the Yanomamis, but also health and educational services for various ethnic groups. The Church, through the Vicariate, is defending the ethnic groups against the onslaught of 'modern' culture. One of the most difficult tasks is to carry out a really inculturated evangelization with a fresh missionary enthusiasm that is a concrete and convinced expression of a faith shared with enthusiasm and respect for culture.

The Venezuelan Province is following the guidelines of the Church and Congregation and is poised to respond efficaciously to the challen-

ges of the country's youth.

In El Salvador

Fr Garcia was present on 19 March at the official inauguration of the *Regional Centre of the Salesian Coadjutor* in San Salvador. It is a large and pleasant house, built with contributions from the 12 provinces of the Region and with the economic and moral support of the Rector Major. It is destined for lay Salesians who have finished their practical training period and are preparing for perpetual profession. It will obviously be open also to other Coadjutors from Latin-American provinces who want to make use of its formative facilities.

The "founding" community consists of 11 young Brothers from the Provinces of Central America, Venezuela, Peru, Mexico and Guadalajara, with three formation personnel provided by the Provinces of Central America, Guadalajara and Ecuador. The community is a source of hope for America and the world!

After the journey to El Salvador, Fr Garcia concluded the Visitation of Venezuela with a meeting with the Provincial Council and Rectors, in which he set out his impressions and recommendations, and ways were sought for implementing them. The meetings were followed by a "Festival of Fidelity" in which

the Silver and Golden Jubilees of a number of confreres were suitably celebrated.

In Colombia

Before returning to Rome Fr Garcia spent a week in Colombia for the purpose of making the consultation for a successor to the present Provincial, who has been compelled by health reasons to ask the Rector Major to relieve him of the office.

At Santafé di Bogotá he met Fr Luc Van Looy and together they made the visits reported in the Chronicle of Fr Van Looy. After the Extraordinary Visitation of Colombia, the Rector Major had asked the Provincial Council, with the help of the General Council, to examine these two works in depth as regards their present situation and future prospects, because of their importance from the standpoints of education and evangelization. The prompt and enthusiastic response of the communities and confreres concerned will surely be reflected in robust and beneficial form for Colombia and the whole of Latin America.

The Councillor for the English-speaking Region

After the winter session of the General Council Fr Martin McPake left Rome on 9 January to begin the Extraordinary Visitation of the

Eastern (New Rochelle) Province of the United States of America. After the official opening of the Visitation at the Provincial House he began the visits to the individual communities in the southern part of the province at Miami. A brief delay caused by illness prevented him from being present at a combined meeting of the SDB and FMA Provincial Councils of the Provinces of the USA and Canada which had been arranged at San Antonio in Texas, but he was then able to carry on normally with the visitation, with a rearranged time-table.

In April he presided at a meeting in New Rochelle of the seven Provincials of the Region, which had been arranged as a follow-up to the Team Visit made by the Rector Major and Councillors to the English-speaking Region in Australia in October last, with a view to reviewing the progress made in the implementation of decisions that had been taken.

Precisely at the end of the Visitation when it only remained to make his final report and recommendations to the Rectors and Provincial Council, Fr McPake suffered a further bout of illness which necessitated a brief stay in hospital and surgical intervention. For this reason he was not able to be present at the early part of the winter session of the General Council.

The Councillor for the Asian Region

Fr Thomas Panakezham left Rome on 9 January for Dar Es Salaam in Tanzania, and after visiting all the communities in that country went on to Nairobi in Kenya to visit some of the communities in that country also. He was able to note the progress made by the Vice-province in recent years. The formation communities have become well established and a certain number of native vocations have already appeared. The church of Mary Help of Christians at Nairobi, built in African style, is almost ready for its official blessing, and the confreres await the presence of the Rector Major for this important event.

The Councillor then went on to Bangalore in India, where he took part with Fr Nicolussi from 25-27 January in a meeting already reported in the activities of Fr Nicolussi. He then went on to the Province of Dimapur to make the consultation for the appointment of the new Provincial.

After a brief stop at Calcutta (14-16 February) he spent three days (17-19) in Cambodia where in two years our three confreres have carried out an extraordinary work for the benefit of society's outcasts, a work which has earned the praise of the central government for the dedication of the Salesians to those in need, and especially the young.

This was followed by a rapid visit to some communities in Thailand, and Fr Thomas then visited the two provinces of the Philippines. It was in fact his first tour of the countries of the Cebu Province after the division of the former large Filipino Province. The new province is endeavouring to develop the salesian presence also in the neighbouring islands.

From 1-8 March Fr Panakezham visited the communities of Sri Lanka, a country which in recent years has seen a progressive stabilization of salesian work. The prenovitiate at Dankotuwa promises well for the future of the Delegation.

Reaching Hyderabad via Madras on 9 March, Fr Thomas was present with Fr Odorico at the meeting of missionaries (cf. chronicle of Fr Odorico), and immediately afterwards presided over a meeting of the Indian Provincial Conference in the Provincial House, for the preparation of the Team Visit which will take place precisely at Hyderabad. The Provincials also exchanged views on personnel for services at national level.

The Extraordinary Visitation of the Hong Kong Province kept the Regional busy from 16 March to 24 May. This province includes Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan. The Visitor found the Salesians very hard-working, self-sacrificing and faithful to the charism of Don Bosco. The

confreres are optimistic and enthusiastic, despite some uncertainty about what will follow 1997, when Hong Kong will be reunited with mainland China. Prayers are asked for a successful outcome to this event.

On 25 May Fr Panakezham went to Daejeon in South Korea, to preside at a meeting of the provincials of the Far East (25-28 May). Here too the main theme was the immediate preparation for the Team Visit which will take place in Japan in November 1994.

On 29 May he returned to Rome.

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

After making contact at the end of January with the formation communities of the Central African Province, Fr Dominic Britschu made the Extraordinary Visitation of the North German Province.

In addition to the work required by the Visitation, the Councillor managed to keep in close touch with much of the work in the other provinces of the Region (Austria, North Belgium, Bohemia and Moravia, Croatia, South Germany, Holland, Slovakia, Slovenia and Hungary) which came together at Benediktbeuern from 2-7 May for the Team Visit and consideration of the deliberations of the GC23.

From April onwards there were intensified contacts and interventions concerning the painful events in Rwanda.

The Regional Councillor for Spain and Portugal

Between January and May, the Regional was chiefly concerned with the Extraordinary Visitation of the Madrid Province, which has more than 400 confreres in 35 communities, but managed to include some other engagements in addition.

On 22 January he went to León to launch the consultation for the appointment of a new Provincial.

In February he spent ten days in Zaire to take part in the meeting of the *Curatorium* of the studentate of theology at Lubumbashi, where the students include the first African Salesians from the countries where the confreres from Spain and Portugal are working: 1 from Mozambique in the 2nd year, and six in the first year (1 from Togo, 3 from Benin, 1 from Mali and 1 from Guinea). One of the professors is from the Province of León, Fr Bernardo Alonso.

The social and political situation of Zaire gives cause for much concern; but there is a striking peace and serenity in the studentate among the young confreres, who greatly appreciated the visit of the

Councillor.

Returning to Spain Fr Rodriguez-Tallón spent a further few days launching the consultation for new Provincials in Seville and Barcelona in meetings with Rectors.

On 22-23 March the 39th meeting of the Iberian Provincial Conference took place at León. As is usual in the Spring meeting the situation of salesian work in the Delegation of West Africa was discussed; present at the meeting for this purpose were the Delegate and also the Provincial of Guadalajara (Mexico), responsible for the work in Guinea-Conakry. León was chosen as the location this time, because of the simultaneous inauguration of the new building attached to the Provincial House, which includes a reception centre for young people and another for ailing Salesians. It is a worthy building which offers new possibilities to the provincial house.

A few days later the Councillor went with the Madrid Provincial to Equatorial Guinea, where he spent three weeks visiting the confreres and salesian foundations in that country. He was able also to take part in a meeting of the Delegation for Tropical and Equatorial Africa at Malabo on 11-12 April. The Delegation coordinates and unifies salesian work in Guinea, Cameroun, Gabon, Congo, and the foundations soon to be made in Chad and Central Africa.

On 21 May he had a meeting with the Provincial Council of Madrid, and on the following day a meeting with the Rectors, both for the purpose of communicating his impressions at the end of the Visitation.

On 24 May he celebrated the Feast of Mary Help of Christians with some of the Madrid communities; at midday he was with the community of the National Centre for Youth Pastoral Work; in the evening he took part in the Eucharist and procession of Mary Help of Christians in Atocha. The latter was a wonderful manifestation of popular devotion through the streets of Madrid, with the participation of the local Mayor and an enormous number of the faithful – a festive passing of Mary through the city streets.

The Regional spent the following days at Burgos and Astudillo, in visits to the novices and postnovices, taking the opportunity to converse with the formation personnel and those in formation. These two houses cater for three of the Spanish provinces, one of them being Madrid where the Visitation had just been made.

On the 28th he took part in the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the foundation of the Salesian Catechetical Centre; he presided at the Mass in the Sanctuary of the Madonna of Monserrat and was present at the the celebrations that

followed. The work was a real 'mustard seed' which has borne much fruit, and today gives rich hope for the future. The Regional expressed the hope that this publishing house would provide a very fruitful contribution to the evangelization of the young and the formation of Salesians.

On 30 May Fr Rodriguez-Tallón returned to Rome for the plenary session of the General Council.

The Regional Councillor for Italy and the Middle East

The following items are listed in the chronicle of Fr Giovanni Fedrigotti. They are in addition to the continuation of the Extraordinary Visitation of the Genoa Province (to mid-February) and that of the Italian Southern Province (from mid-February to the end of May).

– 4-7 December 1993: visit to the houses in Albania at Tirana and Scutari.

– 9-11 January: meeting with the presidency of the Italian Provincial Conference to discuss the *Confronto Italian: Salesian Youth Movement*, 1995 and approve the new Regulations for the CISI, to be submitted to the Rector Major and his Council. A joint meeting took place also with the FMA Provincial Conference on the theme: *Salesian religious life: a charismatic presence in the Italian Church*; the need was

emphasized to work as the Salesian Family, in dialogue with the particular Churches and with special attention to the poorer dioceses and the new forms of poverty.

– 13 February: he celebrated the Eucharist at Villa Tuscolana to inaugurate the updating course organized by the combined SDB and FMA provincial conferences for those working in schools.

– 6-11 March: retreat at Collevallenza for provincial councillors and local superiors of the SDB and FMA Provinces of Southern Italy, with emphasis on preparation for the coming Synod on Consecrated Life.

– 20-24 March: took part in the retreat for the CISI Provincials, preached by Fr Piergiordano Cabra at Cecchina, Rome.

– 14-16 May: CISI Assembly at the Generalate, to deal with the following items: Salesian Family, Cooperators and Past-pupils. And a further meeting with the CISI Presidency to examine the state of relations between the CISI and the UPS, with the Rector Magnificus of the UPS and the Superior of the UPS Vice-province present. The meeting also discussed the CISI plan for volunteer work in Calabria, and expressed a preference for “the Laity” to be the theme for the GC24. It also approved the setting up of the new Juridical Office for the CISI, to deal eventually with juridical aspects of salesian schools

and oratories in Italy.

– 29 May: at Salerno; Fr Fedrigotti took part in the annual celebration and procession of Mary Help of Christians to invoke her protection at the conclusion of the Visitation.

The Rector Major's Delegate for Poland

Fr Augustyn Dziedziel's main task in this period was the Extraordinary Visitation of the Warsaw Province, which involved his participation in various celebrations, activities and other meetings for animation, formation and study purposes in the province and elsewhere. The following items appear in his calendar:

– An early meeting with the Polish Provincial Conference and Fr Zdzisław Weder, responsible for the countries of the former Soviet Union.

– The launching of the consultation for the appointment of a new Provincial for the Cracow Province.

– Visits of animation to formation communities and groups of the Salesian Family.

– 15-19 May: he accompanied the Economist General in two meetings: at Warsaw with the provincial economists, and at Lutomiersk with local economists of the four Polish provinces, and in visits to some salesian works.

– 19-23 May: together with Fr Paron he accompanied the Rector

Major in his first visit to the new Eastern Circumscription (the countries of the former Soviet Union) for the inauguration of the work at Gatchina; and then to Moscow where the Rector Major celebrated the solemn Mass of Pentecost in the salesian church of the Immaculate Conception, with the participation of members of the Salesian Family and large numbers of the faithful; the Mass was followed by an academy in honour of Mary Help of Christians with the solemn entrustment to Mary of the Salesian Family of the new Circumscription. Finally he accompanied the Rector Major to Oktiabrskij Posiolok on the outskirts of Moscow, where Fr Viganò blessed the house destined to be the future novitiate.

– Returning to Poland from Russia, Fr Dziedziel was present at the priestly ordination of 22 confreres (12 from the Warsaw Province, 9 from that of Pila, and 1 from Byelorussia).

– 26 May: he presided at a meeting with the four Polish Provincials, and on 29 May, with the participation of a large representation of various groups of the Salesian Family, he presided at Auschwitz at the celebrations for the centenary of the Apparition of the Madonna on the ruins of the wall of the church later entrusted to the Salesians. Following this, he returned immediately to Rome.

The Secretary General

Between February and May 1994 Fr Maraccani organized three meetings of Provincial Secretaries of different areas of the Congregation.

These meetings, which formed part of the programme laid down for the present six-year period, represented an updating process for the work of the provincial secretaries in the service of the provinces and the Congregation, and also provided an opportunity for an exchange of experiences. The fundamental elements of our particular law were reviewed, and the more important aspects of the organization of the provincial office. Particular emphasis was laid on the documentation of the life and mission of the communities and the provinces, with special reference to the archives where such documentation is preserved and passed into history.

The first meeting took place at Sampran in Thailand from 28 February to 5 March for the Secretaries of the 13 provinces of Asia (India and the Far East) and Australia. It was noteworthy not only for the active participation of all present, but also for the fraternal atmosphere fostered by the magnificent hospitality of the Thai Province.

Having reached this part of the world, the Secretary General took the opportunity to visit some other provinces and communities in Asia.

Passing through Bombay on his way to Thailand, he stopped in the Province of Hyderabad, India, to visit the salesian foundations in that city and the novitiate at Chandur. He also made a brief stop at New Delhi, where he admired the salesian reality of our various foundations, before going on to Bangkok.

After the meeting in Thailand, Fr Maraccani made brief stops in three other countries: Korea, Japan and the Philippines. In South Korea he was able to make a short visit to all our works, with particular regard to the formation communities. In Japan he visited the salesian houses of Tokyo and became aware not only of the mission carried out by the Salesians of the present day but also of the history of our work in this country. Finally in the Philippines he visited some of the works in the southern province, particularly the houses of Cebu and those on the island of Negros Occidental (where the novitiate is situated). In all these

places he was able to meet also various FMA communities and other groups of the Salesian Family, characteristic among them the Sisters of Charity of Miyazaki at Tokyo. After a brief stay at Manila, Fr Maraccani then returned to Rome.

The other two meetings with provincial secretaries took place at Rome itself: from 11-15 April for the Provinces of Italy, Spain and Portugal, and from 9-13 May for the other Provinces of Europe (Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Great Britain, Holland, Hungary, Ireland, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia).

These meetings in Rome also were characterized by active participation and great fellowship. Among other things the Secretaries were able to make contact with the various offices of the Generalate (and in particular the Central Archives), and to speak with those responsible for various sectors.

5. DOCUMENTS AND NEWS ITEMS

5.1 Our dead confreres (1994 – 2nd list)

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

NAME	PLACE	DATE	AGE	PROV.
P ALOSSA Arturo	Chieri	28.05.94	69	ICP
P BARBOSA Orlando	Santos	17.04.94	66	BSP
P BORGATELLO Diego	New Rochelle	23.04.94	83	SUE
L BOYCE John	Delaside	27.05.94	75	AFM
P CAPELLARI Saulo	Torino	01.06.94	77	ICP
P CAPOGROSSO Luigi	Taranto	12.06.94	63	IME
L CASTELLI Giovanni	Gerusalemme	31.05.94	84	MOR
P CESAR ROMEIRO Brenno	São Paulo	31.03.94	90	BSP
L CILLUFFO Onofrio	Bahía Blanca	13.04.94	83	ABB
P CORBELLA MARGALEF Juan	Barcelona	19.05.94	86	SBA
P DESTEFANIS Natale	Torino	04.04.94	81	ICP
P DOMANSKI Juan	Lima	17.04.94	84	PER
L FILIPOWICZ Jan	Sokolów Podlaski	13.02.94	58	PLE
P FRELICH Vojtech	Zlín	10.02.94	79	CEP
P GASPARIN Guerrino	Novara	01.04.94	77	ICP
P GIUDICI Giuseppe	Arese	05.05.94	92	ILE
P GROSSO Antonino	Cuneo	23.05.94	62	ICP
L JEZOVIT Jan Baktist	Banpong	15.04.94	84	THA
P JOSCHKO Franz	Köln	09.04.94	82	GEK
P KHONGLAH John	Jowai	18.04.94	70	ING
P KNOLL Luigi	Würzburg	26.05.94	73	GEM
P KOMAREK Václav	Praha	22.05.94	64	CEP
L KOVAC Alfons	Praha	22.04.94	74	CEP
P MARTIN GONZALEZ Angel	Córdoba	03.06.94	70	SCO
P MILAN GOMEZ Alfonso	Orense	16.05.94	66	SLE
<i>Fu Ispettore per 6 anni</i>				
L MRZEL Rafael	Mandaluyong	16.04.94	81	FIN
P MUÑOZ OPAZO Honorio	Santiago de Chile	06.04.94	98	CIL
L NACHTEGAEL Gustaaf	Gent	24.05.94	75	BEN
L PALATHUMKAL Cherlan	Aluva (India)	16.04.94	59	AFE
P PERCKE Pierre	Pontoise	06.04.94	74	FPA
P RAUCH Edouard	Mulhouse	28.03.94	80	FLY
P RESCHOP Carlos	Valencia	01.05.94	72	VEN
P SALLACH Adolf	Velbert	07.04.94	71	GEK
P SERRANO CONSTANZA Manuel	San José (Costa Rica)	16.04.94	89	CAM
L SINSEDER Franz	Bad Tölz	04.04.94	88	GEM

