



# **acts**

**of the general council**

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**year LXXV october-december 1994**

**N. 350**

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

**Roma  
Direzione Generale  
Opere Don Bosco**





# acts

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

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OFFICIAL ORGAN OF ANIMATION AND COMMUNICATION FOR THE SALESIAN CONGREGATION

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## N. 350

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## 1. LETTER OF THE RECTOR MAJOR

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### CONVOCATION OF THE 24TH GENERAL CHAPTER

Introduction - 1. Official convocation - 2. The choice of the theme - 3. A rapid glance at salesian tradition - 4. The statement of the theme of the Chapter - 5. The meaning we give to the term "lay" - 6. "Secularity", the "secular dimension" of the Congregation, the "secular character" of the lay faithful - 7. Lay people with Don Bosco's spirit - 8. A salesian community animating lay persons - 9. Incentives of the coming Synod for new relationships with lay people - 10. An invitation to the provinces - Conclusion

Rome, Solemnity of the Assumption of Our Lady  
15 August 1994

My dear confreres,

This closing part of the year 1994 and the whole of 1995 is for us a time rich in grace.

Very soon the Lord will give us the opportunity to follow the work of the Synod of Bishops on "the consecrated life and its mission in the Church and in the world".

I have already drawn your attention to this event of the Church; it has been entrusted to the consideration of communities and to the prayers of the individual confreres. I ask you to be generous in this connection; all the good that flows from it will redound to our own advantage and to the growth of gospel authenticity.

During the time the celebration of the Synod is in progress the communities should offer a special prayer of adoration to invoke the light and strength of the Holy Spirit.



We shall have occasion to come back in due course to the content and conclusions of the Synod, because they will be of direct interest to our life.

This circular brings you the official announcement of the convocation of the coming 14th General Chapter which will involve the provincial communities in work during 1995 in the preparation of contributions to be sent to the Moderator who is organizing the work of the general assembly.

We have grown accustomed to hearing it said that the General Chapter is an "event of the greatest importance", to repeat the words of Don Bosco in 1877.<sup>1</sup>

The Constitutions certainly attach great significance to the General Chapter: *"The general chapter is the principal sign of the Congregation's unity in diversity. It is the fraternal meeting in which Salesians carry out a community study and reflection to keep themselves faithful to the Gospel and to their Founder's charism, and sensitive to the needs of time and place."*

*Through the general chapter the entire Society, opening itself to the guidance of the Spirit of the Lord, seeks to discern God's will at a specific moment in history for the purpose of rendering the Church better service".<sup>2</sup>*

Even without going fully into what a Chapter is, we must recognize that its convocation is of special significance and represents a call to fulfil obligations of great importance.

cf E CERIA, Annali vol I, p 313

<sup>2</sup> G 146



## 1. OFFICIAL CONVOCATION

By the present letter I intend to convoke officially the 24th General Chapter in accordance with what is laid down in art. 150 of the Constitutions. I fulfil also what is required by arts. 111 and 112 of the General Regulations:

★ I communicate that I have appointed as Moderator of the GC24 Fr Antonio Martinelli, Councilor General for the Salesian Family and for social communication;

★ after hearing the opinion of the General Council, which reflected also the preferences of the various regions of the Congregation, we have chosen the following as the Chapter's theme:

“SALESIANS AND LAY PEOPLE:  
COMMUNION AND SHARING  
IN THE SPIRIT AND MISSION OF DON BOSCO”;

★ after analyzing a possible process of preparation we have decided on 18 February 1996 as the opening date at the Generalate in Rome, Via della Pisana 1111. The Chapter will begin with a retreat, and it is expected that it will continue for some two months, finishing not later than 20 April;

★ in due course the technical commission was appointed and, with the Moderator, has decided on the preparation process and arranged for the drawing up of the guidelines to be sent to the provinces for their sensitization and active participation in the coming Chapter. You will find the results of their work in another part of the present issue of the Acts.

The Regulations also require that the Rector Major send out a letter indicating the “principal



purpose of the Chapter". That is the purpose of the present circular.

It should be kept in mind however that another important and vital aspect of the Chapter is the election of the Rector Major and the members of his Council. I draw your attention to this task not merely to fulfil a formality but to ask for the participation and shared responsibility of all confreres,<sup>3</sup> through abundant prayer that the Lord will give to the Congregation the superiors needed at the present historic moment of the Church, the world and young people. On their service of animation and government, on the docility to the impulse of the Holy Spirit, on their ability to be bound to the foundational charism of our father Don Bosco, will depend in a special way the numerical and qualitative increase of our Society.

<sup>3</sup> cf G 123

## 2. THE CHOICE OF THE THEME

The GC23 had already given to the Congregation a precise and demanding task in connection with lay people. It had expressed the following words directed to the Rector Major and General Council: "The Rector Major, through the Departments concerned, will offer elements and lines of thought for a 'lay project' in the Congregation".<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> GG23 238

The same Chapter also declared unequivocally: "A change of mentality is needed ... in the first place in the Salesians themselves".<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> GG23 232

With the convocation of the GC24 it is clear that the time has come to verify the result of these statements and to relaunch in efficacious fashion the steps taken by the communities in connection with the hoped for lay-project.



The substance, in fact, of what we are hoping to realize at the present day through the GC24 has its origin in the distant past, and has its roots in the experience of Don Bosco himself.

We cannot forget, however, that the Church has lived through new and deeply renewing events proclaiming that the hour of the laity has struck.

Such items, for instance, have been:

- *Lumen Gentium* with its chapter II on the People of God and its chapter IV dedicated entirely to the lay faithful;
- *Gaudium et Spes*, which analyzes the presence of the Church in the world and, after examining and reformulating Christian anthropology, goes on to consider in the second part of the document the more urgent problems linked with the various areas in which the lay Christian is called to realize his or her vocation. One need think only of the problems of the family, of culture, of the economy, of politics, of peace and in wider terms of the problems of the world in general;
- the decree *Apostolicam Actuositatem* considers with balanced attention the different perspectives in which the lay apostolate is realized in the Church, in harmony with its global mission, emphasizing the commitment to evangelization, to the Christian animation of the temporal order, and finally its charitable mission;
- coming nearer to the present day, the Apostolic Exhortation of John Paul II on the vocation and mission of the laity in the Church and in the world, *Christifideles laici*, to “stir and promote a deeper awareness among all the faithful of the gift and responsibility they share, both as a group and as individuals, in the communion and mission of the Church”.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> GL 2



In the light of these substantial innovations we may ask ourselves: Don Bosco's intuitions about the laity, his commitment to getting them fully and responsibly involved in his mission, his seeking to the end of his life for convinced and generous collaborators, his conviction that unity gives strength to those working for good – how have all these been renewed by us who are his heirs?

Hence the choice of the theme for the GC24, which will offer all confreres and communities opportune guidelines for renewing the relationship between Salesians and lay people along the lines of the most genuine tradition.

### 3. A RAPID GLANCE AT SALESIAN TRADITION

Don Bosco understood intuitively the essential importance of his mission to the young and the poor being shared by a vast movement of persons (priests, religious and lay people). In fact the activities of the Oratory in its first years he carried out with the assistance of numerous collaborators, beginning with the help of his own mother, Margaret Occhiena.<sup>7</sup>

He chose them from among those who showed an aptitude and availability for the education of needy youth, and he used them principally for the animation of free time, in recreation, in assistance, and in the teaching of catechism.

He took care of their initial training and planned for them a programme of continuing formation, for which purpose he had frequent meetings with them.<sup>8</sup> He involved them in the life of the Oratory and entrusted to them specific tasks.

<sup>7</sup> cf. Decree of the Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes, of 9 May 1985, in RAL p. 5 and 10

<sup>8</sup> cf. MB 4, 300



From the rich personal experience of Don Bosco there developed a salesian suggestion to lay people who want to respond to an invitation to "help Don Bosco".

The lay person who commits himself to the service of the salesian mission shares Don Bosco's apostolic anxiety, interpreting his spirit and love for the young. He becomes ever more involved in a true sharing of responsibility to the point of living to the full the protagonism deriving from Don Bosco's charisma.

Such work, sensitivity and availability have been evident from the beginning in varied forms of collaboration and sharing.

When we dealt with the topic of the Salesian Cooperators, we made a close examination of salesian tradition in this connection. I invite you to read again with attention in AGC 318 (*the Association of Salesian Cooperators*) the reflections we then made on the central aspect which concerns us.

For our Founder the determining element of the presence of the lay person is not only the capacity for work and active intervention, but primarily the possibility of fully sharing the spirit which animates education and the apostolate in the thought of Don Bosco.

#### **4. THE STATEMENT OF THE THEME OF THE CHAPTER**

The expression used to indicate the task of the coming General Chapter includes some important perspectives:



★ *"Salesians and Lay-people"* in communion of intent: not therefore a relationship as between teacher and pupil, but an interpersonal and institutional relationship which is to be deepened, fostered and followed up with a view to mutual enrichment.

The Salesians have something very valuable to offer the laity, while the latter can give the Salesians original elements in their being and activity.

These mutually enriching relationships need to be rooted not so much in requirements associated with a possible decrease in the number of Salesians, but rather in the notion of complementary roles in a common mission rethought in the light of the ecclesiology of Vatican II.

★ *"Communion and Sharing"*; an expression of the new Constitutions well expresses the sense and implication of the formulation of the theme: it is a matter of involving *"in a family atmosphere parents and educators, so that it can become a living experience of the Church and an indication of God's plan for us"*.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> 47

The term communion emphasizes the close relationship of persons in the light of the objective of living together, of mutual friendship, of activity and intercommunication; the term sharing implies a reinforcement of communion, giving further emphasis to the aspect of active participation of both parties.

★ *Spirit and mission of Don Bosco*"; this is an expression which refers to his charism as a Christian educator. It must be repeated that it is precisely the genuine spirit of Don Bosco that must enlighten the mutual relationships, as also his concrete mission.



In this perspective it becomes possible, as we shall see, to recall the *different levels* in communion and sharing on the part of many lay people who work at our side or draw their inspiration from our educative project.

This expression also recalls the salesian community to a task which has true priority: that of the formation of the laity; i.e. the Salesians must give priority to the tasks of spiritual and pedagogical animation, and give greater attention to the formation of collaborators and those who share responsibility with us, before undertaking other activities.

Here too is relevant the indication of the GC23, n. 232: "A change of mentality is needed ... in the first place in the Salesians themselves", to foster the professional approach, educational ability, and witness as regards education to the faith.<sup>10</sup>

The spirit and mission of Don Bosco, shared together by Salesians and lay people, will need a common formative process, which will have to be such not only in content but sometimes also in time. The latter will facilitate the assimilation of the gifts of each group and of the vocational differences.

## 5. THE MEANING WE GIVE TO THE TERM "LAY"

In our numerous and widely varying foundations there is, in fact, considerable space for many persons all of whom we call "lay", but who differ widely from each other. Some of them are practising Catholics and true members of Christ's faithful; others are Christians but not Catholics, others belong to non-christian religions; still others are unbe-

<sup>10</sup>cf GG23 237



lievers who go so far as to call themselves atheists: a whole variety of persons according to the cultural characteristics of the local territory.

And then what are we to say also of the term "lay" as commonly used outside ecclesial circles, with a cultural and political sense of an agnostic kind?

We cannot allow the work of the General Chapter to become submerged in a background so elastic as to paralyze the attainment of concrete objectives.

We shall not interpret correctly the living meaning we want to give to the term unless we start from the concept of Vatican II (developed in the Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles laici*) which ensures that we have the first and full ecclesial significance.

Such an aspect must also shed light on the various levels of which we are aware among the lay people (in the broad sense) who surround us; it will constitute the yardstick, as it were, and the goal of our relationships of communion and sharing with them. We must never forget that what we have in mind are always lay people who are committed in some way and sympathizers with the spirit and mission of Don Bosco, which is objectively a charism of the Holy Spirit in the Church for the world. We need to recall therefore, albeit briefly, what is a true "lay Christian".

The dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium* presents the lay person in the following terms: "*The term 'laity' is here understood to mean all the faithful except those in Holy Orders and those who belong to a religious state approved by the Church. That is, the faithful who by baptism are incorporated into Christ, are placed in the People of God,*



*and in their own way share the priestly, prophetic and kingly office of Christ, and to the best of their ability carry on the mission of the whole Christian people in the Church and in the world".<sup>11</sup>*

<sup>11</sup> LG 31

On the other hand, the Council itself presents the insertion of the laity into temporal and earthly realities, not only as a sociological fact, but rather and specifically as something theological and ecclesial, as the characteristic manner in which the Christian vocation is lived: "*they live in the world, i.e. they are engaged in each and every work and business of the earth and in the ordinary circumstances of social and family life which, as it were, constitute their very existence. There they are called by God that, being led by the Spirit to the Gospel, they may contribute to the sanctification of the world, as from within like leaven, by fulfilling their own particular duties. Thus, especially by the witness of their life, resplendent in faith, hope and charity, they must manifest Christ to others*".<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> LG 31

They live out their commitment on a double frontier: within the Church and within the world.

The harmonization of the double attachment, in the unity of personal life, compels all in the Church to work for the growth of this vocation, in line with the three great urgent needs recalled in the Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles laici*:

- the indispensability of both an ecclesial and social formation, since they must commit themselves on both fronts;
- the importance of an appropriate and actual spirituality, as a response to the new demands of today's culture;



- the continued need of support in their difficult process of presence and animation, so as to be manifestly “the sacrament of God’s love” to contemporary men and women.

## **6. “SECULARITY”, THE “SECULAR DIMENSION” OF THE CONGREGATION, THE “SECULAR CHARACTER” OF THE LAY FAITHFUL**

But for us, in fact, the term “lay person”, even in the light of these precisions of the Council, has a wider effect; it compels us to think matters out in a more gradual but stimulating way.

Let us recall how Vatican II has relaunched in a new form the concept of “world” (*Italian ‘secolo’*), and has rethought the relationship of the Church with it: no longer the “Church *and* the world”, but “the Church *in* the world”.

From this there emerges a vision of “*secularity*” as an existential and sociological condition of everyone: it is a simple fact; and in it there is a great deal of good and a great deal of evil. The present process of secularization would need to know better and develop its multiple values which are often neglected by a reductive mentality, even though it be religious. Unfortunately, however, this process leads all too easily to a secularism which is harmful and immanent.

In any case a renewed theology of creation helps us to a knowledge of many secular values by leading us to a discovery of the positive sense of the world, created by God, taking account also of its dynamic elements of evolution and development (the signs of the times) which are found objectively situated at the foundation of the growing challen-



ges which nowadays demand nothing less than a new evangelization. To be convinced of this, all you have to do is consider the "new frontiers" of which the Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles laici* speaks.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup> GL ch 3

Unfortunately secularism distorts the many values of secularity, with the result that man, instead of being the way of the Church, becomes transformed into a usurper who manipulates and misuses these values, thus bringing about a noxious anthropocentrism.

Secularity without the Creator, without Christ who sums it up in a new form, is in fact a soulless reality. It remains always a treasure chest, rich in values, but in unskilled hands its very riches serve to cause its degeneration.

Christ, the Church, vocations, are all born in the secularity of the world, but bring to it the soul of the Creator and Saviour. In this way Jesus and all the People of God are bearers of an indispensable "*secular dimension*", which adds to the reality of the world a very special vocation of salvation. It is important from this standpoint to distinguish between "secularity" in itself and the "secular dimension of the Church"; the first is a fact, an existential and sociological condition: it is the being of the world involving its future, the commitments of science and technology, commerce, life in society, etc., but in a way that can be partial, reductive, non-transcendental and leading astray.

The "secular dimension of the Church", on the other hand, implies a particular assumption of secularity in its values and implies an operative mandate of salvation on the part of the Creator and Saviour: it is a vocation with a wide responsibility for the liberation of the world.



This secular dimension, shared by all the People of God, is realized in different and complementary ways by its members.

Rightly was Paul VI able to declare that the whole Church "has an authentic secular dimension, inherent in her inner nature and mission, which is deeply rooted in the mystery of the Word Incarnate, and which is realized in different forms through her members".<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup> AAS 54 (1972) 208

In this sense the 4th Latin-American Bishops Conference proclaimed as being inseparably united, under the synthesizing perspective of "Christ yesterday, today and the same for ever", the proclamation of the Gospel with human advancement and Christian culture.

Now, when we consider the tasks proper to the specific vocation of Don Bosco, we find massively present in it the incisiveness of a very particular and concrete "secular dimension". It is a charism that has been raised up in the Church *for the world*: the choice of education in the cultural field, the operative sense of the renewal of human society, the awareness of what is lacking in civil life, the demands of the family, the challenges of needy youth, attention to the formation of a right conscience among people, the efficacy of social communication, etc. The very figure of the Salesian Brother is an original element in our clear secular dimension.

Don Bosco's charism is an ecclesial reality which would have neither sense nor physiognomy without its concrete and very demanding secular dimension; it would have no meaning without the world, just as it is, in which it feels itself called to practical collaboration to repair the Christian texture of the fabric of human society. And this secu-



lar dimension brings our Congregation very close to certain specific commitments of the laity, and to their competence and professional approach.

In the laity, in fact, the "*secular character*" must be considered as their proper characteristic. "Certainly," says the Pope, "all the members of the Church are sharers in this secular dimension but in different ways. In particular the *sharing of the lay faithful* has its own manner of realization and function which, according to the Council, is '*properly and particularly*' theirs. Such a manner is designated with the expression: '*secular character*'.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> GL 15. N.B. In this paragraph it is important to understand the distinction between «secular dimension» and «secular character»

For these lay people "secularity" passes from an existential and sociological condition to a vocational theological commitment. In other words secularity is consciously assumed as a qualifying element of their own Christian existence, which no longer remains simply a common fact (being in the world), but becomes a freely made choice for the practical living out of baptism. The "world" becomes the setting and means of their own Christian vocation, "called to contribute to the sanctification of the world, *as from within like leaven*". Thus for the lay faithful, to be present and active in the world is not only an "anthropological and sociological reality but, in a specific way, a theological and ecclesiological reality as well"; it is the "place" of their vocation and mission. "The lay person is a member of the Church in the heart of the world and a member of the world in the heart of the Church", declared the Latin-American Bishops at Puebla.

All this prompts us to keep in mind an observation particularly useful for approaching well the theme of the coming Chapter.

It is worth our while to emphasize the close as-



sociation and happy spiritual harmonization between the "secular dimension" of our Congregation and the "secular character" of very many lay people who share our choice of the social and cultural sector of education.

It is not only a fortunate linkage, but is objectively a practical and vocational involvement to be fostered, so that the "spirit of the beatitudes" to which Religious must give shining witness<sup>16</sup> may become the evangelical climate also of the life and activities of the laity.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup> LG 31

<sup>17</sup> 5f LG 38: AA 4: GS 72

The Founder Don Bosco did not enclose his characteristic salesian spirit in two religious congregations, but wanted these to be the source and animating centres and distributors of such evangelical richness.

The growth of the salesian charism is not genuine without further communion and sharing with many lay people.

In the first General Chapter of the Congregation (1877) Don Bosco, speaking of the Cooperators, said they are: "An association of the greatest importance for us, one which is the soul of our Congregation and will provide us with a link for doing good with the consent and help of the good faithful who live in the world, practising the spirit of the Salesians. These Cooperators must grow in number as far as possible".<sup>18</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Quoted in AGG 318 (1985), p. 4

## 7. LAY PEOPLE WITH DON BOSCO'S SPIRIT

Lay people with something of Don Bosco's spirit are found at various levels, and we must be able to give adequate animation to all of them.

The *Cooperators* are the first of the laity who share the spirit and mission of Don Bosco, even outside our works: Don Bosco's "mission" and "salesian works" are not the same thing. I invite you to read the Regulations of Apostolic Life drawn up originally by our Father and Founder for the *Cooperators*, and recently revised in line with the requirements of the Council and approved by the Apostolic See

With the *Cooperators* there are also the *Past Pupils* (who if Christians are invited to become *Cooperators* too); because of the education they have received they have a more direct knowledge of the spirit and mission of Don Bosco; among them is to be found a wider range of persons of good will, even outside the Church.

Included too must be the very many *Collaborators* who in different degrees of sharing and involvement contribute actively, and in some cases also in a decisive manner, to the fulfilment of the salesian mission; it would be desirable that those who are committed in a Christian manner should become true *Cooperators*.

It must be kept in mind that the term "collaborator" includes different categories of people: the parents of the youngsters for whom we work, teachers, animators of groups and free time, employees, and volunteers of various kinds. All these play a part in the activities of our works according to the possibilities either by active participation in



the work itself or by their adherence to the salesian spirit and mission.

Finally we must add those who are loosely called *Friends of Don Bosco*, and who include numerous persons who are sympathizers (believers, non-Christians, admirers and benefactors): they have in common a liking for Don Bosco, his spirit and mission, and they are willing to collaborate in doing good, even just as benefactors, in the vast expanse of our mission to the young and the poor.

And if to all of these we add the laity entrusted to us in our various works, like parishes, because they refer in a certain sense to all the inhabitants of a specific area, we find among them in addition to a wide variety of non-Christians, non-believers and non-practising Catholics, also groups of Catholics with other spiritualities which enrich the local Church with their own particular charisms; this implies for us a delicate and versatile ability to animate their identity without detriment to the groups of our own charism.

I think that, like Don Bosco, we also must be able to look at all these lay people without excluding from our active attention anyone who wants in some way to share with us our educative and evangelizing perspectives.

This is a very valid heirloom which must always be preserved in the Congregation and which at the present day must also be tested in conciliar openness to ecumenism, to dialogue with non-Christian religions, and even with non-believers.

It must be remembered, however, that the more we extend the understanding of the term "lay person" as one who draws inspiration from the spirit and mission of Don Bosco, the greater becomes the obligation of the salesian community to help



and follow up in their formation these people who are close to us. The more numerous our lay people in this wide sense, the greater is the need for a well formed nucleus of "lay faithful" (especially Co-operators) and the more spiritual and apostolic must be the animating salesian community.

To understand this *requirement of a strong animating nucleus* we need to refer back to the reflections we have already made concerning secularity, the secular dimension and the secular character.

It is a matter of bringing a salvific influence to bear on secularity, or in other words on the world and society. The commitment for salvation has its roots in the "secular dimension of the Church", in her mission of evangelization of the world through her numerous special charisms, and in particular for us the charism of Don Bosco. The secular dimension of the Church is the bearer of the vocation of salvation; without it secularity does not foster and does not enter upon the process of transcendence. Within secularity there are certainly many values, people of good will, the possibility of involving in a practical way many persons in the work of salvation, even though they may not perceive clearly the transcendental dimensions. There is true space for the involvement of the laity in the wide sense, but it is very necessary that in the animating nucleus the clarity and strength of the Christian faith be securely present.

As I said earlier, the secular dimension of our Congregation is concentrated in the cultural option of education, of the human advancement of needy youth, of a particular sensitivity in respect of the poorer classes. It does not extend over the whole vast expanse of secularity but is defined by the choice of this concrete and vital sector. It will not



be difficult in such a sector to involve in a practical way people of good will who are professionally competent, directing them gradually towards a spirituality which respects and in no way suffocates their secularity but rather enriches it and enables them to discover broader horizons.

There is therefore a vast and fertile ground also among the "laity in the wide sense", but it supposes an animating nucleus with an intense salesian spirituality.

If we look in particular at communion and sharing with the "lay faithful" we observe a very strong harmony between the secular dimension of the Congregation and the secular character of these brothers and sisters in baptism. It is promising and even vital to be able to share the commitments in the cultural and educative sector with people who cultivate its values "from within", who live out their baptismal vocation precisely by fostering the positive realities of this sector, which they make their own so as to be genuine members of the Christian faithful.

If to this we add that the Holy Spirit has raised up Don Bosco specifically for needy youth in the "world", and has equipped him with a kind of evangelical spirituality and a working method brimming over with apostolic love precisely with a view to such a mission, we are bound to admit that failure to share these riches with large numbers of the lay faithful committed in the secular area of Don Bosco's mission would be a kind of mutilation of the charism which would impoverish the educative outlook for very many youngsters. But here too the involvement of these lay faithful demands a salesian community with an intense charismatic vitality.



To conclude these reflections, which I thought necessary, we can respond to the question: who are the lay people with the spirit of Don Bosco? With him we are open to all sorts of possibilities at different levels, but like him we must be filled with the Holy Spirit so as to multiply the number of the faithful who live out their baptism in the area of education and culture. The Chapter theme of the laity is a challenge to us to be more authentically Salesians.

## **8. A SALESIAN COMMUNITY ANIMATING LAY PERSONS**

To tackle the theme of the laity means, as we have already observed more than once, to speak of the salesian community to itself, of the reformulation of its services and commitments, of its manner of being and working. Let us try to explain the new elements more clearly.

In the first place, testimony of fidelity to God's gift received and expressed on the part of a religious community more attentive to the requirements and shared responsibility of the laity cannot fail to involve, from the standpoint of identity, the primacy of spirituality. It becomes indispensable to intensify the famous "new enthusiasm" of which the Holy Father speaks.

And then, *collaboration* between the different forces requires that it be given a new orientation: the necessary and indispensable presence of the laity cannot be considered as something merely ornamental. The project is born of the whole complex. The realization of the educative mission must



be planned with due consideration for the unique nature of the various forces involved.

Finally, the *animation of the community* demands a verification of the possibilities and manner of working as an animating nucleus, concerned in a special way about the *formation of the laity*.

This is not the place to review all the various practical settings in which lay people are inserted at various levels, nor to indicate what the salesian community should do in each case. These are aspects for each community to look at, analyze and insert in a project suited to the particular situations.

What concerns us more immediately is rather the horizon to which we have to move and for which we have to organize our forces. It involves the following obligations:

### 1. *Qualify the formation of the laity*

The most significant qualification is given by the help we are able to offer for unity of life.

The first great virtue to foster is the vital synthesis of *unity*: the grace of unity which is at the centre of Don Bosco's spirit. This maintains the harmonic binding force between two poles: those of faith and secularity, which are also the two poles of charity: God and man, mystery and history.

The grace of unity must be fostered by means of a spiritual pedagogy. Unity is not something static; it is in tension, with a continual need for proportion, revision, conversion, updating and harmonization.

There are two risks to be avoided:

— too much weight given to the secular pole:



not only would this fail to ferment the world with the values of the Gospel, but little by little it would lead the lay person (and the Salesian as well!) to a horizontal and purely temporal mentality at odds with the Church's specific mission;

— too much weight given to the spiritual pole: it would bring about an intimism or alien vertical attitude opposed to the characteristic significance of the salesian vocation and mission.

*"In discovering and living their proper vocation and mission, the lay faithful must be formed according to the union which exists from their being members of the Church and citizens of human society.*

*There cannot be two parallel lives in their existence: on the one hand the so-called 'spiritual' life with its values and demands; and on the other the so-called 'secular' life, i.e. life in a family, at work, in social relationships, in the responsibilities of public life and in culture. The branch, engrafted onto the vine which is Christ, bears its fruit in every sphere of existence and activity. In fact, every area of the lay faithful's lives, as different as they are, enters into the plan of God, who desires that these very areas be the 'places in time' where the love of Christ is revealed and realized for both the glory of the Father and service of others".*<sup>19</sup>

<sup>19</sup> GL 59

## 2. Extend the involvement

What is wanted is not just a greater working presence of lay people in our works; that could be easily realized and would serve at times to meet only some immediate needs. What is required is rather an overall attitude, rooted in an availability



for personal and communal change so as to bear clear witness to baptismal brotherhood and a shared missionary outlook.

Involvement implies also the ability to have trust in the lay person who takes on the direct and primary responsibility for certain services, while the Salesian supports and sustains him.

### 3. *Foster shared responsibility*

Experience shows that in some cases this aspect is the most difficult of the elements involved.

Some confreres find personal difficulty in visualizing the sharing of responsibility. They willingly accept collaboration, but not shared responsibility. It seems to them that the latter takes from them something which is absolutely theirs without any question. Certainly one must avoid whatever might detract from our particular identity and vocational responsibility, but be able at the same time to make use of the complementarity of gifts and the possible harmonization of contributions.

There are also objective problems that can be met with in the organization of work carried out by a differentiated group.

A calm and progressive dialogue about the content and motivations of the work, the frequent verification by a group of work done together with the express desire to help each other, the necessary proportion between the requirements of pastoral educative activity and those of family, social and political life (especially of lay people), the clarification of roles and functions entrusted to the Salesians and to the lay group, are the most effective means for bringing about a real sharing of responsibility.



Some organisms of shared responsibility, such as the educative community, consulting groups and committees, groups for specialized work, should be strengthened in order to ensure a setting in which all can make their contribution to the common cause.

#### 4. *Revitalize internal and external communication*

We must be well aware of the strict linkage that exists between collaboration and shared responsibility on the one hand and the intensity and quality of communication on the other.

There is an aspect which, I think, could be given greater attention if we are really open in mind and heart to the professional ability of lay people and their desire to make available their expertise: the communication we succeed in creating with the surroundings in which we are inserted. It is not sufficient to concentrate only on the efficacy of our influence on those to whom our work is immediately directed; we must also have in mind the incidence we have on culture and our ability to spread the message linked with Don Bosco's charism.

Our Father and Founder paid much attention to the image of his mission that others would form. Attention to secular matters, and to the demands associated with them, open the community to this dialogue with the setting, the neighbourhood, and the local culture.

Don Bosco deliberately sought this comparison, in the conviction that he had something interesting and important to both give and receive.

There are many other aspects concerning the presence of lay people, their collaboration, their



ability to assume responsibility, that would merit a word of introduction or comment. I have in mind two themes which are not considered in the present circular:

— the *lay ministries*, in which we have a particular interest because in our initiatives we have in fact so many ministries, which are only awaiting organization and recognition;

— the new cultural aspects associated with the *identity and dignity of women* at both ecclesial level and civil or secular level. For us Salesians the theme is of practical concern in the educational and pastoral field, e.g. in connection with coeducation and education to love.

In any case there is no lack of material for serious and deep reflection in this regard.

## **9. INCENTIVES OF THE COMING SYNOD FOR NEW RELATIONSHIPS WITH LAY PEOPLE**

Without any doubt the coming Synod on Consecrated Life will deal also with the theme of the relationships between consecrated and lay persons. In the "Working paper" the point is referred to in two paragraphs: in n. 80, under the heading "in communion with the laity", and in n. 98, which is an incitement to "new forms of apostolic presence".

In the light of the ecclesiology of communion, n. 80 exhorts to a more constructive collaboration in which there must be an explicit re-evaluation of the secular reality *as a theological area*. The Council has highlighted the dignity and mission of the baptized person; at the present day there is a grow-



ing number of groups of lay people “who express the desire to share in the spirituality and mission of the institutes of consecrated life in a complementarity of vocations. These institutes”, adds the text, “are actively involved in searching for programmes of formation and structural forms to accommodate this participation and collaboration”.

The document goes on to remind members of Institutes of Consecrated Life that, as is stated in *Lumen Gentium*, they exist to bear witness “to all the faithful, but especially to the laity, that the secular world cannot be offered to God without the spirit of the beatitudes”.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>20</sup> cf. LG 31

This is equivalent to recommending to consecrated persons the urgent need for their spiritual renewal (a “new enthusiasm”), in such a form that their charismatic identity proclaims clearly to everyone each day a strong evangelical spirit. Communion and sharing with the laity demands of each of us and of our local communities a contagious salesian spirituality; without this it will be a matter only of collaboration and organization in the works, which will not necessarily bring about in the Church and in the world a growth in Don Bosco’s charism.

Referring to the demands of creativity made by the New Evangelization, n. 98 exhorts to “a particular form of apostolic participation at this moment in the Church’s history”. Such participation “is expressed in the sharing of the individual modes of seeing and acting together with the laity, especially in fields of particular competence, such as the school, etc.”.

Here it will be well to look back and recall that when speaking of the salesian apostolate the terms “mission” and “works” are not identical in mean-



ing, and that lay people who are well prepared can act, within the secular area chosen by Don Bosco, even beyond the limits of the works of the Salesian Family.

The Regulations of Apostolic Life of the Cooperators declare that "the lay Cooperators fulfil their commitment and live the salesian spirit in the normal situations of their life and work, according to their lay state, and spread their values in their environment".<sup>21</sup>

<sup>21</sup> RAL 4, §2

Our own Constitutions assert: "We also give our attention to the lay people responsible for the evangelization of their local area, and to the family where different generations come together and build the future of mankind";<sup>22</sup> an operative presence in the world, in the family, in work, in local and social institutions, especially for the benefit of the young, to offer the ferment of the Gospel on a generous scale.

<sup>22</sup> C 29

Don Bosco was eager to involve numerous members of the lay faithful in his spirit and operative plans, even beyond his own works: "The work of the Cooperators will extend to every country, it will spread throughout Christianity. The hand of God will sustain it! The Cooperators will be the ones who foster the Catholic spirit. It may seem that my idea is utopian, but I am sticking to it nonetheless!".<sup>23</sup>

<sup>23</sup> MB 18, 161

He wanted the Cooperators Association to be active and enterprising, with its purpose to shake a lot of Christians out of their torpor and spread the energy of charity.<sup>24</sup> Rightly do the General Regulations lay down: "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, prom-

<sup>24</sup> *ibid.*



<sup>25</sup> R 38

ote and spread knowledge of this particular vocation, especially among our more committed young people and among our lay collaborators".<sup>25</sup>

The working paper of the Synod gives praise to the kind of Associations that "share the spirituality and collaborate in the mission" of an Institute; it is "a reality in process of growth and still seeking adequate forms, but which can allow consecrated communities to better articulate their life in the Church and their specific apostolate. These new ways", adds the document, "can play an important role in sustaining persons dedicated to spiritual research, who want to commit themselves in the Church in a specific field. They are forms which provide the possibility of creating places for sharing, places of faith, and for support in a common mission, lived in different forms but realized in the same spirit".

## 10. AN INVITATION TO THE PROVINCES

The time we have available before the celebration of the General Chapter will be useful to the individual provinces as a period of grace for the verification of fidelity to Don Bosco, and in the search for a more adequate manner of participation of the laity in the salesian spirit and mission.

Art. 168 of the Regulations prescribes: "*With the consent of his council the provincial has the power (...) of inviting to the provincial chapter Salesians and non-Salesians as experts or observers, without the right to vote*".

Without doubt, this indication has always been kept in mind in provincial chapters, but in preparation for the GC24 it acquires a new significance if



the norm referred to can be rendered operative and efficacious.

*The presence of some lay people*, and this not just at the opening and closing celebrations but also during the effective work of the Chapter, can be of opportune help in feeling, seeing and guiding the sensitivity of the lay faithful who live their own vocation and their reference to Don Bosco in a significant manner. Direct contact between Salesians and laity in reflection and the selection of guidelines will be of help both to us Salesians and also to the lay people.

The presence of such lay people cannot be improvised. They must be chosen in advance and prepared. By sharing with them the preoccupation of a General Chapter of renewal, we shall discover possible suggestions and proposals which will prove truly enriching, and we shall gain a better understanding also of the secular dimension of the Congregation.

And then, since the lay-project has been considered and put forward in the last General Chapters, it is fitting that in the coming provincial chapter any initiatives already launched in this field should be reviewed and strengthened.

In particular it will be well to insist on the educative and pastoral community, putting realistically into practice what the Constitutions lay down: in the educative community "lay people associated with our work make a contribution all their own because of their experience and pattern of life. We welcome and encourage their collaboration and offer them the opportunity to get a deeper knowledge of the salesian spirit and the practice of the preventive system".<sup>26</sup>

Finally I would like to recall with particular in-



sistence *the involvement and formation of parents*. We are in the Year of the Family and the Holy Father has placed great emphasis on the urgency of this theme; in the last circular we reflected together on our apostolic responsibilities in this connection; and so in the provinces let there be an intensification of initiatives for the benefit of parents and an insistence that each local community truly commits itself in this sense.

## CONCLUSION

Our preparation for the coming General Chapter, dear confreres, will oblige us to intensify two vital aspects of our consecrated life: *spirituality and formation*. They are aspects which are primarily of importance for us but which refer also to those to whom our work is addressed.

Speaking of the young, much insistence has been placed on youth spirituality and on their formation through appropriate journeys of faith.<sup>27</sup>

Now, as we concern ourselves with lay people we must once again be able to study deeply both our salesian spirituality and formation to operative activity following the rich contents of the preventive system.

To succeed like Don Bosco in such a task we must perfect ourselves in these two aspects. We have at our disposal abundant and valuable instruments for doing this well, even beginning gradually and in small numbers provided the work be genuine and penetrating.

Let us look with trust to Mary, who is particularly competent in lay values: the faithful wife, the virgin mother, the generous disciple of Christ her

<sup>27</sup> cf GG 23



Son. In her, family values shine out: conjugal love and the education of her child.

She lived joyously in the world, listening to the saving Word of the Creator and meditating on his merciful interventions. She is "the one who believed", manifesting a deep vision of faith with respect to the vicissitudes of history. Assumed into heaven as the second Eve, she has stimulated the secular dimension of the Church because, following her as a model, the Church has always been the leaven of salvation. From heaven she has shown her continuing motherhood of all the members of the People of God, and this in particular by collaborating with the Holy Spirit in raising up charisms of consecrated life.

And it is precisely Mary, the Helper of Valdocco, who with motherly concern and predilection guided Don Bosco in beginning his charism for the young and the poor: a spirit and a mission to be shared with ever more numerous consecrated and lay persons to provide a common witness in an authentically ecclesial communion.

May the Marian dimension of our charism be for us an incitement to prepare well for the GC24. In this way we shall be faithful to the gift raised up by the Holy Spirit through the maternal intervention of Mary in view of the renewal of society and the salvation of the world.

My greetings to you all, with God's blessing on your work. May Don Bosco intercede on our behalf!

With affection and hope.

Don F. Viganò



## 2. GUIDELINES AND POLICIES

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### 2.1 CALENDAR OF 24TH GENERAL CHAPTER

#### *August 1994*

The Rector Major convokes the GC24 in accordance with art. 150 of the Constitutions and 111 of the General Regulations. He appoints the Moderator of the Chapter (R. 112) and specifies its principal purpose, place and opening date (R. 111).

#### *October 1994*

The letter of convocation is sent to the provinces, together with the theme of the Chapter, the outline for reflection for the local and provincial communities, and the instructions for the carrying out of the provincial chapters (AGC 350).

In addition the Moderator sends to the provinces the forms for the minutes and model sheets for contributions of the provincial chapter and confreres: on printed sheets and diskettes for computers.

#### *November 1994 - July 1995*

The work of preparation is carried on in the provinces and the provincial chapter takes place (C 171-172). The date of the provincial chapter is to be fixed so as to meet the following deadlines.

#### *15 July 1995*

Not later than this date the following documents must be received in Rome:

1. the minutes of the provincial chapters;
2. the minutes of the election of the delegates and their substitutes;
3. the contributions of the provincial chapters;
4. the contributions of the individual confreres.



5. Provincial chapters which study themes concerning their own province only and make deliberations which need the approval of the Rector Major and his Council in accordance with Const. 170, must send to Rome also the deliberations concerned.

Proposals which arrive later than 15 July 1995 cannot be considered by the precapitular commission in its work.

#### *August 1995*

The material received will be put in order and classified by a working group.

Meanwhile the Rector Major appoints the precapitular commission for the preparation of the dossier to be sent to those taking part in the GC24 (cf. R 113).

#### *September - October 1995*

The precapitular commission is at work.

Also appointed is the commission for the checking of the minutes of the election of the provincial delegates to the GC24 (cf. R 115).

#### *November 1995*

The schemes of work prepared by the precapitular commission are printed and sent to the provincials and delegates.

#### *December 1995 - February 1996*

The members of the GC24 study the working documents in their own communities.

#### *18 February 1996*

The GC24 begins.

#### *Ending of the Chapter*

A duration of two months is foreseen, which makes 20 April 1996 the last day of the GC24.



## 2.2 OUTLINE FOR REFLECTION

### ***PRESENTATION OF THE OUTLINE FOR REFLECTION***

The letter of the Rector Major already indicates clearly the sense of the theme chosen for the GC24. It will be necessary therefore to work within the indications there given, and in the light of the results expected.

In this *introductory note* to the OUTLINE FOR REFLECTION are indicated some practical aspects which can be of help to the provincial communities in the preparation of the provincial chapter and in the sending of contributions for the General Chapter.

In the first place, the following is an overview of the points for reflection; it will serve as an index.

#### 1. *THE SALESIAN COMMUNITY AND LAY PEOPLE: THE SITUATION*

##### 1.1 Aspects to consider:

- 1.1.1 A charismatic fact
- 1.1.2 The term 'lay person'
- 1.1.3 The laity in the Salesian Family

##### 1.2 The involvement of lay people

##### 1.3 A new cultural situation

- 1.3.1 The new relationship between culture and religious experience
- 1.3.2 Communication
- 1.3.3 The new identity and dignity of women



## 2. THE ECCLESIAL AND SALESIAN FRAME OF REFERENCE ON THE THEME OF THE LAITY

### 2.1 Ecclesial references

2.1.1 Who is the lay person?

2.1.2 The woman: complementarity and reciprocity

### 2.2 Salesian references

2.2.1 Our obligations with respect to lay people

2.2.2 Obligations of the salesian community

## 3. PRACTICAL OBLIGATIONS OF THE SALESIAN COMMUNITY

### 3.1 Broaden the involvement

### 3.2 Promote shared responsibility

### 3.3 Exploit communication

3.3.1 Interpersonal and inter-group communication

3.3.2 Production of messages for the local environment

3.3.3 New models of communication

### 3.4 Qualify formation

3.4.1 The formation of Salesians for new tasks in the animation of the laity

3.4.2 The formation of lay people

### *Logical development of the outlines*

A careful reading of the index will reveal that the outlines are drawn up around three essential points;

- \* the situation
- \* the frame of reference
- \* the operative commitments.

It is a widespread method commonly used in areas in church and congregation areas.

★ *The SITUATION* means highlighting the circumstances at present obtaining. It provides an opportunity for reaching the practical situation of the provinces. It is open to particular local circumstances which are touched on only briefly in the Outline. It helps in the



description of facts and problems with an indication at the same time of their causes and roots. It leads to an evaluation which will accurately reflect the reality.

It will be noted that the 'situation' is presented point by point, because the theme of the General Chapter touches on a great variety of elements of our life and presents multiple consequences in the organization of salesian activities.

In practice it is a question of gathering together:

- facts
  - difficulties met with
  - results achieved
  - identified causes which are blocking renewal
  - seeds of innovation present in culture and experiences
  - responses given by the community up to the present time
  - evaluation of the quality and timeliness of animation and government at provincial and local level in the light of the theme
- SALESIANS AND LAY PEOPLE.

★ *THE FRAME OF REFERENCE* gathers together in a systematic manner the doctrine of the Church and Congregation on the theme of the General Chapter.

Its purpose is to concentrate the reflection on aspects which ought to form part of the manner of thinking of all confreres and collaborators in the salesian spirit and mission.

In the frame of reference of the Church, emphasis is laid on the major conciliar and post-conciliar documents which deal with the lay believer.

In the frame of reference of the Congregation, particular importance is given to the Constitutions, Regulations, and the GC23.

A reconsideration of the doctrine should be of use to the communities for checking up on themselves, for promoting dialogue and comparison, and for moving towards efficacious and meaningful decisions.

★ The *OPERATIVE COMMITMENTS* represent the deliberations necessary for continuing the renewal of the communities in the light of the theme of the GC24. They will lead to proposals for the coming years. They are presented from two standpoints, both of which merit the greatest attention: those of the Salesians and of the laity.



The standpoint of the Salesians is indispensable at the present day and, in a certain sense, has priority.

Sensitivities are changing and new requirements are constantly appearing. In the absence of those who can assume the new orientations, it is impossible to take any steps in renewal.

And then the standpoint of the Laity is an aspect which conditions our whole mission: to make it our own, as Salesians, is the first response we are called upon to give.

To be able to express some practical guidelines suitable for meeting today's situation with its new aspects, means positively embarking on the road to renewal.

With a view to improving our ability for communion with lay people and the sharing of the spirit and mission of Don Bosco, it is a question of reaching:

- the conscious acceptance of a new manner of working and cooperating with the laity;
- criteria and directives for a renewed action of the community with respect to the laity;
- deliberations which prompt the community to a renewal of the relationships between Salesians and lay people;
- structural provisions linked with the renewal of communion and shared responsibility;
- conclusions for organizational, methodological and spiritual renewal.

#### **What the outline asks for.**

The outline is an organized series of considerations aimed at stimulating reflection and response. The latter constitute the 'contributions' of the provinces to the GC24. How then should the work be organized?

The Moderator of the General Chapter should receive three sets of contributions:

- the first, which apply to the situation of the relationship between Salesians and Laity;
- the second, which examine the difficulties and experiences in the realization of decisions indicated by the Church and the Congregation;



- the third, which on the basis of experience in the province, puts forward possible practical guidelines for sharing with the whole Congregation.

### **How should contributions for the GC24 be prepared?**

To facilitate the convergence of work in all the provinces the outline provides *PROMPTS FOR LAUNCHING THE REFLECTION*. They are a short series of questions which will concentrate consideration on a nucleus of specific items. Point by point answers are not expected, because the questions do not have the nature of a questionnaire. They represent rather an open logical process in the sense that once having launched a discussion they have fulfilled their purpose. They will stimulate research.

In harmony with the more urgent demands and problems indicated by experience, deeper consideration will be given to those aspects which better respond to the needs and which offer possible solutions.

### **A 'method' which must not be disregarded**

The GC24 with its theme SALESIANS AND LAY PEOPLE is an explicit invitation to provincial chapters to consider the possibility of involving lay people directly in the preliminary reflection, in the preparation and, as far as possible, also in the celebration of the chapter.

It will be important to listen carefully to what they can offer to our communities. It will not be sufficient that we Salesians merely talk about them. They must themselves express their views on themselves and on us.

This common willingness to listen and a mutual attitude of attention to the other's views will be the first result of the work of the chapter.



## **OUTLINE FOR REFLECTION ON:**

### **SALESIANS AND LAY PEOPLE: COMMUNION AND SHARING IN THE SPIRIT AND MISSION OF DON BOSCO**

#### **1. SALESIANS AND LAY PEOPLE: THE SITUATION**

##### **1.1 *It will be useful to begin with a consideration of the three aspects here mentioned:***

###### **1.1.1 *A charismatic fact.***

From the very beginning lay people were called by Don Bosco to share his spirit and mission. For this reason the salesian community has allowed to become involved with it various categories of lay people who have facilitated the spreading of the Founder's spirit beyond the walls of our foundations. In this way the typical salesian option for the young and the poor has placed lay people at our side in educational and pastoral involvement and responsibility.

The evolution of our times has fostered a new awareness in the Church and society, and this has given rise to a sensitivity, mentality and reality which are more open with respect to the laity. A logical consequence of this in the salesian community has been the numerical growth of lay collaborators, together with the recognition of their professional and educative competence.

At the same time the number of Salesians began to become disproportionate to the commitments we had made. We Salesians had need of the collaboration of the laity, and necessity compelled us to find new forms of combined presence and of relationships.



From the GC19 to the GC23 the Congregation offered reflections, incitements, and indications in the Constitutions and Regulations (cf. C 5, 47, 48; and R 4, 5, 37, 38, 40, 148) to help the communities in this task.

And so we have reached the GC24.

### 1.1.2 *The term 'lay person'.*

In the present context, the term 'lay person' refers for us to many categories of persons who live the spirit and mission of Don Bosco. We may recall in a rapid survey:

- the Cooperators who, by the express wish of Don Bosco, have a close, unique and particular relationship with the Salesians;
- the past-pupils, men and women of different cultures and religions, who, remembering the "education they have received", have a warm spot in their heart for the father and teacher of youth, and foster his spirit and the preventive system;
- the many collaborators who work in salesian communities, with different functions and titles; without any doubt they represent the most numerous group of lay people inserted in salesian projects and activities;
- convinced Christians, men and women of good will, the parents of our pupils and of those to whom our mission is directed, simple people and those responsible for civil and social life who admire Don Bosco and his work;
- the many youngsters who with different roles work and collaborate with the salesian spirit and in Don Bosco's mission. One need only recall the young animators, those involved in the various elements of the salesian youth movement, the "conscientious objectors" in Italy, those doing volunteer work in their own country and outside it, etc., etc.;
- friends and benefactors involved in all sorts of different ways with Don Bosco's mission to the young and the poor: all of them draw their inspiration in some way from Don Bosco the educator and evangelizer.



### 1.1.3 *The laity in the Salesian Family*

There are various groups of the laity in the Salesian Family. Some of them have developed mainly in particular geographical areas (e.g. the Association of Salesian Ladies ('*Damas Salesianas*')). Others are getting themselves organized in a manner more adapted to the present times (e.g. the Association of Mary Help of Christians). Still others are more widespread with an organization at world level (e.g. the Past Pupils and Cooperators).

It should be noted that the sensitivity of communities with respect to lay people, and to their presence and possible collaboration, has grown also with the growth of the Association of Salesian Cooperators. The new Regulations of Apostolic Life (1986) and the experience of the Regional Congresses (1993-1994) have made evident the richness of the gifts which these lay people bring to our Family. Their adherence to Don Bosco, their enthusiasm and operative fidelity to the salesian charism, the desire to be and feel themselves inserted in the spiritual dynamism stemming from Don Bosco, manifest a possible process with many people who share our Founder's spirit and mission.

### *PROMPTS FOR LAUNCHING A REFLECTION*

We may begin by verifying the relationship between Salesians and lay people, from both a theoretical standpoint, and still more from a practical point of view.

- \* *Who are the 'laity' for us? and who are we for them?*
- \* *What do we expect from them? and what do they expect from us?*
- \* *Does the community know and follow up the growth of lay people in the Salesian Family?*
- \* *What kind of living relationship does the salesian community have with the numerous young lay people who are present in our salesian works and activities? Does it welcome them? animate them? get them involved? Does it form them? understand them? follow them up?*



## 1.2 *The involvement of lay people*

The charismatic element has certain practical consequences in the organization of the life of communities. For this reason, in addition to interpersonal relationships it becomes indispensable to verify the level of involvement of lay people in the typical educative and pastoral commitment of the Salesians.

The degree of communion and sharing in the salesian spirit and mission is not identical for all lay people. There will consequently be differences, for instance, in their involvement with the community. There may be differences perhaps in the attention given by the community to various groups of the laity.

The verification will indicate what we can do to ensure their real involvement and a fuller sharing of responsibility.

### *PROMPTS FOR LAUNCHING A REFLECTION*

- \* *How many lay people are there in the community who share, at different levels, the salesian spirit and mission?*
- \* *How many lay people are there in the community who are members of the Salesian Family? The distinct sectors of the community should be considered separately, with an indication of the roles and offices filled by lay people, and the real responsibilities entrusted to them.*
- \* *Does the community succeed in involving in the salesian mission and spirit those lay people who work in ecclesial and civil settings and manifest a welcoming attention and liking for Don Bosco?*

## 1.3 *A new cultural situation*

We are concerned here only with phenomena that have an effect on and condition the relationship between Salesians and laity. We may look at three of them.

### *1.3.1 The new relationship between culture and religious experience*

It is well known that the secularization process is increasing, with different accentuations in different parts of the world. In some geographical areas can be observed such phenomena as: new forms of



colonialism, cultural dependence, processes of violent change in ways of life and its motivations etc. etc.

But there is also emerging a need for sense and a search for spirituality. This is observable in minorities belonging to various religious denominations. At the same time the desire for contact with what is sacred leads to unusual religious forms, magical experiences, and various experiences of mysticism.

The relationship between culture and religious experience is in process of change and is provoking previously unheard of formulations for the organization of life.

As a consequence one may note, amongst other things, that in this new situation, especially for those working in the field of education, the professional approach, competence, and aspects of a legal, administrative, trade union and management kind, all have an incidence. And these aspects lead to a different style of relationships, even between Salesians and lay people.

As Salesians, in the light of the spirituality of the resurrection, we are called to make a real contribution: Don Bosco has placed us as true religious in secular tasks and in direct collaboration with lay people.

### *PROMPTS FOR LAUNCHING A REFLECTION*

- \* *Are Salesians and lay people yet aware of the new relationship between culture and religious experience?  
Have they reflected on it together?  
If so, what have been the consequences for their relationships?*

#### *1.3.2 Communication*

Without any doubt one of the elements of the new culture is the utilization and incidence of 'communication' and its 'instruments'. Consideration of it in our theme means being aware of the support and risks presented by communication in relationships between Salesians and lay people.

At the present day information has reached a maximum in both speed and area covered, but this has not improved communication and interpersonal relationships.



In fact, phenomena like loneliness, anonymity, frustration, misunderstanding are on the increase because of a series of disturbances in communication, which are linked with sectionalization and the multiplication of information agencies. Today we are bombarded by myriads of stimuli and messages coming from all directions, even though we do not want them.

Two dangers emerge: fragmentation and the fleeting nature of the impression made, and both of them strike at the very root of relationship and operative collaboration.

### PROMPTS FOR LAUNCHING A REFLECTION

- \* *Do the phenomena of communication (spread, velocity, quantity, variety, fragmentation, fleeting nature, etc.) have an incidence on the relationship between Salesians and laity.  
If so, of what kind?*
- \* *What aspects of this new world of communication must the Salesian learn and make his own in order to rethink the mutual relationship with the laity?*

### 1.3.3 *The new identity and dignity of women.*

Today we are witnessing an epoch-making anthropological mutation, which has different manifestations in different cultures: women are living a new identity in society and in the Church.

From the numerical aspect alone, it must be recognized that they form the most consistent part of our Catholic laity, and the qualitative contribution that they make to the Church and society at the present day is significant. Even in salesian educative and pastoral experience they have considerable space.

### PROMPTS FOR LAUNCHING A REFLECTION

- \* *How is the presence of women in the salesian mission perceived by the salesian community?*
- \* *In what areas of communal activity is there collaboration and shared responsibility?*



## **2. THE ECCLESIAL AND SALESIAN FRAME OF REFERENCE ON THE THEME OF THE LAITY**

### **2.1 *Ecclesial references***

The affirmations of the Church at the present day are very expressive and have their roots in history. We shall not go through all of the latter; what is of concern to us here is to recall only a few elements connected with the theme of the GC24.

#### **2.1.1 *Who is the lay person?***

The lay person is a member of the Church in the heart of the world, and a member of the world in the heart of the Church (Puebla document).

The Christian novelty is the foundation and title to equality of all the baptized in Christ, of all the members of the People of God: the members have a common dignity because of their regeneration in Christ; they have in common the grace of being sons and daughters; they have a common vocation to perfection, a single salvation, a single hope and undivided love (LG 32).

In virtue of their common baptismal dignity the lay faithful share responsibility with the ordained ministers and with men and women religious for the mission of the Church (CL 15).

These references are sufficient to recall the vast array of ecclesial reflection which places the figure, action and life of the lay person in a new context.

A well structured laity, mature and committed and with an ongoing formation, is the sign of a Church which is alive in the midst of the world (Puebla 103).

This requires that the formation of the lay faithful have as its fundamental objective the ever clearer discovery of their own particular vocation and the ever greater availability to live it in fulfilment of their specific mission (CL 58 ff).

The integral and unitary formation of the lay faithful for their missionary and apostolic action supposes a 'personal growth' in human values.



The laity should set great store by professional competence, by the sense of the family and civic duties, and by those virtues which concern social relationships, i.e.: probity, the spirit of justice, sincerity, courtesy and strength of mind without which Christian life itself is impossible (AA 4).

### PROMPTS FOR LAUNCHING A REFLECTION

- \* *What indications of the Church are new for the salesian community and need deeper explanation?*
- \* *What guidelines of the Church deserve special operative attention in the salesian community?*

#### 2.1.2 *The woman: complementarity and reciprocity*

The profound cultural changes in connection with women mean that we must make every effort to see that they are fully recognized and given their proper value in the Church and society. And so it is necessary to modify our mentality and attitudes in their regard, even though this presupposes a deep cultural change, given that at stake are equity and justice as principles of Christian social life (Santo Domingo, *Working paper*, 599).

*Christifideles laici* declares (n. 49): "The Synod Fathers gave special attention to the status and role of women, with two purposes in mind: to themselves acknowledge and to invite all others to once again acknowledge the indispensable contribution of women to the building up of the Church and the development of society. They wished as well to work on a more specific analysis of women's participation in the life and mission of the Church".

All this implies that there should be an in depth examination of the presence of women in the various decision-making bodies, and in more general terms of the process of the assumption of responsibility by women in the various sectors of life.

### PROMPTS FOR LAUNCHING A REFLECTION

- \* *What new dimensions and possibilities does the presence of women bring to the salesian spirit and mission?*



## **2.2 Salesian references.**

In salesian life, in addition to the statements of the Church, the following have constituted points of reference and stimulus for the renewal of mentality and practice, and they continue to do so:

- the new sensitivity;
- new experiences;
- the new role of the laity and their specific contribution to the life of the Church and society;
- the indications of the GC23.

It does not seem realistic to be able to determine in a concrete manner how the salesian community reacts in the face of widely differing situations lived out locally. What the provinces are asked to do is to carry out a work of adaptation and application.

### *2.2.1 Our obligations with respect to lay people*

There are numerous reminders and indications in this regard in our salesian literature. What is required therefore is a work of sensitization: change and ecclesial renewal, attention to culture with the giving of proper value to women, the practical situation of the community which cannot by itself fulfil the obligations of education and evangelization, make it urgent in practice that the Salesians and communities assume the function of “centre of communion and participation, capable of gathering together and stimulating those whom the Spirit calls to work with youth” (GC23, 218).

And the Salesians must give priority to tasks of animation over services of administration, and give more attention to interventions for the formation of lay people, collaborators and those who share responsibility with us, in preference to other commitments. The words of the GC23 are quite striking: “A change of mentality is needed, (...) in the first place in the Salesians themselves” (GC23, 232).

### **PROMPTS FOR LAUNCHING A REFLECTION**

- \* *Has the salesian community in the last six years used the incentives offered by the Congregation at a general level for the organization and renewal of the relationship with lay people?*



- \* *What original initiatives has the province organized and lived in the last six years that is of significance in the relationship with the laity?*
- \* *What in particular has the province found of help in the change of mentality called for by the GC23, especially with a view to not looking always upon lay people as merely 'objectives' of the community's commitment?*

### 2.2.2 Obligations of the salesian community

The Constitutions and Regulations already recall a series of obligations the salesian community must fulfil with respect to lay people. The following is a rapid list of them:

- C 47, R 5 and 84: the community as a whole is called upon to make itself a centre diffusing spirituality to those with whom it comes in contact;
- C 55, R 148 and 199: those responsible at both provincial and local level should consider the animation and formation of the laity an integral part of their service;
- C 5, R 38 and 39: the community seeks particular and closer relationships with other groups of the Salesian Family.

Formation is always at the centre of the community's concerns. The GC23 gives a very apt definition of the compass of formation when it states that the programme of formation "will foster the professional approach, educational ability, and witness as regards education to the faith" (GC23, 237).

These three elements (professional approach, educative ability and evangelical witness) constitute the frame of reference for the development of the spirituality which we call 'salesian youth spirituality'. This puts the lay believer at the centre of daily life.

From the obligations we have recalled it is clear that the Salesian too must be formed with a view to the animation of the laity in line with the indications stated.

The experience of the sharing of the one spirit in the richness of the diversity of many possible salesian vocations is an instrument of common growth between Salesians and lay people (cf. C 10-21). Creation of the conditions for a true communion and a profitable



exchange of gifts between Salesians and laity are the objectives to be achieved by the various communities

### **PROMPTS FOR LAUNCHING A REFLECTION**

- \* *What kind of reception have the indications of the Congregation on the relationship between Salesians and lay people met with?*
- \* *What proposals can be put forward at provincial level to develop this salesian frame of reference? And at local level?*
- \* *What spiritual and operative details can be suggested for making practical the process for the sharing of the single spirit with many possible salesian vocations?*
- \* *Which aspects of the formation of the Salesian foster the ability to animate lay people, individually and in the educative community?*

## **3. PRACTICAL OBLIGATIONS OF THE SALESIAN COMMUNITY**

### **3.1 *Broaden the involvement***

Here a preliminary remark is indispensable. Don Bosco worked all his life to impress on his environments a particular style: that of the family. Hence the presence at the Oratory of mothers of Salesians, the very informal relationships between 'superiors' and youngsters, the serene and fraternal atmosphere.

The community was a home able to welcome everyone and to offer each one the possibility of expressing his particular talents and gifts, and to grow day by day in the responsibility for organizing his life.

For this reason the community must develop a first conviction about the inserting of lay people in our mission: 'working together' by different individuals and groups with the same spirit enriches the experience of all and helps to a discovery of the fruitful nature of Don Bosco's intuitions.

Moreover, while the community recognizes the conditions deriving from the life of the laity for a total involvement in salesian activity, it



accompanies their family and professional experience so that it may be an expression of the spirit and mission of Don Bosco.

Finally the community, in view of the involvement of the laity, provides the working space in which they can express their originality. This must be done keeping in mind both the variety of settings of education and evangelization and the different levels of sharing in the salesian spirit and mission.

There is no lack of practical experience in this regard in the different provinces, and an examination of them can well indicate the path to be followed.

### PROMPTS FOR LAUNCHING A REFLECTION

- \* *In the various settings of salesian work do Salesians and lay people work together? What helps to bring this about and what hinders it?*
- \* *Are there moments programmed for the stimulation, acceptance and positive assessment of the comparison between Salesians and lay people?*
- \* *Does the community concern itself about the presence of lay people beyond their involvement in salesian structures, so that they may live and work in Don Bosco's spirit?*

### **3.2 Promote shared responsibility**

The constitutional obligation of C 47 is quite explicit for Salesians, but in practice many difficulties arise.

The salesian community sometimes suffers from individualism and from fear. The centering of responsibility in the hands of the Salesians reassures the confreres about the project under discussion. And the presence of other groups in the decision-making process of the community seems to impair its freedom in making the educative and pastoral options which it is competent to do.

On the side of the laity other difficulties are met with. It is not clear how family and social obligations are to be reconciled with the taking on of direct responsibility in salesian work. Furthermore the lack of



precision about roles and functions between the various operators, salesian and lay, does not help in the assumption of concrete responsibility.

Shared responsibility requires effective dialogue, working as a team, the organization of interventions, and the creation of structures and organisms that are adequate and recognized - all of which is necessary so as not to leave the fostering of shared responsibility solely to the good will of individuals, be they Salesians or lay people.

### *PROMPTS FOR LAUNCHING A REFLECTION*

- \* In your own situation what are the practical difficulties on the part of the community for a full sharing of responsibility with lay people?*
- \* What are the practical difficulties on the part of the laity?*
- \* What practical experiences of shared responsibility have been realized in the community? How were they brought about? With what verified results?*

### **3.3 Exploit communication**

The communities are asked to consider at least three types of communication, in the context of the relationship between Salesians and lay people who share our spirit and mission.

#### *3.3.1 Interpersonal and inter-group communication*

The educative and pastoral community can become a kind of laboratory in which to experiment and develop the intensity and quality of communication between Salesians and lay people.

To communicate by bearing witness to and sharing the spiritual journey, with common experiences and special specific moments of formation, is an indispensable objective.

#### *3.3.2 Production of messages for the local environment*

To be efficacious at the present day it is necessary, on the one hand, to provide messages that are clear and simple, and which go beyond



the walls of the salesian community and enter the history of the external environment, so as to return to the community enriched with the reaction of people of the neighbourhood.

On the other hand one must see to it that the messages are consistent with the life conditions of those who make use of them. They must therefore refer to experiences already taken place or to projects realizable in the immediate future.

In this process of communication there is a place also for dialogue and discussion with civil and ecclesiastical organisms of both a public and private nature.

### 3.3.3 *New models of communication*

Communication today takes place not only through direct and personal contact. It has many other channels and structures which are no less efficacious and convincing. In fact the organization of contemporary life makes great use of the new techniques for reaching the greatest possible number of people.

Communion and the sharing of Don Bosco's mission and spirit can therefore make use of new channels of communication to spread his charisma.

Many provinces are experimenting with new forms of relationship and interaction in the field of education and the area of evangelization.

### *PROMPTS FOR LAUNCHING A REFLECTION*

- \* *What are the conditions needed to make the educative and pastoral community the natural and primary place for communication between individuals and groups of Salesians and lay people?*
- \* *Are the messages put out by the educative and pastoral community to its members, to those to whom our work is addressed, and to the local neighbourhood, consistent with the lived reality and experience? Are they planned, or are they dictated by circumstances?*
- \* *What instruments and channels are normally used for communication with those who share Don Bosco's mission and*



*spirit (meetings and other encounters, bulletins and circulars, etc.)?  
Are the new means of communication made use of? Which ones?*

### **3.4 Qualify formation**

The presentation of the preceding obligations can help to specify the areas in which to move in the new relationship with the laity who share Don Bosco's mission and spirit. Placing formation, therefore, as the last point in these outlines does not mean that it is of secondary importance. On the contrary it is a point deserving of particular consideration on the part of both Salesians and lay people.

#### **3.4.1 *The formation of Salesians for new tasks in the animation of the laity***

This task has already been recalled by the GC23: "Every province will draw up an organic plan for the ongoing formation of the confreres with a view to their spiritual renewal, their pastoral qualification, and their educational and professional ability. It will prepare confreres especially for the work of education to the faith, the animation of pastoral communities, and the formation of lay people" (GC23, 223).

Elsewhere the GC23 declares: "Mature relationships of shared responsibility must be established with lay people. There is need especially of a process of formation. Experiences realized so far guarantee satisfactory results, even with some difficulties" (GC23, 233).

The tasks which the salesian community is called upon to carry out with the different categories of lay people we have referred to, impose as a matter of urgency the qualified formation of the confreres. Every delay in this field will have negative repercussions also as regards the promoting of vocations.

From many points of view the process of formation of the Salesians coincides with that of the lay people. Of this, mutual enrichment is a fortunate consequence.

#### **PROMPTS FOR LAUNCHING A REFLECTION**

*\* What is the province's experience as regards the formation of*



*confreres for the new tasks? What are the contents of formation offered to the confreres? What results have been gained from these experiences on the practical level of relationships between Salesians and lay people?*

- \* Are there any experiences of Salesians and laity trying to work together to form themselves for a new relationship of communion and shared responsibility?*
- \* Has the province any suggestions to make for the formation of young confreres to the new relationship with lay people? with young lay people? What are they?*

### 3.4.2 The formation of lay people

The Church invites us to improve the formation of the laity, so that they may become leaders in evangelizing activity and agents of change in society following gospel criteria (cf. CL, chap V, The formation of the Lay Faithful, nn. 57-63)

The GC23 is most explicit in this connection: it tells all Salesians: "The province will draw up a programme of formation for the lay people; this programme will foster their professional approach, educational ability, and witness as regards education to the faith. It will offer initiatives for liaison, lay down criteria for the sharing of responsibility and participation in all the works, and try out particular forms of management of the work with the collaboration of the laity" (GC23, 237).

The following is a possible process of formation:

- learn and share contents and methodology starting from common problems;
- improve mutual knowledge, the common understanding of facts, problems, and educational and pastoral guidelines;
- offer values we can provide in respect of each one's characteristics, of culture and of particular religious sentiments;
- educate to a realization that differences are an enrichment for all;
- study and develop continually each one's own vocation.

The formation of Salesians, of collaborators, and of all who share Don Bosco's spirit and mission is a benefit for all. It must therefore be sustained and increased.



### PROMPTS FOR LAUNCHING A REFLECTION

- \* *Does an organic plan exist for the formation of lay people? What difficulties are met with in developing the various areas of formation: human, professional, Christian, salesian?*
- \* *How are the obligations of the provincial and local communities distributed as regards the formation of the laity?*
- \* *Is the need recognized for an initial formation of lay people before they take up activity in a salesian work? What contents should be given priority?*



## 2.3 THE PROVINCIAL CHAPTERS

### 2.30 SUGGESTIONS FOR THE PREPARATION AND CARRYING-OUT OF THE PROVINCIAL CHAPTER

#### 2.31 Tasks of the Provincial Chapter

"The provincial chapter", declares art. 170 of the Constitutions, "is the fraternal gathering in which the local communities strengthen their sense of belonging to the provincial community, through their common concern for its general problems. It is also the representative assembly of all the confreres and local communities".

The tasks of the provincial chapter are indicated in art. 170 of the Constitutions and art. 169 of the General Regulations.

We must keep in mind the practical distinction between the provincial chapter convoked "*in preparation for the General Chapter*" and the so called "*intermediate*" chapter (which takes place during the interval between one General Chapter and the next).

In the present case the provincial chapter is convoked primarily and specifically for the preparation of the GC24.

In consequence:

1. primarily and principally it will study the theme of the GC24, i.e. "Salesians and lay people: communion and sharing in the spirit and mission of Don Bosco".
2. it will elect the delegate (or delegates) to the General Chapter and their substitutes (C 171,5).

In addition to fulfilling these primary requirements, the chapter can deal with *other matters of more immediate concern to the province* and considered of particular importance, as provided for by C 171, 1-2.



## 2.32 The preparation of the Provincial Chapter

After receiving the Rector Major's letter convoking the GC24, it is desirable that the provincial call his council together

- ★ to analyze more deeply the nature and purpose of the GC24, and to clarify the significance and purpose of the provincial chapter which is to prepare it;

- ★ to take notice of the study outline on the theme assigned to the GC24 and study the norms governing the preparation and realization of the provincial chapter and their application;

- ★ to study means and motives for fostering the involvement of confreres and communities;

- ★ to appoint the moderator of the provincial chapter (R 168) and invite possible experts and observers to the chapter (R 168).

If it is considered opportune, the provincial with his council may appoint a preparatory commission, to help the moderator in preparing the provincial chapter.

A provincial preparatory commission is not prescribed by the General Regulations. It has nevertheless proved useful in many provinces for the preparation of the provincial chapter. It is for the provincial and his council to decide how it should be made up.

**The provincial chapter should be convoked** by a letter from the provincial encouraging the confreres to reflect on the theme and to participate in the chapter's work. In it he will announce:

- ★ the name of the moderator;

- ★ the members of the preparatory commission (if there is one);

- ★ the date and place of the chapter, which could be spread over more than one session;

- ★ the manner of grouping of communities which have less than six confreres, for the purpose of electing the delegate to the provincial chapter and his substitute (cf. R 163).

**After the election of the delegates of the local communities**, the provincial in a second letter will



- ★ communicate to the confreres the names of those elected,
- ★ and present the list of perpetually professed confreres eligible for election to the chapter as delegates of the confreres of the province (cf. R 165, 1-2).

### 2.33 The Moderator of the Provincial Chapter

- ★ will decide and inform the communities of the dates by which must take place the election of:
  - the delegates of the communities and their substitutes;
  - the delegates of the confreres (from the provincial list);
  - eventual new substitutes for community delegates if a substitute is subsequently elected from the provincial list as a delegate of the confreres;
- ★ will send to the communities the norms governing the election of the delegates of local communities and the forms for recording the minutes of their elections; he will also announce the method to be used for the election of delegates of the confreres of the province.

**2.34** It will be the task of the **provincial preparatory commission** (if there is one) to study, suggest to the provincial, and foster all the initiatives it may consider useful for:

- a. sensitizing the confreres to chapter perspectives (by conferences, study days, group and community meetings, etc.)
- b. helping the confreres to dispose themselves spiritually for the work and obligations associated with the chapter (through retreats, days of prayer, celebrations, etc.)
- c. clarifying the chapter theme and helping the confreres in their study of it: every confrere could well be given a copy of the study outline found elsewhere in this edition of the Acts (cf. p. 37-58).

The preparatory commission could also at opportune moments interest members of the Salesian Family and friends of our works (FMA, DBV, Cooperators, Past-pupils, the more



mature among our pupils, competent members of the clergy – including our Bishops and Prelates etc.) requesting their collaboration in the form and areas allowed by our norms and local situations.

The moderator, with the preparatory commission, will also

- ★ send out forms, based on samples supplied by the Moderator of the GC24, for collecting the contributions and reflections of the confreres and/or communities;

- ★ lay down a date by which the forms must be returned to the moderator of the provincial chapter;

- ★ study the contributions and proposals sent in by the confreres, and arrange them in a manner which will facilitate their use for the provincial chapter's reflection and decisions.

### **2.35 The carrying out of the Provincial Chapter itself**

Every effort should be made to ensure that the provincial chapter is celebrated in a fraternal atmosphere of reflection and prayer, and that it is seeking God's will as we try to bring an ever better response to the expectations of the Church and of youth at the present day. This will be helped by an appropriate preparation of the liturgy as regards content, method, aids, etc.

For the carrying out of its work, every provincial chapter will have its own brief collection of *regulations*, containing norms for work, discussions, and the organization of the capitulars into study groups or commissions. For these regulations the norms indicated by the Constitutions and General Regulations should be kept in mind (C 153 concerning the modality of elections, R 161, 164, 169) together with any indications found in the provincial directory.

For the *communication* of proposals and contributions to the GC24, the indications given by the Moderator of the GC24 must be scrupulously observed.

In particular, proposals and contributions must be written on the appropriate forms, indicating clearly the point of the study



outline to which they refer. Proposals from provincial chapters should carry the details of the voting.

### **2.36 Participation of the communities and confreres**

It will be convenient at the end of these suggestions to list some duties of the communities and individual confreres.

#### **2.37 *The communities***

- ★ Accompany the whole of the capitular process by their daily prayer.

- ★ Elect their delegate to the provincial chapter and his substitute. They compile the minutes of the election, following the model supplied by the Moderator.

- ★ Receive and study (in common if possible) the motives and material sent by the Moderator for their sensitization.

- ★ Deepen their knowledge of the provincial chapter theme, with a view to the GC24, and submit contributions and proposals.

#### **2.38 *The individual confreres***

- ★ Vote in the election of the delegate of their own community and his substitute.

- ★ Take part in the election of the delegates of the confreres of the province.

- ★ Make a personal study of the theme, availing themselves of aids and of the exchange of ideas in their own community,

- ★ Submit personal contributions and proposals to the provincial chapter and collaborate in the drawing up and discussion of proposals and contributions from their own community.

- ★ Send, if they so wish, personal proposals and contributions directly to the Moderator of the GC24.

- ★ Follow, through information and prayer, the preparation, realization and conclusions of their own provincial chapter.



## 2.4 NORMS FOR THE ELECTIONS

### 2.40 Introduction: lawfulness and validity of acts

The provincial chapter is a community act, whose value and consequences transcend the provincial community and the time at which it takes place.

The provincial chapter in fact elects delegates for the General Chapter and draws up proposals for the latter. In addition it can make decisions which, after the approval of the Rector Major with his council (cf. C 170), have binding force for all the confreres of the province, including those who have not taken a direct part in the decision-making.

Its realization therefore is governed by norms which guarantee that its acts are valid and lawful. These norms are listed in the universal law and in our own proper law (Constitutions and General Regulations), from which the provincial chapter derives its authority.

The observance of the laws concerning validity and lawfulness, and precision in compiling official documents, ensure clarity and expedition at successive stages of the work and eliminate delays, reference back, explanations and sanctions.

As a service to provincials and moderators of provincial chapters the following list of norms and juridical indications is provided.

These norms refer to:

- *Canonical erection of houses*
- *Appointments*
- *Calculation of number of confreres and the various lists needed*
- *Minutes of the elections of delegates and substitutes*



- *Special cases*
- *Formal indications*

## 2.41 Canonical erection of houses

The canonical erection of the house is indispensable (cf. can. 608, §1) before the confreres can meet in an assembly which has the power of validly electing the delegate to the provincial chapter, and before the president of such an assembly of the confreres (the rector: C 186) can take part by right in the chapter (C 173, 5).

The document of erection should be in the house archives.

For houses which existed before 1926 as communities in their own right (and not "filiali" i.e. dependent on another community) it is sufficient that there be evidence of its existence before that date in which houses were canonically erected without individual documentation. A similar erection was made for the houses of Poland in 1930.

It is necessary therefore:

- a) to verify in good time the canonical erection of each house or community;
- b) to put in hand the necessary procedure for the canonical erection of those houses and communities not yet erected, before the election of the delegates.

For the canonical erection of a house it must have at least three confreres (cf. can. 115 §2), and the provincial after consulting his council and obtaining the written consent of the Local Ordinary must make formal application to the Rector Major (cf. can. 608-610).

- c) that the provincial give an official, clear and explicit assignment to the groups of confreres belonging to those "presences" which for various reasons have not yet been canonically erected, or who belong to houses canonically erected but with less than six confreres: the norms for such assignments are to be found in art. 163 of the General Regulations.

In the case of "presences" *not canonically erected* the provincial will assign the group of confreres concerned to a house already



canonically erected in which they can fulfil their duties and exercise their rights as electors together with the confreres of that house. It should be remembered that the "one in charge" of such a presence does not take part in the provincial chapter by right.

In the case of canonically erected houses with less than six confreres the norms of R 163 apply: if possible the provincial should arrange that they meet together so as to form the number of at least six members under the presidency of the rector who is senior by first profession. Thus united they will elect the delegate for the provincial chapter and his substitute. If however because of special circumstances the members of a house with less than six professed members cannot join with another in like condition the provincial will join the community with less than six professed members to a larger one (with six or more professed) and together the members of the two communities with equal rights (both active and passive) will proceed to the election of the delegate and his substitute for the provincial chapter. It should be remembered too that the rector even of a community with less than six professed members (provided it be canonically erected) takes part in the provincial chapter by right.

## **2.42 Appointments**

A verification must be made to see that the appointments of those who take part by right in the provincial chapter are in order and have not lapsed. This is especially important in places where the provincial chapter takes place at a time when there is normally a change of personnel and new assignments.

An appointment is in order when:

- a) it was made in accordance with the Constitutions;
- b) the person appointed has taken possession of his office in the manner prescribed;
- c) the term of office has not expired.

The Superior Council, on 23.6.1978, made the following decisions concerning entry into office and its cessation:

- the appointment of confreres to various offices, at either local or provincial level, becomes effective from the moment that the confrere formally takes over the office;
- such confreres remain in office until their successors formally take over the same office; this must happen not more than three months after the expiry of their mandate.



What has been said above is to be applied, case by case:

- to provincials and superiors of vice-provinces or special circumscriptions (cf. C 162, 168);
- to members of provincial councils (cf. C 167);
- to superiors of provincial delegations (cf. C 159);
- to rectors (cf. C 177);
- to directors of novices (cf. C 112).

For a vice-rector, given that with the approval of the provincial he can take the place of the rector if the latter is seriously impeded (cf. C 173, 5), there must be a formal document regarding his appointment as vice-rector. Sufficient for this purpose is the letter of obedience given to the confrere. There must also be a formal document indicating that the provincial has recognized the serious impediment preventing the participation of the rector in the provincial chapter and his substitution by the vice-rector.

#### **2.43 Calculation of number of confreres and the various lists needed**

The calculation of the number of confreres who belong to a province (or a vice-province) for purposes of the provincial chapter is very important. It determines:

- a) the number of delegates of the province (or vice-province) who take part in the provincial chapter (cf. C 173, 7; R 161-166);
- b) the number of delegates which the province (or vice-province) sends to the General Chapter (cf. C 151, 8; R 114-115, 118).

For circumscriptions with a special statute both the composition of the provincial chapter and the number of delegates to the General Chapter are laid down in the decree of erection of the circumscription concerned.

A general list of confreres belonging to the province will be made for purposes of the provincial chapter.

As well as this general list, there are other lists which will be useful for the realization of the chapter and should be compiled. They are:



- a list of those who take part in the chapter “by right”;
- a list of confreres having “active voice”;
- a list of confreres having “passive voice”.

The norms governing the compiling of each of these lists are as follows:

**2.44** *A general list of confreres belonging to the province (or vice-province) for purposes of the provincial chapter.*

It should be noted that this list of confreres belonging to the province “*for purposes of the provincial chapter*” does not coincide with the list that is asked for each year for statistical purposes; the latter includes also confreres in “irregular” situations.

The following are to be considered as belonging to the province (or vice-province) for this purpose:

- A) confreres who made their first profession in the province (or vice-province) and are still resident in it at the time the list is compiled (C 160);
- B) confreres who came from another province (or vice-province) as a result of a *definitive transfer* and who still reside in the province at the time the list is compiled (cf. R 151);

*The making of definitive transfers* belongs to the Rector Major (cf. R 151). Definitive transfer is considered to have taken place also in the following cases:

- confreres who in the act of erection of a new province or vice-province are assigned to it (cf. ASC 284, p. 68, 3.2);
- missionaries who return definitively to their home country and are assigned by the Rector Major to the province he considers most suitable for their condition;
- all those for whom the Rector Major (or the Vicar General) has issued a decree of definitive transfer.

- C) confreres who at the time the list is compiled reside in the province (or vice-province), though coming from another province (or vice-province) on *temporary transfer*, in accordance with the norm of art. 151 of the Regulations;

*Temporary transfer* is brought about:

- either by a mandate of obedience (e.g. when a confrere is sent by obedience to exercise an office (rector, director of novices, teacher,



etc. in another province), as long as the mandate lasts;  
 — or by agreement between two provincials, when a confrere is sent to help in another province (cf. R 151). The confreres who have been transferred, even if only temporarily, are to be included and vote only in the province where they are actually working.

D) confreres who belong to the province (or vice-province) by one of the above-mentioned titles: (A, B, C), but who are *temporarily absent for lawful reasons*.

In accordance with R 166 the following are to be considered as "lawfully absent" (and hence to be included in the list):

(a) confreres of the province (or vice-province) who at the time the list is made are living temporarily and by express mandate of their own provincial of origin in a salesian house of another province (or vice-province) for specific reasons of *study, health or work received from their own provincial*;

The confreres referred to here (those temporarily absent for reasons of study, health, or for work given them by their own provincial) are not "transferred", even temporarily, to another province. They

— vote in the house where they are resident (outside their own province) for the election of the delegate of the community;

— but for the election of the delegate of the provincial community they are included in the provincial list of their own province.

It should be noted that the work given them by their own provincial, which is referred to here must be effectively a work for their own province of origin. This is evidently not the case of a confrere who resides and works in an interprovincial house: in a formation community or an interprovincial study centre, for instance, the formation or teaching personnel (but not the students) belong in all respects to the province of the territory in which the house is situated, and are counted only in that province. (Here it is a matter of "temporary transfer" as long as their assignment lasts.)

(b) confreres who have received from their own provincial permission for "*absentia a domo*" (cf. can. 665) or who have received from the Rector Major (or from the Apostolic See) the indult of "exclaustration" (cf. can. 686). Confreres who are "exclaustrated" (can. 686) or "*absentes a domo*" (can. 665), and whose permission to be absent has not expired, are salesian religious and therefore to be included in the general list.

Nevertheless:

— those exclaustrated in accordance with common law (can. 687) are deprived of the right of active and passive voice;

— those "*absentes a domo*" can be deprived of the right of active and passive voice in the judgement of the provincial (especially when leave of absence is granted for vocational reasons), at the time the concession is granted; cf. the letter of the Vicar General of 20.01.1985.



**2.45** To be still more precise the following, although still belonging to the province (or vice-province), *must not be counted for purposes of the provincial chapter* (and must therefore not be included in the above-mentioned general list):

A) confreres who have made a formal request for dispensation from priestly or diaconal celibacy; or who have made a formal request for secularization or for dispensation from perpetual or temporary vows;

The practice is that for the purposes of the provincial chapter, confreres who have made a formal request to leave the Congregation are not counted, even though the request is still under consideration and has not reached a definitive conclusion.

B) confreres who are *unlawfully* outside community for any reason (i.e. confreres in “irregular” situations).

**2.46** It will be opportune to keep in mind the following norm, given by the Rector Major on the occasion of the SGC and to be considered still valid:

Transfers from one province to another which took place without the prescribed formalities, and for which there are no clear facts or documents, are to be considered definitive (and hence with the loss of all effects of the former membership) after ten consecutive years of residence in the new province.

**2.47** The “general list” of the confreres of the province is the one to be used for calculating both the number of delegates of the provincial community to the provincial chapter (one for every 25 or fraction of 25 members: R 165, 3), and the number of delegates to the General Chapter (one if the total number of confreres is less than 250, two if the number is 250 or more: R 114).

*As soon as this general list has been compiled, a copy is to be sent to the Moderator of the GC24, whose duty it is to verify the calculations of the individual provinces (or vice-provinces), so as to ensure the validity of the election of delegates to the General Chapter.*



Remember that 24 May 1995 is the day by which the general list of the confreres of the province must be sent to the Moderator of the GC24.

**2.48** 2. *List of those who take part in the provincial chapter "by right".*

This is a list which the provincial (or the moderator of the provincial chapter) will communicate to the confreres, so that they know which members attend the chapter by right, in view of the elections at provincial level.

In accordance with C 173 the following are members "by right" of the provincial chapter:

- the provincial (or superior of a vice-province) who presides over the chapter;
- the provincial councillors;
- the delegates of the individual provincial delegations;
- the moderator of the provincial chapter;
- the rectors of canonically erected houses, even if the number of confreres is less than six;
- the director of novices.

As was said earlier, the composition of the chapter of the *circumscriptions with a special statute* is laid down in the respective decree of erection.

**2.49** 3. *Lists of confreres having "active voice" (electors).*

They are of two kinds:

**3.1** *List for the election of the delegates of each community.*

This list is compiled in each community and includes all *perpetually and temporarily professed confreres who reside in the community concerned*, including those of other provinces (or vice-provinces) who are there temporarily for reasons of study, health, or for a mandate received from their own provincial of origin (cf. R 165,2).



3.2 *Provincial list for the election of delegates of the provincial community to the provincial chapter.*

To this list, which is important for the election at provincial level, belong *all the confreres, both perpetually and temporarily professed, included in the "general list", except those who are deprived of active and passive voice.*

Those deprived of active and passive voice, even though they be included in the general list of the confreres of the province, are:

- a. confreres who have an indult of exclaustation, in accordance with can. 687);
- b. confreres who have received permission for "absentia a domo", and who in receiving such permission renounced their right to active and passive voice.

In the case of the "absentes a domo", their renunciation of active and passive voice must be clear from the document by which the provincial (with the consent of his council) grants permission for absence; cf. the letter of the Vicar General of 20.01.1985.

**2.50** 4. *Lists of confreres with passive voice (eligible for election).*

These are lists of confreres who can be elected as delegates of the local communities or as delegates of the provincial community.

They are of three kinds:

4.1 *List of confreres eligible for election to the provincial chapter as "delegates of a community".*

It includes all the *perpetually professed members* of the community (including those of other provinces residing there only for reasons of study and health),

- except for those who are already members by right of the provincial chapter (v. list 2)
- and those deprived of active and passive voice.



**2.51 4.2** *List of confreres eligible for election to the provincial chapter as "delegates of the provincial community".*

*This list includes all the perpetually professed members on the "general list" of the province (list 1), with the exception of:*

- those who are already members of the provincial chapter by right (list 2),
- the delegates already validly elected by the communities,
- confreres deprived of active and passive voice (those exlaustrated and "absentes a domo" who have renounced their right to active and passive voice).

**2.52 4.3** For the election within the provincial chapter of the delegate or delegates of the province to the General Chapter, it should be kept in mind that *all the perpetually professed on the "general list" (list 1) are eligible for election, except:*

- the provincial, who is a member of the General Chapter by right;
- Rector Majors emeriti, present in the province, who are also members by right of the General Chapter;
- confreres deprived of active and passive voice.

**2.53 Minutes of the elections**

— The rules for voting and scrutinies in the local communities are set out in arts. 161-163 of the General Regulations (cf. also C 153).

The corresponding minutes of the election of delegates of the local communities and their respective substitutes must be drawn up on the appropriate forms and be examined by the relevant provincial commission.

This provincial commission for the examination of the minutes of the election of the delegates of the communities will be appointed by the provincial in agreement with the moderator.

— The rules for voting and scrutinies in the voting for delegates of the provincial communities are set out in art. 165 of the Regulations.



The corresponding minutes of the election of the delegates of the provincial community must carry the following details:

- the date of the scrutiny,
- the names of the scrutineers,
- an indication that the required procedure has been observed,
- the results.

The minutes drawn up on the appropriate forms, must be endorsed by the signatures of the one presiding over the scrutiny and the scrutineers themselves.

- The minutes relating to the election of delegates to the General Chapter and their substitutes must be drawn up only on the special forms provided for the purpose and in accordance with the instructions they carry.

*These minutes must be sent without delay to the Moderator of the GC24, who will pass them to the appropriate juridical commission appointed by the Rector Major for the prescribed examination (cf. R 115).*

## **2.54 Special cases**

- Salesian Bishops, even though retired from office and resident in a province, have neither active nor passive voice, and if they are invited to the provincial chapter they do not vote. The same norm applies to Bishops reinserted in salesian communities (cf. AAS 1986, p. 1324).

- Rector Majors emeriti have both active and passive voice in the local community in which they are inserted and in the election of delegates of the provincial community; but if they are elected as delegates to the provincial chapter (either of the local community or the provincial community) they have active voice in the provincial chapter but not passive voice, since they are already members by right of the General Chapter.



### 2.55 Formal indications for compiling the lists of confreres

1. Names of the confreres are to be *numbered* progressively.
2. *Names are to be given in alphabetical order and spelled as in the Elenco of 1994.*
3. *Use capital letters for the PATERNAL SURNAME* and lower case for the Christian name.
4. *Indicate* by the appropriate sign whether the confrere is a priest (P), deacon (D), lay salesian (L), or “clerical” student (S).
5. *Indicate* by the letter ‘t’ if the confrere is in temporary vows.
6. If a member of the provincial chapter, indicate the *title* to participation:
  - a) by right
  - b) delegate of local community
  - c) delegate of provincial community.



## **2.5 WORK OF THE PREPARATORY TECHNICAL COMMISSION**

On 14 July 1988 the Rector Major, in accordance with art.112 of the Regulations, appointed the preparatory technical commission for the GC24, to be presided over by Fr Francesco Maraccani who had been already appointed Moderator of the GC24 on 08.06.94.

The members of the commission were: Fr Eugenio Alburquerque, Fr Gennaro Comite, Fr Damians Alexandre, Fr Luis De Lima Alves, Fr James Poonthuruthil, Bro John Rasor, Fr Albert Van Hecke, and two lay people: Professor Gioia De Cristofaro Longo and Professor Mario Pollo.

The technical commission met in Rome from 15-18 July 1994, and in its various sessions studied and drew up the following contributions:

1. A calendar for the preparation of the GC24, based on the date of opening laid down by the General Council;
2. A study outline on the theme of the GC24, as an aid for the provincial chapters and confreres.
3. Suggestions for the preparation and carrying out of the provincial chapters.
4. Juridical norms useful for the provincial chapters.

The contributions drawn up by the technical commission were passed to the Rector Major through the Moderator. The material concerned is contained in the present issue (350) of the AGC.



## 2.6 COLLABORATION OF LAY PEOPLE IN THE GC24

*We publish below the two letters sent by the Moderator of the GC24, Fr Antonio Martinelli, to the Councillor General for Youth Pastoral Work, and to those responsible for the Lay Groups of the Salesian Family, in view of collaboration on the theme of the GC24. The letters are the consequence of a proposal of the technical Commission, approved by the General Council.*

### 1. For the collaboration of youth groups

To Fr Luc VAN LOOY  
Councillor General for Youth Pastoral Work  
Rome.

Dear Fr Luc,

With the theme of the GC24

#### SALESIANS AND LAY PEOPLE SHARING AND COMMUNION IN THE SPIRIT AND MISSION OF DON BOSCO

it would seem to be of interest to implement a proposal of the technical Commission: to involve young people in reflecting on the theme, so that they can make a valuable contribution.

Without any doubt the provinces will interest young people in various ways in taking part in the work of the chapters.

The purpose of this present letter is to ask, through the Youth Pastoral Department and its General Councillor, for a specific and unique intervention on the part of the young.

At present I have no idea of how youth groups can be organized at world level. It may prove important to seek their views on this very aspect.

What I would like you to do is to study in what way I could receive, as Moderator of the GC24, their contribution not later than 15 July 1995. I would like a single contribution summarizing the views expressed.



I am well aware that this means extra work for the central organisms. On the other hand I think that the Salesian GC24 may provide a good occasion for increasing the awareness of the lay groups and for launching a modest linkage between the different continents.

Is it possible to make an effort in this connection? It would certainly provide a very interesting contribution to the GC24. It is my earnest hope that the whole operation may prove fruitful and produce enduring results.

I thank you in advance for whatever you are able to do.

Cordial greetings to you, your collaborators, and all the youth groups, and with the assurance of prayers for the success of your work.

Rome, 20 August 1994

Fr Antonio Martinelli  
Moderator GC24

NB. With the contribution I should like to receive also an account of how the work was carried out, and an indication of the countries which have collaborated in preparing the contribution requested.

## **2. For the Lay Groups of the Salesian Family**

To those responsible at central level  
for the LAY GROUPS  
of the SALESIAN FAMILY:  
– Salesian Cooperators  
– Salesian Past-Pupils  
– FMA Past-Pupils  
– Damas Salesianas  
– A.D.M.A.

Dear friend,

Cordial greetings from Rome to all the members of your group  
We Salesians have begun the preparatory work for the 24th General Chapter which will begin on 18 February 1996, and will continue for about two months, as far as can be foreseen.

The theme to be studied by the GC24 is the following:



## SALESIANS AND LAY PEOPLE SHARING AND COMMUNION IN THE SPIRIT AND MISSION OF DON BOSCO

After consulting the Rector Major and his Council, and in my capacity as Moderator of the GC24, I invite your collaboration.

Let me explain the request.

The General Chapter is an assembly of Salesians and for Salesians. It has no jurisdiction at all over the other Groups of the Salesian Family, which are autonomous in the organization of their life and programmes.

The theme SALESIANS AND LAY PEOPLE lends itself to an autonomous reflection on the part of the laity, from their own point of view, on the spirit and mission of Don Bosco which they share with the Salesians.

What should be done in practice?

1. Become organized, if it be thought opportune and in whatever way the Group may choose, as a lay group of the Salesian Family for a reflection on the theme;
2. Send to the Moderator of the GC24 of the Salesians not later than 15 July 1995 "a contribution"

The two aspects call for a rapid comment.

### 1. *Become organized*

No group should feel obliged to send a contribution. If the Group's programme can find room for this extra task, well and good; otherwise let the invitation not be accepted.

Becoming organized means, first of all, that the whole arrangement of the reflection is entrusted to the Group. The manner of working is in no way defined by the SDBs. Each Group will make whatever arrangements it considers opportune.

Becoming organized means, in addition, that the Central Council of the Group will be the contact point for the Moderator of the GC24.

### 2. *Send*

In the first place, the Moderator can wait until 15 July 1995 for a possible contribution from a Group. Anything reaching Rome after that date cannot be considered. Punctuality is therefore recommended.



The Moderator adds also that he hopes to receive *only a single contribution* from each Group.

This means that the Central Council, or similar organism, must prepare a summary. This alone will be sent to the Moderator. The Preparatory Commission of the GC24 will examine the contributions of all Groups so as to integrate them with the contributions of the Salesians.

The present invitation is made without prejudice to the collaboration which individual salesian provinces may organize locally with lay people of the groups of the Salesian Family and with collaborators in our activities and works.

Enclosed you will find the index of the reflection that will be made by the Salesians on the theme of the GC24.

The Groups of the Salesian Family are not expected to do the same. It will be sufficient if they give consideration to some of the more important aspects in the light of the lay perspective.

I express my fraternal gratitude for whatever you succeed in doing, and remain at your disposal to help in the solving of difficulties that may arise.

With the assurance of a remembrance in prayer.

Rome, 20 August 1994

Fr Antonio Martinelli  
Moderator GC24

NB. With the contribution I should like to receive also an account of how the work was carried out, and an indication of the countries which have collaborated in preparing the contribution requested.



## ACTS OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL IN ITALIAN

On 30 June 1994 in plenary session the General Council examined the norms for the distribution in the Congregation of the Acts of the General Council, "the official organ for the promulgation of directives of the Rector Major and his Council and for official information" (R 110), with particular regard to the edition in Italian. Requests had been received from various parts for a re-examination of the norms governing the sending out of the Italian edition which, in line with a previous deliberation, had been sent in the past to all the houses of the Congregation.

The Rector Major with his Council confirmed that the *Italian edition*, in which the Acts of the Council are originally written, remains the *official edition*, to which reference must be made for the authentic interpretation of the Council's thought and dispositions. Alongside the Italian edition translations are published in various languages which, though not of an official character, carry faithfully the directives of the Rector Major and the Council. These translations, at least for the principal languages, are made by translators linked with the General Secretariat, which sees to the publication of the Acts (cf.R 110).

On the basis of these considerations and with the reality of the Congregation in mind, the Rector Major with his Council has decided that, beginning with the next issue (n.351), the provinces and vice-provinces (outside Italy) will receive only a *limited number of copies* (usually five or six) of the *Italian edition*: so that the official edition needed for consultation may be available in the provincial house library and provincial archives, in the formation houses and centres, and in the province's leading libraries.



In addition to this basic number, *it is open to the individual provinces* — if they think it opportune — to request from the General Secretariat a *greater number of copies* of the Italian edition for the specific use of houses and confreres. If necessary an indication can be given of the addresses to which these extra copies should be sent.

All houses will be sent the Acts in the respective translations, in accordance with the requests that will be made (to the various distribution centres) by the provinces themselves.

In making this reflection and the decision concerning the Italian edition, the Council also emphasized the importance of a timely distribution of the Acts of the Council and of the giving of an ever more efficacious value to the guidelines and policies they carry.



## 4. ACTIVITIES OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL

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### 4.1 Chronicle of the Rector Major

In July the Rector Major was involved in Rome in the plenary session of the General Council, but was able also to participate in animating activities with various groups in Europe and in a general chapter of Sisters. In particular he had a moving encounter with 19 of our missionaries who had to leave Rwanda.

From 23-27 July Fr Viganò was at Nairobi (Kenya) and Moshi (Tanzania). In the Kenyan capital he took part in the consecration of the magnificent Sanctuary of Mary Help of Christians, and in Tanzania he had a lively meeting with the young confreres of the fine novitiate and post-novitiate.

On 5 August, at Turin, he was present at *Campobosco*, with some 600 youngsters from Spain and Portugal. The following day he was at Contra di Missaglia for the professions of the FMA novices. From 26 to 30 August he left the Generalate once again to spend some time with the confreres of Slovakia who are celebrating 70 years of salesian activity.

On 31 August at Castellammare di Stabia he took part in the meeting

of the World Consulting Body of the Cooperators.

8 September found the Rector Major back once again at Turin for the profession of our own novices, and on the 11th he was at Leghorn for the meeting of the National Council of the Past-Pupils of Italy.

### 4.2 Chronicle of the General Council

The summer plenary session of the General Council (the ninth of the present six-year period) took place between 1 June and 29 July, with a total of 29 full sittings, in addition to meetings of groups and committees.

As usual, much of the session's work was given to the customary items coming from the provinces: appointment of provincial councilors, approval of the appointment of rectors, the opening and erection of houses (7 new openings and 16 canonical erections), economic and administrative matters, and the solution of particular problems of confreres.

The greater part of the work, nevertheless, was given to the ani-



mation of the provinces (especially as a consequence of the extraordinary visitations and in connection with the appointment of provincials), and also to matters connected with the convoking of the GC24, as indicated by the Rector Major in introducing the session.

The following is an ordered list of the points of greater importance dealt with by the Council.

1. *Appointment of Provincials.* After examining the results of consultations and the making of discernment in common, accompanied by prayer, the Council proceeded to the appointment of ten provincials and superiors of vice-provinces or other circumscriptions for the coming six years. In alphabetical order they were: Dissegna Roberto (East Venice); Domenech i Corominas Antoni (Barcelona, Spain); Dziubinski Marian (Cracow, Poland); Gonzalez Gil Cipriano (Seville, Spain); Lopez Romero Cristobal (Paraguay); Naughton Patrick (Southern Africa); Niebles Vidal (Medellin, Colombia); Palathingal Varghese (Dimapur, India); San Martin Perez José Antonio (Léon, Spain); Weder Zdizslaw (Special Eastern Circumscription).

2. *Reports on extraordinary visitations.* Following the visitations made between January and May 1994 reports were made by the visitors concerned; these enabled the

General Council to make an accurate assessment of the reality of the situation in the individual provinces. The reports concerned: Brazil-Campo Grande; China; Italy-East Venice; Italy-Genoa; Italy-Southern; North Belgium; North Germany; Poland-Warsaw; Spain-Madrid; Venezuela.

3. *Reports of the Departments.* The Councillors heading Departments reported on their own activities and those of their respective departments, with an indication of problems met with and plans for the future. These reports enabled the Council to share collectively in the work done by each Department in the service of the Congregation.

4. *The GC24.* Discussion of this important item, which is not all that far away now, took up a good deal of the Council's time; in the preceding session (cf. AGC 348, p.51) in a first reflection on the matter, the regional Councillors had been asked to make an informal consultation of the provinces, especially with regard to the theme of the Chapter.

The aspects discussed and matured by the General Council in the course of the present session (published in this number of the Acts) are mainly the following:

a. indications for the appointment of the Moderator of the GC24, subsequently approved by the Rector Major in the person of Fr Anto-



nio Martinelli, Councillor General for the SF and SC;

b. determination of the date and general calendar for the General Chapter;

c. consideration and definition of the theme of the Chapter, on the basis of the consultations made and the needs of the Congregation; in the present issue of the Acts the theme is presented and illustrated by the Rector Major.

d. some indications were given for the "Outline for reflection" on the Chapter's theme: this both before and after the work of the technical commission;

e. the Council also examined other particular aspects of the preparation of the GC24, and in particular the question of the participation of lay people for the development of the Chapter's theme.

5. *The financial and administrative report for 1993.* An important item required by the general Regulations is the examination and approval of the financial report of the work of the Generalate, presented by the Economist General.

6. *Some particular items.* Among particular items considered by the General Council, the following are the more outstanding:

6.1 *Italian edition of the Acts of the General Council.* In accordance with requests that had been recei-

ved, the Council reflected on the matter of the Italian edition of the Acts of the General Council (of which copies had been sent in the past to all the Society's houses). While confirming that the Italian remains the official edition, the Council decided that outside Italy a limited number would be sent to the provinces for use in provincial libraries and archives, and also in formation houses and main libraries of the province (cf. «Rulings and Directives" in this number of the AGC).

6.2 *The "Colle Project" of 1994:* the Council studied and then made observations and suggestions in connection with the "Colle Project", presented by the Superior of the Piedmont Circumscription with his Council: it was a matter of a further development of what had been already begun, for an ever better exploitation of Don Bosco's birthplace for the benefit of young people.

6.3 *Salesian Central and Provincial Archives.* The occasion of the presentation by the Secretary General of a verification of the norms governing the Salesian Central Archives provided an opportunity for the Council to emphasize the importance of subsidiary archives, especially those of the provinces, which need to be given greater attention.



During the session there were also other events and encounters which involved the General Council. In addition to the meeting of new provincials (6-17 June) and the seminar on volunteer work (4-15 July), pride of place goes to the *Spiritual Retreat*, made by the Council at Poggio di Rojo, near Aquila, under the guidance of Fr Pino Scabini, Spiritual Director of the Pontifical Lombard Seminary of Rome.

Also of importance was the *combined meeting of the SDB and FMA General Councils* which took place in the house of "Santa Rosa" at Castelgandolfo in the afternoon of 17 June. The theme of common study was: *Some points for reflection on the educative and pastoral dimension of formation*. First in groups and then in combined assembly an effort was made to reply to some questions posed by the two Councilors (FMA and SDB) for Formation. These questions, which served as a basis for formulating some indications for use in formation were as follows:

- In our experience what attitudes are shown with regard to our mission by young people who aspire to the salesian life (attraction, experiences, expectations, preparation, weak points, etc.)?
- In the case of FMAs and SDBs who have experience of a progressive involvement in the educative mission among young people, in what aspects do they seem to be better formed, and in what do they seem fragile and/or less well prepared?
- What aspects of continuity or discontinuity between initial and ongoing formation are there with respect to the mission?
- What prospects and proposals are there for making concrete a progressive co-involvement in the mission and in the realization of programmed and guided apostolic experiences integrated into the overall life and mission of the community?
- In the light of the complex nature of the present-day, the realities of the young people who are called and the challenges of the mission:
  - . what aspects need to be given greater attention in formation?
  - . how can we ensure the acquisition of a qualified competence, both professionally and pastorally, to meet the challenges of the education of youth at the present day?



## 5. DOCUMENTS AND NEWS ITEMS

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### 5.1 Strenna of the Rector Major for 1995

*The Strenna of the Rector Major for 1995 reads as follows;*

SINCE WE ARE ALL CALLED TO BE FREE (Gal 5,13)  
LET US DRAW ONCE MORE ON THE  
PREVENTIVE SYSTEM  
BY EDUCATING YOUNG PEOPLE TO LIVE  
BY TRUE VALUES

### 5.2 New Provincials

*As already stated in the Chronicle (cf. n. 4.2), during the summer session were appointed eight provincials, a superior of a vice-province and one of a special circumscription. Some biographical details of them are given below.*

#### 1. DISSEGNA Roberto, Province of East Venice.

Fr Roberto Dissegna, the new Provincial of East Venice succeeds Fr Gianni Filippin at the termination of the latter's period of office. Born at Rossano Veneto (Vicenza) 17 August 1944, Roberto Dissegna was a pupil at the aspirantate of Castello di Godego, and went on to the novitiate of Albaré (Verona), where he made his first profession on 16 August 1961.

After the study of philosophy and practical training, he followed the theology course in Turin and was ordained priest in the basilica of Mary Help of Christians on 25 March 1972.

He then concluded his civil studies, obtaining a doctorate in philosophy and psychology and a teacher's qualification.

He became an outstanding educator. From 1982 to 1987 he directed the salesian house of Mezzano di Primiero, and was then entrusted with the professional work of Venice (San Giorgio), which he guided during its transfer to Mestre in 1990.

From 1993 he had been rector of the house of Gorizia.

#### 2. DOMENECH i COROMINAS Antoni, Province of Barcelona, Spain

Fr Antoni Domenech i Corominas has been appointed to succeed Fr Miguel Carabias as provincial of Barcelona, Spain.

He was born at Barcelona 12 April 1943, frequented the salesian school at Barcelona, made his novitiate at Arbós and there made also his first profession on 16 August 1959.



After philosophy and practical training, he studied theology at Salamanca, where he obtained the Licentiate in Theology and was ordained priest on 1 February 1969.

A teacher and formation guide, he was rector at Sant Adrià del Besòs from 1976 to 1982 and at the same time a member of the provincial council. In 1982 he became rector of the studentate of theology of Marti Codolar, and at the end of his mandate in 1988 remained in the same community as a teacher and formation guide. From 1988 he was the provincial councillor in charge of youth pastoral work, and in 1990 was a delegate to the GC23.

3. *DZIUBINSKI Marian, Province of Cracow, Poland.*

Fr Marian Dziubinski succeeds Fr Piotr Biegus as leader of the province of Cracow.

Born at Zgiergynka, Nowy Tomysl, in the diocese of Poznan, on 5 April 1946, he made his novitiate at Kopiec and his first profession on 25 August 1965.

Philosophy and practical training were followed by theology in the salesian studentate of Cracow and he was ordained priest on 9 June 1972. He then completed his civil studies by gaining a doctorate in classics.

After educative and pastoral tasks in various houses, in 1979 he was called to the Generalate in Rome where he collaborated in the publi-

cation of the Salesian Bulletin, a work he later continued in Poland as director of the Polish Bulletin.

In 1982 he was for one year provincial secretary, and then in 1983 became vice-provincial, an office he filled with competence until his appointment as provincial. He was a delegate to the GC23.

4. *GONZALEZ GIL Cipriano, Province of Seville, Spain.*

Fr Cipriano Gonzalez Gill will succeed Fr Francisco Vazquez as provincial of Seville, Spain. He was born at Ahigal de Villarino, Salamanca, on 1 June 1936. He made his novitiate at San José del Valle, and his first profession on 16 August 1955.

After the study of philosophy and practical training, he followed the course of theology at Cordoba and was ordained priest at Sanlúcar la Mayor on 27 March 1965. He obtained the Licentiate in Theology and in Educational Sciences at the UPS.

He was soon given posts of responsibility, rector and director of novices at Sanlúcar la Mayor in 1972, and he became a provincial councillor in 1973. In 1975 he became rector of the formation community of the theologians at Seville and subsequently of the house of Morón de la Frontera. In 1985 he was once again director of novices, a post he retained until 1991 when he was appointed rector of the for-



mation community of the students of theology at Seville. From 1988 he was a member of the Provincial Council.

5. *LOPEZ ROMERO Cristobal, Province of Paraguay.*

Fr Cristobal López Romero has been appointed to succeed Fr Ascensio Zabala in Paraguay. He was born at Velez Rubio (Almeria), Spain, on 19 May 1952, made his novitiate at Godelleta, and his first profession on 16 August 1968.

This was followed by philosophical studies, practical training and theology at Barcelona, where he was ordained priest on 19 May 1979. He was a teacher of general subjects and obtained the degree of Bachelor in Theology and the Licentiate in Informational Sciences.

As a young priest he left for Paraguay where he was given posts of responsibility. In 1985 he was appointed rector of the provincial house at Asuncion, and in 1987 member of the provincial council. In the same year he became director of the Salesian Bulletin of Paraguay, and has held the office ever since. He was also provincial delegate for the youth apostolate.

6. *NAUGHTON Patrick, vice-province of Southern Africa.*

Fr Patrick Naughton succeeds Fr Patrick Lonergan in guiding the vice-province of Southern Africa.

Born at Creggduff, Galway (Ireland), on 23 November 1940, he left for South Africa when still quite young; he made his novitiate there at Daleside-Clonlea (now Walkerville)) and made also his first profession there on 19 February 1962.

After the study of philosophy and practical training he went to Benediktbeuern in Germany for theology and was ordained priest on 27 June 1961. His studies gained for him the degrees of Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Education; he also holds a Diploma in Catechetics.

A teacher and educator, he was appointed rector of the house of Don Bosco, Daleside in 1985, and in 1989 became the Vicar of the Superior of the vice-province. Since 1991 he had been also rector of the house at Lansdowne.

7. *NIEBLES Vidal, Province of Medellin, Colombia.*

Fr Vidal Niebles is the new provincial of Medellin, Colombia; he succeeds Fr Marco Antonio Baron, who has had to leave the office for serious reasons of health.

Vidal Niebles was born at Soledad, Barranquilla in Colombia, 14 July 1946. Attracted by the salesian vocation, he made his novitiate at Copacabana and there made also his first profession on 18 January 1967.

Philosophy and practical training were followed by theology at Bo-



gotá in the salesian studentate, and he was ordained priest at Barranquilla on 24 August 1974.

He was then engaged in educational and pastoral work and in 1980 was appointed rector of the house of Tuluá. From 1985 to 1988 he went to Rome for further studies at the UPS where he obtained the Licentiate in Theology.

Returning to Colombia, he was rector at Don Bosco, Barranquilla, from 1988 to 1991, and in this latter year was appointed vice-provincial and rector of the provincial house of Medellín, an office he held at the time of his appointment as provincial.

8. *PALATHINGAL Varghese, Province of Dimapur, India.*

Fr Varghese Palathingal becomes the new provincial of Dimapur at the end of the term of office of Fr Scaria Nedumala.

He was born at Narakal, in Kerala, on 12 November 1949, and feeling an attraction to the salesian way of life left for the North of India when still young. He made his novitiate in the house of Shillong-Sunnyside and made his first profession on 24 May 1969.

After the study of philosophy and practical training in the north he went to Bangalore for the study of theology, and on 17 December 1978 was ordained priest at Kattoor.

He obtained the Licentiate in

Theology and was then engaged in educational and pastoral work. In 1984 he became rector and parish priest in the house of Punnanamai and in 1988 rector and director of novices in the Dimapur novitiate erected in the centenary year at Imphal, Manipur. It was here that the news reached him of his appointment as provincial. From 1988 he had been a member of the provincial council.

9. *SAN MARTIN PEREZ José Antonio, Province of León, Spain*

Fr José Antonio San Martín Pérez succeeds Fr Filiberto Rodríguez as provincial of León, Spain.

Born at La Coruña, in the diocese of Santiago de Compostela, on 3 September 1937, he was a pupil at the salesian college in the same town, and went on from there to the novitiate at Mohernando, where he made his first profession on 12 December 1956.

After the study of philosophy and practical training, he followed the theological course at Salamanca, and was ordained priest in his home town on 28 February 1965. He obtained the Licentiate in History.

From 1972 to 1975 he was rector in the house of 'Maria Auxiliadora', Vigo, and in 1973 became a provincial councillor and was for many years delegate for youth pastoral work. From 1986 he was rector of the house of St John Bosco at La



Coruña, and was a delegate to the GC23.

10. *WEDER Zdzislaw, for the circumscription of Eastern Europe.*

Fr Zdzislaw Weder has been appointed the first Superior of the new Circumscription with a Special Statute for Eastern Europe, with headquarters at Moscow.

He was born at Slepianica (Łódź), Poland, on 22 January 1936, made his novitiate at Czerwinski, and his first profession on 2 August 1952.

After philosophy and practical training he studied theology in the salesian studentate of Lad, and was ordained priest on 3 June 1962. Subsequently he obtained the Licentiate in Theology from the Catholic University of Lublin.

He then worked in the pastoral field (as far as was possible in the social and political situation of the time) and in 1972 became rector of the house of Pila, where he remained until 1979. In 1978 he became a provincial councillor and in 1979 director of novices at Czerwinski. In the following year he was sent as rector to the house of formation of Kutno-Wozniakow, and in 1982 became vice-provincial. In 1984 he was appointed provincial of Łódź (now the province of Warsaw).

At the end of his mandate as provincial he remained at Lodz for a

year, and then accepted an invitation to go to the countries of the former Soviet Union and assist the Delegate of the Rector Major (Fr Augustyn Dziedziel) in their animation. He has now been appointed the first superior of the new circumscription.

### 5.3 New Salesian Bishop

*Mgr. ARTALE Ermanno, Bishop of Huanuco, Peru.*

On 22 June 1994 the Osservatore Romano carried the news of the appointment of *Fr Ermanno ARTALE* as Bishop of the Diocese of Huanuco in Peru.

Born at Naples, Italy, on 20 April 1933, Ermanno Artale was a pupil at the salesian college of Torre Annunziata, and went on to the novitiate of Portici, where he made his first profession on 16 August 1949.

After his philosophical studies he left while still a cleric for Latin America. He studied theology in the studentate of Santiago, Chile, where he was ordained priest on 30 November 1958. Subsequently he obtained the Licentiate in Theology from the Lateran University, Rome.

He was then assigned to the Bolivian province and in 1968 became rector of the house of Don Bosco, La Paz. Later he became a provincial councillor and rector of the



house of Maria Auxiliadora, La Paz.

He returned for a short period to his native province in Italy and was rector of the house of Castellammare di Stabia. He then returned to Latin America to the province of Peru, and from 1979 to 1982 was rector of the house of San José at Lima. In 1992, on the death of Mgr. Vallebuona, he was appointed by the Holy See Apostolic Administrator of the diocese of Huanuco, of which he has now become Bishop.

#### **5.4 Appointment of Coordinator General of the Association of Salesian Cooperators**

*During the first meeting of the new World Consulting Body of the Salesian Cooperators, held at Castellammare di Stabia from 29 August to 3 September, the Rector Major appointed Prof. Roberto Lorenzini as Coordinator General of the Association, on the expiry of the mandate of Mr. Paolo Santoni. We publish below the DECREE OF APPOINTMENT.*

Prot. N. 94/1685

Fr Egidio VIGANO, Rector Major of the Salesian Society of St Francis de Sales, and Superior of the Association of Salesian Cooperators, in accordance with art.148 of the Regulations of Apostolic Life,

#### **APPOINTMENTS**

from among the members of the World Consulting Body

**Prof. Roberto LORENZINI**

COORDINATOR GENERAL of the Association of Salesian Cooperators for seven years, in accordance with art.48,4 of the same Regulations, from 31 August 1994.

He wishes the new Coordinator a period of generous commitment and ample success, under the protection of Mary Help of Christians and St John Bosco.

May the perspective of the third millennium of the Christian faith, now close at hand, be a stimulus for the growth of the Association.

Rome, 31 August 1994.

Fr Egidio VIGANO

Rector Major



## 5.5 Our dead confreres (1994 - 3rd list)

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

NAME	PLACE	DATE	AGE	PROV.
P AERE Umberto	Pordenone	07.07.94	79	IVE
P AUTRET Guillaume	Perpignan	24.06.94	85	FPA
P AZIMONTI Giulio	Asti	01.09.94	78	ICP
P BANDO Edward	Rumia	24.06.94	82	PLN
P BAPTISTÃO Josué Victor	Brasília	31.07.94	65	BBH
P BELAJ Stanislav	Zagreb	08.08.94	72	CRO
L BOCHENEK Stanislaw	Bilbao	10.07.94	79	SBI
L CAHOJ Michael	Shillong	01.07.94	82	ING
P CAMPORA Emilio Angel	Rosario	27.06.94	87	ARO
P CANALE Domenico	Mérida	18.07.94	79	VEN
L CASULA Giovanni	West Haverstraw	02.08.94	74	SUE
P CAVAZZI Carlos	Montevideo	16.07.94	81	URU
P COLLINS John	London	30.06.94	77	GBR
P COLUSSI Antonio	Cuiabá	27.08.94	80	BCG
L Da LUZ ESPIRIDIÃO Angelino	São Carlos	13.07.94	88	BSP
P DI MARCO Cipriano	Messina	23.08.94	66	ISI
E D'ROSARIO Hubert	Shillong	30.08.94	74	
<i>Fu per 5 anni Vescovo di Dibrugarh e per 25 anni Arcivescovo di Shillong (Assam)</i>				
L DURANDO Sebastiano	Melbourne	15.08.94	86	AUL
P FERREIRA Lino	Porto	30.08.94	80	POR
P FESTINI VISSIO Miguel	Santa Fe	01.07.94	77	ARO
P FRATTALLONE Giuseppe	Palermo	28.06.94	57	ISI
P GMEINER Hermann	Amstetten	20.05.94	85	AUS
P GONZALEZ LAZARO F. Javier	Logroño	11.07.94	40	SBI
P GRABOWSKI Jan	Radom	07.07.94	80	PLS
L GSCHWEND Karl	Benediktbeuern	10.07.94	86	GEM
P HIPPE Albrecht	Schwandorf	05.08.94	72	GEM
P HOFFMANN Alfred	Siedlce	02.07.94	71	PLE
P HOPKINS Patrick	Ezeiza-La Plata	10.06.94	82	ALP
L JAKOB Johannes	Helenenberg	15.07.94	81	GEK
P KESY Zygmunt	Rumia	11.07.94	81	PLN
P KOCHUPURACKAL Thomas	Calcutta	06.07.94	39	INC
P KOLACHERIL Thomas	Pannur	18.06.94	62	INM
P KOSCAK Fabijan	Rijeka	27.07.94	66	CRO
P LANGER Eduard	Lipník nad Bečvou	02.07.94	77	CEP
P LEE Tcheng Hua John Baptist	Chao Chow (Taiwan)	17.06.94	67	CIN
P LORENZI Luigi	Legnago (Verona)	03.09.94	78	BCG



NAME	PLACE	DATE	AGE	PROV.
P LUKACS Lajos	Szombathely	20.07.94	68	UNG
P LUPACCHINO Angelo	Castellammare di Stabia	01.07.94	72	IME
P MADDALENA Domingo	Buenos Aires	21.06.94	77	ABA
P MONDIO Sebastiano Rosario	Catania	25.08.94	73	ISI
P MONTIVEROS Mario	Córdoba	06.06.94	80	ACO
E PAZ Ladislau	São Paulo	24.06.94	91	
<i>Fu per 9 anni Ispettore e per 21 anni Vescovo di Corumbá (Brasile)</i>				
P PELLIZZONI Mario	Arese	04.07.94	77	ILE
P PEREGO Marco	Civitanova Marche Alta	20.05.94	81	IAD
P PEREZ GAONA Roberto	Paysandú	11.08.94	91	URU
P POLACEK Jaroslav	Prostejov	27.07.94	66	CEP
L PROVERA Francesco	Santiago de Chile	10.08.94	86	CIL
P RAMIREZ URTASUN Juan	Bahía Blanca	31.07.94	73	ABB
L SACCHETTO Primo	Châtilon	24.08.94	82	ICP
P SINISI Gennaro	Manduria	02.08.94	80	IME
L TORRES David	Torino	27.06.94	95	ICP
P URBAITIS Petras	São Paulo	10.07.94	83	BSP
P VALIATI Roque Baptista	Brasilia	15.06.94	75	BBH
P VALSECCHI Tarcisio	Arese	04.08.94	66	ILE















