



acts

of the general council

year LXXVII january-march 1996

N. 355

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

**Roma
Direzione Generale
Opere Don Bosco**

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

OFFICIAL ORGAN OF ANIMATION AND COMMUNICATION FOR THE SALESIAN CONGREGATION

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

OFFICIAL ORGAN FOR ANNOUNCEMENT AND COMMUNICATION WITH THE SALESIAN COMMUNITY

N. 352
Year LXXVII
January-March 1996

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MOVING TOGETHER TOWARDS THE GC24

Introduction - 1. An extraordinary event - 2. An event of communion - 3. The significance of the GC24 - 4. Communication between the capitular community and local communities - 5. The community, the subject giving effect to the General Chapter - 6. Two levels of reflection and community commitment - Conclusion

Rome, 8 December 1995

My dear confreres,

When you receive this letter we shall be already on the threshold of the GC24. We are involved in its preparation with the same care and concern shown by Fr Egidio Viganò from the time the theme was chosen, closely scrutinizing the doctrinal and practical problems implied and studying the method of working.

For some time now the members of the Chapter have had available the precapitular document, translated into various languages. It contains an organic synthesis of the contributions sent in by the Provinces and lines of reflection for the Chapter.

It is the result of the work of the Precapitular Commission, made up of sixteen confreres from as many Provinces and thirteen countries, who met together at the Generalate for three weeks under the guidance of the Moderator of the GC24, Fr Antonio Martinelli.

They worked in an atmosphere of brotherhood with a sustained rhythm of study, dialogue and prayer, using modern means of gathering and cataloguing information and expressing it in organized form. This led to a result which was considered positive by all the members of the Commission and by others who read the text before it was approved for despatch.

It is evident from the documentation coming in that the theme of the Chapter has involved the Congregation at the levels of both reflection and practical verification. The diversity of tone and emphasis coming from every part of the Congregation is valuable and has converged, so to speak, in a single effort to embody Don Bosco in the present day.

I am grateful to all those who in the Provinces, at the Generalate, and in the Precapitular Commission, have taken the GC24 to heart, thus enabling us to look forward with well-founded hope to the celebration of the Chapter itself. It is my intention through the present pages to invite confreres and communities to participate spiritually in the Chapter and prepare themselves to accept its guidelines thus creating from the outset the conditions for their prompt application.

1. An extraordinary event

The General Chapters have been milestones in the life of the Congregation. Some of them, after patient and successive revisions, adopted norms and forms of life which, because of the Chapter deliberations, became stable and universal. Others created roles and organisms which led to new and decisive developments in important sectors of acti-

vity. Still others consolidated various aspects of spiritual and cultural formation.

Some of them have been given particular attention by scholars,¹ because of the effect they have had on our history.

¹ Marcel Verhulst SDB, *Note storiche sul Capitolo Generale I della Società Salesiana* (1877) in "Salesianum" 43 (1981) pp. 849-882; Morand Wirth SDB, Don Bosco e i Salesiani, LDC, Torino-Leumann, 1969, chap. XXIV, pp. 291-300

Well known to us are the recent Chapters, of greater length and with more members. But a patient study of the individual earlier Chapters followed by synthesis and correlation enables us to see that even those which come less easily to mind have provided thrusts which through the ordinary processes of government have updated or strengthened our identity.

In this sense all of them consolidated the unity of which they were a sign, discerning the suggestions made by the grace of vocation in times which changed at a rate which admittedly was not as rapid as our own.

Preparation and willing acceptance in faith were always, and are still so today, essential conditions for the efficacy of General Chapters. There is nothing automatic about them.

Before all else the General Chapter is an appeal to our freedom which recognizes with simplicity and interior docility that it "has supreme authority over the Society",² and this not only nor even mainly in a juridical sense but especially from a charismatic standpoint: it is the means which best indicates the direction in which we should be moving and the strengths we should apply at this moment in history.

It is sad, Fr Egidio Viganò used to say, when visiting the Congregation, to come across occasional Provinces which for the most varied reasons are some two or three Chapters behind. You become aware at once that their delay is something

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affecting not only their own small sector, but the life of the whole Congregation and the ecclesial dimension of the salesian vocation.

It is easy in fact to see how our General Chapters are celebrated in strict connection with essential ecclesial processes. Thus, for instance, if the GC23 represented the particular endeavour of the Congregation to become harmonized with the "New Evangelization", the programme of the GC24 will bring it into line with "Christifideles Laici" and the reflections on consecrated life developed by the Synod of Bishops.

Hence participation in General Chapters is equivalent to entering in our own specific way into the Church's movement.

2. An event of communion

The mass media would often make it seem that General Chapters of Religious or Synods resemble parliaments, constituent assemblies, congresses or electoral colleges. These are categories with which they are more familiar and which, they believe, are more suited to people in general. The resemblance is purely material.

We know by experience that a General Chapter is much more than a technical or juridical organism which meets to carry out such specific tasks as the election of the General Council, the study of a particular topic, or revision of the Constitutions and Regulations.

Introducing the first General Chapter which opened at Lanzo on 5 September 1877, Don Bosco said: "Our Divine Saviour tells us in the Gospel that where two or three are gathered in his name he

³ BM 13, 183

will be there among them... And so we may trust that the Lord will be in our midst and will personally lead our discussions to his greater glory".³

In this way he emphasized the character of the celebration of a General Chapter. He gave us to some extent the profile described in art.146 of the Constitutions when it describes it as a fraternal meeting, the place of a common sensitivity "to the needs of time and place", for giving a response "at a specific moment in history".

The principal dimension of the General Chapter is communion, given substance by months of intense common life, enriched by the variety of places of origin of the Chapter members and of their experience. It is brought about through the authenticity and novelty of personal contacts which foster the joy of finding oneself different and yet among brothers. It is carried on through continual exchange of ideas among people who are all aware that they have something to contribute and something to receive in Don Bosco's house. It is nourished by the strength of the liturgy and the Eucharist. It is able to manifest externally the characteristic traits of salesian joy and happiness. In this way communion becomes expressed in the style of fellowship which is typical of our communities.

Such an atmosphere leads, as though by osmosis, to intense communication with appreciation of the differences and points of linkage between different cultures, to an understanding of the challenges presented by different religions, to the joyful realization that the salesian charism is flexible, and it leads to the solicitous desire to find solutions to problems which beset young people the whole world over. It brings about a convergence which becomes evident in the groups and assemblies, in

discussions and voting.

This expression of communion involves the individual local and provincial communities and links them all together. In it reaches its maximum extension and intensity the search for unity which is manifest in the communities all over the world.

For this reason the General Chapter, while it is in session, wants to be in deep communion with every single confrere. The local and provincial communities, the times and places where they are working, are the essential and continual points of reference for its reflections. From them it begins, of them it is constantly thinking, for them it works.

In convoking the sixth General Chapter, Blessed Don Rua expressed the desire to be in communion with all the confreres of the world, making his own the words of the Apostle: "I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers" (Eph 1,16).⁴ We may well believe that the more we are united, the more efficacious will be the GC24 for the entire Congregation.

⁴ Circular letter, 19.3.1892

An experience of communion of this kind and the unity which it creates are not something purely fleeting. They do not disappear with the ending of the Chapter but rather continue to spread afterwards.

Without setting out to do so, but most efficaciously nevertheless, a General Chapter moulds those who witness the event. Participation in it does not end the obligations of the Chapter member.

He is called to make known to the confreres of the houses and his province the experience he has lived through, and to manifest that new salesian heart, which every Chapter inculcates through the sum total of its work. He will pass on the universal

vision of the Congregation, the thousand and one aspects of its presence, and its unity of spirit and purpose.

Every Chapter member feels that he is present at the Chapter in your name and because he has been 'sent' by you; but he also cherishes the hope that you are eagerly awaiting his return, to pass on to you the witness which cannot be adequately conveyed by either a written text, or a videocassette, or by the flow of information which will certainly be forthcoming. The confirmation or development of such information you will probably be looking for in the words of the direct witness.

In his summing up of the work of the first General Chapter, Fr Ceria recounts what was said by Fr Secondo Franco S.J., who had helped the Salesians in its preparation: that its main objective was to form the religious consciousness of the confreres.⁵ Every Chapter is a gift to the Congregation for the efficacy of its mission, a gift to each one of us to enable us to grow in fidelity to our vocation.

If therefore it is a matter of a vocational grace and not just an event which has to take place at fixed intervals, it follows that the preparation, style of communion, and willingness to accept and put into practice whatever it may decide, are the spiritual attitudes we must foster within us from the outset.

3. The significance of the GC24

The GC24 is an ordinary General Chapter. It develops and studies more deeply an aspect of our identity and plan of activity already studied on

⁵ BM 13, 219

other occasions. In particular it will maintain continuity with the GC23 and strengthen the directives concerning shared responsibility with the laity and their formation in the direction of the education of young people to the faith.

Among the members of the General Council as also among the Provincials and members of Provincial Councils, who assessed the various suggestions put forward for themes for the present Chapter, there was a strong desire to maintain an organic linkage with both preceding Chapters and with what has been done during the past six years, which have been marked by such initiatives as the "Lay Project" and the "Common Identity Card of the Salesian Family".

This should lead to a post-Chapter process in substantial continuity but also with significant progress with respect to what has been done so far. The point is emphasized in the Precapitular Document: "The horizon therefore is the mission, and in this sense the theme fits in with the general pattern of reflections made by the Congregation from the Special General Chapter onwards to the launching of the present Chapter".⁶

⁶ Precap.doc. n. 1

Looking back to the celebration of the first General Chapter, we find Don Bosco saying: It will give our Congregation a new look. It will be a giant step. How good it makes us feel to see that we are forging ahead year after year".⁷

⁷ BM 13, 177

Don Bosco expected from the first Chapter therefore, and it is helpful for us to believe the same of this our 24th, a twofold result. The giving to the Congregation of a new look, i.e. of shaping more clearly the outlines of its physiognomy and perfecting its identity; and that of taking a step forward in the direction indicated by the signs of the

times, the indications given by the Church, and the urgent needs of the young.

It hardly needs pointing out that the relationship with the laity, which is the theme of the GC24, touches in very truth on the substantial form of the Congregation and is a point in which the Congregation is urgently called upon to take a real step forward, or maybe several steps. To illustrate the point one need only look back to the space given by the first GC of 1877 to the theme of the Salesian Cooperators.

4. Communication between the capitular community and local communities

From what we have said it is clear that in the GC24 it is the entire Congregation that must gather together and express its opinions. We consider this to be one of the Chapter's most important aspects, and one or two particular points of attention on the part of local communities will help towards its realization.

Prayer and sacrifice

The results we are hoping for from the GC24 make us think back to the sowing of the seed in the Gospel. Here too the parable can be applied: some of the seed fell along the path and the birds came and devoured it. Other seeds fell on rocky ground where they had not much soil, and they sprang up at once but soon withered. Still other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundred-fold, some sixty, some thirty.⁸

⁸ cf. Mt 13,4-9

The degree of fertility depends on grace and interior dispositions. Both must be asked for in constant and trusting prayer. I would not want this invitation to be felt as a merely generic or routine exhortation. Thought must be given to the spiritual capacity and dispositions required in each Chapter member to be able to understand, discern, purify himself from improper attachments, reach convergence with others and decide on what best conforms to God's plan. And no less thought must be given to the attitudes of those who receive the message and must give effect to it: willingness to listen, availability, trust, prompt application.

It is in prayer that the Holy Spirit educates us to situate in a context of faith the problems at the centre of our attention, to predispose our hearts to accept and welcome the results of the GC24, to obtain light and grace for the confreres working in the Chapter itself. "If a thought does not germinate in God's terrain, it is destined to get no further than a human dimension, where it will have no more than fleeting success".⁹

We feel the need for prayer especially for the enlightened choice, free of all human consideration, of the Superiors who will have to guide the Congregation in the coming six years. In his letter convoking the Chapter, the late lamented Fr Egidio Viganò asked for "the participation and shared responsibility of all confreres 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".¹⁰ This is perhaps the most important task of every General Chapter, and the one fraught with the gravest consequences.

⁹ Bosco Valentino, *Il Capitolo: momento di profetia per tenere il passo di Dio*, LDC, Torino-Leumann, 1980, p. 86.

¹⁰ AGC 350, p. 6

Information

The Regulations for the General Chapter give particular attention to information. This is entrusted to a capitular commission and will make use of the structures and personnel associated with ANS.

As compared with previous Chapters we are better equipped at the present day for communication purposes: internet, electronic mail, fax, etc. We have entered the era of rapid communication. The GC24 is an excellent opportunity, for those who have the possibility but have not yet taken advantage of it, to set up their own instruments of communication with the Centre of the Congregation.

It is our hope that the increased possibilities for the exchange of information may allow us to experience and savour a greater communion. We are well aware that neither instruments nor the constant flow of news automatically produces such communion. Of this we have daily experience. After seeing a news bulletin on television, we often remain a long way from the real facts and the persons we have had presented to us.

The desired sharing will take place if on both sides, General Chapter and local community, after the style of journalistic curiosity which is always looking for snippets of interest to 'broadcast from the housetops', the effort is made to receive and diffuse salutary news, the kind that takes us to the heart of problems, which gives us the real dimensions of our charism, which helps us to feel the Spirit's presence and which opens our eyes to the occasions and opportunities God is offering us. And especially so if such information is spread and ex-

ploited in local communities, and for the Salesian Family also by suitable means.

Information on the General Chapter, therefore, compels communities to verify and perfect their own internal communication, and to invite every confrere, in the spirit of the Constitutions, to renew his commitment to take part in the more significant community practices.

Study

For the celebration of the GC24 and the acceptance of its results, the terrain needs to be prepared also by an opportune updating in what concerns present phenomena and sensitivities, especially in the heart of the Church. This is an inescapable duty for those coming to Rome, but is also incumbent on those who follow the Chapter from home. It includes the reading of the great documents of the Church's magisterium, especially the more recent ones, the study of salesian history and spirituality, the Acts of the principal lay congresses that have taken place in recent years, the renewed Constitutions and Statutes of the lay components of the Salesian Family.

Remarks are sometimes made about the excessive abundance of such documents. But it is not necessary to read all of them in this brief interval. The unfortunate thing would be to neglect all of them. Taken as a whole they offer a great possibility of choice for the meditation of individuals and communities.

Study will enable us to go beyond the surface facts concerning the laity, to understand more deeply our harmonious relationship with the new figure of the lay person awaited by the Church, to

discover what it is that unites us with many lay people of good will together with whom we are called, even in this secularized world, to work together so as to bring salvation to the young and hope to the world.

In other words it is a matter of not considering finished, at community level, the work of reflection undertaken by the Provincial Chapters, but to continue in the directions indicated the process they began.

The Precapitular Document says in fact: "From a reading of the situations reported by Provincial Chapters, some problems and questions emerge which refer back to salesian history for a comparison and subsequent outlining of a practical framework for the future. Some areas are particularly relevant for this kind of reflection:

- the historical experience of Don Bosco read in the perspective of his relationship with the laity;
- the vast movement of persons involved in the salesian mission, guided by the animating nucleus living at Valdocco;
- Christian spirituality in the salesian interpretation of the secular condition".¹¹

¹¹ Precap.doc. n. 183

5. The community, the subject giving effect to the General Chapter

It had already become clear in the GC23 that any practical guidelines were based on a necessary premise: the quality of the salesian community. It is a point that follows from the very nature of our vocation.

Activity which is only individual does not attain the fullness, witnessing capacity and power of

transmission proper to the salesian mission. On the other hand, to set up plans for the Congregation or its charism without taking into account the state of the communities, would not go further than generous ideals.

The very insistence over the last twenty years on planning in general, and the Educative Project in particular, suggests an essential reference to the salesian community as the subject of formation, planning and apostolic activity.

With the contributions made by the Provinces in mind, the Precapitular Commission emphasizes the central role played by the local community in giving effect to any indications for change that may be decided on: "The salesian mission is practised, in general, by the daily communal realization of a project by an educative and pastoral community. And so the subject responsible for the project is an ensemble of organized presences in an educative community in which the SDBs constitute the animating nucleus of other pastoral and educative forces, with the groups of the Salesian Family which fully share Don Bosco's charism".¹²

¹² Precap.doc. n. 1

It is not enough to single out the *lay sector* as a sensitive area for the salesian mission, nor the successful outcome of the GC24, nor the stimulating force of a well drawn up and balanced final document to bring about, together with the laity, the leap forward to which we have referred. This will depend rather on the renewed missionary motivation of our communities, on their energy and enthusiasm in giving expression to salesian spirituality, and on their capacity for communication and sharing.

The bringing in of lay people, the sharing of responsibility with them, their animation and forma-

tion will require the provincial and local communities to mobilize themselves and their resources so as to ensure the necessary conditions for the application of whatever the GC24 may be able to decide.

For this reason it will be necessary to verify at once the life of the local communities and their effective union with the provincial community; to encourage the practice of discernment which will lead them to decide to concentrate their resources on the more important and promising aspects; to see what level of animation and shared responsibility they display. The emergency as regards formation, notes the precapitular document, “applies transversely to what is said in connection with protagonists of the mission, environments, initiatives and structures of coordination. Everywhere there emerges an insistent demand for formation together, in which SDBs and lay people are simultaneously givers and receivers of formation”.¹³

This tallies with what is said in *Christifideles Laici*, at the end of a paragraph dedicated to “The reciprocal formation received and given by all”: “Forming those who, in turn, will be given the responsibility for the formation of the lay faithful, constitutes a basic requirement for assuring the general and widespread formation of all the faithful”.¹⁴

It is no exaggeration to say that every Salesian through the ministry entrusted to him – and which extends from the school to catechesis, to the celebration of the sacraments, to assistance and to counselling – is by vocation a formator of formators. And so each one must cultivate “the conviction, first of all, that one cannot offer a true and effective formation to others if one has not personally taken on or developed a personal responsibility for

¹³ Precap.doc. n. 220

¹⁴ CL 63

formation, and this is essentially a formation of self".¹⁵ The positive habit of self-formation leads to a taste for the continued growth of oneself and others, and becomes a characteristic manner for responding to the impulse of the Spirit who uses every means to mould us to Christ's image.

¹⁵ Ibid.

This relationship between community quality and the possibility of animation is almost taking on the character of a law. This has recently been corroborated by the document "Fraternal life in community" and by the Synod on Consecrated Life. In the former we read: "In order to achieve fruitful relationships, based on bonds of mature co-responsibility (...) it is necessary to have religious communities with a clear charismatic identity, assimilated and lived, capable of transmitting them to others and disposed to share them; religious communities with an intense spirituality and missionary enthusiasm for communicating the same spirit and the same evangelizing thrust; religious communities who know how to animate and encourage lay people to share the charism of their institute, according to their secular character and according to their different style of life".¹⁶

¹⁶ *Fraternal life in community*, n. 70

6. Two levels of reflection and community commitment

Reflection on the indispensable role of the salesian community leads us to draw some practical conclusions at two levels.

In the first place at the level of animation and government of the Province, where decisions are made about the number of communities, where the

Pastoral and Educative Plan is approved and verified, where the quantitative and qualitative consistency is laid down in strict relationship with the mission entrusted to each of them.

It is the responsibility of the Provincial with his Council to ensure that each community be sufficiently strong to guarantee its common life, the efficacy of the mission, the possibility of providing diversified formative processes, and the ability to foster vocations.

And then at the level of the local community the awareness must be cultivated that "living and working together"¹⁷ is our particular way of "being church", enabling us to live by the Spirit of communion, which prompts us to work as members of the body and branches of the vine. And it is also the only possible way for expressing the rich qualities of the salesian charism and the preventive system.

The family spirit, so dear to Don Bosco and salesian tradition, has at its foundation the experience of a community which feels itself to be God's family, because "it is a reflection of the mystery of the Trinity".¹⁸ It is a human family because acceptance and mature affection pervades its relationships and atmosphere. We cannot therefore live and act as individual steersmen. We must behave like apostles who know that communion is their first witness and mission.

We need to examine to what extent the spirit of the 'world' with its subjectivism of thought and selfish approach to life may have eroded our personal style and conscience. We need therefore to renew our commitment so that the salesian community may become a house where the confreres are happy to live together, feel themselves subjects of a mission, and support those who need to see

¹⁷ C 49

¹⁸ *ibid.*

that the Spirit of God, in creating communion, is stronger than flesh and blood: the families, parish communities and groups, and the people who live around us.

Conclusion

Let us approach the GC24 in deep communion with the whole Church. We hear this thought in the words of John Paul II: "A great hope animates the Church on this eve of the third millennium of the Christian era. She is preparing to enter it with a strong commitment to the renewal of all her forces, among which is the Christian laity". The Holy Father is convinced, and his certainty derives from the pilgrimages he has made to all parts of the world, that "one can speak of a new lay life, rich with immense human power, which plays an ever more active part in the missionary effort of the Church".¹⁹ In this way a progressive maturing is taking place in one of the results of Vatican II, which pointed out that in the laity is manifested in all its splendour the countenance of the people of God.²⁰

¹⁹ John Paul II, *Address of*
21.9.95

²⁰ cf. LG 32

The GC24 has its place on the highroad opened up by the Council, which runs between a continual return to the sources²¹ for charismatic fidelity and the "reading of the signs of the times",²² by means of which the Spirit guides his Church and recalls consecrated life to continual renewal.

²¹ cf. PC 2

²² GS 4

At the end of the third General Chapter, which took place at Valsalice in 1883, Don Bosco said to his Salesians: "When you go back to your houses you will greet the confreres and all the youngsters.

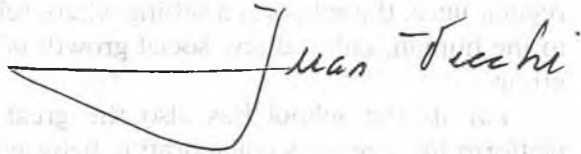
¹³ MB 16, 418

Take with you the thought that the Congregation's glory goes with you: everything is in your hands. God's help will not be wanting"²³

And that goes for us too. "Everything is in your hands". Salesians and laity together we are preparing the GC24, together we shall celebrate it, together we shall take responsibility – each according to his possibilities and the ministry entrusted to him – for giving life to its directives for the salvation of the young.

Affectionately in Don Bosco,

Fr Juan E. Vecchi
Vicar General


 A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Juan Vecchi". The signature is written in a cursive style, with a large, sweeping initial 'J' that extends downwards and to the left, crossing under the rest of the name.

2. GUIDELINES AND POLICIES

2.1 SALESIAN SCHOLASTIC WORK¹

Fr Luc VAN LOOY

Councillor for Youth Pastoral Work

Introduction

The school is still the place where the Salesian finds himself most in contact with the young, the environment in our mission where he spends most time with youngsters and where his relationship with them is most constant. When organized on regular lines, the school is a setting where relationships are directed to the human, cultural and social growth of the individual and the group.

For us the school has also the great merit of providing a platform for a zealous collaboration between SDBs and lay people, all dedicated to the same mission.

In recent years we have organized at Congregational level some *discussion conferences on the theme of the salesian school*: in India in 1993; in Latin America in 1994; in Poland in 1994; and for European schools in general in 1995. There was also a meeting with Universities and University Colleges run by the Congregation (Brazil, 1995).

On the basis of indications emerging from these meetings I now offer some reflections on the salesian school.

In the first place there is the clear conviction that the school is a very valid setting for the realization of Don Bosco's mission at the present day. Every youngster has the right to a good education, and frequently families are not able to provide this in an integral and

¹ In the present article it hardly seems necessary to make a distinction between schools and professional training centres. For this reason I have used the title 'scholastic works' rather than 'schools'.

complete form; hence human and cultural development come through the teaching imparted in a school. The latter therefore, in collaboration with the family, is a principal setting for education.

Observing the Congregation's schools at the present day in their different geographical contexts, we see that in western countries in general the Catholic school is forthrightly asserting its indispensable role alongside state schools and in comparison with them; in Asia the salesian schools enjoy a widespread reputation for good education; in Latin America our schools exert a powerful influence on mentality and culture. In recent years the former communist countries are discovering the validity of the school. It must also be added that in many countries of every continent governments are instigating studies or practical experiments for the renewal or restructuring of scholastic teaching, and these certainly have an influence on our own schools.

We believe therefore in the school and we assert once again, if such a declaration be necessary, *its importance in the ensemble of the salesian mission.*

In addition to this fundamental point, the following list provides a summary of other important elements emerging from the meetings:

- The school creates the awareness of the salesian ethos in lay collaborators.
- The Salesians have learned or are learning to collaborate with the laity.
- The importance is endorsed of giving priority to work for the poor and needy.
- Centres for professional training are always considered part of our specific charism.
- Schools exert a great influence on the local neighbourhood.
- The need is felt for linkage between schools of the same Province and beyond it.
- In recent years much attention has been given to the education of young people to the faith and to a rereading of the preventive system.

1. The school as a platform for various educative activities

The salesian school functions with an *oratorian criterion*, without this diminishing in any way its stringent character of study and exploration. A school is not only a place for passing on information but one where youngsters are prepared for life. Hence the presence must be ensured of other educational activities, complementary to teaching. And this means that those responsible for the direction and organization of the school must see to it that the scholastic timetable allows for such activities. I emphasize the two complementary aspects.

1.1 *The school must be a true school, of cultural and scientific quality*

The spread of matters taught gives the pupil the possibility of knowing, considering and evaluating natural, cultural and historical realities etc. with objective criteria. It gives him at the same time the ability to read contexts and his own experiences with a critical sense. It is important to insist on an integral teaching without too much overemphasis on particular sectors. There is the danger that simple knowledge of facts be imparted without reference to behaviour and criteria for action. For instance, physics cannot be taught without reference to ecology, biology without reference to ethics, etc. Today's youngsters have a great need to see the connection between the various subjects and sectors of life.

1.2 *The school as a setting for complementary activities*

As we know, Don Bosco was well aware of the educative value of games, music, theatrical productions, etc. The teaching programmes laid down must be accompanied by complementary expressions corresponding to the requirements of the young; scholastic obligations and commitment to study require also moments of free time within the school's environment for

relaxation and games; the pressure for getting good scholastic results must be compensated by the joy of expressing personal talents in other fields, etc.

It is noted that in our schools *service to the neighbourhood* is also developed, i.e. the awareness grows that the school has a role to play in the cultural development of the locality in which it functions, as a service to local social and political life. Thinking back over the study carried out by this Department on educative and pastoral projects, I recall that it was found that in general the social and political incidence of our works was rather weak; now it has been found that our schools have improved in social and political sensitivity.

One expression of the increased social sensitivity is the volunteer movement among the young. Teachers and pupils of many schools have made their contribution to service programmes, at home or on the missions abroad. Project Africa, which entrusted to the various Provinces the foundation and care of missionary projects, has opened up many possibilities in this form of service; and in fact there are numerous examples of teachers and pupils who have spent holiday periods in the new missions in Africa, to set up new workshops for instance.

Young people feel a great desire to overcome territorial boundaries and link up with other youngsters. Schools try to establish these linkages, especially with similar institutes in other countries. The big youth congresses of recent years have fostered such a movement. In Europe in particular the exchange of pupils and teachers is facilitated by organisms of the European Union.

2. The school as a common workplace for Salesians and Laity in the same mission

We know that the great majority of the teachers in our schools are lay persons, and the number of schools with a lay director or headmaster is on the increase. This creates a new situation in which the Salesian must collaborate with the laity. Our experiences in this

connection are positive so far. There is a good integration between the two, and no one would want any longer to run a school with Salesians alone, even if they were available.

Great importance attaches to the proper functioning of the *educative community*, which gives life to the reciprocal relationship between laity and religious, with educational activity based on a common programme drawn up together. The school is perhaps the sector in which there is the clearest testimony to the communal nature of our mission. Salesians, lay teachers and educators, parents, pupils, administrative and service personnel, all converge in a single shared structure.

The school becomes also a *place of formation and of cultural and relational growth for the teachers*, where they learn to love the youngsters with a genuine educative love. A typically salesian characteristic of the educative community is that it resembles a family which finds its cohesive force in the same educative mission and in love for the young. This cohesion is not based solely on being involved in the same structure or activity, but is born of the same fundamental motivation and aims at the same objective. In this way the educative community finds in the preventive system not only a concrete and practical pedagogy, but also a source of spirituality.

It must also be recognized that the particular nature of the lay person and the salesian religious makes it possible to bring about the linkage of the school with the neighbourhood. The lay person who passes each day from society to the school brings with him the specific sensitivities of his own family and social context; and returning home he bears the sensitivities acquired by contact with religious dedicated to education.

Linkage with the locality takes on a special form in the case of professional and technical schools. Preparation for manual work and hence connection with the working world is one of its specific dimensions. The young find in our training centres professional information and guidance, together with a trade qualification. There are countries where business enterprises draw up their training programmes together with the school and guarantee subsequent employment for our pupils. But it must be said that in

general the vast majority of our schools find no difficulty in finding employment for their past-pupils.

3. The school as the environment for the life of the young person

“To be young means to go to school”, said Professor Martin Lechner at the recent congress in Rome. It is a fact that the young spend a lot of time at school, and in general if you want information about a youngster you ask immediately what school he goes to and in which class he is. Now if he passes so much time at school, the latter needs to create the environment that will enable him to live an appropriate life. The salesian school aims at creating an *environment in which the youngster feels at home*, where typical youthful activities are not only permitted but encouraged.

In many cases there are forms of youthful protagonism in the running of the school itself. There are several schools and training centres where the pupils are effectively represented in the pastoral coordinating group; other institutes manage the scholastic life through groups or councils. Fundamental to the salesian school is the existence of groups which express the desires and abilities of the youngsters themselves. Musical, sporting, theatrical groups, etc. must all be able to find elbow-room in our environments. A classroom does not close down with the last period of class, but reopens for many other activities. When I spoke earlier of the integration and complementary nature of educative activities, I had in mind precisely this kind of scholastic organization.

An important initiative, still comparatively new in some countries but well consolidated in others, is the “*school for animators*”, which prepares young leaders for the various post-curricular activities. The Provinces which have developed this form of training young leaders have not only made possible the animation of youngsters in the school itself, but at the same time have provided the possibility of animation of the locality during holiday periods, thus opening up new horizons for both pupils and school.

4. The school as a setting for ongoing formation

From what has been already said it is clear that those who benefit by the work of the school are not only the young pupils. Among the beneficiaries is also the charismatic mission of the Congregation. The presence in the school of many qualified persons permits in fact a proficient rereading of the preventive system. The educative community has at its disposal the means necessary for verifying whether and in what way Don Bosco's system of pedagogy can be realized in our own time for today's youth in different cultures. This is an obligation of both value and weight, and very important for the development of our mission.

Another beneficiary is *the teacher and educator*. When a salesian school takes on a lay teacher, it commits itself to his human, professional, Christian and salesian formation. For this a sound and serious introduction to the salesian educative method from the moment he begins work is indispensable; and the school will concern itself with the ongoing formation of teachers and educators, especially in the field of education to the values and application of the preventive system.

The *parents* form a third important beneficiary. In many countries the practice has become well established of organizing courses for the parents of pupils. The purpose is not only to raise their cultural level, but more especially to enable them to better understand the educational process of their children, to bring them into the school's environment, to help them to get to know the school's personnel, and in general to make them feel at home in the environment of the pupils. In some schools too, especially training centres for the professions, attention is given to the ongoing formation of the past-pupils, through evening courses for updating purposes, revision courses, etc. with the commitment of both teachers and the past-pupils themselves; in other words attentive follow-up is offered to youngsters who need further study or specialization.

Finally the school offers ongoing formation to the *Salesians themselves*, and this from the time the latter are clerics or brothers

in their practical training period, when they are often prevented from teaching because they lack the necessary qualifications. As we have already said, the school is not just a collection of classrooms for the imparting of academic and scientific knowledge but an environment for the life of the youngsters. And so if the focal point of the school is the youngster rather than the material taught, the young Salesian will find space there for his educational commitment. But at this point one is bound to make an appeal for the cultural and scientific qualification of young Salesians. The nature of our mission requires that the greatest possible number of religious be qualified in academic and professional disciplines. If we do not take this matter to heart, our Provinces will lose both quality of culture and impact on the local area. It is sufficient to recall the Congregation's history from the time of Don Bosco to the present day to be convinced of the importance we must give to the intellectual quality of our confreres.

5. The school as an expression of Church

We have spoken of the service of the school to the local neighbourhood. We must also speak of its connection with the Church, and specifically with the local Church. The salesian school, in fact, like every Catholic school, has a role to play in the local Church, since it participates in the Church's name in the local culture.

Moreover we have to recognize the fact that many of our youngsters and their families come into contact with the Church solely through the school. From this fact which is a new one, particularly in the West, other possibilities derive, and they are urgent: the Catholic school takes on a pastoral role with respect to the families of the pupils. It is true that pastoral contact with the families is the business of the parish, but it is also true that pastoral work operates through persons rather than structures. It seems to me that if our schools want to carry out a complete and integrated

work, they must study how to create the conditions in terms of programming and personnel for making contact with the families of pupils and past-pupils even from a pastoral point of view.

The salesian school finds its place *within our evangelizing mission*: in educating we put forward the model of the perfect man, who is Christ. In different contexts we express more or less explicitly our attention to the Gospel, but this can never be absent from the general set-up of scholastic work. In whatever cultural or religious context, it is our duty to present the Christian vision though without "proselytizing". We educate "in the name of Jesus", not only through specific activities but also by the general tone and Christian interpretation we give to scholastic disciplines. Behind our teaching there are always present the ethical and religious criteria which are our distinguishing mark.

It is true that the presence of pupils of many different religions in our schools creates more and more difficulties in celebrating in a religious manner feasts which are typically ours. It is a delicate problem of the present day. But our youngsters have a right to a clear identity for their school and we must not be too timid in presenting it. Much depends on the ability to develop a respectful atmosphere and to introduce the youngsters to the mystery. If we respect the religious freedom of the pupils, they themselves will be ready to respect our own religious expressions in the functions organized by the school.

The importance of the school's role in culture and in inculturation of the faith is not difficult to understand, and it has furthermore an impact in the life of the local Church. It is important therefore that our schools collaborate with the latter and keep in mind both diocesan and parochial programmes. In effect it turns out that our schools and the sections of the provincial administration concerned with schools offer their services to the local Church to an ever greater extent, and that the Church recognizes our educative ability.

6. Salesian Universities

The lengthening of the period of education for young people has prompted us to give greater attention to the university sector. This is a new and significant pastoral area which a number of Provinces have entered as a response to the needs of young people, of society, and of the Church. We have entered it as an integral part of the salesian mission, and it has therefore acquired a rightful place in salesian work. The meeting in Brazil in August 1995 of those responsible for salesian Universities and University Colleges expressed very strongly the need for us to dedicate ourselves to this category of young people, so as to influence their cultural and professional formation and to form leaders for tomorrow's society. It is a fertile field for pastoral work for vocations. In the Universities too one can work more effectively from a social and political standpoint, and we are only too well aware of the need there is for well prepared persons at such a level.

Work in so demanding a field obviously requires a specific preparation, not only from an academic aspect but also from a pastoral point of view, to accompany both professors and students. The cultural, social and political complexity of the present day, in fact, has need of scientific quality if we want those for whom we are working to be in their turn competent educators and evangelizers in their own context. Catholic Universities have an important task to perform in the Church, that of the accurate assessment of reality and of guidance of humanity's way of thinking. In the salesian environment much is expected from the Universities for a rereading of the preventive system in a manner adapted to the present day.

At the meeting in Brazil was founded the *Salesian University Association (ASU)*, to create a permanent network of communication and linkage between them, and to draw up common guidelines for salesian work in the university field.

7. Prophetic nature of the salesian school

The salesian educative process in the emerging cultures must be able to bear witness to the prophetic nature of Don Bosco's calling. We know to how great an extent the scholastic world in every continent is dominated by economic and political interests, and how schools are frequently compelled to conform to dispositions not in harmony with their specific educational character. It was precisely as a *prophetic response* to the needs of the young provoked by the social and industrial situation that Don Bosco created the preventive system, and it is no less relevant at the present day.

In the various meetings about schools, various elements have appeared for ensuring that salesian work be truly "prophetic" in this field at the present day. The main ones are:

- Put the young person at the centre of affairs and leave space for youthful protagonism in the school.
- Invite and form lay people to share responsibility with the Salesians in the same mission.
- Integrate the school with life, linking it with post-curricular activity.
- Rescue it from economic and commercial domination, and from exclusive interest in the labour market.

Finally, to further highlight the prophetic task of the school, it is interesting to read a paragraph from the message which John Paul II sent to the European Congress (Rome, 2 December 1995): "The 'Saint of youth' was well aware that the school is an environment in which youngsters meet friends and create vital relationships with adults. And so the rapport which becomes established between young people and their educators is of great importance. For Don Bosco this was an essential element in education. 'Education is a thing of the heart', he used to say, and he wanted his collaborators to be present among the youngsters: a presence not limited to the classroom but extended to every

moment of life through contact and collaboration with parents, in the knowledge that the teacher is called upon to be a model for his pupils".

2.2 THE DON BOSCO SECULAR INSTITUTE

A vocational proposal

Fr Antonio MARTINELLI

Councillor for the Salesian Family and Social Communication

A HISTORICAL OUTLINE

I begin from the first steps, to present a series of facts which may be of importance and significance in the future. They set out the process of development of a vocation which enriches the salesian charism with a new channel of grace.

It is a matter of a *gift* which the Congregation has found in its hands without particular toil. A gift of *young people* who, through a deeper study of Don Bosco's spirit, have believed it possible to live and work as consecrated salesians in the world.

The fundamental meetings

§ 18 July 1992

During the ongoing formation course for Provincial Delegates for the Salesian Family, three confreres (Fr Joseph Godoy, Fr Rinaldo Vallino, and Fr Francis Zammit) had a meeting with the Councillor for the Salesian Family and Social Communication, for a first reflection on an experience they were living with some young men in salesian settings.

On 20 July 1992 a letter or memorandum was sent to the above-mentioned confreres and to Frs Bruno Masiero and Cristóbal López (who were also interested in the matter), with indications which had emerged during the meeting: something like a *decatalogue*

to guide reactions to young men who showed a desire to live in the world as consecrated salesians.

From these two events took its origin the process of the reality which I now present.

§ 15-19 December 1993

Contact continued between the five confreres and the Department in view of a possible organization going beyond local experiences, and eventually the idea was suggested to call together at the Generalate in Rome the young people already positively inclined and the confreres following them up.

In the meantime a member of the Don Bosco Volunteers had begun a similar work in Italy with a number of young people, forming a group with an analogous interest.

The letter convoking the meeting went out from the Department on 10 August 1993 with indications of the purpose of the encounter:

- a retreat for *vocational discernment*,
- a *meeting of the Rector Major* with the Salesians involved and the young men who had been called together.

Also arranged was a pilgrimage to Turin to get to know the places of the first manifestations of salesian sanctity, and a meeting with a group of Don Bosco Volunteers for a fraternal exchange of information and experiences.

During the time spent in Rome, the most intense moment of spirituality was the recounting by the young men of the story of their lives. The Rector Major in the first place, and all the others with him, recognized the *finger of God* in what had happened. The four experiences, lived in four different parts of the earth, each of them in ignorance of what was going on among the others, led to the same conclusion.

Fortunately the young people themselves, before leaving Rome, wrote a resume of their history. I quote it in full:

1. *How we came to make this option*

In recalling the path that has been followed, these elements have been high spots in our lived experiences:

1.1 Direct commitment in a specific task within a lived apostolic activity.

1.2 Four factors which have matured the process of reaching a vocational option:

- the presence of *youngsters*, generally in need and in particular difficulties;
- the presence of *Don Bosco*, perceived at a particular moment as something very significant;
- the constant encouragement of certain educators and *spiritual guides* in the process of discernment;
- the presence of *others* who were living through the same experience.

1.3 Some pressing demands in our own lives:

- * the group commitment called for a deeper study of certain questions:
 - why are we doing all this?
 - for whom are we doing it?
 - how can we organize our own lives?
 - what plan of life do we foresee for the purpose?
 - how can we express our complete and radical self-donation to God who is calling us through the obligations of daily life?
- * the difficult process (difficult for practical reasons of family, work, continuity of commitment, vocational response, etc.) has required:
 - extra faith,
 - deeper prayer,
 - group support.

2. *How do we communicate this experience?*

2.1 Some preliminary points need clarification:

- it is not a matter of an *escape route*, because of the difficulties met with in the realization of other vocational paths;
- nor is it a matter of a *sudden discovery*, but one that has matured in time and in the serious search of what to do in life.

2.2 The possible way of *communication* must give due attention to the following points:

- *living* a concrete experience of work, of apostolic activity, and of salesian mission for the benefit of those particularly in need: youth and the working classes;
- *comparing* what we are doing and how we are living our daily lives, with what we want to be doing and the way we want to live them;
- *moving forward* not alone but in company with others who are sincerely seeking the path in life God has marked out for them.

2.3 The necessary supports in the search:

- *prayer*: God's help is indispensable;
- *patience*: it is a slow process and needs time for realization.

§ 12-18 September 1994

The interval between the first and second meeting was lived with great seriousness by the groups of young men concerned.

They were asked in fact to prepare for the meeting having in mind the formulation of a rule of life, the text of a rule, and a first draft of possible Constitutions. The letter of 5 April 1994, sent to those responsible for the groups, for their young members, asked:

“Please read carefully the Constitutions of the Don Bosco Volunteers and those of the Salesians. (...) Do not be afraid to borrow parts of their material. Put together a text and let me have

it (Councillor for the Salesian Family and Social Communication) by the end of June. I will work on it in July and August so as to have a combined text ready for the meeting". Practical indications followed concerning the preparation of the text to be submitted to the meeting.

In agreement with the Rector Major a note was added: "I would like to know, if any have made *private vows*, and if so how many and who they are, and how many would be ready to make them at the end of the meeting".

To express all that went on at the September meeting is impossible – there was too much of it: the reflections made, a further study of the texts drawn up by the groups, the seeking of harmony between various requirements to reach an agreed text, the meetings with the Rector Major, the day seven participants made their profession, are all items which remain indelible in the memory of those who lived through the experience.

The fundamental objective, the formulation of a reference text for the life of the groups already active and for the setting up of other new ones, occupied the greater part of the time of the meeting.

In the first place, a lot of work was done on the texts that had been sent in, together with that prepared by the Department in an effort to group the items under the main chapter headings:

- identity of the Institute,
- secularity, consecration and salesianity,
- formation, membership and fidelity,
- authority in the Institute at the present day.

The result was enthusiastic work full of bright future prospects.

In addition points were made specifically connected with the importance of a constitutional text in the life of the members of a group, an association, or an Institute. Contributions were made by Fr Juan Vecchi, Fr Corrado Bettiga and a member of the Institute of the Don Bosco Volunteers, to present the spiritual, institutional and experiential value of the constitutions.

Then the circumstance of the imminent Synod of Bishops on the Consecrated Life was recalled in an intervention of Fr Pasquale

Liberatore, who had examined the text of the Synod's 'Instrumentum laboris' with special attention to the vocation to consecrated secularity.

Finally, the unforgettable meeting with the Rector Major, his comments on the progress made, and the circumstance of the first profession of the members, gave a dimension of innovation to the event. Taking part in the ceremony were the confreres of the Generalate community, a sizable group of Don Bosco Volunteers with their Superior General, and representatives of the Cooperators and Past-pupils: a happy event for the Salesian Family.

In one of the interventions of Fr Viganò a name for the new group emerged. The Rector Major said: "Your feelings should be those of Cagliero and his companions on the day Don Bosco invited them to make their profession. They thought to themselves: 'Don Bosco wants to make us monks'. And this was something opposed to the cultural feeling of the time, especially in Turin. But then Cagliero declared: 'Monk or not, I'm going to *stay with Don Bosco*'. To *stay with Don Bosco* was not a juridical expression, nor a phrase of a religious kind, but rather the expression of young people enthusiastic about the spirit and mission of Don Bosco, and who proclaimed: 'we are staying with him'."

DEVELOPMENTS AT THE PRESENT DAY

The life of the incipient Institute has been like the *growth of the pine tree* planted by 'Volunteers with Don Bosco' in the garden of the Pisana behind Don Bosco's monument: it needs time and attention if it is to grow.

Attention on the part of the Department covers *two sectors*, of which the more important is that of providing a *series of aids* to help the young members in their formation and salesian pilgrimage. In this connection the following have been prepared:

* October 1994, *aid n. 1*:

- a document for the salesian Provincials
- an aid for those interested in becoming 'Volunteers with Don Bosco' (CDB);

* January 1995, *aid n. 2*:

Constitutions of the 'Volunteers with Don Bosco' (CDB), the salesian male secular institute – first draft.

* March 1995, *aid n. 3*:

- letter of the Central Assistant of the CDB Volunteers
- an intervention of Fr Aubry
- practical indications for following the path undertaken.

* October 1995, *aid n. 4*:

- letter of the Central Assistant
- contributions and points for the prayer of the consecrated salesian secular.

I have listed the aids which have been prepared and sent out, because the documentation was sent to all Provincials. Some of them were prepared in Italian only, some in Italian and Spanish, others again in Italian, Spanish and English, as for example aid n. 2.¹

I hope these aids will not pass unnoticed, since they represent a help to the young men who are trying out a new form of bringing Don Bosco to life in the world, and also to the Salesians who in this context too are the most authoritative and authorized group of the Salesian Family to support and animate the development of this new vocation.

It is from this perspective that the present communication takes its rise.

I will return to the question to offer some lines of reflection and concrete intervention in the Provinces. I suggest first of all that the above-mentioned documents be given a prominent place on the desks of Provincials and in the working agenda of Councils. As SDBs we too have much to learn with regard to the secular reality if we want to help our young people to grow in their vocation as

¹ (Translator's note: The constitutions were translated into English under the title DON BOSCO SECULAR INSTITUTE, with 'Volunteers with Don Bosco' as a subheading; this to avoid confusion with the 'Volunteers of Don Bosco').

consecrated persons in the world. There is scope here for new possibilities of animation and interest for all workers in the fields of education and pastoral work.

I think that when reference is made to development at the present day, attention, interest and curiosity are usually of a quantitative kind: what kind of consistency attaches to these groups of volunteers, we want to know.

1. *Geographic expansion*

As far as is known to the Department at present, the 'Volunteers with Don Bosco' live in group form in the following countries:

* *In Italy:* the group is not numerous, but the members are clear enough about the significance of their option as consecrated seculars. They live their formative process with regularity. They know how to be good propagators of their vocation, with the result that curious young men have already approached the Volunteers in their search for their own place in ecclesial and civil life. The prospects are promising, even from a quantitative standpoint.

* *On the island of Malta:* the group is fairly numerous and in continual growth.

While in other parts of the world the Don Bosco Volunteers are promoting the Volunteers with Don Bosco, in Malta the opposite has been the case: the CDB came first and then the DBV. Their lively presence in salesian works and those of the local Church attracts a good deal of attention, interest and imitation. There is well founded hope for the future.

* *In Paraguay:* the group has been in existence for some time but has not grown numerically in any marked way. The present members are very convinced about their option and happy about it. They are able to preserve relationships with their friends of other countries, and willingly take part in meetings on their own territory and elsewhere. At present there is little quantitative expansion.

* *In El Salvador:* this is the last group of whose existence the Department has become aware, through a communication which

came directly from the members themselves. It has come into existence as a consistent group.

* *In Venezuela:* there is a fairly stable group with several centres. It has been in existence now for several years and could claim to be considered the first, or at least the second group to appear in salesian life. It enjoys a very rich animation and has the possibility of significant encounters from the standpoint of salesian spirituality. Some of its members play important roles in ecclesial and social life. The foundations are good and provide possibilities of growth.

2. *The life of the groups*

Here I would like to reproduce two articles from the draft Constitutions, because while expressing the identity of the Institute they present also the foundation of its life and the commitment to bring about its growth in harmony with certain points of reference.

Article 4. *The Institute in the Church.*

In the Church the Institute is a Male Secular Institute, according to the norms of the Code of Canon Law.

It is made up of consecrated laymen with different professional qualifications.

The Institute neither possesses nor manages its own works; it possesses only the goods necessary for its organization in the light of the laws of the Church and the different nations.

Love of the Church and fidelity to the Pope require the convinced acceptance of the Magisterium, competent collaboration in pastoral activities, dynamic communion with all the members of the People of God and the fostering of a social life inspired by the Gospel.

A prudent and responsible reserve about our condition and the other members of the Institute contributes to the efficacy of our presence and activity in the world.

Article 5. *The Institute in the Salesian Family.*

We perceive ourselves as bearers of the charism of Don Bosco and members of the Salesian Family. Our condition as consecrated salesian laymen is inspired and guided by its spirit, its apostolic project and its pastoral style.

We recognize the Rector Major, the Successor of Don Bosco, as the centre of unity and the common father, responsible for unity of spirit and of fidelity in the common mission.

We live in communion with the various Groups of the Salesian Family, and in a particular relationship with the lay groups, especially the Don Bosco Volunteers.

The Salesian Congregation, because of its spiritual patrimony and the apostolic riches which it preserves and fosters, is for us, in respect of reciprocal characteristics and autonomy, a living source of authenticity and a stimulus in fidelity to the charism.

We look upon the Don Bosco Volunteers, with whom we share the specific nature of salesian consecrated secularity, as our 'elder sisters'.

These two articles provide a concise statement of the commitments, I repeat, not only for the members of the Institute but also for us SDBs who must accompany them in the fulfilment of their vocation.

The essential references to the Church and the Congregation, to the Groups of the Salesian Family and to the DBV in particular, to the spirit of Don Bosco and the mission to the young and the poor, to professional qualification and generous solidarity with those in need, are already indications of points for formation and for the organization of daily life.

It is up to us SDBs to render operative and dynamic all this in the story of the consecrated young members.

3. *A seed which is growing*

So far I have referred to organized groups in the five countries in which members of the Institute are living. But there are also

members in other countries, even though they are *not yet constituted in groups*, either because they are just beginning the experience or because they are isolated.

Once again on the basis of information reaching the Department, I can tell you that there are other young men interested in the same vocation living in:

- Argentina, in at least two areas,
- Italy, in the north, centre and south,
- Peru,
- Mexico,
- Slovakia.

In each case the youths concerned have completed a first year of preparation and have begun the second.

It has been found by experience that it is very important to maintain contact with individuals, to communicate to them the joy of being part of the Salesian Family and the determination to press ahead with a building process for themselves and others.

All of this *represents the second sector* to which we intend to give special attention. The relationship established with the young persons and with the Salesians working in this new field will be continued and made deeper.

GUIDELINES FOR THE PROVINCES

It may be useful to draw some practical conclusions to enable us to make a contribution as Salesians to the development of this new vocation. I address myself explicitly to the Provincial and Provincial Council as those responsible for the organization and animation of the life of the Province.

1. The *aids* prepared by the Department should be known to the Provincial and Councillors, so that they may have opportune and accurate information in a field where news is not always either precise or adequate.

They must also help the communities to overcome a fear that promoting the CDB Volunteers may militate against the

development of SDB vocations.

The knowledge of this new reality, already gained or still to be acquired, could well be the subject of a discussion in the Provincial Council.

2. The Provincial should also get the Delegate for Youth Pastoral Work interested in the theme of the Volunteers.

It is quite probable that among the young people with whom the salesian community is in regular contact, in oratories, parishes and the many kinds of salesian activity, there are some disposed to live a radically evangelical vocation while remaining in the world.

The first step is to discover them, and to follow them up is a primary requirement for an educator. Obedience to the Holy Spirit applies not only to the young person but equally to the adult placed by the Spirit alongside him to help him.

3. The Delegate for Youth Pastoral Work, in agreement with the one in charge of vocational promotion and his team, should include among the possible vocational options open to young people also this one of the Secular Institute. This means that they too must have the necessary information about the new Group, born of the young people themselves.

Vocation camps, projects for vocational animation, vocational meetings at provincial level (realities which go by different names in different provinces) should also include this new vocation.

4. Rectors with their confreres, salesian animators and lay members of the educative communities should have an indication of common and shared criteria before the possibility of the new vocation is launched.

For the process of *vocational discernment* the Department presents the following positive indications which should then be developed in the provinces and communities.

We should address ourselves to:

— youngsters who are already committed to some salesian apostolate in which they already have some experience: catechesis, assistance and work in camps, animation of youth groups, leadership in an oratory, etc.;

- youngsters who are serious and *well balanced*, who have a natural ascendancy over their companions, young animators and potential leaders among their friends;
- youngsters of manifest *spiritual life*, desirous of doing and giving something more, of serving others, of gaining a deeper understanding of the salesian spirit;
- youngsters who are *affectively mature*, capable of opening their hearts to a greater freely given gift of themselves for the service of God and their fellow men.

5. Finally we should interest in the new Institute priests who are confessors. The service they can render is great and important. Every vocation is something personal, a matter of conscience which matures under God's sun.

The mediation of the sacrament of reconciliation is indispensable for the enlightenment and strength the young person needs for making a decision. For that matter, salesian spiritual experience has always recognized the primary value attaching to the sacrament of reconciliation in vocational growth.

6. At the various levels of provincial and local responsibility, consideration should be given to the instruments to be utilized in an organic and coordinated manner:

- the personal colloquy of spiritual direction;
- days of retreat, adapted to the level of maturity of those concerned;
- participation in an annual course of spiritual exercises;
- follow-up during short periods of private commitment (under the form of promises or private vows) concerning the content of a radical and evangelical self-donation to Christ proper to consecration;
- professional work, carried out as an expression of spirituality in action in the salesian style.

7. I think it may be useful, in conclusion, to recall an organizational aspect.

Confreres who through their educative and pastoral work

come to know of young men open to the Volunteer CDB vocation, should make contact in the first place with the *provincial centre* (through the delegate for youth pastoral work and/or the one in charge of promoting vocations), and then *inform the Department* for the Salesian Family (through the Councillor for the Salesian Family and Social Communication, or the Central Assistant for the DBV and CDB, Fr Corrado Bettiga).

CONCLUSION

I think it a duty to end this communication by asking the salesian provinces for an analogous commitment to the spiritual animation of the Don Bosco Volunteers, assumed by the Congregation in art.40 of the General Regulations.

The contacts I have had with the latter Institute lead me to appeal for a greater effort from our provincial communities, so that the service we render them may respond to today's needs. In today's climate of growing secularization we must increase our efforts for the formation of consecrated persons, both men and women.

4. ACTIVITIES OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL

Chronicle of the Councillors

The Vicar General

Fr Juan E. Vecchi remained at headquarters for the ordinary management of the Congregation and of the Generalate, and to complete the work following the passing of Fr Egidio Viganò: the examination and setting in order of his published and unpublished writings, the sending out of the obituary letter to the Congregation and the Salesian Family (8 September), a summary of some of his indications regarding salesian spirituality (published in AGC 354), and other tasks of a similar nature.

He was also busy with the preparation of the Report on the state of the Congregation and other aspects of the General Chapter which fall to his lot as its President.

In September he took part in Poland in the ceremony for the crowning of the statue of Mary Help of Christians at Twardogóra in the Province of Breslau.

From 13 to 15 October he was at Bologna for the World Congress of the Cooperators, at which he gave an address on: *The demands of education at the present day.*

In November (22-25) he was present at the 47th assembly of Superiors General which, among other

items of work, studied the theme: "Young people challenge religious life".

Finally he attended to the preparation of the plenary session of the General Council from December to February, which is the last of the present period.

The Councillor for Formation

The greater part of Fr Nicolussi's time in the last three months was dedicated to three points: *participation in meetings and congresses, visits* to areas where formation processes are in their initial stages or in process of organization, and *brief contacts* with the formation reality in certain Provinces.

From 12 to 14 August he was in Brazil for the first meeting of those responsible for Universities and University Colleges managed by the Congregation.

Of great importance and significance was also his participation in two meetings concerned with Coadjutor Brothers. First among them was the *third Congress of Salesian Brothers of East Asia* (Cebu, 16-21 October), at which were present

more than 80 confreres, the great majority of them perpetually professed Brothers from six Provinces (CIN, KOR, GIA, FIN, FIS, THA); unfortunately the confreres from Vietnam could not be present because they were unsuccessful in obtaining visas. The meeting had as its theme: "Towards a secular dimension of the Salesian Congregation concretely embodied in the Salesian Brother", and took place in a positive atmosphere of quality and commitment, stimulated by the contribution of two Brothers, Joseph Das of India and Peter Swain of Australia.

From 29 to 31 October, 41 Salesian Brothers and 21 confreres in initial formation or the first years of priesthood, belonging to the South Belgian Province and the two Provinces of France, met together at Lyons to reflect with great interest on the situation and vocation of the Salesian Brother at the present day. A significant contribution was made by Bro. Jean-Paul Muller, of the Cologne Province.

Among the *visits* to areas with formation processes in their early stages were:

- the visit to Moscow (21-27 August), with the blessing of the new novitiate on August 26; it has at present 14 novices. Another five novices of the Eastern Circumscription are in other novitiates;
- the visit to Madagascar (1-12 September) where the formative stage

of theology has been launched;

- the visit to Myanmar (Burma) (6-10 October), where there are 34 Salesians and 6 novices, and where amidst many restrictions and difficulties the salesian presence is striving to grow in identity and formational quality;
- the visit to Ethiopia (9-19 November) where after twenty years of work there are now 50 Salesians (25 of them natives of Ethiopia or Eritrea and 25 missionaries) and 10 novices; they belong to two Provinces, ILE and MOR, but are growing in the awareness of a single presence and are in process of integration. In Eritrea, the youngest of the African nations, the first salesian foundation is about to be made.

Mention should also be made of brief contacts with the formation situation of some other provinces: Brazil, Belo Horizonte (15-18 August); Thailand (4-6 October); North Philippines (11-13 October); and South Philippines (during the Congress of Cebu on the Salesian Brother).

The Councillor for Youth Pastoral Work

For Fr Luc Van Looy the period August-November 1995 was one of many and varied journeys and important engagements, which followed one another so rapidly that it is difficult to give a complete and con-

nected account of them.

The period began with a meeting with the parish priests of the Atlantic Region; first with those of Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay at La Plata in Argentina; then a week later with those of Brazil at Cacheira do Campo. The experience was useful and interesting, because many of the participants were anxious to tell of their experiences and compare them with those of others. Profitable clarifications were made from both juridical and salesian aspects.

Between these two meetings of five days each Fr Van Looy took part in the general assembly, held every four years, of the World Association of Catholic Teachers (UMEC), of which he is the Ecclesiastical Assistant. This meeting at world level took place at Toronto in Canada with 86 persons present from 28 countries; it studied the role of the Catholic teacher in a society in process of rapid social and educational change. It was an experience rich for making contacts and a useful event for strengthening the presence of the Church in the scholastic world.

From 12-15 August he presided with Fr Nicolussi at the first meeting of confreres responsible for Universities and University Colleges managed by the Congregation. Present were 32 persons from 19 Institutes around the world (cf. n. 2.1 in this edition of the AGC).

After the Brazil meeting Fr Van Looy went to Recife to direct a study session on Salesian Youth Spirituality with confreres and young people; he then preached a retreat for confreres and FMA in the "Colônia dos Padres" at Jaboatão.

From Recife he went to Belgium to celebrate his parents' diamond jubilee at the end of August and spend a few days rest with his family.

On 4 September he was at Rome again and three days later left for India to meet for several days with the SDB and FMA pastoral teams of the Indian Provinces at Madras on the theme of Salesian Youth Spirituality. It transpired that the situation in India is such that much work still needs to be done in this connection. The meeting made clear and practical decisions to be implemented at national, provincial and local level.

From India Fr Van Looy went on to Japan for a three-day meeting at Chofu with those responsible for pastoral work in SDB and FMA houses; themes studied were: the youth situation in Japan; salesian pastoral work for youth; and the Bible in pastoral work. It was a period rich in cultural exchanges. Subsequently he moved on to Korea where he was able to celebrate his silver jubilee of ordination with the Provincial, Fr Mark Cuvelier.

From Korea it was on to Vietnam

and a striking experience, mainly because this time he was able to meet the confreres, which had not been possible in his visit of 1986. The economic situation of the country is in rapid change and the Church is experiencing a more relaxed period. More numerous priestly ordinations are being allowed and tension with the government seems to have diminished. At present we have in Vietnam 118 confreres and 18 novices gathered in 11 communities but working in some 30 different places.

In Australia, from 22 to 30 September, Fr Van Looy preached a retreat for all the confreres and the FMA in formation; 46 young confreres and sisters, together with some young Cooperators, spent a week reflecting on a biblical reading of the preventive system. High spots of the week were the liturgical celebrations ably prepared by Fr Pawel Kowalik. The Councillor also visited Samoa, which forms part of the Australian Province, where we have a highly esteemed professional school, a training centre for catechists, and two parishes. The confreres are few, but vocations are appearing and at Alafua there were ten aspirants. The novitiate and studies take place in Australia at present, but the possibility is being studied of having the initial stage of formation in Western Samoa itself.

From Samoa Fr Van Looy went

on to San Francisco in California. After the death of Fr Martin McPake, other members of the General Council are sharing the task of following this Province, especially since his illness had prevented Fr McPake from making the Extraordinary Visitation. Fr Van Looy spent ten days in the province, meeting rectors, parish priests, heads of schools and others involved in pastoral work. He observed with pleasure the renewal taking place in the province, and the emphasis being given to the strengthening of specific areas. Some works have already been given new life, with the help of confreres, laity and the young people themselves. It was interesting to note that there were 11 aspirants and prenovices.

From 14 October to 2 November Fr Van Looy was at the Generalate in Rome. Then he spent two days at Munich to take part in the annual meeting on Salesian Youth Spirituality organized for the SDB, FMA and youngsters together. This year a verification was made of the extent to which the SYS has been given effect in recent years.

From Germany he went on to Russia, where he was pleased to find our parish in Moscow in strong process of growth. Of particular interest is the Oratory, based in premises under the church. The parish is well organized from a salesian oratorian aspect. On Sundays there

are six Masses, two each in Russian and Polish and one each in Korean and Spanish. In the new novitiate premises Fr Van Looy had a two-day working meeting with the Rectors of the Circumscription, who had gathered to meet him. They studied pastoral topics and especially the new works being developed in the former Soviet territory. He ended his stay in Russia with a visit to the salesian professional school at Gatchina near St Petersburg, which is fully inserted into the local scholastic context with excellent future prospects.

From 17 to 19 November the Councillor was at Birmingham in England, for a meeting of the executive committee of the World Association of Catholic Teachers (UMEC), and on 25 November in Belgium for the centenary of the house of Tournai. The following day found him at Ragusa in Sicily for the celebration of twenty years of existence of the "World Youth" movement, and on the 27th he was present for the conclusion of the formative session for the pastoral teams of the Italian SDB and FMA Provinces.

From 27 to 29 November he was involved in a pastoral course for the Sisters of Mary Immaculate in Rome, and from 30 November to 3 December he presided at the *European Convention of Salesian Schools* at the "Salesianum". At this

meeting, organized by the Department, 100 persons took part: 63 Salesians, 35 lay persons and 2 Daughters of Mary Help of Christians from 18 countries across Europe. The speakers were Salesians and lay people from various parts of the continent. The work concentrated on the need for integral education in schools, shared responsibility by the laity, linkage between pupils and teachers, and on collaboration between east and west. It was a time of active awareness of the educational task we have in salesian schools, and of exchange of experiences and projects.

The Councillor for the Salesian Family and Social Communication

A. SALESIAN FAMILY

– Engagements with the Past-pupils

1. PARAGUAY: Latin-American Congress, Asunción: 7-12 September 1995.

The CONGRELAT, as it is called, took place with men and women representatives of the various Unions of all the countries of Latin America, with many novelties and future prospects rich with possibilities.

* The first and principal novelty is expressed in the word *together*. The two World Confederations of the Past-pupils of Don Bosco and of the FMA managed to overcome all difficulties of shared responsibility in preparing the Congress. The results gave deserved satisfaction to the organizers, because the uniting of forces led to a multiplication of positive results.

* A second novelty or innovation was the presence of *young past-pupils of both sexes*. Their organization had become a necessity for Latin America, and it came into existence at the Congress under the name of LATINJEX. It can well be the source of new life for the Association in the countries concerned.

* A third innovation: the presence at CONGRELAT of all the SDB and FMA Provincials of the area involved. The Past-pupils are ever more aware of the need of the SDB or FMA presence for formation and animation purposes.

* A final innovation: the responsibility for the running of the entire Congress was in the hands of the Past-pupils themselves, a significant and evident sign of the maturity of the two Confederations.

2. MALTA: Meeting of the Presidency of the World Confederation: 2-7 November 1995.

The presence of all members made for a direct knowledge of the various realities around the world,

and made discussions more efficacious.

* The division of work within the Presidency facilitated a deeper examination of the points on the agenda for the meeting. The work is divided into the following sectors: the young; presence in the various salesian regions; study of problems linked with inculturation and ecumenism; representation in the Council of Europe; organization of international congresses and other events; human, religious and salesian formation of members of the Unions and Federations; financing of the Association; the general secretariat; the organization of priest past-pupils; relationship with the FMA; representation in OMAAEEC (World Organization of Past-pupils of Catholic Schools).

* A re-examination of the contribution prepared for submission to the GC24 prompted further reflection on the responsibility of lay people in its animation. The lay members of the Salesian Family must grow in their lay condition as convinced members of the Family of Don Bosco.

— *Engagements with the Cooperators*

THE CENTENARY CONGRESS AT BOLOGNA

This took place from the 13-15 October, to commemorate the first

Congress held there in 1895. The following positive elements are worthy of special notice:

- * the large number of participants: some 500 Cooperators in all, of whom half were from outside Italy. Between them they represented 60 Provinces and 30 different countries.

- * the organization: all (or nearly all) the weight of the organization was undertaken by the Cooperators themselves.

- * the financial aspect: the event was self-financing; an excellent spirit of solidarity made evident the generosity of certain local and national unions in better financial circumstances in helping Unions in greater economic need.

- * the arrangement of the Congress: alternation of times of prayer, assembly, group work, reflection, exchange of experiences, and public manifestations, in a proportion which gave satisfaction to the participants and produced good results.

- * the growth of the Cooperators; judging from the results of the Congress, the members of the Association have been given a boost in their salesian lives as committed members of the laity.

– *Other engagements with the Salesian Family*

- * 29 July – 5 August 1995: LISBON.

Retreat for the Superiors of the

FMA communities in Portugal.

- * 20 August – 26 August 1995: TURIN.

Retreat for the Don Bosco Volunteers of the North-West Italian Region.

- * 7 October 1995: TURIN.

Day of Recollection for the Salesian Family of Piedmont on the theme: Mary, star of the new evangelization.

B. SOCIAL COMMUNICATION

Fr Martinelli was present at Warsaw from 22 to 27 November 1995, for a meeting of the Polish Provincial Conference on the theme of social communication.

Those taking part were: Provincials, provincial delegates for social communication, the national delegate; and those in charge of the publishing centre at Warsaw, of youth publications, of the Salesian Bulletin, and of the polygraphic centre at Krakow.

Some of the decisions made were as follows:

1. Help the Provinces to call to the attention of Provincial Councils the theme of communication.

2. Help the Provinces to define more clearly the *figure and role of the provincial delegate* for social communication, linking him at the same time with the Provincial Council from which he receives in-

dications for his work and to which he reports results, and with the local communities which need help to show them how to work in this sector from both an educational and pastoral point of view.

3. Help the Provinces to understand that the *Salesian Bulletin* cannot be the concern of a single Province and a single person in the Province responsible. The present type of Bulletin should be revised, so that it responds:

- to the General Regulations of the Congregation;
- to the expectations of the Provinces, which are dissatisfied with the falling off in circulation, now down to 1,500 copies;
- to the spreading of Don Bosco's spirit in the new Poland.

4. Help the Provinces to start up a *programme of social communication*. To attain this objective a calendar was drawn up for the preliminary work to be done by the national and provincial delegates.

After the meeting of the Conference it was possible to examine in greater detail the present social communication reality in the Warsaw and Krakow Provinces. The themes of the Conference were taken up again and a concrete plan drawn up for their realization.

Meetings with the *communities of young confreres* (novitiate, post-novitiate and theologate) provided a

possibility of presenting prospects for social communication in the Congregation as a whole.

The Councillor for the Missions

From 20 to 27 July Fr Luciano Odorico took part in the *Fifth Missionary Congress of Latin America* (COMLA V) and presided also at the second meeting of Provincial Delegates for Missionary Animation at Belo Horizonte, Brazil. He noted the constant growth in missionary interest at salesian and ecclesial level, and gave some guidelines for applying at provincial level the contents of the booklet *Educating to the Missionary Dimension*.

Returning to Rome he made a private retreat from 2-7 August and took a few days of rest. Later (from 29 August to 9 September) he was back again in Brazil, in the Province of Mato Grosso, to visit the salesian missions among the Chavantes and Bororos. This visit, linked with the centenary celebrations, was carried out in a climate of provincial missionary animation with detailed visits to the three areas of Sangradouro, Meruri and São Marcos, liturgical functions in inculturated form and personal dialogue with the confreres. In the closing meeting with the missionaries and the Provincial Council Fr Odorico emphasized the truly positive efforts

that had been made to attain the objectives of authentic salesian missionary work in an atmosphere of sound inculturation.

From Brazil the Councillor went to Cuba for some days of missionary animation, and to get to know the pastoral reality there (10 to 14 September). He noted the changes which favour greater pastoral activity among young people, the growth and maturing of vocations and a renewed commitment for a youth catechumenate.

Before returning to Rome, he fulfilled an obligation to preside at an important meeting at Khartoum, Sudan, from 15 to 18 September; together with the Provincial of Nairobi and the local confreres he made an overall assessment of the salesian presence in that difficult African country. He met with two surprises, both of them very positive: the growing number of catechumens in the salesian parish at Khartoum, and the official permission from the Department of Education in the capital for a new Don Bosco technical school.

From 21 to 24 September Fr Odorico remained at Turin to be with those preparing to leave for the missions; they received their missionary Crucifix on the 24th. They were some thirty in all between SDBs, FMAs and lay volunteers, and were destined for all five continents.

Subsequently from 25 September

to 7 October he visited the missionary works of Tanzania in the Vice-province of East Africa. This was the circumscription of which he had been a member before being elected to the General Council, and Fr Odorico noted with joy the quantitative (there are already 9 foundations) and qualitative progress of salesian work in that country. Deserving of special mention are the formation houses, the training schools for those about to enter the world of work, and the missions of First Evangelization.

From 9-12 October he presided at Lisbon, Portugal, at the annual meeting of salesian Mission Procurators. He took advantage of this meeting to thank Fr Antonio Mélida for the work he had done as coordinator of the Mission Offices, and to introduce and welcome Fr Christian Bigault who was succeeding him in the Department. He also spoke of the very positive work that had been done by Fr Aureliano Laguna, formerly in charge of the Missions Office at Madrid who was now being succeeded in turn by Fr Mélida.

After a brief stay in Rome, Fr Odorico then began a final journey which from 17 October to 5 December was to take him to Jakarta (Indonesia), Hyderabad (India), Haiti, Venezuela, Curaçao and Hong Kong. In these different countries he had various tasks to perform: missionary animation (Indonesia),

preaching retreats to Rectors of Hyderabad and Bombay, the extraordinary canonical visitation of Haiti, missionary animation and the closing of the Centenary in Venezuela, and finally meetings in Hong Kong in connection with the salesian presence in mainland China.

Deserving of special mention are Haiti and the prospects concerning China:

1. Salesian work in Haiti is making considerable progress: the Salesians are increasing in number; there is greater space and commitment for the work for the very poor; there is a growing sense of Salesian Family; and there are hopes of a progressive improvement in the social and political situation.
2. In the meeting at Hong Kong concerning our commitment in China, a meeting at which were present all the confreres involved and also the members of the Provincial Council, an assessment was made of the present situation and strategies were studied for the future.

On 4 December Fr Luciano Odo-rico returned to Rome.

The Economist General

Fr Omero Paron lists his engagements in the period August to November 1995 as follows:

- 28 August, a meeting at Milan with the Provincial Council of the Milan Province for a discussion on the Administrative Report for the year 1994, with particular reference to the situation of the houses in Switzerland which had earlier been part of the former Novara Province.

- 18-21 September, at Lviv in Ukraine, in connection with the final work of reconstruction of our Greek-Byzantine church, prior to its consecration. He also inaugurated the scholastic year at the pre-novitiate on the outskirts of the city.

- 22 September as he passed through Bratislava (Slovakia) he observed the progress of the work on the new foundation in Petržalka.

- 1 October: the opening for the use of the faithful of the new church of Our Lady of Hope in Rome. Fr Paron blessed the high altar, the parish offices and other buildings, and the confreres' residence.

- 6-10 October: back once again at Lviv in Ukraine, for the inauguration and consecration of the church entrusted to our Ukrainian confreres. The Economist General visited also the work for Latin-rite Catholics in the area surrounding the town.

- 14-15 October: at Gorizia (Italy) for the celebration of 100 years of salesian work. Official commemoration of the centenary with the civil and religious authorities at the Castello. Extraordinary meeting of Past-pupils.

- 26-28 October: meeting of the National Congress of Salesian Economists at Vico Equense Pacog-nano, organized by the economic sector of the Italian Provincial Conference.

- 1-2 November: a similar meeting at Villa Tuscolana, Rome.

- 4 December: a meeting with the Council of the Vice-province of Sardinia, to discuss the financial situation of salesian work in that island.

The Councillor for the Atlantic Region of Latin America

On 31 July Fr Techera left Rome for Angola to carry out the extraordinary visitation there and hence complete the visitation of the São Paulo Province of Brazil begun six months previously. He was able to visit all the communities and meet all the confreres. Peace in the country is not yet well consolidated but he was able to make all the necessary contacts. He also did a consultation for the appointment of a new Provincial Delegate for Angola. There is a good salesian atmosphere

in the Delegation, with great dedication to the salesian mission. The esteem felt for the Salesians by Bishops, youngsters and people in general is obvious. There are many requests for new foundations, and the needs of the young people are great, especially in this period following the civil war.

Going on to Brazil, the Regional Councillor began on 16 August the consultation for the new Provincial of Mato Grosso; he was able to visit nearly all the communities and help in the making of a serious discernment at a moment which is very important for the future of the Province.

At the beginning of September he visited the course of ongoing formation for the Salesians of the Plata area at Ramos Mejia, Argentina, and took part immediately afterwards in the CONGRELAT at Asuncion, Paraguay. After the congress he presided at a meeting of the Provincial Conference of the Plata region, and later at that of the same conference of Argentina. Both conferences included a sharing of experiences by Provincials regarding animation, problems, etc., a dialogue on the subject of the coming General Chapter, and comments concerning the Provincial Chapters about to take place.

On 15 September Fr Techera began the extraordinary visitation of the Province of St Francis Xavier,

with headquarters at Bahia Blanca. From 12-14 October he had to interrupt it temporarily to attend the national meeting of the Salesian Family of Brazil on the theme of children and adolescents living on the streets, a yearly effort to help to solve this distressing problem, and on 15 and 16 he presided at a meeting of the Brazilian Provincial Conference. This was followed on the 17th by a meeting of the SDB and FMA Provincials of Brazil, at which were discussed the common identity card of the Salesian Family, the coming Marian Congress at Cochabamba (December 1995), means of giving a new impulse to the Cooperators and Salesian Family in general, and an exchange of views on preparations for the SDB and FMA General Chapters.

The Regional then returned to Bahia Blanca to continue the Visitation, and was in the Province for the centenary celebrations of two communities of great historical importance: Fortin Mercedes, where lie the mortal remains of Zepherino Namuncurá, and Junin de los Andes, where Blessed Laura Vicuña died. While visiting the community of the students of theology at Buenos Aires, he was also able to take part in the celebrations for the centenary of another house with a great salesian tradition: Bernal.

Concluding the visitation with a meeting with the Rectors and

another with the Provincial Council, Fr Techera declared among other things that he had found the Province in a substantially positive situation as regards pastoral work for the young and for vocations, the animation and formation of teachers, and animation of the Salesian Family. All this gave well founded hope for the future when the Province has some great challenges to face as regards new vocations and a fresh missionary spirit in meeting the needs of the young.

After the Visitation the Regional spent the remaining days available in November in a consultation for the appointment of a new Provincial in Uruguay.

On 26 November he returned to Rome for the concluding session of the General Council.

The Councillor for the Pacific-Caribbean Region of Latin America

In his last series of visits for the six-year period, Fr Garcia passed through his entire Region with the exception of Haiti, which he had visited in the previous May. He also visited some formation communities in other provinces. The purpose was to make an evaluation of what had been done overall in the period 1990-1996, in view of the coming GC24.

He began in *Guinea Conakry*, accompanied by the Provincial of Col-

ombia-Bogotá. The visit was highly appreciated by the missionary confreres and bishops of the country whom he was able to meet. The Salesians and lay volunteers working in this French-speaking African country give a wonderful example of ecclesial communion. They are apostolically committed to the evangelization and cultural development of the people, and especially of the young and adolescents. Vocations are beginning to appear.

Returning to Rome for two days he was able to be present at the Pope's Mass at Castel Gandolfo, and received from him a special blessing for all his Region. Spiritually fortified in this way he headed for *Santiago, Chile*, where he met with the new Provincial (Fr Natale Vitali) and his Council. The themes dealt with here and subsequently in the other provinces were: the service of animation and government, progress in the significance and efficacy of the work of evangelization and vocational commitment in the various works, the degree of perseverance of our young confreres, the Regional Centre for ongoing formation and the Regional solidarity project, the Regional Centre for the Salesian Brother, and care of the Spanish-speaking immigrants in the USA.

From 20 August to 20 October the Regional Councillor made the Extraordinary Visitation of the Pro-

vince of Bolivia, which will celebrate next year its salesian centenary. During this time he suspended the visit for five days to take part in the CONGRELAT in Paraguay.

Bolivia is a young and growing province, canonically erected only 32 years ago, and is rich in vocations. The salesian charism is dynamically evident in all the works. In the scholastic field there are more than 32,000 pupils in more than 60 schools and colleges, with some 1,500 educators and teachers, catering for the most part for the poor and needy. In one school in La Paz they have managed successfully to run two schools, one for fee-payers and one for the poor, contemporaneously in the same classrooms, alternating the timetable. It is a new model for educational collaboration inspired by the Gospel and the preventive system.

The province is also dynamically original in the field of social communication, with a publishing centre and bookshop, radio and TV transmitters, and an enterprise for producing video-cassettes of an educational and cultural kind.

The Oratories, Youth Centres and Parishes are all effective in work for the young and the poor, and are particularly dedicated to finding work for the most abandoned youngsters.

Fr Garcia then went on to *Peru*, where his first engagement was the

funeral of Fr Alessandro Michalski who had died at Piura a day earlier. Salesian work in Piura is growing and becoming consolidated on a double front: the Don Bosco College, of which the primary and middle sections will soon be united, and 'Bosconia' – a social work in one of the poorest of the city's outskirts.

The Regional then went on to Arequipa and the 'Centro de Educación Ocupacional Don Bosco', where the training programme is also financially productive. At Magdalena del Mar he was able to admire the restructuring of the Higher Institute of Pedagogy and of the College; and could do the same later at the novitiate, the retreat house, the parish at Moyopampa, and the aspirantate and prenovitiate at Chosica. After spending some time with those in formation he attended a meeting programmed by the Provincial Council.

He next went on to *Ecuador* and then *Colombia (Bogotá and Medellín)*, once again to assess the results of the last six years. All three Provinces have made considerable progress in many aspects of the mission, but particularly in the field of formation. At Bogotá he noted the significant advances made in theological and pastoral study and research, and in the financial field, in the parish of the Child Jesus after the extraordinary visitation. Great efforts are being made to extend de-

votion to the Child Jesus which is so deeply rooted among the people and spreading at so surprising a rate not only in this country but even beyond the continent itself.

From Colombia Fr Garcia moved on to *Mexico (Guadalajara and Mexico Provinces)*. In the main cities of the southern province he had meetings with the salesian communities to launch the consultation for the appointment of a new Provincial.

Before returning to Rome he was also in *Central America* (Guatemala) and Venezuela, where there is still a feeling of freshness and joy after the celebration of the salesian centenary, which gave to the provinces a spiritual and pastoral reinvigoration, strengthened communal affinity and concord and also vocational enthusiasm. Here too he set in motion the process of consultation preceding the change of Provincial.

Fr Garcia concluded his journey at *Santo Domingo* with a meeting of the Provincial Council before returning to Rome.

The Councillor for the Asian Region

Fr Thomas Panakezham left Rome on 22 July for Calcutta where he participated in a Mass in suffrage for the Rector Major, Fr Egidio Vi-

ganò, at which the Archbishop of Calcutta presided and Mother Teresa and other religious superiors of the archdiocese were also present. Fr Thomas then visited some of the communities in the Diocese of Krishnagar before going on to the Province of Guwahati to make his own spiritual retreat in the community of the novices at Sunnyside, Shillong. Subsequently he began the consultation for the appointment of the new Provincial of the same province, visiting for the purpose several communities in Shillong, Tura and the plains of Assam. He also inaugurated the new academic year in the theological studentate of Shillong, where at the same time he was able to congratulate in the name of the members of the General Council the two Salesian Bishops, Mgr Tarcisio Resto of Shillong and Mgr Thomas Menamparampil of Guwahati, who had recently been raised by the Holy Father to the rank of Archbishops and Metropolitans.

From 16 to 27 August the Regional visited almost all the communities of the Province of Dimapur, a province which at present is passing through a difficult period because of tribal conflicts and guerilla activity, etc. Nevertheless the confreres continue their work of evangelization and education.

Returning from Dimapur, Fr Thomas then visited the formation com-

munities in the Calcutta Province. It is encouraging to see a good number of local vocations in the formation houses. The charism of Don Bosco is compatible with all tribes and cultures!

On 8 September the Regional headed for Japan, where every year the Salesians have some novices, despite the crisis in the vocational field experienced by various other Congregations. In a missionary spirit, the Province has sent two confreres to begin a new foundation in the Solomon Islands.

In his next visit, to South Korea, Fr Panakezham observed the strength of the Salesian Family during a celebration for the priestly silver jubilees of Fr Luc Van Looy and Fr Marc Cuvelier, the present Superior of the Vice-province, who were students together. The Vice-province has recently signed an agreement with the local governor for a foundation in Manchuria.

The period from 21 September to 5 October was dedicated to a visit to the communities of Timor and Indonesia, which form part of the Southern Philippines Province. Despite the political and social tension, the confreres in Timor continue their apostolate with commitment and enthusiasm. In both Timor and Indonesia there are vocations and youthful forces which promise well for the future: they have 80 confreres and 14 novices at the present time!

From Indonesia the Regional went on to Papua New Guinea where there are 30 confreres working in six foundations. The work is demanding and calls for sacrifice, but it is also satisfying because it is directed in large part to the primary education of this needy people.

From Papua New Guinea Fr Thomas moved to the Philippines to take part in the *third congress of the salesian coadjutor brothers of Eastern Asia*, held at Cebu, at which was present also Fr Giuseppe Nicolussi, Councillor General for Formation. Subsequently he visited also some of the formation communities of the Manila Province before travelling by way of New Delhi to Hyderabad in India to preside over a meeting of the Indian Provincial Conference. Various questions were dealt with during this meeting, among them: the functions of the secretary of the "Don Bosco Education Society" (a society formed to represent all salesian institutions in India in dealings with the government); the situation of the Past-pupils; the English edition of the Indian Salesian Bulletin; the geographic division of the Indian Salesian Provinces; the forming of a group of confreres at national level to attend to salesian formation; an evaluation of pastoral work at national level. Immediately after the meeting of the Conference there was another meeting, this time of

Indian participants in the GC24; this meeting was attended also by the Provincials of Japan and of the two Philippines Provinces.

From 13 to 19 November Fr Thomas visited some of the formation communities of the Provinces of Bombay and Bangalore; he noted the concern of the Provincials for a sound preparation of candidates for the salesian life, requiring from them a full year of preparation for the novitiate.

On 19 November Fr Panakezhram reached Nairobi in Africa, where a visit to the Kenyan communities, and particularly the formation community of Nairobi-Utume, revealed an increase in local vocations to the salesian life. Mention must be made too of the confreres looking after a group of nomadic people in the Korr desert, some 500 km. from the capital.

On 26 November Fr Panakezhram returned to Rome.

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

In the context of the *Extraordinary Visitation of the Province of Slovenia*, Fr Dominic Britschu made contact in the month of August with the confreres who since 1992 have been working in Albania. At the end of September after a brief meeting with the salesian Al-

banian-speaking students who are accommodated in the Studentate of San Tarcisio in Rome, the Councilor went to Slovenia and visited successively the salesian communities and the confreres working in Carinzia, Voivodina, Central Serbia, Kosovo and Montenegro.

From 16 to 20 October he took part in the work of the Interprovincial Conference of the Central and Northern European Region. The meeting was held in the reacquired and rebuilt premises of the studentate of philosophy and theology of the Croatian Province at Zagreb.

The Regional Councillor for Spain and Portugal

Fr Antonio Rodriguez left Rome on 28 July for Madrid, and two days later travelled via Lisbon to Mozambique where he remained until 23 August, dedicating the intervening period to an attentive visit to the communities and salesian works of that country. In the three years that had passed since his previous visit peace had been restored between the contending parties.

He found a newly restored peaceful atmosphere with the salesian communities in a position to freely define their activities, limited only by lack of personnel and the number and complexity of the projects to which they want to give effect. It is interesting to note that after 16

years it is again possible to make plans of a kind capable of realization, even though they must be moderate in scope.

On 13 August he was present at his ordination to the diaconate of the second Mozambican Salesian, and at the first profession of two others who had just finished their novitiate.

On 23 August Fr Rodriguez moved to Luanda in Angola where, in the course of a week, he was able to visit nearly all the salesian foundations and try to form an overall impression of the situation of the country and of the salesian works for youth. Peace is less consolidated than in Mozambique because here there is greater conflict between national and international issues. Angola appears as a country with many possibilities, great natural resources and a pleasant and welcoming people; but it is suffering visibly from the effects of a long and savage civil war, which has flared up again several times.

August 30 saw his departure for Portugal, where he took advantage of a short stay in the country to visit some communities and take part in the work of the Pedagogical Congress, organized on the occasion of the centenary of the arrival of the Salesians in the country. Many eminent persons in the world of education attended, and the closing ceremony was performed by the Presi-

dent of the Republic himself. It was an event of great dignity with very positive results.

In the evening of 8 September he received the first profession of two novices and joined in the province's celebrations on the occasion.

The following day the Regional left for Madrid, and after a week with his family went on to Valencia, where between 14 and 24 September he launched the consultation for the new Provincial of that province, visiting all the communities for the purpose.

On the 25th he installed the new Rector of the Missions Office in Madrid, Fr Antonio Melida. He remained at Madrid for the following two weeks, with visits to various houses, and on the 28th was present for the solemn inauguration of the Theological Centre of Studies at Carabanchel. Taking part in this function were many confreres, including the Provincials of the SMA, SLE, POR and SVA provinces all of whom have declared their intention of sending their theology students to the Centre.

On 4 October at Salamanca the Regional was present at the meeting of the National Delegation for the Coordination of Youth Pastoral Work of the FMA, and subsequently visited the formation houses of Burgos (postnovitiate) and Astudillo (novitiate) and spoke to the young confreres about the reactions that

had followed the death of the Rector Major.

At a meeting of the Rectors of Madrid on 7 October he presented the consultation for the new Provincial of the province, with reflections based on the figure of the provincial as depicted in the 'Manual for Provincials'. He explained the dynamics of the consultation and asked the Rectors to pass on the explanation to the members of their own communities.

On 13 October Fr Rodriguez left for Lomé (Togo) where he remained in residence until 11 November at the novitiate of Gbodjome to take the place of the Director of Novices who had to be absent for family reasons. He explained to the novices the part of the Constitutions referring to the service of authority at world level and introduced them to some parts of the General Regulations.

During his stay in Togo he also visited the other foundations in the country and made contact with each confrere. He was able to visit several times the director of the work at Kara, Fr José Bejerano, during the fatal illness which carried him off at the age of 40 years after spending twelve self-sacrificing years on the missions for the benefit of the poorest of the poor. He died on 7 November at Seville. On the 9th Fr Rodriguez offered Mass for the repose of his soul in the pres-

ence of the combined formation communities of the Gbodjome novitiate and the Lomé postnovitiate.

On the evening of 10 November he left for Madrid, where he arrived the following morning, and presided over the 42nd meeting of the Iberian Provincial Conference on the 13th and 14th. Among other items on the agenda was a review of the work of the Conference over the past six years, an assessment of interprovincial solidarity, and an examination of the work of various delegations. In the afternoon of the 14th there was the third meeting of the combined SDB and FMA Iberian Conferences, this time to consider the theme of collaboration in pastoral work for vocations.

On the 16th he visited the novitiate at Sanlucar la Mayor and the students of theology of the Seville and Córdoba Provinces. While at Sanlucar he heard of the tragic death by drowning of the youngest of the novices at Gbodjome, where the Regional had just spent a month. He was aged 19 and born in the Ivory Coast; he had known the Salesians from his early childhood.

From 19 to 27 November Fr Rodriguez passed through the houses of the Córdoba Province (except for those in the Canary Islands), once again to launch the consultation for the next Provincial. On the 28th he returned to Madrid, and on the following day, together with the Pro-

vincials of Madrid and León and two other confreres, had a further meeting with the Archbishop of Madrid concerning our plan to open a Higher Centre of Youth Pastoral Work. The Archbishop was given a dossier with all the relevant information, and was informed that a copy of the same dossier was being prepared for the use of the other Bishops who are members of the Episcopal Commission for this sector.

On 2 December Fr Rodriguez returned to Rome for the final session of the General Council.

The Regional Councillor for Italy and the Middle East

Fr Fedrigotti dedicated the month of August to various engagements for purposes of animation. From 27 July to 3 August at Loreto he preached the annual retreat to the FMA of the Roman Province of St Agnes. From 9 to 15 August he was present at Colle Don Bosco for the first Italian National Review of the Salesian Youth Movement. The results were gratifying, thanks to the excellent work of preparation, and endorsed the validity of these gatherings for increasing young peoples' awareness of the SYM and their sense of effective membership of it.

In the third week of August he spent some days at the VIS summer camp of Prè Saint Didier, and at the

formation camp for Salesians in their first five years of priesthood at Perrères di Valtournanche.

In September he spent the first week at San Tarcisio, Rome, preaching the retreat for those about to make their perpetual profession. On Monday 4th he made a rapid journey to Turin and back to present to SDB and FMA teachers the report on "Faith and Culture" in connection with the national educative project for schools.

On the 9th and 10th he took part at Gualdo Tadino in the work of the National Council of the Past-pupils, commemorating together both the 125th anniversary of the founding of their association and the memory of Fr Egidio Viganò, with special reference to the latter's commitment for the laity

On Saturday 16 September at Padua - Don Bosco, he presented to FMA teachers the theme: "The anthropology of the National Educative Project"; and on the following day at Sesto San Giovanni, introduced the annual pastoral theme (Eucharist and Penance) for the animators of the SYM. The same afternoon he received the perpetual professions of the confreres of the Milan Province.

On 20 September he visited the community of Nave and on the 23rd that of Turin-Crocetta. On the 23rd and 24th he took part in Harambee and the departure ceremony for the

missionaries, and on the 25th, again at Valdocco, he was present at the meeting of the National Consulting Group for the Missions. On the 28th he visited the novices at Lanuvio, and on the 29th was at the CNOS programming meeting.

On 1 October Fr Fedrigotti was at Macomer in Sardinia for the launching of the annual pastoral plan and a meeting with the young SDB and FMA animators. He also took the opportunity to make a rapid visit to the various houses on the island.

On 7 October he preached a day's retreat to the students of philosophy of San Tarcisio and on the following day had a meeting with the confreres of the Roman Province working in schools, to look together at the problems facing salesian schools in Italy.

On the 12th he was at Conegliano Veneto to present the National Educational Project to the FMA teachers of that Province. From the 13th to the 15th he took part in the Cooperators' Centenary Congress at Bologna. On the 16th he was at Prato for a meeting with the Provincial Council and a visit to the new salesian foundation there. On the 17th he had a meeting with Mgr Luigi Petris, delegate of the Italian Bishops Conference for emigrants, for a discussion concerning the service provided by Italian Salesians for emigrants in Germany.

On the 18th he was at the Auxilium to preside at a commemorative Mass for Fr Egidio Viganò, and from 20 to 25 was in Germany (Mainz and Essen) to meet the Italian confreres working for the migrants, and to discuss with those responsible the possibility of establishing a small community at Essen for the service of Italian migrant workers.

On the 26th he took part in a meeting of the CNOS/FAP National Council which elected its new president in the person of Fr Stefano Colombo, who had previously been delegate for the Piedmontese area. On the 29th at Rome – Sacro Cuore, he took part in the first National Council Meeting of the recently founded CNOS/SCUOLA, which elected the usual officers (President, Vice-president and Secretary) and made the necessary decisions for getting the Association off the ground.

From 30 October to 6 November Fr Fedrigotti was at Istanbul, to meet the members of the community there and take part in a meeting of the U.R.T. (Union of Turkish Religious). He followed this with the annual meeting of the CISM (Conference of Italian Major Superiors) at Collevaleenza.

From 11 to 13 November he presided at a meeting in Rome of the CISI Assembly at which were present all delegates of the Italian pro-

vinces to the GC24. The precapitular document was presented by two of the Commission which had drawn it up (Frs. Mazzali and Pusino); the Moderator of the GC24, Fr Antonio Martinelli, presented the new possibilities available in the matter of information, and the Regional spoke of certain other questions of a general nature (Regions and Regionals, number of members of the Chapter, proposals for discernment in view of the elections, etc.).

Saturday, 19 November, found the Regional at Brescia where, in the presence of the Salesian Family, the Rectors of the Milan Province and the young Salesians of Nave, he gave the address for the opening of the academic year, on the theme: "Fr Egidio Viganò, master of and witness to spiritual life". In the afternoon of the same day he was at Chiavenna to deputize for the Vicar General at the conferring of the "Athos Valsecchi Prize" in memory of Fr Egidio Viganò. The commemorative address was given by Dr. Nuccio Fava of the RAI. On both occasions Archbishop Bertone presided at the associated Eucharist.

On the 22nd Fr Fedrigotti was present at the national "Savio Club" office in Rome, and on the 24th was at Bari to present to the priests of the Quinquennium and a group of the Salesian Family the "Common Identity Card". The same presenta-

tion was repeated at Conegliano Veneto for the Salesian Family of the area of Triveneto Est, and in the afternoon of the same day he met with the Rectors of the Ligurian Province to start up the consultation for the appointment of the new Provincial. On Wednesday 29th at Verona San Zeno, he conferred in the name of the Italian Provincials the "Lentino d'oro" on Fr Felice Rizzini, former President of the CNOS and CNOS/FAP, on behalf of the Graphics section of the Institute.

Finally, from 30 November to 3 December at the Generalate, Fr Fedrigotti took part in the European Congress on Salesian Schools, organized by the Youth Pastoral Department.

The Rector Major's Delegate for Poland and Eastern Europe.

Between 27 July and 1 August Fr Augustyn Dziedziel was in Poland, visiting the communities of Czestochowa, Auschwitz and Warsaw. The following week, from 2 to 9, he was in Lithuania, where at Kaunas he took part in a meeting of the Council of the Circumscription, and visited the communities and salesian foundations, and groups of the Salesian Family of Lithuania. Subsequently he did the same in Belarus.

He then went on to visit the salesian foundations in Georgia where

the confreres work among the faithful of the Armenian rite, and later went on to Moscow to meet the confreres of the Eastern Circumscription in initial formation, who were preparing for their renewal of profession which he later received.

In the period from 21 to 26 August Fr Dziedziel accompanied Fr Nicolussi in his visit to Moscow and Oktiabrskij, and his meetings with the young confreres, the inauguration of the new novitiate, encounters with the novices and the formation team, and a meeting with the Council of the Circumscription on the theme of formation.

From Moscow he went with Fr Zdzislaw Weder, Superior of the Circumscription, to Siberia for a ten-day visit to Yakutsk and Aldan; there he took part in the spiritual exercises of the confreres working in Siberia. On returning to Moscow, he then visited other salesian foundations in European Russia.

Later he went back to Poland, where he was present with the Vicar General, Fr Juan Vecchi, at the solemn coronation of the statue of Mary Help of Christians at Twardogóra, in the salesian Marian sanctuary of the Province of Breslau.

Fr Dziedziel spent the period from 4-10 October in Ukraine, visiting the salesian works at Kiev, Odessa and Lviv. In Lviv, together with the Economist General, Fr Omero Paron, he took part in the

consecration of the church, entrusted to the Salesians in the thirties, then nationalized and now, fifty years later, restored to our Greek-Catholic confreres renewed, embellished and equipped according to the requirements of the rite concerned. The Delegate and the Economist General later visited the other places in the neighbourhood where confreres of the Latin rite are working in Lviv and its surroundings.

From 10 October to 5 November Fr Dziedziel was back in Poland. After presiding at a meeting of the Polish Provincial Conference on the theme of the laity he dedicated the rest of the time to visits of animation to Poland's ten formation communities.

From 5 to 14 November he was back again in Russia, this time to accompany Fr Luc Van Looy in his visit to Moscow and the neighbouring novitiate at Oktiabrskij, which included meetings with Rectors, the Council of the Circumscription, the formation team, and the novices themselves. These meetings and en-

counters concentrated on the theme of youth pastoral work, and partly on formation.

Returning once again to Poland Fr Dziedziel visited some further formation communities and then from 21 to 28 November convoked once again the Conference of the Provinces of Poland and Eastern Europe, this time to study the theme of social communication, under the guidance of Fr Antonio Martinelli who was accompanied by Fr Carlos Garulo, the Central Delegate for Social Communication. With the Provincials and provincial delegates for the sector concerned there were also present some other confreres with responsibility for various activities in the same field. The encounters and subsequent visits to works in this sector and to the formation communities, will certainly serve to sensitize the provincial community in this regard, and increase the coordination and development of the sector.

On 2 December Fr Dziedziel returned to the Generalate at Rome.

5.1 Introduction of the Cause for Canonization of the Servant of God Fr Elia Comini SDB

A new "Servant of God" enters the ranks of the members of our pilgrim Family with the public ecclesial recognition of his sanctity. He is the salesian priest *Elia Comini*, whose Cause for Canonization has now been officially introduced.

The beginning of the process took place on Sunday 3 December 1995 in the Salesian parish church of the Sacred Heart at Bologna in a solemn function at which the Archbishop, Cardinal Biffi, presided. At 4 p.m., with the church thronged with the faithful, the Cardinal officially set up the diocesan tribunal for the process of beatification and canonization of our confrere Fr Elia Comini together with that of Fr Martino Capelli, of the Congregation of the Priests of the Sacred Heart (Dehonians), who was a companion of Fr Elia in sacrificing his life. The setting up of the tribunal was followed by a concelebrated Eucharist in which some sixty priests took part, with many Salesians among them. Our postulator general Fr Pasquale Liberatore and

the vice-postulator Fr Rino Germani, both of whom had taken the prescribed oath together with the members of the tribunal, the Provincial of Milan Fr Francesco Cereda, and the Secretary General Fr Francesco Maraccani were also present.

In the course of the function a brief outline was given of the lives of the two Servants of God, with emphasis on their death which occurred on 1 October 1944 when, after being arrested and segregated for three days, they were killed together with 42 other persons with whom the two priests with heroic pastoral charity wished to remain united, thus giving their lives for the flock the Lord had entrusted to them. Fr Elia Comini was 34 years of age, having been born at Calvenzano di Vergato (Bologna) on 7 May 1910. He had been a Salesian since 1926 and a priest from 1935. His death, as a supreme gesture of love, was the crowning of a life of consecration.

5.2 Message of the Holy Father on the occasion of the European Congress on the Salesian School

From 30 November to 3 December 1995 there took place at the "Salesianum" in Rome the Congress on the Salesian Schools in Europe, organized by the Youth Pastoral Department. It followed similar congresses which had taken place in the past two years in Asia (India) and Latin America. As was significantly indicated by the theme: *The Salesian School and Prophecy in Europe*, the objective was "a re-reading of Don Bosco's preventive system for a school of the third millennium". This was the scope of the papers given, which developed the following topics: "Europe today" (*An Hermans*), "Salesian 'prevention' today" (*Martin Lechner*), "The Salesian Catholic School in France" (*Alain Beylot*), "Exchanges between schools and training centres at European level" (*Guglielmo Malizia*), "Towards a common policy for Salesian Schools in Europe" (*Angel Astorgano*). In the group workshops, exchanges of experiences, and a round table, the themes were rendered concrete so as to lead to some practical conclusions. The Councillor for Youth Pastoral Work, Fr Luc van Looy, introduced and concluded the work. On Saturday, 2 De-

cember, the president at the Eucharist was Cardinal Pio Laghi, Prefect of the Congregation for Catholic Education.

On the occasion of the Congress the Holy Father John Paul II, with a gesture of great kindness, sent a stimulating message which we translate below:

Dear brothers and sisters!

1. I am happy by means of this message to address myself to you who are taking part in the European Congress on the Salesian School. You are gathered together as representatives of all the countries of the continent in the name of your communities, to reflect on how you can contribute efficaciously to the building of a Europe which will foster the cultural and religious values of its history. This so as to give renewed strength and vigour to Don Bosco's educative charism, applied to new times and reinterpreted for the purpose of the education of today's youth. It is a task which is by no means easy but is urgent none the less. To be ready to face the challenges of the new millennium, the young need to have a very clear idea of values.
2. *The Salesian Congregation in Europe*, in more than a hundred years of life, has contributed to the education of youth primarily,

though not exclusively, through the school, and especially through professional and technical schools. In recent years it has given proof of its vitality by opening new schools in Eastern Europe. I know that professional training centres have been started up, not only in Poland but also at Gatchina in the St Petersburg area, and in Bosnia near Sarajevo. This has happened because the spiritual sons of Don Bosco continue to believe in the importance of the school as an efficacious means and environment for the formation of the young and for the advancement of the very poor. The Catholic school in Europe has had a great influence on the culture and Christian life of the people, especially by preparing young people to be able to transform society by the force of the Gospel.

The school, in fact, must not aim solely at giving a qualification or preparing its pupils for employment; its objective must be to offer *an integral education of the whole person*.

3. A few days ago, when speaking to the plenary gathering of the Congregation for Catholic Education, I recalled that education is the communication of the love of God, and that only one who loves is able to educate, "only one who loves is able to speak the truth which is love" (14 November 1995). Dear teachers in Catholic schools, for communicat-

ing the truth of love to the young you have a great model in St John Bosco.

The 'Saint of youth' was well aware that the school is an environment in which youngsters meet friends and create vital relationships with adults. And so the rapport which becomes established between young people and their educators is of great importance. For Don Bosco this was an essential element in education. 'Education is a thing of the heart', he used to say, and he wanted his collaborators to be present among the youngsters: a presence not limited to the classroom but extended to every moment of life through contact and collaboration with parents, in the knowledge that the teacher is called upon to be a model for his pupils.

4. Your gathering, dear brothers and sisters, bears witness moreover to *the concern of the Salesian Family that the school, by overcoming the boundaries of a restricted environment, should become an authentic formative platform for disclosing to the young a worldwide horizon, fostering in them an awareness of the generosity and solidarity needed for transforming the world*. The school in fact can contribute a great deal in the service of people in greater need. You have a long experience in this regard: numerous are the teachers and pupils of your schools who take part in

initiatives of cooperation with developing countries, especially during the summer months. Professional schools, in particular, have the merit of having set up and accompanied more than a few professional training-centres in underdeveloped countries. Continue along this path of openness and solidarity, involving your pupils in initiatives of education and development, so that they will themselves become in their turn educators of future generations. For the renewal of Europe there is need of this openness to broader horizons and the ability to offer one's own cultural and educative resources to the whole world.

5. I want now to say a particular word to the *laity* among you. You, dear brothers and sisters, have in the school of Don Bosco the compelling task of sharing full responsibility for the human and Christian education of the pupils. This is why you are called to form solid *educative communities*, which bear together the responsibilities connected with the management of structures and the accompaniment of every single pupil. The task of education cannot, in fact, be realized by an individual but only by the communion and participation of all. How important therefore for Don Bosco was the presence of the educator among the youngsters: you too should try to find your joy by staying in the midst of your charges!

Moreover, dear lay teachers, you have a precious role to fill in the social and political formation of the young. Help them to be able to read the signs of the times, and to face with wise discernment the realities in which they are living. In my letter *Iuvenum Patris* (1988) I emphasized the importance of an educative process thanks to which "the young be equipped with a discerning conscience that is able to perceive authentic values and unmask ideological hegemonies" (n.16).

6. Finally I exhort all of you to *turn your gaze to Christ*, the perfect educator, and to learn from him to dialogue with the young. As did Jesus when accompanying the disciples on the way to Emmaus (cf. Lk 24), you must take the initiative in encounters. Put yourselves alongside them; accompany them and listen to them; share their worries and aspirations; explain the Gospel to them with patience and love, rousing in them the ardour of the faith which transforms them into credible witnesses and proclaimers of the Gospel.

It is my heartfelt wish that your meeting may have rich results, while through you I send my affectionate greetings to the educative communities you represent. I pray the Lord through the intercession of Mary Help of Christians and of Saint John Bosco, to inspire you and help you to draw up a true Eu-

ropean and Christian profile for salesian schools. To you who have taken part in this Congress and to the salesian schools of Europe I willingly send a special Apostolic Blessing.

From the Vatican, Saturday 2 December 1995.

Ioannes Paulus II.

32E	15 11 95	ANTONIO GUILAS MARTIN	15 11 95
32A	16 11 95	M SALAMON LUDWIG	16 11 95
31E	16 11 95	B BENEDETTI MICHAEL	16 11 95
31A	17 10 95	B BOSCH JOSE	17 10 95
30E	17 12 95	B BOYLE THOMAS	17 12 95
30A	18 10 95	B CASALI GIUSEPPE MARCO	18 10 95
29E	18 10 95	B CASTAGNA UGO	18 10 95
29A	19 10 95	B CAVALLI RENATO	19 10 95
28E	19 10 95	B CREVACORE ALFONSO	19 10 95
28A	20 10 95	B COULON ZOLLAN	20 10 95
27E	20 10 95	B DEL RO LUIGI	20 10 95
27A	21 10 95	B DIRKMEIER GERARD FRANS	21 10 95
26E	22 10 95	B DROWA KONRAD	22 10 95
26A	23 10 95	B ECHENRIET FRANCO JOHN JANE	23 10 95
25E	23 10 95	B ECHIVERRIA LUIS ANGEL	23 10 95
25A	24 10 95	B FRAZZETTE MICHAEL	24 10 95
24E	25 10 95	B GARDIA FORAS CARLOS REMANDO	25 10 95
24A	26 10 95	B GAUTHIER JOSEPH	26 10 95
23E	27 10 95	B GHIRARDELLI GIACOMO	27 10 95
23A	28 10 95	B GOMEZ HILDEBRAND	28 10 95
22E	29 10 95	B GONZALEZ SAIZ SIXTO	29 10 95
22A	30 10 95	B GRASSONE PAOLO	30 10 95
21E	31 10 95	B GUEVARA PEREZ JOSE DE JESUS	31 10 95
21A	01 11 95	B HARASIMOWICZ GREGOR	01 11 95
20E	02 11 95	B JACCONELLI PONTINO	02 11 95
20A	03 11 95	B JOYCE THOMAS	03 11 95
19E	04 11 95	B KANWATH THOMAS	04 11 95
19A	05 11 95	B KUCZEK JAN	05 11 95
18E	06 11 95	B KASTL HANS	06 11 95
18A	07 11 95	B KENNY NOEL	07 11 95
17E	08 11 95	B KUNZ PETER ERNEST	08 11 95
17A	09 11 95	B KUNZ VIMOR	09 11 95
16E	10 11 95	B KUNZ LUDWIG	10 11 95
16A	11 11 95	B KUNZ STANISLAW	11 11 95
15E	12 11 95	B LAVAGNOLI LUIGI	12 11 95
15A	13 11 95	B MARIN SANI MICHAEL	13 11 95
14E	14 11 95	B PEREZ LOPEZ FRANCISCO	14 11 95

5.3 Our dead confreres (1995 – 4th list)

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

NAME	PLACE	DATE	AGE	PROV.
L ANTOLIN GUIJAS Matias	León	15.11.95	58	SLE
N BALAMOU Lucien	Gbodjome (Togo)	16.11.95	19	SBA
P BENEDETTI Michele	Arese	04.11.95	94	ILE
P BOSCH Jose	Makati-Manila	13.10.95	74	FIN
P BOYLE Tomás	San Isidro	16.12.95	92	ABA
P CASELLI Giuseppe Mario	Stony Point	20.10.95	88	SUE
P CASTAGNA Ugo	Negrar (Verona)	26.10.95	77	IVO
P CAVALLO Renato	Mendoza	30.09.95	71	ACO
P CREVACORE Alfonso	Tokyo-Kamakura	28.12.95	79	GIA
P CSUPOR Zoltán	Székesfehérvár	29.11.95	76	UNG
P DEL COL Luigi	Beppu	19.10.95	75	GIA
P DIRKSMEIER Gerard Frans	Nijmegen	09.12.95	87	OLA
P DRONIA Konrad	Johnsdorf	02.12.95	86	AUS
P ECHEVERRI FRANCO John Jairo	Medellín	31.10.95	47	COM
P ECHEVERRIA Luis Angel	Chosica-Quito	23.11.95	86	ECU
L FRAZETTE Michael	New Rochelle	29.10.95	79	SUE
P GARCIA PORRAS Carlos Hernando	Santafé de Bogotá	01.10.95	45	COB
P GAUTHIER Joseph	Lyon	09.12.95	75	FLY
P GHIRARDELLI Giacomo	Punta Arenas	14.10.95	81	CIL
L GOMEZ Ildefonso	Montevideo	24.10.95	98	URU
L GONZALEZ SAEZ Sixto	Barcelona	08.11.95	58	SBA
P GRASSONE Paolo	Torino	27.11.95	83	ICP
P GUEVARA PEREZ José de Jesús	Bucaramanga	27.10.95	78	COB
P HARASYMOWYCZ Gregorj	Buenos Aires	07.09.95	75	ABA
P JACOANGELI Porfirio	Frascati	26.11.95	83	IRO
P JOYCE Thomas	Pallaskenry	01.12.95	82	IRL
P KANNATH Thomas	Dibrugarh	31.12.95	48	IND
P KŁOCZKO Jan	Swobnica	08.02.95	61	PLN
P KASTL Hans	Bedediktbeuern	08.12.95	83	GEM
P KENNY Noel	Shillong	08.11.95	85	ING
P KLEINPETER Ernst	Aschau-Waldwinkel	30.10.95	71	GEM
P KLINGER Vilmos	Székesfehérvár	28.10.95	70	UNG
P KOZLIK Lucjan	Kobylnica	28.05.95	83	PLN
P KUBERA Stanisław	Ostrzeszów	30.11.95	74	PLS
P LAVEGGI Luigi	Varazze	13.10.95	82	ILT
P LINARES SANZ Vicente	León	24.11.95	91	SLE
L LOPEZ LOPEZ Francisco	Oviedo	24.11.95	59	SLE

NAME	PLACE	DATE	AGE	PROV.
P LOVATO Italo	Negrar (Verona)	28.11.95	75	IVO
L MADDONINI Luigi	Arese	08.12.95	82	ILE
P MANDLY Karol	Moca (Rep. Dom.)	04.12.95	90	ANT
L MARCOS CHAVEZ Ramón	La Linea de la Concepción	13.10.95	85	SSE
P MARTOCCHI Felice	Oakland	22.10.95	78	SUO
P MATSUO Eiichiro Giuseppe	Tokyo-Chofu	20.06.95	72	GIA
P MICHALSKI Alexander	Piura	29.10.95	83	PER
P MONTRASIO Vittorino F.	Sondrio	28.12.95	79	ILE
P MOSCHIN Giuseppe	Sangradouro	12.12.95	60	BCG
P NOLAN Joseph	Dublin	24.11.95	80	IRL
P NOTARIO Manuel	Buenos Aires	06.11.95	85	ABA
P OBARTUCH Józef	Czestochowa	04.11.95	70	PLO
P PAES Desmond	Bombay	08.11.95	54	INB
P PASTORI Emilio	Puerto Natales	22.10.95	69	CIL
L PEREIRA Severino	Lisboa	10.07.95	67	POR
P PLANKA Viktor	Skalica	14.09.95	70	SLK
P PUGLIESE Agostino	Putignano (Bari)	29.11.95	82	ICP
P PULLA Giuseppe	Roma	14.12.95	83	IRO
L PYTEL Antoni	Rumia	04.07.95	82	PLN
P RAUH Johannes	Bonn	29.11.95	77	GEK
L REGNA Frederico	Estoril	04.10.95	90	POR
P RISSO Angel	Buenos Aires	23.05.95	80	ABA
P RODRIGUEZ BEJARANO José Antonio	Sevilla	08.11.95	41	SSE
P ROLANDO Juan Bautista	Concepción del Uruguay	17.10.95	80	ARO
P SANZ YAGÜE Aniceto	Madrid	10.11.95	95	SMA
P SATTLER Mario	Porto Alegre	22.10.95	81	BPA
P SPITALE Cataldo	Biella	11.11.95	87	ICP
P TAMOŠIUNAS Mikhail	Medellín	05.12.95	85	COM
P VANSTEENKISTE Robert	Liège	02.12.95	71	BES
P VENIA Daniele	Roma	20.12.95	65	INB
L WORZ Georg	Campo Grande	16.11.95	90	BCG
L ZANELLA Ernesto	Varazze	16.12.95	74	RMG
P ZAWADZKI Julian	Debno Lubuskie	04.06.95	89	PLN
L ZEYA Victor	Rangoon-Yangon (Birmaniam)	25.11.95	71	INC
L ZIEGLER Julio	Caracas	13.10.95	68	VEN