



acts

of the general council

year LXXVII october-dicember 1996

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

**Roma
Direzione Generale
Opere Don Bosco**

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of the Salesian Society
of St John Bosco

OFFICIAL ORGAN OF ANIMATION AND COMMUNICATION FOR THE SALESIAN CONGREGATION

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THE EXHORTATION "VITA CONSACRATA" INCENTIVES FOR OUR POSTCAPITULAR JOURNEY

1. In the movement of the Church - 2. Our reading of the Exhortation - 3. The gift of our consecrated life - 4. Spirituality: a primary requirement: *Programme and process - A pastoral spirituality* - 5. The many areas of communion - *Experts of communion* - 6. Our 'areopagus': education - Conclusion.

Rome, 8 september 1996
Feast of Our Lady's Birthday

My dear Confreres,

At the time I write this letter the GC24 has been consigned to all the Provinces. To the first communication which took place while the Chapter was still in progress by means of our organs of publication, there followed further transmissions by those who had taken part in the Assembly. Finally the official edition was sent out through the Acts in various languages. It carries not only the documents promulgated in accordance with the Constitutions¹ but also other useful texts for a fuller understanding of the event and of the capitular guidelines.

I imagine that the Provinces and local communities are busy getting to know and absorb the motivation which the documents offer concerning the participation of lay people in the spirit and mission of Don Bosco, and in trying out already the possible applications in relationships, structures, organization of the work, and in ongoing formation programmes.

¹ cf. C 148

I remind you that it is urgent that we put into practice in our lives in an organic and communal manner, the decisions of the GC24 in line with what I said in my final address: "It will be necessary for the indications of the Chapter to be integrated into a unified project and be converted into processes which foster their vital assimilation (mentalities, attitudes, capabilities, experiences). It is a question of bringing broad visions down to earth in daily life. And here we face a challenge: to find an efficacious mediation between inspiration and practice, between the document and its practical application".²

The GC24 is a challenge to each one of us: it is an invitation to awaken and activate apostolic resources which lie dormant within us, in our charisma, in the Christian and educative experience of the many lay people who collaborate in our initiatives or whom God is moving internally towards the mission to the young.

1. In the Church's movement

The GC24 places us in the heart of the Church's pastoral project for this last part of the century. It takes up its motives, objectives, contents and plan of action.

The project has a name: *new evangelization*. We have heard and repeated the expression many times and we have grasped its general implications and demands. But perhaps we still need to go more deeply into its sense and practical consequences for our life and educative activity.

It is a question, in fact, of becoming aware of modern culture in its realizations and tendencies, in the light of the Gospel and the vocation of the human person, so as to better understand the significance of salvation which the event, the actual presence and the word of Christ can have in it, and in consequence renew the

² GC24, 256

Christian testimony, the proclamation of the Gospel and the intervention of the disciple of Christ in history.

This implies a further meditation on the Christian mystery, a careful reading of many phenomena and the rigorous screening of the many opinions which challenge our convictions and our experience as consecrated persons. Faith in fact leads us to confess that Christ is salvation for all times: yesterday, today and always.

In this movement for a new evangelization particular importance has become attached to the reflection on the Church, proposed again and again in the documents of the Magisterium and celebrated in significant events like the Synodal Assemblies at the level of the Universal Church or of continents: this has produced a new ecclesial awareness and a progressive renewal in the manner of conceiving the relationship between the Church and the world.

The Church knows herself to be the people of God. She proclaims and expresses in human history the mystery of God's active presence. She bears witness to, teaches and helps in the living out of the divine filiation revealed in Jesus Christ. Her mission is to gather together, guide and unite individuals and humanity to live this vocation and accept all the consequences which derive from it, even temporal ones. She knows therefore that she must express in the world and in history a form of life, a proclamation and historical option which apply to persons in so far as they are God's images and his children in Christ.

In this context the Church has decided to look more deeply, in the light of the Word, her centuries of experience and the present trends, at the three fundamental conditions in which those who have been called to the faith live to the full their vocations as disciples of Christ: the lay state, that of ministry, and that of religious consecration.

The Apostolic Exhortation, *Vita Consecrata*, which contains the reflections on the third case and is the result of a long process of preparation and realization of the IX Assembly of the Synod of Bishops and of careful subsequent refinement, was published

while our GC24 was in the midst of its work. It provided inspiring principles, proposed a frame of reference for understanding the relationships between the different realizations of the salesian charism, and exercised a decisive influence on the practical guidelines. You will find traces of it all through the capitular text in abundant quotations and references.

It will be of help, therefore, at this time of study and application of the GC24 to take up the Exhortation for a reading which goes beyond what is prompted by a first lawful curiosity. And that is what I propose to do in this letter, after having studied it with the members of the General Council for our personal profit and in order to share with you some of its perspectives.

This, I think, will have two beneficial results. It will place us more deeply in the communion of the Church which is everywhere called upon to reflect on Consecrated Life as a matter of general interest. Rightly in fact did the Synodal Fathers use an expression which was subsequently frequently repeated and emphasized: "*De re nostra agitur*"³ the whole Church.

Moreover, it will help us to focus more clearly on certain crucial points in the GC24, the adequate understanding of which will condition the quality of our life and the efficacy of our praxis.

2. Our reading of the Exhortation

There is no need for a systematic presentation of the contents of the Exhortation. They are organized in three chapters around *consecration*, *communion*, and *service*, and set out in non-specialist language intelligible to all consecrated persons.

The various standpoints from which the Exhortation can be read: biblical, theological, historical, juridical and pastoral, have been studied abundantly in meetings, seminars and publications,

³ *Propositio* n. 2

especially those promoted by religious. They offer material useful for personal or communal reading.

In the Exhortation mention is also made of doctrinal and practical problems still to be clarified, which have been entrusted to appropriate study commissions. Among these we have a particular interest in those regarding mixed Institutes and the new forms of evangelical life.⁴ We are following them and awaiting further developments so as to decide, when the time is ripe, on a guideline in conformity with our charismatic identity. This was indicated by the GC24 in a deliberation concerned with the form of our Society: "In the light of the Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consecrata* (n. 61) and of the juridical developments now in progress on the "form" of Religious Institutes, the GC24 considers it important that a study be made of a possible "mixed" form of our Society, and that there be a deeper investigation to see whether the innovations in such a form respond to our charism and to the original project of the Founder".⁵

But rather than dwell on these aspects, I want to run through the text with you to gather and absorb certain incentives, comparing them with our own experience and looking at them in the light of the context in which we are at present living as a Congregation.

Such a reading requires interior acceptance, preferential attention to some points which are substantial and certain, and comparison with our practical life and mentality.

Some have pointed out the limitations of the Exhortation. They remind us that we are living in time and that, after this far from indifferent effort at reflection, we must follow the road that lies ahead of us. To take commensurate note of the point forms part of the shared responsibility which religious have in respect of the whole of the experience of consecrated life. But it would be

⁴ cf. VC 61, 62

⁵ GC24, 192

ungenerous and useless to get bogged down on this particular point in face of the riches offered by the Exhortation. Wisdom indicates that each element be given its just weight as regards life.

Similarly the communities will be helped by a *creative* reading which does not stop at a mere noting of the contents, but tries to reformulate them by a comparison of what is said with our own living experience. The text must serve as a stimulus for verification, for rethinking and for conversion.

Finally, we are interested in a *pastoral* reading. Consecrated persons have received with gratitude this Exhortation of John Paul II. They consider it an instrument for revision and re-launching within their own Institute, but also as an opportunity for becoming more aware of the gift of consecrated life in the ecclesial community and in human history. Its essential significance is often little known, even in situations where consecrated persons are in daily contact with other people. We wonder whether our language and signs are adequate for making it understood, or whether we have not failed to communicate our experience.

We are particularly interested in presenting it to the young in the splendour of its perennial significance and its unequivocal validity. This is part of the journey of faith we have been trying to make explicit over the past six years; it responds to the particular moment of definition of life through which young people are passing and comes to grips with their great desire to know the best ways of meeting the problem. For this reason we must once again examine our experience to make of it a message we can efficaciously communicate.

3. The gift of our consecrated life

It is remarkable how often the word *gift* occurs with reference to the totality of the consecrated life, to each of its historic manifestations or charisms, and to many of its components or partic-

ular aspects: the vows, community, and the service of charity. A gift received is a gift offered. The abundance of modulations with which such references are reposed leaves after the reading the impression that the category of 'gift' is one of the fundamental categories for perceiving in its proper light the nature of consecrated life. The gift refers back to the gratuitousness and love which is there at the beginning, to the joy of feeling oneself an object of predilection, to excellence.

We often pause over questions concerning our identity as consecrated persons. More often too we have to listen to and try to analyze the difficulties which have to be overcome if we are to succeed in being meaningful. We are provoked by the secular environment which is ill-inclined to recognize the value of options and motivations which go beyond what is functional, temporal and practical. We are also challenged by the apparently inefficacious nature of our efforts in respect of the great phenomena of our time: the loss of religious sense, ethical disorientation, poverty which increases and becomes ever more extreme, discrimination and conflicts which degenerate into continued violence. We are also worried about the poor vocational response, especially where rationality, wellbeing and development are the order of the day. And last but not least, we are aware of our personal and institutional limits in the realization of a project which is attractive in its ideal presentation.

We Salesians in particular wonder how we can live and recount our experience to the young, who are open to what is significant and available for spiritual experience, but at the same time distracted by many fleeting stimuli, attracted towards more immediate projects, different from us in tastes, language and style of life. Often they question us on the significance and reasons for our consecrated existence.

This confrontation with the world is not something extraneous to the experience of the believer and the consecrated person. We find abundant traces of it in the Bible. The Psalms express it with

unusual efficacy and in a deeply-felt form of invocation when they quote the challenge of the sceptic: "Where is your God?"⁶ In fact the presence of God and the experience it provokes in man cannot be reduced to a purely temporal vision, and its signs are to some extent extraneous to human perception: they are wrapped in mystery and call for faith and grace.

The Exhortation has not ignored this kind of analysis which is not only sociological and short-term in nature but is also theological. You have to read between the lines, but it has not made a big deal of it either. It has not even considered as negative the need to measure itself against a secularized context in which we are called to bear witness to the choice of the primacy of God and of charity; nor has it indulged in complaints, justified or mere pretexts, of deviations from consecrated life in the complex process of renewal which followed Vatican II.

Its outlook is positive and stimulating and concentrates the gaze on consecrated life, which it enlightens with new perspectives.

Some of these recall the personal experience of those who have felt called to this kind of life: the particular brilliance with which Christ has appeared to us and the fascination it has exerted on us, the rich nature of the perspectives it opens up to existence when concentrated in God, the peace which accompanies loving with an undivided heart, the joys of self-giving in mission, the privilege of enjoying an intimacy with Christ and consciously participating in the Trinitarian life. It is all signified in the icon of the Transfiguration of Christ in the presence of the disciples he had chosen to witness his glory.

It is an invitation to look back on our moments of Tabor, the best aspects of our personal experience, interpreting them in the light of God's word, making them the motivations for a courageous fidelity.

⁶ Ps 42,4

The value of consecrated life is manifested also in and through the Church. It produces copious fruits of holiness and service in every season of the Church.⁷ Rapid surveys of history reveal the persistence, richness, diversity of expressions and correspondence with the urgent needs of the Christian community which has characterized the appearance of different forms of consecrated life which is open to new expressions even today. A Gospel unfolded as times develop! It proposes holiness again, respects Christ's life style, helps in discovering the signs of the Kingdom and continually spurs on towards the definitive realization of man. For this reason it is indispensable not so much for the practical organization of the Church but for the substantial experience of the mystery of relationship with its Lord.

The consideration of the value of our consecration, in the interchange with other ecclesial vocations in an "harmonious exchange of gifts", is particularly relevant to the time in which we are living. The GC24 reminds us of this when it describes the role of the religious community within the CEP: "The Salesian SDB, by his very life, translates the Gospel into language accessible especially to the young; through the values of consecration he raises questions and indicates possibilities of sense; through his dedication he proclaims that the secret of happiness is to lose his life so as to find it again; through his style of life he makes attractive the spirit of the beatitudes and proclaims the joy of the Resurrection; through his living in community he becomes an image of the Church, the sacrament of the Kingdom".⁸

As educators committed in human advancement and culture, we are stimulated also by those perspectives which speak to us of the incidence of consecrated life in human history, not only through service but also by means of the horizons which are opened up, the values which bear witness, and the attitudes created.

⁷ cf. VC 5

⁸ GC24, 151

This fixing of attention on the gift of God and the discovery in it of the depth of wisdom, the brilliance of life, the radiance of experiences, the joy of encounters and the generosity of love, places us in an atmosphere of contemplation.

Superficial readings of the reality can in fact leave impressions of something irrelevant, of inefficacy and insignificance. Going back to the sources of our existence, to the great presence which brought it into being, to the word which enlightens its sense and its destiny, the awareness of the mystery at work in us is strengthened, and we get a deep grasp of the facts which challenge us.

The element of thanksgiving therefore permeates the whole of the document starting from the opening words. It has been remarked that the text passes continually from theology to doxology, from reflection to praise of God. From the contemplation of God's gift flows a calm trust and confidence in confronting present difficulties and future hope. Certainly there are questions concerning significance, of pastoral adaptation, life style and cultural dialogue. We are in a period of reaping and sowing. But we are encouraged by the words of John Paul II: "You have not only a glorious history to remember and to recount, but also a great history still to be accomplished! Look to the future, where the Spirit is sending you in order to do even greater things.⁹ Ours is "a hand 'touched' by the hand of Christ, a life where his voice is heard, a life sustained by his grace".¹⁰ It unravels like an exodus from the light of the Transfiguration to the definitive light of the Resurrection.¹¹

4. Spirituality: a prime requirement

Spirituality appears as the fundamental dimension of consecrated life, the point of convergence of all the perspectives from

⁹ VC 110

¹⁰ VC 40

¹¹ cf. VC 40

which it gains its deep effect: theological, historical, biblical and pastoral. It is therefore a transverse element which pervades the entire Exhortation.

But it is concentrated nevertheless in certain paragraphs which present it in direct and practical form. The headings to these paragraphs constitute a summary which is easily understood: a transfigured life - the call to holiness,¹² a decisive commitment to the spiritual life,¹³ continuing formation,¹⁴ spirituality as a response to the search for the sacred and the desire for God.¹⁵ It is never separated from, and still less is it opposed to theological reflection and apostolic activity, but is solidly rooted in the former and gives its characteristic form to the latter.

Anyone who has made a deep study of the Exhortation will rightly affirm that if a strong note be emphasized immediately in the document, that note will be the embodiment of a realistic spirituality, which appears in both the almost "mystical" nature of the doctrine, and in the many explicit references to the need for spirituality and commitment to it.¹⁶

From the Spirit, as the source of the germinal gift, takes shape the particular configuration of the consecration, the style of the mission, the communal life, and the specific manner of practising the vows.

Spirituality is therefore like a principle of individuation, from which develops the identity. Consecrated life in fact is not born of a general project thought up by someone in theory, but by singular experiences of life in the Spirit, through which is accepted, felt, matures and is expressed the love of God and neighbour, revealed in its fullness in Christ. The Exhortation endorses this in several points, but dwells on it especially in the introduction when it

¹² cf. VC 35

¹³ cf. VC 93

¹⁴ cf. VC 69

¹⁵ cf. VC 103

¹⁶ cf. CASTELLANO CERVERA J., *Dimensione teologica e spirituale della vita consacrata: tradizione, novità, profezia*, in AA.VV. *Vita consacrata*, Rogate, Rome 1996, p. 38

traces the spiritual nature of various forms of consecrated life which have appeared in the course of time.¹⁷

Rules, plans and regulations all converge to provide the complete expression of an original spirituality. "All these elements, which take shape in the different forms of the consecrated life, give rise to a specific spirituality, i.e. a concrete programme of relations with God and one's surroundings, marked by specific spiritual emphases and choices of apostolate, which accentuate and re-present one or other aspect of the one mystery of Christ. When the Church approves a form of consecrated life or an Institute, she confirms that in its spiritual and apostolic charism are found all the objective requisites for achieving personal and communal perfection according to the Gospel".¹⁸

The spiritual life is therefore "a primary requirement, inscribed in the very essence of the consecrated life by the fact that like every other baptized person, and even more so those who profess the evangelical counsels, must aspire with all their strength to the perfection of charity".¹⁹

On this depends the apostolic fertility, and the vocational attraction exerted on new generations. It appears as the energy and starting point for the development of the renewal which in recent years has been at the centre of studies, plans and expectations: "To tend towards holiness is, in brief, the programme of every consecrated life, particularly in the perspective of its renewal on the threshold of the Third Millennium".²⁰

This insistent request, repeated after the verification made by the Synod, seems to point to spirituality as the "last frontier" of the consecrated life, the only possibility for rendering it significant and fruitful. It seems in fact to be the only element capable of making the ethical proposal credible, because it is animated by

¹⁷ cf. VC 5-11

¹⁸ VC 93

¹⁹ *ibid.*

²⁰ *ibid.*

the truth and by love to overcome through pastoral activity catechetical initiation and organizational aspects, inspired by the logic of grace and the sacraments, and to enliven by charity proclamation, celebration, testimony and service.²¹

Programme and process

What has been said about the priority of the spiritual life becomes concrete when we remember the dimensions and requirements demonstrated by secular experience of consecrated life.

In the first place there is the fidelity to the *spiritual patrimony* of each Institute.²² It is a matter of a creative fidelity and not of material observance or rigid conservation. We must refer back to the soul, the attitudes and the Gospel options of the Founders and Foundresses to respond to the challenges arising from the dominant mentality or actual problems of living together. Every charism in fact implies a form of relationship with the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, expressed in history. Such creative fidelity finds its basis not only in apostolic initiatives but primarily in the style of life of individuals and communities. From these arise the invitation to evangelical transparency, to radicality and apostolic courage. In the context of this fidelity, declares the Exhortation, "there is a pressing need today for every Institute to return to the Rule, since the latter provides a map for the whole journey of discipleship",²³ and contains the genuine spiritual tradition of the Institute. It is an invitation to a continual exploration of our patrimony and to extract from it new riches.

First among the dimensions to be cultivated with particular care is the *contemplative* element, which is expressed in the sense

²¹ cf. note 16 above.

²² cf. VC 36

²³ VC 37

²⁴ C 12

of the presence of God welcomed with love and gratitude. To this our Constitutions refer when they say: "As he works for the salvation of the young, the Salesian experiences the fatherhood of God and continually reminds himself of the divine dimension of his work. He cultivates union with God, aware of the need to pray without ceasing in a simple heart-to-heart colloquy with the living Christ and with the Father, whom he feels close at hand. Attentive to the presence of the Spirit and doing everything for God's love he becomes like Don Bosco a contemplative in action".²⁴

We all have a permanent need of this dimension: "theology, to exploit fully its own sapiential and spiritual soul; prayer, so that we may never forget that seeing God means coming down the mountain with a face so radiant that we are obliged to cover it with a veil; commitment, so that we will refuse to be locked in a struggle without love and forgiveness".²⁵

The contemplative dimension permeates all forms of consecrated life, though each charism has its own typical moments and manner of manifesting it. The way it is taken up and practised by the Salesians is expressed in two texts which closely connect prayer with educative activity. The first is in Const.95: "His need of God, keenly felt in his apostolic commitment, leads him to celebrate the liturgy of life, attaining that 'tireless industry made holy by prayer and union with God...'. The second sees educational activity as the characteristic setting for our experience of God: "Don Bosco has taught us to recognize God's operative presence in our work of education, and to experience it as life and love... We believe that God is awaiting us in the young to offer us the grace of meeting with him... In this way our work of education becomes the preeminent context in which to meet him".²⁶

The contemplative dimension is nourished and strengthened at the sources which ward off stress and strain. The Exhortation

²⁴ C 38

²⁵ VC 38

²⁶ GC23, 95

emphasizes the Word of God, communion with Christ in the Liturgy (particularly in the Eucharist and in Reconciliation) and spiritual direction. It dwells on the value of the *Lectio divina*: "When practised according to the possibilities and circumstances of life in community, this meditation leads to a joyful sharing of the riches drawn from the word of God, thanks to which brothers or sisters grow together and help one another to make progress in the spiritual life".²⁷ As is evident this requires an attentive approach to the text, an internal absorbing of God's word, comparison with life and sharing. It is also a suggestion for exploiting moments and forms of spiritual communication which will lead to placing in a more evident manner the Word of God where art. 87 of the Constitutions would have it to be: "For us the Word, listened to with faith, is the source of spiritual life, the food of prayer, light to see God's will in the events of life, and strength to live out our vocation faithfully"

The *apostolic* dimension emerges from the internal unity between consecration and mission: "The task of devoting themselves wholly to 'mission' is included in their call; indeed, by the action of the Holy Spirit who is at the origin of every vocation and charism, consecrated life itself is a mission as was the whole of Jesus' life",²⁸ understanding and cultivating a spirituality of action, "seeing God in all things and all things in God",²⁹ expressed by means of an illustration which makes the significance immediately obvious: the washing of the feet in which "Jesus reveals the depth of God's love for humanity".³⁰

Spirituality implies also an *ascetical* dimension, of resistance or spiritual combat, represented by Jacob's struggle with the Angel. "Asceticism, by helping to master and correct the inclinations of human nature wounded by sin, is truly indispensable if

²⁷ VC 94

²⁸ VC 72

²⁹ VC 74

³⁰ VC 75

consecrated persons are to remain faithful to their own vocation and follow Jesus on the Way of the Cross".³¹ This is an aspect not very congenial to current sensitivity which tends to the satisfaction of its desires and seeks justification for doing so. Every Institute has a tradition of asceticism consistent with its own spiritual style. In our own Congregations there are certain key words which define it: work, temperance, loving kindness and competence in our educative task, fraternal relationships.

An important aspect of such asceticism is to integrate into the plan of life in God some tendencies which, if left to develop in autonomous form, would compromise the quality of the spiritual experience and the purposes of the mission: a frantic quest for efficiency and professional approach disjoined from pastoral objectives, secularization of mentality and life style, nationalism (even in hidden forms) or the excessive affirmation of cultural peculiarities.³²

Spirituality, as a process, leads to the assuming of the whole of existence in its various phases. "At every stage of life a person seeks and finds a new task to fulfil, a particular way of being, of serving and of loving".³³

Some writers speak of the possibilities and risks present at different ages of man, and the effort they call for: spiritual emptying in the phase of intensive activity, habit, disappointment and the danger of individualism in the mature years, diminishing activity in advanced age or sickness. Each phase nonetheless is accompanied by a particular grace of God and includes a strong invitation to grow and respond in mature form through continuing formation.

Since the seventies we have been running courses in ongoing formation which by now have spread to every region. The GC23 launched an aspect which is already being put into practice: the local community is the setting for daily continual formation, espe-

³¹ VC 38

³² cf. VC 38

³³ VC 70

cially through the quality of relationships and communication, moments of prayer, community planning, and the shared responsibility for the realization of the mission.

The importance of systematic personal commitment must not be undervalued, and perhaps this is the best place to speak of it. Our life needs to integrate reflection and practice, study and activity, silence and meeting together, though we are not bound to a rigid programming in this regard. It is one of the keys for tending to that spiritual, pastoral and cultural quality to which I referred in my closing address to the GC24.³⁴

A pastoral spirituality

A novel point in the Exhortation is found in the statement that the spiritual life is not only a precondition, basis or preparation for the service which consecrated persons offer to mankind, but that it is an essential aspect of their mission. They are urged to become expert spiritual guides and to multiply initiatives which have as their purpose that of accompanying the faithful in their pilgrimage towards God.³⁵

In this light those parts of the Exhortation should be read attentively which entrust to consecrated persons the task of inspiring "in all the faithful a true longing for holiness, a deep desire for conversion and personal renewal in a context of ever more intense prayer and of solidarity with one's neighbour, especially the most needy".³⁶ It is not a matter of an individual commitment but of a communal understanding and an institutional objective: "Every Institute and community will be a school of true evangelical spirituality".³⁷

³⁴ cf. GC24, 242-243

³⁵ cf. VC 39

³⁶ VC 39

³⁷ VC 93

Service to the dimension of spirituality goes beyond the confines of the Christian community and appears as an accompaniment and support for all who are seeking sense and direction. "All who embrace the consecrated life, men and women alike, become privileged partners in the search for God which has always stirred the human heart and has led to the different forms of asceticism and spirituality".³⁸

This is our undertaking for the next six years. We are aware that we have been through a process of change of mentality, that we have rethought the content and method of pastoral work, and have brought up to date the structures of community life and of government. At present we are committed to calling in lay people, sharing responsibility with them and engaging together in formation, but as I pointed out in my closing address: "The GC24 arrived at the discussion of spirituality in its search for a source of communion between laity and Salesians. There is a widespread awareness in the Congregation that our linkage with lay people needs a more robust spirituality if we are to face up together to the difficult challenges which the salesian mission presents at the present day".³⁹

The Exhortation itself had anticipated this approach when it declared: "Today, often as a result of new situations, many Institutes have come to the conclusion that their charism can be shared with the laity. The laity are therefore invited to share more intensely in the spirituality and mission of these Institutes".⁴⁰

To facilitate this task, frames of reference have been drawn up which give an adequate idea of our spirituality. The Salesians have their Constitutions and in them the chapter on the salesian spirit, which is the starting point and basis for other presentations. Fr Egidio Viganò has set out certain traits which form the common patrimony of all the Salesian Family,⁴¹ included and fur-

³⁸ VC 103

³⁹ GC24, 239

⁴⁰ VC 54

⁴¹ cf. AGC 324

ther specified in the Common Identity Card. For young people manifestoes and suggestions have been formulated from the eighties and the GC23 made them authoritative as communally shared proposals. Recently a new presentation has been prepared by those responsible for the combined SDB and FMA Pastoral Departments.

The GC24 sought to highlight what is best for bringing us to share the mission with the laity: a preferential love for the young and especially the poorest of them in the form of pastoral charity,⁴² the quality of educative activity and the family spirit,⁴³ the commitment for the Church and the world prompted by "da mihi animas",⁴⁴ the daily round of duties, relationships and professionalism lived in the presence of God,⁴⁵ the educative practice of the continually renewed preventive system.⁴⁶

In this way our spirituality has been formulated for religious, for the young and for the laity: We have available texts for meditation and guidance: "We conclude the GC24 with the conviction that to propose the salesian spirituality to them is the proper and adequate response to a pressing appeal and the offering of a desired gift. In any case, the demand for spirituality prompts us to discover our family treasures, to develop and analyze more deeply those traits which Don Bosco has left us and which are so extraordinarily efficacious".⁴⁷

But it must be recognized that we become initiated into a spirituality through an encounter with someone who has had experience of it and lives it with joy and conviction, and through membership of a group which communicates it with the ability to involve others, under the guidance and spiritual direction of someone who knows its ways and resources.

⁴² GC24, 89-90

⁴³ GC24, 91

⁴⁴ GC24, 95

⁴⁵ cf. GC24, 97

⁴⁶ cf. GC24, 99

⁴⁷ GC24, 240

Once we know formulations and perspectives, it is on these points that we must put the emphasis: lived experience, community, communication and direction.

5. The many areas of communion

Another main line of thought of which to take advantage in reading the Exhortation concerns the community. Its novelty lies in the mission of communion which is entrusted to consecrated persons. The reflection moves in fact along two lines: one, which looks towards the internal aspect of the community, takes up and confirms what was included in the earlier document *Fraternal Life in Community, Congregavit nos in unum*;⁴⁸ the other concerns external aspects.

Starting from Vatican II, all Institutes have brought about the change from community, understood prevalently as living in common, to the experience of communion. The former emphasizes the importance of the structures which regulate the common life. The latter is concerned with mutual love, the sharing of projects, deep communication and shared responsibility.

We too, through a process of accent and balance, have brought into charismatic unity the two elements indispensable for a real and testifying community presence: the spiritual element (brotherhood in Christ expressed in unity of hearts and quality of interpersonal relationships); and the other more visible, the "common life" or life in common, which consists in living together in a particular religious house, in taking part in common activities, and in fulfilling pastoral commitments with common resolve. "It is clear that 'fraternal life' will not automatically be achieved by observance of the norms which regulate common life; but it is evident that common life is designed to greatly

⁴⁸ cf. CIVCSVA, 2 Febbraio 1994

favour fraternal life".⁴⁹ Our charism, our praxis, our mission and our characteristic family spirit lead to a close union of the two aspects: communion of spirit and community life.

To this blending, which calls for human maturity and spiritual depth, are attributed by our Constitutions significance and a certain pastoral impact, even to the extent of becoming an indispensable element in the mission. "To live and work together is for us Salesians a fundamental requirement and a sure way of fulfilling our vocation. This is why we come together in communities, where our love for each other leads us to share all we have in a family spirit, and so create communion between person and person".⁵⁰

The GC23 sees it as a sign, school and environment of faith for the young,⁵¹ the preferential place for ongoing formation for the Salesians,⁵² a testifying presence in the locality,⁵³ a centre of communion and participation,⁵⁴ the centre for organic pastoral work,⁵⁵ and the promoting of vocations.⁵⁶

The GC24 went on to specify, from a theoretical standpoint and practical applications, what is meant by *animating nucleus* and the internal conditions needed for its realization: charismatic identity, unity in spirit and in planning, the knowledge and practice of the preventive system, interior apostolic conviction, creativity, and the ability for communication. It also studied the concrete forms for exercising such an assignment: care to get involved, participation, distribution of responsibilities, formation processes.

While this stimulating picture is being absorbed by the common mentality, we too are experiencing the impact of the ex-

⁴⁹ Congregavit nos in unum, 3

⁵⁰ C 49

⁵¹ cf. GC23, 216-218

⁵² cf. GC23, 222

⁵³ cf. CGC23, 225-226

⁵⁴ cf. GC23, 232-234

⁵⁵ cf. GC23, 239-246

⁵⁶ cf. GC23, 252

ternal and internal phenomena which are testing the community and communion. Among the former is the demand for more personal freedom, the consumerism which leads to the personal possession of goods, and the communications explosion. Among the others we find the reduction in numbers, the broadening of the real and potential fields of work, the pressure of new and urgent needs, and a new relationship with external elements.

The Exhortation strongly emphasizes the indispensable value of fraternal life for the renewal and efficacy of the mission.⁵⁷ John Paul II had already made the point some years ago in an address to the plenary meeting of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life: "The whole fruitfulness of religious life depends on the quality of fraternal life in common. Moreover the present renewal of the Church and in religious life is characterized by a quest for communion and community".⁵⁸

The confirmation of this is found in a deeper analysis of the Trinitarian dimension, from which come the ecclesiological and anthropological consequences put forward once again not only as a paradigm of reciprocal relationships but of actual presence, the cause and origin of communion among religious. "Even fraternal life is put forward as an eloquent witness to the Trinity. It proclaims the Father, who desires to make of all humanity one family. It proclaims the Incarnate Son, who gathers the redeemed into unity. It proclaims the Holy Spirit as the principle of unity in the Church".⁵⁹

The community functions therefore not only with regard to work. It is a human space in which dwells the Trinity",⁶⁰ where God is present and brings about through the memory of the Lord, the love in which we commit ourselves and want to be rooted, and the unity of those who present themselves as followers of Christ.

⁵⁷ cf. VC 72

⁵⁸ Giovanni Paolo II, Address to the CIVCSVA, 20 Nov. 1992

⁵⁹ VC 21

⁶⁰ VC 41

Experts of communion

Communion is also the content and end of the mission. "Before the coming of fraternal life, perhaps never was known so great a mission in so explicit a manner".⁶¹

Fortified by a personal experience which is God's gift, consecrated persons, whether as individuals or communities, are called to expand, strengthen or recreate communion: they become "experts of communion",⁶² the leaven of unity and workers for reconciliation.

Multiple are the environments in which they work. In the universal Church communion is given greater power by the fraternal testimony and work of all consecrated life, by the practical solidarity with which consecrated persons head for the frontiers of evangelization, by their availability for meeting urgent needs of the Church, by their union with the Holy Father. We should not overlook the impact on the universal communion deriving from our presence, from the action between young people and adults, from the profession of faith, and from our words and firm attitudes. The giving of a daily personal contribution to the unity of Christ's body stimulates our spirituality: "Our love for Christ necessarily gives rise to our love for his Church, the People of God, the centre of unity and communion of all the forces working for the Kingdom".⁶³

"A significant role", says the Exhortation, "is played by consecrated persons within the particular Churches. ...The charisms of the consecrated life can greatly contribute to the building up of charity in the particular Churches".⁶⁴ This is a second environment where communion becomes a task of our mission. As practical methods for this are quoted "cooperation between consecrated

⁶¹ CIARDI F., *La Comunione in "Vita Consecrata"*, in *Religiosi in Italia*, n. 294, p. 120

⁶² cf. VC 46

⁶³ C 13

⁶⁴ VC 48

persons and Bishops for the organic development of diocesan pastoral life",⁶⁵ the care and inserting of one's own spiritual patrimony and pastoral practice, dialogue between superiors and bishops, care by the latter for the charism sought and welcomed by the religious.⁶⁶

This is a necessary aspect in view of the education of youth to the faith, in which ecclesial experience is indispensable but not at all easy. It is interesting to recall how in his particular Church, tormented by doctrinal and pastoral tensions, Don Bosco did not side with either party but adhered to the crucial point of communion. In the solution of personal conflicts he saw to it that the good of the Church prevailed over any natural desire for justice.

The Exhortation presents the mission of communion also in another setting: that of the *relationships between consecrated persons*. "Those who are united by a common commitment to the following of Christ and are inspired by the same Spirit cannot fail to manifest visibly, as branches of the one Vine, the fullness of the Gospel of love. Mindful of the spiritual friendship which often united founders and foundresses during their lives, consecrated persons, while remaining faithful to the character of their own Institute, are called to practise a fraternity which is exemplary and which will serve to encourage the other members of the Church in the daily task of bearing witness to the Gospel".⁶⁷

For this too, practical indications are given: knowledge, friendship, active participation in the organisms of animation and coordination, communication and inter-exchange so as "to discern God's plan in this troubled moment of history, in order better to respond to it with appropriate works of the apostolate".⁶⁸

In the report on the State of the Congregation I wrote: "There is a much greater sensitivity and openness to a broader communion

⁶⁵ VC 48

⁶⁶ cf. VC 48

⁶⁷ VC 52

⁶⁸ VC 53

realized between Institutes of Consecrated Life. Attention is being given to what is happening in the area of religious life, and valid contributions are being made in events and organisms of coordination (CISM, CLAR, preparation of the Synod, common commitments, etc)".⁶⁹ It is a criterion to be maintained and a path we must continue to follow.

The possibility must not be undervalued of establishing systematic and stable forms of collaboration with other religious for specific enterprises which call for convergence of techniques and resources. This has been shown already through study-centres. The complex nature of the present context and the new demands of evangelization lead not only to bringing about a concordance of settings and lines of action, but also to the launching of some common initiatives.

There is then also the aspect of the *locality* or the human community, considered immediately and in a broad manner: sector, town, country, world. In these there emerges the need for aggregation, the call for peace, the desire for reconciliation and for dignified and reassuring living conditions. To the old situations of conflict now present in new family, social and political forms, are added new examples typical of our time, such as cultural extraneousness, emargination, various kinds of fundamentalism, and the opposing theories. Often they end up in real or psychological divisions, rejection or inattentive oversight.

To be experts of communion means being able to create moments and motives of aggregation, to mediate in daily situations of conflict, to inculcate the desire for peaceful living together, to foster humanizing structures and circumstances, to be peaceful in the strong sense of the word, to concentrate on the quality of relationships, to work for the overcoming of social or ethnic prejudices, to becoming ever more able to dialogue with people of different mentalities. Some are hoping for the setting up of interna-

⁶⁹ VECCHI J. E., *La società di San Francesco di Sales nel sessennio 1990 - 95*, 4.3 n. 276

tional and intercultural communities which will be workshops for the welcoming and exploitation of diversities, and of gaining experience in this line.

There is a final indication given in the Exhortation, to which we need to give attention at the present day because it links up with the commitment asked of us by the GC24: it is that of the *laity*, and particularly in the case of "associates and volunteers".⁷⁰

Let us read again the passage I quoted earlier in connection with spirituality: "Today, often as a result of new situations, many Institutes have come to the conclusion that their charism can be shared with the laity. The laity are therefore invited to share more intensely in the spirituality and mission of these Institutes".⁷¹ The affirmation is supported by a rich collection of charismatic, ecclesial and pastoral motives.

I will not delay on a comparison of indications and motives with those put forward in our capitular document on the same matter. The convergence is too evident to pass unobserved. Our purpose in going through this part of the Exhortation has only been to emphasize that what we are trying to realize is what the Church herself proposes and to show that all these aspects are linked together and mutually reinforce each other. Within them are working those who, according to the same Exhortation, are living and spreading the "spirituality of communion"⁷² and become "witnesses and architects of the plan for unity which is the crowning point of human history in God's design".⁷³

A mission field ('areopagus') for us: education

It will not have escaped your notice that the first field enu-

⁷⁰ cf. VC 54-56

⁷¹ VC 54

⁷² cf. VC 51-57

⁷³ VC 46

merated for the mission of consecrated persons is the "world of education".⁷⁴

Education is understood here in its widest and comprehensive meaning: as the growth of the individual and as the sum total of the mediations at his service to make him aware of his being and his destiny, to give him an adequate knowledge of reality, to develop his ability for evaluation and choice, to open him to sense and mystery, and to proclaim to him God's word.

The model of the educator is in fact "the Master of the Church's inner life, who penetrates the innermost depths of every human heart and knows the secret unfolding of history".⁷⁵

In this broad perspective is to be understood the educative function of the Church in the world. The education of individuals and of humanity is not an optional manifestation of charity or one partial aspect of the mission; it is at its very heart and a way it cannot fail to follow. As God saves man by educating him in what concerns his conscience and from it awaits a response, so the Church exercises her ministry by enlightening, proposing and challenging his freedom. She becomes the mediator for the educating action of God, the prolongation and realization of the teaching Christ gave to his disciples and to the crowds, the sign of the action of the Spirit which transforms hearts.

And so everything in her has an educative character: presence, proclamation, celebration and various services. It all tends to give to man the consciousness of his being, to help him to discover and embrace what is good and noble and eternal which the Creator has placed within him, and to open him to the relationship which constitutes him to dignity with the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

In this context is inserted the educative commitment of consecrated persons, first and foremost because of their choice of the

⁷⁴ cf. VC 96-97

⁷⁵ VC 96

life of the specific Institutes which require it, or of the professional requirements they take on. In this sense all forms of consecrated life are strongly educative in respect of man and in the first place of Christians.

The sign they offer, the values they make their own, the service they provide, are all a thrust and help towards growth in humanity and faith.

Some consecrated persons take up their educational work by profession and make of it the setting where they live their radical option for God and the service of their neighbour, especially those most in need.

The mission leads these religious to work in three settings. The first includes everything concerning the *integral advancement* of the person, according to the needs realized in concrete situations. Their work in this field, inspired by the love of Christ and as his followers, is true evangelization.

The second setting covers *Christian initiation*, the education of those who have made the faith option or show themselves disposed to consider it. Here it is a matter of accompanying those concerned as they live in history as children of God, incorporated in the existence of Christ and members of his people. Catechesis and the formation of an evangelical mentality are its principal parts.

The third setting is the humanization and *evangelization of culture* as a collective form of education following the process described by *Evangelii nuntiandi* "for affecting and as it were upsetting, through the power of the Gospel, mankind's criteria of judgement, determining values, points of interest, lines of thought, sources of inspiration and models of life".⁷⁶

This frame of reference is indispensable for grasping in a realistic manner the challenges made to the mission of religious who are educators, and the responses they can make.

⁷⁶ cf. EN 19

Education understood in this way is not limited to the scholastic sector nor only to institutions specifically known as such, even though these represent the hard core of the social effort, to offer opportunities of prevention, retrieval and growth to all. The kind of society in which we are living has multiplied the problems of both young people and adults. To the pattern of education which for so long was served up for the majority has been added the need for adaptation to a host of situations which become ever more differentiated as society becomes more complex. Rightly does the Exhortation link with education a "renewed and loving commitment to the intellectual life",⁷⁷ on the part of religious, and their presence in the world of social communication.⁷⁸

This field of education has been sometimes called an "areopagus", a place of open dialogue and not just an institutional system, precisely because of the need to set up a dialogue on the sense of an open life, with participants of various orientations and with no axes to grind, because we need to face up to the new demands of life and culture with new initiatives.

For us, all this that we have said points to a professional field of application: *young people, and especially the poorest of them*. They are the test of the realism of our love and our ability to proclaim the Gospel. It is providential for them and for the Church that someone will come down to street level to start up a dialogue with them.

The Exhortation recognizes that consecrated persons, "because of their special consecration, their particular experience of the gifts of the Spirit, their constant listening to the word of God, their practice of discernment, their rich heritage of pedagogical traditions built up since the establishment of their Institute, and their profound grasp of spiritual truth..., are able to offer a specific contribution to the work of other educators".⁷⁹

⁷⁷ VC 98

⁷⁸ cf. VC 99

⁷⁹ VC 96

Don Bosco's words: "The youngsters should not only be loved, but they themselves should know that they are loved"⁸⁰ has a place in the memory of the "admirable examples of consecrated persons who have sought and continue to seek holiness through their involvement in education, while at the same time proposing holiness as the goal of education".⁸¹

It reminds us that for us education is not only a consequence of the quest for sanctification but the human setting in which it acquires its typical physiognomy, because it contains, in line with the nature of our vocation, also the moment of grace. The primacy we give to God in our life and the following of Christ becomes translated into a desire to bring them to life in the heart of the new generations, so that they may find there sense and happiness.

The unity with which we live the two aspects moulds the physiognomy of our spirituality which is identified with the preventive system and creates the style of our communion as "family spirit".⁸²

John Paul II had already pointed this out to us in the letter *Iuvenum Patris*: "I want especially to consider in Don Bosco the fact that he realized his personal holiness through an educative commitment lived with zeal and an apostolic heart, and that at the same time he knew how to propose holiness as the practical objective of his pedagogy. An interchange between "education" and "holiness" is indeed the characteristic aspect of his personality".⁸³

Conclusion

Dear confreres, I wanted to recall your attention to the Exhortation which sheds light on consecrated life to encourage you to read it receptively and creatively on your own account. I have

⁸⁰ Letter from Rome 1884, MB XVII, 110

⁸¹ VC 96

⁸² cf. C 16

⁸³ IP 5

dwelt only on some aspects of it which I consider more immediate at the present moment in view of the actuation of the GC24.

I think in fact that when we look at the more fundamental implications of the GC24 we need to express hope in the resources of our vocation, give preferential attention to our spiritual life and its communication, become men of communion, and rethink the contribution which education brings to the realization of vocation, spirituality and communion.

I finish this letter on 8 September, Mary's birthday. In many Provinces professions take place around this feast. From the information we receive from around the world we see once again that "the Lord loves the Congregation, wants to see it vibrant for the good of the Church and never ceases to enrich it with new apostolic energy".⁸⁴ I myself have had the satisfaction of receiving ten first professions in our novitiate of Oktiabrskij, near Moscow, and another twenty-two at Smarhon (Belarus).

This is an encouragement to us to present with confidence to young people the consecrated life and our experience of it as followers of Don Bosco.

May Mary most holy, who welcomed God's gift and sang his praises in the *Magnificat*, help us to live with joy our experience of pastoral charity, so as to share it with simplicity in our communities and communicate it efficaciously to the young.

My cordial greetings to you all

and may your work be rich in fruitful results.



⁸⁴ *Cost.* 22

CRITERIA AND GUIDELINES CONCERNING THE ROLE OF COORDINATION OF THE REGIONAL COUNCILLOR FOR "AFRICA AND MADAGASCAR"

We publish the document by which the Rector Major, with the consent of the General Council, established the rights and duties of the Regional Councillor for "Africa and Madagascar", in compliance with GC24, 194.

Prot. n. 96/0917

The GC24, in redefining the GROUPS OF PROVINCES (GC24 193-194), set up the group "AFRICA AND MADAGASCAR", leaving the following guidelines to the Rector Major and his Council:

"The Rector Major with his Council will specify the responsibility of the Regional in coordinating the other salesian foundations in Africa, in the spirit of n.310 of the GC23" (GC24, 194).

To give effect to this guideline the General Council, in their meeting of 7 June 1996, first examined the situation of the salesian foundations in Africa-Madagascar.

1. REALITY OF OUR FOUNDATIONS IN AFRICA

The five circumscriptions which constitute the "AFRICA AND MADAGASCAR" Group of Provinces, at the date of this document, are: **AFC** (Central Africa), **AFE** (East Africa), **AFM** (Southern Africa), **MDG**

(Madagascar), **ZMB** (Zambia-Malawi-Zimbabwe). But in addition to these circumscriptions, the salesian reality in Africa presents a variegated panorama, with reference primarily to the coordination of the works. These include:

1.1 *DELEGATIONS OF VARIOUS PROVINCES*, of which the Delegate is appointed by the Rector Major after appropriate consultation:

- **AFO**: Benin (SBI), Burkino Faso (SMA), Ivory Coast (SBA), Guinea Conakry (MEG), Mali (SVA), Senegal (SLE), Togo (SCO and SSE).
- **AFT**: Cameroons (FPA-ILT), Congo (FPA), Gabon (FPA), Equatorial Guinea (SMA).

1.2 *DELEGATIONS OF A PROVINCE*

ANGOLA: (BSP Province with the commitment of all the Provinces of the LATIN AMERICA, SOUTHERN CONE, GROUP); **ETHIOPIA** (ILE and MOR Provinces); **MOZAMBIQUE** (POR Province).

1.3 *FOUNDATIONS COORDINATED INFORMALLY*

NIGERIA (ICP and IAD); **GHANA** (GEK); **LIBERIA** (GBR); **SIERRA LEONE** (SUO with involvement of SUE); **CENTRAL AFRICA REPUBLIC** (BEN); **CIAD** (IVO); **EGYPT** (MOR); **CAPE VERDE** (POR); **LIBYA** (PLN); **MOROCCO** (FPA); **TUNISIA** (IRL-Malta Delegation).

This reality, which reflects various processes of coordination and consolidation, suggests different relationships on the part of the Regional Councillor.

Keeping in mind the situation described, in the context of "Project Africa" and of the attributions given by the Constitutions and Regulations to every Regional Councillor (cf. C 140; R 135-137), the Rector Major and his Council have established **certain criteria**

and guidelines. They have specified the tasks and relationships of the Regional Councillor for Africa and Madagascar, with regard to both the other members of the General Council and the Provincials and Provinces functioning in the Region.

2. SOME FUNDAMENTAL CRITERIA

2.1 *Criterion of UNITY*

The GC24, in deciding to set up a Group of Provinces for “Africa and Madagascar”, manifested its intention of fostering a growing coordination between ALL THE FOUNDATIONS of this geographical area. Consequently, the work required of the Regional Councillor for “a more direct liaison between the Provinces and the Rector Major”, for “looking after the interests of the provinces assigned to them”, and “to foster in the General Council a knowledge of the local situation” (C 140), must include – albeit in different ways – all the salesian foundations of Africa and Madagascar.

2.2 *Criterion of INCULTURATION*

The accomplishment of the SALESIAN MISSION is the objective of every structure of government and animation (cf. C 121). With the constitution of the group of Provinces “Africa and Madagascar”, the intention is to foster and animate INCULTURATION of the salesian charism in these territories. The Regional Councillor is called upon to promote and animate this process in all the foundations of the Region.

2.2 *Criterion of MISSIONARY RECIPROCITY*

The work of the Regional Councillor for Africa and Madagascar should foster the commitment of the Provinces of origin with the missionary foundations and the bond of missionary animation of the latter with the respective Provinces.

3. GUIDELINES ON SOME CONCRETE ASPECTS

3.1 *Coordination of the foundations*

The Regional Councillor will:

- take care of the growth and consolidation of the foundations in the Region “AFRICA-MADAGASCAR”, in dialogue with those locally responsible, and always within the constitutional limitations of his office;
- promote missionary animation, together with the Councillor for the Missions;
- in agreement with the Councillor for Formation, concern himself with the creation of formative structures in the Region, with an overall view.

3.2 *New foundations in the Region*

It belongs to the Councillor for the Missions – in agreement with the Rector Major and his Council – to follow the process for foundations in countries of the Region where the Congregation is not yet present. For the launching of new foundations in countries where salesian houses and works already exist, the initiative belongs to the respective Provincial with his Council. But in both cases the Regional Councillor for Africa and Madagascar must be brought in.

It is the task of the Regional Councillor to follow up the implementing of agreements signed between the juridical circumscriptions existing in Africa-Madagascar and the Provinces which gave rise to salesian foundations in the context of Project Africa. Similarly it will be his task to promote agreements for new circumscriptions which may be created in the future.

3.3 *Extraordinary visitations in the Region*

Keeping in mind what is set out in a general form in art.104 of the Regulations, the following aspects are specified with regard to particular situations of the Africa-Madagascar Region.

3.3.1 *Extraordinary visitations of Delegations set up by various nations:*

In conformity with the objectives of coordination desired by the GC24, it is deemed convenient that the foundations set up by several nations (cf.1.1) should have their own specific extraordinary visitation and that this be carried out by the Regional Councillor for Africa and Madagascar. The overall view that he can pass on to the Rector Major and his Council and, in consequence, the unity of the guidelines which the Rector Major can give, will thus be of greater help in the salesian development of a zone.

3.3.2 *Extraordinary visitation of the Delegations of a Province:*

To foster coordination, the extraordinary visitation of these Delegations (Angola, Ethiopia and Mozambique) will be made by the Regional Councillor for Africa and Madagascar, and will preferably coincide with the extraordinary visitation in the Province to which they belong.

3.3.3 *Informally coordinated foundations*

Those foundations too which depend only and directly on their own Province (cf. 1.3) must in practice feel themselves part of the Africa-Madagascar Region.

The Regional Councillor must visit these foundations, as opportunity offers, and will or will not make the extraordinary visitation according to the mandate he receives from the Rector Major.

For the informally coordinated foundations which are moving towards a more definitive situation (e.g. the constitution of delegations), it is opportune that the extraordinary visitation be made by the Regional Councillor for Africa and Madagascar and at the same period of time.

3.4 *Meetings and Team Visits*

In line with the practice followed in the past, all the foundations in the Region will be involved in the realization of meetings for animation and in Team Visits.

3.5 The reference person for Provincials in the General Council

For juridical practices relating to African foundations, the Provincials should normally get in touch with the Regional Councillor for Africa and Madagascar. They may also approach the Regional Councillor of the Region to which the Province belongs. The two Councillors will exchange information and act in mutual agreement.

The presentation of *practices in the General Council* will in any event be made by either of the Regional Councillors by mutual agreement.

Rome, 30 June 1996

4.1 Chronicle of the Rector Major

With the General Chapter finished and after some days of meetings of the General Council, the Rector Major went to Turin-Valdocco on 25 April to take part in the festivities of the Provincial Community of the Special Circumscription for Piedmont and the Valle d'Aosta, commemorating the 150th anniversary of the beginning of the Oratory at Valdocco.

On 28 April he visited Alassio for the feast of the past-pupils and the presentation of the volume outlining the history of the Salesians in that town. The two events formed part of the centenary celebrations. The Mayor of Alassio conferred on the Rector Major the decoration making him in effect an honorary citizen of the town.

From 22 to 25 May he took part at Ariccia in the 49th Assembly of Superiors General who spent some days discussing the Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consecrata*.

On 2 June he was present at the National Assembly of the Salesian Sports Clubs of Italy. He said Mass for the participants and attended the closing session.

From 15 to 19 July, with the members of the General Council, he visited the salesian holy places: Colle Don Bosco, Turin and Mornese. At Castelnuovo Don Bosco he received honorary citizenship from the town's Mayor, and in the evening of the 17th in the basilica of Mary Help of Christians at Valdocco he presided at the solemn Eucharistic Celebration with the confreres of the circumscription, at the end of which he signed the first Strenna of the new six-year period and deposited it on the altar of Don Bosco.

From 12 to 28 August he visited the Circumscription of Eastern Europe, and travelled around the salesian foundations in the various component countries. In Lithuania at Vilnius he blessed the newly finished residence of the community, and the foundation stone of the church which is now building. At Palamonas-Kaunas he inaugurated the freshly restored church and witnessed the first profession of two Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. Here too the Rector Major blessed a new residence for the

community, and took the opportunity to meet a numerous group of animators who had come from Italy to help in running the summer project for the young.

After greeting the confreres of Rumsiskés, he went on to Ukraine. At Korostysiv he celebrated Mass for the people and met with a group of young persons from various houses of the Circumscription for a day of reflection. He observed the work on the parish church, which was being rebuilt and should be ready for opening on May 24.

At Leopoli in Ukraine he took part in the concelebration in the Greek-Byzantine rite at which Bishop Sapelak presided, blessed the site destined for the Centre of Professional Formation, and visited the house which will be an aspirantate, and the works for the Latin-rite Catholics. The visit to Ukraine ended at Odessa, where he met the Salesians and Daughters of Mary Help of Christians of the area, and called at the various foundations.

He then went on to Belarus. At Smarhon, before a huge crowd of people, twenty-two young Salesians renewed their profession; they came from five different countries: Belarus, Lithuania, Russia, Ukraine and Georgia. Visits followed to our communities of Zuprany, Baruny and Lida.

The visit to Russia began in Siberia at Yakutsk, with the presence also of the confreres of Aldan. The Rector Major spent a day with them and met also many friends of the work who attended the Eucharistic celebration. He blessed the site where work is to begin immediately on the building of a youth centre and a house for the community.

Returning to Moscow, in the novitiate of Oktiabrskij he received the professions of twelve young men who were finishing their novitiate. They were the first novices from this novitiate; this was also the prime motive for the Rector Major's visit. The programme continued with a celebration, various meetings, an inspection of the Moscow Church of the Immaculate Conception, and it ended at Gatchina (St Petersburg).

During the visit the Rector Major had the opportunity to meet three Nuntios or Apostolic Delegates, and the different Bishops, assessing with them the political and pastoral situation (Minsk, Kiev, Moscow).

Coming back to Rome, he presided on 8 September at the temporary profession of seven new members of the Don Bosco Secular Institute, made privately in the chapel of the Generalate. In the afternoon he received the first pro-

fessions of the novices of Lanuvio.

On 18 September, with the members of the Council who were in Rome, he took part in the opening of the twentieth General Chapter of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians at their Generalate. He presided at the Eucharistic Concelebration and participated, with a message, in the solemn inauguration of the event, which is of interest to the whole Salesian Family.

Finally on 29 September at Turin he presented the missionary crucifix to 33 Salesians from some twenty Provinces from all five continents.

4.2 Chronicle of the General Council

The first plenary session of the General Council newly elected by the GC24 took place at the Generalate from 14 May to 12 July 1996. It was an exacting period with 37 full sittings in addition to meetings of groups and committees. Earlier, after the elections and during the General Chapter itself, there had been some meetings to fix certain calendar dates, to deal with some requests from Provinces, and also to proceed to the appointment of a Provincial for the Genoa Province, for which the consultation results were already available.

After the Chapter, and after a brief period left to the Councillors for rest and preparation, and also where necessary for a rapid journey to various Provinces, the plenary session began on 14 May, feast of St Mary Domenica Mazzarello.

The Rector Major, introducing the work, pointed out its importance because of the obligation during the coming six years to study some aspects of the functioning of the Council itself, and to outline a programme for the purpose. To these objectives had to be added the demanding task of the appointment of numerous Provincials, and the fulfilment of the so-called "ordinary administration" regarding matters for the Provinces (appointment of Provincial Councillors, approvals of Rectors, opening and canonical erection or closure of houses and/or other activities, matters concerning confreres, and economic and administrative matters).

A brief summary of the principal points dealt with now follows.

1. *Appointment of Provincials.*

As already indicated, an important task of the Council was the appointment of a good number of Provincials. The procedure followed was that which has become the normal practice of the Council:

careful examination of the results of the consultation presented by the Regional Councillor, discernment in the Council itself accompanied by exchange of opinions and by prayer, and voting on the candidates indicated.

The following is a list, in alphabetical order, of Provincials appointed during the session: Acosta Rodriguez Felipe for the Province of Córdoba, Spain; Bisio Enrique for Uruguay; Bregolin Adriano for Verona, Italy; Churio Baquedano David for Valencia, Spain; D'Souza Tony for Bombay, India; Gallardo Luis Felipe for Mexico, Mexico; Guerra Ibañez Jesús for Madrid, Spain; Masiero Bruno for Venezuela; Murru Mario for the Middle East; Sandrini Marcos for Porto Alegre, Brazil; Valls i Ferrer Domènec for Barcelona, Spain; Winkler Josef for Campo Grande, Brazil; and during the GC24 itself Colajacomo Giorgio was appointed for Genoa, Italy. At n.5.4 of the present number of the AGC are given some items of information about the individual Provincials appointed.

2. *Setting out of the Council's work and the first lines of programming.*

The biggest task that the Rector Major asked of the Councillors dur-

ing the session, and which occupied the greater part of their time in terms of sittings and group work, concerned the setting out of the Council's work in view of a more efficacious animation; it concluded with the drawing up of some main lines of programming for the six years ahead. The Rector Major himself foresaw in the working calendar three successive and interrelated stages:

1. Reflection on the structure and functioning of the service of authority at world level;
2. Study of the document of the GC24;
3. Elements for programming the six-year period at two levels:
 - elements of "common" programming;
 - elements of programming for sectors and regions.

We may look briefly at some of the principal aspects of these individual stages.

2.1 *Reflection on the structure and functioning of the service of authority at world level.*

Introducing the reflection on this point, the Rector Major indicated its objective as being the study of the roles and tasks of the General Council, its functioning, its internal coordination and its linkage with

other organisms of the Congregation. And this not only in terms of the practical functioning of the Council itself, but to understand in depth the significance it has in and for the Congregation, assuming and living also the inherent spiritual attitudes. It is clear that the fundamental point of reference for such a study is provided by the Constitutions and General Regulations; but it is also important to refer back to the practice of the Congregation and the specific demands of the six years ahead.

With these objectives in mind and also the points of reference indicated, the General Council – after a preliminary examination in two study groups – analyzed more deeply the main aspects, as regards both structure and functioning of the service of authority at world level, and reached some indications which can form the basis of a kind of a *vademecum* for the work of the next six years.

The various aspects gradually developed concern:

- Principles, criteria and attitudes drawn from art.120-124 of the Constitutions (service to the charism and mission, and service to unity in diversity; in communion and dependence on the Rector Major; in the spirit of Don Bosco);

- Aspects specifically regarding the service of unity of the Rector Major;

- Some criteria of work for the Council itself and criteria concerning relationships between the Councillors;

- Specific aspects of the service of the Regional Councillors; regional and interprovincial structures;

- Extraordinary visitations and Team Visits;

- Some reference to the role of the Secretary General and Procurator General.

2.2 *Study of the document of the GC24.*

In connection with the programming of the six years ahead, it was considered important for the General Council as such to study the document of the GC24, which without doubt represents the immediate point of reference for such programming. The Rector Major emphasized the fact that in this phase the study did not have the purpose of identifying strategies for implementing the Chapter's deliberations (which will take place in a later phase), but of acquiring the deepest and most accurate understanding of the content and various aspects of the document, as regards

both the implementation left to the General Council and to the animation of the Provinces and communities of the Congregation.

In line with these objectives, the Council (on the basis of a preliminary study by a smaller group), reflected on the following principal aspects:

1° Some *elements needing further examination*, according to the indications of the document:

- The ecclesiology of communion;
- Salesian spirituality;
- The salesian community and its commitments in the light of the GC24;
- The Salesian Movement.

2° Some *elements to be given priority* in view of the programme:

- Formation;
- Practical plans and processes for implementing the Chapter at various levels (the importance of a "projectual mentality" was emphasized);
- Communication.

The reflection led to a more complete and convinced assimilation of the document, especially in view of the action of government.

2.3 Elements for programming the six-year period.

On the basis of the results of the reflection on the service of author-

ity and of the study of the document of the GC24, the General Council set about drawing up the first fundamental lines for the programming of activities for the coming six years. The objective was to identify the main contents of the programme, and reach a first essential draft.

The work was spread over two successive phases:

(a) *The elements of "common" programming*, i.e. which must permeate the specific programming of each particular sector.

As the first important step, four principal nuclei were singled out:

1. The realization of the GC24: relationships between SDBs and Laity;
2. Significance of the salesian presence, in different contexts and activities;
3. SDB communities and their primary task of being and functioning as an "animating nucleus";
4. Formation: in the sense of adapting the quality of the Salesian to the needs of modern culture and different cultural contexts.

(b) *elements of programming for individual sectors and regions.*

For each of the sectors of activity (formation, youth pastoral work, salesian family, social communication, missions, finances) as also for

each of the regions established by the General Chapter, certain lines of programming have been laid down. Starting from the knowledge and state of the sector or region, in general and in order of priority for the six years, the following were indicated: the areas considered primary for the work of animation, adequate ways of working, the persons involved and the functioning of organisms of animation.

Mention was made too of the areas of commitment of the Vicar General and of the General Secretariat.

Concluding the overall work for this first phase of programming, the Rector Major emphasized how in the first place it had led to a deeper understanding of the role of animation of the General Council and the acquiring of a dynamic manner of working based on the principles of discernment. There was a shared commitment for unity (ideal and functional) and fraternal rapport had been established in communication and participation as the way of working. The lines of programming traced out are a first substantial draft, which will be taken up again and further defined in the next session.

3. *Other matters dealt with.*

Some other arguments were studied by the Council during the present session. The following were among the more important:

3.1 *Reflection on the Exhortation "Vita Consecrata".*

The Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consecrata*, promulgated while the GC24 was in progress, was (as the Rector Major said in his concluding address) "an important and significant fact" inserted in the Chapter's work "as a stimulus to the ever better understanding of our specific vocation in the Church, the gift of the charism we have received through the Founder, and the great horizons now open in the Church and in the world to us who are consecrated apostles" (cf. GC24, 228). The Exhortation throws light too on the obligation to implement the Chapter's guidelines.

For this very reason it was the Rector Major's wish that the Councilors should give some time to a deeper study of the pontifical document, from the standpoint of planning for the six years ahead, questioning themselves especially on aspects which concern more closely our charism and mission, and which must consequently be stressed in the animation of the

communities. In this line the Councillors offered some suggestions to the Rector Major for communication to the Congregation.

3.2 *Specific tasks of the Regional Councillor for Africa and Madagascar.*

With reference to the deliberation with which the GC24, in setting up the group "Africa and Madagascar", left to the Rector Major and his Council the task of "specifying the responsibility of the Regional in coordinating the other salesian foundations in Africa" (cf. GC24, 194), the General Council, starting from the present situation of salesian foundations in Africa, studied what has been done – especially in the past six years – in the development and coordination of Project Africa, following the indications of the GC23 (cf. GC23, 310) and of the long and short term prospects.

In this way the General Council defined the role and competence of the Regional in respect of the foundations and of the salesian confreres working in Africa and Madagascar, in relationship with other members of the General Council who are involved in some way. The Rector Major has promulgated the directives which emerged with a document published at n.3 (Rulings

and Directives) in the present issue of the AGC.

3.3 *Recognition of the Institute of the Daughters of the Queenship of Mary Immaculate as members of the Salesian Family.*

Acceding to the request made some time ago by the Superior General of the *Institute of the Daughters of the Queenship of Mary Immaculate* with headquarters at Bangkok, Thailand, the General Council – on the basis of a study made by the Department for the Salesian Family – decided that the Constitutions of this Institute were in conformity with the criteria laid down earlier for membership of the Salesian Family. The Successor of Don Bosco, therefore, as Father of the Family has officially recognized their membership in a letter of 18 July 1996 to the Superior General (cf. n.5.2).

4. *Pilgrimage to the places of the salesian origins.*

An event of particular significance during the session was that of the pilgrimage made by the Rector Major and the Council to seek light and strength for the next six years from a living contact with the places where our charism was born and subsequently developed.

The three days of pilgrimage (leaving aside two halfdays of travelling) was concentrated on the three most significant areas:

– *Castelnuovo and Colle Don Bosco* (Sunday 16 June), with a solemn concelebration in the Temple and visits to the places where Don Bosco was born and spent the years of his infancy (explained by Fr Natale Cerrato); meaningful too in the first part of the morning was the manifestation in the central square of Castelnuovo Don Bosco, where the Mayor conferred honorary citizenship on Fr Juan E. Vecchi, VIII Successor of Don Bosco;

– *The Oratory of Turin-Valdocco* (Monday 17 June), the place where Don Bosco, led by Mary Help of Christians, brought the charism to maturity by founding the Congregation, and from where it spread to the whole world; the visit in the morning to the places of Don Bosco, illustrated by Fr Tere-

sio Bosco, was crowned by the evening concelebration in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians with confreres and the Salesian Family, after which the Rector Major (after praying at Don Bosco's altar) signed the text of the *Strenna* for 1997;

– *Nizza Monferrato* (Tuesday 18 June, a.m.) and *Mornese* (p.m.), the places of Mother Mazzarello, with the guidance of the Provincial of Nizza (Sr Carla Castellino) in the morning and Sr Erta Cigolla (at Mornese in the afternoon). The Mornese visit closed with a concelebration in the morning of the 19th, with the FMA of the two communities, in the Temple of St Mary Domenica Mazzarello, before leaving to return to Rome.

On the way back there was a fraternal meeting for lunch in the salesian house of Pisa, with confreres, FMA and friends.

5.1 Strenna of the Rector Major for 1997

We publish the text of the Strenna of the Rector Major for the year 1997. It forms part of the preparation of the Jubilee of 2000, indicated by John Paul II for 1997 in the Apostolic Letter "Tertio millennio adveniente".

The text is as follows:

WITH OUR EYES FIXED
ON JESUS, THE FIRSTBORN
OF MANY BRETHREN,
LET US HELP THE YOUNG
TO WELCOME HIM IN FAITH

(cf. Heb 12,2).

5.2 Recognition of the Institute of the Daughters of the Queenship of Mary Immaculate, as members of the Salesian Family.

The following letter was sent by the Rector Major to the Superior General of the Institute of the Daughters of the Queenship of Mary Immaculate, with headquarters at Bangkok (Thailand), communicating the recognition of the Institute as a member of the Salesian Family.

Prot. n.96/1025.1

The Rev. Superior General
Maria CHANTHAWARODOM, DQM
Bangkok

Dear Reverend Sister,

It gives me great pleasure to inform you that on 12 July 1996, during a meeting of our General Council, the request you sent us in the name of the Institute for recognition as *members of the Salesian Family* was examined.

The Councillors expressed themselves in favour.

In my own name, as "successor of Don Bosco, the Father and centre of unity of the Salesian Family" (Const. SDB art.126), I endorse their opinion and communicate, to you in the first place, and to all the Groups of the Family the *recognition* which has been granted.

We reached this decision after reviewing a lengthy series of facts.

The antecedents

Already, in a letter dated 1.1.1977,

Fr Carlo della Torre had requested that the Institute he had founded be united to the Salesian Family.

The Founder himself in correspondence with the first Councillor General of the Salesians to have charge of the sector of the Salesian Family, wrote: "Concerning the membership of the Institute of the Queenship of Mary Immaculate in the Salesian Family, I believe that it is already an accepted fact... but it would be more pleasing if there were an official document of the Rector Major of the Congregation declaring it to be true. Our Institute certainly desires to have official recognition of membership of the Salesian Family, so that our linkage may be stronger" (Letter to Fr Giovanni Raineri, 2.4.1981).

The final request which you yourself sent to the Rector Major of the Salesians bears the date of 23 December 1994.

The situation the Congregation has lived through in the past two years has compelled us to delay consideration of the desired recognition, but we have admired the constancy with which the Institute has pursued its desire for membership, in the conviction that the formal gesture would provide a further stimulus to rediscovering the salesian roots of its vocation.

The first recognition

The present declaration is the first of its kind that it has fallen to my lot to make in the quality of Rector Major, since my election by the 24th General Chapter.

I recall the discussions and deeper study of the capitular assembly on the theme of the *Laity*. The Secular Institutes had an ideal and significant presence in our minds during our work; indirectly, the Institute of the Queenship of Mary Immaculate too was present in our perspectives for the spreading of the spirit of Don Bosco through the presence of lay people and members of the professions.

A second motive contributed to keeping your Institute in our reflections: when we spoke of the *Laity* reference was frequently made to a specific context, which can be described as pluricultural and plurireligious.

Your Institute has lived these experiences from its very foundation. Forming part, then, of Don Bosco's Family, you are called also to offer to the other Groups that contribution of thought and action which will facilitate activity and apostolate in environments of particular difficulty.

May Don Bosco continue to guide the activities, further growth,

and apostolic commitment of the Institute, and as his successor I feel myself linked with what you will succeed in doing.

The content of the recognition

There are many elements which bind the Institute to Don Bosco, and I would like to recall some of them, to emphasize their importance and the common commitment to development:

1° COMMITMENT TO THE YOUNG

This is the most significant of the points we share in Don Bosco's Family, because it is able to gather into one the efforts of all for the good of the young people for whom we work.

Your Constitutions declare (art. 4): *"The Institute of the Daughters of the Queenship of Mary Immaculate was founded for the purpose of renewing and extending the Kingdom of God by prayer and through various forms of activity in society under the protection of Mary, the Immaculate Queen. This mission is addressed to pagan and Christian peoples alike, and in particular to the young and especially the poorest of them, in collaboration with the local Church"*.

And art.45 states: *"Pastoral work*

for the young is an activity to which the Founder directs attention... the work of the education of the young ... Moreover the Institute preserves its commitment to begin new activities for the efficacious advancement of the education of youth: i.e. the oratory, professional centre, and other activities for helping youngsters, both directly and indirectly".

2° SALESIAN SPIRIT.

The spirit of Don Bosco, lived by the different Groups, constitutes the soul of the Salesian Family. Its care and cultivation ensure the rich values of the Family.

"During the revision of the Constitutions, the Institute became more clearly aware of the salesian patrimony passed on by the Founder, and studied more deeply the characteristics of the salesian spirit inherent in our charism". These words you wrote in the documents setting out the path the Institute has followed. And on this same road you must continue, to enrich yourselves and also others of the salesian spirit who share your educative and apostolic concerns.

I read with satisfaction: *"The ministry of the Rector Major of the Salesians and his representatives will help the Sisters to live the salesian spirit more intensely and to*

study it more deeply, as their Founder desired”.

3° PREVENTIVE SYSTEM

“We embrace the preventive system with gratitude and love for Don Bosco, taking him as the teacher and model of our apostolate” (cf. Constitutions, art.46).

Don Bosco remains for all of us who share in his spiritual Family, the practical reference point for how to work with young people and adults, so as to be efficacious in our proposals for human advancement and Christian growth.

A means for growth as a Family: the Common Identity Card

I thought it well to recall the three elements quoted above to in-

dicate the common responsibility and shared participation of all the Groups in the growth of the patrimony we have received.

Today the COMMON IDENTITY CARD recalls the fundamental aspects of the Family:

- the spiritual aspects
- the apostolic aspects
- the educative aspects
- the organizational aspects.

The reading and study of this last document, received as a gift from Fr Egidio Viganò, almost as his Will and Testament to the Salesian Family, will be a help to growth in communion and fellowship.

I assure you of a remembrance in my prayers.

Rome, 18 July 1996

Fr Juan E. VECCHI
Rector Major of the Salesians

5.3 The new General Council

The 24th General Chapter, in the elections which took place respectively on 18 March 1996 (for the Rector Major), 21-23 March (for the Vicar General and Departmental Councillors) and 2 April (for the Regional Councillors), elected the new General Council for the six-year period 1996-2002.

For purposes of official documentation, the composition of the Council is as follows:

Fr Juan E. VECCHI
Rector Major

Fr Luc VAN LOOY
Vicar General

Fr Giuseppe NICOLUSSI
Councillor for Formation

Fr Antoni DOMENECH i COROMINAS
Councillor for Youth Pastoral Work

Fr Antonio MARTINELLI
Councillor for the Salesian Family and Social Communication

Fr Luciano ODORICO
Councillor for the Missions

Fr Giovanni MAZZALI
Economer General

Fr Helvécio BARUFFI
Councillor for the Latin American (Southern Cone) Region

Fr Pascual CHAVEZ VILLANUEVA
Councillor for the Interamerican Region

Fr Joaquim D'SOUZA
Councillor for the Australia-Asia Region

Fr Giovanni FEDRIGOTTI
Councillor for the Region of Italy and the Middle East

Fr Filiberto RODRIGUEZ MARTIN
Councillor for the Region of Eastern Europe

Fr Antonio RODRIGUEZ TALLON
Councillor for the Region of Africa and Madagascar

Fr Albert VAN HECKE
Councillor for the Region of Northern Europe

Fr Francesco MARACCANI
continues as Secretary General

The following are brief biographical notes on the new Councillors who enter the General Council for the first time.

1. *Fr Antoni DOMENECH i COROMINAS, Councillor for Youth Pastoral Work.*

Born at Barcelona, Spain, 12 April 1943, he frequented the salesian school in the same city and, in response to God's call, went on to the novitiate at Arbós where he made

his first profession a year later on 16 August 1959.

After the study of philosophy and practical training he followed the theological course at Salamanca where he gained the Licentiate in Theology and was ordained priest, 1 March 1969.

A teacher and formation guide, he was rector at Sant Adrià del Besós from 1976 to 1982, and at the same time a provincial councillor; in 1982 he was appointed rector of the theological studentate of Martí Codolar where he remained until 1988 as rector, and subsequently stayed on in the same community as a teacher and formation guide, continuing also in the provincial council as delegate for youth pastoral work. He took part in the GC21 and GC23 as delegate of his province, and on 10 June 1994 was appointed Provincial of the Province of "Our Lady of Ransom" of Barcelona.

Now the GC24, on 22 March 1996, has elected him Councillor General for Youth Pastoral Work.

2. *Fr Giovanni MAZZALI*,
Economer General.

Giovanni Mazzali was born at Turin 1 February 1947. As a pupil at the salesian aspirantate of Ivrea his vocation matured as a follower of Don Bosco and he went on to the novitiate at Villa Moglia, where he

made his first religious profession 16 August 1964. After the study of philosophy and pedagogy and practical training, he frequented the course of theology at Maynooth in Ireland and was ordained priest at Cumiana 7 December 1974.

With the Licentiate in Theology and a doctorate in languages, as well as a Teacher's Certificate, he became a teacher and educator for several years in houses of the Central Province. He was then transferred to the Genoa Province and worked at Alasio, first as a teacher in the senior school and then, from 1987 as rector. On 18 May 1990 the Rector Major with his Council appointed him Provincial of the Genoa Province.

On 23 March 1996 the GC24 elected him Economer General.

3. *Fr Helvécio BARUFFI*, *Councillor for the Latin American (Southern Cone) Region*

Helvécio Baruffi was born 18 July 1944 at Luiz Alves, in the state of Santa Catarina, Brazil. Attracted to the salesian life, he made his novitiate in the house of Taquari and his first profession there on 31 January 1964.

With the study of philosophy and practical training behind him, he frequented the course in theology at Sao Paulo, Brazil, and gained the Li-

centiate in Theology. After priestly ordination at Massaranduba on 30 December 1973, he went on to obtain also the Licentiate in Letters and Philosophy. Subsequently he also took the course in spirituality at the UPS.

In the Province of Porto Alegre Fr Baruffi occupied various offices of responsibility. In 1977 he was appointed rector at Ponta Grossa, and three years later became director of novices, an office he held until 1989 when he was sent as rector to Viamao. From 1984 he was a provincial councillor. On 30 October 1990 he was called by the Rector Major with his Council to be Provincial of Porto Alegre.

The GC24 elected him as Regional Councillor for the Latin American (Southern Cone) Region.

4. *Fr Pascual CHAVEZ VILLANUEVA, Councillor for the Interamerican Region.*

Born on 14 December 1947 at Catorce, in the Province of San Luis Potosi (Mexico), Pascual Chavez was 11 when he entered the college of Saltillo. From there he went on to the novitiate of Coacalaco, where he made his first profession on 16 August 1964.

After philosophy and practical training he studied theology at Guadalajara, and was ordained

priest on 8 December 1973.

Sent to Rome for further studies he obtained the Licentiate in Sacred Scripture at the Pontifical Biblical Institute. He then returned to Mexico to be professor of Scripture in the theological studentate of Tlaquepaque, where in 1980 he also became rector. A member of the provincial council from 1986, in 1989 he was appointed Provincial of the Province of Guadalajara, an office he held for six years.

When the news reached him that the GC24 had elected him to the General Council, he was in Spain concluding his studies for the Doctorate in Sacred Scripture.

5. *Fr Joaquim D'SOUZA, Councillor for the Australia-Asia Region*

Joaquim D'Souza was born at Parel, Bombay, on 22 March 1945, and has been a Salesian since 24 May 1963, when he made his first religious profession at Yercaud at the end of his novitiate. After the post-novitiate and his first salesian experience in practical training, he went to Rome for studies in philosophy and theology, which he completed at Poona in India. He was ordained priest at Matunga, Bombay on 19 June 1975.

Called to commit himself to the formation of young confreres, he was soon entrusted with tasks of re-

sponsibility. In 1980 he was appointed rector at Poona, Koregaon Park, and in 1984 of the studentate of philosophy at Nasik. He was a provincial councillor from 1982, and in 1988 the Superiors appointed him Vice-Provincial; he was at the same time rector of the Provincial House. Subsequently on 30 November 1993 he became Provincial.

He was a delegate to the GC23, and the GC24 elected him Regional Councillor for the Australian-Asian Region.

6. *Fr Filiberto RODRIGUEZ MARTIN, Councillor for the Region of Eastern Europe*

Filiberto Rodriguez was born at Valsalabroso (Salamanca) 8 December 1942, the last of several brothers and sisters. The eldest sister is a Daughter of Charity, another is a Daughter of Mary Help of Christians and three of the brothers became Salesians (of whom one is dead).

He entered the aspirantate of Astudillo and subsequently the novitiate in the same house, making his first profession on 16 August 1960.

After philosophy and practical training he studied theology at Salamanca and was ordained priest 22 February 1970.

There followed some years of teaching and pastoral animation in the houses of Oviedo and Orense,

during which time he also completed his civil studies, and gained the Licentiate in Chemical Sciences at the University of Oviedo.

In 1976 he became rector of the aspirantate of Léon-Armunia, but a year later was asked to become provincial economer, an office he carried out efficiently until his appointment as Provincial 12 July 1988. At the end of his term of office he became rector at Orense in 1994.

The GC24 elected him as Regional Councillor for Eastern Europe.

7. *Fr Albert VAN HECKE, Councillor for the Region of Northern Europe*

Born 1 September 1941 at Sleidinge (Belgium), Albert Van Hecke was a pupil at the salesian school of Sint-Denijs-Westrem and later went on to the novitiate of Groot-Bijgaarden, where he made his first profession on 25 August 1942. He concluded the usual course of formation and first salesian experiences with priestly ordination at Oud-Heverlee on 12 September 1970.

He followed courses in moral and religious sciences at the University of Louvain, and dedicated himself to the mission of educator. In 1986 he was appointed rector of the house of Hechtel and three years later was transferred to be rector of the extensive salesian work of Sint-Denijs-

Westrem. After being a member of the provincial council from 1984, he was appointed Provincial in 1990.

The GC24 elected him as Regional Councillor for Northern Europe.

5.4 New Provincials

The following biographical information refers to new Provincials appointed in the session December '95 to January '96, and in the session of May-July 1996 after the GC24. The Provincials are listed in alphabetical order.

1. *Fr Felipe ACOSTA RODRIGUEZ, for CORDOBA, Spain.*

Fr Felipe Acosta Rodriguez succeeds *Fr Eusebio Muñoz* in the Province of St Dominic Savio, Cordoba, Spain.

Born at La Orotava (Tenerife) on 21 June 1940 he was a pupil at the salesian school in his native town, and after the novitiate made his first profession at San José del Valle on 16 August 1956. After philosophy and practical training he studied theology at Seville and was ordained priest at Sanlúcar la Mayor on 30 April 1967.

In addition to his teaching qualifications he obtained the Licentiate in Educational Sciences from the Salesian Pontifical University in Rome.

He was soon called to offices of responsibility. From 1972-1976 he was rector of the house of Ubeda, then for the next three years of the College of Córdoba, then of Granada-Cartuja (1982-87). From 1987 to 1990 he directed the community of Málaga and subsequently that of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria (1990-93). In 19932 he was again entrusted with the direction of the postnovitiate at Granada-Cartuja. For several different periods he was a member of the provincial council (1978-81, 1984-87, 1993-96).

2. *Fr Enrique BISIO, for URUGUAY*

Fr Amilcare Visentini has been succeeded as Provincial of Uruguay by *Fr Enrique Bisio*.

He was born 9 September 1943 at Salto (Uruguay) and his vocation matured while he attended the salesian school there. He made his novitiate at Montevideo-Manga followed by his first profession on 29 January 1963. Philosophy and pedagogical studies followed and then practical training, after which he frequented the courses in theology at Montevideo and was ordained in his native town on 27 October 1973.

After his first educative and pastoral assignments, he was appointed rector of the house of Mercedes in 1978, and then in 1980 of that of

Salto, from where in 1983 he went on to be rector of the aspirantate of Montevideo. From 1984 he was a member of the provincial council, and from 1989 rector and director of novices in the novitiate of Montevideo.

3. *Fr Adriano BREGOLIN, for VERONA, Italy.*

The new Provincial of the San Zeno Province of West Venice, with headquarters at Verona, is *Fr Adriano Bregolin*, who succeeds *Fr Gi-anantonio Bonato*.

He was born at Pegolotte-Cona (Venice) 16 October 1948. He frequented the salesian aspirantate of Bevilacqua and went on to the novitiate of Albarè (Verona) where he made his first profession on 16 August 1966.

He studied philosophy and pedagogy in the postnovitiate of Cison di Valmarino, and after practical training followed the theological course in the salesian studentate of Verona-Saval, finishing it at Trento where he was ordained priest on 27 May 1978. He then continued with academic studies, gaining the doctorate in modern languages.

His first priestly experiences were at Trento in the house for vocational guidance, of which he became rector in 1983. In 1986 he became a member of the provincial council,

and two years later because Vice-provincial for three years. From 1988 to 1994 he was also rector of the important 'Don Bosco' house of Verona. In 1990 he was a delegate of the Province to the GC23, and recently had been vice-rector at Padua. There he received the news of his appointment as Provincial.

4. *Fr David CHURIO BAQUEDANO, for VALENCIA, Spain.*

Fr David Churio Baquedano succeeds *Fr Candido Orduna* in the Province of St Joseph, Valencia (Spain).

David Churio comes originally from Navarra, having been born at Oricáin on 29 December 1935. He was a pupil at the salesian college of Pamplona and went on to the novitiate at Arbós, where he made his first profession on 16 August 1952.

After philosophy and practical training he studied theology at Barcelona, and was ordained priest on 29 April 1962. As well as the Licence in Theology he gained a Master's degree in teaching.

He was engaged in teaching and pastoral animation for a number of years, and was then called to take on greater responsibilities. After being rector at Villena from 1969 to 1972, he was appointed Vice-provincial (1972-77). Following this he was a provincial councillor (1977-83)

and rector in various houses: Valencia-Sagunto (1978-84), Burriana aspirantate (1984-85), Valencia-San Vicente Ferrer (1985-88), the post-novitiate of Valencia-San Antonio (1988-94). From 1995 he was rector at Villena, and it was there that the news reached him of his appointment as Provincial.

5. *Fr Giorgio COLAJACOMO, for GENOA, Italy.*

While the GC24 was still in progress, Fr *Giorgio Colajacomo* was appointed as Provincial of the Ligurian-Tuscan Province with headquarters at Genoa-Sampierdarena. He succeeds Fr Giovanni Mazzali, who was elected Economer General by the GC24.

Giorgio Colajacomo was born at Genoa-Sampierdarena 31 July 1940. He made his novitiate at Pietrasanta and his first profession on 15 October 1958. After philosophy and practical training, he attended the Pontifical Salesian Athenaeum – first in Turin and later in Rome – for theology, gaining the Licentiate. He was ordained priest in Rome on 5 March 1966. Subsequently he crowned his civil studies with the Doctorate in Letters, Didactics and Pedagogy.

For several years he worked as a teacher and educator. In 1978 he was appointed rector of the house at Leghorn, but in 1981 the Superi-

ors sent him to Turin with an assignment to the Società Editrice Internazionale, where he was also publications manager.

Returning to his own Province, he spent a year at Sampierdarena, and was then called to succeed Fr Giovanni Mazzali as rector of the house of Alassio. Now he follows him once again, this time as Provincial.

6. *Fr Georg DEMMING, for COLOGNE, Germany.*

Fr *Georg Demming* has been confirmed for a second six-year period for the Province of St Boniface, with headquarters at Cologne in Germany. He had been appointed for six years on 16 May 1990. Now, after six years of intensive work, he has been reappointed on the basis of the consultation.

(for biographical details, cf. AGC 334, p. 67)

7. *Fr Tony D'SOUZA, for BOMBAY, India.*

To succeed Fr Joaquim D'Souza, elected by the GC24 as a Regional Councillor, has been appointed Fr *Tony D'Souza* who had already been Provincial between 1976 and 1982.

Born at Bombay 25 January 1943, he was a pupil at the aspirantate of Tirupattur and went on to the novitiate at Yercaud where he made his

first profession on 24 May 1961. The study of philosophy and pedagogy followed in the same house of Yercaud, and then practical training. After theology in the salesian studentate of Bangalore, he was ordained priest at Bombay on 19 December 1970.

He soon found himself in posts of responsibility: rector of the aspirantate at Lonavla in 1974-75, but at the end of 1974 he was appointed Vice-provincial and after only a further two years he was entrusted with the responsibility of guiding the Province as Provincial.

At the end of his six-year mandate, he left for Nairobi in Kenya as Provincial Delegate for the Delegation of East Africa which embraced the salesian foundations entrusted to the Indian Provinces, which were juridically dependent on Bombay. As Delegate he took care of the development and consolidation of the salesian works, until the Delegation was raised to the status of an independent Vice-province. After a year at the Centre of ongoing Formation at Berkeley in the USA, he returned to Kenya as rector at Nairobi-Karen and member of the Council of the Vice-province.

Returning to the Province of Bombay in 1992, he was successively rector at Poona-Koregaon Park and at Panjim (Goa). Here he received

the news of his appointment as Provincial.

8. *Fr Luis Felipe GALLARDO for MEXICO, Mexico.*

Fr Luis Felipe Gallardo Martin del Campo has succeeded Fr Francisco José Altamirano as Provincial of Mexico. He was Provincial of this province earlier from 1980 to 1986.

Born at Irapuato in the state of Guanajuato (Mexico) on 12 December 1941, he entered the salesian college of San Pedro, Tlaquepaque, and studied there until 1957 when he entered the novitiate of Coacalco. There he made his first profession on 16 August 1958. After the study of philosophy and practical training he was sent to Turin for theology at the Salesian Pontifical Athenaeum; he completed his studies in Rome with the gaining of the Licentiate in Theology and was ordained there on 22 December 1967.

Returning to his own Province he was rector and director of novices at Coacalco (1972-75). In 1973 he was appointed a provincial councillor and in 1980 became Provincial.

At the end of his six-year mandate he was once again rector in the novitiate at Coacalco (1972-75), then at Mexico-Don Bosco (1989-90). In 1990 he was sent to direct the formation community of students of theology at Tlaquepaque until 1995, when he was

appointed rector at Tehuacán, Pue. There he received the news of his appointment as Provincial.

9. *Fr Jesús GUERRA IBÁÑEZ, for MADRID, Spain.*

Fr *Jesús Guerra Ibañez* has been appointed to succeed Fr Pedro López García in the guidance of the Madrid Province.

He was born at Saldaña in the Province of Palencia 27 January 1938, and was a pupil at the salesian college of Baracaldo, Bilbao, before entering the novitiate of Mohernando where he made his first profession on 16 August 1956. After philosophy and practical training he studied theology in the studentate of Salamanca and was ordained priest at Bilbao-Baracaldo on 18 March 1966. Subsequently he obtained the Licentiate in Theology at the UPS and later the Doctorate in Moral Theology.

For several years he was a teacher and formation guide in the studentate of the Madrid Province. In 1986 he became a provincial councillor and two years later was appointed Vice-provincial, an office he held until 1994. At the same time he was also rector of the provincial house. In 1995 he became rector at Atocha-Don Bosco in Madrid where he remained until his appointment as Provincial.

10. *Fr Dominic JALA, for GUWAHATI, India.*

Fr *Dominic Jala*, the new Provincial of the Province of Guwahati, was appointed during the Council session of December 1995. He succeeded Fr Joseph Thelekkatt.

A native of the state of Meghalaya, Dominic Jala was born at Shillong-Mawlai 12 July 1951. He made his pre-novitiate and subsequently the novitiate itself at Shillong in the years 1968-69, and his first profession on 24 May 1969. After the study of philosophy and pedagogy in the postnovitiate of Sonada, and after completing practical training, he followed the theological course in the salesian studentate of Bangalore. He was ordained priest at Shillong 19 November 1977, and completed his theological studies in Rome, where he gained the doctorate in Sacred Liturgy.

On his return to his own Province, he became a teacher and animator in the salesian theological studentate of Shillong. In 1989 he was appointed rector of the house of Shillong-St Anthony, and in 1990 Vice-provincial, an office he held for three years. He was a delegate at the GC23. In 1992 he became rector of the provincial house and in 1993, at the end of his mandate as Vice-provincial became rector of the

house of Shillong-Don Bosco, remaining a member of the provincial council.

11. *Fr José JEANMART, for the South Belgian Province of BRUSSELS*

To succeed Fr Fernand Nihoul was appointed Fr *José Jeanmart*, who had been Vice-provincial.

Born at St Servais (Namur, Belgium) 3 October 1936, he got to know the Salesians at the school of Woluwe-St Pierre and entered the novitiate of Grand-Halleux, where he made his first profession on 26 August 1956. After philosophy and practical training he was sent to France for the study of theology at the salesian international studentate of Lyons, and was ordained priest at Liège on 1 May 1965.

After ordination he worked constantly in the schools of the Province, and was for a long period (1972-75, then 1984-94) a provincial councillor. In 1994 he became Vice-provincial. He was a delegate to the GC24 and has now been entrusted with the government and animation of the Province.

12. *Fr Bruno MASIERO, for VENEZUELA.*

The new Provincial of Venezuela is Fr *Bruno Masiero*, in succession to Fr José Angel Divasson, who had

been appointed Vicar Apostolic of Puerto Ayacucho (cf.n.5.5).

Bruno Masiero is of Italian origin; he was born at Mirano in the province of Venice, 28 January 1940. From the aspirantate of Penango, where he did his early studies, he left for the novitiate in Venezuela at Los Teques where he made his first profession on 31 August 1960.

After philosophy and practical training he returned to Italy for theology at the salesian studentate of Messina, and was ordained in his town of origin on 3 April 1971. Later he completed his studies at Bogotá, Colombia, gaining the Licentiate in Pastoral Theology.

He was soon called to posts of high responsibility. From 1977 to 1983 he was rector at San Félix, and then for two years (1984-85) at the aspirantate of Los Teques. In 1985 he became rector and director of novices in the novitiate of San Antonio de los Altos, an office he held until 1991. From 1988 he was also a provincial councillor. In 1991, after six years as novice director, he was appointed rector of the postnovitiate at Los Teques, where his appointment as Provincial reached him.

13. *Fr Mario MURRU, for the MIDDLE EAST Province.*

Fr Alfredo Picchioni, who was Provincial for twelve years, has now

been succeeded by Fr *Mario Murru*.

Mario Murru was born in Sardinia (Italy) 16 February 1943. Attracted to the salesian vocation from his boyhood, he was sent to the aspirantate of Mirabello in Piedmont, from where numerous Salesians reached the Middle East Province. In fact after his novitiate at the "Villa Moglia" of Chieri and his first profession (16 August 1961) Mario Murru left as a young cleric for the Holy Land. There, after further studies and practical training, partly in Lebanon and partly in Iran, he studied theology at Jerusalem, where he was ordained priest on 25 June 1972.

In the years that followed, much of his educative and pastoral ministry was carried out in Iran, in the college "Andisheh Don Bosco", of which he became rector in 1979. After being compelled to leave Iran on the closure of the salesian college, the Superiors appointed him rector of the house of Alessandria d'Egitto (1982-88). In 1990 he was appointed rector of the community of Nazareth and the following year became a provincial councillor. Now he has become Provincial of this Province which includes many different nations.

14. *Fr Piet PALMANS, for the North Belgian Province of BRUSSELS.*

Fr *Piet Palmans* has been chosen as the new Provincial for North Belgium; he succeeds Fr Albert Van Hecke who, at the end of his mandate, was elected by the GC24 as Regional Councillor for Northern Europe.

Born at Bocholt (Limburg) 16 December 1942, Piet Palmans was a pupil at the salesian school of Hechtel, where his vocation matured. He went on to the novitiate of Groot-Bijgaarden, where he made his first profession on 25 August 1963. After philosophy and practical training he studied theology in the formation community of Oud-Heverlee, and was ordained priest there on 11 September 1971. In 1973 he gained the Licentiate in Moral and Religious Sciences at the University of Louvain.

He worked as a teacher and educator, and from 1978 to 1983 was rector of the house of Vremde. In 1981 he became a provincial councillor. In 1983 he was transferred as rector to the formation community of Oud-Heverlee and in 1989 to that of Halle, which he directed until 1991. From 1990 he was Vice-Provincial.

15. *Fr Marcos SANDRINI,*
for PORTO ALEGRE, Brazil

The new Provincial of Porto Alegre, Brazil, is *Fr Marcos Sandrini*. He succeeds *Fr Helvécio Baruffi*, who at the end of his mandate as Provincial was elected as a Regional Councillor.

Marcos Sandrini was born at Braço di Norte, in the state of Santa Catarina (Brazil) on 27 February 1946. He became acquainted with the Salesians in the school at Ascurra and entered the novitiate at Taquari where he made his first profession on 31 January 1963. This was followed by the study of philosophy and pedagogy and by practical training. For theology he was sent to the salesian studentate of Sao Paulo. On 10 December 1972 he was ordained priest at Tubarao, Santa Catarina, in his diocese of origin. He then completed his studies, gaining civil recognition for the teaching of history and philosophy and also Portuguese. Subsequently he obtained the Licentiate in Pastoral Theology at the UPS.

For several years he worked in the Province as a teacher and educator. In 1984 he was appointed as rector of the Institute of Santa Rosa, but was transferred the following year to be rector of the provincial house at Porto Alegre. Later he was

rector at Porto Alegre-Sao José (1991-93) and Porto Alegre-Sao Manoel. He was a provincial councillor from 1993, and was a delegate at the GC23.

16. *Fr Domènec VALLS i FERRER,*
for BARCELONA, Spain.

As successor to *Fr Antonio Domenech*, elected by the GC24 as Councillor General for Youth Pastoral Work, has been appointed *Fr Domènec Valls i Ferrer*.

Born 24 February 1948 in Barcelona he was a pupil at the school of Sarrià, and went on to the novitiate of Arbós, where he made his first profession on 16 August 1965. After philosophy and pedagogical studies and with practical training behind him, he followed the course in the Faculty of Theology of Barcelona and gained the Licentiate in Moral Theology. He was ordained priest at Terrassa 31 January 1976. He completed his civil studies by obtaining his Teaching Certificate.

Soon the Superiors placed him in posts of responsibility. In 1978 he became rector of the salesian house of Sant Vicenç dels Horts and held the post till 1984. From 1985 to 1991 he was rector at Barcelona Ciudad Meridiana, and from 1991 was rector of the Centro di Martí Codolar (Barcelona). From 1982 he was a member of the provincial council.

17. *Fr Josef VÖSL, for AUSTRIA.*

Fr Josef Vösl is the new Provincial of Vienna, Austria; he succeeds Fr Josef Keler who guided the Province for twelve years.

Josef Vösl was born on 2 April 1940 at Erla, Austria, and became a pupil at the salesian school of Unterwaltersdorf, from where he went on to the novitiate at Oberthalheim; there he made his first profession on 15 August 1967. After the study of philosophy and pedagogy, and with practical training behind him, he went to the salesian studentate of Benediktbeuern in Germany for theology. In addition to the Baccalaureate in Theology he also obtained the Diploma in Educational Sciences. He was ordained priest at Benediktbeuern on 29 June 1976.

After educational and pastoral work in various foundations, in 1986 he became a provincial councillor, and in 1990 Vice-provincial. From 1990 he was also rector of the house of Horn, the interdiocesan seminary for adult vocations. He was a delegate at the GC24.

18. *Fr Josef WINKLER, for CAMPO GRANDE, Brazil.*

Fr Josef Winkler, succeeds Fr Joao Bosco Maciel in the guidance of the Province of Campo Grande, Brazil, of which he had already been Provincial in the period 1978-1984.

Born on 13 June 1935 at Olomouc, Germany, he was a pupil at the school of Benediktbeuern, and from there went on to the novitiate at Enseldorf, where he made his first profession on 15 August 1956. While still very young he then left for the Province of Mato Grosso in Brazil where he did his practical training and made his perpetual profession (1962). He then followed the course in theology in the salesian studentate of Sao Paulo, and was ordained priest on 31 July 1966. He gained the Licentiate in Pedagogy and a Diploma in Accountancy.

Specializing in the education of the young and community animation, in 1975 he was appointed rector of the house of Araçatuba and in 1977 became a provincial councillor. A year later he was appointed Provincial.

At the end of his mandate he was assigned by the Superiors to the missions of Angola, which the Atlantic Region had taken over in the context of Project Africa. For nine years in Angola he was the Provincial Delegate of the Provincial of Sao Paulo, the Province juridically responsible for Angola. At the same time he was rector and economer at Luanda-Sao Paulo (1989-92), and vice-rector at Calulo. Returning to Brazil in 1994 he became rector of the house of Meruri.

5.5 New Salesian Bishops

1. *Mgr. José Angel DIVASSON, Vicar Apostolic of PUERTO AYACUCHO, Venezuela.*

On 2 March 1996, while the GC24 was in progress, the Osservatore Romano published the appointment of the salesian priest, Fr *José Angel Divasson*, Provincial of Venezuela, as Vicar Apostolic of Puerto Ayacucho and Titular Bishop of Bamaccora. He took the place of the salesian Bishop Ignacio Velasco who some months earlier had been promoted to the Metropolitan See of Caracas.

Born at Artajona, in the province of Pamplona (Spain) on 21 April 1939, José Angel Divasson entered the salesian college of Astudillo at the age of 12 years; he went on to the novitiate of Mohernando, and made his first profession on 16 August 1955.

Following a missionary call, he left while still young for Venezuela for his practical training, and made his perpetual profession at Los Teques. For the study of theology he returned to Turin-Crocetta, where he obtained the Licentiate in Theology and was ordained priest on 11 February 1965. Subsequently he gained also the Licentiate in Educational Sciences.

On his return to Venezuela he was appointed in 1972 rector of the house of Caracas-Sarriá, becoming at the same time a member of the provincial council. He was rector at Valera from 1985 and in 1990 became Provincial of Venezuela. The GC24, during which he was appointed a Bishop, was his fourth General Chapter. He had already been a member of GC20, 21 and 23.

2. *Mgr. Nicola COTUGNO, Bishop of MELO, Uruguay.*

On 14 June 1996, the Osservatore Romano made public the appointment of the salesian priest *Nicola Cotugno* as Bishop of the Diocese of Melo in Uruguay.

Nicola Cotugno was born on 21 September 1938 at Sesto San Giovanni (Milan), where he did his early studies and felt the call to the salesian life. He entered the novitiate at Missaglia (Como), and there made also his first profession on 16 August 1957. This was followed by philosophy and other studies at the studentate of Nave (Brescia).

He then left Italy for the Province of Uruguay where he did his practical training and made his perpetual profession on 29 January 1962. He was then sent to Chile for the study of theology at Santiago, where he was ordained priest on 26

July 1967. Subsequently he gained the Doctorate in Dogmatic Theology at the Pontifical Gregorian University of Rome (1971).

Returning to Uruguay, he became rector of the house of Montevideo-Manga (1973-76) and in 1974 began a period of six years on the provincial council. From 1976 he was rector of the formation community of the students of theology at Montevideo, teaching theology at the same time. Subsequently he became rector of the house "Talleres Don Bosco" of Montevideo (1979-84) and from 1987 of that of Montevideo-Buceo, where recently he was also parish priest.

3. *Mgr. Riccardo EZZATI, Bishop of VALDIVIA, Chile.*

On 29 June 1996, the Osservatore Romano published the news that the Holy Father had appointed Fr *Riccardo Ezzati SDB* as Bishop of the Diocese of *Valdivia* in Chile.

Born on 9 January 1942 at Campiglia dei Berici in the province of Vicenza (Italy), Riccardo Ezzati in 1954 entered the salesian aspirantate of Penango in Piedmont, where he began the following out of a missionary vocation, following Don Bosco. Sent to Chile immediately after his early studies, he made his novitiate at Quilpé, and there made also his

first profession on 31 January 1961. After philosophy and practical training in Chile, he was sent to Rome for theology at the Pontifical Salesian University, where he gained the Licentiate in Theology and was ordained priest on 30 December 1966. Later he obtained the Licentiate in Catechetics from the catechetical Institute of the University of Strasbourg, France.

On his return to Chile he became Delegate for Youth Pastoral Work, and at the same time obtained the Licentiate in Religious Sciences from the Catholic University of Valparaíso, with also a civilly recognized Teaching Certificate.

From 1973 to 1978 he was rector of the house of Concepción, and in 1976 became a member of the provincial council. In 1978 he was appointed rector of the studentate of philosophy and pedagogy at La Florida, Santiago, and was at the same time director of the study centre and professor of pastoral catechetics in the Catholic University of Santiago. In November 1983 he was appointed rector of the studentate of theology at La Florida, and took part as delegate of the Province in the GC22 of 1984. In the same year he was appointed Provincial of the Chilean Province. At the end of his mandate in 1991 he was called to Rome as a valued

collaborator of the Congregation for Institutes of consecrated life and Societies of apostolic life.

4. *Mgr. Emil ALLUÉ, Auxiliary Bishop of BOSTON, U.S.A.*

On 24 July 1996, the Osservatore Romano reported that Fr *Emil Allué* had been appointed by the Holy Father Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Boston, with the titular diocese of Croe.

Emil Allué was born on 18 February 1935 at Huesca in Spain. He was a pupil at the salesian school in his native town, and in 1955 was admitted to the novitiate of Arbós, where he made his first profession on 16 August 1956. In the same year he left for the United States of America, joining the Province of St Philip the Apostle with headquarters at San Francisco.

He studied philosophy at Don Bosco College, Newton, and ob-

tained his B.A. degree. After practical training in the house of Pater-son, he was sent to the Pontifical Salesian Athenaeum in Rome for theology. He gained the Licentiate in Theology and was ordained priest on 22 December 1966. In 1980 he obtained the degree of Ph.D. in Theology from Fordham University, New York.

After priestly ordination he returned to the United States to fulfil various pastoral tasks. From 1972 to 1975 he was rector of the house of Goshen. Other assignments which followed were: parish priest in the salesian parish of New Brunswick, director of the Spanish apostolate for the Diocese of Metuchen (1984-89), parish priest of the parish of St Kieran, Miami (Florida). From 1995 he was assistant priest in the New York parish of Mary Help of Christians, with responsibility for the Spanish apostolate.

5.6 Our dead confreres (1996 - 1st list)

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

NAME	PLACE	DATE	AGE	PROV.
P AGNELET Antonio	Torino	26.02.96	81	ICP
P ALESSI Antonio	Torino	04.02.96	80	ICP
P ALVAREZ ECHAVARRIA Manuel	Medellín	02.08.96	69	COM
L ALZATI Francesco	Novara	03.02.96	84	ICP
L AMALFI Giuseppe	Pedara	14.09.96	77	ISI
P ARCE GUTIERREZ José	Urnieta	24.09.96	96	SBI
P ARIAS GOMEZ Ricardo	Urnieta	09.03.96	53	SBI
<i>Fu Ispettore per 6 anni</i>				
P ARTALE Giovanni	Santiago de los Caballeros	23.08.96	69	ANT
<i>Fu Ispettore per 6 anni</i>				
P AVENATTI Remo	Torino	28.08.96	76	ICP
P AYERRA MUNARRIZ Gregorio	Asunción	01.01.96	83	PAR
L BAIGUINI Silvano	Sucua-Morona	24.02.96	86	ECU
L BALLABIO Virginio	Arese	13.09.96	85	ILE
P BARACCA Giuseppe	Torino	03.07.96	76	ICP
P BARBARO Federico	Pordenone	29.02.96	83	GIA
P BASTARRICA Miguel Angel	Montevideo	02.02.96	68	URU
P BATTEZZATI Andrea	Santiago de Chile	20.02.96	88	CIL
P BEDETTI Antonio	Ivrea	02.07.96	71	ICP
P BEDOIN Louis	Toulon	23.08.96	70	FLY
P BEINAT Leonardo	Torino	17.08.96	93	ICP
P BENETAZZO Giuseppe	Saonara	04.04.96	64	ICP
P BENITO PEREZ Agustín	León	06.03.96	89	SLE
<i>Fu Ispettore per 6 anni</i>				
L BERTELLI Egidio	Verona	11.06.96	68	IVO
L BOLLATI Giulio	Boston	07.09.96	88	SUE
P BRACISZEWICZ Edward	Kopiec	29.06.96	85	PLO
L BRAGION Andrea	Calamba, Laguna	15.04.96	90	FIN
P BURLINA Giuseppe	Torino	29.02.96	77	ICP
P BUSTI Luigi	Arese	27.07.96	92	ILE
P BUTTO Angel	Rosario	16.07.96	78	ARO
P CARLESSO Guglielmo	Negrar (Verona)	01.02.96	91	IVO
L CASA Giacomo	Borgomanero	10.01.95	82	ICP
P CAZZOLA Giovanni	Varazze	22.03.96	93	ILT
P CHISTÈ Giulio	Melbourne	06.01.96	80	AUL
L CONTERNO Vittorio	Varazze	19.03.96	84	ICP

NAME	PLACE	DATE	AGE	PROV.
P CORNI Armando	Bologna	31.01.96	75	ILE
E COSTA João Batista	Porto Velho	16.04.96	93	-
<i>Fu Vescovo di Porto Velho per 36 anni</i>				
L COSTA PEREIRA Manuel	Estoril	05.01.96	72	POR
P CZERNIECKI Józef	Mirocin	12.08.96	86	PLS
P DE BIASE Giuseppe	Castellammare di Stabia	25.05.96	57	IME
P DEIANA Giovanni	Sassari	03.06.96	66	ISA
P DEMARIA Tommaso	Torino	12.07.96	87	ICP
P DI PIETRA Vincenzo	Palermo	18.04.96	87	ISI
L DIAZ RODRIGUEZ Josué	Santafé de Bogotá	04.07.96	75	COB
P DINGERMANN Friedrich	München	13.08.96	83	GEM
P DOCHERTY John	Stroud	20.09.96	64	GBR
P DOTTA Luigi	Torino	05.08.96	88	ICP
P DOYLE John	Bolton	16.05.96	85	GBR
P DUARTE Dennis	Bombay	24.09.96	78	INB
<i>Fu Ispettore per 6 anni</i>				
P FAGGION Fortunato	Torino	19.01.96	82	ICP
P FESTOC Alexis	Saint-Brieuc	12.01.96	83	FPA
L FILIPPUCCI Vincenzo	Civitanova Marche	11.05.96	92	IAD
P FLORES ARREDONDO Antonio	Guadalajara	27.02.96	92	MEG
P FRANCESIA Secondo	Torino	25.05.96	73	ICP
P FÜLES Lajos	Budapest	17.02.96	61	UNG
P GABBIANELLI Guglielmo	Roma	23.03.96	84	IRO
L GALINDO Faustino	Santafé de Bogotá	26.03.96	80	COB
P GALLENCIA Angelo	Ivrea	04.02.96	79	ICP
L GHIBAUDO Antonio	Alessandria d'Egitto	16.09.96	73	MOR
P GIMENEZ Luis	Manta	03.09.96	83	ECU
P GIUSTO Giovanni	Varazze	07.01.96	71	ILT
P GŁOGOWSKI Piotr	Kobylanka	11.08.96	92	PLN
P GONZALEZ FERNANDEZ Francisco	Guadalajara	05.03.96	60	SMA
P GRUSSU Mario	Roma	06.04.96	83	RMG
P GUERCI Francesco	Campo Grande	02.01.96	74	BCG
P GUMIERATO Luigi	Verona	22.07.96	61	IVO
P HERNANDEZ CRUZ José Dolores	México	14.06.96	44	MEM
P HERNANDEZ GARCIA Tobías	Arevalo	02.07.96	76	SMA
P HOLÍK Augustin	Zlín	18.09.96	77	CEP
L HUNTE Charles	London	13.01.96	87	GBR
P INFANTE DE COS Rafael	Alcalá de Guadaira	10.06.96	84	SSE
P INOUE SHIGERU Paolo	Osaka	22.05.96	74	GIA
P ISERBYT Gerard	Nossegem	28.01.96	86	BEN
P JOUAN Joseph	Caen	27.02.96	82	FPA
L KASCÁK Juraj	Zilina	24.04.96	73	SLK
P KIENINGER Fridolin	Santafé de Bogotá	17.01.96	85	COB
L KLEMON Ferdinand	Senica	04.06.96	81	SLK

NAME	PLACE	DATE	AGE	PROV.
P KOKORIĆ Josip	Nürnberg	21.03.96	64	CRO
D KOLESNIK Jarosław	Czechowice (Gliwice)	24.08.95	26	PLE
P KORMANN Joseph	Tampa	15.03.96	90	SUE
P KRUTILEK Frantisek	Novy Jicin	22.01.96	84	CEP
L LACO Ivan	Krapinske Toplice	04.08.96	57	CRO
P LANGHAMMER Rudolf	Unterwaltersdorf	11.06.96	88	AUS
P LEFEBVRE Jean	Vieux-Condé	29.02.96	85	FPA
P LIBRALATO Severino	Negrar (Verona)	13.02.96	65	MOR
P LOPEZ LAPEÑA Miguel Angel	Barcelona	15.09.96	59	SBA
P LO PIANO Biagio	Palermo	25.07.96	87	ISI
L LUZ José	São Paulo	29.03.96	84	BSP
L MAINARDI Bartolomeo	Torino	11.01.96	73	ICP
S MAKOUALÁ Dieudonné	Pointe Noire	02.05.96	30	FPA
P MANESSI Angelo	Torino	15.07.96	82	ICP
P MASCHIO Aurelio	Bombay	09.09.96	87	INB
P MENICAGLI Giuliano	Colle Val d'Elsa	22.02.96	64	ILT
P MERONI Tarcisio	Monza (MI)	13.09.96	79	ILE
P MICHEL Edmond	Grand-Halleux	31.01.96	78	BES
L MICO Vincent	Zilina	31.12.95	75	SLK
P MIDURA Anthony	Stony Point	10.03.96	90	SUE
P MILOCCO Mario	Udine	25.05.96	84	IVE
P MIOZZO Norberto	Buenos Aires	13.08.96	83	ABA
P MIZANIN Francesco	Fogizzo	10.02.96	68	ICP
L MORANDI Giovanni	Cremisan	25.01.96	85	MOR
P NICOLETTO Noè	San Vito al Tagliamento	17.04.96	82	IVE
P OREGLIA Santiago	Córdoba	16.06.96	79	ACO
P PEBQUÉ Rafael	Montevideo	04.02.96	70	URU
P PEERLINCK Jozef	Vilvoorde	06.02.96	82	BEN
<i>Fu Ispettore per 6 anni</i>				
P PENNELLI Felice	Castellammare di Stabia	02.04.96	84	IME
P PERI Domenico	Livigno (SO)	30.01.96	78	IAD
L PEZZI Mario	Torino	18.07.96	87	ICP
P PIEGLOWSKI Henryk	Kraków	14.06.96	81	PLS
P PISULA Józef	Sroda Slaska	18.01.96	76	PLO
P PÖHLMANN Enrique	San Isidro	31.01.96	92	ABA
P POMBO Raimundo	Coxipó da Ponte	29.07.96	82	BCG
P PORCU Antonio	Rocafuerte	09.04.96	76	ECU
L PORTILLO Juan Antonio	Panamá	25.11.95	93	CAM
P PRACHUM Mimpraphal Gabriel	Bangkok	08.08.96	84	THA
L PRILLWITZ Kurt	Danzig	26.06.96	61	GEK
L PUJOLAR ARNAUS Francisco	Villena	08.06.96	98	SVA
P QUARELLO Enrico	Torino	15.05.96	88	ICP
P RADDI Fortunato	Genova	14.06.96	81	ILT
P RAMOS CHAVEZ Gabriel	Sevilla	15.08.96	69	SSE

NAME	PLACE	DATE	AGE	PROV.
P RAMOS SANCHEZ Eduardo	Mérida	01.01.96	85	SSE
P RODAK Mieczysław	Warszawa	07.06.96	73	PLE
P RUBINO Biagio	Milano	15.06.96	59	ILE
L SCHIAFFINO Prospero	San José	07.08.96	85	ARO
P SCHOENEGER Pierre	Roanne	26.01.96	87	FLY
P SCOTTI Elio	Allassio	24.02.96	73	ICP
<i>Fu Ispettore per 4 anni</i>				
P SEBER Alcide	Madras	02.02.96	86	INM
P SOMMA José	Montevideo	01.07.96	68	URU
P STRALLA Luigi	Posadas	12.05.96	76	ARO
L SUTA Francis	Stony Point	11.03.96	86	SUE
P SZABADOS Frantisek	Pezinok	03.05.96	75	SLK
P TABELLINI Antonio	Nave	14.04.96	83	ILE
L TARDIO Giuseppe	Castellammare di Stabia	17.07.96	93	IME
L TATTI Pietrino	Roma	29.06.96	81	IRO
P TEDESCHI Vincenzo	Brindisi	21.03.96	76	IME
P TIN MAUNG Paul	Mandalay (Myanmar-Birmania)	03.09.96	53	INC
P TOSCHI Alfredo	Treviso	15.09.96	88	IVE
P TREANOR Francis	Lansdowne	22.01.96	79	AFM
P TRUS Stanisław	Szczecin	01.09.96	62	PLN
P TUTEL Brizio	Cuorné	17.02.96	79	ICP
L VARGAS GUERRERO Angel	Agua de Dios	20.07.96	68	COB
P VASCONCELOS José Luiz de	Campinas	28.08.96	87	BSP
P VECCHI Higinio	Bahía Blanca	05.01.96	69	ABB
P VERONESI Francesco	Bologna	05.03.96	88	ILE
L VERTUPIER Michel	Marseille	23.12.95	66	FLY
P VILLALOBOS TRUJILLO Cristobal	Córdoba	19.03.96	70	SCO
L VITHUVATICAL Peter	Mannuthy	02.04.96	69	INK
P VIVAR SANTAMARIA Luis	Huesca	12.05.96	83	SBA
L VORANO Eligio	Arese	30.03.96	85	ILE
L WIERZCHOWSKI Tadeusz	Kutno-Wozniaków	01.08.95	69	PLE
P YU Tsi-chiu John	Macao	30.08.96	91	CIN
P ZACKO André	Montpellier	02.01.96	83	FLY
P ZANGHELLINI Ferdinando	Selva di Cadore	09.03.96	67	IVO
P ZEMLA Alojz	Pezinok	21.02.96	83	SLK