



# acts

**of the general council**

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year LXXIX

january-march 1998

**N. 362**

official organ  
of animation  
and communication  
for the  
salesian congregation

Direzione Generale  
Opere don Bosco  
Roma





# acts

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

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OFFICIAL ORGAN OF ANIMATION AND COMMUNICATION FOR THE SALESIAN CONGREGATION

YEAR LXXIX  
january-march 1998 **N. 362**

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**LOOK AROUND YOU, AND SEE  
HOW THE FIELDS ARE RIPE FOR HARVESTING<sup>1</sup>.  
*Our missionary obligation in view of the year 2000***

1. With our gaze fixed on Christ. - 2. A missionary family. - 3. A new phase in our missionary praxis. - 4. The primacy of evangelization. - 5. A necessary and delicate task: inculturation. *Deeper analysis of the mystery of Christ; an adequate understanding of the particular culture; in community; the process of inculturation; the stages.* - 6. Interreligious and ecumenical dialogue. *Salesian attitudes and manner in dialogue.* - 7. A watchword: consolidate. - 8. New frontiers. - 9. Together towards 2000. - Conclusion.

Rome, 1 January 1998  
*Solemnity of Mary Most Holy, Mother of God*

**1. With our gaze fixed on Christ.**

*"Lift up your eyes and see the fields":*<sup>2</sup> this was the invitation made by Jesus to his disciples when, after his conversation with the Samaritan woman, they suggested he should take something to eat. A mysterious gaze of the Lord who saw the harvest waiting to be gathered!

We find the secret of his glance in his words: "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work".<sup>3</sup> The Father's will is the salvation of every human being and with Christ, the universal Saviour, this is proclaimed and extended to all nations and to every era.

<sup>1</sup> Jn 4,35

<sup>2</sup> Jn 4,35

<sup>3</sup> Jn 4,34

While this is being done, the Father is active in humanity. He is preparing the heart of many persons and is keeping alive the expectations of peoples so that they may succeed in reading the signs of their salvation. He inspires the interventions of those who keep to his will and have the same love of Christ for mankind. And so there is much in the world that must be gathered in. Jesus affirms it of the present time: "Now is the time for harvesting".<sup>4</sup>

The fact that the harvest is ready is due also to the wonderful communion which the Spirit creates between generations in the real history of salvation. "Others have laboured before you, and you have entered into the fruits of their labour".<sup>5</sup> Nothing is ever lost of the efforts of the past despite the appearance of sterility and delay.

The mission of Jesus in Samaria is like the prelude to the work of the evangelization of peoples. He suggests the spirit in which it should be carried out. To the disciples, who are unaware of God's plan, he indicates the time when it should be given effect: now!

They must learn to see and start working without, as it seems to them, any waiting for further development. Everything is already arranged, prearranged by the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. They have to get on with the harvest and sow new seed: "One sows and another reaps".<sup>6</sup> Sight and trust must guide the enterprise he will entrust to them: "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole of creation".<sup>7</sup>

Jesus also teaches them how to tell that the times are mature. The gift of God reaches even those who were considered outcasts and becomes in them an interior source of understanding, of love and peace; in their turn they too become announcers of Jesus through their words and witness; there is a

<sup>4</sup> cf. Jn 4,35

<sup>5</sup> cf. Jn 4,38

<sup>6</sup> cf. Jn 4,37

<sup>7</sup> Mk 16,15



new space within which man can meet God, over above and independently of all preceding laws of religious experience, and it is valid for all. It is the space created by God who offers it and by its sincere acceptance on the part of man: "The hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem... True worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth".<sup>8</sup> At the same time is declared the historical and unique character of the event which marks the manifestation of God: "Salvation is from the Jews".<sup>9</sup>

I too, with the gaze suggested by the Lord to the disciples, have been able to perceive the abundance of the harvest to be gathered in at the present day, and the extent of the terrain to be sown for the future. I have caught a glimpse of the work of preparation which the Father has already done and is still doing in expectation of those he will send to work.

The time is ripe. This is evident from the heed being given by so many people to the proclamation of the Gospel, from the welcome being given to good suggestions, from the generosity of those who join us in apostolic and missionary initiatives. Fruits are being gathered everywhere, even if there are also arid and infertile spaces in line with what the Saviour had foretold.

On 28 September last in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians, I presented the missionary crucifix to 33 new missionaries. It was the 127<sup>th</sup> expedition and it recalled the first one, laden with daring and prophecy, which Don Bosco prepared and sent off on 11 November 1875. While I was carrying out the rite I thanked God for the signs of new fertility emerging in the group. The missionaries came from every continent and there were also lay people among them. In one case (a young married couple!) the missionary vocation had been joined to and integrated, as it were, with their marriage vows. Some were going to continue a work previously begun, while others were

<sup>8</sup> Jn 4,21-23

<sup>9</sup> Jn 4,22

entrusted with the breaking of new ground and making new foundations: harvesting and sowing!

And I thought of the "laws" which are always verified in apostolic work: "The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few".<sup>10</sup> It is a constant refrain in evangelization. The Father fills the world with his gifts and his invitations. Christ's riches are immense. The workers, even if they were a hundred times as many, would always be too few for the distribution of such abundance.

The same thoughts were in my mind when I visited our former mission in China, or when I rejoiced with the confreres at the new sowing in Cambodia, when I saw the abundance of results in Southern Africa (and especially in Swaziland and Lesotho), and when I saw in my mind's eye what would take place in other places which today are in the first phases of the work.

## **2. A missionary Family.**

Don Bosco felt an attraction for missionary work. His desire and intention did not become immediately translated into a departure for foreign parts as would have been his own desire. The enlightened discernment of his confessor foresaw that other roads had been planned for him.

But the missionary spirit remained in him with the same intensity and inspired his vision, his thrust and his pastoral background: he was a missionary there in Turin. He began by making contact with the forgotten youngsters on the fringe of society; he pushed on to the urban frontiers of evangelization and education.

Later he realized also his missionary intentions in foreign lands in many different ways: every year from 1875 he sent off

<sup>10</sup> Mt 9,37

missionary expeditions, kindling in youngsters and confreres the ardent desire for the spreading of the Gospel and enthusiasm for the Christian life, dreaming day and night of new enterprises, spreading missionary sensitivity through the Bulletin, seeking resources and cultivating relationships which would help the work of the missionaries.

In this way the missionary trait became part and parcel of every Salesian, because it is rooted in the salesian spirit itself. It is not something additional in certain cases. It is like the heart of pastoral charity, the endowment which characterizes the vocation of all.

Each one, wherever he may be, considers his "highest knowledge is to know Jesus Christ, and his greatest delight is to reveal to all people the unfathomable riches of his mystery".<sup>11</sup> He thinks therefore of those who have need of Christ's light and grace; he is not satisfied with those who are already 'in the fold', but moves out to social and religious frontiers.

It was not just by chance that Paul VI called us "missionaries of the young": catechists for some and bearers of a first proclamation of life for so many others, educators in institutes and also travellers in the vast field of youth situations not reached by such institutes.

In the same missionary expeditions Don Bosco united two directions of missionary mentality and endeavour. Don Ceria has spoken of them in the Annals: "He had very much at heart", he wrote, "the condition of Italians who were becoming dispersed in large and ever growing numbers (...). Voluntary exiles in search of fortune, without schools for the children, and a long way from any possibility of religious practices, and who through distance or the lack of priests of their own language ran the risk of forming large blocks of populations without either faith or laws".<sup>12</sup> The missionary project in-

<sup>11</sup> cf. C 34

<sup>12</sup> CERIA E., *Annali*, Vol.I, p.252

cluded also Christians who were lapsed, forgotten, abandoned and emigrants.

In recent times it became customary to speak of "mission lands", not just as an appealing image, but in reference to contests marked by a Christian tradition. The parish has been defined as a "missionary community", the school a "missionary setting". Except for technical distinctions, it is evident that every one of our communities is nowadays facing a situation similar to those of first evangelization.

Since the missionary sense is not an optional trait but forms part of the salesian spirit in every time and situation, in the programming of the Rector Major and his Council we have proposed it to all the provinces as an area of special attention for the six-year period from 1996-2002.

Among the practical interventions we have indicated to make this effective we have indicated: strengthening the commitment of the Congregation to those most in need, concentrating on a more intense education of young people to the faith so as to give rise to vocations, and directing decisively the greatest possible amount of energy (personnel, projects and means) to the missions "ad gentes".

The missionary spirit and style are eloquently marked by the availability of many confreres to work in areas of first evangelization and of foundation of the Church; but they are adopted and lived by all in the carrying out of their own mission. The will to evangelize and the ability to give transparent expression to the message of the Gospel is the point in which the two different realizations become one.

The confreres working in the front line feel themselves supported by the prayer, closeness and practical collaboration of all the others who share their same ardour and enthusiasm. This is why the Constitutions declare that we look upon missionary work as "an essential feature of our Congregation".<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup> C 30



On our movement towards the very poor I have already had the opportunity of expressing my thoughts in the letter "He had compassion on them",<sup>14</sup> and this remains one of the fundamental criteria for our relocating. It is in fact the trait which marks the beginning of our charisma and reveals the impetus which moves the community of Christ's disciples: charity.

The mission "ad gentes" is the object of the present letter. I intend to put forward some blueprints on two lines of action which seem more urgent at the present day: to strengthen our existing missionary works and to move towards new frontiers. To consolidate and advance: to give "pastoral" consistency to what we have recently begun and to push ahead to still untrodden territories and peoples not yet reached, so as to bring to all of them the light of the Gospel.

I have always in mind, and it is a basic starting point also for the indications I offer you, a particular characteristic of the missionary work of the Salesians: it is committed to first evangelization and the foundation of Churches, but from the outset it is called to enrich the Christian community with a particular charism: that of predilection for the young with special regard to the education of the poor and middle classes.

The charisma determines, without closing it off, the manner and direction of missionary work, while the latter gives vitality to the charism restoring its evangelical vigour and ecclesial sense.

I would like to stir up a renewed enthusiasm for the missions in all the Provinces and invite the confreres, of whatever age, to consider the possibility of a missionary commitment.

May the Lord grant that at the present day there may take place what happened at Valdocco when Don Bosco envisaged, prepared and sent out the first expedition and those which immediately followed it.

"Meanwhile", say the Annals, "the words and deeds of Don

<sup>14</sup> cf. AGC 359, April-June 1997

Bosco with regard to the missions had created a new ferment among pupils and confreres. Vocations to the ecclesial state multiplied: there was a noticeable rise in applications to enter the Congregation, and a new apostolic fervour gripped those who were already members"<sup>15</sup>.

### **3. A new phase in our missionary praxis.**

Our missionary praxis of the present day is following in the wake of a tradition of enterprise, zeal, tenacity and creativity, and its results are undeniable. It would deserve a deeper study so as to understand it at greater depth and obtain greater results. It has been inserted and proved in many different cultural and geographical areas over a span of time which provides a sure guarantee of its consistency. The first missionary project for expansion in America (1875-1900), the one that led to the spreading of the Congregation in Asia (1906-1950), and the recent expansion in Africa have moulded a typical manner of missionary activity of which the characteristics are synthetically expressed in the Constitutions and Regulations.<sup>16</sup>

At the present day the praxis needs some rethinking. The reflection of Vatican II and the deeper study of theology have given new perspectives to missiology in the light of events which are marking the life of the Church and today's world: the ecumenical movement, the reawakening and exploiting of religions, the human and social values of cultures, intercommunication at world level, the growth of the new Churches and the way they live the faith in interaction with their contexts, and the decline of ancient areas of Christianity.

Such phenomena have brought about a deeper understanding of the grace of creation and the work of the Father in

<sup>15</sup> CERIA E., *Annali*, Vol I, p.252

<sup>16</sup> cf. C 30; R 11. 18. 20. 22

the salvation of every individual, and also of the presence of the Spirit in the life of humanity.

Together with the new perspectives questions too are emerging, which we must know about and duly resolve from a doctrinal and practical standpoint. They regard the value of Christianity for the salvation of man, the implication of the universal mediation of Christ, the role of the Church and consequently the sense of evangelization itself and of its modern means.

Perspectives and questions are dealt with in the Encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*, of which a careful study becomes therefore indispensable. On the same arguments the continental Synods, which were convoked in view of a new evangelization, are now expressing themselves with a richness of reflection and circumstantial analysis.

Indications for our missionary praxis today come also from the Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consecrata*, which entrusts to religious the study of certain aspects which have emerged in recent years.

Paul VI had already emphasized the participation of religious in missionary work: "They are enterprising and their apostolate is often marked by an originality, by a genius that demands admiration. They are generous: often they are found at the outposts of the mission, and they take the greatest risks for their health and their very lives".<sup>17</sup>

John Paul II had pointed out in *Redemptoris Missio*: "History witnesses to the outstanding service rendered by religious families in the spread of the faith and the formation of new churches: from the ancient monastic institutions, to the medieval Orders, up to the more recent congregations".<sup>18</sup>

In more direct terms, *Vita Consecrata* considers the "mission ad gentes" a dimension of all charisms because it is in-

<sup>17</sup> EN 69

<sup>18</sup> RM 69

cluded in the total donation presupposed by consecration. Their mission, says the document, is expressed not only through the works proper to the charism of each Institute, but especially through participation in the great ecclesial work of the mission *ad gentes*.<sup>19</sup>

The Church awaits from consecrated persons at the present day "the greatest possible contribution"<sup>20</sup> and entrusts to them the specific task of proclaiming Christ to all peoples with new enthusiasm.

In addition to the quantitative contribution, realized in the past, verifiable in the present and hoped for in the future, the Apostolic Exhortation emphasizes certain present aspects of missionary activity for which religious appear to be particularly talented.

It attributes to consecrated persons a particular capacity for inculturating the Gospel and the charism in the different peoples. "Supported by the charism of their founders and foundresses, many consecrated persons have been able to approach cultures other than their own with the attitude of Jesus, who 'emptied himself, taking the form of a servant' (Phil 2:7). With patient and courageous efforts to initiate dialogue, they have been successful in establishing contact with the most diverse peoples, proclaiming to all of them the way of salvation".<sup>21</sup> Much is therefore expected of them in the way of effort and direction of inculturation.

Something similar is said with respect to religious dialogue. Since the life of consecrated persons is centered on experience of God, they have a particular disposition for entering into dialogue with other equally sincere experiences present in different religions.<sup>22</sup>

To the new implications acquired by religious life there cor-

<sup>19</sup> cf. VC 72. 78

<sup>20</sup> VC 78

<sup>21</sup> VC 79

<sup>22</sup> cf. VC 79. 102



responds, on the other hand, the new impulse given to the lay condition. If the new Churches must manifest from their beginnings the holiness and newness of life of the people of God, the Christian formation of believers becomes a prime necessity. The laity, on the other hand, are called to develop their ability for active participation in the community and for service to the world. The new dimension of the laity modifies the very image of the Christian community and its way of functioning. Lay people, says the Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa*, "are to be helped to become increasingly aware of their role in the Church, (...) Consequently they are to be trained for their mission".<sup>23</sup>

In this frame of reference the efforts and competence of consecrated persons and of priests are arranged differently.

In the light of these incentives let us now focus on some questions, taking for granted the normal salesian praxis.

#### 4. The primacy of evangelization.

Evangelization implies a plurality of aspects: presence, witness, preaching, appeal to personal conversion, formation of the Church, catechesis; and in addition: inculturation, interreligious dialogue, education, preferential option for the poor, human advancement, and transformation of society. Its complexity and articulation has been emphasized and presented in authoritative form by *Evangelii Nuntiandi*.<sup>24</sup>

But there is a principal nucleus, without which evangelization is not evangelization at all, something which gives sense and shape to the whole, and even dictates the criteria and manner according to which the rest is carried out: it is **the proclamation of Christ**, the first announcement which presents Jesus Christ to those who do not yet know him, and the

<sup>23</sup> EA 90

<sup>24</sup> cf. EN 17

subsequent process by which his mystery is more fully explained, even to prompting others to the apostolate.

The Synod of the African Church says in this connection: "to evangelize is to proclaim by word and witness of life the Good News of Jesus Christ, crucified, died and risen, the Way, the Truth and the Life".<sup>25</sup> To proclaim the Good News is to invite every person and every society to a personal and communal encounter with the living person of Jesus Christ.<sup>26</sup>

In what way are the aspects set out above to be considered or result, in reality, complementary and convergent towards a single goal which is precisely the ever deeper knowledge of Christ, adherence to his person in faith and sharing in his life? It is a question which must be solved not only doctrinally by the missionary communities, but also in the daily plan of activity.

In missionary praxis, in fact, there can be lack of balance, through choice, through limited vision or ability, or through lack of attention. To foresee such things we must **establish priorities and yardsticks**. One of these is a proper relationship between the explicit proclamation of Christ in its different forms (the first proclamation, catechesis, care of the community of the believers, the Christian formation of individuals), and human advancement. The Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* has presented very clearly the deep linkages and distinction between these; it has also offered enlightening principles for understanding the import and deep sense of liberation as announced and realized by Jesus Christ and as practised by the Church.<sup>27</sup>

Salesian spirit and tradition emphasize the harmony and mutual relationship between these dimensions of evangelization; at the same time they make quite clear the order of significance. The clearest formulation we find in our Constitutions: "We educate and evangelize according to a plan for the total well-

<sup>25</sup> EA 57

<sup>26</sup> cf. *ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> EN 31

being of man directed to Christ, the perfect Man";<sup>28</sup> "For us too evangelizing and catechizing are the fundamental characteristics of our mission".<sup>29</sup> From it, and from him who is its object, our commitment for man draws its significance.

We must therefore give priority to evangelization in its various forms: in our preparation, in our dedication, and in our use of time, personnel and resources.

The ideal of a missionary situation is that envisaged by the practical guidelines of the SGC when it asked that the Province should become "communities at the service of evangelization",<sup>30</sup> that every salesian community should become an "evangelizing community",<sup>31</sup> and that every Salesian be an "evangelizer".<sup>32</sup>

The ecclesial trend, in the time of new evangelization, leads us more than ever before to concentrate our gaze and hope on Christ. Knowing and welcoming him transforms the person and saves him, without ignoring or neglecting his temporal conditions but transcending them. To offer such an announcement of salvation is the specific task of the Church's mission.

Within this there is another balance to be established: that between the first announcement and attention to the growth in faith of individuals and Christian communities through efforts at diffusion and consolidation. The latter includes the education of young people in the faith, the formation of adults in line with their different situations, the preparation of workers and ministers, the unity and witness of Christian communities, and apostolic commitment on the part of believers.

The two aspects must be suitably satisfied: extending the proclamation and giving consistency to the community. This is the task of the Provinces, of the individual communities and of

<sup>28</sup> C 31

<sup>29</sup> C 34

<sup>30</sup> SGC 337

<sup>31</sup> SGC 339

<sup>32</sup> SGC 341

each person, who must become capable of taking the process of evangelization to its optimum levels.

Finally there is the opportune proportion between means and declaration, between structures and presence among the people, between organization of works and direct communication, between service and insertion. Means, structures and organization are functional for proclamation, presence and communication. And they should be proportional to them and corresponding in style. When means and structures are too great and cumbersome, or when in order to create and maintain them we have to put excessive limits on our meditation of the Word to be proclaimed, on direct communication, on dedication to preaching and the formation of individuals, then we need to rethink them in the light of a project better centered on what is essential.

## **5. A necessary and delicate task: inculturation.**

This is a theme which nowadays is frequently the focus of attention and is more deeply analyzed. It is presented in organic form in various ecclesial documents. The continental Synods have considered it at length. The preparatory texts, discussions and the Exhortations which have followed, have spoken clearly of it emphasizing its urgency, expounding its theological foundations, indicating criteria and ways for its realization and singling out preferential fields for its application.<sup>33</sup>

Our typical synthesis between education and evangelization makes us particularly sensitive to inculturation; this is why we Salesians have given attention to the point. Fr Egidio Viganò dealt with it in various letters.<sup>34</sup> The GC24 referred to it as a need and process to be able to educate and bring about participation in the salesian spirituality and mission.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>33</sup> cf. EA 59-64

<sup>34</sup> cf. AGC 316, 336, 342

<sup>35</sup> cf. GC24 15. 55. 131. 255



The risk for practical workers like ourselves is that in all the enlightenment, which is necessary but also articulated and applicable in various directions, we do not find any common lines of realization, and in consequence we do not make the required effort or we get lost in small personal experiences not always properly assessed. It will be well therefore to recall some practical guidelines.

*The centrality of the mystery of Christ*

The first is evident and fundamental to the topic of inculturation. It concerns historical reality and the unique character of the coming of Christ.

Christ is not a symbolic reality, a generic object of religious sentiment, a summation of humanity's aspirations, the synthesis of everything noble and generous found in cultures. He is a concrete historical person, with a unique biography, different from all the elements acquired and expressed by humanity put together. It was a unique and unrepeatable event. Of him the Apostles bore witness. The Jesus their eyes had seen and their hands had touched<sup>36</sup> is Christ the Lord, the same everywhere, yesterday today and always, who remains with us till the end of the world.

The Kingdom he preaches and the life he proposes are not the accumulation or the summation of all the good things that man can desire or experience. They are the gratuitous communication of God, made concrete in a promise and covenant which have received historical realization in his person.

He does not leave behind him only a "doctrine" which we have the task of translating into adequate words and concepts, a morality to be adapted to various situations, but he offers saving gestures and facts to be "lived" and "celebrated" in a relationship which is lived personally and shared in community.

<sup>36</sup> cf. 1 Jn 1,1

He can assume all the "seeds" of truth and of good scattered throughout human history but not just anyhow. The criterion and model for inculturation are the incarnation, death and resurrection of Christ, definitive events for the salvation of man.

Inculturation of the faith means causing the faith which Christ proposes to penetrate into the life and thought of a human community, in such a way that it can express itself with cultural elements and take on an inspiring, stimulating, transforming and unifying function of the culture concerned.

The Incarnation is not a fusion of two elements of equal dignity and energy, but the assuming of a human nature by a divine Person. The Word, who has his own divine and complete personality in the Trinity, becomes man. Hence there is a determinate subject who assumes humanity and a nature which, purified and redeemed, gives him the historical possibility of expression.

From this derive certain indications for the practice of inculturation. **Since the person, life and message of Christ** have a proper identity and essential role, a principal and main attention must be given to it. It would be useless, not to say dangerous, to want to inculturate the Gospel without an ongoing deeper understanding of the mystery of Christ, without the experience of a personal relationship with him and communion with his body, the Church. Unfortunately one frequently notes a limited understanding of the mysteries it is desired to communicate or a too individualistic meditation with little reference to the sources of faith.

### *An adequate understanding of the particular culture*

On the other hand, that **knowledge of culture** is necessary which comes from being immersed in it for a sufficient time, and from the study in a reflexive and organic manner of its significant aspects, as they are presented in relevant studies and as lived by the community.

But it must be kept in mind that no culture is monolithic

and uniform. In every environment, nowadays especially, different cultural models exist side by side. Culture is not even a "fixed" reality. It is always evolving, through the development of its own elements and through interchange with other cultures. It is subject to changes, transformations and evolutionary processes, which come about through progressive changes but also through leaps due especially to free causes.

And so for culture one must consider not only what it was and what it is, but also what it is likely to become.

### *In community*

One must also keep in mind that inculturation takes place in a community, which is at the same time the subject of culture and of the experience of faith; within it both of these interpenetrate. Collaboration is given by those of the faithful who in their daily lives live out the demands of the Gospel without any theorizing; and there is also the influence of experts and specialists who reflect on the faith and examine and interpret cultural forms; there is the work of the Pastors who accompany and educate the people to the following of Christ in line with their particular context; and of decisive importance are the "spiritual people" who have more intuition than others, possess the capacity for promoting agreement, and discover the seeds of the Gospel to be found in certain cultural trends.

Rightly therefore is **ecclesial communion** indicated as a fundamental criterion for inculturation. Transferred to a salesian setting, this criterion suggests that a problem should be approached through communal reflection at provincial and local level, so as to move in the right direction.

### *The process of inculturation*

Another factor to be considered in inculturation is **time**. It is not so much a matter of "chronological" time, i.e. the mere

passing of the years, as the amount of time filled by the presence of Christ in which the Holy Spirit is working. The efficacious expression of the Christian mystery in a culture is that culture's "fullness" of time. The rapidity of the process depends on the intensity with which the Christian community lives the mystery of which it is the bearer and on its capacity to make itself a leaven in society.

This leads us to understand how the process of inculturation takes place and prevents us from wandering off down impracticable side alleys.

Inculturating the Gospel implies the evangelization of culture. And this follows a process which is certainly not rigid but is historically observable: faith is received wrapped in the cultural garb of the one who proclaims it. The acceptance of the message, according to the words and intentions of those already living it, is the first and necessary step for inserting the Gospel in a culture.

The deeper assimilation of the proclamation gradually produces a change of mentality in the persons who receive it; a progressive conversion transforms personal habits, and little by little modifies the life and relationships of the Christian group until the evangelical leavening of everything that is human gives them a new and original appearance, just as the humanity of Jesus characterized the historic presence of God. Similarly faith assumes the forms typical of a people and becomes a ferment for change among them. The process is not linear but circular. This is evident from the fact that the more intensely one works for the conversion of the person, so much the more rapidly and efficaciously are levels of inculturation reached.

### *The stages*

Finally inculturation proceeds in some typical stages. Substantially they are continuity, prophetic opposition, and creation.

Continuity leads to the taking up of the “*semina Verbi*” which one finds in a particular context, correcting them, purifying them, giving them a new significance or opening for them a new phase of development. St Paul at the Areopagus in Athens can provide us with an example. The religious background of the Athenians offered a space for the proclamation and so the Apostle took that as his starting point. But there came a time for the Athenians when their religion was no longer sufficient even from a human standpoint, because of an event which marked a new phase: “While God has overlooked the times of human ignorance, now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day...”<sup>37</sup> There are many aspects of a culture that can be taken up, but not without first discerning their significance and comparing them with the mystery of Christ.

Not everything in a culture is compatible with the Gospel. There can be in it concepts and realities which are not reconcilable with the Christian experience. And there are also “systems”, “ensembles”, “constellations of elements”, of which the very point of internal coherence is “non-evangelical”. And so the Christian and the community are invited, through a comparison with the Christ event, even to abandon and leave aside some elements which may be solidly rooted in culture. If the facts of the Incarnation suggest the condescension of God who took on human nature, the death and resurrection of Christ indicate the passage through which the same human nature can attain the form to which it is destined and for which it was assumed.

Finally the Christian faith, since it is not only subjective sentiment but the acknowledgement of historical facts and a real salvific mystery, is capable of producing **particular cultural expressions**. The Eucharist bears a culture, with human significance, words, gesture, behaviour, forms of social relations inextricably linked to its nature and to the historical

<sup>37</sup> Acts 17,30

moment of its institution. Such culture therefore crosses the Christian universe in the sense of space and time. We still read with emotion what Paul says of what he had received from the Lord concerning eucharistic celebration,<sup>38</sup> and we see it today repeated in Christian communities scattered everywhere under heaven.

This also takes place for prayer, which is inserted in that of Jesus, and in other signs in which the Christian community recognizes itself. This is universally valid of Christian experience, which stems from historical truth and from the unique nature of the event of Christ. To express this *unum* the Holy Spirit gives to the ecclesial community a diversity of tongues, gifts, charisms and cultures. The Christological principle is the criterion of unity; the reference to the Holy Spirit justifies plurality.

There is an evident interaction between faith, culture of faith, and cultures. The more one meditates on the Christian mystery and the significance of the words and gestures with which it was expressed at its beginnings, so much the more does one grasp its newness and hence its internal need to "convert" culture. The more deeply one examines the structure and elements of a particular culture, the more one understands the way through which a people seeks the fullness of humanity, and hence what expressions, what intuitions, what models are suitable for expressing the Gospel.

Dialectics are permanent. There can never be peace, in the sense of absence of mutual challenges or a kind of definitive peaceful living together which eliminates confrontation.

Inculturation represents not only the process of penetration of the Gospel in a human group, but also the complete conversion of the Christian community. It becomes evangelized, not in a decorative manner as with a superficial veneer but only when it gets right down to the root of the culture, starting from

<sup>38</sup> cf. 1 Cor 11, 23-26

the person and returning always to the relationship of the persons with each other and with God.<sup>39</sup>

And so inculturation is felt everywhere as urgent. We cannot fail to take on the task in communion with our local Churches.

## 6. Interreligious and ecumenical dialogue.

The foregoing considerations on the Incarnation, the uniqueness of Christ, and the need of his mediation for the total salvation of man serve also to illustrate another line of commitment: that of dialogue with other religions and Christian denominations.

**Interreligious dialogue** is complementary to proclamation. It brings us closer to those who in some way feel the presence of God, gives due value to the seeds of truth present in different religions, and fosters mutual acceptance and living together in peace. We are reminded of the challenges and demands addressed by Jesus to his contemporaries regarding religious practices and beliefs (Jews, Greeks, Samaritans, Syro-Phoenicians).

It is also an important part of the process of inculturation, if we are to believe what more than a few experts say, that religion represents the deepest aspect of a culture and that, in some cases, it forms with them a single reality for poor people.

Perhaps never in the past has there been so immediate an experience of the plurality of religions as exists today. The mass media have fostered at least summarized information in this regard. Greater possibilities for travelling have made it possible to gain partial and temporary experience of this, even on the part of those who wished to profit by certain manifestations or merely satisfy their curiosity. Various phenomena con-

<sup>39</sup> cf. EN 20

nected with religion are known, such as search for spirituality, the reawakening of traditional beliefs, and fundamentalism.

In the Church there has been a long and patient process of encounter, understanding and evaluation of different religions. Collaboration with them takes place in common causes, such as the pursuit of peace, overcoming poverty, the defence of human rights. We can all still remember the pictures of the big meeting at Assisi, those of the visit of the Pope to Morocco and his address to the Moslems or, more recently, those of the funeral of Mother Teresa of Calcutta.

The Salesians work in plurireligious contexts in which Catholics are often a minority. To educate and evangelize they must have an adequate knowledge of the religious facts of their own context and the incidence it has on persons and culture to be able to interact with regard to attitudes, traditions, beliefs and religious practices.

Dialogue is concerned not only with the formulation of truth. It includes also acceptance, respectful and simultaneous presence in educational and social environments, shared experiences in the promotional field, in witness and in service. It takes place therefore not only in formal circumstances but also in ordinary daily life. In more than a few settings, where we are at present working with young people and personnel of other religions, such things are already happening. Now it is necessary to add on other more explicit items on doctrinal and moral content, and cultist aspects of religions. In this way prejudice is overcome, a more adequate understanding is acquired of the sense and norms proposed by each religion, and religious freedom and sincerity of conscience are fostered.

Experience tells us that this form of dialogue is not always easy. The suspicion that the Christian religion is linked with the cultural predominance of the West creates several barriers. The conviction that Christ is the necessary and universally valid mediation of Salvation appears as an almost insurmountable obstacle. The idea is being insinuated more and more that



every religious expression, if followed with a sincere conscience, can have equal value for man.

In this way interreligious dialogue loses interest, and the desire for it and the capacity for proclamation declines. We ourselves are not totally immune from such a risk.

A further difficulty arises from the new religious movements, generically known as "sects". So great is their variety and diversity that one cannot generalize about how to dialogue with them. The *Instrumentum Laboris* of the Synod for America repeats several times that their aggressive proselytism and fanaticism, the dependence they create in persons through forms of psychological pressure and moral constraint, the unjust criticism and ridiculing of the Churches and of their religious practices, seem to render impossible every form of dialogue, comparison and collaboration.<sup>40</sup> All the same we are invited to understand the reasons for a certain incidence they have and to foster freedom of conscience and their peaceful co-existence.

With the due distinctions suggested by the above comments, we too must insert ourselves into interreligious dialogue in the course of our pastoral missionary work. Certain convictions will sustain us in this.

The light and grace brought by Jesus do not exclude valid processes of salvation present in other religions.<sup>41</sup> Indeed they assume them, purify them and perfect them. "The Incarnate Word is thus the fulfillment of the yearning present in all the religions of mankind: this fulfilment is brought about by God himself and transcends all human expectations. It is the mystery of grace".<sup>42</sup>

The Spirit is present and active in every conscience and every community which moves towards the goal of truth. He

<sup>40</sup> *Instrumentum Laboris* 45

<sup>41</sup> cf. LG 16

<sup>42</sup> TMA 6

precedes the action of the Church and suggests to every person the way to what is good. At the same time he prompts the Church to evangelize those groups and peoples which he is already preparing internally to welcome him. The point is made in many recent documents of the Magisterium. The Spirit, we are told in the Encyclical *Dominum et Vivificantem*, is manifested in a particular manner in the Church and in its members: nevertheless his presence and activity are universal, without limits of either space or time.<sup>43</sup> He is at the origin of the existential and religious demand of man, who is born not only from contingent situations but from the very structure of his being... The Spirit is at the origin of noble ideals and good initiatives of pilgrim humanity... It is the Spirit again who scatters the "seeds of the Word" present in rites and cultures, and prepares them to mature in Christ.<sup>44</sup>

A reading of this kind leads on the one hand to the overcoming of religious relativism which considers all religions as equally valid approaches and paths to salvation, ignoring with grave detriment to their members the fullness of revelation and the singular nature of the healing grace brought by Christ. On the other hand it encourages us to offer with enthusiasm our experience, and that of the Church, with attitudes of respect and expectation, aware of the difficulties of change, open to the surprises of grace, grateful and joyful at so many responses, even though they be small ones and even though only partial.

I add only a remark about **ecumenical dialogue**, the kind that is carried on with other Christian Churches. Unity is one of the targets urgently endorsed by John Paul II. It is a condition and sign of our evangelization. Prayer, attitudes and efforts to build it are an essential part of pastoral work at the present day because they respond to the desire of Jesus and the

<sup>43</sup> cf. DEV 53

<sup>44</sup> cf. LG 17; AG 3.15; RM 28

needs of the world. Every community is asked for commitment in this regard. With some of these denominations a process has already been started up and the way is open for interchange in prayer and in active collaboration.

### *Salesian attitudes and manner in dialogue*

Because of the usefulness of incorporating interreligious and ecumenical dialogue into our missionary praxis, it may be helpful to indicate some attitudes and ways for intervening in such dialogue with a salesian spirit.

I put in the first place the ability, typical of the preventive system, to discover and **exploit what is positive**, wherever it may be found. This is something proposed to all Salesians by the Constitutions: "Inspired by the optimistic humanism of St Francis de Sales, (the Salesian) believes in man's natural and supernatural resources without losing sight of his weakness. He is able to make his own what is good in the world...: he accepts all that is good...".<sup>45</sup> They refer this particularly to missionaries when they state that "following the example of the Son of God, the salesian missionary makes his own the basic values of the people and shares their hopes and anxieties".<sup>46</sup>

Then there is **the desire to meet** with persons, inspired by trust and hope. The Salesian takes the initiative of making the first move towards the other, be he Christian or a member of some other religion. He approaches him full of humanity (kindness!), with the conviction that in every heart there is fertile territory for the unveiling of truth and for generosity in doing good.

And finally I recall the **patience which can rejoice in small steps forward**, awaiting further results, accompanying intuitions or discoveries, entrusting to God the moment when

<sup>45</sup> C 17

<sup>46</sup> C 30

faith will mature, profiting by every occasion for communicating one's own experience of the Gospel through friendship and conversation.

In religious dialogue particular importance attaches to **the communities**. This kind of dialogue is in fact more of a choral work than for single pioneers. The ecclesial community is a "sign and instrument" of salvation and is in continual communication with society, giving out signals by what it is rather than by what it does by preaching. Within the Church individual communities, like educative communities or those of consecrated persons, open or close the possibility of dialogue by their style of life and their capacity for welcoming others.

It has been found that in plurireligious **educative communities** animated by our confreres, the members live together, gain in tolerance, know each other and give value to elements of other religions; Christian signs and practices are evident and there is a readiness for a deeper dialogue with those who want to acquire a better knowledge of Jesus Christ.

As regards communities of consecrated persons on the other hand, the Exhortation *Vita Consecrata* emphasizes the particular role they can play in communication with other religious experiences through mutual knowledge and respect, cordial friendship and sincerity, "shared concern for human life extending from compassion for those who are suffering physically and spiritually to commitment to justice, peace and the safeguarding of God's creation",<sup>47</sup> dialogue of life and spiritual experience.

In mission areas it will be important, in these as in other sectors of missionary life (inculturation, formation, etc.), to build up a constant and ample **collaboration** with other missionaries, religious or lay, so as to provide a richer contribution to the common commitment for the Kingdom.

<sup>47</sup> cf. VC 102

## 7. A watchword: consolidate.

In the last twenty years the Congregation, despite the scarcity of vocations over large areas, has opened up with generosity to new missionary foundations. The salesian charisma has been taken to numerous countries. To Project Africa has been added soon afterwards an intense movement towards Eastern Europe and expansion in South-East Asia (Indonesia, Cambodia).

In some of these contexts the foundational phase has been happily completed, and consolidation is now in progress as regards communities, structures and the pastoral project.

Precisely in view of this consolidation, and recognizing the results already achieved, I want to indicate some urgent points we must attend to. I entrust them in a particular way to the missionaries working in the field, and to the Provinces responsible for the foundations concerned.

The principal effort must be directed to **formation**. As far as initial formation is concerned, with the sites and formation communities already established we must now provide for the preparation of personnel and the constitution of teams which are sufficient in terms of both numbers and quality. It will be a good thing to set up at the same time the commission for formation and draw up the Directory prescribed by the Regulations.<sup>48</sup> By including the common normative guidelines and what is suggested by local experience, the directory will become an instrument of inculturation in line with what I recalled in previous pages.

Everywhere we are finding it necessary to get to know the **cultural and religious background of candidates**, in order to make an accurate discernment of their capacities and motivations and accompany them pedagogically, so that they

<sup>48</sup> cf. R 87

may be able to interiorize their attitudes to consecrated life and live in a personalized manner the genuine salesian spirit, conveniently adapted to the context. In the deep and convinced assimilation of the spirit, in addition to external practice, consists the true founding of the charism in a country. Great care must be taken therefore of the formation communities, starting from the prenovitiate, particularly in what regards personnel.

Initial formation at the present day takes its model and profile from **ongoing formation**, and aims at making it general and efficacious. Ongoing formation is therefore an indispensable element of consolidation. It includes a personal commitment of prayer and spiritual life, of reflection and study, of progressive qualification and preparation for the mission, from which the work of evangelization can never be disjoined. It covers also the quality of life of the local and provincial community. It has been found always and everywhere that the evangelizing efficacy depends on the community style of fraternal life, of prayer and of well ordered planning, rather than on individual activity.

The Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consecrata* recalls that communion is already mission by force of its evangelical witness. Perhaps the missionary communities more than others are called to become the place of permanent growth.

For each member times should be set aside for updating, synthesis and 'rewinding'. These are for the purpose of a suitable periodic rest, but especially to give back depth to daily life and to commitment as evangelizers. It will be well to make them regular and specific.

A second point to which attention should be given is the **qualification of our work**, both educative and pastoral. In the light of experience I mention some elements that need special care.

One is harmony and integration between evangelization, human advancement and education.

The first, **evangelization**, constitutes the main objective. It is the reason for our existence and our work. Hence, as we have said, it should be given preference in time, means, use of personnel, qualifications and planning.

**Education** is for us our typical way of working. It mainly regards young people, but it also prescribes the style for us to follow with adults. Of its nature it is addressed also to those who are not Christians and do not intend to embrace the faith. To Christians we offer a complete human formation, integrated with a catechetical process and initiation to the faith.

**Human advancement** is an indispensable aspect of evangelization. This too regards man and society as such; it has its own objectives, methods and dynamism, and can take on different orientations. And so Paul VI qualifies as "evangelical", "founded on the Kingdom of God", the advancement which the Church favours. This must appear in its constancy and mode of action, so as to make evident the specifically religious purpose of evangelization, which would lose its *raison d'être* if it left the axis which governs it: the Kingdom of God before all else in its fully theological sense.<sup>49</sup>

All this finds a means of clarification, orientation and convergence in the **Educative and Pastoral Project**, which motivates and synthesizes the various dimensions of our work: those which are educative and cultural, those of evangelization and catechesis, the communal and group aspects, and the vocational dimension.

Its elaboration and realization appear necessary for overcoming improvisation and too individualistic visions which are unbalanced in some direction and divert us from our objective. The preparation of the project and putting it into effect will provide an opportunity for rethinking our activity through common accord and ongoing formation.

Pastoral work does not attain its purpose, and the project

<sup>49</sup> cf. EN 32

has no guarantee of proper functioning, unless attention is centered on the **qualification of persons**. In this case we refer to the neophytes, the faithful, animators, parents and, in general, those available for formative processes. To some of these categories particular care must be dedicated. The experience they make gives them the opportunity of entering more deeply into a relationship with Christ, and the work they do has a decisive influence in the Christian community. I am referring to catechists and educators.

In practice my intention is to make an energetic call to everyone to invest principally in the formation of persons: as many as possible and at the highest possible level.

The use of money should be verified so that it can be allotted to the support of the most important activities, and our structures and the orientation of our occupations should be reviewed to ensure that what is only instrumental does not stand in the way of what is of foremost importance. Even in the missions the community must function as an “animating nucleus”.

A third point to which attention must be given regards the **conditions** needed for the Gospel and salesian charisma to take root in different contexts. Inculturation is not an operation carried out by experts around a table. It is the Christian and salesian life which as it progresses produces a typical interpenetration between the Gospel and customs.

This must be realized first of all in ourselves. It demands a sense of being part of the locality, the learning and daily use of the vernacular, the assuming of habits – improved if you wish –, the participation in simple and humble relationships, the understanding and adopting of popular religious devotions. In other words, it means becoming part of the place and being perceived as such, “becoming all things to all men”.

This process (belonging, language, local usages, insertion among the people), already undertaken by those who take upon themselves the first development of a mission, will facilitate



living with the native generations and the passing of responsibility to them when the time is ripe.

This is the purpose of the **creation of circumscriptions** which group foundations together, strengthen the sense of belonging, create shared responsibility, and permit the setting up of communities made up of confreres from different countries who will have to model their kind of life on the criteria of insertion and inculturation.

Contributing to inculturation, to the quality of evangelization, to the communication of the salesian spirit, and to the preservation of memory of the past, are also things like archives, specialized libraries on local culture, collections of ethnographic material and of letters etc. which document missionary progress.

The salesian missionaries of the early days had this historical dimension much at heart; it responded to the recommendations of the superiors, starting from Don Bosco, and to the cultural preparation of the pioneers. It is a concern we must take up again at the present day.

## 8. New frontiers.

We have several missionary projects in the pipeline, all of them promising. The expectations manifested in the areas where they will begin, the human and cultural richness with which they will bring us in contact and the extreme needs they will meet, encourage us to go ahead with them. They are fields ready for the harvest. I present them to you to render our thoughts more concrete and share with you the joy of looking forward to the future.

In Africa, in addition to strengthening and organizing the foundations already made, we shall go ahead also in new contexts: Zimbabwe, Malawi and Namibia.

In Asia the first foundation in Cambodia is now fully active:

a vast and modern centre for professional training with 500 young people and the possibility of a youth centre and missionary activity. A second work is in preparation, while we explore the possibilities offered by Laos. Recently communities were established in the Solomon Islands and in Nepal, and we are aiming at beginning a foundation in Pakistan, where four confreres will be sent in the second half of 1998. All the Provinces of India have undertaken new missionary initiatives.

And then there is China where there are signs of new times full of promise because of the dimensions of the territory and the population, the human characteristics, the former missionaries and the strong religious currents. The work is going ahead for the moment in very original and non-typical forms. The future shows signs of hope and of problems. However, the Congregation is following political events closely so as to move towards a consistent presence as soon as conditions permit. With this prospect ahead applications are already coming in from candidates who feel themselves called to work there.

In Europe we have to support some communities of recent foundation, as in Albania, while we proceed to establish the work in Rumania with the involvement of the Provinces of Venice and Austria. Don Bosco has gone there before us and the diffusion of his biography has already given rise to local vocations, who have already embarked on the first phases of formation.

In America we are looking at Cuba, where in recent years we have had positive signs of increasing vocations and where the needs of the Christian context appear immense for the scarce forces available. And in the new atmosphere of collaboration and solidarity foreshadowed in the GC24 and reaffirmed in the Synod for America, we are planning works for Hispanic immigrants in the United States.

Within various countries there are also natives to whom we have given care and attention in the past, and whom we continue to follow. To them are being added at the present day nu-

merous groups of Afro-Americans for whom, in line with the Churches of America, we have some projects in preparation.

I close the list with a reference to the painful problem of the refugees, millions of them, especially in Africa, and among whom the gravest consequences are felt by children and young persons. I have entrusted to the Missions Department the task of drawing up a proposed plan of action, starting from a knowledge of the phenomenon in every continent, so as to produce an effective initiative from an educative and pastoral standpoint.

"The harvest is great". Following the example of Don Bosco and his successors, who have presented to the Congregation new missionary enterprises to arouse generosity. I too appeal to the confreres who feel the desire and the call to put themselves at the Lord's disposal. I address the appeal to all. The presence of aging confreres may prove providential because of their witness, their prayer and their contribution of wisdom in missionary communities which are very young. Similarly the period of life, which in many countries can no longer be dedicated to educational work, could be most valuable for the missions. Nevertheless I would like the younger confreres feel that this appeal is addressed particularly to them.

Missionary generosity has been one of the reasons for the good health and expansion of the Congregation during its first one and a half centuries of life. I am convinced that the same will be true of the future.

In this appeal I would like to accent two particular points. The first concerns Provinces which today have an abundance of vocations. For a long time the Provinces of Europe have provided the greater number of missionaries, and thanks to them the Congregation has been planted in other continents. In the recent European congress on vocations held in Rome it was found that the contribution of the European Churches to the mission "ad gentes" in the last twenty-five years had gone down by 80%, while they maintained an exemplary economic solidarity and other assistance of various kinds. At the same

time the contribution of other continents is gaining consistency, as I was able to verify for myself when presenting the crucifix to those taking part in the 127<sup>th</sup> missionary expedition.

John Paul II, at the conclusion of the Encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* declares: "I see the dawning of a new missionary age, which will become a radiant day bearing an abundant harvest, if all Christians, and missionaries and young churches in particular, respond with generosity and holiness to the calls and challenges of our time".<sup>50</sup> We too must spread a mentality and enthusiasm in the recently flourishing Provinces and open to the young the world's possibilities.

Missionary reciprocity should make us available for the mutual sharing of means, personnel and spiritual helps.

The second point on which I want to lay emphasis is the involvement of the laity in the mission "ad gentes". With the general growth of awareness of the laity and their participation in the communion and mission of the Church, there has been a parallel attention among them to the mission "ad gentes". The desire is spreading, applications are increasing, the preparation of candidates is improving, and ways are being sought to make possible their participation in a manner suited to their particular conditions. To proclaim the good news is a right and duty of lay people, based on their baptismal dignity. We are witnessing an unprecedented mobilization of volunteers committed in the front line of the Church's pastoral work and in human advancement carried out in a Christian sense.

The GC24 endorsed in many forms this possibility of the missionary commitment of the laity. It is now time to go beyond the first realizations and move on to broad and well organized forms of salesian missionary laity.

<sup>50</sup> RM 92

## 9. Together towards the year 2000.

To this work of consolidation and to the new enterprises for the extension of the Kingdom we are all called. The "missions" form part of a single ecclesial mission. The salesian "missions" form part of the single salesian mission. They are realized, without any lack of continuity, wherever the Church must preach the Gospel, or the Congregation is called to offer its particular charisma.

Among those who work in the different "missions" there is a deep communion of goods and a mysterious solidarity of efforts and results.

We share the missionary trait of salesian spirituality, with the desire that the light of the Gospel may reach all. We share in missionary praxis so that the priority of the proclamation, the opening to religious dialogue, the movement of inculturation, and the effort to consolidate the community through the formation of members, may be taken up everywhere in the measure each situation requires. We share missionary life by sharing in both sad and consoling events through information, and try to see God's will in them through a Gospel reading of the incidents. We maintain communion with the missionaries especially by daily prayer and in special circumstances or anniversaries preserved in our memory or indicated by the Church.

An expression of the same sharing is **pastoral youth work** which in the journey of faith brings about an intense living of the missionary dimension of the Church. In the course of human maturing, of deepening of faith, of ecclesial experience and vocational guidance, there is place for incentives of all kinds coming from the world of the missions. In youthful group movements space is found for groups with an apostolic bent who take their inspiration from missionary interest. In them they cultivate flourishing Christian attitudes and behaviour, like willingness for self-dedication, esteem for different cultures, the ability to get beyond the surface in the case of per-

sons, the communal sense of work and activity, the taste for communication, and a world mentality.

Another expression of sharing is the spreading of **missionary sensitivity**, or the witness by our poor life among Christians or simply those of a kind heart. This is to be done in line with the principles and purpose of evangelization, rather than merely according to the techniques of publicity and seeking of agreement. The contribution of the Mission Offices at world, interprovincial and provincial level, has made possible the inception and growth of many missionary projects and continues to be the sign of the involvement of many persons in the missionary enterprise and of the practical sense which has characterized it from the time of the first expedition.

It hardly needs saying that it is to be lived not with a merely functional mentality, but with the desire to leave nothing undone so that as many as possible may enjoy the happiness of experiencing Christ's salvation.

The proximity of the year 2000 prompts us to give a new proof of our ability to undertake wide-ranging missionary initiatives together.

And so we have reached 125 years since the first missionary expedition, and our history shows that no important anniversary of that event was allowed to pass without being marked by particular celebrations.

At the beginning of the century it fell to Don Rua to commemorate the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The Salesians of America very much wanted him to visit that continent, and brought important influences to bear to achieve that result, but they were not successful.<sup>51</sup> The celebrations took place, however, in the presence of the Catechist General, Fr Paul Albera, in connection with the International Congress of Cooperators at Buenos Aires, the second following that of Bologna.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>51</sup> cf. CERIA E., *Annali*, Vol.III, p.106

<sup>52</sup> cf. *ibid.*, pp.104-128

Better remembered is the commemoration of the 50th in 1925, at the wish of Blessed Philip Rinaldi, which coincided with a jubilee year. The first point in his program was "a great function and a numerous missionary expedition".<sup>53</sup> And such an expedition was in fact prepared. It comprised 172 Salesians and 52 Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. It fell to Card. Cagliero to bless the expedition and present the crucifix to the departing missionaries.

On the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary, Fr Peter Ricaldone asked for an extraordinary contribution of personnel from the Provinces which had been the beneficiaries of the first missionary efforts, and urged the founding of some missionary aspirantates outside Europe.

In 1975, at a hundred years from the date which is so dear to us, Fr Ricceri invited us to remember it with some practical initiatives of which the second was: a missionary expedition worthy of the centenary. "I come now", he said, "to make you not a proposal but a warm invitation. The Congregation, grateful to God for all the good it has been able to do for souls in the past hundred years and aware of how much remains to be done, trusting in the Providence which will reward the action of anyone who leaves his Province for the missions by raising up new and generous vocations, intends to realize a missionary expedition worthy of the event".<sup>54</sup>

The dimensions of the Congregation and the vitality of the new Provinces, the widening of the world and the new areas awaiting the sowing of the seed, prompt us to give life to missionary reciprocity.

I propose to you in view of the year 2000 to form a band, with a minimum contribution of one confrere from every Province, to consolidate the works recently begun and to

<sup>53</sup> Minutes of Superior Council, 16.6.1925

<sup>54</sup> Circular Letters of Fr Ricceri, 35 "On the Centenary of the salesian missions" Vol.2, p.779

advance in the places now being opened. Provinces favoured with many vocations can contribute according to their wealth in personnel, beginning immediately a work of sensitization and motivation among the young confreres. In this way we shall link the Pope's appeal for a new evangelization with thanksgiving to God for the ten thousand or so missionary vocations he has sent to our Congregation.

### **Conclusion.**

At the end of these reflections my thoughts turn to Mary Help of Christians. It is not by chance that our expeditions set out from the Basilica dedicated to her as the centre of irradiation of the faith and the Congregation. Even if today, because of missionary decentralization, there are many points of departure, the presentation of the crucifix before Mary Help of Christians will always be the gesture with which the Salesian Congregation as such renews its missionary commitment.

Her picture gives us a synthesis of missionary spirituality with the reference to the Father who is at the origin of the mission, to the Incarnation of the Son, which was the first mission and the source of all others, and to the presence of the Spirit sent to animate the Church which in turn is sent to evangelize the world.

Mary makes us think of the word received at the Annunciation, of the joyful message brought in the Visitation, of the Word meditated on in the birth of Jesus and progressively become life in the participation in the public ministry, and fully realized in union with the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus.

The territories where we have sown the seed are almost all of them marked by a sanctuary of Mary Help of Christians. The communities which have been formed have learned to



invoke her. The three Christian communities with whom we celebrated the Eucharist in China asked spontaneously as we were leaving for the blessing of Mary Help of Christians. It is a practice and a souvenir which so many years of isolation could not succeed in obliterating from the memory of those attached to the faith.

To her, who has opened and guided our missionary history, we entrust our present and future projects.

A handwritten signature in dark ink. The signature is stylized, starting with a large, sweeping 'J' that curves around and under the name. The name 'Juan Turchi' is written in a cursive script. The signature is positioned in the center-right of the page.

### THE CORNERSTONES OF SALESIAN MISSIONARY PRAXIS

Fr Luciano ODORICO  
*Councillor General for the Missions*

#### Introduction

I want to offer to all Salesian missionaries of the Congregation a brief summary of Salesian Missionary Praxis which will include the main criteria of our hundred years old missionary tradition.

The contents of this article represent the second part of my intervention in the recent celebrations of the 75th Anniversary of the arrival of the Salesians at Shillong in North-East India.

#### 1. The specific span of the Salesian Missions

Under the heading "**Salesian Missions**" we include:

- missionary commitment for first evangelization, for the implanting of the Church and the Congregation (*especially in Africa*);
- missionary commitment among ethnic *minorities* (*especially in Latin America*);
- commitment for a missionary mentality in territories of ancient and great religions (*Asia and Africa*);
- missionary commitment of all confreres who have left their native country;
- missionary commitment towards new missionary needs

(e.g. *Eastern Europe and Asia*) and new 'areopagi' (emigrants, refugees, youth distress etc.).

Faithful to its origins, the Salesian Congregation continues to ensure an effective missionary presence. Asia and Africa have already begun to make an active missionary contribution by sending out their own missionaries.

## 2. The main unchanging factors in salesian missionary commitment

The experience of more than three generations in the work of the Congregation in the missions "ad gentes" reveals **the following fixed points:**

- A process of "refoundation" of the Congregation: a fresh understanding of the Founder's charism against the background of the geographical, cultural and social context of the territory concerned;

- The Catholic and missionary dimension of the whole Congregation, in the sense of its geographical expansion and the involvement of the confreres;

- The growth of the Provinces in their commitment for the missions;

- The universal nature of salesian pedagogy even in environments of different religious persuasion: Moslems, East Asia, work among ethnic minorities, etc.;

- Indigenous vocational strategy for the future of the Congregation in areas where we are working;

- Originality in journeys of faith, especially as regards the catechumenate;

- The missions as a school of evangelical radicality, of holiness and joy.

### **3. Salesian missionary praxis**

This can be broken down into several complementary sectors. We can quote them, together with the relevant references to the Constitutions, Chapter documents, and the Church's magisterium.

#### **3.1 The first evangelization, among people not yet evangelized, as the special objective of Christ the Good Shepherd and the apostolic thrust of Don Bosco.**

*"Through our missionary activity we carry out a patient work of evangelization by founding the Church within a group of people" (Const. 30).*

The history of the salesian missions has been a story of first evangelization in Latin America, Asia and Africa. The foundation of Churches is still represented by numerous missionary Vicariates and Dioceses entrusted to the Salesians.

*The first evangelization is however obstructed by the resurgence of nationalisms, the phenomenon of the sects, of religious syncretism, of fundamentalism of various kinds, and of misunderstood irenics in an interreligious context.*

Other difficulties arise from the defective formation of catechists and from inadequate catechumenate programs.

#### **3.2 Harmony and integral relationship between evangelization, education and human advancement.**

*"Missionary work mobilizes all the educational and pastoral means proper to our charism" (Const. 30).*

Our missionary style takes its inspiration from the *salesian charism*. A clear preference for the young and the bond between these three components are the master plan which make the missionaries assume "the values of the people, and their

hopes and anxieties". The *oratory* has always been and still is our first line of missionary approach to the young.

*In missionary praxis there is sometimes a lack of balance in pastoral services: on the one hand, an exaggerated attention to welfare or an administration which is too complex, and on the other, too little attention to explicit evangelization and to the need for itinerant activity in the villages.*

### 3.3 Local vocations

*"Do all you can to find vocations for both the Sisters and the Salesians" (LDB 448).*

The Salesians go to the missions to stay there. Their commitment, while respecting the seasons of the Lord of the harvest, is characterized by an immediate rendering indigenous of the Congregation. At the present time two thirds of the novices come from the southern hemisphere, from young Churches and young Provinces. There is also a greater interest in vocations to other branches of the Salesian Family.

There has been noticed in the past, and it still exists, *a lack of adequate inculturation in vocational discernment, and of the special following up of candidates from ethnic minorities.*

### 3.4 Missionary inculturation

*"Provinces which have mission territories within their boundaries should prepare personnel for dialogue with cultures not yet evangelized, even though they represent ethnic minorities" (Reg.18).*

The commitment to inculturation helps the incarnation everywhere of the Gospel and the salesian charism. There have been examples of missionaries deeply embodied in their missionary praxis and in scientific research and output.

One comes across, especially in Project Africa and in the

new foundations in Asia, *phenomena of monocultural geographical mentalities of missionaries with a restricted vision of inculturation and of international collaboration.*

Sometimes emerges also an *attitude, very often unconscious, of being bearers of a dominant and higher culture, with little interest for tribal languages.*

### **3.5 Missionary activity and ecumenical and interreligious dialogue**

*"The fundamental unity of all human beings, the positive values and elements of grace present in religious traditions, encourage the Church to enter into 'dialogue and collaboration' with them" (GC24, 183).*

The majority of salesian missionaries have accepted the change in doctrinal and pastoral emphasis of Vatican II, the shift from controversy to a dialogue of life, of activity, of theological exchange and religious experience (in line with what is indicated in *"Dialogue and proclamation", n.42*).

An uncritical emphasis on ecumenical and interreligious dialogue coupled with a superficial theological preparation have provoked the spreading of a *false irenics and a lack of commitment to direct evangelization*. It was wrongly thought that dialogue excluded the commitment to the first proclamation (*cf. GC24, 185-186*).

### **3.6 Salesian pedagogy and spirituality**

*"Charity, patience, gentleness, never humiliating corrections, never punishments, do good to those you can and evil to no one", wrote Don Bosco to Don Cagliero (LDB 447).*

At a pedagogical level, the salesian missionary style is characterized by amiability, joy, availability, creativity, enthusiasm and unlimited work. In some cases salesian missionaries have courageously faced even the test of martyrdom.

*Missionaries who have not made a lifelong option do not display a deep missionary spirituality. In the pedagogical field some missionaries are reduced to a managerial role because of too many commitments and too many works. There are also serious phenomena of tiredness and missionary counter-witness, and of deliberately little effort at inculturation.*

### **3.7 The presence of Mary**

*"Constantly promote devotion to Mary Help of Christians and to the Blessed Sacrament" (Souvenir, 16).*

In Don Bosco's missionary plan, as in every salesian project, the presence of Mary has always been considered an essential element.

In missionary praxis this becomes translated into the spreading of popular devotion to Mary Help of Christians, the publication of booklets and pictures, the due celebration of the principal Marian festivities, and finally the building of Sanctuaries dedicated to her.

The first missionaries never conceived the beginning of salesian work in a new country without the construction of some sign in honour of our Mother, a Sanctuary more often than not. For them missionary praxis was intimately connected with the presence and assistance of the Help of Christians.

### **3.8 Missionary cooperation and financial support**

*"The missionary Church gives what she receives, and distributes to the poor the material goods that her materially richer sons and daughters generously put at her disposal" (RM 81).*

The story of the salesian missions has also been from the outset the story of the generosity of benefactors and of the mother Provinces.

At the present day, many programs of development, of edu-

cation (and especially of professional training), and of evangelization are possible thanks to the qualitative and quantitative structural and financial support of various sources, such as the Salesian Headquarters, the Missions Offices, mother Provinces, and the initiatives of individual missionaries.

But today the crisis of vocations in the West means that a *consistent cooperation at the level of personnel* can no longer be ensured as it was in the past.

Moreover the *priorities of those to whom missionary cooperation is directed* are not always kept in mind: e.g. catechists, local vocations, the young and the poor, young workers, the sick, and leaders with their many projects.

### **3.9 Missionary cooperation and the lay missionary volunteer movement**

*"Within missionary activity, the different forms of the lay apostolate should be held in esteem, with respect for their nature and aims. Lay missionary associations, international Christian volunteer organizations, ecclesial movements, groups and sodalities of different kinds – all these should be involved in the mission 'ad gentes' and in collaboration with the local churches" (RM 72).*

The lay missionary volunteer movement is a positive reality in constant growth in the salesian missions, and is present in every continent. It expresses the lay dimension of the missionary endeavour which we try to manifest in a salesian style. Long-term volunteer commitments are to be preferred.

*Sometimes there is an evidently inadequate preparation of candidates, an insufficient follow-up by those responsible, and a lack of sufficient financial backup.*



### 3.10 Attention to new missionary frontiers

Obedient to Christ's command (Mk 16,15.20) and faithful to the salesian mission centenary, the Congregation is open to the need for new missionary frontiers.

It is part of salesian tradition to go to new mission fields together with other branches of the Salesian Family, and especially with the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. In these new fields we frequently work in the same territory, sharing common lines of pastoral planning, though with programs managed autonomously.

The aspect of novelty and the new challenges offered by this opening give rise in the Congregation to new missionary vocations and to new lines of missionary animation.

### 3.11 Missionary animation

*"It is the duty of each Provincial with his Council to lay down norms for the animation and coordination of missionary activity" (Reg.18).*

Missionary animation has increased in nearly all the Provinces, catalyzed by the recent missionary projects.

There is interest and a sense of ecclesial and congregational missionary reciprocity. Already well established are meetings at national and continental level of Provincial Delegates for Missionary Animation. *But there are still some Provinces where the role of the Delegate is still not clear.*

## Conclusion

At the end of this intervention on salesian missionary praxis, I think it opportune to point out that the salesian enterprise for the missions "ad gentes" has been the principal

reason for the expansion of the Congregation in the world and hence of its 'catholic' nature.

This salesian missionary universality, translated into charismatic inculturation in 120 countries of the world, is called to produce a new missionary impulse which can make possible missionary reciprocity, especially through the work of candidates coming from countries rich in vocations.

The missionary ideal has always produced excellent vocational results.

The following words of the biographer of Don Bosco will provide a suitable conclusion:

"But one of the effects of the missionaries' departure was the increased number of applicants for the Congregation. Formerly the Congregation had developed slowly and in obscurity; little or nothing was known about it outside Piedmont. But now before, during and after the departure, Don Bosco and the Salesians were given wide coverage by both the Italian and foreign press. Many became interested and an ever greater number applied for admission into the Society" (BM 11, 382).

"The insertion of the **Salesians** and of the **Daughters of Mary Help of Christians** in the ecclesial missionary movement of the nineteenth century was a courageous initiative of great historical importance for the development of the two Congregations, because by introducing them from their beginnings into a wider participation in spatial 'catholicity' of members and activities of the Church, the rhythm of numerical and operative growth was speeded up and they became transformed into **Institutes of world extension**" (FAVALE A., *The missionary project of Don Bosco, Quaderni di Salesianum* 3, p.42).

### 4.1 Chronicle of the Rector Major

The period from the end of September to early December was rich for the Rector Major in visits, meetings and events of various kinds.

28 September: he visited **San Benigno Canavese** where the past-pupils were holding their annual meeting and celebrating at the same time the 50th anniversary of the opening of the electro-mechanics laboratory.

In the afternoon of the same day he went on to Turin to the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians, where he presented the missionary crucifix to the 33 departing missionaries: 20 SDBs, 7 FMAs and 6 lay people including a married couple. This was the **127th missionary expedition**. Concelebrating with the Rector Major were Fr Luciano Odorico, Councillor General for the Salesian Missions, Fr Giovanni Fedrigotti, Regional Councillor for Italy and the Middle East, the Provincial Fr Luigi Testa, and eighty other priests. The Rector Major congratulated the missionaries for the grace God had bestowed on them and for their generosity in making themselves

available for preaching the Gospel: *"Blessed are those who proclaim peace..."*.

29 September - 4 October: The Rector Major took part in various meetings of the Congress of Young Religious in Rome. This significant ecclesial event involved numerous Salesians.

Monday, 6 October. Fr Vecchi left Rome for a journey which had as its principal objective a visit to the salesian work in Cambodia and China. At Bangkok Airport he had a meeting with the Apostolic Nuncio to Thailand (Mgr. Luigi Bressan) and several Salesians, and then left with Fr Joaquim D'Souza (Regional Councillor) for **Phnom Penh**. There he was met by the Provincial (Fr Joseph Prathan Sridarunsil) and other Salesians who accompanied him to the Salesian School entitled *The Don Bosco Foundation of Cambodia*. This is a school for professional training with more than 400 pupils and a boarding section, built recently, for youngsters who are nearly all orphans or of poor families. The Rector

Major spoke with the confreres, visited the workshops, met the students during a spectacle of singing and dancing, and greeted the civil and religious authorities who had been invited to a cocktail party on the school premises in his honour. While in Phnom Penh he also visited the works of the FMA.

9 October. With the Regional and Provincial he left Phnom Penh and flew via Bangkok to Hong Kong, headquarters of the China Province. There he visited various salesian works, and met the confreres, the Salesian Family, the Cooperators and Past-pupils, the young confreres in formation, and was present at a youth spectacle prepared in his honour. In particular, in a meeting with the members of the Provincial Council and Rectors, he emphasized some aspects of salesian life and activity: the community, contact with the young, and working with the laity.

Saturday, 11 October. At **Macao**, in the Immaculate Conception College, the first salesian work in the region, Fr Vecchi presided at the Eucharist and met the Salesian Family and young people. Accompanied by the Regional, the Provincial and the Rector of the Don Bosco College he visited the Governor of Macao and

the Bishop. Before leaving Macao he went with Salesians, FMAs, Cooperators, animators, volunteers and pupils to a hill close to the school "Bishop Luigi Ver-siglia" to bless the foundation stone of a building which will be a temporary home for Vietnamese refugees, given by the government of Macao; it will be able to provide accommodation for another 150 youngsters in difficulties.

12 October. The third stage of Fr Vecchi's journey in the China Province was to **Taipei** in the Island of Taiwan, to the St John Bosco Parish. There he met the Province's four novices, presided at the Sunday Eucharist, and in the afternoon greeted the confreres of the salesian houses of Taiwan.

13 October. After returning to Hong Kong he left in the evening with the Provincial and Vice-Provincial, Fr Joaquim D'Souza, Bro. Aloysius Tam and the DBV Sofia Tho, for the port of Hong Kong to set sail for **Mainland China** where he made contact with the activities of various kinds animated by the Salesians.

In the town of **Ma Zhou** he visited a leper asylum; at **Sek Taan** he went to the house for the children of lepers and blessed the area where a professional school will be built, and at **Guan**

**Zhiou** met with more confreres.

Tuesday, 14 October. Fr Vecchi went to **Shaoguan** (formerly Shiu Chow), the town which had seen the beginning and development of the salesian work, the seat of Bishop Luigi Versiglia, who at a spot a hundred kms. from here on the banks of the river suffered martyrdom together with Fr Callistus Caravario. The Rector Major visited the town, the former sites of the works of the SDBs and FMAs, and some villages where through the initiative of the *Don Bosco Foundation* schools and chapels are rising. At Shaoguan he was also able to meet some members of the town government, including the Deputy-Mayor, the deputy Party-Secretary and the official in charge of religious affairs.

Wednesday, 15 October. Before leaving to return to Hong Kong Fr Vecchi went to the chapel in the house of the Sister Announcers of the Lord, the Congregation founded by Bishop Versiglia. There he celebrated a Mass at which were present some forty of the three hundred Christians of the town. At the end he gave the Blessing of Mary Help of Christians.

In the evening of the same day, after saying farewell to the confreres of Hong Kong, he left for Rome.

Sunday, 19 October. The Rector Major went to **Pisa** for the conclusion of the centenary celebrations of the salesian work in that city. During the solemn Eucharist, at which were present the various groups of the Salesian Family and the parish community, while congratulating the entire community he recalled that a centenary is the result of commitment on the part of all, but the golden thread which had united the efforts and made them converge to a single result was the spirit of Don Bosco, centered on the love for young people in need.

Thursday, 23 October. Fr Vecchi left Rome on another journey, this time for Johannesburg, for the conclusion of the celebrations for the centenary of salesian work in Southern Africa. After a brief stop at Johannesburg he went on to Cape Town.

24 October. The Rector Major was met at the airport by the Provincial (Fr Patrick Naughton) and the Vice-Provincial (Fr Robert Gore), who accompanied him to the *Salesian Institute* in Cape Town, the first house to be opened in South Africa; the work now includes a parish, a bookshop and a printing laboratory. A pro-

ject for the benefit of street-lads is also in active development.

Fr Vecchi met the Salesians and FMA of the area and blessed, as a souvenir of his visit, a stone laid next to the foundation stone of the Institute.

Saturday, 25 October. He visited the various parishes of the city entrusted to the care of the Salesians, and presided at the Eucharist in the parish dedicated to Mary Help of Christians in Lansdowne. Concelebrating with him were the Archbishop of Cape Town (Mgr. Henry Lawrence), the Auxiliary Bishop (Mgr. Reginald Cawcutt), and many Salesians from the houses of South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland.

26 October. He visited the house "Blessed Michael Rua" in Rynfield, the place of the post-novitiate, and met the young students of the centre.

Monday, 27 October. The Rector Major reached the country of **Swaziland**, where he visited the *Salesian House* of Manzini, an ample foundation with elementary, middle and high schools for externs. As well as this large scholastic centre, the Salesians also run in the town a *Study Centre*, an oratory, trade school, and works for abandoned children. These too Fr Vecchi visited and had a meet-

ing with the Bishop, Mgr. Louis Ncamiso Ndlovu. He spent the evening with the confreres.

28 October. Fr Vecchi had a significant meeting with seven novices – two from Mozambique and five from Angola – who had travelled for the occasion from the novitiate in Mozambique, with the Provincial Delegate and Director of Novices. On the same day, after celebrating the Eucharist with the novices, Fr Vecchi visited the salesian work at **Malkerns**; this includes a parish, elementary, middle and high schools for externs, and eight mission stations, each entrusted to a group of adults and visited periodically by the priest. In the evening he returned to Johannesburg.

29 October. The Rector Major left with the Provincial and the Regional (Fr Antonio Rodriguez Tallón) for **Maputsoe** in Lesotho by road. Here the Salesians and FMA work together at *St Luke's Salesian Mission*, a large-scale work which includes the local primary school, a high school, the Ha Chaka primary school, the St Mary Mazzarello Craft Centre and the parish. The total number of pupils reaches more than two thousand. Fr Vecchi presided at Mass in the house chapel, with the SDBs, FMAs and two DBVs

taking part, and in the homily presented the figure of Blessed Michael Rua whose feast occurred on that day.

30 October. Once again in the Eucharist, with this time taking part more than 2,000 pupils, Salesians, Sisters and teachers, the Rector Major spoke of Don Rua, emphasizing his generosity and love for Don Bosco; he told the listening youngsters that they too had the possibility of meeting Don Bosco: in the Salesians and the FMA.

In the afternoon he moved to **Daleside**, where the Salesians animate a centre where groups of both young people and adults can meet together for days of spirituality.

Friday, 31 October. Fr Vecchi made a brief visit to the neighbouring "Michael Rua" school which has as its pupils some 460 boys and girls, the majority of them coloured, but the school is also open to whites.

Returning to Johannesburg he visited the Bishop of the city (Mgr. Reginald Orsmond), and then went on to **Booysens**, the provincial house, and later to the parish of St John Bosco at **Robertsham**. From here he went on to the parish community of **Ennerdale**, travelling by way of Soweto (**South West Town-**

ship), and then to the Santa Maria Centre at **Finetown**, situated in a very poor area with many shacks and hovels. In this way Fr Vecchi was able to acquire an overall vision of the salesian reality of the Vice-province of Southern Africa.

5 November. Back in Rome the Rector Major was at the Pontifical Salesian University to preside over a meeting of the Academic Senate; he set out some guidelines for the process of the formulation of the organic operative project, and announced a forthcoming visit of an informative nature at the service of the government of the University (cf. *Documents and News Items* at n.5.3 in this issue of the Acts).

Saturday, 8 November. Fr Vecchi went to Legnago (Verona) for the conclusion of the centenary celebrations of the house and work of the Salesians in the area of Lower Verona.

In the Council Chamber of the Town Hall he received honorary citizenship and was presented with a commemorative plaque in recognition and gratitude for the work of the "Saint David" Institute. In addition to the local Mayor and Council, there were present also other Mayors from the

vicinity, the Prefect of the city of Verona, past-pupils, cooperators and friends.

In the evening in a concelebration in the Cathedral the figure of Mgr. David De Massari was recalled; he was the priest who appealed to Don Bosco and subsequently to Don Rua to send Salesians to Legnago to begin a work for the benefit of the young. The day concluded with a musical entertainment in the parish theatre of Porto, prepared by the young people of the St. Dominic Savio salesian parish of Verona, with the title "Light in the world".

Sunday, 9 November. The centenary celebrations concluded with an encounter with the Salesian Family of West Venice in the main hall of the Institute and with the well-attended solemn concelebration in the sanctuary of the "Madonna della salute" of Porto di Legnago.

16 November to 12 December. Fr Vecchi took part in the Synod of Bishops for America. During this period he stayed in the salesian community of St Francis de Sales at the Vatican, so as to dedicate himself with greater continuity to his important task.

Each Saturday he returned to the Generalate to give the "good

night" to the confreres describing how the work was going, the topics discussed and the perspectives emerging.

He interrupted briefly his participation in the Synod for a visit to the Czech Republic between 5 and 8 December, for the celebration of seventy years of salesian work in that country.

Friday, 5 December. Accompanied by the Regional Councillor, Fr Albert Van Hecke, the Rector Major left Rome Fiumicino for Prague, where he was received by the Provincial and a group of Salesians who accompanied him to **Ostrava**, to the salesian house of "St Joseph", where the Salesians look after a youth centre, an oratory, a public church and other parishes of the area.

6 December. Fr Vecchi solemnly blessed the Ostrava chapel, restored after its use during the communist period as a gymnasium. After visiting the various parts of the house and a meeting with a group of past-pupils of the oratory of the time preceding the communist area (who sang the *Iubilate Deo* in his honour), he presided at a solemn concelebration in the chapel, in the presence of the Bishop of Ostrava, the Bishop of Olomouc, and many



salesian priests and diocesan clergy. The youngsters of the oratory animated the celebration with their singing. In the homily the Rector Major thanked the Provincial for the welcome he had been given, the Bishops for their presence, and the Salesians for the work they had done in the last seventy years. At the end of the Mass he went to the Town Hall, accompanied by the Provincial and the two Bishops to visit the Mayor of the town. Back at the salesian house he took part in an academy in his honour, and then met with and greeted Salesians, Cooperators and past-pupils.

Then, in the company of Fr Van Hecke, the Provincial and other Salesians, he left for Brno. On the way they stopped to visit and pray at the tomb of the first Salesian of the Czech Republic, Fr Ignatius Stuchly, who is buried at Frysták. There he also visited the salesian house, the first to be opened in this country. It was once an aspirantate; now it is a youth centre.

In the evening he reached our parish at **Brno-Lizen**, in a new area of the city.

7 December. Here in the morning, after visiting an ancient church dedicated to Mary Help of Christians (and considered by the

Salesians to be a sign of their future presence), the Rector Major presided at a Eucharist for the young people in a hall of the neighbouring state school; he then met with a group of youngsters to whom, after replying to their various questions, he left a message in three words: *Life, faith and work*, as a commitment for their personal formation and intellectual growth.

In the afternoon of the same day he went to the newly built church of Brno-Zabovresky, dedicated to Mary Help of Christians. In the Church Hall he met the Rectors, members of the provincial council, and the Salesian Family.

After taking leave of this assembly, he left for Prague, Kobylisy, where he was received by the clerical students of the fourth year of theology. There too had gathered the Provincials of Austria, Hungary, Germany, one of the Polish Provinces, and the Superior of the UPS Vice-province.

8 December, Feast of the Immaculate Conception. Fr Vecchi visited the PORTAL salesian publishing house, and then the JABOK Faculty for pedagogical, social and theological studies, founded in 1992 and directed by the Salesians. In the Aula Magna the Rector Major met with some eighty students

and various teachers and presented the main lines of the pedagogical intuition of Don Bosco: the preventive system.

In the same building in the afternoon he met the students of philosophy and theology and the pre-novices of Ceské Budejovice. For them Fr Vecchi developed some points from his letter *For you I study*.

Later in the Cathedral the Rector Major took part in the celebration at which Cardinal Vlk presided, in the presence of the Apostolic Nuncio and many Salesians. In his homily, after thanking the Cardinal for his words of greeting, Fr Vecchi recalled the seventy years of salesian presence and work in the Czech Republic.

Tuesday, 9 December. After celebrating Holy Mass with the community the Rector Major departed for Rome where he took part in the final days of the Synod which ended on 12 December, feast of our Lady of Guadalupe, with a solemn concelebration in St Peter's Basilica.

With the Synod ended, the work of the plenary session of the General Council was waiting at the Generalate; but there were still other engagements and commitments to be fulfilled.

15 December. There was a meeting with the confreres of the various communities of the UPS, in which Fr Vecchi dwelt on some topics of particular interest to the Congregation. He was also able to meet and congratulate the new Bishop of Innsbruck, Mgr. Alois Kothgasser SDB.

16 December. At the "Auxilium" Pontifical Faculty of Sciences, the Rector Major celebrated the Eucharist and met the academic community, with the Mother General (Sr. Antonia Colombo), offering them some reflections on arguments taken from his circular letter *For you I study*.

The remainder of the period was devoted almost entirely to the work of the Council. As is the case every year, there were the meetings of the Councillors with some of the formation communities of Rome for the exchange of the season's greetings.

## **4.2 Chronicle of the Councillors**

### **The Vicar General**

After the summer plenary session, Fr Luc Van Looy preached a retreat to the novices of the three FMA novitiates of Italy who then

made their first professions in their own provinces.

8 August. At Turin he presided at the celebration for the professions of an international group of DBVs, on the occasion of the 80th anniversary of their foundation.

17 - 23 August. Les Combes, Valle d'Aosta. He preached a retreat for the confreres of the Piedmontese Circumscription (ICP). He then left for Belgium to spend some days with his family.

7 September. Rome. SDB perpetual professions.

8 September. Rome. SDB first professions.

12 - 20 September. Generalate, Rome. Intermediate meeting of General Council.

21 September. Malta, for a three-day study seminar with the Salesians and lay collaborators. He was able also to make contact with other groups committed to the salesian mission in the island and visit the various works.

24 - 27 September. He preached a retreat for the confreres of the Congregation of the Disciples, who have a charism similar to our own and work for abandoned youth.

October. At the beginning of this month Fr Van Looy was compelled to divide his time between three Congresses that were going on simultaneously: the world

congress of young religious at the Hotel Ergife, Rome; that of the FMA organized by the "Auxilium" at world level on the theme: *The Woman and the humanization of culture on the eve of the third millennium: the way of education*; and the world meeting on "Prayer for peace" at Padua and Venice, organized by the Sant'Egidio Community. The coincidence of the three meetings meant that Fr Van Looy could be present only for a part of each.

20 October. He presided at a day of reflection with the rectors of the Roman Province at Formia, on the theme of the practical application of the dispositions of the GC24 in the provincial context.

24 October. At the "St. Thomas" community of the UPS for the monthly retreat.

25 October. Animation of the retreat for the community of the FMA novitiate at Monte Mario, Rome.

26 October. Meeting with the members of the Salesian Youth Movement of Piedmont on the presence of the young Christian in today's world. It enabled Fr Van Looy to become aware of the strength of the SYM in Piedmont and of the capacity for reflection of the young people, with the assistance of the FMA and SDB.

On the same day he was present at a meeting of the heads of salesian schools in Italy to reflect with them on the future school renewal in the country.

5 November. He was present at a meeting of the Bishops and religious of Belgium, to promote better collaboration, especially with regard to means of communication and care of the missionary zones in the area of the African Great Lakes.

8 - 10 November. He presided at the tenth meeting of the five SDB-FMA German-speaking Provinces of Germany and Austria on the theme of *Salesian youth spirituality and vocational pastoral work*. The meeting was followed with great attention because of the comparison with the pastoral work for vocations of the Church in Germany. A considerable sensitivity has developed in these countries in the last ten years of constant commitment to the SYS.

15 - 16 November. Rome. Meeting with the executive Council of the World Union of Catholic Educators (UMEC). It was a meeting for the organization of activities at world level and a preliminary preparation for the world assembly of 1999, to be held in Holland.

17 - 18 November. Meeting with the provincial councils of the

Milan and Adriatic provinces to study the redefinition of the boundaries of the two provinces. Later on 1 December there was a further meeting with the rectors of the Adriatic province on the same point, and to launch a consultation among the confreres of both provinces.

21 November. Verona. Fr Van Looy was present at the solemn celebration of the Golden Jubilee of the San Zeno School of Graphic Arts, with leading personalities of the Venice Region, the city of Verona, and the worlds of industry and education.

22 November. He was with the confreres of the Generalate in the afternoon for the traditional "chestnuts" outing.

24 - 25 November. He guided a reflection of the rectors of the Cologne Province (GEK) of Germany on the application of the GC24 to the German context.

26 - 29 November. Ariccia, Rome. Fr Van Looy represented the Rector Major (impeded by the Synod of America) at the semi-annual meeting of the Union of Superiors General. The theme of the meeting was the consideration of the world congress of young religious and resultant future processes. Through listening to and dialogue with the young re-

ligious and with the organizers of the congress, attention could be given to what transpired in the event, and consequences could be drawn, especially for the formation of the young religious themselves. The Superiors General greatly appreciated the contribution given by young Salesians to the organization and successful results of the congress.

3 December. At the Generalate there was a fraternal supper of the Rector Major and Council with the nine salesian bishops taking part in the Synod.

6 December. Fr Van Looy was present at the meeting celebrating ten years work of the international office of the CI-GIOC.

8 December. He presided at the concluding Eucharist of the social and political meeting organized at Italian national level by the Young Past-pupils on the theme *Youth and work*.

9 December. The plenary session of the General Council began.

### **The Councillor for Formation**

Between August and November 1997 the animation of Fr Nicolussi, and his participation in various interprovincial meetings of formation delegates and formation personnel, had as its objective the

stimulation and consolidation of interprovincial linkage and collaboration in the field of initial and ongoing formation, which is one of the commitments in the program. The meetings were centered on the guidelines of the GC24, the revision of the *Ratio* and on other points relevant to the six-year program.

26 - 28 August. Manila, Philippines. The Councillor had a meeting with the provincial delegates of the Australian and East Asian zones. A basis was established for an interprovincial linkage of a systematic and programmed nature. The journey enabled him to make contact with the various formation communities of the Philippines and to go to Jakarta (Indonesia) to visit the flourishing postnovitiate community.

25 September - 3 October. Fr Nicolussi visited all the communities of initial formation of the two USA Provinces, most of which are in the New Rochelle Province. To mark the occasion of the celebration of the centenary of salesian work in the country, the intention is to verify and relaunch the formation project and process by making options which better respond to the new vocational, pastoral and cultural situation. Steps were taken to bring about a

more systematic interprovincial collaboration.

29 September. The Councillor spent this day in the Institute of Salesian Studies of Berkeley, California, founded in 1984. The Institute is animated by an integrated team of Salesians and Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, and offers an annual program of salesian studies in a formative context of fraternal and international common life. Its situation in a university area means that participants in the Institute's programs can easily frequent courses of interest to them in the various local study centres. The annual program offered by the Institute is followed especially by confreres from English-speaking parts of the Congregation. Since 1990 the Institute has been publishing the *Journal of Salesian Studies*.

10 - 11 October. Szczyrk. Here in southern Poland Fr Nicolussi had a meeting with the delegates and some formation personnel of the four Polish provinces and the Eastern Circumscription. It was decided to propose to the Provincial Conference the designation of a national committee for linkage in the field of formation.

1 - 2 November. In a seminar on formation organized by the CISI (Conference of Salesian Provinces

of Italy) with an attendance of 60 persons between delegates, confreres in formation and formation personnel from Italy and the Middle East, Fr Nicolussi insisted on the need for stronger and more continuous coordination.

Within the Department reflection has continued on the process of the revision of the *Ratio*, asked for by the GC24, and a systematic collection has been made of data concerning those leaving the Congregation in recent years, as a first step towards a reflection on the "problem of defectors".

17 November. The Councillor began a two-week "academic visitation" of the UPS, for which he had been delegated by the Rector Major. The objectives, context and manner of making the visitation are stated by the Rector Major himself in his communication to the UPS Academic Senate of 5 November 1997.

### **The Councillor for Youth Pastoral Work**

At the end of July Fr Domenech took part in the course for new rectors of Spain, developing the theme of the rector as animator of a pastoral community.

14 - 24 August. He was present in Paris, invited by the Pontifical

Council for the Laity, at the *International Forum* of Youth, and at the World Youth Day. In the *Forum* he shared with 350 young people representing Bishops' Conferences from all over the world and international youth movements an experience of reflection and communication on the presence and commitment of young Christians in the world and in society.

28 August - 9 September. He participated in the meeting of the National Centre for Youth Pastoral Work of India, with provincial delegates and members of their teams ("Don Bosco Youth Animation") on the theme: *Saleians and laity, formation and growth together*. In the course of the meeting he presented the Department's program to those taking part and had a discussion with each of the delegates and their respective teams to gain a better knowledge of the situation and challenges of the Provinces. After the meetings he visited some of the salesian works in the areas of Goa and Mumbai.

At the same time Fr Raúl Rojas, of the Department, took part in the first meetings of provincial delegates for schools and professional training centres of the Interamerican Region: a first meeting was held at Guatemala from 29 to 31

August for the Provinces of Mexico, Central America, Antilles and Venezuela, and a second meeting in Santafé de Bogotá from 15 to 17 September for the Provinces of Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia. In the two meetings a coordinated plan of action was established for the animation of the process of renewal of salesian work in the scholastic sector in line with the Cumbayá meeting of 1994.

In September the Department was present at a meeting on the Volunteer Movement, organized by SEPSUR in Santiago, Chile, to examine doctrine and experiences and so reach common criteria of animation.

12 - 20 September. Fr Domech was present at the intermediate meeting of the General Council, and then went to Ireland to spend some weeks in learning English. In the meantime the Department's personnel, now complete, continued with the revision of the Manual for the Provincial Delegate for Youth Pastoral Work which is in preparation, and the development of the program of activities of various sectors.

27 October - 1 November. The Councillor animated a retreat for provincial councillors and rectors of the Provinces of Córdoba and Seville in Spain.

## **The Councillor for the Salesian Family and for Social Communication**

The *extraordinary visitation of the Milan Province*, begun towards the end of September, has occupied and will continue to occupy until May all the time Fr Martinelli has available after the fulfilment of his duties in connection with the program of the Rector Major and the General Council.

Between August and September the activities with the two departments may be set out schematically as follows.

### **A. SALESIAN FAMILY**

At *international* level:

1. Meeting with the provincial delegates or assistants for the various groups of the Salesian Family of the Interamerican Region in Bogotá, 16 - 18 October 1997.

The three days of work covered the following aspects:

- The overall perspective of the Salesian Family in considering the central Groups: Cooperators, Past-pupils, Don Bosco Volunteers.
  - The perspective of salesian spirituality lived by the central Groups: Overall, Cooperators, Past-pupils, Don Bosco Volunteers.
  - The organization of the Salesian Family of the Province, in its entirety and in its component Groups: Cooperators, Past-pupils, Don Bosco Volunteers.
2. Meeting of the World Presidency of the Confederation of Don Bosco Past-pupils, at Santiago di Compostela, from 4 to 7 August 1997. The meeting made complete and detailed plans for the World Electoral Assembly to be held at the Generalate in Rome from 1 to 5 May 1998.
3. Meeting at Dublin from 4 to 7 August 1997 for the planning of the next English-speaking Regional Congress of the Cooperators. Representatives were present of some countries interested in the coming Congress and also the World Councillor for the Region. The manner of development of the Congress was studied.
4. Meeting of young past-pupils, from 6 to 8 November at Caracas and from 11 to 13 November at Buenos Aires, in fulfilment of a deliberation of the Congress at Asunción. The main purpose of the meetings was the organization of the youth sector of the provincial Federations.
5. Meetings with the Presidents of National Federations of Latin America at Sao Paulo (14 - 16 November) and of Europe at



Brussels (12 - 14 December) for the preparation respectively of the *Congrelat* of Santiago, Chile, of 1998 and the *Eurobosco* of France in 1999.

At *national* level:

6. National Congress of the Co-operators of Brazil (29 July to 1 August) at Itajaí in the Province of Porto Alegre. The meeting provided the occasion for the election of the Cooperators' National Council.

7. Two days with the SDB rectors and FMA local superiors of Peru (22 - 28 August) to study the letter of the Rector Major on the Salesian Family and the Common Identity Card. Parallel with this there were meetings with all the Groups of the Salesian Family. The meetings with the individual Groups and the meeting with the Family as a whole helped to elucidate a series of practical questions. The participation was numerous and very active.

8. Regional Congress of the Salesian Cooperators of the Northern Latin-American Region at Guadalajara, Mexico, from 2-8 November. The perspective of the new millennium puts real and serious questions to the Association, to enable it to respond to the de-

mands of the new evangelization.

9. National meeting of the Co-operators of Spain at Torremolinos (Málaga) from 6 to 8 December 1997. The fundamental question was: "How are we today? And how would we want to be tomorrow?" The presentation of various experiences already realized has helped to look to the future with confidence.

From an overall look at the various meetings we may form the impression that the Letter of the Rector Major recalling the passing of 25 years since the refounding of the Salesian Family, has aroused interest and attention in the provincial communities, and in their desire to give effect to the indications in the letter. The process needs to be followed up and sustained, so that it may produce ever better fruits in the years ahead.

## **B. SOCIAL COMMUNICATION**

The first point of importance in connection with the social communications sector is the *reorganization of the department*.

1. Reorganization, in the first place, of the *personnel* involved.

New confreres have joined the department: Fr Vito Orlando (re-

sponsible for the ANS and central director for the Salesian Bulletin at world level, with the task of giving effect to the renewal and relaunching foreseen by the program of the Rector Major and his Council), Fr Gian Carlo Manieri (director of the Italian edition of the Salesian Bulletin), Fr José Luis Burguera (in charge of the practical details of social communication). An FMA past-pupil, an expert in journalistic and radiophonic services has also joined the team; she is Antonella Iadanza. Fr Devadoss Sagayaraj continues in the sector of animation and formation.

2. Reorganization, next, of the productive sector of ANS.

After the suspension of the publication of *ANSMag* for some months for various reasons, with the new team we have been able to resume the publication of the following ANS products:

- *ANSMag* for the communities;
- *ANSNews1* for the members of the General Council;
- *ANSAgenda* for those responsible for information (provincial delegates for social communication, directors of the Salesian Bulletin, those in charge of radiophonic transmissions in the Congregation, etc.);
- *ANSService* for Provincials and

Information agencies within and outside the Congregation;

- *ANSfoto* which accompanies *ANSMag* for the communities.

3. Reorganization of the *programming* of the department.

Following on the programming by the Rector Major and his Council, the department is preparing four interventions, significant because of the commitment they call for and for the involvement of the Provinces concerned.

(a) *Renewal and relaunching of the Salesian Bulletin.*

The work is already in progress of gathering the present data, in view of a broader project which will help the Provinces and Bulletin directors to bring their products into line with the new demands of production and diffusion.

(b) *Coordination of Web pages.*

Stimulated by groups of confreres in various recent meetings, we are preparing a reflection on the theme of the Internet, to offer to those who already have prepared pages for the Internet a clear idea of criteria and practical guidelines. A meeting at international level is already arranged.

(c) *An aide for formation in social communication.*

The need for this is very much felt in the Provinces.

The department already has an aide ready, which it will try out in the coming months and then circulate it to the Provinces as a practical help in this field of formation for communication.

*(d) Support for those working with radio transmissions.*

This is a sector rich in possibilities for incidence and influence. We have many examples of structures in this field. Coordination of the work and the provision of practical help could be a welcome relief for those responsible

The second commitment concerns *contact with the Provinces*.

In line with the program of the Rector Major and his Council, the following meetings took place between August and December with the respective salesian Provincial conferences:

1. at Porto Alegre with the Brazil Conference, 10-12 October 1997;
2. at Manila, with the Provinces of Asia and Australia, 22-24 October 1997;
3. at Lyons with the provincial councils of France and South Belgium, 14-16 November 1997;
4. at Madrid with the Iberian Conference, 2-4 December 1997.

In every case the meeting centered on *three fundamental nuclei*:

- the awareness of the importance and influence of social communication in contemporary culture;
- a strategic point for the life of the Provinces: the presence, figure and role of the provincial delegate for social communication;
- an essential point of reference for significant presence and pastoral work: insertion in the provincial and community project of the social communication perspective.

Among the activities of the department must be mentioned finally a meeting with the young confreres of the Province of Porto Alegre, 27-30 July, for the study of the communication of the process of personal and community formation.

### **The Councillor for the Missions**

After the summer session of the General Council Fr Luciano Odorico was in Venezuela from 26 July to 7 August, to preach a retreat to the confreres and to visit two new mission stations: Carrasquero and San Félix. He also took the opportunity to see how the missionary animation of the Province was proceeding.

9 - 12 August. With the Coun-

cillor General for the Missions of the FMA and personnel of the two Departments; he took part in a meeting, a pre-seminar, on Afro-American pastoral work on the island of Curaçao. In this meeting a scheme was drawn up for the American encounter on the theme "*Missionary approach to the Afro-American reality*" which will take place at Belo Horizonte from 1 to 5 April 1999. Some salesian specialists contributed material for the contents.

24 August - 6 September. After a brief stay in Rome, Fr Odorico left for Cambodia, China and Japan. In *Cambodia* he observed the incredible development of the Don Bosco Technical School, the full realization of the dream of the former Khmer refugees at the time of the civil war. He also noted that the work of the catechumenate was proceeding without interruption.

At *Hong Kong* he had a meeting with young missionaries sent recently to the Chinese Province and made with them an assessment of the experience of recent years. The result was substantially positive. A meeting with the Provincial and provincial council served to emphasize the priorities to be followed in the early future.

He then travelled by *Seoul (Korea)* to mainland China with the Provincial, to see the technical school at Yanji (Jilin) which is in an advanced stage of construction. He had meetings with the local salesian community and with the civil and educational authorities of the town. The project seems to be developing well and is due to open in September 1998.

Finally, in a missionary visit to *Japan*, Fr Odorico had a meeting on missionary praxis with all the personnel of the parishes and missionary stations in the Tokyo area, and another in the missionary zone of Oita. The discussions were of mutual help, both because of the nature of the topics dealt with and because of the considerations to which they gave rise. The Councillor proposed to the Japanese Provincial to centre on the Province the theme for the Salesian World Missionary Day of 1999. The intention would be to focus especially on the theme of the very difficult evangelization of the Japanese environment, as well as the presentation of the missionary commitment in the *Solomon Islands*.

8 - 10 September. On his return to Rome Fr Odorico presided at the general meeting of all the provincial and interprovincial

mission procurators, in which various directors of *project offices* took part for the first time. The assembly was characterized by a greater awareness of true missionary cooperation, of the need for continual development of new Offices in mission territories, and for giving valid technical support to *project offices*.

10 - 18 September. He took part in the intermediate meeting of the General Council, during which the Manual of the Provincial Delegate for Missionary Animation was discussed and approved.

20 - 28 September. With the personnel of the Department he accompanied those preparing for their departure in the 127th missionary expedition. They included 20 SDBs, 6 FMAs and 7 lay volunteers.

1 - 9 October. Fr Odorico went to Argentina on a pilgrimage to the ancient missions in the south of *Patagonia*. He was able to see for himself the full realization of the prophetic dreams of Don Bosco, both with regard to salesian expansion and the geographical and historical realities of those territories. At Rio Grande he blessed the new missionary and ethnological museum, a true and fitting historical memorial to the work of the first missionaries. Returning to Buenos Aires, he

met with some young candidates for the missionary life from the Provinces of Rosario, Córdoba and Bahia Blanca.

12 - 14 October. After a brief stopover at Lima, Peru, (10 and 11 October) for a meeting with the Provincial, a brief missionary animation of those in formation, and a discussion with possible candidates for the missions, he took part at *San Francisco* (USA) in a meeting with the Provincials of the Interamerican Region; to them he presented the Document on Missionary Animation and explained the responsibility of the Provinces of the Region in respect of their missionary territories in Africa.

18 - 29 October. After a very short stop in Rome the Councillor made a missionary visit to the Province of *Guwahati* (India), during which he took part in the seminar for the 75th anniversary of the arrival of the Salesians at Shillong, and visited recent missionary work in the State of Tripura (where the context is one of first evangelization) and Mizoram (context of ecumenical dialogue). During the seminar he spoke on the theme: *Missionary praxis according to the salesian charismatic tradition*. In a meeting with the Provincial and provincial council he gave an up-

dated assessment of the present situation regarding the Centre for Indigenous Culture and Missionary Museum for North-East India.

30 October - 4 November. Fr Odorico went to the Province of *Bangalore* to visit the new missionary centres of the Province, especially in the State of Karnataka. There he observed the enthusiasm of the Salesians in undertaking works of first evangelization. He also held meetings for missionary animation with those in the houses of initial formation.

5 - 8 November. He made a brief stop in the Province of New Delhi, visiting the missionary work of the parish of New Delhi and the new foundation at Kauli in the State of Punjab.

14 - 18 November. At the invitation of the Provincial of Slovenia, Fr Odorico visited the scattered missions of Belgrade, Podgorica, Pristina and Muzlja. He noted the missionary care given to the Catholic minorities in Orthodox and Moslem cultural areas. The Albanian minority are culturally close to the Salesians working in Albania. These various foundations are missionary especially in their historical and in their religious and cultural contexts.

22 - 25 November. The Counillor went to *Pakistan* to arrange

the final details for the imminent departure of the first Salesians to that country. At Quetta he had a meeting with the Bishop of the diocese of Hyderabad, and with the missionaries of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate (OMI) to make the final arrangements. The beginnings are foreseen for the second half of 1998. He also visited the site of possible salesian work in the Archdiocese of Lahore.

27 November - 4 December. Fr Odorico was in the Province of *Dimapur* (India) to visit for a second time the salesian work of first evangelization in the State of Arunachal Pradesh; he was able to see the consoling progress of the Catholic communities, of the catechumenate programs and of the salesian educative work. The missionaries dedicate themselves heroically to their educative and pastoral work. At Harmutty he had a meeting with the confreres working in the State for assessment purposes, with the Vice-provincial and provincial economer taking part.

5 - 6 December. Finally he went to *Cebu*, in the South Philippines Province, for a meeting with the Provincial and his council. In the name of the Rector Major he gave them the news that the salesian work in Pakistan will depend ju-

ridically on the South Philippines, news that was received with joyful generosity. While in the Province Fr Odorico also blessed the new *Salesian Retreat House*, as well as the foundation stone of the future novitiate.

7 December. During a stopover at Manila on his return journey he had a meeting with the Provincial and Economer (FIN), and was able to talk with two young students of theology destined for Pakistan.

8 December. Feast of the Immaculate Conception. The Councillor returned to Rome for the winter session of the General Council.

### **The Economer General**

After the summer session of the Council, Fr Mazzali made a contribution to the course organized by the CISI for new rectors, dealing with matters pertaining to his own Department. For much of August he remained at headquarters but went to Contra di Misaglia for the first professions of a group of Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. From 24 to 30 August he animated the "Camposcuola" of the Cooperators Community of Piedmont at Oulx, and from 1 to 7 September directed that of the youngsters of the

Don Bosco Oratory of Sangano, Turin, at Col di Nava.

Returning to Rome after some days of rest, he took part in the intermediate session of the General Council. In the second half of September he commuted regularly between the Generalate and Turin for meetings of the Executive Committee of the SEI. At Rome he was particularly busy in following up arrangements for final requests in view of the Jubilee of the year 2000, and certain important business regarding the "Gerini Foundation".

On 11 October he took part in the inauguration of the new "Don Bosco Palasport" at Genoa-Sampierdarena, and on the following day was present with Salesians, pupils and parents, for the official opening of the scholastic year at the Salesian Institute of Cumiana.

16 - 17 October. Fr Mazzali had a meeting at Los Angeles with the Provincials and Economers of the Interamerican Region, two days of intensive work of particular importance for the promoting of mutual knowledge and appreciation among the provincial economers of the Region.

18 - 22 October. The Economer General then moved to the New Rochelle Province for a brief visit to Boston and to take part in the

work of the provincial council.

1 November. He participated in the work of the National Assembly of the Cooperators of Italy, and gave an address on formation in the light of the GC24. A few days later he had a meeting with a large group of economists from the Italian provinces at Rocca di Papa, and spoke on the topic of the identity of the economist.

8 - 9 November. He animated a retreat for the FMA at their house at Marina di Pisa.

14 November. He preached a retreat to the salesian students of theology at the Gerini Institute, conferring on some of them the ministries of reader and acolyte.

15 November. Of particular interest was a meeting with a group of Economers General on the theme of the administrative account to be presented to General Councils.

22 November, Feast of St Cecilia. At the "Santa Rosa" house of the FMA he preached a retreat to the priests and deacons of the "St. Thomas" community of the UPS. Throughout October and November he also attended regular meetings with the Directive Committee of the SEI, with the Administrative Council of the same entity, and with the National Directive Council of the AGIDAE.

### **The Councillor for the Africa-Madagascar Region**

Fr Antonio Rodriguez Tallón left Rome on 5 August for Khartoum, to begin in Sudan the *extraordinary visitation of the Vice-province of East Africa*. In this country we have three communities, two in the capital and one at Wau in the south. Wau is practically isolated because of the civil war, and special permission is needed to enter the area. After visiting the two communities in the capital, and finding it impossible to obtain the necessary permission to enter Wau, the Regional proceeded to Nairobi and then on to Tanzania to continue the visitation in that country where there are ten salesian communities.

Subsequently he made the visitation of the communities in Kenya, which are eight in number: four in Nairobi and the others in various villages. Finally he made the visitation of the two communities in Uganda.

The visitation kept the Regional busy until 17 October, when he called the provincial council together to communicate his impressions and opportune guidelines. On the following day the Provincial Feastday was celebrated in combination with the closing of the extraordinary visitation.



19 October. Fr Rodriguez moved to *Malawi* for a first visit to the two recent foundations in that country: Lilongwe (a parish, youth centre and future trade school on the outskirts of the town) and Mkhatakota, where we have the pastoral responsibility for an extensive missionary area: a parish and more than 50 attached mission stations.

24 October. The Regional travelled to Cape Town, to accompany the Rector Major in the celebrations for the centenary of salesian work in that city, the beginning of the salesian presence in South Africa. With Fr Vecchi he visited all the foundations in the Vice-province in South Africa, in Swaziland and in Lesotho.

2 November. He moved on to see how matters were going in the salesian works in *Rwanda* and *Burundi*, remaining in these countries until 12 November. During this period he also went to visit the two communities in Goma (Democratic Republic of the Congo). In Rwanda the confreres have taken up again the greater part of their activities; there are at present four active communities, with plans to reopen a fifth. In Burundi there are three communities, though two of them are only at the beginnings. There are good hopes for

the future, though factors of uncertainty persist at present.

15 November. At Nairobi the Regional had a meeting with the Provincials and delegates of the various English-speaking circumscriptions; those present were the Superiors of the AFE and AFM Vice-provinces, the Superior of the Special Zambian Circumscription (ZMB), and the Delegate for Ethiopia and Eritrea. The purpose of the meeting was to launch the preparations for the Team Visit to these countries, foreseen for February 1999. This may seem a long time away, but if local communities are to be involved in the preparation, sufficient time must be allowed. The process to be followed for the preparation was decided on, and tasks and responsibilities were allotted.

20 November. Fr Rodriguez had the opportunity to get to know the refugee camp of KARUMA, in the north of Kenya and close to the border with Sudan. In this camp for several years now a group of salesian past-pupils supported by some SDBs of the AFE Vice-province have had responsibility for two professional training centres where young refugees, the majority of them Sudanese, receive a training in trades which will enable them to

face up to a difficult future with greater guarantees of success.

He had intended finally to leave on 24 November to visit the three communities in Egypt and the one in Tunisia, but was compelled by circumstances to remain longer in Nairobi, and then decided to return to Rome to regain some strength and prepare for the winter session of the Council.

### **The Regional Councillor for Latin America ("South Cone")**

Between 1 August and 19 October Fr Baruffi carried out his main task, which was the *extraordinary visitation of the Province of Recife*, Brazil, and the *consultation for the new Provincial*.

The visitation began with a meeting with the provincial council and all the rectors. The great progress made was recognized as also were the difficulties of recent years, and the role of the rector was studied in the animation of the religious community and the government of the works.

At the end of the visitation there was another meeting with all the rectors for a concluding synthesis and assessment, and a meeting with the provincial council for making the necessary deci-

sions. The visitation concluded with the feastday of the province and the episcopal ordination of Mgr. Valerio Breda, with the almost complete participation of the confreres of the province.

8 - 10 September. At Santiago, Chile, the Regional took part in a meeting on the topic: *Laity and religious, building a combined operation*. Present were all the Provincials of the CISUR, the FMA Provincial of Chile, Salesians, laity and volunteers. In the course of the three-day meeting, after a presentation of the reality of each Province, the relevant documents of the Church and the Congregation were studied, and this was followed by a deeper and more detailed description of the Volunteer Movement as experienced in the Province of Guadalajara.

There was a very rich exchange of experiences, especially as regards the witness of the laity involved in the volunteer movement. With this as a starting point a profile was drawn up of the kind of volunteer needed in the Region, and some appropriate settings for the movement in the Region were decided on (Chaco Paraguayo, Manaus, Bahía).

11-13 September. Fr Baruffi presided at a meeting of the Provincial Conference of the

South (CISUR), during which Fr José Maria Guerrero S.J., of the CLAR theological team, gave an exposition of the future prospects of religious life in Latin America. After this, other arguments of interest to the Region were discussed and efforts were shared for the application of the decisions of the GC24, a field in which there is a great variety of initiatives. The greater progress of collaboration with lay people is found in scholastic structures, but their participation is increasing also in other sectors. On the part of the laity there is great interest in every proposal in the line of formation and spirituality.

A verification was also made of collaboration in youth pastoral work and in meetings for initial and ongoing formation. There was also the opportunity for a celebration in the new temple in Valparaíso dedicated to Don Bosco, which recalls Don Bosco's missionary dream: *from Valparaíso to Peking*, and in thanksgiving for the at least partial realization of the dream a call was made for renewed missionary ardour and enthusiasm.

13 September. The Regional presided at a meeting of the Provincials of Argentina (JIAR), who had come together to assess the progress of the interprovincial

novitiate of Ramos Mejía and to discuss the composition of the formation personnel for the next novitiate year.

14 - 22 September. Fr Baruffi visited the Salesians of Southern Chile, in the communities of Valdivia, Puerto Montt, Punta Arenas, Porvenir and Puerto Natales. In addition to making contact with all the Salesians and meetings with the communities, he found time to speak with the young pupils. Despite the reduced number of Salesians, some of them of advanced age, the communities are open to the young in an effective and affective manner.

24 September - 7 October. The Regional launched the consultation for the appointment of the new Provincial of Manaus, by organizing the discernment process in seven places in the Province: Belém, Manaus, Porto Velho, Santa Isabel, São Gabriel de Cacheira, and Taraquá. In the missions too it was possible to gather the Salesians together for a day of prayer and discernment.

8 - 9 October. At Porto Alegre Fr Baruffi presided over a meeting of the provincial conference of Brazil (CISBRASIL). As well as discussions of common interest, such as the renewal of the Salesian Bulletin, meetings and cours-

es for ongoing formation, congresses to be arranged, the topic which occupied most time was the *plan for common action between SDBs and FMAs*. A juridical entity was set up, with a permanent executive secretariat situated in Brazil, for the purpose of following changes in the laws made by the National Congress in the sectors of the education of natives, of children and of adolescents.

10 - 12 October, still in Porto Alegre, he took part in a meeting on Communication, with the Provincials, provincial delegates and others responsible for the communications sector. The meeting was guided and animated by the Councillor General for the Salesian Family and Social Communications with his collaborators, and revolved around three nuclei: knowledge of the national reality; knowledge of salesian praxis, with special reference to the figure and role of the provincial delegate for social communication; and finally, elements for the elaboration of a plan for social communication.

At the end of the meeting the following decisions were made: to continue the restructuring of the Salesian Bulletin, to seek a greater convergence between formation and social communication, to investigate the possibility

of a social communication 'think-tank' with experts from various provinces, and to revise educative and pastoral projects in the perspective of social communication.

13 - 15 October. Fr Baruffi was present at a further meeting, this time of the interprovincial formation team, which met in the provincial house of Recife. The objective was to organize the necessary steps for a combined process between the SDBs and FMAs in Brazil. Outlines were also drawn up for certain strategies for promoting active collaboration in the revision of the *Ratio*.

After the appointment of Fr Valerio Breda as Bishop of Penedo in the state of Alagoas, a consultation became necessary for a new Provincial for the Recife Province. For this purpose the greater part of the Salesians of the Province gathered on 16 October in the retreat house of Jaboatão for a day of prayer and discernment under the guidance of the Regional.

19 October. In the gymnasium of the Sacred Heart College of Recife, Fr Baruffi took part in the solemn episcopal ordination of Mgr. Valerio Breda, formerly Provincial of Recife. The event stirred up enthusiasm throughout the Salesian Province and the local Church.

26 October. The Regional joined those taking part in the 54th salesian pilgrimage to the Basilica of Our Lady Help of Christians of Jaboatão de Guararapes, organized by the Salesian Cooperators, which had as its theme: *Following after Jesus with Mary our model in faith*. It was the conclusion of a work of evangelization in all the salesian works. Some 5,000 people took part, between youngsters and adults. The pilgrimage coincided also with the closing of the extraordinary visitation of the Recife Province.

27 October - 13 November. Fr Baruffi visited the works of the Province of Campo Grande, and especially the missions. He had meetings with the provincial council, the provincial pastoral team, and the Council of the Catholic University. In visiting the various houses he was able to speak with the Salesians and the FMAs of the individual communities, and to animate the monthly retreat for the missionaries.

28 November. The Regional Councillor returned to Rome.

### **The Councillor for the Inter-american Region**

After the summer session of the General Council, Fr Chávez left

for Canada (25 - 29 July), to visit the salesian communities of Edmonton, the most northerly of the entire Interamerican Region. There the Salesians animate four parishes, two of them specifically for ethnic groups (one Chinese and the other Hungarian), and the other two pluriethnic and pluricultural. The confreres display an admirable vitality in their commitment to the construction of premises adequate for parish activities, and they have already taken steps to become united in a single community in the "Villa San José", where the Province has acquired four apartments which meet the needs of the confreres.

Returning to Toronto, Fr Chávez had a meeting with the confreres of the Canadian Vice-province in the parish of St Benedict.

30 July. He moved to *Detroit (USA)* where he joined Fr Patrick Angelucci, Provincial of New Rochelle, and together they visited Cardinal Adam Maida at the behest of the Rector Major who had received a request from the Cardinal for a new foundation in favour of Hispanic immigrants, who had doubled in number in the past two years. With the plan for a work in Chicago, Detroit appears as a new challenge and another field for the

salesian mission in the United States of America.

31 July - 3 August, the Regional made the *consultation in Haiti* in view of the appointment of the new Superior of the Vice-province. After he had met the Council to explain the consultation procedure and the program for his visit, the present Superior Fr Jacques Mésidor presented his personal view of the present situation of the Vice-province. On the following day there was a meeting of nearly all the confreres, in which the consultation took place in the context of a celebration.

Later Fr Chávez visited Cap-Haïtien, seat of the new novitiate. Returning to Port-au-Prince, he had a meeting with Bishop Luis Kébrau SDB.

After some days of rest with his family, the Regional went on to *Guadalajara* for the professions, which he received in place of the Provincial, Fr Salvador Flores, who has made a satisfactory and almost complete recovery from his automobile accident.

22 August - 21 November. Finally Fr Chávez made the *extraordinary visitation of the Province of Mexico*, including the missions of the Mixepolitana Prelature, with two interruptions: one in Bogotá from 18 to 21 September

to take part in a Congress on the Salesian School organized by the FMA Provinces on the occasion of the centenary of their work in Colombia; and the other at San Francisco and Los Angeles from 12 to 19 October, to coordinate the meeting of Provincials and Economers of the Region, a meeting at which were present also Fr Luciano Odorico, Councillor for the Missions, and Fr Gianni Mazzali, Economer General.

After the visitation of the Mexican Province the Regional had various other meetings: with the provincial council of Guadalajara, with the Apostolic Nuncio in Mexico, and with the Director of the Catechetical Centre of Madrid.

1 December. He returned to Rome for the winter plenary session of the Council.

### **The Councillor for the Australia - Asia Region**

Leaving Rome after the summer session of the General Council, Fr D'Souza made a brief visit to the Indian National Centre for Ongoing Formation at Bangalore *Don Bosco Yuva Prachodini* and presided at the annual meeting of the Indian Provincial Conference (SPCI) at Yellagiri Hills, near Chennai. Among other things,

the Conference approved the *Vision Statement* and the new Statutes of the Conference, two documents which had been drawn up after wide consultation in all the Provinces. The *Vision Statement* was issued on the 50th anniversary of the country's independence and is meant to be a public and official declaration of the identity and mission of the Salesians in India, and an instrument of animation for the Salesians themselves and their collaborators. The Regional profited by the nearness of the novitiate, the aspirantate, and the "Sacred Heart College" to make a brief visit of animation to all three. He then concluded his visit at Chennai with a meeting with the newly formed national team for youth pastoral work, to program its service of animation of the Provinces.

15 August, Solemnity of the Assumption. After moving on to Manila, Fr D'Souza began the *extraordinary visitation of the North Philippines Province* (FIN), which was to occupy him full-time until 26 September, when he travelled to Cebu to launch the consultation preceding the appointment of the new Provincial for the South Philippines Province (FIS).

1 October. The Regional was at

Bangkok, Thailand, to receive Fr Vecchi for his first visit as Rector Major to the East. He then accompanied him to Phnom Penh (Cambodia), Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan and Mainland China.

15 October. After the Rector Major's visit Fr D'Souza returned to Bangkok to launch another consultation, this time for the appointment of the new Provincial of Thailand.

22 - 24 October. He was back again in Manila to take part in the seminar on social communication for the Australia and East-Asia zone at Batulao under the presidency of Fr Antonio Martinelli.

Immediately afterwards the Regional travelled to New Delhi to the new house acquired by the Indian Provincial Conference, *SPCI House*, which will be the headquarters of the Conference itself and is destined to be the centre of reference and linkage between the Indian Provinces, the centre for salesian documentation, the centre also for the animation of youth pastoral work and for the spreading of salesian news at national level.

From New Delhi Fr D'Souza proceeded to Mumbai and then immediately on to Hyderabad, where he launched a third process of consultation for the ap-



pointment of a new Provincial (1 - 9 October). On his return to Mumbai he called at the post-novitiate at Nashik, and there received the news of the death of Mgr. Abraham Alingimattathil, former Bishop of Kohima in the state of Nagaland in North-East India. Hurriedly leaving Nashik he reached Kohima just in time for the funeral. From Kohima he once again returned to Hyderabad to take part as representative of the Rector Major in the solemn inauguration on 24 November of the new post-novitiate at Warangal.

Thus ended his third visit to the Australia-Asia Region and the Regional returned to Rome on 27 November.

### **The Councillor for the West Europe Region**

On 26 July Fr Filiberto Rodriguez left Rome for Léon (Spain) to take part in the "Days for new rectors" organized by the Iberian provincial conference from 26 July to 2 August.

3 August. He went back to Italy to Turin to be present at the *Campobosco* of the young people of Spain and Portugal.

6 August. The Councillor was at Santiago de Compostela and

was present at the Assembly of the Confederal Council of the Don Bosco Past-pupils for their closing deliberations.

18 August. After spending some days with his family at his birthplace Fr Filiberto Rodriguez left for Mexico to make the *extraordinary visitation of the Province of Guadalajara*. This occupied him full-time until his return to Madrid on 8 November. During the visitation the perpetual profession of seven confreres took place on 7 September at Irapuato.

12 - 13 November. He was at Lyons (France) for the annual meeting of the combined formation commission of the Provinces of Paris, Lyons and South Belgium.

14 - 16 November. Also at Lyons there was the meeting on social communication presided over by the General Councillor Fr Antonio Martinelli, with the Provincials of the three French-speaking Provinces, the provincial delegates for social communication, and two other members of the Department from Rome.

17 November. The Councillor left for Morocco, there to begin the *extraordinary visitations* of the Paris and Lyons Provinces which he will make in the name of the Rector Major from next January.



Returning from Morocco after meeting the seven confreres working at Casablanca, Kenitra and Rabat, he returned to Madrid which he made the centre for a number of brief visits: to Burgos, the post-novitiate for the Provinces of Portugal, Bilbao, León and Madrid; to Sanlúcar la Mayor, at present the novitiate for the whole of Spain; and to Campello, where the course of ongoing formation for Salesians of Spain and Portugal and various others from Latin-American Provinces was coming to an end.

1 December. Fr Rodriguez took part in the combined meeting of the SDB and FMA Provincials of Spain and Portugal, which approved the redrafted version of the document: *"The educative plan of the salesian school"*. A long discussion took place on the school as a platform for the presentation and inculcation of salesian youth spirituality.

2 - 4 December. At Madrid, El Plantio, there was the meeting on social communication. Fr Antonio Martinelli presided, and taking part were the members of the Iberian provincial conference, with the provincial delegates and others in charge of communication, and some other members of the Department at headquarters in Rome.

5 December. This was a day dedicated to receiving information from the various national delegations and to the implementation of various business matters concerning the Iberian Conference. Extreme weather conditions prevented the Regional from being present at the meeting organized in Valencia by the Confederation of Youth Centres and Oratories.

9 December. Fr Rodriguez returned to Rome for the winter session of the General Council.

### **The Councillor for the North Europe Region**

After the summer session of the Council, Fr Albert Van Hecke went to Belgium to spend some days with his family. He returned to Rome on 13 August.

13 August. He began a brief two-day visit to Austria, where he took part in the annual *"Euro-treff"* youth meeting and gave a conference on the theme: "With Jesus Christ on the roads of the world", to 120 young people from eight Provinces of the Region.

16 August - 6 September. He stayed at the Missions Office in Warsaw, while frequenting a course in the Polish language.

22 August. At Kopiek, in the

novitiate of the Breslau and Cracow Provinces, he presided at the function of the clothing and first profession of 18 novices.

25 August. He assisted at the closure of the annual "*Campo Bosco*" youth festival at Lutomiersk, in which some 1,200 youngsters from the Warsaw Province had taken part.

14 September. After a week in Rome the Regional left for Moscow to begin the *extraordinary visitation of the Circumscription of Eastern Europe*, and got to know something of the great historical, cultural and religious diversity of the vast area. Especially he was able to observe the missionary commitment of the confreres, the difficult and frequently unsafe conditions in which they live and work, the challenges to the education of the young and the inculturation of the salesian charism, and the opportunities for the salesian mission in the future.

25 October. After concluding the extraordinary visitation, Fr Van Hecke went to Lad, to the studentate of the Pila Province.

27 - 28 October. At Lad he presided at a meeting of the Polish provincial conference. An assessment was made of the Polish edition of the Salesian Bulletin

and among other items dealt with, particular attention was given to formation and to preparations for the centenary of the arrival of the Salesians in Poland. The Regional also profited by his presence in the country to visit some works in the Warsaw Province.

1 - 15 November. He was at headquarters in Rome, where among other things he set up the consultations for the appointment of new provincials in the Provinces of Great Britain, Poland-Pila and Poland-Breslau.

16 - 17 November. He went to Augsburg in Germany for a meeting with the rectors of the Munich Province (GEM), with an intervention on the theme of the EPC.

21 - 24 November. He was in Slovenia, to take part in the festivities for the 75th anniversary of the Province of SS. Cyril and Methodius, and to inaugurate the centenary of the Salesians in Slovenia. He was able to bless the new gymnasium at Zelimlje, and he had a meeting with the provincial councils of Slovenia and Croatia, and the Croatian rectors, and spoke to them about the program of the General Council.

5 December. He accompanied the Rector Major in the Province of the Czech Republic for the cele-

bration of 70 years of work in the Province of St John Bosco. During the various events and celebrations he was able to observe the great energy and trust of so many confreres who had worked during the communist regime, and who are now trying to translate the salesian charism into an evangelical and pedagogical plan for the young people of the country.

9 December. Fr Van Hecke returned to Rome.

### **The Regional Councillor for Italy and the Middle East**

Between the end of July and early August, Fr Fedrigotti preached a retreat at Palermo to the *Missionary Servants of the Poor*, an Institute founded by Blessed Giacomo Cusmano (+1888) who, during his lifetime, became known as the Don Bosco of Palermo.

5 August. At the FMA Generalate he was present at the celebrations for profession silver jubilees and other renewals.

8 - 9 August. At Aquila he had a meeting with young priests ordained in the last five years and developed a discussion on the themes: "*Young Salesians: a process of serene and planned fidelity*", and "*The GC24: a spiri-*

*tuality for young Salesians*".

24 - 30 August. After a period of rest with his family, he preached the retreat to the Verona Province at Santa Fosca di Cadore.

30 - 31 August. At Auronzo di Cadore, with the animators of the Venice Province, he introduced the national pastoral project: "*The experience of Jesus helps us to live the experience of Church*".

5 September. At Milan-S. Ambrogio, the Councillor had a meeting with 600 teachers from salesian schools in the Milan Province, to illustrate the theme: "*The cultural project of the salesian Catholic school - a synthesis of faith and life*".

14 - 20 September. He was present at the intermediate meeting of the General Council, which examined more deeply some items concerning the CISI, including the redistribution, effectiveness and mobility of CISI personnel from a solidarity aspect; collaboration for the general services of the Congregation, and an analysis of the CISI hypothesis for the restructuring of the Provinces.

22 September. He had a meeting with the salesian presidents or delegates of the CNOS associations.

23 - 24 September. He was at Bologna for the days dedicated by

the Eucharistic Congress to the young and to consecrated life.

25 September. At Carisolo he met with the confreres of the salesian studentate of philosophy of Nava (Brescia).

27 September. At the *Rainerum* of Bolzano for the feast of the past-pupils he gave a conference on: "*Adults and young people on the way to the third millennium*".

28 - 30 September. He took part in the *Harambee*, the meeting of the missionary consulting group, and also made brief visits to Pinerolo and the Crocetta, to greet the novices and theology students respectively.

1 - 30 October. He carried out the extraordinary visitation of the Vice-province of Sardinia.

7 October. A brief return to Rome to take part in a meeting of the *National Council of the Catholic School*.

1 - 2 November. Fr Fedrigotti was back in Rome to take part at the Generalate in the national seminar on formation problems.

7 - 9 November. Meeting of the CISI Presidency at which the Rector Major communicated a letter

following on the work of the intermediate meeting of the General Council in September: "*Indications of the Rector Major after the General Council's reflection on matters concerning the Region*".

The Presidency then went on to study the letter which dealt, amongst other things, with: a discussion with salesian delegates of the CGS, PGS, SCS, and TGS; analysis of the formation program in the financial sector; proposals, methods and contents for the assembly of May 1988 on the theme "*Consecrated life and affective maturity in initial formation*", and on the CISI/CII meeting of January 1988; and approval of the "*Handbook for accompaniment of the work of Provincial Chapters*" on collaboration with the laity.

12 November - 6 December. The Regional began the extraordinary visitation of the Province of Ireland, starting with the *Delegation of Malta*, which represents a lively and original incarnation of the spirit of Don Bosco. It will soon be celebrating the centenary of salesian work in this glorious Christian island of the Mediterranean.

### 5.1 Intervention of the Rector Major at the Synod.

*The Rector Major's intervention on 22 November in the assembly of the Synod of Bishops for America was given in Spanish. The original text can be found in the Italian edition of the Acts. The following is an English translation.*

I will refer to numbers 20 and 37 of the working-paper, which speak briefly of young people. In almost every country of America they form the majority of the population. They represent a rich human value for the present and a potential for the future. Even though they do not appear nor act as a compact group, nor can they be lumped together in a single social and religious situation, they all display certain characteristics: the savouring of life, tension concerning growth, search for possible happiness. For an ever increasing number the age of youth is getting longer and longer because of the more lengthy period needed for studies. And all this makes them an important component of social and ecclesial dynamics.

A big number of them suffer from grievous forms of poverty or are prematurely exposed to its

more destructive consequences, which include the lack of educational opportunities, cultural poverty, absence of ideals and life-projects and of loving care and family support, religious indifference, and dependence of various kinds.

During youth, and especially between the ages of 16 and 25, fundamental developments take place for evangelization: faith is either personalized or abandoned; the first cultural synthesis or view of life is formed, still incomplete but with many definitive elements already in place; basic models are adopted for one's personal code of ethics; social and political preferences mature, and a vocational path in life is chosen.

For the majority of young people, all this takes place prescind-ing from Christian truth and against the difficult background of what is provided by the means of communication, peer groups, dominant ideas of the neighbourhood, spontaneous perceptions, and conclusions attributed to the sciences.

Contact with the Church is difficult. Systematic programs of religious formation end with Confirmation, while the development

of the young person continues with university studies or with social experiences which leave their mark on the individual.

And all this despite the fact that at this age there is taking place a search for sense which is present in a large number of the young, but of which only a minority are consciously aware. When they come across some sign that impresses them, an interlocutor who understands them, an enterprise to which it seems worthwhile to commit themselves or an attractive model, then arises the question we find on the lips of the young man in the Gospel: "what must I do to gain eternal life?"

It is an underlying question which young people express in different degrees and words, and more frequently by their attitudes than in words. And it gives rise to religious experiences which strongly involve the individual and touch his feelings: the volunteer movement, the commitment of the young as animators in ecclesial life and especially in the youth sector, days of prayer or prayer-vigils, and the missions.

We know that Jesus is always ready to respond and transcend the expectations of youth. The Father calls them to develop as individuals conformed to the image

of Christ. The Spirit moves their desires and conscience, directing them to the Word and person of Jesus. We know too that the Church sees in the young the reflection and image of itself, called to renew itself continually and to maintain the hope of a full life.

To the Church is entrusted the task of mediating the meeting of young people with the living Christ. To do this successfully it must receive them into its communities with the understanding of the Good Shepherd, but must also go out to look for them, eliminating the physical, psychological and cultural distance which exists between the Church and the world of youth; it must overcome the mutual extraneousness in language, tastes, life experiences and projects; defeat the competition of other offerings which make a more immediate impact on the senses; and give sense to hope by proclaiming the good news which is at heart of life.

It would be useless to have a "depositum" of truth if it never got a chance of making contact, of being understood, of providing enlightenment and being shared.

These considerations lead to some suggestions.

1. Young people, with their various groups and attitudes with re-

gard to the faith, must be given special attention by pastors and ecclesial communities. Medellín gave them a generous chapter in its document; together with the poor, Puebla gave them a preferential option, which Santo Domingo confirmed and made its own. In the approach to the third millennium, it is fitting that attention to this line of evangelization be not diminished but rather given greater focus.

2. The pastoral care of the young can be developed only partly in the usual environments of parish, family and institutions. Youth too needs to be considered as a mission setting or sector to which direct messages and specific initiatives must be addressed. For contact with young people parochial catechesis and formal education in institutes are insufficient. Many are not reached by these programs at all. Membership of the young in such environments is sparse and limited. Often they deliberately avoid them and develop their own mentality autonomously. Meetings and dialogue must be set up in the places and activities where the young live their life, in line with healthy interests which attract them and the needs they feel.

3. Young people must not be

considered solely as objects for education and recipients of messages, but as active subjects in initiatives and processes which stimulate change of mentality, manifestations of communion and new forms of solidarity.

4. We must avoid giving pastoral care only to the élite, and equally the reduction of all to elementary levels of Christian formation. New ways must be sought for making the first proclamation to as many as possible, proceeding at the same time to the formation of groups of faith, of apostolic commitment or of healthy cultural interests; and simultaneously following up personally those who show a greater response, helping them to develop an evangelical life option and aspire after an ideal of holiness.

5. Many churches lack places nowadays where young people can gather together and be welcomed as they look for company, dialogue, friendship, and the sharing of causes to which they are committed. Where they can count on a youth centre, including inter-parochial centres, initiatives flourish and interesting movements abound.

6. For places and youth interests and activities to achieve their purpose, and for the settings for

meetings and welcome provided by the Church to be functional, persons are needed with the capacity for meeting others and for dialogue who will be attentive to what is happening in the youth world and be able to approach it with the pedagogy of the Good Shepherd and interpret it in the light of Christ.

## **5.2 Communication to the Academic Senate of the UPS**

*The following is the translation of the text of an address given by the Rector Major to the Academic Senate of the UPS, in its meeting of 5 November 1997, in which he gave indications of steps leading to the formulation of the "organic operative project" of the University, through an opportune process of verification.*

I am glad to be able to preside at this sitting of the Academic Senate at a moment particularly important for the UPS, after the call made to the Congregation through the AGC for a cultural commitment and one of renewed attachment to study.

I see the two realities, the UPS and the pastoral interest in culture, as strictly linked from both a

real and symbolical standpoint. And I take this opportunity also to convey to you the good wishes which I was not able to express at the beginning of the Academic Year because of a visit already arranged to Cambodia and China.

I use the occasion also to offer my best wishes to the new Rector, and to thank all of you for your collaboration in his appointment and him for his availability. Together it will fall to you to take our University into the next millennium, drawing fruit also from the occurrence of its 25th anniversary.

## **1. SOME CONVICTIONS**

On various occasions, and in particular in the Report to the GC24 on the State of the Congregation, I have expressed certain convictions concerning the UPS. I will not repeat them now, but I will recall three affirmations which I consider as a starting point, fruitful in its simplicity, for what I want to say today.

- The first concerns the results obtained in the past, and the present situation of the UPS, which can be expressed as positive from an overall point of view. The UPS "as a whole is fulfilling the mission entrusted to it" (n.208), and



appears rich in possibilities still to be exploited. For this I declare once again my gratitude to you and, through you, to all those who have carried and are still carrying at the present day the responsibility for the animation and government of the University. We feel its beneficent influence in the entire body of the Congregation and of the Salesian Family.

- It follows from this, and this is my second point, that as the Congregation gradually expands and the challenges of the mission multiply, as the demand increases for quality in pedagogical service, in evangelization, in inculturation, and in the fostering of communion, there increases also within the framework of salesian reality the importance and relevance of the function of the UPS as a highly qualified expression of the salesian charisma at the service of the Church. Its cultural and formative potentiality must therefore be further increased. There is much to be extracted from past experience, from the salesian charism, from the progress of the educational and pastoral sciences, from the new situations of the young, and from the incentives now present in the Church (cf. Report to GC24, n.229).

- Hence follows a third conviction: the evolution of recent years and the prospects of further developments lead us to recognize the need we have to reflect, in a more than normal manner, on the organic operative Project of the UPS with a view to the short-term and long-term future, in the light of its mission in the Congregation and in the Church (cf. Report, n.224).

In the Report to the GC24 I indicated some fundamental objectives of this project: a rethinking of the identity and effectiveness of the UPS, not in general but in the light of new possibilities which can be taken up or ruled out (pupils, teachers, courses, curricula, trends); drafting concrete steps for the coming years in which the leading criterion must be quality; deepening the relationship between UPS and Congregation; studying the building plan; clarifying the relationship of the UPS with the Vice-Province (cf. Report, nn.224-229).

And so I said when addressing the Academic Senate on 6 November 1996: "We can look forward in the coming six years to a process in continuity with the past, but also with some opportune verifications and new crucial options. Some buildings must be

improved, and some statutes modified, but especially we must be concerned about drawing up the University's operative organic Project". "In the putting of that Project into effect", I added, "there will be need for dialogue and understanding with the Rector Major and his Council which already exists, thank God, and is inspired by fraternal cordiality and salesian spirit. It must be perfected however in view of the organic and practical nature of the planning required".

## **2. THE PROCESS TOWARDS THE ORGANIC OPERATIVE PROJECT**

Since that time I have tried to go more deeply into this perspective through continual communication with the Councillor for Formation, in meetings of the "Curatorium" in which all the Deans were present, and in a lengthy session together with the General Councillors heading Departments, the Rector of the UPS and the Superior of the UPS Vice-province, during the intermediate session of the General Council held in March 1997.

From this meeting certain steps emerged which can constitute a path to the formulation of the organic operative Project.

– It is not the first time that the Congregation will have done an overall evaluation, verified the orientation and relaunched the development of the University. This has never meant "stopping", nor is this required by our present effort. It means simply that the Congregation has the Salesian University at heart, feels that it carries the main responsibility for it and wants it to be an outstanding expression of the Congregation's mission and a privileged instrument for the formation of its mentality and confreres.

The SGC (1972) gathered together the guidelines for "The Pontifical Salesian Athenaeum" in the fourth part of its document on formation. The GC21 (1977-78) drew up specific lines and numerous practical guidelines "Opera PAS and Salesian Pontifical University" (cf. GC21 nn. 343-370). In September 1979 the Rector Major, Fr Egidio Viganò, in an official letter to the Rector Magnificus, published in the Acts of the Superior Council, spoke of "refounding the University" and indicated the objectives to be attained, the key-points to be kept in mind, and the requirements on the part of the Congregation.

Since then the University has endeavoured to keep pace with

the events of the Church, of society and of the Congregation. Evidence of this are the numerous initiatives in the academic field, in research and in cultural extension. But we live in times of a rapid succession of changes, marked by their number and complexity, which make it necessary to go back over what has been done in the past, sometimes sector by sector, to compare it with an overall evaluation of the University in the light of emerging demands.

– The present circumstances of the Congregation make still more urgent the task indicated in the last Team Visit and are an incitement for the elaboration of the Project. I will point out some of the main ones among these circumstances.

- The further study of the General Chapter and the ascertaining of the reality of the Congregation have led the Rector Major and his Council to establish four priority areas of attention and intervention which, in the long term, can create new lines of action: the new relationship between SDBs and laity, the effectiveness of the salesian presence, the new role of the religious community as the animating nucleus of numerous

educational forces, and the quality of formation in its spiritual, cultural and pastoral dimensions. It would be interesting to analyze more deeply the projection of these priorities in the specific context of the UPS, but this is not the moment to do so.

- On the other hand, the need to be precise about the salesian objectives to be attained, the expediency of going ahead with shared projects, adapting responses to new needs with the respective priorities, and making adequate use of the available resources with a view to a more effective presence, have led the Congregation and many provinces to a process of verification, of re-definition and of re-planning, supported by the assistance of professionals and experts, often from outside the Congregation. We have found in fact that in the ensemble of our initiatives, aspects and elements interact in which our own competence needs help and confirmation.

- I add the fact that salesian presence has extended in the university field in various ways, in particular through the numerical increase of salesian institutions of university level and the continued growth of some of them (cf. Let-

ter AGC 361). It is a matter of initiatives quite diverse among themselves and not entrusted directly to the responsibility of the UPS. But it is natural that the UPS should constitute a point of reference and serve as a stimulus for them, especially at this stage when we have to define more clearly the identity and orientation of these centres. This complex task we have in the University field is a service to those for whom we work, and also an active participation in the evangelization of culture which is of such concern to the Church.

– Two fundamental routes can foster an overall view of the UPS reality and its projection towards the future: the revision of the Statutes, ordinances, curricula and organization, and the “evaluation of the quality of the University”.

**2.1 The Revision of the Statutes, Ordinances,** Ratio Studiorum and overall organization, is the principal process for verification and re-planning. You are involved in this at the present time, and it will be the special commitment for the academic year now in progress. Because you are particularly well informed about the difficulties and the lines to be followed, I will not delay to

offer suggestions or criteria. I remind you only that they must not only guarantee participation but also ensure agility in reaching decisions; they must provide space for innovation and initiative, but also foster convergence and an overall vision.

**2.2** To the internal verification, of whose serious and rigorous nature we do not have the least doubt, it would seem opportune and useful at this stage to add the contribution of an **evaluation made by qualified externs**.

For this purpose we are in contact with the Association of European Universities or the Conference of European Rectors (CRE). You already know of its objectives and method, and the deadlines of the “Program of institutional evaluation of the CRE”, and in particular of the “Assessment of the CRE for institutional quality”.

It is not a matter of an intervention from outside; it involves all of us and pays particular attention to the specific demands of our University, its mission and its culture. From our knowledge of similar experiences we expect help for a better use of our resources, a clearer projection towards the future and a better or-

ganization and institutional management. It can constitute for us an occasion of ongoing formation in our own particular craft or trade, through a better understanding of the structure in which we are working. In any case it is clear that the principal actors in this operation will be all of you.

The specific objectives of the CRE Assessment do not coincide with those for the revision of the Statutes and Ordinances, even though they are linked with them. It seems therefore neither opportune nor possible to carry out the two processes simultaneously, nor to await the results of the Assessment before proceeding to the revision of the Statutes and Ordinances. In the first case it would lead to an accumulation of tasks and meetings; in the second to an unjustifiable lengthening of the time required.

The "Assessment" comprises self-evaluation, a preliminary visit, the main visit, and the final report. It will extend over a period of eighteen months. According to the first forecasts we should have the results in the spring of the year 2000.

The calendar and deadlines which have been communicated to you, concentrate our attention during this academic year on the

revision of the Statutes and Ordinances, Ratio Studiorum and general organization, while assigning to autumn 1998 the beginning of the "Assessment" process through the self-evaluation stage.

**2.3** I add, for your information and without going into details, that soon there will begin a **verification on the administrative and economic situation and structure** of the University and Vice-province. This too will be carried out by competent external personnel. It has been arranged, with my consent, by the Economist General of the Congregation, President of the Superior Council of Administration of the UPS.

In meetings of this organism the opportune nature of an initiative of this kind has already been discussed, and similar questions have been raised at other levels regarding the administrative structure of the University and its relationships with that of the Vice-province.

The specialists, to whom this verification will be entrusted, have already carried out the same service with regard to the Economist General's Department of our Congregation, and from them we hope to be able to acquire a "professional" vision of the administration

and financing, with consequent suggestions for a transparent and updated management.

**2.4** The coming years will see the Congregation and University committed to important and onerous **interventions in the building sector**. These interventions, some already decided on, are not independent of the Project we are speaking of. Neither the Project nor the management of the University can prescind from a careful consideration of the building aspect and, more generally, of the economic situation; and logically these cannot be thought out and realized without close and strict reference to the University Project as a whole.

Choices and datelines concerning building plans in the past have depended to some extent on the General Council and are also connected with the possibility of external contributions; this latter possibility needs to be defined in the near future.

**2.5** The time-span in which we are moving keeps us in mind also of **other events** of various kinds, which will provide opportunities for verifications and reorientation. I have in mind the Chapter of the Vice-province (1998), the Extraordinary Visitation (1999),

and the Team Visit (2000). It is clear that such a succession of occasions will produce results in the measure that we begin and proceed in line with a shared basic vision as regards procedures, sectorial developments, and processes.

### **3. AN ACADEMIC VISITATION**

It is my intention to be involved in the problems, to follow up as far as possible and guide, when necessary, this process of revision and projection which involves the Rector Major as Grand Chancellor and is binding on the Congregation.

So as to be informed of items which are emerging in the revision of the Statutes and Ordinances and their consequences, and to have an adequate vision of the situation of the UPS and of the perspectives to be established for the coming years, I have judged it opportune to have **an academic visitation** made in the near future, following the indications of the Ordinances at n.4 § 1.2.

The visit will have a **particular and limited purpose**. It is a question of collecting from those responsible for the government of the University at different levels, information, evaluations and suggestions which will be useful to the Rector Major and Grand

Chancellor for the revision of the Statutes and Ordinances and, more generally, for his task of orienting, sustaining, and making decisions in what concerns the functioning of the UPS and, in particular, the practical realization of its mission in the coming ten or fifteen years.

It will certainly be useful to me to be able to view the situation of the University and indications of its future perspectives as seen by those who know it from within.

The **contribution which I ask of you** is therefore specific, and has certain characteristics.

It falls within the perspective of the responsibility for government of the Rector Major and Grand Chancellor, the first in responsibility for the attainment of the purpose of the University and the ensuring of the necessary conditions: priorities, options, internal management, structural functioning conditions, personnel, resources, relationship with the Congregation and with the Church, etc.

It all starts, and not without a certain effort, from an overall vision in which particular or sectorial aspects are considered to assess their contribution, dimensions, space for initiatives and relationships with other realities.

It takes into account the present situation of the Congregation and of the UPS itself, and gives consideration to the real short-term conditions of development with complete openness to what the more distant future may suggest.

The visitation I am speaking of will not therefore be concerned with assessing the specifically academic aspect. It has neither the objectives nor the depth of the "Assessment" of the CRE as regards institutional quality, even if it should anticipate the perception of certain aspects which will be the object of such assessment. It does not propose to make contact with every organism or sector of university life and activity. It is not the "Extraordinary Visitation" which of its nature, refers particularly to the "religious" aspect.

It is a visitation which is informative in character at the service of the government of the University; it is not decision-making but thought of in view of orientation, commitment or decisions, which can be adopted during the process of the reformulation of the Statutes and Ordinances, or afterwards.

I thought it necessary, at a time when the Statutes and Ordi-

nances are being re-examined, and in a period which – as I have said – options will have to be made in various sectors of the UPS reality (e.g. building operations). I have entrusted the Visitation to the Councillor General for Formation, Fr Giuseppe Nicolussi.

I hope it can begin about the middle of the present month, and should take two or three weeks. The Visitor will proceed mainly through personal encounters. I have asked him to meet personally with the Rector and Vice-rector, the Deans of the Faculties, the major Officials, the members of the Academic Senate, those responsible for some sectors of university life, the ex-Rectors present at the UPS, and other members of the academic body who may wish to express opinions or whose contribution he may judge it opportune to ask. He will also be able to follow other paths and make other contacts which will enable him to fulfil the task with which he has been entrusted and present an enlightening report to the Grand Chancellor.

The interventions we have listed (revision, verification of quality, academic visitation, etc.) certainly require sustained applica-

tion, but they should not impede the normal course of university work. The participation of all will lead without excessive overloading to the better fulfilment, by means of a shared organic project, of the mission which the Church and the Congregation have entrusted to the UPS.

**I conclude** by expressing once again, personally and in the name of the Congregation, sincere gratitude for your dedication to formation, teaching and research, and I thank you in advance for the contribution of knowledge and experience which you will provide for me through the academic visitation, and which you will give during the other stages of the process which we have tried to explain.

The effort we are making is extraordinary indeed: it corresponds to the advent of the third millennium, to the stress of the new evangelization, to the challenges of culture and to the vitality shown by the Congregation in the GC24, and to the potentiality of the UPS.

Let us entrust it to the Lord and to Mary “Seat of Wisdom”, who will inspire and sustain our intentions.



### 5.3 A service for salesian institutions of university level

*The following is the text of a letter of the Rector Major establishing, for a limited period, a service from the Generalate for salesian institutions of university level, and entrusting the responsibility for the service to Fr Carlos Garulo.*

**Prot. N. 2080/97**

*To the V. Rev. Provincials,  
Provincial Councillors,  
and all the confreres of Salesian  
University Institutions.*

Dear Confreres,

In my recent circular Letter "*For you I study*" on our cultural preparation and on the quality of our work (cf. AGC 361), I drew your attention to a significant field of our mission, which is of particular importance in the formation of persons and in the elaboration and spreading of culture: the **salesian university institutions**, which are increasing in number and in quality.

This is a field to which the Church too looks with hope, in the context of the new evangelization, because of the influence such institutions can have in the

formulation of a cultural project inspired by the Gospel, capable of creating new relationships in society and in the world, and of enlightening people in their search for truth and for sense in life. The importance of educative and scholastic institutions, and in particular those at university level, was reflected also in the recent Synod of Bishops for America.

Now, on the basis of the verification made on the occasion of the GC24 and of the publication of the above-mentioned Letter, to draw attention to the growing number of our university institutions but also to their diversification (cf. AGC 361, p.44), and to the needs and expectations expressed by those responsible at various meetings and occasions (in particular may be recalled the conclusions reached at Brazilia in 1995), I have judged it opportune in agreement with my Council to **promote**, for a limited period of time, **a service from the Generalate addressed to the salesian university institutions** (with the obvious exclusion of the UPS which comes under the direct responsibility of the Rector Major as its Grand Chancellor).

This service, in line with the great effort at cultural qualification asked of the Congregation at

the present day, is a **sign of particular commitment** in this area of special influence for our mission.

The service will aim at seeking the common general conditions – in respect of the norms of individual countries – which will ensure, whether in the individual institutions or as a group, “a **significant salesian presence** at a scientific, educative and pastoral level” among the centres which “produce and diffuse culture” in society (cf. Letter *For you I study*).

I have entrusted the task of **guiding and animating this service** for the Salesian University Institutions (SUI) to our confrere **Fr Carlos Garulo**, whom I thank for the availability he has shown.

As I have said, this is a task of limited duration until the achievement of the objectives proposed. The person concerned will respond to the Rector Major for his work, and will have as points of reference and collaborators the Councillors General for Formation and for Youth Pastoral Work. He will normally be dealing with the Provincials responsible for the salesian university institutions existing in their provinces and the academic authorities of the institutions themselves.

The objective and scope of the service in the first instance will be the **survey of the situation of the SUI** (facts, analysis and conclusions); and this so as to:

- define, on the part of the Rector Major and his Council:
  - a **general policy** of the Congregation in this field;
  - an authoritative line which will help the EPCs of the individual university institutions to define their own cultural, educative and pastoral project (cf. Letter, AGC 361, p.46);
- foresee and begin a plan of **collaboration and synergy** among the SUI;
- orientate and accompany the **Provinces** responsible for the SUI.

Dear confreres, I hope that through the contribution of this service we may be able to give ever greater help to our university institutions in the making of the necessary verifications, and especially in attaining that salesian competence and cultural and professional quality, of which I spoke in my circular letter (cf. AGC 361, p.46).

Let us place our work under the protection of Mary Help of Christians, asking through her inter-

cession for the wisdom which is the gift of the Spirit.

Rome, 8 December 1997.

Fr Juan E. Vecchi

## 5.4 New Salesian Bishops

*We publish some biographical details of three new Salesian Bishops.*

### 1. *Mgr. Franco DALLA VALLE, Bishop of JUINA (Brazil).*

The Osservatore Romano of 24 December 1997 carried the news of the appointment of Fr Franco Dalla Valle SDB as Bishop of the new Diocese of Juina in Mato Grosso, Brazil.

He was born 2 August 1945 at Crespano del Grappa, Italy. He was a pupil at the aspirantate of Penango in Piedmont, and went on to the novitiate of Chieri-Villa Moglia, where he made his first profession on 16 August 1963.

Immediately after his study of philosophy he left as a missionary for the Province of Manaus in Brazil, where he did his practical training and made his perpetual profession. He came back to Italy for theology at Castellammare di Stabia, and was ordained priest at Colle Don Bosco on 26 August 1972.

Returning to Brazil, he was engaged in pastoral work in various houses, and in 1982 was appointed rector of the aspirantate of Manaus and provincial councillor in charge of vocational animation. In 1988 he became rector at Jí-Paraná. In 1990 he was appointed rector and novice director in the novitiate of Candeias, Porto Velho. Two years later (December 1991) the Rector Major entrusted him with the guidance of the Amazonian Province as Provincial.

He was consecrated Bishop by Pope John Paul II at Rome on the Solemnity of the Epiphany 1998.

### 2. *Mgr. Flavio GIOVENALE, Bishop of ABAETETUBA (Brazil).*

The Osservatore Romano of 8 October 1997 announced the appointment of Fr Flavio Giovenale SDB as Bishop of Abaetetuba, a new Diocese in Brazil.

Born at Murello, Italy, 5 June 1964, he entered the aspirantate of Peveragno where his salesian missionary vocation matured. He made his novitiate at Pinerolo where he also made his first profession on 8 September 1971, and soon afterwards left for the missions. In 1973 we find him in Brazil at Lorena, where he stud-

ied and obtained the Licentiate in Philosophy. After practical training at Ananindeua, he studied theology at the studentate of São Paulo. He was ordained priest at his native Murello on 20 December 1981. He then completed his studies at the UPS, gaining the Licentiate in Spiritual Theology.

On his return to Brazil he was soon given posts of responsibility. In 1985 he began six years as rector of the aspirantate of Manaus-Aleixo; in 1990 he became a member of the provincial council, and in 1992 provincial economer, a post he combined with various other duties of pastoral animation. For two years he was also provincial secretary.

3. *Mgr. Alois KOTHGASSER,*  
*Bishop of INNSBRUCK*  
*(Austria).*

The appointment of Fr Alois Kothgasser SDB as Bishop of the Diocese of Innsbruck, in the Austrian Tyrol, was announced in the Osservatore Romano of 10 October 1997.

He was born on 29 May 1937 at Lichtenegg, Rosenthal, in the diocese of Graz-Seckau, Austria, and has been a Salesian since he made his first religious profession at Oberthalheim on 16 August 1955.

Three years later he made his perpetual profession at the end of the period of practical training, and studied theology at the Pontifical Salesian Athenaeum. He was ordained priest on 9 February 1964, and went on to obtain the Licentiate and then the Doctorate in Theology.

For several years he became a valid and much esteemed teacher of theology at the same Athenaeum, and then at the Pontifical Salesian University.

Returning to his Province of origin, from 1981 he taught dogmatic theology, and later became Rector of the Higher Institute of Philosophy and Theology at Benediktbeuern in Germany. There the news reached him of his appointment as Bishop.

## 5.5 Rector of the Pontifical Salesian University

The Congregation for Catholic Education, on the proposal of the Rector Major and in accordance with the Statutes, by a decree of 3 July 1997, appointed the Rev. Prof. Fr. Michele PELLEREY, Rector Magnificus of the Salesian Pontifical University, in succession to Fr Raffaele Farina, called to be Prefect of the Vatican Library.

Michele Pellerey was born on 18 May 1935 at Pegli, Genoa, and was a pupil of the Sacred Heart Institute in Rome. He has been a Salesian since 16 August 1951, when he made his first profession after the novitiate at Varazze. After the study of philosophy and practical training, he studied theology in the studentate of Bollengo, where he was ordained priest on 25 March 1961.

He obtained the Doctorate in

Mathematics at the "La Sapienza" University of Rome, and was appointed to the Chair of General Didactics in the Salesian Pontifical University, a post he has filled successfully for many years. Subsequently he became Director of the Institute of Didactics, President of the Faculty of Educational Sciences, Vice-Rector of the University in 1992, and President of the Institute of the Science of Social Communication in 1995.

### 5.6 Our dead confreres (1997 - 4th list)

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

NAME	PLACE	DATE	AGE	PROV.
<b>E ALANGIMATTATHIL Abraham</b>	Dimapur	18-11-97	65	—
<i>Fu Vescovo di Kohima (Nagaland, India) per 23 anni</i>				
<b>P ALDEGHERI Michelangelo</b>	Chioggia (VE)	28-12-97	81	IVE
<b>P BAKAN Jožef</b>	Izola	16-12-97	84	SLO
<b>P BALDAN Gastone</b>	Savona	28-11-97	81	ILT
<b>P BASSI Giuseppe</b>	Bologna	25-11-97	88	ILE
<b>P BERNARD Stephen</b>	Chellampattidai	07-11-97	70	INM
<b>P BERTINI Alberto</b>	San Isidro (Bs. As.)	12-11-97	88	ABA
<b>L BEVC Joze</b>	Colle Don Bosco	17-11-97	88	ICP
<b>L BODRITO Giovanni</b>	Savona	21-12-97	77	ILT
<b>P BOHLEIN Nikolaus</b>	Schwandorf, Baviera	14-11-97	89	GEM
<b>P CABRAL Augusto Duarte</b>	Resende, RJ	23-10-97	78	BBH
<b>P CALDERÓN Jesús</b>	Los Teques	20-12-97	76	VEN
<b>P CELANI Luigi</b>	Roma	27-10-97	89	IRO
<b>P CINQUINA Francisco</b>	La Plata	18-11-97	80	ALP
<b>L COLOMBATTI Mario</b>	Torino	04-06-97	80	ILE
<b>L COSIO Andrea</b>	Caleta Olivia	29-10-97	73	ABA
<b>P DALMET Anand</b>	Pune	10-10-97	38	INB
<b>L de GODOY Carlos</b>	Campinas	26-10-97	91	BSP
<b>P DELGADO José Justo</b>	Oviedo	12-10-97	93	SLE
<b>P DI GRADO Andrea</b>	Palermo	25-12-97	82	ISI
<b>P DITTRICH Ladislao</b>	Roma	11-10-97	68	IRO
<b>P DOBLER Hermann Maria</b>	Fulpmes, Tirolo	21-11-97	82	AUS
<b>P DOWNEY John Joseph</b>	Limerick	14-12-97	76	IRL
<b>P FORNASARI Alberto</b>	Milano	27-11-97	88	ILE
<b>L FURLAN Vinko</b>	Ljubljana	30-12-97	86	SLO
<b>P GISBERT Vicente</b>	Valencia	27-12-97	61	SVA
<b>L GONZALEZ Silva Justo</b>	Santiago de Chile	19-11-97	99	CIL
<b>P GOURVÈS Jean-François</b>	Caen	25-10-97	59	FPA
<b>L GRIEB Johann</b>	Essen	24-10-97	84	GEK
<b>P HERNÁNDEZ GARCÍA Emilio</b>	Mohernando	13-12-97	80	SMA
<i>Fu Ispettore per sei anni</i>				
<b>P KENNEDY Cyril</b>	Liverpool	30-12-97	74	GBR
<i>Fu Ispettore per sei anni</i>				
<b>P KUNZ Santiago</b>	La Plata	27-12-97	83	ALP

NAME	PLACE	DATE	AGE	PROV.
L LOURENÇO Matias	Vilarinho	31-10-97	83	POR
P LOWE Joseph	Pallaskenry	07-11-97	85	IRL
L MANZO Giovanni Battista	Torino	07-12-97	74	ICP
P MATKO Ivan	Eisenkappel	16-03-97	86	AUS
P MAZIARZ Franciszek	Rózansko	14-04-97	64	PLN
P MIRÓN Victor	Alapardo (Madrid)	22-10-97	73	SMA
L MÜLLER Arnold	Jünkerath	20-10-97	87	GEK
P MUÑOZ ABAD Rafael	Barcelona	20-11-97	72	SVA
P NEDUMATTATHIL Jose	Maram, Manipur	22-11-97	35	IND
P NICOLAS Théophile	Guingamp	27-10-97	85	FPA
L PANCERI Felice	Como	25-12-97	84	ILE
L PATRUCCO Marco	Alessandria	09-10-97	75	ICP
P PEREZ DELGADO José Luis	Salamanca	01-05-97	56	SMA
P PLOSKI Mikolaj	Gdańsk	28-09-97	81	PLN
L POKORN Tomaž	Trstenik	07-12-97	83	SLO
P PONCHIONE Albino	Bangkok	17-12-97	93	THA
L PREVC Franc	Jesenice	07-11-97	83	SLO
P RE Vittorio	Borgomanero	03-11-97	73	ICP
P RENAUD Paul	Gasville	08-12-97	75	FPA
L RIGON Isidoro	Treviso	22-12-97	89	IVE
L RIGUET Mario	La Plata	10-10-97	85	ALP
P ROOZEN Godfrey	Makati, Manila	08-12-97	85	FIN
P SCHERER Richard	München	18-12-97	85	GEM
P SELVAGGIO Gaetano	Ribera (AG)	30-11-97	55	ISI
P SPADARI Angelo	Manaus	12-10-97	87	BMA
L STIEN Charles	Bailleul	08-11-97	89	FPA
P SZABÓ Imre	Veszprém	14-10-97	81	UNG
L TIBERI Lelio Vicente	San Isidro (Bs. As.)	11-12-97	83	ABA
P VERGARA Juan de Dios	San Luis Potosí	24-10-97	77	MEG

