



acts

of the general council

year LXXX

january-march 1999

N. 366

official organ
of animation
and communication
for the
salesian congregation

Direzione Generale
Opere don Bosco
Roma

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

OFFICIAL ORGAN OF ANIMATION AND COMMUNICATION FOR THE SALESIAN CONGREGATION

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A LOVE WITHOUT LIMITS FOR GOD AND THE YOUNG¹

1. Chastity for the Kingdom. What we have professed. - The cultural climate. - The inspiring certainty: a love which proclaims the Risen One and awaits him. **2. Chastity and the salesian charism.** In the wake of a tradition. - At the service of educative love. - A sign of complete self-donation. - "Almost a requirement for education". - Enriching and complementary nature. **3. The process towards maturity.** A challenging development. - A course to be followed. - Vocational discernment and initial formation. - The role of the community. **Conclusion:** The force of a prophecy.

Rome, 8 December 1998
Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception

My dear Confreres,

I am writing to you at the beginning of the jubilee year dedicated to God our Father, from whom comes to us every good gift. Among the greatest of these that we have received throughout our time on earth, after that of Baptism and Christian life, is the special grace of consecration on which I invited you to reflect in my previous letter.

"An eminent position among these is held by virginity or the celibate state. (...) This is a precious gift of divine grace given by the Father to certain souls (cf. Mt 19,11; 1 Cor 7,6,7), whereby they may devote themselves to God alone the more easily, through an undivided heart (cf. 1Cor 7,32-33)".² I thought it opportune therefore to continue the reflections by suggesting to you some further points on this aspect of our consecration.

The Constitutions present the particular role this gift has in our charism when they state that it is "a love for God and for the young that has no limits".³ It includes complete self-

¹ cf. C 81

² LG 42

³ C 81

giving and disposes us to face, with greater freedom and readiness, even risks to life on mission frontiers, solidarity with the poor, and situations of conflict.

While I am actually concluding this letter, details have been published with the names of men and women missionaries killed during 1998 in contexts of war, religious fundamentalism and ethnic struggles: thirty-one in all, to be added to the very many who form the martyrology of the twentieth century.

Against the background of this story of brothers and sisters who have not hesitated to sacrifice their lives, I want to set my reflections on that "intensely evangelical way of loving God and our neighbour"⁴ which is realized through the vow of chastity. In this way also I hope to create the awareness of the educative power of religious consecration in daily life,⁵ in line with what is set out in the program for the present six-year period.

1. Chastity for the Kingdom.

What we have professed.

The Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consecrata* does not deal separately with each of the evangelical counsels. It unites them in the single grace of the *sequela Christi*, limiting itself here and there to the particular significance, values or demands of each. In this way it emphasizes the character of a personal rapport with the Lord which belongs to profession and the spiritual dimension of the vows. Each counsel implies specific attitudes and commitments, but ultimately includes the other two as well. It is difficult to think of a consistent and luminous chastity detached from the poverty which consists in the total offering of one's personal and material goods, or from the obedience of heart which makes one available for the mission, cost what it may. And vice versa.

⁴ C 80

⁵ cf. AGC 358, Supplement, n.34, p.16

Vita Consecrata does not even deal at length with the counsels taken together, but includes various points concerning them when speaking of consecration, mission and fraternal community. The counsels are conditions for a calm and coherent realization of these fundamental aspects of our life and reflect each of them.

The clarity with which it is spoken of in the Gospel, the frequency with which the documents of the Church and the Congregation have returned to the argument, even in recent times, have helped us to acquire a sufficiently clear picture of the meaning of consecrated chastity: it is a gift of the Father and, from our side, a free response of love which leads us to assume the virginal life chosen by Jesus. Clear too are the commitments it implies: celibacy as a state of life and the practice of continence appropriate to such a state, the will for unlimited self-donation to God and to the young. Doctrinally it also implies the asceticism that the practice of chastity requires, nearly always expressed in a series of attitudes which include human and supernatural means.

Nevertheless the cultural climate in which we are living suggests that we make a personal reflection on this counsel in the present context.⁶

We are in fact well nigh submerged by images, messages, opinions and explanations concerning sexuality, while there is an almost complete silence about chastity.

This leads us to ask ourselves some questions about the present practice of chastity, the necessary conditions for it to become mature and serene, the force of its witness, the pedagogical and spiritual paths that can lead us to its effective realization in a world which does not seem to bother about it.

⁶ This was the opinion of the Group of sixteen Superiors General who in their meeting with the CIVCSVA developed the theme: *Living chastity and celibacy today: problems and our responsibility*.

The cultural climate.

A certain reserve about Christian chastity, even on our part, can arise from a cultural change which makes it more difficult today than it was yesterday to perceive its human significance and to speak, in realistic and delicate terms, about certain problems to which it gives rise: such as lawful expressions of love, the nature of a couple, practices which relate to life, and the culpability or otherwise of certain forms of personal behaviour.

A Catholic reflection is placed under particular pressure by the complexity of the questions and the variety of opinions expressed. It tries to respond to questions by studying more deeply the nature of the person, the role of conscience, the influence of the situation, and life orientation. Snap judgements therefore, even though formally correct yet without a sufficiently deep analysis, end up by not providing any solution to pressing questions which chastity raises.

One of the elements which mark the present evolution is without doubt the proper appraisal of sexuality. It is a complex matter. That it has a decisive influence on the development of personality is an accepted fact. It is considered a richness to be developed rather than an instinct to be eradicated. It has a relationship with many aspects felt by the individual, such as maturity, self realization, ability to form relationships, enjoyment, interior balance which can overcome complexes, feelings of guilt and insecurity. This positive perspective has also been adopted by the thinking of the Church, as is evident from the abundant catechesis of John Paul II and a vast quantity of moral and spiritual literature.

On the other hand the level of social restraint has fallen, sometimes even within the family. There is public tolerance and the right to choose is strongly defended; indeed the press, literature, and spectacles of various kinds frequently exalt transgressions and present deviations as possible options, the consequences of personal conditioning. Any ethical dimension,

even of a humanistic nature, is disregarded when not completely ignored, even in widespread diffused official programs. The only concern is to live sexuality in a manner safe from physical and psychical risks, and detached from anything which acknowledges what is transcendent and appropriate to human dignity.

The body is developed and almost exalted in its various possibilities: health, form, beauty, artistic expression, pleasure. It is at the centre of attention and relevant activities which respond to and encourage new interests: gymnastics, sport, fashion, dancing. Christian thinking emphasizes the fact that the body is called to be ever better integrated in the vocational plan, that man not only has a body, but is a body capable of expressing what the spirit feels and wants to communicate: love and joy, anxiety and anger, concern for other people or simple self-interest.

The overall cultural evolution and the contributions of a balanced feminism have highlighted the unique nature of woman, the richness of her talent and her complementary relationship with man. The interventions of John Paul II in this connection are also the sign of change in the Church's approach. The consequence for us is a closer relationship with women, which is expressed in being together in all kind of environments, in collaboration, and in freer relationships which not infrequently lead to closeness, familiarity and friendship.

Our kinds of society have become allergic to laws and controls which seem to invade what is considered the private sphere, and so moral norms give rise to reactions which make it difficult to express deep human and religious values in civil society. Sexuality, love and (from some aspects) the family have become a private matter. Many forms of personal behaviour and relevant choices are no longer judged from commonly accepted moral principles, but are sometimes evaluated according to the rights of the individual considered in his inviolable dignity, sometimes confused with an arbitrary liberty.

The cultural change now taking place brings with it positive developments and also high prices to be paid. Among the former we may list greater freedom in making decisions, the perception of gaps that need to be filled and which are in fact filled through the reopening of the desire for an authentic love, the search for and offering of what is freely given, i.e. what is spontaneous and gratuitous.

Among the prices to be paid is an exaggerated emphasis on subjectivity in sexual matters; the weakening or even neglect of the marriage bond, and the fear of getting married, with the consequent prolonging of the period of adolescence; and the proliferation of sexual images and coarse and vulgar material, practically available to all and sundry through legitimate or clandestine channels and networks.

All this produces an ambiguity which challenges not only the capability for appraisal, but also the control of desires. On the one hand there is a strong defence of woman's dignity, which is a lot more than that of her body, but at the same time she continues to be presented in advertisements and cinema as an erotic object. Encouragement is given to the free expression of sexuality, but the reaction is severe when this becomes uncontrollable and goes beyond all limits. Emphasis is laid on "emotion", especially in the case of the young, through images and adverts, and yet from them is expected a constancy and fidelity which is the result of ability to think and plan. Market forces lead the media to concentrate on what is effective in communication if not indeed on mere technical skill, rather than on presenting a true and in depth vision of reality.

The present atmosphere envelops the young who get their first information about sexuality and chastity in a confused and ambiguous manner. But in this religious are not spared, not even those who had earlier assimilated an interior Christian vision. Even for us there can be a falling off in sensitivity which makes us almost indifferent as regards appraisal or behaviour and lessens the specific value of our consecrated option. We

may lose the keenness of the vigilance which prevents those who have chosen to place Jesus at the centre of their hearts from being exposed to negative experiences. In pastors and educators uncertainty can be generated in guiding consciences in communion with the Church, and in proposing chastity in a convincing manner as an essential value in forming the person and the Christian.

The risk can become greater when the education we have received, with its inevitable limitations despite its undeniable value, has not provided us sufficiently with the necessary means for assessment, with soundly based attitudes of life, and with a sincere mental approach able to unmask the rationalizing of which evil is frequently so capable.

Vita Consecrata invites us to responds to the challenges of culture with the "joyful living of perfect chastity, as a witness to the power of God's love manifested in the weakness of the human condition".⁷

We Salesians feel the need of an interior personal and communal mobilization, to live with greater joy and more radiant transparency this virtue which forms Christ's members to the complete freedom and capacity for self-giving of their Head.

Only with our gaze fixed on him are we able to appreciate the significance of chastity, especially in that particular and prophetic form which shines forth in the gift of virginity professed for the Kingdom of heaven in religious communities.

**The inspiring certainty:
a love which proclaims the Risen One and awaits him.**

It is impossible to tackle any specific question regarding Christian chastity without seeking its deeper roots in the word of God. And rather than in particular texts, which are certainly not lacking, the foundation of consecrated chastity and

⁷ VC 88

its significance are to be sought in the very Person of Jesus, the total and definitive Word of God. He is celibate for the Kingdom, to manifest in a visible way the love of God for each and everyone. Thus he establishes another way of being a person in which, with complete freedom, sexuality attains full attachment to the Father and total self-giving to men.

From the Bible I take only some points which I think particularly adapted to our present theme. They will serve as an invitation to approach the Word in a calm and personal way so as to place our reflections in his presence, full of light and grace.

The Old Testament foreshadows the future revelation of virginity for the Kingdom when Jeremiah, who has placed his celibacy at the service of the prophetic mission,⁸ introduces the image of the *virgin of Israel*⁹. But the usual expectation of the Old Testament is fertility, blessed by God with offspring who descend from one generation to the next, in confirmation of the promises of Yahweh and of the hope of preparing in their own flesh and blood the coming of the Messiah.

The gift of virginity belongs to the New Testament and carries in its heart, as we have said, the memory of Jesus, who lived it with simplicity and expressed its content through his life given to the Father and to the service of his brethren.

It is easy to glean from the New Testament an emphasis on the very personal relationship that bound the disciple to Jesus. It appears particularly strong and positive in John's Gospel. It is developed in the dialogue of Jesus with Nicodemus and with the woman of Samaria, it becomes familiarity in the house of Lazarus, Martha and Mary; it shows itself faithful in the hour of the cross in a web of mutual donation and suffering, in which Jesus, the Virgin Mother, and the beloved disciple are the protagonists.

⁸ cf. Jer 16,1-2

⁹ cf. 18,13; 31,4.21

¹⁰ Jn 20,2

It is precisely the image of the *disciple whom Jesus loved*¹¹ which shows the central position of personal love. Discipleship has its origin and expression in a love which is believing and obedient. It is at the basis of the apostolate. And this is the sense of the dialogue with Peter in the 21st chapter of St John's Gospel: in it the personal love for the Master is demanded as an inescapable condition, in view of the conferring of the pastoral ministry: "Do you love me more than these?"¹¹

It was a love marked by close intimacy between Jesus and the beloved disciple, who at the last supper rested his head on the Master's heart. It was a courageous love which remained with him in time of trial. It was an enlightened love which, on the day of the Resurrection, "believed without seeing" and maintained that sharpness of perception which was able to recognize the Risen One on the shore of the lake even in the morning mist. It was a love which would endure "until he comes again".¹²

Today it is maintained that *the disciple that Jesus loved* is also the type of the mature Christian, who has made Christ, the centre, cause and "first love" of his own life. And there is an ancient but still very much alive Christian tradition which sees in the beloved disciple the symbol of virginity and an undivided heart, almost a foreshadowing of consecrated life which makes Christ the one and sovereign love of his own existence, capable of giving vigour and order to all other forms of love. His home is with Mary, in the heart of the Church. His family is the company of brothers and sisters who have received the gift of the same call. His destiny is to continue "until he comes again", writing in an ever-fresh manner the long story of the friends and followers of Jesus.

The understanding of such a novelty was not an easy matter. The change introduced by Jesus in current usage, in homage to the original plan of God – "from the beginning

¹¹ Jn 21,15

¹² 1 Cor 11,26

it was not so”¹³ – was too radical. For this reason, Jesus himself declared, with respect to the confrontation between matrimonial fidelity and celibacy for the Kingdom, that “not everyone can accept this teaching, but only those to whom it is given by God”:¹⁴ “others do not marry, so as to better serve the kingdom of God. Let anyone accept this who can”.¹⁵

“What then is this Kingdom of God which enables people even to renounce matrimony? It is the fatherly, motherly and nuptial love of God for man, of which all the Scriptures speak: the gentle dominion of the Father through Christ and in the Spirit, to which one chooses to respond with a filial love of betrothal. The perception of the bursting in of the Kingdom: this is the root of Christian virginity”.¹⁶

If Jesus preached the Kingdom, the Apostles preached Christ who embodies its definitive fullness. Virginity is his memorial. He is the Kingdom who, in spirit and truth, gives new life to humanity for the destiny of Grace, prepared by the Father.

The Apocalypse sees in virginity the sign of the spouse “coming down out of heaven from God”¹⁷ and rising towards him from the earth. The meaning therefore is proximity to Christ the Lord, and the joy of accompanying him in festive communities who sing a new song full of beauty and mystery, and with the tension sustained by the hope of a definitive meeting. Through the exhilarating discovery of Christ, the religious state is accurately exemplified and perpetually made present in the Church. It is the form of life which He, as the Son of God, accepted in entering this world to do the will of the Father, and which he proposed to the disciples who followed him.¹⁸

¹³ Mt 19,8

¹⁴ Mt 19,11

¹⁵ Mt 19,12

¹⁶ AA.VV. *Parola di Dio e spirito salesiano. Ricerca sulla dimensione biblica delle Costituzioni della Famiglia Salesiana*, p.137

¹⁷ cf. Rev 21,2

¹⁸ cf. LG 44

Our vow is a sign which points to Christ, living, risen from the dead and present in his Church, able to infuse into hearts that “love” of which the Church has sung through the centuries in her history and liturgy.

Through chastity religious make themselves the image and first fruits of the Church completely given over once and for all to her Lord. Their identification with the Church takes place through and is expressed especially through total self-giving. “There is no virginity which is not fruitful and full of significance (...); it acquires its meaning and its fertility solely from total dedication in the Church”.¹⁹

Christian virginity stands or falls with the mystery of the cross, with the opening of the wound in the side of Christ and the birth of the Church from it as “Christ’s body and spouse”. This ecclesial expression is the reason why each vow contains in embryo the other two. “Obedience is the poverty of the spirit through love; and virginity, which is a poverty of the body through love, becomes fertile only where spiritual sacrifice is presupposed”.²⁰ Chastity, even from this standpoint, configures us to Christ who “though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor”.²¹

The religious – after the example of Christ who died stripped of his garments on a naked cross – will find himself when his earthly existence ends like a man without family or fortune, who has built nothing for himself but whose eyes are fixed on God, who alone gives meaning to his existence.

In this way chastity comes to express a mature form of freedom, which is the decision to give oneself without reserve, to achieve personal fulfilment in an unusual way, to give oneself totally to a particular mission without seeking or keeping anything for oneself. This is the witness which large numbers of missionaries of the past and the present – with many Salesians among them – have given and are still giving to the

¹⁹ Von Balthasar, *Gli stati di vita del cristiano*, (Jaca Books 1995, p.204)

²⁰ *ibid.*

²¹ cf. 2 Cor 8,9

Church when, in missionary outposts, they continue to give everything and even life itself in fidelity to those entrusted to their care, even when exposed to great risk of life. And so we find the paschal Mystery at work in the heart of the Congregation and of our incomparable brethren. The history of the Church, especially in missionary countries, and the dramatic events of recent years amply confirm that these are not just so many words, but only an effort to read Gospel facts.

This unconditional and total oblation is the heart of the chastity of Mary who, in saying *Ecce ancilla Domini*, "Behold I am the handmaid of the Lord",²² combines the loftiest form of chastity with a total self-entrustment to God's plan.

2. Chastity and the salesian charism.

In the wake of a tradition.

There is hardly need to recall Don Bosco's concern for the virtue of purity, which he saw as an essential element for the Christian growth of the young person, a guarantee for the educative atmosphere of a salesian house, and a basis for the Salesian or youngster who wanted to give himself to Christ and to the Church.

Contemporary witnesses are united in speaking of the fascination that the practice of this virtue had in Don Bosco; it became one of the most limpid characteristics of his holiness. It causes no surprise therefore that our holy Founder dreamed of the Salesians as being characterized by chastity, and placed this virtue at the crossroads of educative demands, of processes of personal sanctification in the following of Christ, and of prophetic needs in the service of the young and of the people of God.

²² Lk 1,38

Our Father had certainly been given an extraordinary knack of helping youngsters to combine chastity with happiness. In one of his notes Fr John Bonetti, speaking of Don Bosco, wrote: "Several times I heard him speak of this matter from the pulpit, and I must confess that every time I experienced more and more the force of his words, and I felt myself prompted to make any sacrifice for love of so inestimable a treasure".²³

On reading over again the practice of Don Bosco,²⁴ one becomes convinced that the overall quality of the educative setting, the fatherly and loving kindness of Don Bosco himself, the educator and confessor, the continual and serene presentation of supernatural means (Eucharist, Penance, devotion to Mary), the spirit of mortification and avoidance of dangerous occasions, a style of life based on happiness lived and proposed in a positive manner, were the paths our Founder preferred to follow and which he convincingly pointed out to educators as the way to form young people to chastity.

This was not only a trait of his personal holiness, but an element of the charism. Don Bosco began a tradition. On the 20th anniversary of his death, Blessed Michael Rua wrote one of his most sorrowful letters, which he entitled *Vigilance*. His concern was to make known "what we have gradually learned by experience, and what the needs of the present time suggest to us".²⁵ The letter was published soon after that difficult period of trial known in the history of the Congregation as the *facts of Varazze*.²⁶ "An avalanche of calumnies and horrible accusations spread suddenly like mist hiding the sun", wrote Don Rua, and he recalled the words of Don Bosco: *Est Deus in Is-*

²³ Don Ricaldone, *Sanctity is purity*, in ASC 69, Jan 1935, p.11

²⁴ cf. the careful analysis of P. Stella in Don Bosco, II (Rome 1981), pp.240-274; the treatise of P. Braidò in *Il sistema preventivo di Don Bosco*, PAS-Verlag 1964, pp.289-311; F. Desramaut *Don Bosco et la vie spirituelle*, Paris 1967, especially the Chapter "L'Ascèse indispensable".

²⁵ cf. Circular Letters of Fr Michael Rua to the Salesians, Turin 1965, pp.461-73

²⁶ cf. Annali della Società salesiana, Vol III, pp.684-702

rael. Let nothing disturb you. But drawing a lesson from the sad experience, Don Rua added with serene realism: "We cannot deceive ourselves; our thoughts are scrutinized, our actions are taken up and examined". It seems clear that his intention was to instill courage at a time of difficulty, but also to foresee facts which could give rise to criticisms and accusations in so sensitive an area as that of the education of the young.

In the same context it needs to be added that since then and right up to the present day, in many parts of the world the atmosphere has become even more sensitive and demanding.

Fr Paul Albera too, in 1916, thought it opportune to write a letter *On Chastity*;²⁷ it was full of elements deriving from salesian tradition and aimed at fostering the great means of fidelity: the Eucharist and Penance, prayer and devotion to Mary, mortification, humility and prudence. This letter too was written for the context then prevailing. It began by proposing as part of the education of the young more systematic information about sexual matters. There was nothing more natural than to recall the delicacy of Don Bosco, repeat the expressions he had used in the matter and the ways he had indicated for its development.

Fr Albera insisted on chastity as an *oblation*, with reference to the Letter of St Paul to the Romans: "I appeal to you therefore, brethren, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship".²⁸

His second successor, whom Don Bosco held in high regard, had fully grasped the evangelical foundation of chastity which our Founder proclaimed by his style of life, totally dedicated to the young, rather than by his words: the eucharistic offering is prolonged in a life which repeats humbly but firmly: "This is my body which is given for you".²⁹

²⁷ cf. Circular Letters of Fr Paul Albera to the Salesians, *Sulla castità*, Turin 1965, pp.212-229

²⁸ Rom 12,1

²⁹ Lk 22,19

Fr Peter Ricaldone, with his heart still full of the celebrations of Easter 1934, which included the canonization of Don Bosco, offered his letter *Sanctity is purity*, as a coronation of that unforgettable year. It was a calculated choice and rooted in the certainty of touching on one of the sensitive points of the salesian spirit. Fr Ricaldone said he was convinced that he could do “nothing more pleasing to Don Bosco than exhort all Salesians to reflect incessantly on the fact that our holiness must be expressed especially through a life of candour and virginal purity”.³⁰

Fr Luigi Ricceri in 1977, with the letter *Living consecrated chastity at the present day*, “in response to a precise dictate” of his conscience, put forward once again “the characteristic witness of salesian chastity”. It is an interesting letter, still very relevant at the present day, which I invite you to read again to complement this one of mine. Its context in fact is the start of the climate in which we are now immersed: a new context with new challenges from the world, and new questions from the Church: a context marked within the Congregation by the painful problem of defecations, often though not always linked with interior emptiness, lack of foundations, want of prudence or carelessness in this field.

It may be that all too easily we have attributed the severe words of Don Bosco in terms of chastity, only to the cultural and ascetical context of his own time, which was certainly not without its limitations and even serious ones. Nowadays we understand better that we are called upon to read in them the wisdom of a saint, with a deep knowledge of the human heart, who foresaw with great concern the negative consequences of certain tendencies and attitudes. In the light of present-day events which are frequently publicly denounced, the reflections of Don Bosco during the 3rd General Chapter of 1883 are seen to be still relevant: through faults against morality “Before God one’s soul is lost; before the world one’s honour”.³¹ “The

³⁰ Fr Peter Ricaldone, *Sanctity is purity*, in ASC 69 (1935), p.6

³¹ BM XVI, 331

Lord", he said on another occasion, "will destroy the Congregation if we fail in chastity".³²

Educational dramas of our time, the abuse of juveniles within and outside the family, the prostitution of youngsters organized and transformed into a new kind of slavery in the context of a depraved tourism, atrocious forms of pedophilia, renewed slave-like treatment of defenceless women, young men and adolescents, confirm us in the belief that this is not only a religious problem, but an urgent ethical matter; it is not a question of private virtue, but a need of public justice; it is not an exclusive problem of the Church, but the responsibility of a civil society concerned about its future and its dignity.

At the service of educative love.

When we look for the serious motives for the insistence which runs through our tradition, there come to mind some expressions with which Don Bosco expressed his love for the young, and which nowadays we may hesitate to repeat: "I love you, my dear boys, and I am ready to give my life for you!" Or those words we have read in the introduction to the Companion of Youth: "You are very dear to me. (...) There are writers better and more learned than I, but it would be difficult to find one who has a greater love for you in Jesus Christ, or a greater desire for your true happiness".³³

"Celibacy... is a *state of love*",³⁴ which makes us "signs and bearers of the love of God for young people".³⁵ To love in an evangelical and educative manner, with greater freedom and efficacy, the vows are made. It is already accepted that chastity cannot be separated from charity. St Francis de Sales puts it with his customary simplicity and elegance: "We know that we have prayed

³² BM XIII, 63.

³³ Don Bosco, *Opere edite* II, p.1886

³⁴ Congregation for Catholic Education: *A Guide to formation in priestly celibacy*.

³⁵ C 2

well and that we are making progress if, when we have finished, our countenance radiates charity and our body chastity".³⁶

We know that pastoral charity, which constitutes the heart of the salesian mission in the field of education, is expressed in a form perceptible to the senses: "Seek to make yourself loved", "Let the young people see that they are loved". Therefore it is not only a matter of closeness and professional approach, but also of friendship, a fatherly and motherly affection which encourages, soothes and very often also supplies what the youngsters are lacking. And all this is directed to their good and not to our own satisfaction, without any self-seeking, without ambiguity or weariness in the inevitable trials of lack of correspondence or of misunderstanding. Anyone with this kind of experience well understands the import of Don Bosco's words: "Whoever devotes his life to the care of destitute youth should certainly strive to enrich himself with every kind of virtue. But the virtue he should especially cultivate is that of chastity".³⁷

In this central area of our educative ministry, we are given a "grace of unity", through which charity gives rise to purity and that delicate relationship which is the best expression of affection.

"The key to salesian chastity", notes Fr Ricceri, "is *salesian charity*".³⁸ The style of salesian charity is deeply influenced by chastity. The latter frees and at the same time expresses, tempers and protects; it gives a unique quality to the love of the pastor and educator.

In the first place it makes him capable of deep and free self-giving. He enjoys seeing each young person grow, and for this purpose he "gives his life" in patient daily accompaniment. He hopes for an appropriate response and welcomes it because he sees in it the sign that the youngster has assimilated what the educator is offering; but if he meets with resistance he is also

³⁶ *Dictionnaire de spiritualité*, under SFdeSales, 1085

³⁷ Constitutions 1875, V, 1

³⁸ Circular Letters to the Salesians (Rome 1966), *Living consecrated chastity at the present day*.

able to wait and provide new opportunities of salvation.

Chastity also inspires a frank and transparent loving-kindness modelled on that of Don Bosco, which made each one feel he was the object of special care, on account of the signs of a love that was made perceptible with never-failing creativity: "a love without the least element of selfish interest",³⁹ untainted and without any suggestion of ambiguity.

This kind of educative love gives rise to the family spirit, the authentic foundation of the salesian house and work.⁴⁰ Charity keeps the fire burning; but chastity increases its light and warmth. It encourages a ready correspondence on the part of the confreres and youngsters, cultivates a taste for the service of the house, opens the heart to deep and uncomplicated friendships⁴¹ and in the meeting of bright and cheerful hearts becomes a shield and support of perseverance and joy in Salesians and pupils. "Those whom God leads to separate themselves from their near relatives because of their love for him", noted John Henry Newman, "find at their side brothers in the spirit.. Those who remain alone for his love have children raised up for them in the spirit".⁴²

Don Bosco "warns us that his method requires us to love young people not only in a holy and supernatural manner, but also in a perceptible way; and this love must have all the fragrance of family life and the holy expansiveness of loving kindness".⁴³ Fr Ricaldone hesitates⁴⁴ to speak of "charity perceivable by the senses", and he is not the only one; but he recog-

³⁹ *ibid.* p.979

⁴⁰ cf. Fr Peter Ricaldone, *Sanctity is purity*, ASC 69, 1935.

⁴¹ cf. C 83

⁴² J.H.Newman, *Parochial and plain Sermons*, V, 280

⁴³ Fr Peter Ricaldone, *op.cit.* pp.59-60.

⁴⁴ *ibid.* pp.58-59 "I confess, my dear sons, that my hand is trembling as I write these words, even though I try to express them as accurately as possible, because in most cases I am doing no more than repeat the thoughts and expressions of our Father. I tremble because we can all see how dangerous can be the practice of charity with the characteristics with which he wanted it adorned".

nizes that it is in fact the correct way to express the intention of Don Bosco, who wanted the pupil not only to know of the love of the educator, but to feel it as well”.

This aspect is so central that the GC24 deals with it under the heading *Spirituality of the relationship: family spirit*. To free the educative relationship from possible implications of a possessive or manipulative nature, it “must be so filled with charity that it becomes transformed into an expression of authentic relational spirituality. Its fruit and sign is the serene chastity, so dear to Don Bosco, which governs affective balance and oblatinal fidelity”.⁴⁵

Serious situations, which put the salesian vocation at risk, can have their origin in the difficulty of combining generous charity with prudent chastity, apostolic courage with community regularity. The rise and fall of certain projects, begun with a sincere desire of service but ending in progressive failure, prompts each one to feel himself responsible for the joyful perseverance of his confrere, by giving him the warmth of friendship, family joy, and the help of fraternal correction.

A sign of complete self-donation.

“For you I am ready to give my life”, “he who spends his life for the young...” are expressions of Don Bosco for defining the interior intention which guarantees the practice of the preventive system.

The virginity of Jesus, of his Mother, and of Joseph her husband, is the sign of the unconditional handing over of themselves to the Father’s plan for the salvation of mankind. They had no plan of their own or, if they did, they abandoned it in the very act of receiving their special calling. God’s plan they made their own. They had no family but the Family of God; no descendants save those included in God’s Promise..

⁴⁵ GC24, 93

Mary, tota pulchra, is radically surrendered to God. "Not only does she participate in the form of life which consists in self-dedication, but is implanted in it as its soul".⁴⁶ She is its model, its driving force, its thrust and point of attraction.

The "Totus Tuus", repeated by John Paul II, is the interior attitude of Christ, who came to do the Father's will even unto death, and the death of the cross.

In comparison with these parameters we feel ourselves very small and we become ever more aware of our poverty. For this reason Jesus loves us, and with a love of predilection. The essential point is that in response to his eternal love we give him everything, even though it be only a couple of small coins like the widow in the Gospel,⁴⁷ provided that it be all we are and all we have. It is difficult for us to fully understand the religious vows except within this scenario, within which we make our patient way towards the totality of the donation of ourselves to God in the mission.

The vows constitute three signs of that unique and total attitudes by which we abandon ourselves to the Lord's fidelity, and which gives an evangelical character to all the values in our life.

"Don Bosco lived chastity as a love for God and for the young which had no limits".⁴⁸ By the strength and gift of the Spirit they became his family. He spent all his strength in meeting them, gathering them together and educating them. Every moment was made use of to reach them, wherever they were to be found, in prisons and on the streets, through the "Catholic Readings" and the various series of school books. To clothe them and give them a home he built a house, a school and a family, despite his lack of means.

In the spiritual tradition of the West, the phrase *angelic purity* has a significance which deserves to be rediscovered.⁴⁹ It

⁴⁶ V.Balthasar, *Gli stati di vita del cristiano*, Jaca Books 1995, p.248

⁴⁷ Lk 21,2

⁴⁸ C 81

⁴⁹ cf. 34th Congregation of the Company of Jesus. Chastity, n.11 and note 5

refers on the one hand to the depth with which the angels contemplate God and, on the other, the readiness with which they become his messengers of salvation in respect of human beings and become guardians of those he loves, accompanying them in the dramatic vicissitudes of the world. It is a missionary element which must be recovered and made explicit, by analogy, by application to the vocation of the Salesians, who are called to be guardians and educators of the young. Chastity renders them completely available: to stay here or hasten elsewhere; to lead a recollected life of study and education, or go bravely to where there is risk to life itself; to give oneself over to religious obedience (the missionary virtue *par excellence*) as though abandoning oneself into the arms of God's Providence.

The joy expressed by many peoples when missionaries remain with them, even at times of the greatest difficulty, to share and risk everything with them; the enormous reaction which everywhere followed the death of Mother Teresa of Calcutta, are an example to us of the mature fruits of that total dedication to the cause of the Kingdom, of which chastity is a sign.

Anyone looking at Don Bosco or Mother Teresa did not wonder about their life of chastity, but accepted and appreciated it as a fire which gave daily warmth to a life given over completely to others.

During the World Day of Youth at Paris in 1997 two young people were asked what they found fascinating in John Paul II, old and feeble as he was; they replied: "We have come because we realize that he is giving his life for us".

To put one's life totally at the service of others is not a decision made spontaneously. And yet it was not difficult for the better boys of Valdocco (among whom there were many little rascals) to say: "I want to stay with Don Bosco". They remained not only to "stay with him", but also to "do as he did", which inevitably led in turn to "living as he lived".

I am convinced that for those lads Don Bosco's chastity was not seen as a problem, a difficulty or a sacrifice – and surely

such it must have been, even for the Saint of the young – but always as a gift of God, a joy of loving, a fullness of life, a happy disposition, which made it possible for him to be everything for them. For this reason they embraced it willingly, even though it was a demanding virtue, together with everything else that made salesian life wonderful, if exacting as well.

“Almost a requirement for education”.

The expression comes from Fr Albert Caviglia who used it to define the role of purity in the educative process as Don Bosco saw it.

Our chastity, as we have already said, is fruitful in inspiring a paternal love towards the young and in particular towards those who have greater need of it, and in prompting gestures which can make it immediately understood.

It is equally fruitful in respect of objectives and educational content for a proper view of life, of the person, and of the culture which it presupposes, bears witness to, and communicates.

Sexuality certainly includes a whole constellation of specific manifestations: a right sense of the body, relationships, the image of self and others, the control and direction of pleasure, and values like love, friendship and self-donation. But it matures and is expressed in the context of the whole person and never as a separate function. It interacts with every other aspect of personality. Education of the person as a whole in conformity with a certain vision is therefore indispensable.

It shows us the daily influence which the presence and friendship, the words and actions of educators, can have on the young people who are associated with us.. We educate more by what we are than by what we say.

Nowadays a widespread need is felt for identifying adequate ways for helping young people to integrate sexuality into the project of life to which they feel called. This implies delicate and demanding processes which go against the general trend;

and we cannot deceive ourselves that these will mature on their own without enlightenment, aims and effort.

If – as has been rightly stated – “chastity is *freedom*” in loving and being loved, we need to identify the successive stages of a “process of liberation”, which leads progressively to a guidance of the affective resources of the individual, placing them at the service of friendship and love in a stable life project.

To carry out such a process it is necessary, first of all, to focus on the individual with his multiple possibilities and particularly his destiny in God’s sight. This will lead to a clarification of the proper value of the body and of the virtue, nowadays uncommon, called modesty. With it man and woman recognize that they are very much more than their bodies alone and learn to discover the unknown riches of others.

The presence in many of our environments of boys and girls means that we must take very seriously the matter of *coeducation*, in which each person accepts his/her own sexuality as a vocation, and discovers and appreciates the originality of the other without the latter becoming transformed into an *object of desire*, unable to enter into free and mature dialogues in a dynamic relationship within which can develop a serene and mutually beneficial friendship.

Young people of today automatically find themselves in highly charged situations (the media, friendly groups, discotheques, local culture etc.). These require an *abundance* of commitment for education to chastity of the heart, teaching self-restraint and regularity of life, the control and guidance of desires, ongoing reflection on personal options and affective attitudes, and the strong and serene patience to which every young Christian is called in preparation for vocational and matrimonial commitments.

From the outset we help our young people to understand how the individual reaches self-fulfilment through the *experience of love*, a love which is encounter, joyful offering and selfless gift, a willingness to seek the other’s happiness rather than selfishly seek one’s own.

Only a *self-sacrificing* love can be the serene outcome of the sexual urge. The young person must understand that the more the mind dwells on sexuality, the more it remains dissatisfied and torments itself looking for variations which will never satisfy the heart's yearnings. Modern society, even without wanting to, provides us with a thousand and one confirmations of the drama which embroils those who do not follow the right path of love. A love which ignores sacrifice, which has no space for the cross of Christ, risks becoming continually transformed into a possessiveness which enslaves and manipulates.

But to learn to love is to learn to live, to begin to be a Christian. Don Bosco knew this and taught it to his boys. For this reason, to an invitation which admitted of no doubts he added wise advice for watching over one's natural inclinations, for strengthening character, and for developing good intentions.

The GC23 considered this education to love as having a particular influence on the perseverance or falling off in faith, and has asked us to take it up again in a decisive and updated manner through certain processes: an educative atmosphere rich in friendship, integral attention to the person, the human quality of boys and girls associating with each other, education to sexuality, the witness of Salesians and lay people who live their self-donation in an unruffled manner, a catechesis which points towards Christ and forms the conscience, and a spiritual life which emphasizes the transforming force of the Sacraments.⁵⁰

Enriching and complementary nature.

The GC24 sanctioned an arrangement which had been developing for some time, but of which the characteristics were not fully defined nor the consequences for our attitudes and possibilities spelled out. One such characteristic is the comple-

⁵⁰ cf. GC23 195-202

mentary relationship between educators and parents which becomes expressed in dialogue, collaboration, enlightenment and exchange of experiences. "Collaboration with youngsters' families should be intensified, since parents are the primary educators of their sons and daughters. To this end they should be offered in our works an educative climate rich in family values, and in particular an educational team with a harmonious integration of men and women members".⁵¹

Love between husband and wife, just as it gives origin to life, so also constitutes the first and principal force for education in the family. Married couples, protagonists of the Christian family, and the celibate, protagonists of consecrated life, reflect the gift of Christ to his Church in courageous fidelity and total self-giving to a particular mission. Christian marriage and consecrated chastity manifest in two excellent though different ways the same mystery of totality, expressed in the "pact of love" animated by the same Holy Spirit.⁵² "The 'yes' of the matrimonial promise and the 'yes' of the religious vow correspond to what God awaits from man: the unconditional surrender of himself, just as Christ on the cross offered everything, soul and body, for the Father and for the world".⁵³

In the exchange of gifts between vocations and states of life, the fidelity of married couples encourages the consecrated, and the fruitful virginity of the latter supports the former in their journey through life, which is today much more exposed to pitfalls than it was in the past. They bear reciprocal witness to the strength which comes not from flesh and blood but from the Spirit of Christ, who animates his Church. They are united by a single fidelity to the Lord, which opens them to shared experiences.

In daily encounter and collaboration this dialogue becomes for the young communication of values and example of Christian life. "In this context", says the GC24, "one must empha-

⁵¹ GC24 177

⁵² cf. *Familiaris consortio*, n.11

⁵³ Von Balthasar, *op.cit.*, p.206

size the significance and prophetic force of the Salesian: not only does he play his part in education with his male values but, by living his celibacy with joy and fidelity, he bears witness to a particular quality of love and fatherliness".⁵⁴

In educational circles moreover, we are called upon today to demonstrate the educative richness of the complementary male-female relationship. Religious and educators plan, act and revise together. The development of coeducation is a challenge to all of us, and perhaps to us before it is to the youngsters themselves. Fear, distance, timidity, lack of communication must all be overcome. So too must any irresponsibility, superficiality, and blurring of the pastoral objective and of consecrated witness.

The demands of coeducation affect heart, thoughts and deep attitudes, rather than just ways of doing things.

Our contemplation of Jesus and the person of Mary provide us with the parameters for directing and modelling our thoughts, feelings and attitudes. It is clear that human relationships and educative collaboration, founded on and expressed in line with such parameters, add a touch of human quality and Christian witness to the environment and to every educative project.

The GC24 reminds us of this in many passages. To quote just one of them: "The presence of the woman helps the Salesians not only to interpret the feminine ethos, but to live a more complete educative relationship: in fact the man and the woman help the boy and the girl to discover their own identity, to accept as enriching their own specific nature to be offered as a gift in reciprocity".⁵⁵

Virginal charity combined with conjugal love, male and female characteristics, produce with unprecedented fruitfulness an "educative charity", which is able to bring together in a single process human and Christian growth of both young and adults.

⁵⁴ GC24 178

⁵⁵ GC24 53

3. The process towards maturity.

A challenging development.⁵⁶

I cannot pass over in silence a painful experience which is proving a sore trial to some local Churches and religious Institutes in different parts of the world. Cases have been met with, here and there, of priests and religious who have been accused of sexual abuse and molestation of juveniles or defenceless women. The devastation, often irreparable, which such traumas can bring to a young life is well known. This explains the severity of many legal provisions with respect to such deplorable episodes and the severity of courts in dealing with those guilty. Sometimes the facts in question go back twenty or thirty years: nevertheless they have been the object of legal actions, with grave damage to the mission of the Church, sad repercussions on the accused and his community, and also with enormous financial losses.

In addition to their objective gravity, these events acquire further importance because of the related problems which create concern in the Church and in religious institutions. Sometimes there is an anomalous extension of the concept of sexual abuse and molestation to include actions which were no more than imprudent. Examples are known to everyone.

The prominence given by the media to lapses on the part of priests and religious is well known; it is usually because of a legitimate accusation or because of lack of the appropriate behaviour expected of such persons, but not infrequently is due to speculative and defamatory aims regarding the Catholic Church and other Institutions. The whole thing is made worse by the exploitation of the facts with a view to obtaining huge sums of money in damages and costs.

⁵⁶ cf. working document of the General Council: *Di fronte alle accuse di abusi e di molestie sessuali*

It all serves to reawaken in us the echo of the dramatic words written by Don Bosco from Rome on 5 February 1873: "The public often complain about immoral happenings that have occurred contrary to good behaviour, and about some horrible scandals. This is a great evil, it is an absolute disaster: and I pray the Lord to bring about the closure of all our houses rather than disgraceful happenings of the kind take place in them".⁵⁷

The facts before us compel us to intervene by every possible means in defence of juveniles and against the exploitation of women. And I offer my heartfelt thanks to the confreres who are working on these frontiers.

They prompt us also to recall some elements of the preventive system which Don Bosco had suggested or pointed out, and which in some places may to some extent have been neglected.

We need to bring back some norms of pedagogy and prudence – part of salesian tradition – which deserve to be considered again, and which have been brought to the attention of the superiors responsible, from whom I ask (also through these pages) a firm and unflurried collaboration. This is a significant part of that preventive approach which creates environments and habits which will make every human and Christian virtue flourish.

But especially we are urged to understand more deeply, in the light of adequate knowledge and of the Word of God, the path of ongoing growth we are called to follow. Even though it may be the most serious, uncontrolled seeking of satisfaction is not the only manifestation of an immature and repressed sexuality. There is also incapacity for friendship, closure to fraternity, hardness of heart, unreasonable attachment to opinions, objects or personal advantage, and coldness in relationships. We need therefore to maintain our efforts in self-giving and educative competence.

⁵⁷ Fr Peter Ricaldone, *op.cit.* p.62

A course to be followed.

Sexual energy and identity – to which chastity gives joyful recognition, accepts without hesitation and turns to account in the personal life-project – builds personality at the deepest levels, from every standpoint: thought, affections, ability for expression and planning, and relationships. It is marked by life's more significant experiences. The prenatal period, the first months and rapport with the mother, the family atmosphere and relationships, the elements of heredity, precociousness or retardation in education and self-education, traumatic experiences difficult to define, and others which exert an influence on the process of the maturing of affectivity and sexuality.

A serene chastity comes at the end of a long process, for the simple reason that the mature personality is itself the point of arrival of a long journey. It is therefore a matter of accepting – for ourselves and for those entrusted to our educative care – the steps necessary for attaining the maturity which generates joy and peace and becomes translated into witness.

At the same time we are called upon to note that in this decisive field of human growth, the religious life, and still more a Congregation of educators, is put to the test (so to speak) not only in respect of sexual morality but especially as regards its affective value. “The consecrated life must present to today's world examples of chastity lived by men and women who show balance, self-mastery, an enterprising spirit, and psychological and affective maturity”.⁵⁸

The Constitutions alert us to the fact that “chastity is not a conquest made once for all time. It has its moments of peace and moments of trial. It is a gift which because of human weakness demands a daily pledge of fidelity”.⁵⁹

“This means”, writes Fr Ricceri in a fatherly note, “that we must not be surprised or frightened if in moments of depres-

⁵⁸ VC 88

⁵⁹ C 84

sion, inactivity or isolation, we suffer in the flesh or heart. It is an aspect of the cross we have to carry and sometimes, perhaps, a form of participation in Christ's agony in the garden of Gethsemane".⁶⁰ Difficulties in relationships, apostolic frustrations, misunderstandings in community, worries about personal health or that of dear ones, times of stress: all these are promptly registered in our affective sphere, with repercussions which must be placed in the balance and overcome with the help of grace and prayer, of the spirit of mortification, of calm determination, and of a welcoming and supportive community. It may be necessary to undertake patient processes for the recovery of motivations and for changing deeply rooted habits. The different stages of life require further processes for a new understanding of the commitment that was assumed.

Some essential points regarding such a course of action should be kept in mind.

Our ministry must be carried out with a spirit of humility and prudence, freeing it from any form of presumption in whatever might wound chastity: "Remember that I am sending you to catch fish, and that you must not be caught yourselves", said Don Bosco to his followers with a touch of humour, and knowing that they would be working in situations of some risk he advised them to "leave your eyes at home".⁶¹ In addition to more direct references, such words reminded his hearers of the care that must always be taken in the matter of friendships and familiarity in our educative and pastoral settings, involving daily contact with women collaborators and young people of both sexes.

The path towards serene maturity is marked by the cross. With the authority of an eye-witness, Fr Albera wrote: "Do not believe that Don Bosco gave little importance to the *spirit of*

⁶⁰ Fr Ricceri, *op.cit.*, p.974

⁶¹ BM V, 107

mortification; study his life carefully and you will find he made of every circumstance an occasion for a lesson on the practice of mortification”.⁶² That may seem old-fashioned, but it must be linked with the fruitfulness of the cross. It may be that the most dangerous threat from the bourgeois mentality, not only to religious life but even more to the roots of Christianity, is the tacit, practical and systematic rejection of the cross. *Comfort* is considered a value to be aspired after and a *status* to be attained; painkillers have passed from the world of medicine to that of daily life in order to alleviate all suffering. In this way habits and attitudes are generated which demand immediate satisfaction, and the suppression of risks of physical, moral or spiritual suffering, becomes a way of life. What is lawful, and frequently desirable, in the physical arena tends to become transferred to the moral field, setting aside or reducing the cost of the necessary effort which each one is called upon to make in defence of the values, fidelity and authenticity of Christian life. From the very beginning the latter has been found to involve the cross, persecution and martyrdom. Paul’s words to the Christians of Philippi remain fully relevant for us today, immersed as we are at times in an atmosphere lacking moral commitment: “Many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, live as enemies of the cross of Christ”.⁶³

When the discussion was taking place on the motto to be inserted in the coat of arms of the Congregation, there were some who proposed *Work and temperance*. It is known that Don Bosco insisted on the binomial, which encouraged members to spend themselves generously but with due proportion. In this way the two parts are not to be considered separate one from the other, but combined to indicate that work is itself to be regulated by temperance, so that it can continue to manifest charity

⁶² Fr Paul Albera, op.cit. p.224

⁶³ Phil 3,18

towards God and neighbour, while avoiding excesses that can lead to stress, burnout and affective vulnerability.

What is needed is a reasonable amount of time for work and time for relaxation, of possibility for activity and for formation, for involvement with people and opportunity for looking into ourselves and the deeper spiritual motivations of our life and work. Exaggerated activism must be overcome as a disorder in life, and our control reestablished over time, our activities and ourselves. For this reason the necessary importance must be given to the annual and monthly retreats, to Sundays, to moments for community and for daily prayer (including meditation!). Personal recollection must find a place again in our daily program. "Isolation is negative, but solitude is something quite different: it can be seen as its contrary. It is like the silence which precedes the spoken word, and renders it fruitful".⁶⁴

The most decisive helps, however, come from the grace of the Lord, which in the *sacraments* and in love of Mary Help of Christians has elements which our tradition has always recognized as being most effective.

The Eucharist, which nourishes us with the Body and Blood of Christ, continually renews our awareness of being his members, gives us the strength to live as Christians, avoiding anything contrary to this name.

Daily listening to the Word of God puts in context and annuls the false arguments with which we are tempted to justify possible yielding or giving in to less positive practices.

Love of Mary and the contemplation of her unparalleled way of life keep chaste and lofty the intentions of the heart, and inspire a greater docility to the movements of grace.

Fr Paul Albera emphasized the importance of confidence in a spiritual director when he recommended the "opening of

⁶⁴ Fr Luigi Ricceri, *op.cit.*, p.976

both doors of one's conscience to the confessor".⁶⁵ It is an insistence which is regaining strength. To keep the conscience sensitive and vigilant, able to recognize good and evil from afar, and to defend one's personal spiritual freedom, it helps to submit one's own life to the eyes of one's brethren and to know how to share and evaluate the experiences which the Lord places in our path.

Vocational discernment and initial formation.

The process we have spoken of requires a basic starting-point which is a sign of the call to salesian life and the interiorized assimilation of the attitudes, habits and practices consistent with chastity. When we speak therefore of the progress towards maturity we cannot omit a reference to vocational discernment and initial formation. Our documents already provide charismatic criteria for such discernment and pedagogical options for the follow-up of candidates. There is no need to repeat them here, but nevertheless it may be desirable to recall some points of particular relevance.

Experience, reflection and ecclesial guidelines of recent years have placed particular emphasis on basic affective and sexual maturity as a prior condition for admission to religious vows and the ordained ministry, and as an indispensable element for a serene and mature vocational experience.⁶⁶

A specific formation to affectivity, which integrates the human with the more particularly spiritual aspect, is especially necessary in the present context, which is at the same time one of great openness and of continual exposure to various stimuli. "An education for sexuality", says *Pastores dabō vobis*, "becomes more difficult but also more urgent. It should be truly and fully personal and therefore should present chastity in a manner

⁶⁵ Fr Paul Albera, op.cit., p.222

⁶⁶ cf. *Pastores dabō vobis* (PDV) and *Potissimum institutioni* (PI)

that shows appreciation and love for it as a virtue that develops a person's authentic maturity and makes him or her capable of respecting and fostering the 'nuptial meaning' of the body".⁶⁷

Expressing this in our own context for the period opening ahead of us, the GC24 asks that "particular attention be given to the affective maturity required for collaboration with the lay people and with the world of women",⁶⁸ and that from the time of their first formation "confreres should be helped to develop a serious and mature attitude with regard to the opposite sex".⁶⁹

It is a matter of bringing candidates to the point at which they can make a free and mature decision, based on self-knowledge and the vocational project to which they are called; of ensuring their suitability "thanks to which the consecrated persons love their vocation, and love in line with their vocation".⁷⁰

In the process of discernment and at times of admission the affective and sexual area must be given particular attention, and evaluated against the overall background of the person and his history, in relation to the characteristics of the salesian vocation.

Among the points to be considered and made clear before the novitiate, on the basis of adequate knowledge and prudent evaluation, is the *healthy affective condition, and especially balanced sexuality*. The decree *Perfectae Caritatis* of Vatican II, taken up again by *Potissimum Institutioni*, requires that candidates for the profession of chastity should not embrace this state, nor be admitted to it, except after a sufficient period of trial and after they have reached a suitable *psychological and affective maturity*.⁷¹

Initial discernment or the course of formation may bring to light serious inconsistencies and experiences of life which indicate the need for at least extreme prudence. Art.82 of the Constitutions recalls Don Bosco's words: "Anyone who has not a

⁶⁷ PDV 44

⁶⁸ GC24 147

⁶⁹ GC24 178

⁷⁰ VFC 37

⁷¹ PC 12; PI 13

well-grounded hope of being able, with divine help, to preserve the virtue of chastity in word, in deed and in thought, should not make profession in this Society, for he would often find himself in danger". It is a directive which obliges us to ensure that discernment and admissions are made with great seriousness.

There are personalities which from the outset manifest elements that give rise to serious concern: the salesian life is not for them.⁷² The "well-grounded hope", emphasized in the words of Don Bosco, cannot coexist with situations which have deeply marked a person, nor with inclinations which only with great difficulty can be harmonized with the characteristics of the salesian vocation and with the demands of the mission of an educator and pastor, nor with an earlier life gravely compromised.

We are aware of such situations and tendencies; I have in mind, for example, premature relationships; sexual experiences, problems of a homosexual kind, situations of violence, and the like. These are frequently discussed with an abundance of anthropological, pedagogical and moral data. The variety of subjects, the different degrees of incidence of the situations, and the different extents to which the above-named tendencies may appear, advise against snap judgements so as not to deal unjustly with the persons concerned, and not be restricted solely to the fact of acceptance or not. But it is well to know that we have particular criteria of a Congregation of educators expressed in our documents and that they can be further specified in particular cases.

It is not always easy to make discernments and evaluations with delicacy and prudence. It is therefore necessary to have recourse to serious professional help, to assist us in every way that science makes available in this fundamental field of human maturity.

In any case we can never close our eyes to doubtful situations. They must be clarified before the persons concerned can

⁷² cf. *Criteria and norms*, 46-49

be allowed to make commitments which seriously involve the individual and the Congregation. The formation guide must be able to avoid misleading or being misled about the soundness of a candidate.⁷³

Certain cases of leaving religious life after many years, often the result of imprudent admissions, and other painful situations (ambiguity of life, permanent and inexplicable dissatisfaction, unlawful compensations) urge us to be vigilant in our discernment.

Having emphasized the attention that must be given to the affective and sexual dimension and underlined the need for a basic attitude of "salesian" chastity, it must be remembered that this calls for a *mental, moral, spiritual and ascetical formation*, if we want it to lead to the formation of individuals who are mature and joyful. This is therefore a point which must be faced in an open and direct way.

Adequate knowledge in real terms of sexuality in its various aspects, implications and realizations is nowadays necessary, without neglecting information on facts and tendencies present in our culture. This is the sense in which should be approached the problem of sexual abuse and molestation, and its implications of a civil, ecclesial and vocational implications. The aspect of justice towards those who have suffered is important, as is the cultivation of a solicitous pastoral concern for both the victim and the guilty person.

At the same time it will be necessary to present celibacy and chastity for the Kingdom in a positive way, helping others to assume it as a good thing even from a human point of view, with the freedom which "expresses itself in convinced and heartfelt obedience to the truth of one's own being, to the meaning of one's own existence".⁷⁴ The vision offered, based always on the

⁷³ cf. *Directives on the preparation of educators in seminaries*, 57

⁷⁴ PDV 44

Word of God and characterized by realism, will indicate criteria and parameters for self-evaluation which the subject can apply to himself without either anxiety or illusions.

It is in this perspective that the *demand* for spiritual vigilance, prudence and sacrifice should be harmoniously placed, without either hairsplitting or naiveté, and the reminder of the need for asceticism and discipline of life, and for the indispensable and continuous effort to master and integrate sexual impulses.

Sincerity and openness in spiritual dialogue (*spiritual direction*) and the frequent use of the sacrament of reconciliation, human and community relationships of serene friendship and brotherhood, the sense of the mission and personal love for Jesus Christ *sustain* a journey of fidelity which is not without its temptations.

Formation to consecrated chastity is a challenge and a duty for all who are involved in any way in the vocational process. And in some contexts it can include difficulties stemming from the cultural background. In this sense, special attention must be given to the initial preparation of candidates and to their ongoing formation, to pedagogical renewal and to unity of criteria throughout the whole formative process.

The teaching of Don Bosco and the experience of the Congregation help us to combine educative trust with its demands, pedagogical sensitivity with charismatic responsibility.

The role of the community.

What we have said may give rise to the impression that chastity is concerned exclusively with the sphere of the individual. That would be like accepting the insistent insinuation of today's culture which relegates certain aspects of behaviour to the unassailable "private" domain, to the individual conscience alone.

It is true that in this area, as in the whole of the vocational process, each one of us bears a responsibility which is unique

and cannot be transferred, but nevertheless the community too has a role which is far from secondary.

Each one is called personally to be part of the community in a mature way and to be ready to share his talents and experiences with his brothers. The community, on the other hand, creates a climate, supports, encourages and sustains. The quality of our witness to chastity is bound up with the quality of our being and building community, of our living and working together. We can set out some reasons for this interdependence.

In the community, say the Constitutions, "we find a response to the deep aspirations of the heart",⁷⁵ i.e. to the need to love and be loved. In the giving and exchange of affection we become aware of our value as persons and express the deepest capacities of our being. The community is our family. In tranquil communication and adult friendship our capacity for donation grows and is made manifest, and we form effective collaborative relationships. The stronger and more sincere the way we live together, so much the more will our sense of chastity (even as regards its sense of renunciation) invigorate our need for human love, and give credibility to our testimony that the love of God fills all our existence. It then becomes evident, especially to the young and outsiders living alongside us, that the virginity we profess is the choice of an authentic love, which is sincere, rich in humanity and open to all. Brotherly love certainly anticipates, offsets, moderates and reorders in good time any eventual affective frailty. Community disintegration on the other hand, manifested in coldness, flight towards external things, or apostolic individualism, is an enticement towards evasions and alternative satisfactions.

A second reason for the strict linkage between personal responsibility and community experience is connected with our

mission as educators. Community life is a school and a gymnasium. Educative communication is effective if it is realized through a rapport which is appropriate and sincere, able to transmit valid experiences and view of life. Community sharing, the ability and willingness to integrate and achieve mutual fulfilment provide an acid test for our ability to behave in a balanced and efficacious manner also when dealing with young people. It may be that behind many community tensions is hidden an inability to discuss with others, the abandonment of efforts to become integrated in the mission, obstinacy in doing our own thing despite anything to the contrary. Weakness in our community relationships has negative repercussions on the effectiveness of our presence among young people who can become the object of our anger and tensions. An experience of tranquil community life becomes educative in itself, especially in the realms of love, friendship and affectivity, to which young people are particularly sensitive.

Finally, the community guides and supports us in our pilgrimage of fidelity, providing us with a human space for inter-relationships, occasions, events and contacts which make us feel fulfilled at a human level, and positively involved in society and the world. A well integrated community imparts strength and energy to each of its members, giving him a further motive for living his particular calling, sustaining him in moments of difficulty, providing him with space for working through difficult situations, and times of crisis and confusion. The friendly, discreet and close presence of confreres is a support for those living through the tensions of youth, the crises of maturity, and the worries of sickness and old age.

The community therefore has a delicate task to fulfil; to *assist* and to *discern*. *Assistance* in the salesian sense means foreseeing, promptly perceiving the signs of a certain state of mind or dissatisfaction, saying a fraternal word to ward off im-

pending ambiguities or risks, giving light and encouragement to those who may have need of it.

Discernment means resolving unacceptable situations with fraternal respect but equally with firmness and in good time. This is a task of the superior, but not his alone. The witness of each one has its effect on the whole community and hence is part of it. The community should feel that it has the duty of safeguarding such witness. We are reminded of this by our religious commitment and, from certain standpoints, also by civil law.

Conclusion: The force of a prophecy.

The Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consecrata* emphasizes the fact that religious “while they seek holiness for themselves, propose – so to speak – a spiritual ‘therapy’ for humanity, because they reject the idolatry of anything created and in a certain way they make visible the living God”.⁷⁶

Urs Von Balthasar, taking up an expression of Nietzsche, writes: “The most common-sense phrase I have ever heard is: ‘In true love the soul enfolds the body’”, or in other words: “The irradiation of the body through the purity of the soul is the perfection of chastity”.⁷⁷ Shaped by Baptism through the gift of chastity, man assumes his bodily nature in grace, to make of it a sign not of dominion, nor of mere pleasure, nor of fine or aesthetic physique, but of a life given unconditionally to God and neighbour.

We are aware that cold logical reasoning about chastity is not enough. Don Bosco has taught us to ‘radiate’ it: “Education to purity takes place fundamentally through its reflection in the educators”.⁷⁸

Nor can one speak of salesian chastity separate from the climate in which it is generated and expressed. In that experience

⁷⁶ VC 87

⁷⁷ Quoted by Von Balthasar, op.cit. p.86

⁷⁸ P.Braido in *Il sistema preventivo di Don Bosco*, PAS-Verlag 1964, p.292

of the Holy Spirit, Jesus in the Eucharist nourished the life of educators and young people in making them Christians; he inflamed their souls with the fire of charity and gave to their presence and actions the capacity for communicating grace. In this way he created a school of spirituality which in every part of the world continues to produce fruits of apostolic and educative holiness. Its sign is that joy in which Don Bosco saw the salesian version of the "good news" of the Gospel. Salesian chastity, as Fr Luigi Ricceri pointed out, "is habitually lived in joy and tranquility, with a youthful ardour and freshness of spirit, with unclouded eyes, with an invincible confidence in life, and with the perception of the hidden presence of God".⁷⁹

Today's celebration of the Immaculate Conception is full of reminders of the environment which is always a source of inspiration to us. Under Our Lady's solicitous gaze and the fascination of her virginal motherhood was born and grew the group of young people who were to be the future pillars of the Salesian Congregation, the sodality of Mary Immaculate. The loving kindness of Don Bosco had aroused in them the desire for total consecration.

May she also help us to mature in love and guide our young people towards an effective desire for holiness.

With my best wishes for a New Year enriched with the grace of our Father, to whom we turn with the love of sons⁸⁰ on the eve of the third millennium.


 A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Juan Ricceri". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "J" that extends downwards and to the left, forming a large loop.

⁷⁹ Fr Luigi Ricceri, *op.cit.*, p.984

⁸⁰ cf. *Strenna* 1999

2.1 LAY PEOPLE IN THE SALESIAN FAMILY AND CAPITULAR RENEWAL

Fr Antonio MARTINELLI

Councillor for the Salesian Family

Introduction

There is nothing unusual nowadays in speaking of the laity in the salesian charism and activity. The GC24 gathered together the experience of the whole Congregation and summarized the information under four headings: communion, sharing, spirit and mission of Don Bosco.

The Synod of Bishops, which studied the various modes of existence and realization of the Church, helped in the reflections of the Chapter which also kept in mind the pontifical teaching of *Christifideles Laici* and other elements which had emerged in the post-Vatican II period.

Here we shall examine the GC24 to reflect on the theme of the Laity, i.e. those lay people who form a living and recognized part of the Salesian Family. Our considerations will be concerned with the SDB community, and in particular those confreres who have specific obligations in respect of groups of the Family. Indirectly what we say will be of interest to the lay groups themselves, but our starting point will be the Constitutions and General Regulations.

The visits I have been making in the various Regions and the collaborators in the Department have led me to choose this theme and its contents.

It will be the duty of the Provincial and his Council, with

the help of Delegates, assistants and salesian animators in the different Groups, to bring to the knowledge of communities and confreres the requirements and guidelines gathered in this present article.

Of whom are we speaking?

To remove any ambiguity, I list the lay groups of the Salesian Family by name (the reference is to the groups already recognized; there are many others made up of lay people, awaiting official recognition by the Rector Major):

- the members of the Association of Salesian Cooperators (even though they may have priests in their ranks);
- the associates of the World Confederation of the Don Bosco Past-pupils (here I am not speaking of two particular categories: Past-pupils who are priests, and the Past-pupils of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, since with these two groups the communities and confreres have no specific responsibility assigned by the text of the Constitutions and Regulations);
- the members of the Association of Mary Help of Christians;
- the members of the 'Damas Salesianas' (Salesian Ladies);
- the Volunteers of Don Bosco;
- the Volunteers with Don Bosco;
- the Daughters of the Queenship of Mary Immaculate.

The last three groups are lay persons with secular consecration, or consecrated secularity; and the final group have some original characteristics in their life and organization as a secular Institute.

These different situations in the ecclesial panorama have practical and effective consequences as regards animation.

A first conclusion can therefore be drawn at once: Salesians who work in the various groups with the title of **delegate** (as is

the case with the Cooperators and Past-pupils), or with the title of ecclesiastical **assistant** (as with the two groups of Volunteers), or with the title of **animator** (with the Salesian Ladies and the Association of Mary Help of Christians), or with the title of **chaplain** (as with the Daughters of the Queenship of Mary Immaculate, with the Past-pupils of the FMA, etc.), must be well aware of the role to which they have been assigned.

The Salesians must not operate in a manner which is identical for all the groups. Each group deserves its own particular style of animation, linked with the originality and form of realization of the charism of Don Bosco.

This is the first commitment of the salesian community and of those involved, and it must be taken from the texts which regulate the life and action of the Groups. We cannot invent a presence or animation not contemplated in the official texts. That would only create confusion and disharmony.

All this becomes possible only if the history and organization of the group is well known.

A first impression after reading the GC24

Some Salesians, prompted perhaps by remarks of the Salesian Family, have shown a sense of surprise. It has seemed to them that the Salesian Family was not given sufficient consideration in the GC24, as though what it said about the laity had omitted a more explicit and practical reference to the lay members of the Family.

It must be said in the first place that here we are talking about an 'impression'. The whole discussion about the laity must be applied primarily to the laity of the Salesian Family.

In the index to the Acts you have only to look up the word "Laity" (and associated words like "Salesian Family", "Cooperators", "Past-pupils", "Don Bosco Volunteers") to become aware of the richness of the contents which emerge.

There are three capitular statements that I wish to recall to the salesian communities and those involved with the various groups. They indicate an obligation on the part of the Congregation and call for appropriate organization to make them effective. They are:

- the salesian community fosters its own qualitative consistency to be able to accompany the Salesian Family (GC24, 174): the conditioning effect of the salesian community on the development of the Family and the groups is evident;
- the salesian community must make concrete vocational suggestions concerning membership of one of the groups of the Salesian Family (GC24, 124): this is a concrete guideline, and in connection with it the Salesian cannot hide behind the shield of each one's personal freedom;
- in choosing persons to be entrusted with responsibility preference is to be given, when possible, to members of the Salesian Family (GC24, 180): the statement has a single condition which cannot be neglected, i.e. the qualification of members of the Salesian Family. In the case of equality of conditions with other lay people, the choice should without any doubt be in favour of a member of the Family.

The declarations are clear enough, but they must be given effect.

But there is another point to notice and there is a certain innovation about it. The salesian community in its new mode of operation is surrounded by many lay people. They are numerous in both quantity and quality: look up for instance, in the Acts of the General Chapter, the heading "Laity" and the subheading "variety and levels with respect to the laity".

In recent General Chapters the Congregation has shown an ever greater awareness of its mission and of its convergence on the laity, starting from the Salesian Family: cf. GC24, 17, 19, 253, 287. This requires a new style of sharing between SDBs and Laity.

On this situation too the reference to the Salesian Family is evident. The Salesian Family is a structure of sharing: GC24, 48; and the consulting group of the Salesian Family in each province is an instrument for sharing: GC24, 125.

Hence one of the basic tasks is the formation of lay people.

Can this be done by the SDB community alone?

From whom can help be sought in this formation?

Primarily from the already formed laity of the Salesian Family!

We could continue with the analysis of the GC24 and it would remind us of many elements referring to the Family. This lengthy recourse to the Acts has been necessary to clear the ground of impressions which are not always objective. But with this starting point clarified we must now take steps to give effect to the decisions of the General Chapter.

Facilitating the process of renewal of the lay members of the Salesian Family

A somewhat rapid and general analysis of the reports to the General Council of the work of the provincial chapters has prompted this present paragraph: facilitating the process of renewal: in what way?

- In the first place, there are two new perspectives we must adopt, and from which we must start for the process of renewal of both the salesian community and of the groups of the Family. I am speaking of convictions expressed more than once by the GC24:
- the salesian charism is not limited to the salesian community; it extends beyond the context of the religious community, in so far as many others share with us Don Bosco's spirit and mission;

- this sharing, moreover, posits the foundation and justification for the sharing of responsibility by other groups, to the extent that they are complementary as regards the spirit and mission of Don Bosco

Thinking of the lay members of the Salesian Family, I suggest to the communities and the confreres responsible for the animation of the groups some more specific commitments linked with the renewal of our presence among them.

Here are two lines of action which I commend to the Provinces.

1. *HELP THE LAITY TO BE LAITY.*

Help lay groups to be lay, both as regards the internal organization of the group and its external interventions.

By **internal organization**, I mean:

- respect for the regulations of each group is a duty of the members and of the salesian animator;
- make directive groups function with the responsibility that pertains to them in the choices of life and activity of each group. To have leaders who do not lead makes no sense. To have leaders who await the rubber stamp of the Salesian before every move means that they are not fulfilling their role. This implies the making of shrewd and prudent decisions by the president or leader of the group and by the others who make up the board of councillors. The animator's job is just that, to animate or enliven, to inject enthusiasm, and this he must know how to do; but he must not superimpose himself on the organization and activities of the laity, nor condition them as a Salesian. From many aspects, in fact, our presence and work has to be of a secondary nature, but this should not be thought of as lessening its importance and value – quite the contrary. To manage things in such a way that he does not become indispensable is the mark of the true educator!

- the giving of concrete and not merely theoretical recognition to the autonomy of the different groups.

The central point of the matter is precisely the **autonomy** of the group, and from the very fact of being central it is linked with many other aspects, as for example:

- each group must be recognized by the salesian community, in its numerical and qualitative consistency, by the provision of that help which the Salesian Constitutions and Regulations entrust to us religious;
- each group should not only ask to be autonomous by word and desire, but must then be able to take up the animation which will ensure its development and linkage with the other groups of the Family.

The question of autonomy merits a further word.

Not infrequently a vicious circle develops in the experience of the salesian community and the confrere in charge of a group. Autonomy is not given, it is said, because the laity are not adequately prepared. They are not prepared to take responsibility, and so they cannot live and work with autonomy. That is the vicious circle – and it must be broken!

The master path for overcoming the difficulty is that of the **formation** of our lay people of the Family. From the provincial chapters one does not see any specific and express commitment corresponding to this primary requirement indicated by the GC24.

In the regional meetings of the Salesian Family, many confreres have expressed the need for smaller numbers, but of being able to count on persons who are better prepared.

In the area of formation, the Salesian, the community and the individual confrere, cannot dodge the issue, cannot hide from it, cannot be satisfied with small adjustments which do not facilitate renewal of the group.

I will not take the individual groups one by one. Each community, provincial and local, must make its own verification to see whether formation has in the past been at the centre of the animation and development of the groups of the Family.

Remaining still in the context of autonomy, I want to emphasize the other aspect, which is **communion**. Communion too has its demands, which are expressed in the texts of the various groups.

Never autonomy without communion! Never communion without autonomy!

The two requirements are not in contradiction, and even less are they opposed to each other. In fact the opposite is the case. Autonomy grows where communion is alive. Communion is expressed where there is room for autonomy. Autonomy is an organizational reality. Communion is a spiritual soul. They must always be found together.

I have expressed the three fundamental terms which qualify the internal organization of groups of the Salesian Family: autonomy, formation and communion.

In some cases one gets the impression that the Salesians are seeking a situation of dependence on lay groups; in other cases it seems that the lay groups can find it convenient to depend on the salesian community or on the Salesian who is assigned to the group.

External organization includes amongst other things the **relationships**:

- with the community of the Salesians;
- with the Salesian Family as a whole, to present a common image of Don Bosco;
- with the educative community of the salesian work in its various manifestations, to participate actively in the salesian mission and projects;

- with pastoral Councils present in the territory in which groups of the Salesian Family live and work;
- with the local Church, in which must be expressed in the first place availability for collaboration in salvation plans, particularly those directed to the young and the working classes; and not only availability, but also the intention to make interventions in harmony with the particular charism;
- with civil agencies in the area, for the promoting of Don Bosco's spirit and the growth of the salesian movement.

Many other aspects could be mentioned. This reminder has been put together in view of the commitment of the salesian community and of those in charge of the different groups. The tasks entrusted to them as communities and individual confreres are important and significant. And to these aspects greater attention must be given. Let us recall them briefly:

- open the groups to interests which extend beyond those linked only with the life of the group itself;
- link lay groups with each other, and all of them with the Salesian Family;
- urge the making of contacts with ecclesial and civil groups working in the same zone and locality, and for the same categories of people;
- help in drawing up a program before becoming involved in activity.

As in the preceding point concerning internal organization I used three terms (autonomy, formation, communion), so here the following essential references can be useful reminders: **openness** to the reality of the local civil and ecclesiastical environment; **cultural sensitivity** towards the young and people in general, approached directly and systematically so as to get to know their situations and provide an adequate response; a **planning process** open to the real possibilities of the group and the environment.

2. HELP THE LAITY TO BE SALESIAN LAITY

This is the more difficult, but also the more necessary aspect. It covers many kinds of intervention, linked around three main elements in the life of a group: identity, mission and spirituality.

The Salesian Family is born of the common charism lived in the originality of the different groups. This originality is called **identity**. To help the laity to be *salesian* laity requires from the community and from the animator the ability to arouse a deep sense of *membership* of Don Bosco's Family. This is the result of a clear presentation of the life of the individual group and of the Salesian Family as a whole.

Hence those *confusions* must be overcome which level all the realities down to a single one, removing the specific characteristics from each. On the other hand, the particular elements of each one should be pointed out when necessary because they serve to give a better definition of the whole. In our particular case, the true countenance of Don Bosco results from the richness of the charism. We are not all called upon to do the same thing. There is a complementary element involved which must be recognized and given due value.

In Don Bosco's Family there are religious and laity, consecrated lay people in the world, men and women, married and single persons, widows and their families, and priests; and it all makes not only for diversity but for richness too. Each group has its significance and value. To discover it is to live it and manifest it. The different groups of the Salesian Family do not represent a hierarchy or a division. They are a *gift* of the Spirit. They do not enter into competition with each other but live and work in combination.

Reference to the family AS A WHOLE will help us to get away from the idea of genericism and realize the identity. Highlighting the characteristics of the GROUP will help the relation-

ship of *exchange* of gifts which should be evident among all the components of the Family.

These reflections are to be applied to all the groups listed in the paragraph **“Of whom are we speaking?”** If the community and confreres are not first of all clear in their own minds about the identity of the group and groups, they run the risk of creating tensions and difficulties. The clarity they achieve, therefore, they must communicate to the members of the groups concerned.

This step concerning identity is indispensable for the further progress in educative and pastoral commitment of all the groups.

To exist, to live and to work as Salesians is not just an intellectual matter, a simple question of knowledge. It takes us back to a practical understanding of the mission that must be fulfilled.

From identity to mission.

We have to ask ourselves, and put the same question to others when we meet groups of the Salesian Family:

- in overall pastoral work, in what apostolic setting should each group be placed?
- with what apostolic methodology is it presented to the others?
- what project or program does it intend to realize in the course of a year?
- what characteristics does it emphasize through its presence and activity?

All members of the Salesian Family live and work in the light of *da mihi animas*, but each group does so in a different way.

There is an evident linkage between these realities: autonomy, identity and mission. Why then do the communities hesitate to involve the groups of the Family in the local mission? Apart from what we have said about autonomy, here something more must be said about identity.

In the practical field of apostolic work the identity resembles the professional approach or qualification.. I do not ask an engineer to take part in a surgical operation; and vice versa I do not ask a surgeon to intervene in the building of a block of flats. Each one has his own sphere of work! But he has to know it and want to work in it, otherwise nothing practical will result.

The community and the individual confreres have a role to play in this perspective which is by no means secondary. To help the members of the Groups to a deeper understanding along the lines of the preceding reflections is indispensable. We Salesians cannot and must not ask from others what they cannot and must not give. And in general the others must not seek for what lies beyond the particular originality and qualification of Family. Apostolic harmony gives rise to communion!

A third element that enters into the salesian approach to be fostered with the laity is **salesian spirituality**. The renewal indicated for the Congregation by the GC24 has significant consequences also for the Salesian Family, particularly as regards spirituality. In the Acts of the Chapter, the second part, dedicated to *Salesians and laity, memories and prophecy*, deals with spirituality in chapter 3 (nn. 87-105).

Many are the indications emerging from the text, but it is not to our purpose at the moment to recall all the fundamental elements, but we need to direct our attention to what is said in note 3 to n.88 of the Acts. Let me quote first the text to which the note refers, and then the note itself, which will give me the opportunity of drawing a very simple conclusion, but one which is significant.

The text reads as follows:

"One grasps at once the richness of the salesian spirit when, in terms of practical life, it becomes a spirituality. Of the latter we must now look again at some of the principal characteristics".

And here is note 3:

"We find authoritative interpretations in our main texts: cf. the Constitutions which are our principal point of reference. Cf. also the FMA Constitutions, the Regulations of Apostolic Life of the Cooperators, the Common Identity Card of the Salesian Family, and the more recent General Chapters. Cf. also Fr Egidio Viganò to the Salesian University (UPS, Rome 1996, p.162-163)".

What do we deduce from these words?

Salesian spirituality is certainly a matter of interest in our Family, though it may be rather less an object of reflection on the part of the individual groups, and in particular the lay groups. Often traditional expressions are repeated without going into them at any depth. It is easy to be satisfied with a common denominator, so to speak, without looking for the characteristics which must nevertheless be alive in each group. As an example we may say that we are all interested in the spirituality of the preventive system, but it is not equally clear in what this consists in the various groups. There are common elements certainly, but there are other elements which are specific and linked with the different experiences of the individual groups.

In the regional meetings that have been held with those responsible at provincial level for the Salesian Family, we have found how difficult it is to express the spiritual characteristics of each group. We do not have enough experience in reflection and research of this kind. But if the salesian community and the individual Salesian do not take the initiative in making the necessary study of the theme of spirituality, it will be difficult for the initiative to start from the lay groups.

I would like to conclude by calling attention to some points about the GC24.

It has many aspects which are new.

It concerns directly the salesian community.

Reflections on the Salesian Family have not been neglected.

By renewing our animation, we shall help the others to enter into the new context of the relationship of communion and sharing in the spirit and mission of Don Bosco.

Conclusion

Among its future agenda the Department has a meeting with lay representatives of the groups of the Salesian Family; it will take place either during the jubilee year or immediately afterwards.

When we have given further thought to the content and methodology, the Provinces will be asked to collaborate so that we may succeed in giving a more efficacious expression to the countenance of Don Bosco in its lay dimension.

2.2 THE FORMATION CENTRES FOR CATECHISTS IN MISSION TERRITORIES

Fr Luciano ODORICO

Councillor General for the Missions

In the preceding n.365 of the Acts of the General Council I presented a reflection on *The formation of catechists in mission territories*. The purpose of the present article is to emphasize the organization of the Centres of formation, especially in mission territories. I will indicate the more common and universal aspects, so as to reflect the diversity and substantial unity of these Centres in all the mission territories entrusted to the Salesian Congregation.

The joy and commitment of proclaiming the Gospel to all nations has always found in the Church the generous response of persons ready to offer their life for the cause of the Kingdom, whether they be missionary priests, religious or laity.

The Encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* (RM), taking up again the Conciliar Decree *Ad gentes* (AG), acclaims the praiseworthy ranks of those fully fledged catechists in the front rank in mission territories who, "imbued with the apostolic spirit, labour much to make an outstanding and altogether necessary contribution to the spreading of the Faith and of the Church".¹

The Encyclical goes on to invoke the commitment of the Church to ensure a *more careful doctrinal and pedagogical training, continuing spiritual and apostolic renewal*, and the need "to make efforts to establish and support schools for catechists".²

The encouragement of *Redemptoris Missio* is certainly not

¹ AG 17

² RM 73

an innovation, but a definite and authoritative point repeatedly stressed in earlier Documents.³

The peoples not yet evangelized have always been the special object of the solicitude and apostolic drive of Don Bosco. "*Through our missionary activity we carry out a patient work of evangelization by founding the Church within a group of people*".⁴ We thank the Lord of the harvest for the foundation of Churches, missionary vicariates and missionary dioceses still being entrusted to the Salesians.

The options programmed by the Missions Department have endorsed the commitment to the praxis and formation of missionary confreres, and in particular that of catechists in the missions, by encouraging and supporting this indispensable sector of first evangelization.⁵

Catechesis is certainly a difficult task because of the living witness it demands on the part of the catechist, not only on account of the proclamation he has to make but also of his ability for "affecting and as it were upsetting, through the power of the Gospel, mankind's criteria of judgement, determining values, points of interest, lines of thought, sources of inspiration and models of life, which are in contrast with the Word of God and the plan of salvation".⁶

Many missions, with the approval of the Episcopal Conferences, have improved the schools for catechists. According to the statistics of the GC24 (Rome 1996), the Catechetical Centres operating in mission territories of the Congregation are 23 out of a total of 34, i.e. excluding the areas of ancient Christianity. The confreres involved full-time in such structures are few in number, some work in them part-time, and there are many lay persons are involved.

³ cf. the Basic Document (n.189), the General Catechetical Directory (n.126), Apostolic Exhortations *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (n.73) and *Catechesi Tradendae* (n.71)

⁴ C 30

⁵ cf. AGC 358 (Supplement)

⁶ EN 19

On the basis of **statutes and programs**, we note with pleasure a large variety in the form of programs, in level (parochial, diocesan, interdiocesan) and in content; sometimes they are integrated with educational programs for development and for the advancement of women. This is a positive sign of their specific siting in response to ecclesial needs and to the concrete logistical possibilities where we are called to work.

The **length of time** these Centres are in operation varies according to the possibilities of the dioceses and Christian communities, the preparation of formation guides and animators for the Centre, and the indispensable logistic equipment. The length of the formation period is in general between two and three years. There are also revision or updating sessions of three months a year, for catechists who can be freed or who adopt this rhythm of ongoing formation.⁷

1. *The formation of catechists at parochial level*, which we can call the *1st level*, should cover:

- The identity of the catechist, his person as an educator and witness, relationships with his family, the community and those he is working for, his spirituality and human qualities, his need for initial and ongoing formation, his specific place in the prophetic activity of the Church.
- The essential role of catechesis in the praxis of evangelization: teaching, commitment to Christian life, "scrutinies" of a catechumenal kind in the important phases of the liturgical year or in human growth and experience of Christian life (retreats, verifications, practical training, admission to further stages, etc.). In this connection some documents insist on the importance of a change of mentality on those being instructed for an ongoing catechesis and not one

⁷ A synthetic presentation of these Centres of Formation is given in the Document *Guide for Catechists* of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples (CEP), EDB 1994, n.30.18

merely functional for the reception of the sacraments. If the catechesis is embodied, it becomes a source of enlightenment for every phase and every age of life.

- A direct knowledge of the *books* essential to his work: the Bible, the contents of the Catechism and the more important Documents of the Church immediately associated with his work, the necessary lines of methodology for the different developing sectors, and the essential functional and updated teaching material.

2. The 2nd and 3rd levels, where they exist, include more extensive pastoral applications, usually at diocesan and/or inter-diocesan level.

- The programs provide follow-up formation courses on a concentric circles plan for the deeper study of matters of interest and of increasingly more specific items, at the level of intellectual formation and of direct experience; this is sometimes difficult for the concrete insertion of the catechists even of the parishes adjacent to the Centre.
- In general the courses include the areas common to every *ratio studiorum*: biblical, dogmatic, sacramental, liturgical, moral and pastoral formation, and training in methodology.
- A common element appearing in the documents is the criterion for accepting catechists as candidates for the Centres of studies. Insistence is laid on their Christian commitment, on a letter of presentation from the parish priest or the diocese, a suitable level of studies, a proper motivation, a certain human maturity and proven uprightness in social life, a minimum age of 18 years, and at least two years experience in the service of catechesis. (We may quote as examples: the MAKALALA Catechetical Centre in Tanzania, and the "MOAMOA Theological College" in Western Samoa).

3. *A catechetical Centre is distinguished and becomes com-*

petent also for its capacity for research and publishing possibilities: catechisms, periodicals for study and linkage purposes, research of various kinds on inculturation, the results of studies in seminars, experiments, annual celebrations for catechesis or for catechists.

Concluding guidelines

1. One of the tasks of a formation Centre for catechists in mission territory is precisely to foster their **missionary convictions and approach**, the spirit which must motivate them, their vision of the universal Church, their willingness and ability to change from one pastoral sector to another, especially if they are full-time, in places where the pastoral reality includes sectors with great shortages of evangelization. It is obvious that at the foundation of such formation there must be a genuine missionary spirituality or, in other words: *“intimate communion with Christ, (...) openness to and interest in all peoples and individuals, especially the least and poorest”*.⁸

2. It must be emphasized therefore that a solid **integral formation** of catechists must accompany the renewed mentality of the Church “in a state of mission”, evangelized and evangelizing, of which the Catechetical Directory (diocesan or national) should be an effective indicator.

3. Particular attention must be given to the relationship, not always straightforward, between **what the catechists are looking for** (the pastoral needs of the local Church) and **what the Centre can offer**. It is not enough to send for studies at the Centre those who are fond of catechesis; it is important that they be also catechists who are motivated and in a certain sense already involved in local or diocesan pastoral work. The

⁸ RM 88, 89

respective parishes must be actively involved in this project of formation. The importance of the Centre will not depend only on the excellent level of its academic courses, but also on its capacity to exploit the experience of the catechists, especially in what concerns research seminars and experiments in the vast field of the inculturation of the message and the liturgy.

4. It is well for the catechists to know why they are there in the Centre, and for the Centre to say clearly what it can offer. The harmony between request and response will make clear the value of the experience in itself; it will satisfy both the catechists and their parish priests that they will not be disappointed in their expectations, and that the sacrifice inherent in using the Centre is worthwhile. The more the Centre sticks to its purpose, the more will its services and specializations be developed:

- the formation of catechists,
- training of those who will form other catechists,
- specializations in specific areas of catechetical action with reference to rural or urban areas, the different cross-sections of society, a particular sector of pastoral work, etc.
- particular courses for animators or those responsible for basic communities or pastoral sectors.

5. Here the question is one of the **relationship between the Catechetical Centre, the pastoral project of the diocese or country, and the Christian community**. Even the latter must be attentive and solicitous in responding, in the measure of its own capabilities and pastoral rhythm, to proposals for change and improvement in catechetical praxis, ready to support the work of the catechists, particularly as regards didactic material and books for immediate use.

6. The value of a Catechetical Centre, especially in mission areas, is indicated also by its ability to create an environment in which the catechists and teachers have a **strong experi-**

ence of Church,⁹ because of the degree of acceptance of persons, cultures and ethnic groups represented, because of the spiritual growth of individuals and group, and the happy atmosphere sustained by celebrations and informal encounters. In addition to making the participants aware of their own identity, these mutual experiences make the Centre a school of prayer and of education to the missionary mentality, a qualified point of reference and a place for the discussion of pastoral questions of the local Church.

7. In mission territory, the structure of Catechetical Centres foresees a village style of life,¹⁰ or a camping site which respects both the *privacy* of married couples among the catechists and the atmosphere necessary for study. Our experience of houses of formation could be of use to us in maintaining the structures and in their internal organization: family atmosphere, availability, collaboration and joy. These things seem obvious, but they must be given attention if the best results are to come from the communal experience, and the high quality of the Centre itself is to be preserved.

I conclude these reflections with a further quotation from *Redemptoris Missio*, n.73: "*Catechists are specialists, direct witnesses and irreplaceable evangelizers, who represent the basic strength of Christian communities, especially in the young Churches*". Our commitment for the effectiveness of our missionary work and the quality of formation¹¹ solicit our attention to foster in a preeminent manner the care of the catechists; they are our first collaborators.

⁹ cf. the Makalala Centre previously referred to

¹⁰ cf. the Centre in Western Samoa already referred to

¹¹ cf. Priorities programmed by the General Council, with particular reference to missionary praxis, AGC 358 (supplement)

4.1 Chronicle of the Rector Major

17 September. Fr Vecchi left for Southern Africa to visit the confreres and for the celebration of the traditional annual Feast of the Rector Major, held this year in Mozambique.

Between changing flights at Johannesburg he was able to say Mass and spend some hours with the formation community of **Rynfield**. He then went on to Maputo in Mozambique, arriving in the evening of the 18th. He was received by the Provincial Delegate and a group of other Salesians and FMA, and went to the aspirantate of **Matola** where he said Mass and had supper, after which the aspirants put on an academy in his honour.

19 September. He said Mass in the parish of São José de Lhanguene in the presence of a large number of the faithful and representatives of all branches of the Salesian Family, to whom he spoke in the homily of the Family and the vast field open to it in Mozambique. In the interval between the Mass and lunch he was able to make a brief visit to the

salesian work of San José. Among those present at the lunch were the Apostolic Nuncio and the auxiliary Bishop of Maputo, representing the Cardinal who was unable to be present.

After lunch the Feast in honour of the Rector Major began in the "Rainha Sofia" primary school of Maputo. There were opening speeches of welcome by the President of the Salesian Youth Movement and the Provincial Delegate, expressing the joy that the young salesian work in Mozambique had been chosen as the place for the celebration. He quoted many messages that had arrived by fax and telephone, including one from the FMA Mother General. After musical and other items presented by all the groups of the Salesian Family, the Rector Major spoke to express his thanks to everyone and especially to the Apostolic Nuncio and the Bishop. *He explained that Africa and particularly Mozambique had been chosen for the Feast because in Mozambique it was just 500 years since the first contact with the Christian community,*

and in 1992 the Salesians had begun a period of special endeavours in the evangelization movement. He left messages for the young, for adults and for the Salesian Family.

20 September (Sunday). Fr Vecchi said Mass in the morning in the "Bom Pastor" parish in the Maputo-Jardim area, and then had a meeting with the Salesians in the Delegation headquarters. In the afternoon he returned to the parish to meet some 300 young animators who had gathered from the various salesian works of Mozambique. It was a lively youthful afternoon of song and dance, and at the end the Rector Major used it to illustrate *the development of the seed through the stages of taking root, the main trunk, the branch, the leaf and finally the fruit.*

21 September. Fr Vecchi had a meeting with the Council of the Delegation, at which were present also the Provincial of Portugal and the Regional Councillor for Africa and Madagascar (Fr Antonio Tallon), and later in the morning paid a visit to the Franciscan Cardinal Archbishop of Maputo. He spent the afternoon visiting works of the FMA: the

"Casa Rosetta", the Don Bosco reception centres at Infulene, and finally the FMA Provincial House.

22 September. Fr Vecchi visited the salesian house of **Moamba**. Here he presided at the Eucharist, during which two youngsters were baptized, and then blessed the new premises of the Oratory and the workshops of the Centre for arts and trades. In the afternoon in a celebration in his honour thanks were repeated for his visit to Mozambique. In return he expressed his own thanks for the welcome he had received; he spoke of *the progress that had been made from '92 to the present day, and of the initiative and creativity he had noted in the development. He greatly admired the attachment of the confreres to the mission and the hope for the future by which they were animated: a hope stemming from the appearance of local vocations which, by God's grace, were increasing in number.*

23 September (Wednesday). Fr Vecchi left Mozambique, via Johannesburg, for **Luanda** in **Angola**, the other African country on the present program. He was met by the Delegate and oth-

er Salesians and was taken immediately to the post-novitiate house at Luanda-Palanca where, after lunch he had a meeting with the community and confreres of Luanda. The Delegate thanked the Rector Major for his visit and gave a brief history of the work in Angola. We arrived in 1981 with the support of the provinces of the then Atlantic Region as part of the Project Africa. Today there are 51 Salesians in the country: 27 priests, 8 brothers, and 16 in formation. Of these 16 are natives of the country, while the others come from various provinces; there are 15 from Argentina, 12 from Brazil, 4 from Uruguay, 3 from Paraguay and 1 from Mexico.

24 September. Fr Vecchi went to **Dondo**, 180 km. from the capital, to visit the salesian work. Here with the Salesians and FMA he said Mass in honour of Mary Help of Christians for the 24th of the month, and was able also to visit a school in the village of Cas-solala, about 25 km. from Dondo, where he was received by the population and children who frequent the school. In the afternoon he had a meeting with the confreres and spoke to them of our missionary frontiers. He also

met with a group of Cooperators and others who are preparing to become members of the ADMA.

25 September. Fr Vecchi said Mass in the parish church of Dondo in honour of Don Bosco, and then returned to Luanda where, in the afternoon he paid a visit to the Cardinal Archbishop of Luanda and then to the Apostolic Nuncio, to discuss with them various points concerning the Church and the Congregation in Angola.

26 September. Fr Vecchi flew to Luena where, in the morning, he visited the Bishop and presided at the Eucharist in honour of Mary Help of Christians. In the afternoon, after visiting the cemetery and praying at the tomb of Bro. Umberto Michelino SDB (who died at Luena in 1992), the Rector Major was present at a spectacle organized in his honour by the local young people. He then returned to Luanda and spent the evening with the post-novices to whom he gave the 'Good Night'.

27 September (Sunday). Fr Vecchi presided at the Eucharist in the salesian parish of San Paolo in Luanda, with some 4,000

people present, in a celebration solemnized by hymns, dances and typical local choreography. After the Mass he visited two very poor areas where the Salesians are working: the **Mota quarter**, which forms part of the San Paolo parish, and then the parish of St Joseph the Worker in the **Lixeira quarter**, where the Salesians have set up a Centre of Arts and Trades. After Lixeira he went on to the village of **Kakuako** where the FMA animate an oratory and youth centre, a centre for educationally retarded children, and a trade centre for instruction in sewing, typing and information technology. Here there was lunch, to which were invited the leaders of the Cooperators and the ADMA.

In the evening he returned to the parish of San Paolo for a **meeting with the young people**. After the presentation of the numerous groups, the Rector Major responded to questions put to him by the participants.

28 September. Fr Vecchi presided at the eucharistic celebration in the Delegation headquarters with the confreres of the community and then left for the airport to return to Rome.

At Rome in early October the Rector Major had two important engagements: the inauguration of the academic year at the **UPS** and the **Auxilium** on 5 and 7 October respectively

9 October. At the "Sacred Heart" Institute, Rome, Fr Vecchi was present for the presentation of Saul Celora's book *Le vie del Signore sono infinite*.

10 October (Saturday). Fr Vecchi went to the salesian house at **Figline Valdarno** for the celebration of the centenary of salesian work there on the following day.

11 October. The celebrations included various items. After a brief visit to the cemetery to pray at the tombs of the dead confreres, and some other significant places in the town, at 9.30 Fr Vecchi arrived at the Town Hall where he was welcomed by the Mayor and Council. In his reply the Rector Major spoke of the *fidelity of the Salesians to the kind of education Don Bosco wanted, in constant rapport and collaboration with society and the various institutions. He thanked the civic community of Figline Valdarno for what they had given to*

the Salesians and concluded with the hope that the Salesians could continue their work in the spirit of Don Bosco, with competence and educative impact, and that there would be always an effective collaboration with the hierarchy and civil institutions.

Returning to the Oratory Fr Vecchi presided at the Eucharist in the playground, at the end of which the flag-wavers provided a festive spectacle. An interesting item in the afternoon was a visit to the house in the Viesca area of a benefactress of salesian work, Sig.ra Wanda Ferragamo, where a chapel is preserved in which Don Bosco celebrated the Eucharist during his visits to Tuscany.

Immediately afterwards the Rector Major left for **Arezzo**, to visit and inaugurate officially the work which the Salesians have accepted, in the San Leo quarter, at the request of the Bishop of Arezzo. The work includes the pastoral care of the parish of St Leo the Great, but is also intended to be a point of reference for the youth of the area. In the Eucharist, at which the Bishop presided, Fr Vecchi presented the salesian community, and the activities they hoped to carry out. He left the same evening to return to Rome.

12 - 20 October. Fr Vecchi left for South-East Asia, to visit the confreres and communities of **Vietnam**, a visit long desired but only now made possible. It was a very significant period (12-20 October) during which the Rector Major was able to get to know at first hand the salesian reality (which has continued to grow despite the difficulties), visit the various works, and meet the communities and groups of confreres in whatever way was convenient. The salesian situation is very consoling. At the time of the visit there were 157 professed confreres and 13 novices. Of the 157 professed, 94 are in perpetual vows (46 priests, 13 deacons, 17 brothers and 18 clerics) and 63 in temporary vows (43 post-novices and 20 students of theology); 13 are in practical training. The Salesians are gathered into 10 communities, but look after 28 centres with 18 parishes.

In addition to the meeting with the Council of the Vice-province, the Rector Major spoke with the following groups and left a specific message with each: the students of theology at Xuen Hiep, the post-novices at Dalat, the novices at Ba Thon, the pre-novices at Cau Bong, and the rectors and parish-priests. With the

latter group Fr Vecchi *emphasized some positive elements which accompany and give strength to the fidelity of Vietnam at the present day: community fidelity, ability to adapt to the prevailing situation, the numerical increase and care of the formation communities, the commitment to pastoral work for the young, and projects for expansion. He pointed to some needs for the immediate future: the efforts for first evangelization, the quality and depth of the work, and on-going formation.*

Among the personal meetings of significance, two were with the civil authorities: Saturday, 17 October, at Hanoi with the Vice-President of Vietnam for religious matters, and Monday, 19 October, with the director of religious matters for the city of Ho Chi Minh. They were occasions for speaking of the relationship between the Salesians and civil society, and also of some educative projects which the Salesians have at heart (e.g. the Centre for professional training of Kenap, near Hanoi).

On the ecclesial side there were very cordial visits of the Rector Major to the Cardinal of Hanoi and the Archbishop of Ho Chi Minh.

Very interesting was the *Youth Festival* on Sunday, 18 October.

Some 700 young people were present from the salesian parishes and centres. The theme of the festival was: *The young person: communion and sharing in the spirit and mission of Don Bosco.* There was a lively academy consisting of nine linked scenarios presenting the presence and development of salesian work in Vietnam.

The Youth Festival was followed by a meeting of Fr Vecchi with the *Salesian Family*.

Among the important visits was also one on 16 October to the **FMA** at their house at Tam Ha, which is the Delegation headquarters and where are also the postulants and novices, and a kindergarten for some 200 young children. On the same day the Rector Major visited the great Marian centre of Bai Dau.

20 October. Fr Vecchi, accompanied by the Superior of the Vice-province, Fr John Nguyen Van Ty, made a brief visit to the main places of Ho Chi Minh city (formerly Saigon) and then left for Rome, taking with him memories of the vivacity of salesian life and mission in this land of Southern Asia.

23 October. The Rector Major

left Rome again for a three-day visit to Calabria for three particular events: the centenary of salesian work at Bova Marina, the celebration of ninety years of salesian life at Soverato, and the inauguration of the new work at Lamezia Terme.

Fr Vecchi arrived at **Soverato** accompanied by a group of young people on motor-scooters and a police escort. In the morning the Salesian Institute was the venue for a festive encounter with the young who did him homage and listened to his message which was based on the words inscribed above the stage: *SYS: Salesian Youth Spirituality*.

In the afternoon at the Institute of the FMA he gave a conference to Salesians, FMA and a group of Oblate Sisters of the Sacred Hearts. This was followed at 6 p.m. in the parish church with the culminating event of the celebrations, the concelebrated Eucharist. The church was filled to overflowing with members of the Salesian Family, civic authorities, friends and parishioners.

After the Mass the Rector Major had a meeting with the Bishop of Catanzaro, who accompanied him to the Town Hall where he received *honorary citizenship*.

The festivities concluded with a

festive supper in the Institute of the FMA.

24 October (Saturday). Fr Vecchi left for **Locri**, another place where the Salesians are working. There the first event took place in one of the city squares, where in the presence of the Mayor and city council a plaque was unveiled giving to the square the name of St John Bosco.

The Rector Major then went on to the Salesian Youth Centre, where he had a meeting with students from the seven Locri High Schools with whom he developed an interesting address on: *Young people: to be educated or educators themselves?* which he changed to *Young people: to be educated **and** educators themselves*.

Fr Vecchi then presided at a eucharistic celebration at which many members of the Salesian Family were present, and during which nine new Cooperators made the Promise.

In the afternoon he went on to Bova Marina, where he was received by the Rector, the Mayor (who read an address of welcome), confreres and a crowd of other people who accompanied him to the salesian oratory. Here the first act was the inauguration of a commemorative stone tablet

on the wall of the church, before the official commemoration of the centenary by the Provincial. This in turn was followed by a spectacle of traditional folklore, song and dance, including items in the local dialect.

25 October. The Mayor conferred honorary citizenship on Fr Vecchi at a ceremony in the Town Hall. In his speech of thanks the Rector Major said *that he saw the honour as a recognition of all the Salesians who had worked at Bova Marina, and an act of thanksgiving for all that had been done by Salesians and Sisters in the past hundred years.*

At 11.00 am in the Parish Church there was a solemn Eucharist with among the concelebrants many priests who had worked at Bova Marina. The many faithful present included members of the Salesian Family, and outstanding among them a group of the Oblate Sisters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, whose charisma was born at Bova Marina.

In the afternoon Fr Vecchi went on to **Lamezia Terme**, the last stage of his journey in Calabria, to visit the new work launched by the Salesians for the young people of Lamezia, as part

of the "Calabria Project", sponsored by the CISI. In the St Joseph the Worker parish, entrusted to the Salesians, the Rector Major with the Salesians was received by the Bishop, the Mayor, and a big crowd with many young people. A function of welcome took place in the church, with the Bishop and the Mayor expressing their thanks and emphasizing the importance of the presence of the Salesians in pastoral and educative activity for the youth of the city. At the end of the interventions Fr Vecchi blessed a statue of Mary Help of Christians and in a short address said that the inauguration of a new work is always an emotional moment. He thanked everyone for the welcome to the Salesians, and pointed out the true significance of their presence. The Youth Festival followed in the hall beneath the church.

26 October. Fr Vecchi said Mass in honour of Mary Help of Christians in the parish church, and then after a rapid tour of the city, returned to Rome.

7 November. Another centenary celebration took the Rector Major to Zurich, Switzerland: that of the Italian Catholic Mis-

sion. The Mission was established for the care of Italian emigrants, a work which still continues, but at the present day the salesian community takes care also of immigrants to Switzerland from Bohemia and Slovakia. The Catholic Mission is a personal parish with an oratory and youth centre.

In the afternoon of 7 November Fr Vecchi, together with the Provincial and local Rector, had a meeting with the Italian Consul General and the Ecclesial Delegate for Italian Missionaries in Switzerland to deal with the question of immigration into Switzerland.

Later, at the Zurich Town Hall, there was a meeting with the Mayor and other civic dignitaries, with various interventions interspersed with musical items. In his own intervention at the end the Rector Major *thanked the communal administration for this encounter they had arranged to express their gratitude for the work done by the Catholic Mission in the past hundred years. On their own part the Salesians wished to thank the city administration for the support and understanding given them by the various civil institutions.*

At the supper in the Catholic

Mission which followed the event, the Bishop of Coira and Zurich was one of the guests.

8 November (Sunday). Fr Vecchi presided at two eucharistic celebrations: at 10 o'clock for the young people, and at 11.20 for the remainder of the population. They were the occasion for a common thanksgiving to the Lord for a hundred years of salesian life and activity.

In the afternoon there was an interesting academy with professional musical items sharing the program with items and dances presented by the boys and girls of the oratory and members of the youth centre. At the end the Rector Major *congratulated the actors and organizers, and said that the centenary prompts us to look to the future. It highlights the importance to a city of being able to count on a Youth Centre which helps its members to grow. This is a centre which attracts young people, but is also a platform from which the members go out into the city to invite others to come and join them and take part in the life of the young community. He said he was leaving with a most optimistic impression.*

He then returned to Rome to continue his work at headquarters.

19 November. Fr Vecchi took part in a solemn function at the **Auxilium** of the FMA for the conferring of the doctorate "honoris causa" on Mgr. Francesco Marchisano and Sister Fabiola Ochoa.

20 November. He was invited to the Spanish College in Rome, where he gave a conference to the students and teachers on the theme: *Where the Holy Spirit is leading the Church.*

23-28 November. Fr Vecchi was involved in the work of the Union of Superiors General (USG): on the 23rd he took part in the meeting of the USG Executive Council, on the 24th in that of the "Council of 16" and from the 25th to the 28th in the general assembly, which took place as usual at Ariccia.

30 November. The Rector Major was at the "Sacro Cuore" Institute, Rome, to meet the directors of the Salesian Bulletin from all parts of the world, gathered in a congress organized for them for the "renewal and relaunching of the Bulletin in the world". He gave a conference on the theme: *Horizons, attitudes and tasks of the director of the Salesian Bul-*

letin. The text can be found at n.5.2 of the present number of the AGC. The meeting ended with a eucharistic celebration.

7 December. Fr Vecchi took part in the International Meeting on "Street children", organized by the VIS and the Department for Youth Pastoral Work, which held its plenary assemblies in the Esquiline Hall of Rome's main railway station. After an introduction by Fr Antoni Domenech, and brief interventions by various speakers, the Rector Major presented the theme: *Salesians and young people at risk.*

In the afternoon of the same day Fr Vecchi went to Morlupo, 30 km. from Rome on the Via Flaminia to the house of spirituality of the Rogationists, where the VDB were holding the annual convention of their regional superiors and formation delegates. He celebrated Mass for them and then, in a brief meeting, set out some reflections on the progress of the Salesian Family in the present six-year period.

8 December (Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception). The Rector Major was at **Rome, Don Bosco Boys Town**, for the closing celebrations of the 50th an-

niversary of the founding of the work. He met various civic authorities, including Francesco Rutelli, the Mayor of Rome.

He presided at the Eucharist and then met with groups of Past-pupils and Cooperators, with the pastoral council and animators. Before lunch he took part with the oratory members in a *Marian Circle*, and broadcast a message on Radio "Meridiano 12".

4.2 Chronicle of the General Councillors

The Vicar General

After the summer session of the General Council, Fr Van Looy left with Frs Domenech and Van Hecke for Hechtel in Belgium, to take part in the closing stage of the *Euroforum*. Some 900 young people from all over salesian Europe had spent a well organized week together. It was interesting to meet at the European Community Headquarters at Brussels with various authorities of the Council of Europe. At the closing ceremonies were present Cardinal Danneels and five Bishops, with the Vicars General of other

dioceses, two Government Ministers and numerous members of Parliament.

From 28 July to 5 August Fr Van Looy preached the retreat to the FMA at Forno di Coazze, and on 5 August in the basilica of Mary Help of Christians, Turin, presided at the function commemorating the anniversary of profession of many FMA, and in particular the 50th anniversary of profession of Mother Marinella Castagno, the former Mother General.

On 6 August he was at Contra di Missaglia to preside at the Eucharist for the first profession of the FMA novices, and then returned to Rome.

Subsequently after a period of rest with his family, from 16 to 23 August he was at Courmayeur in the Valle D'Aosta for the annual meeting of the VIS on the theme: *Education as a way of development*.

From 29 August to 3 September he was in the Czech Republic at the house of Frysták, for various meetings with young animators, salesian rectors, Cooperators and a theology course.

Returning to Rome, Fr Van Looy took part on 5 September in the ceremony in memory of Mother Teresa, in the Paul VI

Hall at the Vatican. From 7 to 12 September he was occupied at the intermediate meeting of the General Council, and on the 8th presided at the first profession of the novices in the Basilica of the Sacred Heart at Rome.

In the evening of the 12th, at Porto Recanati in the Adriatic Province, he received the perpetual profession of a confrere from Byelorussia, and on the following day was at Colle Don Bosco for the celebrations marking the centenary of the first public statue dedicated to Don Bosco in the square at Castelnovo, in the presence of the civil authorities of the Province, the mayors of neighbouring towns and large crowds of local people and youngsters.

On 19 and 20 September he took part in the national convention of Polish Cooperators at Breslau, and from the 21st to the 26th preached a retreat to the Rectors and Provincial Council of that province, using various texts of St Paul to illustrate the charism of Don Bosco.

Returning once again to Rome, on the 29th and 30th he accepted an invitation from the Sisters of Notre Dame to guide a series of pastoral reflections for their General Chapter on the theme: *Who do young women say we are?*

On 2 October he took part in a combined meeting of the Provincial Councils of Venice and Verona at the Generalate in Rome.

On 4 October Fr Van Looy left for a lengthy journey in the Far East. First he directed in the Philippines three days of reflection for the Rectors of the Far Eastern Provinces, dealing particularly with the role of the Rector in the EPC and his duty of spiritual direction. He then spent a day in Tokyo for a meeting with the recently elected Mother General and General Council of the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of Miyazaki, and for a meeting with the salesian Provincial Council.

From 9 October to 3 November he was in Korea to make the *extraordinary visitation of the Vice-province*, and from there went on to visit the new work at Yanji, in north-east China, opened at the beginning of October.

Returning from Korea to Rome, he spent five days in Indonesia and Timor, where he met the communities and many past-pupils and friends of salesian work.

On 15 November he was with the community of Ortona, in the Adriatic Province, for the cele-

brations for the 50th foundation of the work, which now includes a professional training centre, a parish and an oratory.

On 27 November he took part in the opening work of the world Congress of directors of the Salesian Bulletin in Rome, and concluded the month at Rimini, at the national convention of the Italian PGS, where he spoke on the theme "*Salesian education and sport*"

The Councillor for Formation

One of the objectives of the programming for the present six-year period is the "quality of intellectual formation", a point emphasized by the Rector Major in the letter "*For you I study*" (AGC 361). In this perspective should be seen the meetings of those responsible for intellectual formation of the two regions of America and of the Asia-Australia region, organized by the Department for Formation.

From 9 to 15 August, São Paulo was the venue for the continental seminar for those responsible for the study of theology of the two regions of America. Some thirty confreres took part, representing 17 communities of theological for-

mation, 10 of them provincial and 7 interprovincial. For the same area there took place at Caracas from 1 to 7 November the continental seminar on studies during the post-novitiate period. Here the participants were about forty, from 27 post-novitiate communities. In the American continent there are 4 salesian centres for the study of theology and 18 salesian centres of "philosophical" studies. Other study centres are managed in shared responsibility with dioceses or other Congregations. In some cases our students frequent non-salesian centres which have some salesian teacher on the staff.

In Asia there were two seminars in September. The first was at Hyderabad from the 15th to the 19th, for the eight provinces of India. Those taking part were responsible for both the philosophical and theological studies. At Canlubang in the Philippines from 22 to 26 September there was a seminar for those responsible for the studies of the post-novitiate and of theology of the provinces of Eastern Asia. In the Asia-Australia region there are 17 post-novitiate communities and 11 salesian study centres; with 10 communities of theology students and 4 salesian centres for the study of theology.

These seminars have provided Fr Nicolussi with the possibility of making contact with the formation reality of many provinces, through visits to formation communities, meetings with provincial councils and with those in charge of formation, etc. This has happened for instance in the provinces of Brazil-Recife (5-8 August), Japan (29 September), Mexico (8-11 November), Guadalajara (12-14 November).

In the Department the reflection on the revision of the "*Ratio - FSDB*" has continued, while the contributions of the provinces are awaited together with the planning of a study on the problem of "perseverance and losses".

At the beginning of October the Councillor made contact with some of the international communities of confreres studying in Rome.

By the end of November the Department had received from the majority of the provinces their provincial plans for the qualification of personnel, asked for by the Rector Major.

The Councillor for Youth Pastoral Work

On 7 August Fr Antoni Domech left for India to take part in

various meetings. From 9 to 10 August he was at Nikita-Don Bosco (Calcutta) for a meeting with the National Committee for Youth Pastoral Work which was preparing the national plan for the next three years. At the same place from 11 to 17 August he animated a course of formation for Delegates and members of provincial teams for the same work; it was attended by 46 SDBs and 7 FMAs. On the 18th and 19th there was a further meeting with the same Delegates and those in charge of schools and professional training centres at provincial level for all the SDB and FMA provinces of India. In this last meeting preliminary plans were made for a national meeting on salesian schools for next year.

After returning to Rome for the intermediate meeting of the General Council, the Councillor with another member of the Department animated three courses of formation for Delegates and members of provincial teams: 13-18 September at Montreal for the provinces of USA and Canada; 20-26 September at Guadalajara (Mexico) for the provinces of Mexico, Central America, Antilles and Venezuela; and 27 September-3 October at Cumbayá (Ecuador) for the provinces of

Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia. During these courses the contents of the Department's book on Youth Pastoral Work were studied at depth and ways were sought for giving effect to the various points.

On 5 October Fr Domenech began the *Extraordinary Visitation of the Province of Porto Alegre* (Brazil), which went on till 25 November. During this period he was able to take part in a meeting on the salesian schools of Brazil, which studied the present situation of the schools and sought ways for coordination and collaboration in the animation of this important sector of the country's pastoral activity.

Returning to Europe, the Councillor was at Sanlúcar (Spain) on 5 and 6 December for the national meeting of salesian parishes with the main theme: *The third Millennium and evangelization. Contribution of parishes entrusted to the Salesians*.

From 7 to 11 December he animated, with the VIS, the *First International Meeting on street children*, which brought together at Rome almost a hundred Salesians and lay persons involved in this kind of work throughout the world.

As representatives of the Coun-

cillor, other members of the Department took part in the second meeting of provincial delegates for the schools and professional training centres of Mesoamerica (at Quaretaró, Mexico, from 6 to 9 August) and of the Andino group (at Quito, Ecuador, from 12 to 14 August). From 20 to 24 September, at the invitation of the Pontifical Council for the Laity, the Department was present at Paderborn (Germany) at the third European Meeting for Youth Pastoral Work, together with an FMA and two members of the Salesian Youth Movement. Finally, from 9 to 12 October the Department took part at Campogrande (Brazil) at the 7th Seminar on pastoral work for juveniles at risk, on the theme: *Salesian Family working alongside young people in situations of special need*.

The Councillor of the Salesian Family and for Social Communication

I. SALESIAN FAMILY

The **ordinary commitments** of the Department for the period August to November 1998 were:

- preparations for the meeting

with the VOLUNTEERS WITH DON BOSCO at Rome in the coming December, following the ecclesiastical and salesian approval of the movement as a public Association of the faithful with a view to becoming a secular Institute;

- the application of the conclusions of the world assembly of the PAST-PUPILS to the life of the local Unions, which have most need of support and animation;
- the translation into practice for Provinces and local Centres of the indications emerging from July's meeting of the world council of the ASSOCIATION OF SALESIAN COOPERATORS: autonomy of the Association, formation, and organization of finances;
- preliminary preparations for the realization of a world meeting of the regional assistants of the DON BOSCO VOLUNTEERS, to be held in the year 1999.

Work continued on the initiatives foreseen for the **programming of regional meetings** of those in charge of the Salesian Family:

1. at SAO PAULO in Brazil, 21-23 September, with the participa-

tion of all the provinces of Brazil;

2. at CORDOBA in Argentina, 25-27 September, with the participation of the provinces of the Southern Cone;
3. at MADRID, 20-22 October, with the participation of all the provinces of the Region of Western Europe.

Those taking part in the meetings were: the provincial delegates for the Salesian Family, the national and provincial delegates for the Cooperators, the national and provincial delegates for the Past-pupils, the regional ecclesiastical assistants of the Don Bosco Volunteers, and the animators (to use a broad term applicable to all of them) of other groups of the Salesian Family with a national and provincial organization.

Each meeting was of three days duration.

The *themes* dealt with were:

- The Salesian Family AS A WHOLE: a **perspective** to be developed within the life and organization of each group, as a contribution fostered particularly by the presence of the salesian delegate, assistant or animator.
- the SPIRITUALITY of the Sale-

sian Family: an indispensable **condition** for growth in communion between all the groups. Particular attention was given to the reflection on spirituality, as it emerges from the fundamental texts of the Cooperators, of the Past-pupils and of the whole Family.

- the ORGANIZATION of the Salesian Family: a **commitment** to be taken up in a more efficacious form to ensure something more in the way of the development of the groups and the whole, so as to guarantee continuity in the normal changes which take place not only on the part of the Salesian concerned but also on that of the lay people themselves.

Urgent needs appeared with respect to two particular areas:

- that of a deeper **knowledge** of the different groups and their different identities, so as to render an efficacious service to the growth of the individuals and the groups;
- that of the **salesian spirituality** lived by the individual groups to help each of them to use descriptive expressions typical of the spirit of Don Bosco.

Certain **meetings** merited spe-

cial mention: those in Russia and Lithuania, in Syria at Aleppo, in Sardinia at Lanusei, in Argentina at Cordoba and Buenos Aires, and in the Philippines at Manila. Useful also were the meetings with young confreres and the beginnings of the DBV in Russia of particular interest.

Some original phenomena were associated with the meeting of all the Salesian Family of **Venezuela**. For the whole of three days numerous representatives of the different groups of the Salesian Family (about 150 individuals representing 10 different groups) met together. Also present were the young confreres (novices, postnovices and students of theology) and young Sisters (novices and juniors). They came together for a deeper study of the COMMON IDENTITY CARD. The work proved very interesting, because each group had sought its own roots in the common identity, and the possibilities for development.

The encounter concluded in the national Temple dedicated to Don Bosco in Altamira.

II. SOCIAL COMMUNICATION

The various sectors of the Department have been working on the realization of the **program**

of the Rector Major and his Council.

– FORMATION AND ANIMATION sector.

An aid for formation to social communication has been completed, and work is now proceeding on collecting the documents of the “World Day of Social Communication”.

– INFORMATION sector.

In addition to the ANS publications, preparations were made for the meeting with the directors of the Salesian Bulletin.

– UNDERTAKINGS sector.

The “Fusagasugá Project” has been taken up again, and a re-launching is foreseen of the various settings of salesian work in social communication.

The following **regional meetings** took place, in line with the calendar of the program:

1. at BOMBAY, 25-27 August, during the meeting of the Indian Provincial Conference with the Regional Councillor present, Fr Joaquim D’Souza.
2. at BUENOS AIRES, 29 September - 1 October, during the meeting of the Southern Cone Region, with the Regional Councillor present, Fr Helvécio Baruffi.
3. at CARACAS, 12-14 October, dur-

ing the meeting of the Inter-american Region, with the Regional Councillor present, Fr Pascual Chávez.

4. at ROME 3-5 October, during the conference of the Italian Salesian Provinces, with the Regional Councillor present, Fr Giovanni Fedrigotti.

The **participants** at each meeting came with a variety of experiences and qualifications. They included: The Regional Councillor, the Provincials of the area concerned, the provincial delegate for social communication and the national delegate (for those areas with a national organization), the director or directors of Salesian Bulletins (when the meeting covered several countries), the director of publications (for the provinces having a publishing house), and other confreres whose presence the individual Provincials thought would be useful.

The **contents** of the meeting were spread over three days:

- FIRST day: study of the communication situation in the areas of salesian work; professional and lay experts of the area were involved;
- SECOND day: the salesian re-

sponse was examined to the state and influence of social communication on life and activity in the area, with the GC24 as the point of reference;

- **THIRD day:** the indication of practical perspectives for the future, as regards the contents on which intervention is needed, and the necessary organization foreseen.

The **conclusions** highlighted the following points:

- the need for a more meaningful sectorial organization in the individual provinces, using the various occasions for a better utilization of social communication in salesian commitments;
- the need to provide in the provincial plan for the formation personnel for lively and professionally prepared Salesians for the animation of the provinces;
- the indispensable convergence which must operate between the various means of social communication of a province, and also between the possibilities of neighbouring provinces or those with similar cultures.

The Councillor General had also other meetings with young confreres in first formation, with

Rectors of communities, and with provincial councils in various areas: in Russia, in Argentina, in Venezuela, and in the Philippines, to name only the more significant. An assessment was made of the possibility, from various aspects, of introducing more forcibly the theme of social communication.

The Councillor for the Missions

After the summer session of the General Council, Fr Luciano Odorico left for Kenya for a visit of missionary animation and guidance in missionary praxis. He visited the missions of Nzaikoni, Makuyu, Siakago, and Embu, and inaugurated the new work of the "Savio Centre" at Nairobi for street-boys. Accompanied by the Provincial of East Africa, he also visited the missions of Kamuli and Bombo in Uganda.

At the conclusion of the visit he was able to note the significant consolidation of structures, of pastoral projects, and of the growth in local vocations that had taken place, and the urgent need for First Evangelization.

From Kenya Fr Odorico on 5 August went on to India for the *Extraordinary Visitation of the*

Mumbai Province (INB). It is not possible here to provide a chronicle of every stage of the visitation, but it may be opportune to emphasize some leading impressions on the province and its mission, gathered during the visit:

- the enormous geographical extension (5 States);
- the intelligent and dynamic work of promotion, education and evangelization in different contexts;
- the special care given to initial and ongoing formation;
- the specific preoccupation for the missions and for marginalization.

The visitation lasted from 6 August to 31 October; it began and ended in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians at Matunga, Mumbai. It had to be interrupted from 20 to 28 September to enable the Councillor to make a rapid journey to Rome for the departure of the missionaries. The course and pilgrimage culminated in the ceremony of the presentation of the crucifixes and missionary send-off in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians, Turin, on 27 September. Fr Odorico himself presided at this 128th departure ceremony, which involved 24 Salesians, 7 FMA, and 5 lay volun-

teers. They came from 17 countries and were destined for 15 others. Some of the missionaries were destined eventually for China, but for obvious reasons further information cannot be given.

From 2 to 5 November the Councillor visited the salesian mission of Tetera in the Solomon Islands, which belongs to the Japanese Province. The beginnings have been positive and have fostered the strictly missionary parish and youth activities, and the experiences of the Volunteer Movement.

From 6 to 16 November Fr Odorico, accompanied by the Provincial of Manila, visited our seven foundations in Papua New Guinea. He noted the significant development:

- in structures,
- in vocational and missionary animation,
- in the initiative of a pre-novitiate and aspirantate,
- in the growing interest for an adequate service in the education of young people for employment.

The Bishops are asking for the work to be further expanded, but this will depend on an increase in personnel. The Salesians at present number 31.

At Manila, in the Philippines, the Councilor made a brief report to the provincial council, and presided at a meeting of the Committee for Missionary Animation. Missionary interest and concern in this Province is certainly on the increase, not only with respect to Papua New Guinea but also to other missions of the Congregation.

On 25 November Fr Luciano Odorico returned to Rome. His intended visit of exploration to Mongolia had to be put off to a later date.

The Economist General

The first engagement of the Economist General after the summer session of the Council was at West Haverstraw, USA, from 2 to 8 August to preach a retreat to confreres of the New Rochelle Province. He took the opportunity to make also a rapid visit to the San Francisco Province to deal with some financial and legal matters. In the spare moments available he was able to visit some of the communities and have meetings with the two provincial councils.

After the festivities for the

Solemnity of the Assumption he took part in the "Youth Chapter" of the Genoa Province with an intervention on the involvement and shared responsibility of the young people themselves in the youth apostolate. He then went on to Cesana, Turin, where he animated a "study-camp" for young Cooperators and their families on themes of the Holocaust and the Encyclical *Dies Domini*. In the following week he directed the twelfth edition of the study-camp of the Don Bosco Oratory of Sangano at the salesian house of Col di Nava.

Returning to Rome, Fr Mazzali took part in the autumn intermediate session of the General Council and immediately afterwards left for a week's rest with his family.

The following weeks were dedicated to the work of ordinary administration, to the work of the SEI, and in particular to the launching of the rebuilding operations at the "Salesianum", the UPS and Testaccio. During the same period he also made frequent contacts with the painter Mario Bogani and the mosaics expert Bernasconi, concerning the project of the mosaics to be realized on the outer walls of the Temple of Don Bosco.

From 20 to 31 October Fr Mazali was in Brazil, visiting the Provinces of Manaus and Recife, for discussions with those responsible for the financial situation in the two provinces, and visiting some of the works as far as time would permit.

On 6 November, at the FMA Headquarters in Rome, he celebrated the opening Eucharist at a course for FMA Provincial Economers from all over the world, and from 8 to 19 November he made a rapid tour of most of the salesian works in the Eastern Circumscription, meeting communities and confreres, and studying with the provincial council the financial situation, the projects now in hand and those planned for the future in the various countries.

The Regional Councillor for Africa and Madagascar

After some days of rest with his family, Fr Antonio Rodriguez Talón arrived on 14 August in the *Republic of Guinea (Conakry)* where, for the first time, he visited the three salesian foundations at Conakry (a printing establishment), Kan Kan (a trade school), and Siguiri (a missionary centre),

and was able to share with the confreres their projects and future aspirations.

On the 24th he moved on to Sierra Leone, again for the first time because political events had prevented him from entering country earlier. He was able to see the work at Lungi (parish, primary and secondary schools, and a centre for professional training just beginning) and the activities with street-boys in Freetown.

He had to cancel the brief visit planned for Liberia because of delays in flights from Freetown, but fortunately knew the salesian activity in that country from a previous visit. On 31 August he went directly to Abidjan in the Ivory Coast and on 3 September flew from there to *Ethiopia* to participate in the launching of the new *Vice-province* set up by the Rector Major to unite the work in the two countries of Ethiopia and Eritrea. On the 7th he had a meeting with the Rectors and in the evening presided at the act of inauguration of the Vice-province of *Maria Kidane Meheret* ("Mary Pact of Mercy"), an ancient denomination very dear to the Ethiopians. In the following week he visited the houses of Dilla, Zway and Addis Ababa.

On 15 September Fr Rodriguez Tallón travelled to Mozambique to welcome the Rector Major and accompany him on his first visit to the salesian works in that country and in Angola. In Mozambique he celebrated with the confreres the *Feast of the Rector Major*, and accompanied him in visits of animation to the various houses in the south of the country.

Successively he accompanied the Rector Major also on his visit to the works in Angola, and afterwards remained in the country for an extra few days to get to know the work at Benguela, only recently begun.

On 2nd and 3rd October he held a meeting at Libreville (Gabon) of all the Provincials and Superiors of Circumscriptions of French-speaking Africa, and of the Delegates for Angola and Mozambique, for the purpose of beginning preparations for the Team Visit of this area of the Region, planned for February of the year 2000. Despite the difficulties in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, all concerned were able to be present for the meeting.

When this meeting was over, the Regional Councillor went at once to Malawi to begin the *Extraordinary Visitation of the ZMB Special Circumscription*, made

up of the countries of Malawi, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe. He spent the time from 4 October to 21 November visiting the salesian houses in these four countries. On 20 November he had a meeting with the Superior and Council of the Circumscription to share with them his first impressions on the visitation.

The last week of his stay in Africa before returning to Rome for the plenary session of the General Council, the Regional spent in Egypt, visiting for the first time here too, the three salesian communities and works: the professional school at Cairo; the house for prospective vocations at Cairo-Zeitun, and the college and professional school at Alessandria.

On 28 November he returned to Rome.

The Regional Councillor for Latin America - South Cone

After the summer session of the Council, Fr Baruffi was present at a meeting of the *CIS-BRASIL* (Brazil Provincial Conference) at Sao Paulo, 25-27 July, in which the decisions of previous meetings were verified, the inter-provincial formation plan for 1999-2000 was approved, and

plans were made for future meetings for ongoing formation. A full day was dedicated to a combined meeting of the CISBRASIL (SDBs) with the CIB (FMAs), in which was approved the *Combined Plan of Action* to be realized in the coming years.

From 1 August to 18 September the Regional carried out the *Extraordinary Visitation of the Uruguay Province*, meeting individual confreres and communities, and holding meetings also with the provincial council, rectors and parish priests, and the various groups of the Salesian Family.

Subsequently, from 19 September to 21 November, he carried out the *Extraordinary Visitation of the Rosario Province of Argentina*. This coincided with the conclusion of the mandate of the present Provincial and he was able to make the consultation for the appointment of his successor.

From 28 September to 2 October at Ramos Majia, Argentina, Fr Baruffi took part in the meeting on communication organized by the Department of Social Communication, at which the Provincials were accompanied by their delegates for this sector. He then presided at the meeting of the CISUR for the verification of the interprovincial program for ongoing formation

and to decide on the details for 1999. Considerable time was given to preparations for the coming Team Visit. The Provincials also dealt together with specific points such as the Launching of the Mission Office for Argentina and the common novitiate, as well as appointing those responsible at national level for the animation of various sectors.

From 7 to 11 October at Cachoeira do Campo in the Belo Horizonte Province, the Regional took part in the second meeting of the CISBRASIL for 1998. On the agenda was the preparation for the Team Visit programmed for April 1999 at Campo Grande, the approval of the plan for ongoing formation, and the setting up of CISBRASIL as a juridical entity. Meetings already made were reviewed and future ones planned.

On the 10th he was present at the seventh seminar of the Salesian Family on the juvenile on the theme: *Facing together the inconsistency of exclusion, as the new Millennium draws near*; it was organized by the Province of St John Bosco and 119 SDB and FMA educators took part, together with Cooperators and past-pupils. Nine Provinces were represented, including those of Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay.

After concluding the Rosario Visitation, Fr Baruffi celebrated in his native country the 25th anniversary of his priestly ordination, before returning to Rome.

The Councillor for the Interamerican Region

After the summer session of the Council, Fr Chavez spent a day at the postnovitiate of Guadalajara, Mexico, where the Rector was changing, and immediately afterwards went on to the *Province of Bolivia* to launch the process of discernment preceding the appointment of the new Provincial. From 3 to 8 August he met all the confreres in three groups at Santa Cruz, Cochabamba and La Paz. He took advantage of the visit to Cochabamba to spend a little time with the confreres in the houses of formation: prenovitiate, post novitiate and students of theology who were moving to a new residence.

From 9 to 13 August he visited the *Antilles Province*, and in particular the confreres of Porto Rico where he spent a day on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the arrival of the Salesians in that island; there too he had a meeting with the provincial council, those

in charge of formation, and the confreres taking part in the spiritual exercises at Jarabacoa.

The Regional then went on to the USA for a visit of animation to the two provinces (14-21 August). At Los Angeles on the 14th he received the perpetual profession of three members of the San Francisco Province, and on the following day the first professions of the novices, two from SUO and three from SUE. He also had a meeting with the two Provincials and another with the SUO provincial council.

On his way from the western to the eastern province he spent a day at Chicago to visit the community involved in the new work in favour of the Hispanics, evaluating with them the experience so far gained. In the following days he visited the two communities of Ramsey and Paterson, the new seat of the postnovitiate, and had meetings with the community of the Missions Office and the provincial council.

Next he launched in the *Central American Province* (23-30 August) the *consultation for the appointment of the new Provincial*, passing through each of the countries that make up the province, and speaking to the assembled confreres. In El Sal-

vador he also visited the Coadjutor Brothers engaged in the CRESCO formation experience.

From 3 September to 21 November Fr Chavez carried out the *Extraordinary Visitation of the Province of Ecuador*. During this period of two and a half months he was able to see for himself the rich nature of the salesian presence in this province which has many significant works: the missions of the Amazonian and Andes regions where outstanding results have been achieved in the fields of inculturation, human advancement, and bilingual intercultural education; the work in the Afro-Ecuadorian world; the activities for the benefit of street-children; the publishing centres for textbooks, applied anthropology and catechetical material; and finally the development of the "Salesian Polytechnic University" with several campuses.

The visitation was interrupted for the *meeting of the Provincials of the Region* at Los Teques, Venezuela, from 11 to 18 October. The first part (11th to 14th) was given over to Social Communication and was coordinated by Fr Antonio Martinelli and his department. For this part were also present those responsible for the Salesian Bulletin of each

province, and the provincial representatives for the different sectors of communication.

The second part of the meeting was centred on themes affecting the whole Region, beginning with the personnel situation in the provinces, the preparation for the Team Visit, information about centres of formation in the Region, missionary presence in Africa, conclusions of the meeting on social communication, material on the formation of lay people, the process of setting up "sub-regions", the presentation of the operational project of the provinces, and the revision of the programming for the Region as a whole.

The visitation of Ecuador ended with some days of retreat for the Rectors and the official presentation of the final report

In the last week of November Fr Chavez was in Guadalajara to take part in the two concluding days of the course of ongoing formation for the Salesians of the Region, and to celebrate with his ordination companions his 25 years of salesian priesthood.

Other activities organized at regional or continental level in coordination with other General Councillors, are reported by the latter in their own chronicles; they include the seminars on in-

tellectual formation in the post-novitiate and theologate which took place at Caracas and Sao Paulo, and the courses for provincial delegates for youth pastoral work held at Montreal, Guadalajara and Cumbayá.

On 30 November the Regional returned to the Generalate for the winter session of the Council.

The Councillor for the Australia-Asia Region

After the summer session of the Council the Regional left for New York to preach a retreat to the confreres of the New Rochelle Province, as part of the salesian centenary in the USA. He then returned to Rome, to depart at once for Manila where he set in motion the consultation for the appointment of the new Provincial of the North Philippines Province.

At the end of August Fr D'Souza went to Mumbai for a meeting of the executive council of the Indian Provincial Conference; among the items on the agenda was the preparation for the Feast of the Rector Major to be held at Shillong at the end of February 1999. The Regional then joined the Provincials of In-

dia in a three-day meeting on Social Communication (25-27 August), organized by the Indian national commission, BOSCOM-India, at the request of the Central Department, Rome, Fr Antonio Martinelli and his team took part in the meeting.

On 2 September Fr D'Souza began the *Extraordinary Visitation of the Province of Dimapur* in North-East India. It ended two and a half months later on 18 November after 41 visits to houses and other foundations in the four states of the region, and meetings with the 204 confreres of the Province. On his way back to Rome, he made a brief stop of two days at New Delhi for a meeting with the Secretary of the Indian Provincial Conference, and with the national team for youth pastoral work in their new offices. He also spent a week in the post-novitiate of Nashik in the Province of Bombay, before returning to Rome for the winter session of the Council.

The Councillor for the North Europe Region

From 5 to 8 June Fr Van Hecke presided at a meeting in Rome of the Provincials of five provinces

of the North European Region: CEP, CRO, SLK, SLO, and UNG. The meeting had the following objectives: to consider the reasons for a closer collaboration between the provinces; to identify the common activities now existing with respect to the different headquarters departments; to decide on areas where collaboration can be improved; to define strategies and interventions for development; to lay down the themes and dates for future meetings, and in particular to decide on the theme for the next meeting and the preparations to be made for it. A new Consulting Body CIMEC was set up ("the Cyril and Methodius Council") with the following members: the Regional, Fr Albert Van Hecke as President, the Provincials of the five Provinces; and the Secretary, Fr Marian Stempel.

From 13 to 15 June the Regional accompanied the Rector Major and other guests from Rome to the celebrations at Auschwitz (PLS) for the centenary of salesian work in Poland. Before the celebrations the Rector Major had a meeting with the Polish Provincials to deal with some immediate matters, practical problems, and missionary perspectives in view of the third millennium.

The centenary celebrations brought together 4,000 persons between SDBs, FMAs, other members of the Salesian Family and youngsters. It was a deeply felt celebration with a strong sense of solidarity.

From 27 to 29 June, Fr Van Hecke returned to Poland once again, to preside at the clothing ceremony of 16 novices at the novitiate of Swobnica (PLN), and to take part in the installation of the new Provincial of Breslau (Fr Franciszek Krason).

On 24 July he left Rome for Belgium, where at Hechtel (North Belgium) he took part in the closing events of *Euroforum*, the gathering of 900 young people from 14 different European countries, to discuss the theme: *the educative movement around Don Bosco "for and with the young", a qualified factor in the building of Europe*.

From 1 to 22 August he was in Germany, based at the provincial house of Munich, to follow a course in German. On 14-15 August he went to Junkerath, to receive the first profession of the novices and the renewal of vows of some young confreres.

After Germany the Regional spent a week in Moscow from 23 to 29 August, during which he

had a meeting with the provincial council of the EST Circumscription to verify the results of the Extraordinary Visitation of the previous year, and at Oktiabrskij received the professions of the novices and the renewal of vows of other confreres.

He returned to Rome on 29 August, and took part from 7 to 11 September in the intermediate session of the General Council which studied the eastern zone of the North European Region, and then left for Lviv in Ukraine where he stayed from 11 to 14 September for a brief visit of animation to the confreres of the Byzantine and Latin rites.

From 18 to 20 September Fr Van Hecke was in Slovakia, to participate in the Youth Festival at Zilina, which brought together 4,300 young people. He took the opportunity to have a meeting with the provincial council. Then from 21 to 25 September he was in Holland for a visit of animation to the confreres and meetings with the provincial council and various groups of lay people involved in the salesian mission.

From 26 to 30 September he presided at a meeting of the Council of the Polish Provinces at Szczyrk in Poland. Among the various items dealt with, particu-

lar attention was given to the constitution of the Federation of Salesian Schools in Poland, the office of the Polish Council, the Polish edition of the Salesian Bulletin, and the preparation for the team visit to Poland due to take place at Czestchowa from 5 to 9 October 1999: for this the theme chosen by the provinces is: *Salesian Youth Spirituality in the Polish Church*. Consideration was also given to the Interprovincial Formation Commission and the proposal to draw up the Provincial Directory (R 87). Approval was given to the Regulations for the Council of the Polish Provinces, and a Polish section was set up of the Association of Salesian Historians (*Polska Sekcja Stowarzyszenia Historyków Salezjan-skich*) with its office at Lublino.

After returning to Rome for a few days, Fr Van Hecke began the *Extraordinary Visitation of the Munich Province*. Among various meetings that took place during the visitation were those with the Curatorium of Benediktbeuern on 17 October, with the two provincial councils of GEK and GEM, and participation in the ordination of five deacons for the provinces of Germany and Austria, and in the 1st Congress of the Past-pupils of Germany

which took place on 28 November at Munich.

On 28 October the Regional returned to Rome for the winter session of the General Council.

The Councillor for the West Europe Region

24 July. Fr Filiberto Rodriguez left Rome for Madrid to begin a rapid visit of animation to the communities of the Bilbao Province. Numerous summer camps and colonies are organized in this period by the province and by individual communities, and it is interesting to see how in these free-time activities ever more importance is given to explicitly formative and religious aspects.

The Regional spent the first week of August visiting some of the salesian works in the León Province, especially in the Golizia region. At both Bilbao and León he was able to meet with confreres engaged in the spiritual exercises.

16 August. At Sanlúcar la Mayor he received the *first professions* of all the novices of Spain. This was in fact the first year when there had been a single novitiate for all the Spanish provinces, and Fr Rodriguez took advantage of the occasion to

hold a meeting with representatives of all the provinces, for the purpose of giving clearer definition to the responsibility they shared for all the houses of formation, and in particular for the novitiate, which (at least for the coming year 1998-99) will continue to be a common novitiate.

After a few days with his family, the Regional was present in the province of Madrid in the *days of programming* for the new year in three different areas. During these days he presented the letter which the Rector Major had written to the Provincials of Spain and Portugal.

31 August. He began the *Extraordinary Visitation of the Province of Valencia*, which was carried out with all the accustomed details and meetings. He was able to appreciate the good organization of the province, the high level of the knowledge and assimilation of salesian documents and of the directives of the Rector Major, the creativity in pastoral work, vitality in group-activities, increasing community commitment in pastoral work for vocations, involvement of lay people in organizational and directive tasks, and interesting initiatives in formation work which is going ahead in general. The Visitation

concluded on 7 November after meetings with the provincial council and the Rectors.

17-19 October. The Regional took part at Madrid in the 48th *Session of the Iberian Provincial Conference*, during which were inaugurated the restructuring carried out in the "Casa Don Bosco" and the new premises for the National Centre for Youth Pastoral Work. One of the principal items of the meeting was the preparation of the Team Visit scheduled for next year at Santiago di Compostela.

20-22 October. Still at Madrid, he took part in the *Days of the Salesian Family*, organized for the whole of the Region by the Department of the Salesian Family. Provincial delegates were present from various groups of the Family from Belgium, France, Portugal and Spain. Present too were Fr Antonio Martinelli, and a team from the central department in Rome.

After the visitation of Valencia Fr Rodriguez left for France where he animated several days of discernment in view of the appointment of the new Provincial of what will be the single French province. On 9 November he had a meeting with the Rectors of the present southern province at

Lyons and on the 10th with those of the northern province at Paris.

13 November. He attended one of the normal *CIFO* meetings at Farnière (Belgium), and then for the next two days presided at the *Annual Meeting of the Provincial Councils of the three French-speaking Provinces*. Here again the main point was the preparation for the Team Visit which will cover the whole Region and will be held at Santiago di Compostela. To guide them in their reflections the participants had the help of Fr Schepens SDB, who developed the theme: *Religious life and the salesian charism in a secularized world: situation, discernment, perspectives*.

16 November. The Regional left France for Lisbon, where he had a meeting with the Rectors and Provincial Council at Fatima, and launched the consultation for the appointment of the new Provincial. He then went on to call at various houses in the Portuguese Province, for brief visits of animation in line with the letter sent by the Rector Major to the Provinces of Spain and Portugal.

25 November. He visited the theological studentate of Madrid to speak with the confreres from the Valencia Province and give them the conclusions of the ex-

traordinary visitation recently completed.

26 November. He visited the formation community of Burgos where there are students of philosophy from the Provinces of Portugal, Bilbao, Madrid and Léon. This time the purpose was to extend to the students from Portugal the consultation for the appointment of the new Provincial.

28 November. He assisted at the opening of the celebrations for the centenary of the work at Sagunto, Valencia. It was the first centenary of a salesian work in this province and the celebrations expressed the gratitude on the part of all for the great and delicate work done by the Salesians in Valencia during the past century, especially in the field of the education of the needy classes.

29 November. Fr Rodriguez returned to Rome for the winter session of the General Council.

The Regional Councillor for Italy and the Middle East

In the second half of August Fr Giovanni Fedrigotti took part in a series of national and provincial meetings.

22-23 August. Belluno: an ongoing formation meeting for

priests and brothers of the "quinquennium".

25 August, Rome: a group of FMA promoters of their youth review *Primavera*: to them he spoke on *the importance of the press in the salesian charism*.

28 August, Mestre: assembly of the province of St Mark, Venice, for a reflection and dialogue in preparation for the Provincial Chapter.

29 August, Rome San Tarcisio, a meeting with confreres of the CISI area preparing for perpetual profession.

31 August, Rome - Villa Sora, provincial assembly of the Roman Province, in view of the new pastoral year.

2 September. He began the Extraordinary Visitation of the Verona Province, which was to continue until 22 November.

13 September, Milan-S.Ambrogio. Meeting with the young animators of the Milan Province for the launching of their pastoral program.

27-28 September, Turin. For the ceremony of the departure of the missionaries and the meeting of the missionary consulting group.

2 October, Rome-Generalate. Fr Fedrigotti took part in a meeting of the Rector Major, the Vicar

General and the two provincial councils of Venice and Verona, to verify the point reached in the ongoing dialogue concerning a progressive collaboration and convergence between the two provinces.

3-6 October, Rome-Sacro Cuore. Meeting of the CISI on *Social Communication*, organized by the Central Department through the national sector. In a meeting of the CISI Presidency on the 6th emphasis was placed on the urgent need for greater collaboration between the CNOS-FAP and CNOS-SCUOLA. An outline plan was drawn up for the *formation of directive personnel for salesian schools*. After a long discussion the approval of a *Quality Project for salesian schools* was deferred for a year. The theme proposed by the CISI for the Team Visit in the year 2000 was chosen: *Vocational animation in Italy, with particular attention to adult vocations and the vocation of the Brother*.

18 October, Trieste. The Regional represented the Rector Major at the conclusion of the celebrations for the centenary of the salesian work.

20 October, Rome, in the offices of the CEI, he took part in the

meeting of the *National Council of the Catholic School*.

27 October, Como. He met with the provincial chapter of the Milan Province to launch the consultation preceding the appointment of the new Provincial.

22 November, Monteortone. He met with the provincial chapter of the Verona Province for the conclusion of the Extraordinary Visitation.

23-27 November, Rome-Sacro Cuore. He presided at the national meeting of the Sector for Youth Pastoral Work, which carried out a wide review of the national panorama, pointing out some points and dimensions in need of special attention, such as: the provincial team for youth pastoral work, the function of the publication *Spazio animatori*, the anticipation of the approval of the calendar of youth pastoral activities, support for and pastoral assessment of *Dimensioni* and *Mondo Erre*, the presence of salesian laity in the associations to safeguard the charism, the progress of the Salesian Youth Movement and the relationship between the national and provincial secretariats.

5. DOCUMENTS AND NEWS ITEMS

5.1 Strenna 1999

The following is the official English translation of the Strenna of the Rector Major for the year 1999, which takes its inspiration from the third year of preparation for the Jubilee of the Year 2000

*"BLESSED BE GOD, THE FATHER
OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST"*

(Eph 1,3)

LET US TURN TO HIM WITH THE LOVE
OF SONS AND DAUGHTERS
SO THAT WITH OUR YOUNG PEOPLE
WE CAN BUILD A WORLD
OF FRATERNAL PARTNERSHIP.

5.2 Horizons, attitudes and tasks of the director of the Salesian Bulletin.

We give below the full text of the address of the Rector Major to the Directors of the Salesian Bulletin gathered in Rome. In it he outlines the figure and task of the director, but also indicates what the Bulletin represents for the Congregation and the Salesian Family, according to the mind of Don Bosco and the times in which we are now living.

Good morning to you one and all, and my best wishes that the

work in which you will be engaged in these days may prove to be substantial and long enduring for the Salesian Bulletin throughout the world. I congratulate Fr Antonio Martinelli and his Department on the preparation of this meeting and on the objectives it has in view.

We are living in a period which is like a junction or interchange with regard to the future. We frequently hear words linked with the scenario of the third millennium: *transverseness, globalization, multimedia*. The challenge of the third millennium means that we too must rethink many realities, and among them is this humble instrument which for the Congregation is nevertheless very important: the Salesian Bulletin.

1. A little stocktaking.

I will start the ball rolling by mentioning some points you will certainly have thought about already, but which it is always interesting to recall.

a. The importance of the Bulletin in Don Bosco's project.

First among these points is the importance the Bulletin had in Don Bosco's plan. In his life there are moments of fertile intuition, followed by long periods in which

those intuitions reached patient realization. For instance, the moment when the oratory appeared to him as his "system and his work" was one of intuition and creativity. Then followed the many years it took for the oratory to reach its full form. The same is true of the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians: it was prepared for by devotion to our Lady present in Don Bosco's life from his earliest years. At a particular moment there came the idea of the Title and the Sanctuary; and then the many years of realization of the phenomenon which has since grown up with and around the Sanctuary: the popular Marian dimension of salesian pastoral work. Something similar took place even with the idea of founding the Congregation: the moment of intuition when the idea flashed across his mind, and then the slow process of gathering and forming candidates, the drawing up of the Rule, the giving shape to the community.

We must include the Bulletin in a list of this kind. The idea came to him that it would be good to have a publication at the service of his work and Family, and from this intuition followed the unfolding of the various works, efforts, mini-organizations etc.

Don Bosco saw in advance what did in fact take place: the Bulletin gave a new existence to the Congregation and the salesian movement. Analogously we could say in modern terms that it gave it a virtual existence in a space which is not physical but social, and one in which it created a network of harmony, knowledge and collaboration.

On this passage alone in the life of our Father one could build up a whole conference. It is up to our historians to do so. What is important for us at the present time is to distinguish clearly the different consistency of the initiatives which Don Bosco took up. An occasional work he may have taken up for a while is one thing, but quite another are those initiatives which appear to be determining elements, which have a permanence and continuing development in his thought and in his work: the decision to work for the young, the idea of the oratory, the trade schools, the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians, the foundation of the Congregation, the Salesian Bulletin.

The Bulletin, in fact, was linked with his sensitivity for a wholesome press, but at the same time, and within that category, it had an original existence and

configuration and its own particular objective in respect of the Congregation. For this reason not only Don Bosco but after him all his successors without exception have spoken of its importance and identity; and that is why, according to art.41 of the Regulations, its editing is placed under the responsibility of the Rector Major and his Council.

b. Specific purpose of the Bulletin.

The importance given to the Bulletin in all the phases through which the Salesian Family has so far passed, is due to the functions it has fulfilled. We can sum them up as follows, following the words of Don Bosco himself:

- to extend, I do not say the glory and renown, but the apostolic possibilities of the Congregation and its image, far beyond what could be done by works and individuals;
- to unite spiritually all those who feel linked in some way with salesian work, creating a sense of belonging and of availability for collaboration;
- both the preceding objectives must be connected through the spreading of the salesian spirit expressed in the works and ed-

ucative mentality of the Salesian Family.

These effects were already there in Don Bosco's perspective and history has promptly confirmed them.

On these points I do not intend to dwell at greater length. I am sure you have already considered them, or will do so later. I wanted simply to recall them.

2. Reference points for the present orientation of the Bulletin

When we start thinking about how to realize the same objectives at the present day, the first things that come to mind are not means or instruments, but the context in which we are living. The means, in fact, would serve little purpose if we were unaware of our coordinates in culture, in the Church and in the Congregation. They would be an investment with very little to show for it. It is not a matter for having an organ for saying something, even something good. What is necessary and urgent is to enter into dialogue with today's society and the Church. And so the first and indispensable requirement is to know in what context we are speaking today when we say

something about salesian facts.

I want to tell you how I myself see the present context, so as to justify the directives which, as Rector Major, I shall be giving to you. Even this aspect I cannot develop at any great depth. Each point I mention would really require a lengthy commentary, and our time is limited. It is a matter of the signs of the times through which we are living and which must inspire the orientation of the Bulletin in the coming years.

For how many years? We cannot fix in any precise way how long the signs will last, and hence how long the directives will be valid; they may be valid for three, six or ten years; it all depends on the speed of change. But it is important to keep our gaze fixed on reality and be determined not to remain or work on its margins.

What then are these signs or coordinates, i.e. the salesian, ecclesial and cultural climate in which we are living, and which we must take as a point of reference?

a) *The "era" of the Congregation: Salesians and laity.*

From the salesian point of view the overall setting in which we find ourselves placed today is the reflection of the GC24, and to be still more concrete the aspiration

and goals contained in the six-yearly program of the Rector Major and his Council (cf. Supplement to AGC 358).

On this point we must be clear about what precisely we mean. It is not a matter of fulfilling literally the various points of the program, but of placing ourselves mentally in the setting they create and foresee.

Both the programming and the General Chapter emphasize the value of lay realities.

And what are these lay realities? All the events, themes and topics which concern the human person and foster the dignity of social life among men and which the Church takes on herself, to clarify them, study them more deeply and bring out the sense of salvation they carry with them.

The lay reality is also the new participation of the laity in the Church's mission, indicated by authoritative ecclesial documents, and taken by the Congregation as the main objective of the present six-year period.

What consequences does this imply for the Salesian Bulletin? An immediate one is that the Bulletin must not become a clerical review, and this is the least of the consequences. It must reflect the reality in which people are

living. Do not therefore make every issue a collection of words and photographs of the Pope, the Bishop, the Rector Major, the Superior General, the provincial and local Superiors in turn. This is a first consequence: the setting is the world, with the general events which the Church herself deals with because they represent man's pilgrimage.

Speaking of the laity we Salesians, together with the GC24, have in mind a whole network of persons, Christians and of other religions, who through collaboration, similarity of view, friendship, or because they are attracted by generous projects, have Don Bosco as a point of reference and aggregation. One of our first intentions, but not the only one, is to reach these persons to increase their number and communication with them. But we do not stop there. We want to speak also to others, not only to gain new sympathizers, but to say a word they are perhaps waiting to hear on questions which concern their lives.

Among these persons the word "lay" reminds us of those circles particularly close to us, constituted by groups of the Salesian Family. And so the indication to look

to the lay reality must be linked with keeping in mind the Salesian Family, the salesian movement, and the numerous friends of Don Bosco.

To get a message across to these persons we must choose events for presentation with an eye to effectiveness, i.e. we must keep in mind that there are many fine things worthy to be recounted, but we must choose those which more clearly and immediately present the salesian reality. I will not go into the consequences of this because you, who are directors of publications, are well able to do that for yourselves, but you can easily understand that in the choosing of material you must not be influenced by friendship or the desire of someone hell bent on getting his name and work in the Bulletin. Provincial Newsletters and the like can provide for such people, but not the Salesian Bulletin which is addressed, so to speak, to public opinion.

b. *Ecclesial climates.*

I use this expression to indicate the atmosphere, the macro-tendencies, the milieu or phase, through which the Church is living. As well as perceiving the salesian climate, it is important

to be attentive to the events of the Church.

Let me recall just one of them. The Church is living under a great pressure, which is also a great challenge: the *new evangelization*. It is important that the director of a Catholic review have a sound understanding of what the new evangelization implies. On all sides you will hear expressions recommending devotions, propagating all kinds of initiatives and analyzing complex questions of the present day.

The new evangelization means the ecclesial presence and the proclamation of Christ in geographical settings opened up by the events of recent times. It means interventions in the modern areopagi, as they are often called, and dialogue with man's questions and problems. They are all words which sound somewhat difficult, but in reality they regard the things of every day. The problems of man are life and death, work and pay, culture and ethical questions, education and peace.

If the director of a review has a sound understanding of the present trend of the Church and follows it effectively, it will improve the messages and comments he offers in his review.

Sometimes I imagine that the director of the Salesian Bulletin will be one of the persons who comes readily to mind when you are looking for someone to give an interesting conference on the new evangelization. That should not cause him any difficulty. People think, in fact, "If he directs a publication which carries Christian messages, he must have a good idea of the line being followed today by the Church".

The ecclesial climate is also marked by the present dimensions of *communion*., and here at least two aspects need to be considered: the communion between priestly, lay and consecrated vocations – clarified and set out in the three Apostolic Exhortations which concern these states: *Pastores dabo vobis, Christifideles laici, Vita Consecrata* – and then the wider communion which is nowadays possible to various extents.

The Pope has been called the "world's parish priest" because, just as we have the global village in the civil environment, we have the global parish in the ecclesial setting.

From this we can draw an immediate consequence: no longer is it true to say that we must carry only local news, because mat-

ters taking place far away are of no interest.. Nothing is any longer distant in the life of the Church. Things can happen in Rome, in India or China, and be very important for Tierra del Fuego because they are great signs of ecclesial vitality. Geographical distance is no longer a criterion of the importance of a piece of information for the people of a locality. Small local matters are material for news bulletins which are updated frequently during the day; they are the proper places for them.

For a monthly publication like the Bulletin, the communication dimension is the same as that of the ecclesial climate: dialogue with the world. That means giving consideration to the salient points which are making history, because they regard man. Yesterday the Pope spoke of immigration, of those who speculate in this field and put at risk the lives of poor people. There are events which take place frequently here and there and which are signs of great phenomena on which the Church has a word to say, to provide a Christian standpoint in their respect.. And maybe the Congregation too has an experience to communicate or an initiative to present.

Evangelization and communion have acquired a particular intensity in the Jubilee period which began yesterday, the first Sunday of Advent (29 November), with the proclamation of the Bull for the Holy Year. And as regards the Jubilee, it is not just a matter of making frequent reference to it, but of taking up the great motives it brings to individuals and humanity in general, i.e. of getting into it spiritually and acting from within it.

c. The emergence of social communication.

A third sign to take note of regards specifically this world of ours: it is the emergence of social communication, able to reach simultaneously with the same message a large number of subjects and modify the manner of communication between individuals and groups.

We need to note that this is a pervasive phenomenon; there is concurrence, overlapping and confusion among the messages, and specifically it is multimedia in nature, making use simultaneously of widely differing kinds of means and languages.

It is difficult, for example, for a review to be a review and nothing else. It has other instruments

and channels which function in league with one another: like the *Internet*, diskettes and gadgets you are offered. Some of them are linked with the radio, television and cultural centres.

Briefly, a leaflet by itself in so pervasive a reality as this does not succeed in doing a great deal, even if it is sent to selected subjects. And this should make it clear to us that the Bulletin must not be isolated from other forms of communication which can exist in the Provinces or in the Church. They must be linked in a network.

Another aspect to be kept in mind is that social communication is a setting for dialogue. One cannot be satisfied only with sending messages, with a conversation which is one-sided only. Today interactivity is the norm for almost the whole of the multimedia world; you send messages and you receive reactions; you ask questions and you get replies. Interaction is becoming possible even with TV, which is becoming digital.

Communication is meant to be the means used by dialogue to create images, but also to animate and give life to initiatives. Some reviews and radio transmitters have become centres with

which people can collaborate in favour of causes of concern to the environment locally or far away: there are frequent flash messages, appeals, offers of help for initiatives launched by the centre or particular groups: the communication leads to action, and not only to written or spoken words.

d. Globalization

One of the signs of the times in which we are living is *globalization*. This indicates in general that phenomena are manifested simultaneously in parts of the world widely distant from one another. A variation in the Stock-market is felt in Manila at the same time as in London; Coca Cola sells in Samoa as in Edinburgh and for the same reasons. Everyone can think of numerous daily examples. There are even macro-tendencies of thought and culture which cross all continents.

Globalization also indicates the possibility that something which is local and particular, takes on or gives rise to a worldwide interest.

What is said of the globalization of secular events in general, can be said of the Congregation in particular. For us Salesians too the facts have worldwide dimensions, and not only because of the fact that we now have

foundations in 120 countries. Things which happen in places far from where we ourselves live, e.g. in China or Vietnam, are of interest to us. If the situation changes dramatically in that part of the world, we all want to know about it. As the Rector Major passes from one place to another, confreres and members of the Salesian Family always ask how things are in Eastern Europe and in China. For your consolation I can tell you that they also ask how things are doing in northern and central Europe, because they all have a rough idea of the vocational movement and the condition of the faith in this area.

We too, therefore, are living globalization in the sense that many phenomena are common, and that something happening in one part of the world is of interest to those living in another part.

It must be remembered also that globalization represents the possibility of a wide-ranged linkage for combined action on specific matters. Examples are not hard to find.

3. Guidelines for the Salesian Bulletin

In the light of this frame of reference and of these coordinates,

what guidelines can I give you for the Salesian Bulletin? I put some forward for discussion, in fulfillment of art.41 of the Regulations which says: "*The Salesian Bulletin is edited in accordance with the directives of the Rector Major and his Council in various editions and languages*".

a. Salesian perspectives.

In the first place I recommend that you take up and maintain its salesian character. In the title "Salesian Bulletin", the term *salesian* from a grammatical point of view is an adjective; but in reality it is more like a noun, because the Bulletin is characterized by the fact that it looks at and assesses things in a salesian light, and represents the sensitivity of all those persons who recognize themselves in the salesian charism and mission.

We could use another word instead of Bulletin. We are attached to the latter because it comes to us from Don Bosco, but it is no more than a material definition expressing the kind of publication: it is a bulletin, not a newspaper. The substance is indicated on the other hand by the adjective *salesian*, which implies that we read human events from a salesian standpoint and con-

tribute to discussions which are of interest to us according to a salesian criterion.

Now if *salesian* is the substance, it means that if the salesian aspect fails, so does the review. If the salesian aspect is not evident or even disappears altogether, the review loses its identity. We must therefore be not only materially faithful, but deep and substantial in our salesian vision.

The salesian view should be expressed in various forms and in a creative manner, i.e. not by endless repetition of the same hackneyed phrases, but by changed and enriching expressions. It can be expressed from a pedagogical perspective, from that of spirituality, and sometimes from a simple expression of human sensitivity towards certain problems; everything depends on the theme concerned and the public you are addressing.

And I would add that a salesian view and perspective of this kind should characterize every article. It should influence not only the editorial but the choice of every fact and message, and even the jokes and cartoons. It produces a strange feeling in fact when the whole Bulletin seems to be flowing in a certain direction and then

one suddenly comes across a comic-strip or a photograph which seems to have nothing to do with all the rest but of which the sole purpose is to raise a laugh at all costs.. The *salesian ethos* should characterize the perspective of all the articles, and of each issue as a whole; and it should characterize the series of issues which justifies the masthead.

For greater clarity and to remove any lingering doubts, when we speak of *salesianity* or *salesian ethos* we are not talking about the quantity of salesian matter that is included. It is not necessary to include every commemoration that takes place in the province or in the world. We are not even referring to the transcription of texts of the Salesians and Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, nor even to the presentation of salesian works. What we have in mind is above all is the *criterion used in selecting themes or subjects from widely different settings*.

Church events or topics can be chosen, but we should know why particular ones are selected. Some fact or widespread opinion from the secular context can be taken, even one with political aspects. In Italy at present there is a lot of discussion going on about

the school: I remember recently writing an editorial for the Salesian Bulletin about freedom and scholastic equality. Space can be given over to a discussion of this kind, but even then you must consider what the theme is and why it is chosen. Facts of the Congregation and the Salesian Family can be selected, as in fact is always done, but even here you must have a salesian criterion for rationing the space allowed them.

In addition to the criteria for choosing themes, subjects and events, the salesian perspective indicates the *key for their interpretation*. We have interests, culture and specific sensitivities: the sensitivity of educators, interests in youth affairs, humanistic openness. It is not necessary to repeat the words, but it is important to keep the reference points in mind. Repetition of words merely tires the reader. What counts is the standpoint, which must never be closed but always original.

No one ever provides information which is cold and detached; that kind of information does not exist; there are always some elements it emphasizes and puts in order with a certain succession which puts the important items at the centre of attention; some of

the elements are commented on and others not.. The same kind of thing happens with us when we draw up news items. There is a key for putting the items in a certain order, for commenting on some and passing over others, and for adding the titles.

I can tell you of two impressions I have acquired from reading the Bulletins. I must confess that I do not have time to read all of them from cover to cover. Every now and then I pick up one or other of them in turn. Sometimes I note a certain lack of elaboration, that some event has been reported only materially, just as it took place. Certainly an intelligent reader will fill out the picture, but the writer does not seem to have put in much of his own thought and reflections; he has just put down the facts, and in some haste.

Other Bulletins are variable in their elaboration: in some articles one notes an educative sensitivity and attention to salesian history; others are rather generic, without anything specific and almost without personality. And one wonders with what criteria were the contents chosen, in what key were they written, how were they put together.

A teacher who once taught us

something about journalism told us that in an article, even a short one, only 30% of the material comes from observed facts, another 35% stems from personal inspiration, and a further 35% from the ability to make comparisons with other sources which should be addressed.

The first point then in the realization of Salesian Bulletins is to preserve the specific salesian nature, the salesian outlook and perspective, the salesian standpoint.

b. Universal openness

The second thing I recommend to you is this: give to the Bulletin a *universal openness*. We have already referred to globalization, to a worldwide approach, to the interest attaching to items taking place on the opposite side of the world from our own, to interculturality. We are not in a parish; we are rather in a global village.

Attention and openness to the universal can be understood in three senses.

In a *geographic* sense: the gaze covers all the contexts where Salesians are working. Naturally not everything can be packed into a single number, but the director must be careful about two points: sensitivity, which means

he must be a man of the world and not of the local village or parish, and availability for the acceptance of a wide range of material. If sensitivity is lacking because the director thinks the Bulletin should respond only to the interests of his own country, big or small as it may be, or if he does not have material (i.e. information) readily available, he cannot produce a Bulletin open to the universal.

I have already referred to the interest people show (and in particular our Cooperators and friends) in obtaining news of the salesian world. Nowadays the including of world news is motivated also by another need: that of educating to globalization. We assert it for pupils, but it is true for everyone.

In addition to casting our eyes around the world to gather significant news items from every part, in line with the era in which the Congregation, the Church and the world are living, universal openness means *setting the reported facts in their proper context*. I can best express this by being a bit provocative: salesianity yes, salesianism and parochialism no. Salesianity means that in dialogue in the Church we offer our charismatic vision to others.

Parochialism means giving the impression that for us the only things of importance are ourselves and the matters we are concerned with.

The requirement must be applied also to the ecclesial environment: setting the facts in context in the life of the Church. Once again it is not a matter of writing explicit articles on the ecclesial dimension, but rather of seeing the kind of set-up we give to our news items, what connection and references we link with them. You could call it "educating to catholicity": knowing how to insert the Salesian Family into the great communion of the Church. The strongest impression of the Synods, which are being celebrated in the context of the new evangelization, is this: the Church is becoming more and more convinced that its communion, if it can find new and efficacious forms of becoming more practical, can have an unparalleled influence on the world. Think of the significance of the fact that all the Episcopal Conferences of America unite together to give a certain direction to evangelization, or to influence certain themes or orientations of society. We too must enter this "catholic" line of communion.

Finally the third sense of uni-

versal is being *attentive to variation in human environments*. There are social problems that cannot be overlooked, and their inclusion does not make the Salesian Bulletin a "social" review; there are pastoral concerns, e.g. concerning marriage and the family, which should appear occasionally in the Bulletin; there are political questions closely linked with evangelization. We do not approach legislation concerning life and the family as a Parliament would, but if we do not want to be out of the world altogether we must be able to express our point of view. There are also moral problems. The Salesian Bulletin is interested in all these things, even though it is not a youth review, nor a catechetical review, nor yet a pastoral review: it presents salesian experience and expresses a reflection and sensitivity on human problems and the life of the Church.

c. Sense of unity.

After the salesian perspective and universal openness, I would put as a point for particular attention the *sense of unity*.

Here it is pertinent to ask: Should there be one Bulletin or many? You have already answered the question: a Bulletin

with different editions. The latter have their appropriate degree of autonomy and no one wants to put limits to it. We have always been generous in encouraging creativity. But at the same time the different editions have a linkage between them; they have a charismatic unity, a common identity as the organ of the Family and the salesian movement.

At the present day charismatic unity could have further institutional and operational expressions to make it evident that the different Bulletins are national editions of a worldwide review. The reader should be able to see this for himself. And there is no need to be surprised at the fact as though excessive centralization were involved. Anyone reading the *Readers' Digest* in (say) Mato Grosso knows that he is reading an edition which takes up, adjusts or adds items for the local market, but he knows that there is an editorial group which is responsible for the parent English, French or other edition. The editorial group decides the line and style to be used, and those reading the review in whatever language are aware that the same tendencies and criteria are followed.

I have something analogous in mind for the Bulletin: autonomy,

the choice of material, the manner of elaboration are different, but the characteristics and orientation are the same, in Italian, in English, in French, in Spanish: a worldwide review able to respond to regional interests, but linked in an international network following a certain line and policy.

This unity of the Bulletins, which is one of content and identity, could have further manifestations, e.g. a common *logo*, a common basic program, the word of the Rector Major included regularly or when fitting.

These are all things that you yourselves will agree on as you look to the future.

d. Editorial line and policy.

The fourth guideline I recommend to you concerns editorial line and policy.

The three preceding points tell us that we cannot go ahead with a risk of discontinuity or individualism caused by the director of the time giving his own orientation to the Bulletin: youth, theology, following modern trends like feminism or the theology of liberation, or by another kind of director concentrating on a devotional, defensive or apologetic line. These are exaggerations, but I use them to emphasize that it is

not possible for an institution to have a review of this importance without an ensured editorial line and policy.

The *editorial line* can vary, because the times have their own variations; but it must be *known*, i.e. well founded; *explicit*, i.e. expressed in black and white so that it can be public and well known, at least by those involved or likely to be involved in the editing process; *coherent*, so that statements made at different times are seen to be consistent; and *maintained*, both by writers of articles and as one director follows another.

Our success in different fields as a Congregation has so far been due to the fact that we have combined two things very well: creativity and a certain individualism linked with it. Our missionaries are outstandingly capable of conceiving a work, finding funds, and putting up buildings. They are creative, but at the same time there is an individual slant to their work, so that often you may hear them say: "I wonder whether my successor will have so many friends, receive so many donations, and be able to manage this structure?" No one knows. Individualism is a risk associated with creativity, but it can be con-

trolled or neutralized without killing off creativity itself.

Something similar would happen with the Bulletin if each one followed his own inclinations and possibilities, sought for collaborators of the same mentality, associated with journalists, and dreamed up a new cover without any reference to rules or norms.

One person said to me: "I want to make the Bulletin a youth review", and I replied: "Fine, if you are talking about the tone and presentation, or about having a central point for the contents; but there it stops. The Bulletin is not the Salesian Congregation's review of youth pastoral work or of education". The Salesian Bulletin is more wide-ranging in its interests: it is addressed to a more general public.

It is important therefore to have an editorial line and policy which is known, explicit, coherent and maintained from one editorial team to another, one which leaves space for creativity but at the same time controls and shapes it.

e. Interactivity.

Let me say here in the first place that nowadays hardly any review or organ of communication sends out messages without

being exposed to reaction and dialogue. Radio transmitters base many programs on dialogue itself: talk-shows; reviews have a section for letters to the editor; some of them have a site in the *Internet*.

The *Salesian Bulletin* too should not be a product sealed and sent out from a laboratory, but an apostolic and pastoral work prompting interlocutors in various forms. Dialogue is not always verbal. The attention of the director to the mood and spirit of readers, occasional communication with all of them and regular communication with some, are complementary forms of a well-constructed dialogue.

The participation of the *Salesian Family* is desirable in this interactivity; we need to get over a purely individual kind of management. But on participation of this kind I would like to make two comments. The first is to emphasize that it is necessary. Rather than say: "I'll do the whole lot myself", it is better to say: "Let's get together on the matter". And the second comment is to clarify that this participation is not connected with defence or representation but with competence. We are working with all the *Salesian Family*: let

those who are competent step forward: competent in direction, in editing, in distribution.

Occasionally there can be a revision session, to which representatives can be invited. But in the normal run of editing it is useless to have present incompetent representatives who are there only to defend their own group and win the right to a certain space or number of articles. We must be open, leave space for collaboration and accept it when it is offered, but at the same time maintain a proper criterion, which is that of competence. An editorial team is a professional organism, not a political one.

And finally let us insert in the interactivity what we talked about earlier: communication between *Salesian Bulletins*. I will say no more about this because I am sure this worldwide meeting will aim at a greater interchange in this matter.

4. Dispositions necessary in directors of the *Salesian Bulletin*.

We have insisted on salesian originality, openness, universal approach, and unity of the *Bulletin*. In the light of all this, what dispositions are needed in the di-

rector of the Bulletin if he is to accomplish what is asked of him?

I shall be careful not to give you too long a list, which might lead you to think: "If that is how it is, count me out!" I will point only to some requirements of the role you are called upon to fill. In my opinion they are dispositions we all have, from the very fact we are Salesians; but they have to be re-discovered and developed according to our particular situation.

a. *Reproduce Don Bosco in yourself.*

In the first place I put an interior disposition, a desire which is also an attitude: reproduce Don Bosco in yourself, in what concerns your choices, the interpretation and communication of messages, and in general in the handling of the Bulletin. We tell Provincials: "You are Don Bosco in the province and in the area; you must think as he would think, consider what he would be worried about, and what image he would give of the Congregation". Similarly we tell directors: "You are taking Don Bosco's place as director of a school or a professional training centre; think what Don Bosco would have done with the pupils".

I do not know whether Don

Bosco ever took the title of director of the Bulletin: maybe he did. In any case you have to continue Don Bosco in the inspiration and realization of the Salesian Bulletin. And in the light of all we know about Don Bosco, it is interesting to think how he would have managed this review at the present day, what dimensions and content he would give to it, what choices he would make as regards readers and style.

There is the historical Don Bosco, i.e. the person who lived from 1816 to 1888. We understand him through his biography and through historical studies. And there is also the living charismatic Don Bosco, which is the reality of the Congregation and the Salesian Family with the organic communion in which mediations and moments of discernment have their importance. These are all things that you will be able to take up with a journalistic style and approach.

b. *Salesian culture and formation.*

To impersonate Don Bosco well, the director of the Bulletin must have a *good salesian culture and formation*. From this standpoint too, I often think that if in a certain environment or a

certain group you wanted to know how the Congregation stands, how salesian pastoral work is progressing, or what our spirituality is like, you would think almost automatically of the director of the *Bulletin* as one who would have a deep and updated knowledge of such points.

If I wanted information about the Bank of Italy I could call the Governor. Who should one approach to know how the salesian world is progressing? The thought should come automatically that the one who will know will be the director of a salesian review who cannot possibly be ignorant of the history and of the present trends and intentions, in the light of the expansions and criteria guiding the society of whose publication he is the director. People take for granted, in fact, that the director of a review has a sound knowledge of whatever matters the review is concerned with.

Salesian culture and formation are therefore specific items in which the director of the *Bulletin* must be competent. This requires both sensitivity and study; sensitivity means interest and attention; study means careful and persevering reading, an interiorized and accumulated knowledge

of salesian matters. I cannot imagine a journalist without a personal archive in which he stores, notes and keeps handy observations and data. How otherwise could he write his articles?

I remember once visiting the office of a newspaper, something we have all wanted to do at some point in our lives. I was shown their archives, and I was told: "Look, if the Pope were to die tomorrow, which God forbid, we would bring out this file and in a couple of hours we could write the full story of his life, where he lived and was educated, all his journeys, and all the rest". In a few hours a group of journalists are able to produce a complete edition, because they have all the material ready at hand. And they do not write just anything; they reason as they write.

I have not forgotten the differences between a newspaper and a *Bulletin*; but it is unthinkable that a *Bulletin* after twenty, thirty, fifty years of existence has left nothing behind it in the archives. If today one has available the better technical means that are available, this problem can be faced in a more complete and efficacious manner.

Newspaper offices have a specialized library. It is possible to

think of a specialized library for the Bulletin where relevant material can be rapidly found. It could indeed be a neighbouring salesian library, but it should exist and it should meet the specific requirements of the Bulletin.

Briefly, we must be convinced that nowadays it is difficult to work without the necessary instruments for consultation. Salesianity, for example, has developed a great deal from a historical point of view. And it is immediately clear whether a writer has a grasp of history or not. Some articles are very poor in references; they are linked to Don Bosco and his spirit only through generic references that anyone can quote. In others it is immediately evident that the writer has gone to the sources and has made comparisons. We do not publish in the review all we have learned in consultations of this kind, because space is limited, but the background shines through the article itself, and remains also as salesian culture for other articles.

There is also, in addition to what I said earlier, dialogue possible with those locally responsible for the salesian mission, though here too it is not just a question of reproducing the words of a Provincial or council.

But speaking regularly with them puts you on the right wavelength and helps you to understand where the sensitivity of the Congregation is heading at the present time.

c. *Pastoral sense.*

The final disposition of the director to which I want to refer is his *pastoral sense*. Here we must refer to the spirituality of the communicator, which implies living and feeling internally what he wants to communicate, meditating on it and even praying about it; seeking the best way to get to the heart of people, i.e. touching the point where convictions, sentiments and resolutions are born.

You have to accept therefore the effort, the assiduous work, patience in studying, thinking, writing and improving. And all of that is flatly opposed to improvisation. It is clear that newspapers must carry articles at times which have been written in great haste, because an event took place shortly before the deadline for going to press. But, as an editor once told me, there is enough time for writing brief articles; and so they should be prepared without haste, seeking references or linkages; they should be read and read again to

correct them and give them an incisive form. This is not difficult to verify: some editorials are masterpieces. As far as elaboration is concerned, therefore, there is a rapid form and another which allows for days of reflection. To find the right form and use it is to be considered as participating in the communication of the Word of God.

Together with this, the pastoral sense includes journalistic professionalism, in the pastoral subcategory. Even in journalism there are compartments that have a common basis, but when this basis relates to specific settings it is no longer generic in character. If one presents oneself for an examination in sporting journalism, the tests turn on that area; if the examination is for a political commentator, in addition to matters in general one is tested on knowledge and flair for political aspects. You need therefore to see what pastoral journalism can signify within the phenomenon of the social communication of the Church.

And then there is vocational capacity, by which I mean the ability to form collaborators and successors. And this from two standpoints: the first of which is Salesian. You will say at once that

this depends on the Provincials, who must give you adequate helpers. This is true enough, but I would add that in some cases even having a helper alongside you does not lead to the formation of a successor, because of incompatibility or individual work.

Secondly, in addition to the salesian helpers you are given or should ask for in view of preparing a successor, there is all the formation of lay collaborators to be taken care of. They must not only be asked for material collaboration, but gradually immersed in the mentality of the review, by communication of the salesian viewpoint and spirit.

Finally, as a trait of the pastoral sense, I emphasize communion with the province: communion of mission, personal communion, communion of sensitivity.

And there you have the points I thought it well to make to you with regard to the expression of art.41 of the Regulations: "*The Salesian Bulletin is edited in accordance with the directives of the Rector Major and his Council in various editions and languages*".

Thank you for listening to me.

Rome, Sacro Cuore,
30 November 1998

5.3 Salesian Bishops

1. *Mgr. Friedrich HEIMLER,*
Coadjutor Bishop
of UMUARAMA, Brazil.

On 9 December 1998 it was announced that the Holy Father had appointed the Salesian Fr Friedrich Heimler as Coadjutor of the diocese of Umuarama, in the state of Paraná, Brazil.

He was born at Unterlaunenthal in Bavaria, Germany, on 17 February 1942, and there made his primary and secondary studies. Attracted by the salesian vocation, he entered the novitiate of Ensdorf and made his first profession on 15 August 1960.

Soon afterwards he left for the Province of Mato Grosso, Brazil, where he studied philosophy, did his practical training, and made his perpetual profession at Campo Grande in 1966. He returned to Germany to study theology at Benediktbeuern, and was ordained priest there on 12 July 1970.

Returning to Brazil, he completed his civil studies and gained the Licentiate in Literature. For

several years he was then an animator and educator, and a coordinator of studies. From 1982 to 1985 he was Rector of the College of Santa Teresa at Corumbá, and then in 1985 became provincial economist, an office he held until December 1994.

In December 1994, he became once again Rector at Corumbá, which was then preparing its centenary celebrations. Here he received his episcopal appointment.

2. *Mgr. Nicola COTUGNO,*
Archbishop
of MONTEVIDEO, Uruguay.

The *Osservatore Romano* of 4 December 1998 carried the news that the Holy Father had promoted our confrere Bishop Nicola Cotugno to the Metropolitan See of Montevideo, Uruguay, transferring him from the Diocese of Melo to which he was appointed in June 1996.

As Archbishop of Montevideo he succeeds Mgr. Giuseppe Gattardi, himself also a Salesian.

(cf. biographical data in AGC 3257, p.66).

5.4 Our dead confreres (1998 - 4th list)

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

NAME	PLACE	DATE	AGE	PROV.
L ANDALORO Agostino	Palermo	17-10-98	88	ISI
L ARIN SALSAMENDI Germán	Barcelona	19-10-98	86	SBI
P ASPINWALL Gerald	Lincoln	19-08-98	82	GBR
P BARAUT OBIOLS Luis	Sucre	19-10-98	86	BOL
P BELLO LOURO Fernando	Madrid	19-12-98	82	SMA
P BEM Józef	Kraków	16-12-98	63	PLS
P BERNARDI Eduardo	Rivera	11-11-98	60	URU
L BIEGAŃSKI Franciszek	Łódź	19-12-98	81	PLE
L BLESGRAAF Nico	s-Gravenhage	14-11-98	71	OLA
L BONGIORNO Angelo	Torino	11-10-98	81	ICP
P BUCCIERI Antonio	Shillong	03-11-98	85	ING
P CALDERONI Enzo	Firenze	30-11-98	83	ILT
P CANDIA ALSINA Edmundo	Asunción	05-11-98	77	PAR
P CAÑETE MARTINEZ Jesús	Villena	22-12-98	75	SVA
P CARCABELOS Luis Alberto	Paysandú	09-08-98	68	URU
L CASIRAGHI Domenico	Tampa	10-11-98	83	SUE
P CASTEJON BLÁZQUEZ Benigno	Madrid	20-10-98	74	SMA
E CECCARELLI Enzo	Caracas	15-11-98	80	—
<i>Eletto Vescovo nel 1974, fu per 15 anni Vicario Apostolico di Puerto Ayacucho (Venezuela)</i>				
L CHERIN Francesco	Panamá	28-09-98	92	CAM
P CIMINI Lino	Roma	23-11-98	84	IRO
L CIU LOKAVIT Mark	Banpong	14-10-98	88	THA
P CIURCIOLA Mario Tarcisio	Civitanova Marche Alta	04-11-98	85	IAD
P COMETTI Pietro	Cuiabá	27-10-98	80	BCG
P CORCORAN Denis	Cork	15-10-98	76	IRL
S CORNEJO CAMPOS César	Lima	12-11-98	25	PER
S da COSTA Inacio	Los Palos (Timor)	26-12-98	25	ITM
P DE MARIA Costanzo	Bra (CN)	10-10-98	61	ICP
P FARINA Pio	Carrasquero	06-12-98	87	VEN
L FERRERO Giovanni	Roma	23-11-98	82	UPS
P GARCIA GONZALEZ Ernesto	Granada	26-11-98	74	SCO
P GARCÍA GUITIÁN Luis	Madrid	27-10-98	77	SMA
P GENTILINI Giovanni Battista	Belluno	12-11-98	67	ILE
P GILARDONI Roberto	Buenos Aires	09-11-98	72	ABA
P GUZMÁN Juan José	San Salvador	16-11-98	74	CAM
P HOFFMANN Alfred	Amstetten	04-07-98	84	AUS
P HUGHES Francis	Kendal	16-10-98	83	GBR

NAME	PLACE	DATE	AGE	PROV.
L KAUL Johannes	Neudstadt	28-11-98	85	GEM
P KEIJERS Alphonse	Tournai	18-11-98	82	BES
P LAIMINGER Johann	Oberthalheim	25-08-98	86	AUS
P LICORDARI Salvatore	Pedara (CT)	15-11-98	78	ISI
P MADDEN James	Edinburgh	26-12-98	82	GBR
L MASSI Salvatore	Roma	03-11-98	85	IRO
P McFERRAN Sean	Belfast	12-11-98	80	IRL
P MELOTTI Luigi	Verona	06-12-98	75	IVO
P MORCELLI Geremia	Sesto San Giovanni (MI)	31-10-98	77	ILE
P MUSIELAK Leon	Poznań	24-12-98	88	PLO
L NATOLI Benjamin	Orange, NJ	30-09-98	73	SUE
L NEGRISOLO Eliseo	Sesto San Giovanni (MI)	14-10-98	75	ILE
P ORLANDI Natale	Torino	21-10-98	77	ICP
L PASSERA Mario	Roma	13-10-98	71	ISA
P PASZENDA Wojciech	Oświęcim	28-12-98	67	PLS
P PATHIYIL James Joseph	Calcutta	08-11-98	33	INC
P PAZZINI Gerardo	Campinas	27-11-98	83	BSP
P PERONO Lorenzo	Chiari	13-10-98	75	ILE
P PHALIPPOU Émile	Toulon	03-11-98	93	FLY
<i>Fu Ispettore per sei anni</i>				
P PITTAVINO Maurizio	Lanzo Torinese	01-12-98	86	ICP
P PONTI Benigno	Arese (MI)	09-10-98	78	ILE
P RIZZANTE Giovanni	Alessandria	28-11-98	94	ICP
P RIZZI Ferdinando	Negrar (Verona)	20-12-98	86	IVO
P ROMANI Mario	Savona	23-11-98	87	ICP
P RYDEL Josef	Brno	27-10-98	73	CEP
P SANNA Terenzio	Torino	29-10-98	85	ICP
P SCHMID Alois	Fulpmes, Tirol	05-09-98	81	AUS
P SILBERBAUER Johann	Wien	03-09-98	75	AUS
P SPEZIA Licério João	Blumenau (SC)	26-11-98	49	BPA
P STOLLMEIER José Carlos	Porto Alegre	08-09-98	49	BPA
P TEIXEIRA Raimundo	Belo Horizonte	23-12-98	76	BBH
P TEUGELS Filemon	Hoboken	17-11-98	80	BEN
P WELTER Paul	Marseille	06-12-98	74	FLY
P WIJSMAN Peter	Rijswijk	12-11-98	86	OLA
P WILESCHEK Otto	Heiligenstadt	06-12-98	61	GEK
P WINSTANLEY Albert	Bolton	10-10-98	80	GBR
n WOCHNER Walter Ivan Edil	Santiago de Chile	22-08-98	20	PAR
L WRIGLEY John	Farnborough	30-10-98	95	GBR
P ZAPPELLI Oreste	Roma	17-12-98	84	IRO