



acts

of the general council

year LXXXI

january-march 2000

N. 370

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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Editrice S.D.B.
Edizione extra commerciale
Direzione Generale Opere Don Bosco
Via della Pisana, 1111
Casella Postale 18333
00163 Roma

COMMUNICATION IN THE SALESIAN MISSION

"They were astonished beyond measure!

'He has done all things well;

he even makes the deaf hear and the dumb speak'."¹

1. **Let us get on the air** – ...with the Church – ...and with the Charism – Interpersonal communication. – Social communication.

2. **"He makes the deaf hear and the dumb speak"** – Change of mentality. – Conditions for communication. – The need of the moment: becoming qualified. – A communal competence.

3. **Practical guidelines.** – Community commitments. – Provincial commitments. – Conclusion.

Rome, 8 December 1999

Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception

My dear Confreres,

The year 2000 is at the door. I hope it may prove a happy one for you in the spirit of the extraordinary Jubilee which marks the watershed between the centuries and the millennia. Accompanying you in it you will have the reflection on Repentance already published,² the Strenna on Reconciliation and Peace, the Letter on the Eucharist which will reach you for the month of May, and the aid prepared for our community celebrations.³

In this letter on the other hand I want to develop quietly a point from our six-year program.⁴

When we try to imagine what our life and that of young people will be like in the coming century, we think spontaneously of the development likely to take place in social communication. The mass media already form an indispensable

¹ Mk 7,37

² cf. AGC 369, Oct.-Dec. 1999

³ cf. AGC 369, p.48

⁴ cf. AGC 358, supplement.

part of our personal equipment, almost incorporated in our way of life: newspapers, radio, TV, portable telephones, computers, internet, congresses and meetings, shows and spectacles, cultural and publishing events – these are things that mark our daily life.

Social communication fills the whole world and determines the form of human coexistence. It is of close interest therefore to the vocation of the Salesian as a disciple of Christ and, in a still more pressing manner, as one who works with the mentality of an educator in the field of advancement and evangelization.

With conviction and mental satisfaction we call ourselves sons of a Saint who was able to listen to the many voices coming from the young people and culture of his time; and he succeeded in communicating by body language, by word, and by the very structure he had created. The latter, in fact, became a specific “message” because it expressed very clearly the purpose and spirit of his mission.

In this he referred back to the spirituality of St Francis de Sales, who is now the Patron of Catholic journalists because of his ability at speaking and writing on the Christian life in a manner that could be understood by small and great, the educated and the simple, church people and those far from any kind of religion.

If we now pass on from these very brief but necessary considerations to examine the life of young people of our time, we find two feelings rising in us: we discover that their terminology, picked up from the media, risks becoming completely unintelligible to us; and we feel the urgent need to make up lost ground in the use of communication, as a response to our vocation as Salesians.

It is a matter of first attaining and then holding the fort in a reality which is in constant evolution and which in turn becomes the driving force behind an equally uninterrupted global change.

1. Let us get on the air

... with the Church

A great deal has been said on this matter in recent official documents of the Church and in comments for the annual day of social communication.

The material is abundant and touches on the various aspects of communication: from theology⁵ to the social and cultural dimension; from the formation of priests⁶ to the instruction of the faithful; from the preparation of programs to the pastoral organization of dioceses for an organic intervention in this field.⁷

I am not going to summarize the doctrine. I shall just take one or two points for consideration of an item in the theme which seems of most importance for us, from both a theoretical and practical point of view.

Paul VI had seen intuitively the epoch-making change that the evangelization of the world was undergoing and, in consequence, the new forms which the proclamation of the Gospel required.

"Our century", declares Evangelii Nuntiandi, "is characterized by the mass media or means of social communication, and the first proclamation, catechesis or the further deepening of faith cannot do without these means.

When they are put at the service of the Gospel, they are capable of increasing almost indefinitely the area in which the Word of God is heard; they enable the Good News to reach millions of people.

The Church would feel guilty before the Lord if she did not

⁵ cf. *Communio et Progressio*, pastoral instruction on the means of social communication, of 1971.

⁶ cf. Guidelines for the formation of future priests re the means of social communication, of 1986.

⁷ cf. *Aetatis novae*, pastoral instruction on social communication on the XX anniversary of *Communio et Progressio*, of 1992.

utilize these powerful means that human skill is daily rendering more perfect. It is through them that she proclaims 'from the housetops'⁸ the message of which she is the depositary. In them she finds a modern and effective version of the pulpit. Thanks to them she succeeds in speaking to the multitudes".⁹

The indication comes from the mandate given by Jesus to the Church to take the Gospel to the whole world: it is a question of speaking to multitudes, of extending almost infinitely the field where the word is heard, of taking the Good News to millions of people: and also of helping entire peoples to live lucidly the faith received in a new culture. This is a first element of which we must be clearly aware: pulpits, platforms, sites and channels of proclamation have been changed with common advantage to all.

From the abundant magisterium of John Paul II, rightly considered a great communicator, we take a second point which goes beyond the extensive capacity of the MSC and leads us to a more substantial view: social communication as culture.

"This is a complex issue, since the 'new culture' originates not just from whatever content is eventually expressed, but from the very fact that there exist new ways of communicating, with new languages, new techniques and a new psychology.

My predecessor Pope Paul VI said that 'the split between the Gospel and culture is undoubtedly the tragedy of our time', and the field of communications fully confirms this judgement".¹⁰

The conclusion is peremptory. The simple utilization of the instruments and techniques of social communication is not sufficient to achieve integration between the evangelical message and modern culture. Concepts of life and values must be discovered which are not merely widespread, but even internal to the new methods of communication. *"It is not enough, there-*

⁸ cf. Mt 10,27; Lk 12,3.

⁹ Paul VI, EN 45 (8 Dec. 1975)

¹⁰ *Redemptoris Missio*, 7 Dec. 1990, n.37

fore", they are the words of the Pope, "to use the media simply to spread the Christian message and the Church's authentic teaching. It is also necessary to integrate that message into the 'new culture' created by modern communications".¹¹

A greater effort is needed but it is indispensable, and from many points of view it is attractive because of the novelty of the panorama it offers.

I conclude this rapid review by quoting a text from the Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consecrata*, which concerns us closely, and to which the Union of Superiors General dedicated their 50th meeting.¹² In the Exhortation, in fact, social communication is placed among the modern areopagi which present the greatest challenge to the Christian mentality and hence have more need of boldness, creativity, competence and ability for new collaboration on the part of charismatic persons.

"Consecrated persons, especially those who have the institutional charism of working in this field, have a duty to learn the language of the media, in order to speak effectively of Christ to our contemporaries, interpreting their 'joys and hopes, their griefs and anxieties',¹³ and thus contributing to the building up of a society in which all people sense that they are brothers and sisters making their way to God".¹⁴

...and with the Charism

I have briefly recalled Don Bosco's experience. We could recount his story as a communicator, identify the parameters of his communication, or comment on his projects. The present-day translation of his thought we find in the Constitutions which, by reference back to him, place communication in the

¹¹ *ibid.*

¹² USG, *The challenge of communication*. Means of social communication and evangelization, Rome 1999.

¹³ GS 1

¹⁴ VC 99

perspective we spoke of earlier: as a great possibility for education and evangelization and as a central point for culture.

The relevant article of the Constitutions reads literally: "*We work in the social communication sector. This is a significant field of activity which constitutes one of the apostolic priorities of the salesian mission.*"

Our Founder had an instinctive grasp of the value of this means of mass education, which creates culture and puts before the public models of Christian living; he showed great originality in the apostolic undertakings which he initiated to defend and sustain the faith of the people.

*Following his example we utilize as God's gift the great possibilities which social communication offers us for education and evangelization".*¹⁵

The indication was present in the first draft of the Constitutions prepared by Don Bosco for presentation to the Holy See.¹⁶ Even at that time the obligation of being involved in social communication was recognized as an important part of our apostolate.

The typical areas of the mission entrusted to the Salesians, education, evangelization and social communication, are to be mutually linked together, and to reach practical decisions in harmony with the charism they must also refer to those to whom our mission is primarily addressed and to the services we want to offer them.¹⁷

From one point of view these clarifications help in considering social communication not simply as a collection of instruments or material means to be adopted or as an autonomous activity, albeit within the charism. Rather do they invest the entire salesian presence, committed to education and evangelization both through specific works and equally through other

¹⁵ C 43

¹⁶ cf. *Costituzioni* 1858, I, 5 (cf. critical text edited by F.Motto, ISS-LAS 1982, p.78)

¹⁷ cf. C 31

forms of activity which influence popular culture and through the promotion of adequate social forms.¹⁸

On the other hand, the same constitutional indications circumscribe, guide and finalize the many possibilities, modes and fields of social communication to the objectives of our mission, freeing it from the risk of getting lost among other messages and initiatives.

In this way communication becomes understood as the "main highway" for the realization of the different areas of the mission, and consequently as a necessary qualification forming part of the identity of the salesian educator, pastor, evangelizer and vocations promoter.¹⁹ He realizes this aspect of his mission "particularly by means of social communication", says art.6 of the Constitutions in line with Don Bosco's circular letter of 19 March 1885: *"I beg and beseech you therefore not to neglect this most important part of our mission. Begin it not only among the youngsters entrusted by Providence to your care, but make yourselves its apostles by word and example and through the spreading of good books"*.²⁰

Don Bosco would be even more insistent today. He would be again in the vanguard of progress, bringing influence to bear on the criteria underlying the use of the new technical instruments and drawing on them for the spreading of his own educative and cultural projects.

This is what I had in mind when at the end of the GC24 I put forward social communication as one of the main points for attention in the next six years²¹, and when with the General Council we included in the general programming some indica-

¹⁸ cf. *ibid.*

¹⁹ cf. *Project of Life of the Salesians of Don Bosco*. Guide to the Constitutions, Rome 1986, p. 400

²⁰ E. CERIA, *Don Bosco's Collected Letters*, vol. 4, p. 318ff, letter 2539. Circular 19 March 18

²¹ cf. GC24, 249-251

tions about communication, which we considered of primary importance, as well as a suitably detailed program entrusted to the Department concerned.²² Among the strategies to be adopted to make the salesian presence more effective we included: "By enabling the SDB and EPC communities to communicate with the local context by providing significant messages (kind of work, witness, interventions, statements) for human advancement and evangelization".²³

Interpersonal communication

As educators we are concerned in the first place with *interpersonal communication* between adult and young person, between laity and religious, between those rich in experience and those taking their first steps in life, between all those who have gifts to share.

In this connection I have already had the possibility of sharing some ideas with you on the concept of the community as "animating nucleus".²⁴ I take up the matter again briefly because it belongs to the completeness of the theme with which we are dealing and in its context reveals new dimensions.

The preventive system, it has been said, depends for its educative efficacy mainly on the direct face-to-face meeting. It is a meeting of trust, of friendship. If the youngster is to give his confidence, the educator too must give spontaneously what he himself is living. The family spirit fosters encounters for mutual growth: all the way from the playground to times set aside for dialogue. There are all sorts of aspects to interpersonal communication.

The same kind of thing must be extended analogously to workers, collaborators and those who share our responsibility.

²² AGC 358, suppl. cf. 2, 21 p. 15 and part II – Social communication, pp. 29-32

²³ AGC 358, suppl. cf. 2, 21 p. 15

²⁴ cf. AGC 363, "*Experts, witnesses and craftsmen of communion*"

Every educative community and every project calls for a sincere assessment of the circumstances in which the work is taking place, a verification of the plan proposed and realized, and attention to what is emerging in the hearts of the persons involved as they try to fulfil the common mission.

For the religious community, the different forms of involvement of the confreres and community justify the importance given by the Constitutions to communal meetings: council meetings, community assemblies, moments of shared prayer and the like.

Reducing the possibility of dialogue and inter-exchange in the religious community, as in the educative community, would lead to failure in developing and accompanying the process of growth of the youngsters and the others with whom we are working.

I add two observations. The new tone and new situation of fraternal life encourage us to create in our communities space and opportunity for conversation. It often happens that haste and the many things we have in hand leave insufficient space for restful and unstructured conversation, in which we can exchange personal ideas and try out our ability for sharing. When it does not become merely banal or reduced to grumbling, complaint or mere gossip, conversation offers a new way of being together, of behaving, of listening and responding, of knowing and being known; in short, of living.

The second observation is to emphasize the importance of careful and interested listening in interpersonal communication. Let others speak! Communication is disturbed not only by those who withdraw into silence, but also by those who do not help others by giving them the possibility to express their opinion. "Every Superior (...) should let others speak freely, but should say little himself"²⁵, recommended Don Bosco to the

²⁵ BRAIDO P. editor. *Don Bosco educatore*, Writings and testimonies, Rome, LAS 1987, p. 282

educator. The tendency today, picked up from TV and spectacular presentations, leads in the opposite direction.

The commitment required for educative competence in the matter of communication is therefore indeed a broad one. It includes a reform of our attitudes and habits as well as of relationships and forms of collaboration.

Social communication

Social communication goes beyond the interpersonal kind. It projects us into the world of technology which allow us to reach simultaneously with the same message a large number of people and to establish contacts and linkages without boundaries. In this sense it is a 'new' phenomenon and in its own setting continues to come up with innovations which present us with challenges.

You often hear it said that we live in a global village, in an 'electronic' country. Such expressions can be criticized, but at least they convey an idea very well: communication envelops everyone; it reaches the ends of the world, gets close to peoples and individuals: the universe in which we are living becomes wired up to an ever greater extent. On the meridians of longitude and parallels of latitude are superimposed lines of communication and electronic waves which propagate impulses, images and voices.

And the coming years promise further revolutions. What has already been achieved in the field of social communication will see in future a quantitative and qualitative development which is at present only fictitious. To this conclusion we are led by research, the market and publicity: no sooner have we acquired a portable telephone, a television receiver or a computer than we hear talk of the next model with new possibilities.

We are still in the early stages. The next novelties will not be the last ones. Indeed they could provoke a further acceleration in change. All this represents an opportunity and condi-

tioning, the importance of which we must not run the risk of undervaluing.

Three aspects need to be seriously examined by our educative and religious communities.

The first is the *new relationship between the means and the message*. Maybe this has not yet been grasped and accepted by our mentality, accustomed as we are to distinguish matter from form and content from style.

A news item, an event, a message take on different characteristics according to the instrument by which they are received. The effect when conveyed face to face by word of mouth is one thing. The value, content and reaction of the hearers are different if the same news reaches them through one or more newspapers. It changes still further if it comes by way of an announcement on the radio, and if received by television the results are different again.

The wider the range of intervention, the more attractive the manner of presentation, the more distant the interlocutor, the more "incontrovertible" the communication becomes.

There is a second aspect which concerns us very closely. Our communities, the works and activities to which we give rise like every institution become part of a *much wider system of communication*, within which they are compared and interact. They seem silent physical realities; but in fact they are sending out messages even before we have put pen to paper or taken a microphone to say who we are or talk about ourselves.

It is indispensable, therefore, to attend not only to what is realized within the work. We must keep in mind the image it creates, the reflection our action produces outside the work. A material building speaks through its sober appearance and good taste; the kind of youngster prevailing in a work is already saying something; so is the program and educational style; the environment, experienced directly or known by other

means, is already speaking. And as a result of our communication, in and with the context, what we are doing can be expanded or negatively conditioned.

Finally we must cultivate and exploit the *service to communion*.

The urgent need to enter the communication society more energetically arises from the fact that information and communication, while occupying an ever more pervasive place in human life, seem to be giving rise to a Babel, where people of the same race and tongue cannot understand each other, rather than a Jerusalem Square where the Spirit inspires a message understood in the same manner by different peoples of different tongues. Much is said indeed and many are reached through social communication, but the interpretations given of important facts and aspects of life are often distracting and contradictory. Hence the need of directing towards unity whatever good is to be found in it.

How can we be educators and evangelizers in a global village of these dimensions? How can we become efficacious when many teachers combine in the formation of the same youngsters, but with different aims one from another?

The problem consists not simply in the use of instruments, but in the ability to express ourselves adequately through them. Immersed in a universal network, we are called upon to create, exchange, and accumulate knowledge and cultural values which become common.

A person and a people are such because they are able to produce what is necessary to know and be known; because they are able to learn from others what serves for their own life and can offer to others what serves for an improvement of their own; because they are able to accumulate information, news, facts and experiences which build each one's personal history and serve for going ahead into the future.

There is a patrimony of information, of knowledge and of

useful images which is passed on. But present-day communication can lead, unless the rules are known, either to neglecting what is important, or forgetting what has been achieved with much toil.

2. "He makes the deaf hear and the dumb speak".

Jesus is the Word, and since He lives in ineffable communication with the Father and the Spirit, He communicates God to man and makes him perceive in the light of God, in their right sense and dimension, persons, events and things. And this Word penetrates into the universe and is diffused through history.

Man has to learn to dispose himself to accept it and then communicate it.

There are pages of the Gospel which well express the educative task we have in the area of communication. They are those in which is recounted how Jesus frees the capacity of the senses: eyes, hearing, tongue and the ability to perceive the world, others and the person himself.

They brought to him a deaf man who had an impediment in his speech; and they begged him to lay his hand on him. He took him aside in private, away from the crowd, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spat and touched his tongue. Then looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, "Ephphatha," that is, "Be opened."

And immediately his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly. Then Jesus ordered them to tell no one; but the more he ordered them, the more zealously they proclaimed it.

They were astounded beyond measure, saying, 'He has done everything well; he even makes the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak'".²⁶

²⁶ Mk 7, 32-37

Miracles are a manifestation of Jesus and highlight aspects of his power to save man. The loosening of organs and the recovery of the senses allow him to communicate with the full reality from which he had been cut off: the physical reality of the world, that of individuals, interior, transcendent. First they make us attentive observers and hearers of such a reality, and then they enable us to interpret it and proclaim it. In this way the man born blind began by seeing men "as though they were trees", and ended by seeing Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of God.²⁷

We note that the miracle takes place without a word on the part of Jesus. He uses simple, concrete gestures which are immediately understandable and need no comment. The individual voice of the one who was cured is immediately amplified by the "information" of all the witnesses who begin to speak and recount what has happened.

We are called upon to spread the word, to open eyes, to provide information about the gift of God. How do we set about it? We shall have to be well aware ourselves of the important realities and good communicators of them, and not simply technicians using instruments.

Change of mentality

We said that social communication invests the whole of the salesian presence. Entering into it does not imply just the touching up of some elements of this presence, leaving the others as they were; it calls rather for a *cultural conversion* which becomes translated into a spiritual commitment and a new pastoral outlook.

Until the present day our primary concern was for the results we were able to achieve through our works.

In these we succeeded, through God's grace and the activity of our confreres and collaborators, in creating a satisfying and

²⁷ cf. Mk 8, 22-24; Jn 9, 35-38

serene environment and in communicating to young people convictions, attitudes and values.

Salesian communities, moreover, linked themselves with the social context in which they happened to be situated according to the ways present in the pre-information era: they offered moments of culture, participation in religious and social events, direct rapport with families, and contact with civil and ecclesiastical organisms and institutions.

It was a praxis well formulated and it held sway. But today, in the information era, new factors have come into play, and there must be growth in the awareness of and attention to the broader repercussions of our presence, and of our attitudes and interventions.

The *salesian community* is called upon to do its planning with an eye on its own work as seen also from outside. It is a kind of re-collocation, not so much geographically in the sense of migrating from one place to another, but rather mentally, i.e. being able to consider things from a point of view which gets beyond material space and immediate objectives.

This means passing from concerns based on internal considerations to giving attention to the sensitivities and expectations coming from the context; from doing a great deal of hard work within our own walls, to finding out what others think of us and how they perceive our activity and presence; from a simple and careful development of activities to the communicative and involving ability of the context to affect typical values of the salesian spirituality and mission.

There are some words of Don Bosco which can help us to understand the significance of all this, so that the salesian presence, in its effort to make itself visible or give an account of itself, may not be reduced to a simple veneer or be obsessed with self-presentation.

"Our times call for action. The world has become materialistic, and so we have to go out of our way to make known the good we are doing. Even if we were to work miracles by praying

*day and night in solitude, the world would neither notice it nor believe it. The world has to see for itself”.*²⁸

These are somewhat bold words, with a directness that rather takes us aback. They make us look in a different way at the very organization of community life and apostolic action. It is indispensable to think of our presence, the community and salesian work in “network” form, intercommunicating like a transmitter.

The GC24 has pointed to new openings in this same sense. The first concerns the *lay collaborators*. As has already been said several times, this is not only a question of having persons external to the community who come to work with us in the education and evangelization of the young. Their presence indicates acceptance on our part from other points of view: the typical lay perspectives.

It is not possible to speak of collaboration and of shared responsibility unless there is reciprocity and integration of views and experiences, and this leads necessarily to a different vision of salesian activity, and to new ways of intervention.

This change of mentality and of operational model has a name: the *educative community*. It is not something purely technical, a new structure; it is specifically a reality of internal and external communication. It is not reduced to expressing well-organized contents with verbal clarity and correct positioning in time. It is before all else a capacity of relationship, of real information which is pertinent and opportune, of vital sharing, of a common choice of educative and pastoral criteria.

The Salesian is present in the educative community with a specific responsibility and must learn the many paths and variations of dialogue with the laity and with the educative community as a whole.

A second setting in which a change of mentality is needed is the

²⁸ BM 13, 126

context in which we are called upon to work: the wider *territory* in which the salesian work is situated as a centre of aggregation.

The rediscovery of this function prompts us to broaden the dialogue to include educational, social and religious institutions working in the same area. Encounter with them is the acid test of what we are capable of communicating outside the religious community and our closest collaborators.

How much is perceived externally of the salesian educative project, of the personal and social values they choose for themselves and propose to the young?

How does salesian work become effective in the neighbourhood, in the sectors most congenial to the charism: by attention to the youth condition, by the follow-up of the development of the working class, by closeness to those who live their life feeling isolated and marginalized? The EPC becomes significant in the neighbourhood, and hence carries an intelligible message, when it is able to bring together all who are interested in educational and cultural initiatives and appears as a centre of radiation of sensitivity, plans and workers who are linked with it.

We can also refer to a third opening towards which the same GC24 propels us: it is the scope created by *modern technology*, which can build relationships, provide a self-image and begin an effective dialogue with interlocutors who are invisible but none the less real.

Here especially is there need for a change of mentality, both because we are not yet familiar with virtual space and because we have to learn new forms of communication and meeting. Examples are not lacking of realizations which, when possibility offers, are pursued by willing youngsters or professional collaborators. Web-sites are becoming ever more numerous and some of them are highly educational and reach a large number of persons, thus increasing the influence of the work.

Whether we are aware of it or not, we are part of a great network which envelops us. We could remain outside it, or we

could become inserted in it by offering, in this field too, the gifts we have as educators and evangelizers.

It is a matter of no little importance that we can instantly diffuse information and communications to all parts of the world. Often we speak more of the risks of such a situation than of its advantages. But if we want the world of communications to be changed for the better by the leaven of the Gospel we must feel challenged to intervene and interact with those who descend into the streets and areopagi "to speak and debate".²⁹

Conditions for communication

When we look at things from only an immediate perspective, the principal conditions needed for social communication seem to be high in spectacular quality and the selling potential of the products.

We have only to look at what is offered by television, the most powerful of the mass media, to be convinced of this. Television tends, of its very nature, to turn every event into a spectacle. All programs are assembled with this requirement in view. The very information must be made into a manifestation.

For a TV program to be interesting it must be striking, raise emotions, and be made a powerful image by the skilful use of light and colour, originality, and rapid succession of frames and comments.

In this way too communication is today a great marketplace. We define our society as one of information and images. Information is the main *materia prima* of the economy: data is exchanged to a much greater extent than products. Programs compete for viewers by every possible means. The propaganda is concentrated more on the image than on what is offered by the product. Communication itself, in all its aspects is a matter of big business, played against a background of supply and demand, with competition in price and quality.

²⁹ cf. Acts 17,20

This is the situation in which the salesian community is placed and in which it has to act with an educative purpose. It too, in a certain sense has to impress people and have selling power. And so it tries to understand how communication functions, but it emphasizes the need that it be placed at the service of human growth and bring about communion among mankind.

For it to be positive and efficacious in this connection, the community has to pay heed to other conditions: from a personal standpoint, but still more from an institutional point of view it relies on *authenticity and transparency*.

These are the qualities demanded by those who consider us a point of reference for life and for Christian and human experience in a given area. But as well as this: for us, as disciples of Christ thy are also demands and ruling factors of communication.

I recognize that we are being asked to acquire certain personal and communal attitudes. We have lived out our options and projects, our realizations and cultural realizations, but almost in a reserved manner. Others had to discover for themselves the driving force behind our activities. We did not keep them hidden intentionally, but neither were we concerned about being 'transparent', about making ourselves known.

The matter is not only a moral one. It belongs to the universe of communication: to be present we must be perceptible; to be efficacious we must be authentic, i.e. communicate experiences and convictions which we feel and live at a deep level.

The instruments of communication, and particularly the most recent of them, represent a supermarket of ideas. The visions of life and the proposals they offer are many, easily accepted and just as easily abandoned.

The danger lies in losing the sense of difference between the necessary and the superfluous, between the important and the ephemeral. Since everything is subject to consumption, everything can become the object of exchange. And in this "everything" even authenticity and transparency can end up. "At-

tractive fiction" takes the place of truth and sincerity when it comes to selling something; obsessive audience seeking becomes the norm instead of attempts to generate convergence and a responsible reply.

But even though aware of these real risks and tendencies, we express a positive judgement on the overall world of communications, because "if properly used, they contribute greatly to the enlargement and enrichment of men's minds and to the propagation and consolidation of the Kingdom of God".³⁰

Jesus, the Apostle of the Father, came into the world to communicate God's life, and gathered together in a new form the three elements of human expression: word, action and symbolic gestures. The word sustains the gesture so that the latter be not meaningless; the gesture complements the word so that the latter becomes visible and concrete ("the Word became flesh"³¹ was said of Jesus who came into the world); and action is the fulfilment of the history of the richness of the gesture and the significance of the word.

Authenticity and transparency are not therefore an unattainable utopia. They are criteria for the evaluation of what is offered for the building of communion and responsibility. In other words they are a measure of whether the will to communicate is true and whether the intentions behind it are in line with ethics and love. They therefore represent the commitment of the believer who wants to enter into rapport with others.

The need of the moment: becoming qualified

To respond to today's challenges in the field of communications an adequate formation process is needed.

With the evolution of the media a conflict is arising between the internal possibilities of the technologies themselves and the

³⁰ cf. *Inter mirifica*, 2

³¹ Jn 1,14

human acceptability of what is subsequently offered. The relationship between technical progress and the human maturing process, between technological development and civil progress, is in fact far from automatic.

We may note that while technology is developing with extreme rapidity, the development of individual skill, of how to use the new techniques is rather slow and erratic.

A twofold velocity level has already been experienced in our own communities: some find adaptation difficult and banish the very thought of learning to use and evaluate anything concerning the instruments of information; others easily find themselves at home in the new languages and possibilities they offer, and are able to keep pace with their development with some ease. It is a reflection to some extent of what is happening on a much greater scale in the social reality.

What is to be done then? The only useful road ahead is through formation. The new literacy, i.e. the ability to read and write in the culture of the media, affects everyone, and in so far as concerns the faith it affects all believers. How much more then should it be of interest to educators and evangelizers!

For some years now the Church, through the competent departments of the Holy See, has been proposing a process which contemplates three different levels of formation: one a basic level, a second "pastoral" level, and a third level of specialist preparation.

The minimum required is the *basic level*. Each of us consumes information every day through a thousand and one different channels: from newspapers to books, from the radio to the video, from the cinema to the *Internet*.

Learning to read and evaluate is the first step. One cannot be exposed to the communicational bombardment without the necessary antibodies and the key to its interpretation, so as not to be ingenuously taken in; so as not to see only through the eyes of others and judge through their heads. One cannot remain

even a passive recipient at a time when interactivity has become generalized and every citizen has the right and possibility of expressing his opinion at once on whatever is offered him.

In the process of formation of communities, salesian religious communities equally with educative communities, the guidelines of the Church must be kept in mind,³² so as not to express only generic negative comments, but to help by being able to give motivated judgements on the products of communion. The effort must therefore be made to make oneself capable of an ordinary handling of the new means, techniques and languages: verbal, gestural, audiovisual, symbolic; in speech, radio and television.

There is ample space for formative proposals and also for regular and ordinary intervention initiatives, to meet the demands of the different places in which we work. I am thinking of the influence that could be exerted by educative communities in defending the rights of the weak and the values of local cultures, if they were able to insert themselves in communication circles with correct evaluations of events that take place, and with suitable proposals for objectives to be realized.

A permanent function of "communication" with the world outside, even at moderate expense, is in no way superfluous or marginal for an educative community.

The *second level* of formation involves those who have par-

³² But even as the Church takes a positive, sympathetic approach to media, seeking to enter into the culture created by modern communications in order to evangelize effectively, it is necessary at the very same time that the Church offer a critical evaluation of mass media and their impact upon culture. As we have said repeatedly, communications technology is a marvelous expression of human genius, and the media confer innumerable benefits upon society. But as we have also pointed out, the application of communications technology has been a mixed blessing, and its use for good purposes requires sound values and wise choices on the part of individuals, the private sector, governments and society as a whole. The Church does not presume to dictate these decisions and choices, but it does seek to be of help by indicating ethical and moral criteria which are relevant to the process-criteria which are to be found in both human and Christian values" (*Aetatis Novae*, 12).

ticular responsibilities in the animation of the social communication in the area.

This is not yet specialist level, but that of educative and pastoral workers who must enter the communication network with a professional approach and in line with their mission. It is of concern therefore to *provincial animators of social communication, religious and educative communities*.

It is a matter of knowing, in the first place, the real and effective influences which the new informational technologies and the media exert on the educative processes of individuals and groups.

From this arises a new demand in educative projects: the explicit integration of communication criteria in pastoral options. Yesterday it was sufficient that the content be well defined and pieced together. The instrument would have served solely to "pass" the message efficaciously to the greatest possible number of recipients.

The new model emphasizes that the media are not only "means"; they imply a culture, a philosophy of life, an ethic which re-reads and re-evaluates values, a spirituality which requires a synthesis of human and Christian life under new aspects. In the more specific order of the elaboration and presentation of messages, the use of the instruments and the form determine the characteristics and primary significance of the message itself.

This work of inculturation is indispensable today and shapes in a different manner the way in which the educator and pastor is made.

There are also other elements at this level of formation which we call to attention as being important and relevant.

The educative community must be ready to "minister both to the 'information-rich' and to the 'information-poor'. They need to know how to invite others into dialogue, avoiding a style of communicating which suggests domination, manipulation or personal gain".³³

³³ cf. *Aetatis Novae*, 18

Both the salesian community and the educative community must in particular be capable of accompanying those who are actively committed in work with the media. They must not be left on their own. Let them be encouraged and supported in their activities. They should be called together in certain circumstances for a frank dialogue and mutual help in the understanding and verification of their progress and proposals.³⁴ They, for their part, will try to listen to evaluations and opinions, to act in accordance with a communal project and to work as a team in a sharing and responsible manner.

The *third level* of formation is for *specialists in social communication*. It is of interest directly to *provincial communities* and by reflection to local communities as well.

In the plan for the qualification of a province called for by the Regulations³⁵ and emphasized in the letter *For you I study*,³⁶ particular importance attaches to the training of confreres for the field of social communication.

Once they are qualified, these confreres will place their skills at the service of the province, working in the context of a provincial plan and responding to the demands of the different dimensions: from youth pastoral work, which will give greater attention to the perspectives of communication, to the economy sector which will attend to the financial and entrepreneurial aspects of the communication structures present in many salesian institutions.

The effort made by the Congregation in establishing a University Faculty of social communication should be exploited to prepare confreres who will help the Congregation to rise to the level of the new requirements.

³⁴ Lay Catholic professionals and others working in either the Church apostolate of social communications or the secular media often look to the Church for spiritual guidance and pastoral care, [...] nourishing the communicators' faith, and keeping alive their sense of dedication in the difficult task of communicating Gospel values and authentic human values to the world.

³⁵ cf. R 100

³⁶ cf. AGC 361, Oct.-Dec. 1997

When I look back at our recent history, I have to acknowledge the great part the Salesians have played in the growth of ecclesial sensitivity in respect of pastoral work for the young.

Will it be possible to start up a similar process in regard to social communication? Is it not the case here too of needy youngsters who have to be followed up in their development, or of working-class people who need support in their efforts at advancement?

“Communication is the dimension of the spirit in which we raise ourselves above our biological constitution and our bondage to nature. It has therefore a fundamental function for the development of our understanding of ourselves and of the world”.³⁷

The consent we give to the communications we receive provides confirmation and scope for the maturing of our personal identity. The exchange involved develops our understanding of the value and significance of our own existence.

It is true that no one can delegate to others the task of interpreting life, but it is also true that no human being lives for himself alone; and above all, no one is capable of discovering for himself the keys for understanding life.

This is where the service rendered to man by specialists in communication comes in. The serious effort to make this service recognized as an ecclesial ministry can add dignity to the intervention of those involved in the work.

A communal competence

What we have been saying in the preceding pages are not things extraneous to daily life. Learning how to put together a message for it to be efficacious is part of the pastoral task. Otherwise the community risks just beating the air.

³⁷ German Episcopal Conference and Council of the German Evangelical Churches, *Media, prospettive e rischi*, part 3, 3.2

It is not enough to have treasures; we have to know how to use them. If they remained hidden and could not be passed on to others they would be like stagnant funds.

Often the objectives fixed for themselves by the religious and educative communities are not attained because the forms of communication have not homed in clearly on the nucleus of the message; they have not claimed the attention of those we are addressing, we have not got them involved; we have not talked at their level of experience.

It is true that not all of us are called to be specialists in social communication; but we are all obliged to be good communicators.

The two points do not necessarily go together. Between them is the same difference that exists between the theoretical knowledge of what is to be done and having the personal skill to do it. Every salesian educator and evangelizer needs practical competence in communication for all his interventions: when he meets a youngster or a confrere personally, when he is called upon to speak in public, when he proclaims the word of God to a group or to a vast audience, in a retreat or a discussion, when an opportunity offers for intervening in the mass media.

And it becomes more evident every day that it is part of normal life to be ready to intervene either occasionally or with a certain regularity through the press, radio and TV.

The GC23 had already pointed to these possible settings. "The Congregation", we read in the capitular document, "commits itself to an adequate use of social communication for transmitting the Christian message and educating youth to the faith. For this reason the local community will foster its own capacity for communication: by helping each Salesian to be a good communicator, able to use a kind of language adapted to the young and to people in general, especially in the liturgy and

catechesis; by exploiting all the means (relationships, aspects of the house, theatre, video, music, meeting rooms, etc.) through which messages can be given to predispose people to the faith and spread the message of salvation; and in particular by seeing that young people are educated to the different forms of communication, and a critical reading of the messages they convey".³⁸

If local communities, when reviewing their work, find that they have not yet given effect to these guidelines of the General Chapter, they should draw up a plan for their implementation.

3. Practical guidelines

I now offer you a series of practical guidelines. They are not meant to be taken as an indivisible block, as though every province and every community must realize all of them.

The Congregation is variegated as regards social communication. There are provinces with qualified personnel, structures which operate like business concerns in the manner we have described, training programs already in use, provincial organisms, multiple youth activities, and so on. Others, on the other hand, are working at much more modest levels.

It will be the task of provincial councils to adapt the plan of action to the demands of local circumstances and the real possibilities of the province. But this dimension cannot be ignored or left to the indefinite future. The fundamental option is clear, and so is the direction our efforts must take: the setting up of teams and centres working on the elaboration of messages rather than being concerned with the possession of instruments or the management of material structures. These soon become obsolete and frequently, once we have acquired

³⁸ GC23, 257-258

them, we find we have to use them in work which is not directly related to our mission. The services offered by such technical plants we can leave to third parties, at least in the regions normally foreseen, while we concentrate on the messages.

In no field of life are there any simple and immediately applicable rules of thumb, and still less so in a setting which is in continual expansion and where it is difficult to foresee future developments even in the short term. But it is of no little importance to be aware of the thousand and one possibilities opening up before our apostolic enterprise.

I gather them into two categories: the educative commitment of every salesian work, and the institutional responsibility of the provinces in face of the culture of communication.

The two aspects are mutually complementary: we have to work at once with what we have and to the extent that we may be able, but we must not disregard a wider concern for the youth situation and culture which call for long-term and more wide-ranging programs of action.

The latter may seem to be beyond our capabilities, and maybe they are. But if we do not begin, as citizens and Salesians, to assume greater responsibilities, despite the naturally associated difficulties and those which turn up willy-nilly, we shall never be able to exert any influence on events: i.e. on the criteria of users, the ethics of manufacturers, the mentality of educators, the sensitivity of pastors. And still less shall we be able to meet the challenges, previously unknown and unforeseeable, of the cultural complexity associated with communication.

The salesian charism, in virtue of its direct experience with the young and the ordinary people, can suggest plans for the positive orientation of mass communication and participate in their realization with competent educative and pastoral contributions.

Community commitments

Today social communication is the greatest fact in socialization and education. It is a school without limits of time and space where information can be found, together with modes of action, guidelines for thought and practical solutions of the problems presented by life. It must be considered therefore as a field of interventions for us Salesians, attentive as we always are to the educative dimension.

Here then are some possible commitments to be brought to the attention of the communities so that they may find a place in the educative project and be considered in the yearly programming.

Activate salesian communication

The Congregation and the Salesian Family are up to date as regards the means and manner of internal communication. This takes place at different levels (house, province, region, congregation) and carries abundant material, corresponding to the different needs and priorities.

There is the institutional communication which brings, with the authority given by the Constitutions and the wide experience of salesian life, charismatic guidelines in terms of motivations and practical indications: it includes the Letters of the Rector Major, the communications of the General Councillors for the animation of the sectors entrusted to them, and those which go from the provincial centres to local communities. These communications already carry many elements of spirituality.

Then there is the fraternal communication about the happenings of the Congregation which can be of greater interest because of their significance or their effect on public opinion. This is indicated in art.59 of the Constitutions as one of the main elements for the creation of unity and a sense of belonging. Here I see a difficulty which may be put forward: the accumulation of documents and communications, the lack of

time for communication, the varied interests of the confreres.

It has been found that it is possible to manage the complexity deriving from these three factors by greater attention on the part of the superior or animator to the use of opportunities for communication (good-nights, spiritual reading, community-days, meals, other meetings), by arranging that the organs of communication be placed in a dignified place for the information of the individual confreres (community-room, library), and by making an intelligent selection so as to present to the community the more important or interesting points in line with objective criteria of salesian life or of the community situation, with appropriate comment.

Education to the use of the media

The terminology used in different countries can vary, as also can technical levels and the availability of programs and instruments. What remains the same everywhere is the will for commitment: all who work in education and evangelization must feel themselves called to elaborate a pedagogy which leads to an understanding and use of the media.

It is not sufficient to equip the community, juvenile or adult, with instruments – even of a sophisticated kind – to bring about an increase in communion. It is not the simple connection with national or international networks that ensures an adequate diffusion of knowledge and increased rapport, but the measured and reasonable use of such possibilities. Educative guidance is no less desirable for adults too.

From this stems the need for educators to have the possibility of knowing in depth the problems to which contact with the new technologies can give rise. We must make the effort to apply to the world of the media the principles and criteria of our preventive pedagogy.

This is in line with our charism. We must therefore pursue its expressions and, if necessary, make up for lost time.

Oratories, schools, parishes and youth groups must be

helped – I do not say to get into the media culture, because they may be already immersed in it; but to become accustomed to a clear orientation: i.e. to adopt an efficacious program of education with adequate usage and check-ups.

It should be kept in mind that it is the “small means”, at domestic level and within the reach of all, that represent a communicative richness and help to lift the quality of the environment: leaflets, reviews, celebratory moments of a more or less formal kind, and the like.

Let us not be content with facile criticism of what we receive from the mass media. Rather let us follow, decisively and systematically, a process of preparation of young people and adults towards a responsibility and knowledge of the media corresponding to their stage of growth.

Applying the new technologies to teaching

When here I speak of teaching, I include everything of an educational and pastoral nature realized in a salesian foundation: interpersonal relationships of friendship, of other roles or of priestly ministry; formal teaching in schools, group discussions, evangelical suggestions through preaching; an ordinary or extraordinary moment of celebration, be it cultural or religious.

Nowadays it is necessary to adopt perspectives of a global communication, asking ourselves how we can be efficacious in what we are offering. The community needs to verify the consistency between its verbal language, the message it wants to communicate, and the meaning it actually and unintentionally conveys. It is not enough just to decide on the content; we have to study also the references, the manner in which the content is presented, and the context in which it is to have its effect. The new media technologies serve precisely to centre and improve the elaboration of the content chosen.

What is needed here is a change in the personal and communal way of working that may cost us something. But it will be to the advantage of those to whom our mission is directed

and of the values we want to present.

The GC24 pointed to this same objective: "To exploit communication in all its forms and expressions: communication at interpersonal and group level, the production of messages, critical and educative use of the means of social communication".³⁹

Develop all the communicative potentiality of individuals.

Salesian education has given to civil society many past-pupils who have distinguished themselves in the field of social communication. It would be difficult to present a complete list of names and communication sectors where they are to be found and the roles they have. We can point to the theatre, singing, acting, musical and other spectacles and many other aspects of popular entertainment and culture. We may recall numerous writers who were prepared in salesian environments: journalists, authors of scholastic texts, romances, educational and formative literature, poets in popular and in cultured language.

Nor must we forget all those creative persons belonging to our family who, when the occasion was presented, have been able to exploit their personal talents to create communication enterprises: reviews, publishing houses with various cultural and educational objectives, radio and television networks, and news agencies.

All this is a sign that many young people have found in our midst the space and support for the development of abilities which would otherwise have remained hidden.

It would be indeed a great loss if this richness of our educative tradition were ever to fade!

And so let us have confidence in the young! In the arepagus of communication they are present on a massive scale. They feel a pressing need to accept diversity, to make contact with those of a different culture or sensitivity, to communicate

³⁹ GC24, 129

their experiences, to animate encounters. They grow up already equipped with more than one language. They show a surprising ability at becoming at home in new technologies and languages. This cannot be other than a source of satisfaction; and precisely because of this ability they have, we must have trust and confidence in them.⁴⁰

Young people, said the message for the 24th World Communications Day, "have had the advantage of growing up with the new developments, and it will be their duty to employ these new instruments for a wider and more intense dialogue among all the diverse races and classes who share this 'shrinking globe'. It falls to them to search out ways in which the new systems of data conservation and exchange can be used to assist in promoting greater universal justice, greater respect for human rights, a healthy development for all individuals and peoples, and the freedoms essential for a fully human life".⁴¹

If we are able to guide them in the proper use of these instruments, they can become protagonists in the pursuit of what can guide us to educational objectives of great importance in the new millennium.

I apply this primarily to the young Salesians. Some or many of them, suitable prepared, must be led to occupy in the field of the media those spaces which are addressed to children and young people. This is an "occupation" which well responds to our pastoral work and to the salesian spirit with a vast educative and evangelizing influence.

Helping the new poor classes.

There is a new kind of poverty in the world: that of those who are excluded from the information circuits. The inequality is already evident, and sociologists and educators foresee that it will become ever greater.

⁴⁰ cf. *Communio et progressio*, 70

⁴¹ Message for 24th World Communications Day, 24 Jan. 1990

There are the rich who have access to all the channels of communication with the possibility of adding to their culture and further increasing their good fortune. This protects them from unpleasant surprises, because they can update themselves in everything and even anticipate difficulties, risks and conflicts.

Then there are those who are at a disadvantage because they are kept on the margin of a sufficient and useful communication. They do not have the necessary instruments, or they do not know how to use them successfully; they do not have the necessary elbow-room or the necessary competence to enter into dialogue with others. And so they are exposed to manipulation. There is even talk of a new kind of illiteracy.

An educational institution like ours can consider it part of its mission to set up space for communication for more simple people, even with alternative means: meetings of groups, associations and families, festive and cultural opportunities. And similarly to bring competence in the media to young people and environments where exclusion is more widespread, just as in earlier times it made efforts to provide remedial education and instruction through the schools. It is a field where groups of volunteers can make a contribution. And not only this. If a public institution is not able for various reasons to make terminals available to all, the salesian community should consider how it could create such possibilities. If we do not consider the new techniques a luxury, but an important condition for education, it falls within our remit to facilitate access to them to young people who are poor, and to marginalized persons.

Inserting media competence into the educative project.

From time to time it seems desirable to add new aspects to the formation project for the Salesians and the educative plan for the young.

The fact is that new dimensions and new problems are continually turning up in our daily lives, and the need to respond to them demands fresh attention.

Social communication – messages, instruments, culture – open up or close paths for interpreting and shaping life. From it frequently stem the vision of the world and behaviour models. By now the quality of life is linked with what is presented directly or in a concealed manner by the mass media.

The individual is qualified through his freedom for self-determination, through his concrete options and the contribution he makes to coexistence in society. This is a reflection which would really require a longer and more detailed examination, but the few remarks I have made will be sufficient for me to draw a practical consequence which I entrust to the local communities.

To prepare people to use suitable instruments to enable them to exercise their own freedom, and live in a more complete form the demands of society, is a direct part of the responsibility of an institution which claims to be educational in its purpose.

To ask for the insertion of communication in the educative and pastoral project after considering the various aspects, possibilities and risks, means nothing other than asking the salesian and educative communities to acquire and offer the necessary skills with respect to the culture in which we are inserted and the society in which we have to live.

In this sector the laity can carry out a specific task. They, in fact, can identify and put together messages which respond more closely to the present situation and actual needs of the young and of people in general. They can often use a terminology better suited to the expression of values or convictions, because it has been coined through secular experience combined with a first-hand knowledge of the ordinary conditions of life. In particular those among them who belong to specific professions can be valuable collaborators in Don Bosco's mission.⁴²

In connection with media competence today, I think it indispensable to add a few words about the latest informational revolution: the *Internet*.

⁴² cf. GC24, 132

This great network is extending farther and farther and we too are caught up in it. We are learning how to use it; and we must learn also to appreciate its usefulness and try not to be trapped in it; above all we must be able to give guidance to children and young people who run the risk of getting lost in its labyrinths and reaching sites which will certainly be of no help to their growth.

Ours is a great educative task with respect to an area which is virtual, true enough, but which can have serious reflections on the real life of children and young people; there is also a task regarding its use from a cultural and ethical standpoint with its regulation and responsibilities, from which we cannot stand aside and which we can in fact promote.

The *Internet* makes knowledge available, creates direct contacts and offers ample space for communication and the sending of messages. We cannot remain aloof from its possibilities; but we must adopt proper attitudes in its regard and be able to assess the influence it has on practical life and on our educational activity.

There is no doubt that the *Internet*, even though in a subdued form at present, is giving rise to a kind of anthropological revolution, which affects not only the ability to use it but also forms of thought, habits of daily life and even conscience itself. The web makes us acquire a new concept of the notions of space and time, eliminates frontiers and barriers between nations, and makes possible interaction in which all feel equal. An open world is being born without geographical and functional barriers between individuals, an interactive world and one therefore which is varied and lively. Many things have changed and others will still do so at a relational, cultural and commercial level; there are certain to be upheavals in every form of service, activities of intermediation, the influence of the virtual dimension of transactions, of work, of entertainment, of means of transport.⁴³

⁴³ cf. AA.VV. *Internet: L'informazione senza frontiere*; Paolini, Milan 1997, p. 138

The implication of this revolution cannot yet be fully assessed, but it is giving birth to the “electronic citizen” which we must help to be “upright” and be open to an “other” beside the web and recognize the fatherliness of God, so as to be a “good Christian”.

Provincial commitments

From the institutional standpoint many obligations can be expressed with regard to social communication. I group them around general themes, and in this case I entrust them to the study of the provincial communities and their organisms, and to the communication committees which work within the provinces.

Know the law and your own rights

The provincial office for social communication, among its other obligations, assumes that of knowing the laws which govern the field of communication in the country concerned. There are to be found also the rights of the citizens, of recognized institutions, and of formal groups.

Starting from the different forms of legislation one can come across many ways of defining various urgent aspects for the common good and work to support them.

Around the structures of the mass media develop financial, political, cultural and religious interests with hidden powers. It is not easy to penetrate their dynamic operations. But the first step to take is always to get to know the relevant laws, so that our actions may be legal and secure and we do not cause difficulties either for ourselves or still less for our apostolic activity or salesian institutions. Nowadays, in fact, many aspects are regulated by laws, the violation of which involves penalties as well as dishonesty (copyrights, right to privacy, taxes and other charges, various declarations, reproductions, etc.).

But legality means also seeing that the law is observed by

all, ordinary persons and those in power. An awareness that needs to increase among ourselves and in the educative communities is the right to protection. The common good and the defence of the dignity of the person frequently call for clear and public interventions. The individual citizen and associations have the right and duty to express their views in forthright fashion to appropriate officials using the means they deem most opportune and efficacious.

The subject is a vast one with many implications of an ethical and legal nature, but it rules out of court at once any passive or resigned acceptance or helplessness in face of the great organizations.

Develop certain points of attention.

Following on what we have just said, I now point out some items that need further development. They are all related to the priority for the young in education and evangelization which determine our objectives.

The first is the *right of defence* of children and young people. The experience of recent years has often shown us the suffering of those who are small and weak in face of the media content and criminal organizations reached through media technology.

Violence, racial hatred, moral seduction, the very publicity addressed to a youthful public, are an offence to the human person, and exert a negative influence on intellectual, emotional, moral and psychological development.

Our educative communities can intervene individually or collectively in defence of the legal requirement, as well as educating young people and families to the proper use of *zapping* (surfing the net).

Next comes *defence of the family*. Many spectacles which enter a house through the mass media do nothing to facilitate a cordial rapport among the members of the family; they do not

support fidelity in love and are at odds with the gospel criteria for married life.

The producers of such spectacles cannot unload all the responsibility on those who watch these shows, as if communicative democracy should be without internal self-regulation.

The groups working in our environments have the legal right to intervene and make known what audiences expect to see.

And then there is the *defence of the quality of service*. You often hear it said, in a somewhat specious manner, that quality is a purely subjective concept, that each one likes a certain kind of quality and this is what he is looking for. On the other hand it is certainly possible to define indices which help in the making of an objective judgement on the products offered. The technical level, the professional quality, the skill in interpretation shown by actors and in the scenarios, the intensity of the plot, the ethical dimension of the story are some of the criteria for making a judgement on what is offered by the TV. It is best that everyone should be aware of them so that they can make a competent assessment and intervene without any complexes.

This too is a setting in which lay persons working in salesian structures can make a valid contribution.

Finally I put the *defence of privacy*. The only concern of the great instruments of communication is simply the search for financial profit.

We often find ourselves witnessing a ruthless competition that takes place in seeking the biggest market audience, and in the manipulation of personal data so as to impress the public.

This leads to the patent violation of personal rights and the breaking of norms established by law. The so-called 'scoop' is not just a technique; it is a well-tried gambit for making more profit.

The spontaneous reaction we feel in the face of information which does not defend personal data is a just one. Everyone has the right to decide what personal facts about himself can be

made public and what should remain reserved. It remains to be seen whether in a “social question” like communication, our “just” reactions remain always private and individual or succeed in influencing customs and conduct.

These are just examples. To have pointed out the theme will serve to help reflection on questions which are new and in coming years will become ever more pressing, and will in consequence need clear definition, adequate approach and original solutions.

Be open to synergy and collaboration.

In the Regulations we read: “These services should be established on secure juridical and economic foundations, and there should be liaison and cooperation between those in charge of them and the Councillor General for the Salesian Family and social communication”.⁴⁴ “Publishing houses in the same country or region should devise suitable methods of collaboration, so as to adopt a unified plan”.⁴⁵

A first comment concerns the management of communication enterprises. I look with particular attention at the numerous publishing houses we have in the Congregation. They must respond in the first place to the criteria which shape our educative and pastoral mission. But it must also be kept in mind that publishing activity be organized with business criteria, and must be managed in accordance with well-defined professional principles, with clear objectives and frequent and efficient control on the part of the salesian institution.

A second observation following from the text of the Regulations is that social communication extends beyond the restricted confines of a province. It must be thought of in network terms. What cannot be realized by the efforts of a single province can be attained by the joint effort of many. There are various aspects in continual and rapid change, and this means that if we do not

⁴⁴ R 31

⁴⁵ R 33

seize the opportunity at the appropriate moment when the situation and cost are most favourable, the enterprise may fail and be forced out of the market. Hence the need to avoid overlapping, to avoid the repetition of efforts that can be made in common.

There have been meetings in the Congregation in which several publishing houses have got together to program a future of collaboration and linkage.

The process must be continued on an even larger scale, trying out and comparing practical means of realization. Union is indispensable at the present day if we are to be present in this field in an efficacious and competitive manner. We note continually in every part of the world amalgamations, agreements, linkages between enterprises of every kind (banks, airlines, motor industries etc.), to improve services, resist competition and reduce costs so as to concentrate more on innovations. We have no material products to offer, but plenty of good ideas to spread abroad in both ecclesial and civil cultural environments. We have to find a way of making them very practical, even by small adjustments, so that they can be spread as widely as possible.

The ideal target would be that, once we have tried out such collaboration on a limited scale, we could go on to launch an exchange at world level of knowledge, products and projects. After first positive experiments of collaboration we can mature to this global strategy at congregational level.

Become equipped with useful functions.

Here and there one gets the impression that communication has remained somewhat generic in character. The last two General Chapters have singled out necessary interventions for exploiting social communication in a province. The GC23 pointed out to the Provincial the need to appoint a provincial delegate for social communication, and set out his duties;⁴⁶ the GC24 invited the delegate, in agreement with the Provincial, to

⁴⁶ cf. GC23, 259

form a team including also qualified lay people. and with them to "draw up a provincial plan for animation, formation and consultation in the area of social communications, foreseeing suitable structures and instruments".⁴⁷ These options and concrete realizations should improve the utilization of social communication and integrate it into the pastoral action of the province. But there is need also for attention to other points and sensitivities.

The Regulations go on to indicate: "As far as local possibilities permit, the provincial with his council should promote our pastoral presence in the social communication sector.

He should prepare confreres to enter the fields of publishing, the cinema, radio and television; he should establish and build up our centres for the publishing and diffusion of books, aids and periodicals, and found centres for the production and transmission of audiovisual, radio and television programs".⁴⁸

The commitment required is not small by any means, but it is important. A communications structure, well organized and directed, is as good as another foundation in the territory for the young and working-class people to whom our mission is directed. Indeed, the ability to reach a vast public and influence its mentality makes it more efficacious.

I am well aware that not all provinces have the same possibilities. But there are two points that nearly all should find possible.

The first is the improvement of the *Salesian Bulletin* or its solid and permanent support. I do not need to say any more about this. You can read over again what has already been published in the Acts of the General Council.⁴⁹ I recall only the importance it has in our history and present identification, in the spreading of our image and in the union of the Salesian

⁴⁷ GC24, 136b

⁴⁸ R 31

⁴⁹ cf. AGC 366, pp.98-117

Family and of the Movement of the Friends of Don Bosco.

The work of renewal and relaunching which has been started, linking the directors and editors of the different editions gives us confidence in the incidence it now has. But it must be said that the support structure, the compiling, the office and instruments, must be kept up to date if the Bulletin is to remain a salesian enterprise fulfilling all its possibilities.

Similarly it must be added that it is no help to the Congregation if houses or provinces spread their own salesian reviews and do not concentrate their efforts on what is the expression of Don Bosco and his mission in the world. This is a point to be kept in mind by the committee for social communication.

The other function concerns our *ongoing communication with the world of the media*. In the course of my visits I have seen provinces properly equipped to make their voice heard on the occasion of our own events or the discussion of problems of interest to us. Their relationship with the organs of public opinion is of great value. But there were others where we did not seem to form part of the human community.

A spokesman, a press office, a team – not necessarily full-time but advised in advance and involved – could give us an authoritative voice in newspapers, radio and television, at times when we have urgent need to be heard or a statement is necessary for charitable or pastoral purposes.

It is indispensable to be able to participate in circles where communication messages are elaborated, especially for young people or about them, and to let our educative influence be felt.

Conclusion.

When the Congregation saw the importance of communication and of its many applications in educative and pastoral work, it decided to set up, despite internal and external difficul-

ties, a "Higher Institute for Social Communication", now known by the name ISCOS.

Today it is a Faculty of the Salesian University. As such it inspires a dialogue and an enriching exchange between theological disciplines, educational sciences and social communication, and aims at the theoretical and practical formation in its own field of specialist educators and pastors.

The originality of its aims amongst similar institutions has made it a point of reference for many students. On our part it must not only be supported and encouraged, but also filled with Salesians and lay people who are preparing to work in this sector of the salesian mission.

As I conclude these reflections, my imagination goes to the celebration of the opening of the Holy Door which is now imminent. Perhaps the most striking feature of this opening with respect to all the others that preceded it, is that the whole world is going to be present. In every corner of the earth it will be possible to hear the Pope's voice; everyone will be able to see the Gospel story in the sixteen panels of the Door, assist at the celebration and enter spiritually into the Church, symbol of Catholic communion, of Christian ecumenism, of religious dialogue, of worldwide human solidarity. Entry into these settings of communion is among the goals of conversion proposed for the Jubilee year. And communication will take the news and invitation to the whole world.

May Jesus Christ, of whose Birth we are celebrating the bimillennary, give to us Salesians and to the entire Salesian Family the communicative strength which is proper to his Gospel and make us ever more capable of transmitting it to young people in this Year of grace.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Juan Tucki". 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.

DISCOVERING THE URGENT NEED FOR COMMUNICATION

Fr Antonio MARTINELLI
*Councillor for the Salesian Family
and Social Communication*

**Preliminary: reawakening the awareness of the importance
and urgent need of communication.**

With the present number of the Acts of the Council, the Rector Major consigns once again to the provinces, those responsible and the communities, the obligation of a more efficacious work in the sector of social communication.

Provincials and *Rectors* are asked to rethink their animation in the area of communication and to help the individual confreres to realize the incentives they receive from the General Chapters.

The following is a rapid summary of the **process we have followed at the level of General Chapters**, indicating the practical directives which have guided or should guide the commitment of the salesian community.

Concrete proposals are highlighted and emphasized.

The capitular assemblies have returned frequently to this theme, with various emphases.

From all this arises the obligation of a serious *examination of conscience* which every province and community are called upon to make.

It should be kept in mind that the longer the delay in updating and intervening directly in this sector, so much the

greater will be our distance from the reality of the world and from the young people among whom we live.

The GC19 – 1965

In these years the entire Church was living the Council experience with commitment and enthusiasm.

The Congregation, for its part, presented two particular strong points for a communication orientated in a salesian sense:

- the **preparation** of confreres who can be authoritatively inserted in the field of communication;
- the indispensable collaboration with other institutions working in the sector, especially institutions of the Church.

The reasons put forward for following these indications are immediate:

- on the one hand, the statements of the Church which declare the importance of communication. It is sufficient to recall the words of Paul VI in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (n.45): “*When they (the mass media) are put at the service of the Gospel, they are capable of increasing almost indefinitely the area in which the Word of God is heard; they enable the Good News to reach millions of people. The Church would feel guilty before the Lord if she did not utilize these powerful means that human skill is daily rendering more perfect. It is through them that she proclaims ‘from the housetops’ the message of which she is the depositary. In them she finds a modern and effective version of the pulpit. Thanks to them she succeeds in speaking to the multitudes*”.
- on the other hand, the awareness that for the Salesian commitment to social communication is in perfect harmony with the family tradition. To form young people as good Christians and upright citizens meant for Don Bosco that he must get involved in the world of communication of his time.

The *Provincials* have a vast work of animation to carry out, with the help of their delegate for communication.

The *Rectors* in the communities cannot ignore the risk and richness of communication, whatever be the work carried out by the confreres and laity.

The GC20 – 1971/72

This is the Chapter of the renewal of, and in, the Congregation.

In re-reading its history and determining its charismatic identity, the Congregation expressed the need to recover its educative force.

In this context was inserted the reflection on communication and on the mass media.

From this arose the commitment to look upon communication as a **cultural** and **educative reality**.

For Salesians it does not represent a purely technical dimension.

The “anthropological” concern to put the concrete youngster at the centre of our pastoral commitment, and the “moral” obligation arising from a communication which rapidly becomes large-scale and depersonalizing leads us to look well beyond simple instruments.

Communication is a factor of primary importance which speeds up the history of peoples and influences the education of the young.

Thus were laid the foundations for the present art.43 of the Constitutions:

“We work in the social communication sector. This is a significant field of activity which constitutes one of the apostolic priorities of the salesian mission.

Our Founder had an instinctive grasp of the value of this means of mass education, which creates culture and puts before

the public models of Christian living; he showed great originality in the apostolic undertakings which he initiated to defend and sustain the faith of the people.

Following his example we utilize as God's gift the great possibilities which social communication offers us for education and evangelization".

This gives us two guidelines for the community:

- to be like Don Bosco in the advance guard of progress, committing ourselves seriously with persons and strengths in a communication which creates communion. In this way a perspective is outlined to which all the provinces have given effect in different ways through the **Provincial Newsletters**. At a distance of 30 years from the SGC we do well to check up on what is being done for information and communication **with-in** the communities to achieve a deeper communion and more efficacious incentive for the fulfilment of the mission;
- to realize a liberating education, by developing the responsibility of each one and the shared responsibility of all. Thus are laid the foundations for what today is called "media education", i.e. education to communication through the mass media. It is a reality which can and must find fulfilment, for example, in the school, the liturgy, catechesis and in the whole of educational and pastoral service.

Rectors will find ample scope here for ideas for reflection and action. A bit of apostolic enterprise is needed in the style of Don Bosco.

The GC21 – 1978

This General Chapter made a somewhat rough and ready objective analysis of the situation in the Congregation with respect to social communication.

The inadequate preparation of the confreres was noted, and

the urgent need recalled to have groups and communities capable of dealing with the new facts.

What developments did the Chapter want to see?

- In the first place the setting up of **groups** for study, research, experimentation, and the elaboration of concrete and realizable projects based on serious scientific foundations. As long as social communication is seen as a hobby of individual confreres, or is entrusted to people chosen at random, not only will there be no efficacious results but the communities will begin to lose faith in it.
- All this implies in consequence that a kind of communication must be realized which is **alternative** to what everyone is doing. It is not a good thing to merely repeat what others are doing. It is not necessary to load ourselves with structures and instruments. What is really necessary is to develop new ideas. And here come in all those activities of a traditional kind which exploit the theatre, music, singing, dancing, and various groups which make use of the various products of communication.

Communication is not yet a choral work, one we do together. It often remains a matter of just a few, who are sometimes even isolated from the community. A qualitative leap is needed!

This is a requirement and perspective which needs to be in the *PEPS*.

Provincials and Rectors have an important service to render in this connection.

And they must be helped.

The GC22 – 1984

This is the time when the identity became consolidated.

The new Constitutions drafted by the SGC received definitive form and the approval of the Holy See.

In the area of social communication also this Chapter saw the passage from the contemplation of a charism to its practical implementation.

The Chapter gave birth to the Department of Social Communication with a Councillor General.

The combination with the Department of the Salesian Family seemed the natural result of the preceding salesian history: i.e. the former existence of the “social apostolates” linked with the Salesian Family, and the setting up of a “secretariat for social communication” entrusted at the time to the Councillor for the Salesian Family.

Two requirements were presented by the Chapter to the provinces:

- to learn to be **‘popular’** communicators. The expression implies the need not to lose sight of the relationship with those to whom our mission is addressed. Communication enables us to reach the young and people in general. In respect of its laws and demands it must realize the objectives of human advancement, of education and evangelization. It is not something desired for its own sake. And on the other hand it is impossible to think of our mission to the young and the working-classes without communication; this is stated explicitly in art.6 of the renewed Constitutions;
- to make of our work in communication a **“new”** presence. The evolution of youth and working-class culture, generated and accompanied by social communication and its instruments, seemed to many people to be an occasion for young people leaving the Church in large numbers. Insertion therefore in social communication will provoke the renewal of the salesian community itself which seeks young people in a pastoral manner.

The deeper study of the theme and the preparation of prac-

tical projects require that social communication in the province and in the communities find a place with a certain regularity among the points on the agenda of the *provincial councils*. The circle of those responsible should be enlarged, with the integration of lay people and all the Salesian Family when communication is sought for **beyond** the community.

The GC23 – 1990

With the GC23 we reached the perspective of the education of young people to the faith, and communication became enriched with new lights and further commitments.

Significant here is the description of the **reality** of communication.

It serves in the first place to *inform*, to make one's own personal experience known to others, so that they can share it.

Furthermore, communications *forms*, in so far as it offers examples and models of life, and presents criteria for behaviour and judgements of value. It is therefore a school, an alternative school, with which formal education has to contend. Even if there is no direct confrontation, education is influenced by it.

Yet again, communication tends to *conform*. Its typical characteristics of pervasiveness and attraction easily condition and mould options, especially of the young.

Finally, communication applied exclusively with an eye to economy and the *audience* can easily *deform*. One hears, for example, the term "teledependents" used of those who look to Television for an answer to all their questions or the realization of their desires.

A second emphasis is also important: a reminder of the **many forms** of communication.

We are accustomed to expressing ourselves only in words, spoken or written.

Today's young people, on the other hand, in addition to verbal communication use kinds that are:

- symbolic,
- sign language,
- body language,
- etc., etc.

If on occasion a religious and formative meeting between educator and pupil becomes difficult, the fact is often due to the different ways of reading and interpreting the various signs of communication.

How do we learn the new languages?

The Chapter's response was to assign to the **provincial delegate** for communication a service necessary for overcoming the distance between the young and adults, between educators and pupils.

It would be his task to set up a network of **points of reference** in the individual communities, to multiply relationships, even using electronic means. This is an organizational problem which involves *authority*, the first in responsibility for animation.

The GC24 – 1996

The indications emerging from the last General Chapter are evident to all.

In the **exploitation** of communication the Chapter laid emphasis on the following three points:

- the re-reading of the salesian commitment in the light of communication. Reflection is needed, for instance, for a **new understanding** of the preventive system, of assistance, of education, seen from the perspective of a process of communication. The same is true for evangelization;
- the maturing of adequate **cultural and spiritual** attitudes

in those who want to communicate. Communication, in fact, encloses in itself a dimension of spirituality which has to be learned and lived: i.e. mutual respect, attention to maturing processes, ability to dialogue, the acquiring of technical and critical skills, etc.

- at both provincial and local level there is need on the one hand for a strengthening of **animation** through the service of the delegate, and on the other for a **verification** concerning the quality of communications.

The Provincial with his council, the Rector with his local council, and all the confreres by virtue of fidelity to their vocation must grow in communicative ability.

Conclusion

Here the prevailing concern has been to recall practical aspects for a personal and communal commitment in communication.

If one wishes to recall the richness of doctrine present in our community assemblies, another route needs to be followed, one which is no less interesting.

4.1 Chronicle of the Rector Major

We print the more significant points in the chronicle of the Rector Major in the period Sept.-Nov. 1999, omitting his ordinary commitments at headquarters.

6 September, Monday. He went to Brussels for the *Team Visit* to the Provinces of the Northern European Region, which took place at Groot-Bijgaarden. As is the case in all such visits, there were full assemblies and group-work; the Rector Major introduced the work and gave the final summing-up, as well as the Good-night each evening.

8 September. In the afternoon Fr Vecchi and all the participants visited the university area of Louvain, the "beghinaggi" quarter, some of the Colleges, the church and the square. They then visited the salesian house of Heverlee and inspected the well organized salesianity library and the community. The evening was spent at the Groot-Bijgaarden youth centre.

10 September. A meeting for prayer and fraternal exchange

with representatives of the Salesian Family: SDBs, FMAs, Cooperators, Past-pupils, DBVs, mainly from Belgium with one or two from Holland. At the end Fr Vecchi gave the Good-night.

The following day, with the Team Visit concluded, the Rector Major left for Turin. In the evening, accompanied by Fr Gianni Mazzali, Economer General, he arrived at *Colle Don Bosco*, to bless the new bronze bells for the Don Bosco Temple on the following day.

12 September, Sunday. After the reading of the Word of God, the Rector Major recalled the connection of church-bells with Christian experience and solidarity in times of both joy and sorrow. These bells would ring for the first time at Christmas 1999 and hence were the "bells of 2000". An incision on each recalling the Saint or Beatus to whom the bell is dedicated, emphasizes the holiness and salesian message which the bells are meant to proclaim. On the same occasion was blessed the first of the three external mo-

saics for the external decoration of the Temple. The eucharistic celebration then followed.

Early in the afternoon Fr Vecchi sent on to Turin-Valdocco for a solemn concelebration in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians, during which nine young Salesians and an FMA made their perpetual profession. A large number of priests concelebrated.

In the evening the Rector Major returned to Rome.

19 September, Sunday. He left for Cracow in *Poland*, to preach a Retreat in the theologate. Taking part were the Provincials, provincial councilors and rectors of the four Polish provinces and of the Eastern Circumscription, 102 persons in all. In addition to the conferences he also gave the Good-nights.

There was a particular moment on the third day of the retreat when all the participants visited Auschwitz, the place of our first house in Poland, where they were received with festivity by the youngsters, with Bishop Adam Smigielski SDB of Sosnowiec also present. They then returned to Cracow and the retreat, calling at the Pope's birthplace on the way and visiting the church where John Paul II was baptized.

23 September. The retreatants made a pilgrimage to the much frequented sanctuary of the "Merciful Jesus" where is venerated a copy of the image of Blessed Faustina Kowalska who will be canonized next year.

25 September. At the end of the retreat some FMAs, Cooperators, Volunteers and young people were present, all bringing gifts for the Rector Major, who left for *Turin* later the same day.

26 September, Sunday. In the morning Fr Vecchi had a meeting, organized by the VIS, with the participants at the *Harambé*, at which he spoke on the theme: *Peace is born within the heart*. The VIS President introduced him to the lay volunteers about to leave for the missions.

In the afternoon in the Basilica took place the *function of the presentation of the Crucifix to the departing missionaries*, the 129th such ceremony. The Rector Major presented the Crucifix to the Salesians and lay persons, while the Mother General of the FMA did likewise for the Salesian Sisters. The total number was 46: 21 Salesians, 12 FMA and 13 lay persons.

In the evening Fr Vecchi returned to Rome.

3 October, Sunday. He went to the UPS for the celebration of the 20th anniversary of the official recognition by the State of the Polisportive Giovanili Salesiane (PGS) as an entity for the promotion of sport. Present also for the occasion was the Hon. Oscar Luigi Scalfaro, ex-President of Italy. The celebration took place in the theatre, where Dr Giuseppe Bracco introduced the guests and gave the commemorative address. In addition to the Rector Major and the Hon. Scalfaro, Dr Pietro Badaloni, President of the Lazio Region also spoke. Commemorative medals were presented to the distinguished guests and former officials of the PGS.

4 October. The Rector Major returned once again to Poland, this time for the Team Visit to the Polish Provinces and the Eastern Circumscription, held at Breslau. The Visit followed the usual course between 4 and 9 October.

6 October. The participants visited Twardogóra, a Marian sanctuary managed by the Salesians, where several parish priests of the area had gathered.

7 October. The Rector Major and others were offered a two-part concert: the first part in the

salesian parish church where a Poznan choir sang music of the 17th and 18th centuries and a cantata honouring the recently beatified martyrs; and a second part consisting of a concert given by the band of Lubin.

8 October. Fr Vecchi went to the FMA Provincial House where the communities of the city were gathered, and celebrated Vespers with them. Afterwards he stayed for supper.

11 – 18 October. After returning to Rome, Fr Vecchi presided at the *intermediate session of the General Council*, during which a first examination was made of the revision of the *Ratio Formationis*, entrusted to the Rector Major with his Council by the GC24.

23 October, Saturday. Fr Vecchi left for Sardinia to take part in the celebrations for the centenary of salesian work at *Lanusei* and in Sardinia. On the way he stopped at Nuoro for a brief visit to the salesian house and work there.

At Lanusei he was welcomed by the confreres and representatives of the Salesian Family, then immediately visited the crypt where are buried the first rectors and

founders of the work. He gave a brief address to those present and imparted the Blessing of Mary Help of Christians.

In the afternoon the Rector Major was received by the Bishop at his residence, and then went on to the Town Hall where he was welcomed by the Mayor and Town Councillors, who unanimously bestowed on him *honorary citizenship*.

He next went to the Salesian College where he gave an interview to a TV journalist, and then presided at a Mass at which were present the Bishop, the Mayor and other authorities together with numerous young people and members of the faithful.

In the evening he had a meeting with the youth animators.

24 October, Sunday. Fr Vecchi left for Cagliari, where he immediately visited the sanctuary of Our Lady of Bonaria. He then went on to the *Don Bosco Institute* and then the *parish of St Anne* where the Salesians are working. The Church was filled with members of the Salesian Family and by youth animators, who were responsible for the singing at the Mass.

After Mass the next stop was outside the Institute in via San-

t'Ignazio for the unveiling of the stone tablet in honour of Mgr. Piu, the parish priest who worked incessantly to get the Salesians to Cagliari with letters, intercessions and the prayers of Cooperators, and arranged matters so that on their arrival they would find all they needed. He then followed up the Salesians until his death which occurred at the age of a hundred years.

Abp. Alberti spoke; he brought with him a message from the Bishops of Sardinia on the occasion of the centenary of salesian work in the island and of the visit of the Rector Major.

Fr Vecchi responded, expressing his thanks for the many signs of thanksgiving and gratitude that had been made; he said that the message had a quite particular significance, especially for the love of the Church which Don Bosco fostered.

At the end of the ceremony the Rector Major was conveyed by car to *Selargius* on the outskirts of Cagliari, where lunch was served. After lunch he greeted the youngsters of the PGS before going on to the theatre where the official cultural commemoration took place.

Later the same evening he returned to Rome.

25 October. Fr Vecchi left Rome once again, this time for *Mexico City* and the Team Visit to the Provinces of the Interamerican region. It took place in the premises of the Mexican Bishops Conference at Lago di Guadalupe with the usual calendar. During supper each night the participants were entertained with songs and dances by different groups.

28 October. All the participants made a visit to the Basilica of *Our Lady of Guadalupe* where the Eucharist was celebrated with numerous members of the Salesian Family; the liturgy was animated by pupils of the salesian schools of the city. Fr Vecchi in the homily greeted all the members of the Salesian Family present and commented briefly on the subject of the Gospel of the Mass, the Visitation. After the celebration and lunch he went to Teotihuacan, 50 km. from Mexico City to visit the sacred area which goes back to the Aztec "Fathers".

Returning to the city the party went to the house of Santa Julia where, in the church of Mary Help of Christians (the national salesian Marian Shrine) was gathered the Salesian Family, with whom the Rector Major celebrated a further Mass.

30 October. At the offertory in the Mass which concluded the Visit, the Regional Councillor, Fr Pascual Chávez, invited the 14 Provincials present to approach the altar, take a candle and form a semi-circle around the Rector Major. The whole assembly then renewed their religious profession.

After lunch Fr Vecchi went to the neighbouring house of the FMA to greet the Sisters, and in the evening left for Paris on his way back to Rome.

6 November. The Rector Major went to *Lecce* for the celebrations for the golden jubilee of salesian work there.

After a clamorous reception by the confreres and youngsters to the sound of the "Don Bosco Boys" Band of Naples, and accompanied by the Archbishop (who wished to be present) and the Provincial, Fr Vecchi first visited the photographic exhibition in the Hexagonal Hall and then moved on to the Don Bosco Theatre where he gave a conference on the theme: *Dominic Savio: a model of holiness for young people of the third millennium*.

7 November, Sunday. Once again in the Don Bosco Theatre the official commemoration took place of the 50th anniversary of

salesian work in Lecce, with the commemorative address given by Dr. Adolfo G. Buja, vice-president of the CPP/CEP.

After the ceremony Fr Vecchi went to the Hexagonal Hall for a meeting with the animators of the Oratory and Youth Centre, and then to the Basilica of St Dominic Savio for the solemn con-celebration.

The Mass was that of St Dominic Savio himself, and the urn containing his mortal remains was in a prominent place in the sanctuary. It had been brought from Turin to Lecce for this special occasion.

In the afternoon Fr Vecchi returned to Rome.

10 November. The Rector Major left once again for Spain, to visit the Province of *Barcelona*, on the occasion of the opening of the *Don Bosco Higher Institute of Religious Sciences*, the golden jubilee of the Salesian Theological Centre of Marti Codolar, and the centenary of Ciutadella on the island of Minorca.

He arrived at the Provincial House in time for Compline, at the end of which he gave the Good-night. The chapel has been converted from a place dear to the Salesians: it was the room

where Don Bosco used to sleep when he went to Barcelona. Alongside it is the small room where he received people who came to seek his advice, and where several prodigious events took place.

11 November. Fr Vecchi paid a visit to the Cardinal Archbishop who received him with great cordiality, and then went on to the salesian house of Marti Codolar, another place dear to the Salesians and rich in stories of Don Bosco. It was here that the famous photograph was taken to which Fr Egidio Viganò added a commentary and of which a copy is to be found in many houses of the Congregation.

After the welcoming ceremony all moved into the Aula Magna for the function inaugurating the Higher Institute of Religious Sciences and the commemoration of the golden jubilee of the Salesian Theological Centre.

At the conclusion of the function the Rector Major, as Grand Chancellor of the UPS, solemnly inaugurated the academic year 1999-2000. This was followed by Mass in the Centre's chapel.

In the afternoon Fr Vecchi went to the headquarters of the Don Bosco Publishing House (EDEBE), visited the premises,

and had a meeting with the governing body and the new management components.

In the evening he was present in the theatre of the Polytechnic of Sarrià to inaugurate the courses at the University Technical and Industrial School, with emphasis on Industrial Electronics and Electricity, and present diplomas. Present among others were the Director of the EUSS (Salesian University School of Sarrià) and the Vice-Rector of the Autonomous University of Barcelona, on which the EUSS depends.

Fr Vecchi, in his speech, developed the theme: *Education today*.

12 November. At a meeting of the rectors of the province at Marti Codolar, he set out some considerations on the community as an animating nucleus and the role of the rector. He later left by air for *Madrid* where, after a brief stop at the Provincial House he went to the Palace of Congresses, headquarters of the Congress of Teachers of Religion, organized by the Spanish Bishops Conference, where religious and civil authorities were gathered. At the invitation of the President of the Bishops Conference he addressed the gathering on the theme: *Nuevos desafíos de la educación interpelación a la ERE*.

13 November. After returning to Barcelona the Rector Major was once again at Marti Codolar in the morning for a more extended meeting with the confreres of the province. In the afternoon he visited the Sanctuary and work of *Tibidabo*, and later had a meeting with the Salesian Family in the main hall of the Sarrià Polytechnic.

The day ended at San Boi de Llobregat where in the large gymnasium he had a meeting with members of the SYM.

14 November, Sunday. Fr Vecchi travelled to *Ciutadella* in the island of Minorca for the celebrations for the centenary of salesian work there.

He was welcomed by the confreres and by two small children in national dress who presented him with flowers. This was followed by an interview for the local press and then a Eucharist at which the Rector Major presided, with Salesians and diocesan priests concelebrating.

At the end of the celebration he had a meeting with the Apostolic Administrator of Minorca and Bishop-elect of Lleida, and then went on to the college entrance where he unveiled a commemorative plaque. This was followed almost at once by a visit to the

meeting place of the past-pupils a short distance away, where he unveiled another plaque.

After lunch at the *Princesa Playa* Hotel Fr Vecchi went back to the Salesian Institute where he unveiled yet a third plaque and then went to the theatre for the solemn Act of Commemoration. Present were the pupils of the first course, their parents and members of the Salesian Family.

The Rector Major thanked them, congratulated them on the centenary, and went on to address the members of the Salesian Family on some specific topics.

At the end the city band gave a much appreciated musical concert.

15 November. After recording interviews for the Barcelona periodical *La Vanguardia* and for the *Review of the University School*, Fr Vecchi flew back to Barcelona for a meeting with the provincial council, followed by another with the combined councils of the SDB and FMA

In the afternoon he returned to Rome.

22 November. The Rector Major left Rome once more, this time for *Slovenia* and the Team Visit to the Provinces CEO – CRO – SLK – SLO – and UNG.

In addition to the usual commitments associated with such visits, he took part in the inauguration of the school of Zelimlje, and the launching of the celebrations for the coming centenary of salesian work in Slovenia with a concelebration in the Church of Mary Help of Christians and other events prepared by the province and its young people.

With the other Salesians Fr Vecchi also visited the place where some Salesians were slaughtered in the period following the last war.

29 November. The Rector Major moved on to Zagreb in Croatia and the following day to Zepce, near Sarajevo in Bosnia, for the inauguration of a professional training centre in the presence of various civil and religious authorities.

This was followed by various meetings with confreres, rectors, and young people in formation.

1 December. On his return to Rome, Fr Vecchi went to the UPS to preside at the meeting of the Academic Senate.

6 December. He accepted an invitation to visit the headquarters of the Sant'Egidio Communi-

ty in Rome. He spent some time in conversation with its leaders, during which a video was shown depicting the community's history, and then went into the neighbouring church of Santa Maria in Trastevere for a moment of prayer. The basilica was filled with those belonging to the community and other persons. Fr Vecchi gave a brief commentary on the Gospel of the day – the Transfiguration.

Afterwards he returned to the community headquarters for a family supper, rich in conversation and interventions.

7 December. The beginning of the *plenary session* of the General Council, with the Rector Major presiding.

9 December. Fr Vecchi took part in the presentation of a book he had written in collaboration with the journalist Carlo Di Cicco: *I guardiani dei sogni con il dito sul mouse. Educatori nell'era informatica*; and in the inauguration of the Don Bosco Bookshop in Via della Conciliazione, Rome.

4.2 Chronicle of the Councillors

The Vicar General

At the end of July Fr Van Looy went to Holland for a week of meetings. One of them was the General Assembly of Catholic Educators (UMEC), on the theme: *The child on the threshold of the 21st Century; the new role of the Catholic Teacher*. Fr Van Looy is the ecclesiastical assistant of this organization.

On this occasion he also visited the community of the Provincial House of Holland in its new temporary residence and offices in the town of Amersfoort. The former provincial house had been sold on 1 August, because the professional school situated on the same territory had been compelled by the government to amalgamate with other schools, with the result that the part of the property formerly occupied by the school was now empty.

8 August. Fr Van Looy was in Colombia-Medellin to preach a retreat at Copacabana to the provincial councils and rectors of the two provinces of Colombia. He profited by the occasion to visit some of the salesian works and have meetings with the re-

spective provincial councils.

17 August. He presided at the Eucharist at Lyons, France, on the occasion of the inauguration of the newly united single French province and the installation of the new Provincial. On 15 August in fact, with the coming into effect of the decree of the Rector Major, the process of unification of the former provinces of Lyons and Paris was completed with its headquarters at Paris.

From Lyons Fr Van Looy went to Northern France to the salesian work at Giel for a few days of rest with his family.

29-30 August. He was at Pacognano in the Italian Southern Province for a two-day study of pastoral work. In the evening of the 30th he presided at the installation of Fr Corrado Bettiga as rector of the Generalate community, Rome.

8 September. At Lanuvio, Rome, he presided at the Eucharist and received the first profession of 13 novices.

13-18 September. Fr Van Looy accompanied Bishop Belo in his interviews with the Holy Father, the President of the Italian Republic and other civil and ecclesial authorities and with the mass media. The Bishop explained to all to whom he spoke

the problems experience in East Timor at the time.

4 October. He was present at the opening of the academic year at the UPS.

10 October. He presided at the celebrations for the 40th anniversary of the foundation of salesian work at Bra (ICP).

27-29 October. He took part in the meeting of the Italian Bishops Conference, which had as its theme the Catholic School.

29 (evening)- 31 October. He was present at Grasse in France at the *Eurobosco* meeting of the European past-pupils.

7 November. Meeting of the UMEC executive council in Rome.

8-11 November. Fr Van Looy was in the southern Belgian province for meetings with the provincial council, rectors and provincial committees, and to visit some of the province's works and initiatives. The visit concluded with an assembly of the confreres at Woluwe-St.Lambert.

23 November. He represented the religious at an informative meeting with the ecumenical faculty of Bossey (Switzerland), held in Rome, who were seeking a better understanding of the sense and activity of religious in the Church and in the world.

24-27 November. The Vicar General took part in the six-monthly Assembly of the Union of Superiors General (USG), representing the Rector Major who was engaged in the Team Visit in Slovenia. The theme was: *Sharing charisms and spirituality, a consecrated life open to the laity*. He explained what we are trying to do in this connection.

8 December. Fr Van Looy was present at Biella (ICP) for the celebrations of the Centenary of salesian work there.

The Councillor for Formation

During this period Fr Nicolussi took part in four Team Visits: in August for Western Europe at Santiago de Compostela, in September for the four provinces of Northern Europe at Groot-Bijgaarden (Belgium), in October at Mexico City for the Interamerican Region, and in November for the five provinces of Central and Eastern Europe in Slovenia.

Of the other contacts made and meetings held, two call for special emphasis: the visit to the post-novitiate at St Petersburg, and the five-yearly meeting of members of the Salesian Biblical Association. The occasion for the vis-

it to St Petersburg at the beginning of November was the inauguration of the premises of the post-novitiate, and the main objective was the verification of the formative situation in the Eastern Circumscription with the members of the provincial council and those responsible for the various stages of formation.

At the time of the visit the Circumscription had 29 pre-novices, 6 novices, 20 post-novices, 29 in practical training and 22 students of theology; this means a total of 106 young men and confreres in initial formation, from various countries and belonging to different rites. The number of vocations, the diversity of their origin, the period of initial salesian consolidation through which the Circumscription is passing, and the challenges of the educative and pastoral situation, all clearly indicate the need for a solid foundation, adequate from a pedagogical aspect and satisfactory from a salesian standpoint.

From 27 August to 3 September Cremisan in the Holy Land was the venue for the *4th world meeting of the Salesian Biblical Association*. Taking part were some 40 confreres and 4 Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, with among the latter the Coun-

cillor General for Formation, Sr. Matilde Nevares. The meeting covered three main points: the deeper study of a specific theme: "*The Word of God and salesian formation*"; an interchange of views on the question of updating, and the Association's program for the years immediately ahead. The specific study-theme was prepared with the involvement of FMA and SDB formation communities of all the world. The assembly also formulated some proposals as a contribution to the revision of the *Ratio*.

The time spent at headquarters during this period by the Councillor and the collaborators of his department was given over primarily to the revision of the *Ratio*.

The Councillor for Youth Pastoral Work

26-27 July. Fr Domenech took part in the course for new rectors organized by the Iberian Provincial Conference at Poblet (Tarragona, Spain), and developed the theme of the rector as animator of an apostolic community.

1-7 August. He was at Colle Don Bosco for the *Confronto* '99: a meeting of some 700 young animators of the SYM of the European provinces with the slogan:

"*Citizens of Europe: Citizens of the World*".

10 August. He left for a short visit to the Province of Recife where he took part in the Week of Salesian Spirituality and met with the provincial team for youth pastoral work.

13-14 August. At São Paulo he was present at the national meeting of provincial animators of schools.

15-21 August. He animated a course in youth pastoral work for the provincial delegates of Brazil and members of their teams.

24-29 August. Fr Domenech took part in the Team Visit at Santiago de Compostela (Spain) and in the same period was represented at a meeting at Bogotá on marginalization in the Inter-american region by a member of his department, Fr Raúl Rojas.

30 August. The Councillor left for a visit of animation to the Eastern European Circumscription where he stayed until 5 September. In this period he visited some of the communities and had meetings with the provincial council and the team for pastoral work.

On his return he went to Brussels for the Team Visit to the provinces of North Belgium, Holland, Great Britain and Ireland.

12 September. Fr Domenech left for India where at Hyderabad he had a meeting on the salesian school in India, followed by another meeting of the National Centre for youth pastoral work, and of the provincial delegates and members of their teams (*DBYA Board and National Council*).

21-25 September. He was at Paris for the animation of a course on youth pastoral work for the provincial animators of France and Southern Belgium.

5-9 October. He accompanied the Rector Major in the Team Visit to the provinces of Poland and the Eastern Circumscription.

10-20 October. He was present at the intermediate session of the General Council.

17 October. He took part at Bologna in the Salesian Parish Day of the ILE Province.

26-31 October. He was at the Team Visit of the Interamerican region at Mexico City. Meanwhile from 30 October to 1 November Fr Jerome Vallabaraj, of his department, had a meeting with the team making preparations for the *Forum* of the SYM.

5 November. The Councillor held a meeting of the ICP Commission for the salesian "holy places", and studied with them

ways for promoting a European dimension for the animation of these sites.

14-20 November. He took part in a course in youth pastoral work for provincial delegates and members of their teams of the provinces of Italy and the Middle East.

24-29 November. He made a brief visit of animation to the Portuguese province, and met with the rectors and coordinators of pastoral work and with some lay teachers and youth animators, developing with them some fundamental points of salesian pastoral work for the young.

The Councillor for the Salesian Family and for Social Communication

A. SALESIAN FAMILY

The activities of the period were concentrated about the following nuclei:

- the Team Visits,
- regional meetings,
- commitments with individual Groups of the Salesian Family.

1. The Team Visits in which the Councillor for the Salesian Family took part were those at:

- Santiago de Compostela (23-28 August),

- Breslau (4-9 October),
- Mexico (26-28 October).

Animation of the Salesian Family by the community of the Salesians varies from one place to another and with the organization of the province.

An aspect that needs improvement everywhere concerns the knowledge and deeper study of the Common Identity Card. This resulted from research among all the Groups forming the Family and harmonizes in a balanced fashion the autonomy of the individual Groups and the communion between all of them. A more vivid awareness of the common points of reference represented by the Common Identity Card will help to live membership as a means of exchanging the gifts and charisms received from the Spirit.

2. The *Regional Meetings* foreseen by the programming of the Rector Major with his Council have taken the Department's team to the following places:

- Lomé (13-15 September) for the French and Portuguese-speaking African zone.
- Hong Kong (16-18 November) for the Far East.
- Madras (20-22 November) for the Provinces of India.
- Rome – Generalate (3-5 December) for the Provinces of Northern Europe (North Belgium, Holland, Great Britain, Ireland and Malta).

The meetings proved opportune for gaining a knowledge of the practical situation in the various provinces with respect to the Salesian Family, as a period of ongoing formation for the provincial delegates of the various branches of the Family, and for programming further initiatives for the growth of the Groups in quantity and quality

3. The following *initiatives* were realized with the Groups of the Family:

- The World Presidency of the Don Bosco Past-pupils (30 August – 4 September) considered a series of problems concerning the organization of regional and continental congresses: the Latin-American Congress in Chile in August 2000; the Asian-Australian Congress at Bangkok at the end of the year 2000, and the European Congress at Grasse in November 1999. The main objective was to study the organization of international congresses with a view to giving salesian and educative content to the assemblies.

- The World Meeting (Rome-Generalate, 6-13 December 1999) of the Regional Assistants of the DBV and CDB, meeting for the first time, considered the active and efficacious presence of the DBV World Consulting Body. The week's study and deeper analysis of the reality, life and spirituality of the DBV helped the many participants to rediscover the service of animation which they are called upon to provide.
- The meeting (Rome-Generalate, 12 December) of the study-group for problems concerning the Salesian Family had on its agenda problems concerning the lay groups of the Family.
- Participation in the days of formation for delegates and coordinators of the Salesian Cooperators (Rome-Generalate, 10-12 December) led to the relaunching of formative meetings at national level.

Meanwhile the ordinary work continued in the Department.

Particular activity was associated with the preparation of the three volumes "Don Bosco's Salesian Family", decided on by the World Consulting Body in view of the year 2000. They will be pub-

lished in English, Italian and Spanish, and will be ready early in the new year.

B. SOCIAL COMMUNICATION

The following activities took place at *regional level*:

- a meeting at Lomé (11-13 September) with those in charge of social communication in the French and Portuguese-speaking zones of Africa; all the provincial delegates for communication were there;
- a meeting at Bollington, England, with those in charge of social communication in Northern Europe.

These meetings brought to light the following needs:

- the importance of taking on as a provincial community the obligations of social communication and not leaving all the initiatives of the sector to single confreres, with consequent problems of coordination and orientation;
- the urgent need of fulfilling the indications of the GC23 and GC24 in the matter of the institution of the figure of the provincial delegate; of new relationships to be established between communication and pastoral work for mutual en-

richment; of revision of the educative and pastoral project of the community, to make it more attentive to communication and the associated consequences for education; of the new mentality to be adopted in the matter of communication, which must be considered as a school at mass-production level and not simply the use of instruments, etc., etc.

Two *international initiatives* were realized in this period:

- a meeting of the international committee of the Salesian Bulletin (Rome-Generalate, 23-29 July), to make some practical decisions concerning the renewal and relaunching of the Bulletin in the world;
- a meeting of those responsible for salesian radio transmitters in Latin America (Santiago-Chile, 23-26 October), to find common points of convergence and commitment in the sector.

Routine work at the Generalate included the following:

- the realization of the CD-ROM with the Biographical Memoirs of Don Bosco (in Italian), incorporating the observations made by those who had examined the trial version;
- a proposal for a website for the

Direzione Generale, following the lines given to the Department by the General Council;

- collection of the material needed for the volume: **SALESIAN PRESENCE IN THE WORLD**, to be published for the feast of Don Bosco;
- the analysis of a rapid survey on the acceptability and use of material produced by the ANS Agency.

During this period Fr Martinelli also made two visits to the salesian Provinces of Bahia Blanca and Guwahati.

In this way it was possible for the Councillor to meet many groups of confreres working in the animation of the Salesian Family and in the sector of social communication. These two provinces have a significant involvement in both these areas of salesian life.

The same work of animation of the two sectors was also carried out with the newly appointed rectors of the Western European Region at Poblet.

The Councillor for the Missions

At the end of the summer session Fr Odorico went to Benediktbeuern, Germany, to receive the

perpetual religious profession of three confreres from the two German provinces.

10-20 August. After some days of rest and office work he spent this period in India, in the Hyderabad province, where he made detailed visits to various mission centres with meetings with village catechists and with catechumens. He also had conversations with the Provincial and rectors at the provincial house. Missionary prospects in Hyderabad are very promising.

26 August. He took part in a meeting of the VIS at Courmayeur in the Aosta Valley on the theme: "*The religions of the world and solidarity among peoples*".

30 August-5 Sept. With Sr Ciriaca Hernandez of the FMA General Council, Fr Odorico presided at a seminar in Manaus, Brazil, on *Missionary Praxis in the Amazonian area*. There were 62 participants between SDBs and FMAs, from Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Panama, Paraguay, Peru and Venezuela; there was a very enriching sharing of views, especially on the formation of missionary catechists and on the praxis of inculturation in Christian initiation.

7-13 September. He presided in

the same way at a seminar at Cumbayá, Ecuador, on *Missionary Praxis in the High Andes*. Here the participants were 30 SDB and FMA missionaries from Bolivia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico and Peru. The theme was substantially the same as that of the preceding seminar, with the addition of contributions concerning the missions of the high Andes. This seminar was shaken unfortunately by the tragic death of Fr Alfredo Germani: the conference he was to have given was read and discussed by all with particular interest and veneration.

14 September. Fr Odorico had a meeting at Santafé de Bogotá with Mgr. Hector Lopez and some missionaries of the Ariari area to obtain some firsthand news of the sad situation through which the Vicariate is passing in that area of constant and conflicting guerilla warfare. It is a situation which calls for extremely strong faith.

15-16 September. He was busy in Venezuela with various activities of animation, and then returned to Rome accompanied by a new Venezuelan missionary destined for Sierra Leone.

17-26 September. This period the Councillor spent at Rome and

Turin with the new missionaries preparing for their departure (21 of them were SDBs). The total number leaving this year, including the FMA and lay missionaries, was 46, a number higher than the average of the last ten years.

11-20 October. Fr Odorico was present for the intermediate session of the Council, and was able in the same period to preside over a meeting of various NGOs on "*Don Bosco International*", and another on a possible project for a professional school in Kosovo.

22-31 October. He visited some of our works in the Guadalajara Province of Mexico (Ciudad Juarez and Tijuana), and the missions in the higher parts of the Mixes in the Province of Mexico City. He noted in particular the growth in lay missionary volunteer work, the oratory style and the efforts at inculturation.

4-9 November. The Councillor went to Mongolia by way of Korea for an exploratory visit at the invitation of the Apostolic Nuncio. He was accompanied by the Korean Provincial.

12-22 November. He made a missionary visit to the Ukraine, Georgia, St Petersburg and Moscow, and saw for himself the progressive consolidation of sale-

sian work, the priority given to the young, the careful attention paid to the different rites and the growth of vocations. Three young confreres from this Circumscription have offered themselves for the coming missionary expedition of the year 2000.

30 November-5 December. Fr Odorico concluded his activities of the period with a missionary visit to the two foundations in Ghana. It was consoling to note the growth in local vocations, and the success of the salesian charism for the benefit of poor youngsters. Another six dioceses are asking for salesian foundations.

6 December. He was back in Rome for the winter session of the General Council.

The Economer General

24 July. Fr Mazzali animated the day for financial matters in the course for new rectors organized by the CISI at Rome-San Tarcisio.

26-31 July. He preached a retreat to a group of FMA at Col di Nava (Imperia).

5 August. He was present at the celebration for the renewal of the professions of the FMA at Leghorn, and on the following

day presided at the concelebration for the FMA first professions at Contra di Missaglia.

11-13 August. With Fr Mario Sala he took part at Calcutta in the meeting of the Provincials and Provincial Economers of the Indian provinces, and was able also to make a rapid visit to some of the works in Calcutta and Bombay. Time did not permit visits to the other provinces.

22-28 August. The Councillor directed a summer course for Co-operators on the theme of the Encyclical *Fides et Ratio*, at Cesana Torinese, and in the following week the traditional educational camp for the young people of the oratory of the parish of the Martyrs of Sangano, Turin.

6-10 September: He took part in the Team Visit to the Provinces of BEN, GBR, IRL and OLA in Belgium, and after the Visit accompanied the Rector Major to Colle Don Bosco for the solemn blessing of the bells for the Don Bosco Temple.

After a period of rest spent with his family, he then returned to Rome to continue the normal work of administration, and in particular to deal with matters concerning the building of the new Don Bosco Library at the UPS.

13-14 October. With Fr Giuseppe Corò he took part at Porto Alegre in a meeting of the Provincials of the Cis-Brazil Conference, and then went on to preach the quarterly retreat to a group of confreres of the Paraguay province at Ypacarai.

18-19 October. He was at Manucho for a meeting with the Provincials and Economers of the Cisur Conference.

2-5 November. With Fr Battista Personeni. Fr Mazzali presided at a meeting of the Provincial Economers of the Polish Provinces and the Eastern Circumscription, at Warsaw

8-20 November. The Councillor preached two retreats to the confreres of the Zambian Vice-province at Lufubu and Lusaka-Bauleni. He profited by the occasion to visit some of our other foundations in the area.

22-27 November. He took part in the Team Visit to the CEP, CRO, SLK, SLO and UNG provinces held at Celje in Slovenia.

The work in progress for the restoration of the upper church at Colle Don Bosco, and the other work in Rome at Testaccio, the Generalate and the UPS have all been followed with particular attention by the Economist General in collaboration with the confr-

eres immediately in charge in each case.

The Regional Councillor for Africa and Madagascar

10 August. Fr Antonio Rodriguez left Rome for Johannesburg to begin the *Extraordinary Visitation* of the Southern Africa Vice-province (AFM: Lesotho, South Africa, Swaziland).

12 August. Meeting with the Provincial Council to get to know the view of the Provincial and Council of the province.

14-26 August. He spent in the houses and works of the Cape Town area before going on to Lesotho.

1 September. The Regional was in Lusaka, Zambia, for the installation of the new Superior of the ZMB Vice-Province, Fr Casimiro Socha. He then returned to South Africa to continue the Visitation in the Johannesburg area, and specifically at Daleside.

9 September. He travelled to Togo to take part in the meeting organized by the Departments of the Salesian Family and Social Communication for the French and Portuguese-speaking circumscriptions of Africa.

18 September. After a brief

transit through Nairobi he went to the provincial delegation of Ruanda-Burundi-Goma. Here he visited all the works and had a meeting with the Council of the Delegation to study the social and political situation in which they are living, and its incidence on the linkage with the provincial centre with which communication is becoming more difficult.

1 October. The Regional returned to Southern Africa to visit the houses where he had not yet been and conclude the Visitation.

14-16 October. He had meetings successively with the provincial committee for group work, with all the rectors, and with the Provincial Council. In the two final meetings he was able to share with the rectors and councillors his views on the Province.

17 October. Fr Rodriguez travelled to Indonesia to begin the Extraordinary Visitation of the Vice-province of Indonesia and Timor (ITM)

18 October. He began with the formation community in Jakarta.

23 October. He went on to Dili for the visitation of the seven communities in the eastern part of the island.

At the time of the Visitation he was able to see for himself the consequences of the grave social

disorders that had taken place in East Timor after the proclamation of the results of the referendum on autonomy: houses burned down, public buildings destroyed, lack of so many necessities and an immense number of refugees, compelled by force of arms to abandon their houses and move to the western part of the island, under Indonesian administration. Our confreres have not suffered personal harm, but in the capital a good part of our works and premises has been looted and burned.

The Councillor was able to go back for a second visit later, in line with the plan that had been adopted, because the first time there had been general security in the whole territory which made movement difficult. He was able to visit all the houses to which the confreres had returned, going back to their own communities after giving what service they could to the refugees.

15 November. He was able to have a meeting with the council of the Vice-province to share with the members his impressions after the Visitation.

18 November. He returned to Jakarta for the visitation of the new community at Tigaraksa.

24 November. The Councillor returned to Rome with the intention of making a visit to the confreres at Khartoum before the winter session of the General Council, but unfortunately did not succeed in getting a visa in time.

The Regional Councillor for Latin America - South Cone

After the summer session of the Council, Fr Helvécio Baruffi left immediately for Brazil.

26-31 July. He made a visit of animation to various communities in the Port Alegre Province.

2 August. He began the *Extraordinary Visitation of the Province of São Paulo*, Brazil, with a series of meetings: with the provincial council, the rectors, and the provincial committee for pastoral work. He then continued with the visits to the individual communities.

10 September. He took part in the golden jubilee celebrations of the salesian work in Piracicaba.

12-23 October. The Regional temporarily interrupted the Visitation of São Paulo to take part in the meetings of the CIS-BRASIL and the CISUR.

12-16 October. The CIS-

BRASIL meeting took place in Porto Alegre, with the presence of the Economist General, Provincials and Provincial Economers. As well as points concerning financial matters, an agreement was studied and approved relating to collaboration between the provinces of CISBRASIL and the future Vice-province of Angola. Also approved, after a long and difficult discussion process, was the Civil Statute of the Conference of the Don Bosco Salesian Provinces of Brazil.

17-23 October. The meeting of the CISUR took place at Manucho, in the Rosario Province of Argentina. Here too the first days were dedicated to financial matters, with the Economist General, Provincials, Provincial Economers and some lay administrators present. On the agenda also was the study and approval of the solidarity agreement with the Vice-province of Angola. For the study of this point were present also the Provincial of São Paulo and the Delegate of Angola. The meeting dealt also with specific themes of the CISUR and the JIAR, and in particular with reflections on the launching of the novitiate in Argentina.

24 October. The Regional took up once again the Visitation of

the communities of São Paulo.

9-11 November. He was present at three days of discernment in view of the appointment of the new Provincial.

15 November. He took part in the Feast of the Provincial Community, at which most of the confreres of the province were present.

16 November. The Visitation ended with a meeting of all the rectors and the members of the provincial council.

After the Visitation Fr Baruffi suspended other activities to undergo a medical check-up at São Paulo followed by a minor surgical intervention.

30 November. After a short period of convalescence he returned to Rome.

The Councillor for the Interamerican Region

24-25 July. Immediately after the summer session of the Council, Fr Pascual Chávez had a two-day meeting in the provincial house of Mexico-City province to make preparations for the coming Team Visit and discuss other matters with the Provincial.

26 July. He went on to Guatemala to *visit the formation*

houses of the Central America province: the pre-novitiate, post-novitiate and theologate (all in Guatemala) and the novitiate at Cartago in Costa Rica. He was also able to meet the communities of La Guardia, Don Bosco College, and the University.

28-31 July. He was at the Regional Centre for the Salesian Brother (*CRESCO*), sharing life and reflections with the community of 7 Brothers and 2 Formators, and speaking with each of those in formation. In the evening of the 30th, he went with Fr Ricardo Chinchilla to San Vicente to give a conference to the Daughters of the Divine Saviour, who were preparing for their General Chapter.

Returning to Mexico, Fr Chavez spent a few days with his family and profited by the opportunity to have a medical check-up and take part in some events of the FMA: first professions and the eucharistic celebration on the occasion of the change of the FMA Provincial.

13 August. He travelled to Miami and then on to New York to set preparations in motion for the coming extraordinary visitation of the Antilles province, some of whose members are in the USA. He then went on to

Montreal to start up the consultation process before the appointment of the new Superior of the Canadian Vice-province.

21 August. He went to Santo Domingo and then on to Jarabacoa, to take part in the ordination of one of the confreres of the province and the final part of the "*Happy with Don Bosco*" youth gathering, which brought together many young Salesians and youngsters from various groups of the salesian works in the Dominican Republic.

23 August. The Regional began the *Extraordinary Visitation* of the Antilles Province (ANT), which includes the salesian work in the three Caribbean islands of Cuba, Porto Rico and the Dominican Republic. The Visit continued until 25 November.

3-24 September. The Visit to Cuba included a week's retreat which he preached to a group of Salesians from all parts of the province in the ancient seminary of El Cobre, near the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Charity, the so-called "spiritual heart of Cuba". There the Regional also had an opportunity to meet with the Council of the Delegation.

25-27 September. Fr Chavez travelled to Quito to take part in the silver jubilee celebrations of

the *Salesian Regional Centre*, where the main event (apart from the Eucharist) was a "Formation course for Formators", at which were present the rectors or representatives of all the formation stages of the provinces of the Interamerican Region and of some of the provinces of the Southern-Cone Region.

28 September – 13 October. The visitation of the Delegation of Porto Rico, which ended with a meeting of all the confreres of the Delegation at Cataño, and another with the Council of the Delegation.

23-30 October. The Regional interrupted the Visitation to go to Mexico for the annual programming meeting with the Provincials of the Region and, immediately afterwards, the Team Visit at which the Rector Major presided.

Fr Chavez then returned once more to the Antilles for the Visitation of the communities of the Dominican Republic.

25 November. The Visitation ended.

26-29 November. The Councillor made a brief visit to the province of Venezuela; he was able to go to Puerto Ayacucho and Mérida, and have a meeting with the provincial council. From

Venezuela he flew to Madrid, where he met two new missionaries leaving for Cuba: Juan José Ochoa (SMA) and Miguel Angel Fernández (SBI).

1 December. Fr Chavez returned to Rome.

The Councillor for the Australia-Asia Region

3 August. Fr Joaquim D'Souza arrived at Chennai, on his way to the Marian Sanctuary of Vailankanni, where all the rectors of the Madras Province were making a retreat prior to the inauguration of the new Province of "Our Lady of Good Health of Vailankanni", and the installing of the first Provincial, Fr James Theophilus.

5 August. The inauguration and installation took place in the presence of two Salesian Bishops, Mgr. Chinappa of Vellore, and Mgr. Joseph Anthony of Dharmapuri, and numerous confreres, members of the Salesian Family and friends.

9 August. After passing through Bangalore, with a brief stop at the provincial house and the Ongoing Formation Centre *Don Bosco Yuva Pracodini*, Fr D'Souza reached Calcutta.

10 August. He began a three-day meeting with the Indian Provincial Conference of which the first day was given over to financial matters, presided over by the Economist General, who was accompanied by one of his collaborators Fr Mario Sala. All the provincial economists were present. Among the other items dealt with in the Conference were mainly those concerned with the coming Team Visit to be held at Mumbai from 29 February – 4 March 2000.

At the end of the meeting of the Indian Conference the Councillor began the Extraordinary Visitation of the Province of Calcutta, which kept him busy until 18 November; it involved visiting all the houses and confreres in the States of Bengal and Sikkim in India, in the mountainous country of Nepal and the Delegation of Myanmar, which also belong to the Province of Calcutta. During the visit he was present at the funeral of Fr George Chittilappally, parish priest of the mission of Joypur, who lost his life in a tragic road accident on 20 September, together with a Sister of the mission and the driver of the jeep in which they were travelling.

14 November. At the conclu-

sion of the Visitation, the Regional took part in the celebrations at Bandel for the fourth centenary of the Basilica of Our Lady which is entrusted to the care of the Salesians, and in the jubilees of religious profession and priestly ordination of several confreres commemorated in a combined celebration at Kalyani on 17 November.

On his way back to Rome Fr D'Souza visited the three initial formation houses (novitiate, post-novitiate and Centre for University Studies) at Nashik in the Province of Bombay.

28 November. He returned to Rome for the winter session of the General Council.

The Councillor for the West Europe Region

23 July. Fr Filiberto Rodriguez left Rome for Lisbon for the installation of the new Provincial of Portugal which took place on the following day.

25 July. He went to Poblet, via Barcelona, to be present at the course for new rectors of the Iberian Conference. 34 new rectors were present, and topics were presented by Frs Antonio Domenech, Antonio Martinelli,

the Provincials of Madrid and León, the provincial economist of Barcelona, and Fr Filiberto himself. The course was organized by the Barcelona Province and the results were both interesting and encouraging.

1 August. He accompanied the Spanish contingent to Turin for the European *Confronto '99* at Colle Don Bosco.

5 August. He returned to Madrid for a meeting with the new Council of the FMA Province of "Nuestra Señora del Camino" of León.

9-16 August. He spent some days of rest with his family.

16 August. He left for Lyons to take part in the festivities for the unification of the two French provinces and the installing of the new Provincial. Present also for the occasion were the Vicar General (Fr Van Looy), the local Archbishop, the Salesian Bishop Pican, representatives of the AFO and ATE Vice-provinces and many Salesians and friends of the Salesian Family.

18-21 August. The Regional spent three days with the Council of the León provinces at Cambados, to study the letter of the Rector Major following the extraordinary visitation made by Fr Pascual Chavez.

22 August. He accompanied the Rector Major in a brief visit to the León province before the Team Visit to the Region.

24-28 August. The *Team Visit* to the Region, with the participation of all the provincial councils of South Belgium, France, Portugal and Spain. It took place at Santiago de Compostela, during the local jubilee. Present also were Frs Nicolussi, Domenech and Martinelli. The themes studied were: *The religious community as an animating nucleus* and *Salesian effectiveness in religious life and, in particular, in the mission.*

29 August. After the Visit Fr Filiberto remained an extra day with the Rector Major at Santiago for a meeting with the Salesians working in the houses of Galizia.

30 August. At Orense he presented to the Salesians the conclusions of the Team Visit, and assisted at the presentation by the provincial council of the program for the year 1999/2000.

31 August. He left for Lisbon and three days work with the new provincial council concerning the new orientations of the province.

3 September he returned to Madrid.

5 September. The Regional reached Seville, where on the following day he began the *Extraordinary Visitation* of the Province with a meeting with the provincial council. The visitation continued until 27 November with the usual rhythm of personal and group interviews, and study sessions with the various provincial committees. From all these Fr Filiberto was able to appreciate the pastoral vitality of the province, the quantity and quality of the youth groups, the serious process of education to the faith, the concern and work for vocations, the attention given to the Salesian Family, the sensitivity in the social sphere for the outcasts of society and the efforts to provide for their evangelization.

27 November. The Visitation ended with another meeting at which he presented the conclusions to a meeting of the provincial council and rectors

During the Visitation the Councillor had managed to fulfil one or two other engagements.

6-8 November. He took part at Madrid in the 45th session of the Iberian Provincial Conference, which reviewed the work being done by the various national delegations and discussed how to give effect to the conclusions of

the Team Visit.

9 November. He went to León to set in motion the consultation for the new Provincial of that province.

11 November. He was present at Strasbourg for the annual meeting on formation and youth pastoral work of the provinces of Belgium and France.

1 December. Fr Filiberto returned to Rome for the winter session of the General Council.

The Councillor for the North Europe Region

After the summer session of the Council Fr Van Hecke left for Cogne for a few days rest.

4-7 August. He took part in the *Confronto '99* at Colle Don Bosco.

8-12 August. He spent in Switzerland at our summer house of Saassgrund, which belongs to the house of Beromünster in the South German Province.

13-17 August. He was at Sastin in Slovakia for the 75th anniversary of salesian work in that country. On this occasion he met the Salesian Family, and presided at the perpetual profession of 7 confreres and the first profession of 15 novices. With the Provincial he visited various communi-

ties and works, including that among the gypsies at Bardejov, Petržalka, Jatovnice and the new youth centre at Humenné.

18-20 August. The Councillor was back in Rome.

21-27 August. He went to Northern Belgium to take part at Bijgaarden in the meeting of confreres in initial formation of the provinces of BEN, GBR, IRL-Malta and OLA. The remaining few days of August he spent with his family.

1-6 September. He was at the Generalate in Rome.

7-11 September. The Regional was in Brussels to take part with the Rector Major and other members of the Council in the *Team Visit* for the Provinces: BEN, GBR, IRL-Malta, OLA. In addition to the themes common to all Team Visits this group studied more deeply the two following topics; *How can Salesians and lay people work together to fulfil Don Bosco's mission in the years ahead? What is the role of the provincial council?* and *International collaboration in initial formation*.

12 September. Fr Van Hecke began the Extraordinary Visitation of the Polish province of Cracow. The following meetings stand out among the usual ones.

23 September. He presided at a meeting of the Consulting Group of the Polish provinces and the Eastern Circumscription.

24-26 September. The second meeting of the CIMEC group of provinces (CEP, CRO, SLK, SLO, UNG), which took place in our house at Péliföldszentkereszt in northern Hungary. The purpose of the meeting was to make preparations for the Team Visit to the CIMEC group, study the theme: *The salesian Youth Centre as an educative and pastoral project*, and to share brief news items of the provinces. In this meeting the provincial delegates for youth pastoral work also took part.

1 October. The Regional presided at the solemn inauguration of the new academic year at our studentate at Cracow.

2 October. He assisted at the inauguration and blessing of the new salesian Liceo at Czarny Dunajec.

5-9 October. He interrupted once again the extraordinary visitation of Cracow to take part in a further *Team Visit*, this time at Breslau (PLO) for the Polish provinces and the Eastern Circumscription; the particular theme studied was: *Salesian Youth Spirituality*.

16-17 October. The Regional came back to the Generalate in Rome for a meeting with the Missions Department and the Missions Office of Bonn on the future of the DBI. He then concluded the extraordinary visitation of Cracow on 20 October and returned to Rome the same day.

23-28 November. Later the Councillor took part in the Team Visit at Celje, Slovenia, for the provinces of the CIMEC group, which had chosen as the main theme for reflection: *The educative dimension in our mission today*. It was the last Team Visit in the North European Region to take place in this century and this millenary.

29 November. With the Rector Major he took part in various meetings of the Salesian Family in Slovenia on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of salesian work at Ljubljana.

On the same evening he returned to Rome.

The Regional Councillor for Italy and the Middle East

In August Fr Giovanni Fedrigotti was involved in various animation events.

1-5 August. The European

Confronto'99 at Colle Don Bosco.

18-19 August. At Pacognano-Sorrento for a meeting with the young priests of the Quinquennium, with whom he developed the theme *Listening to Salesian Italy*.

20 August. At the Generalate in Rome, he welcomed a numerous group of the *Don Bosco Families* of the town of Ragusa.

25 August. At Rome - San Tarcisio, he animated a day for confreres preparing for their perpetual profession, on the theme of the salesian community.

30 August. He was at S. Gabriele dell'Addolorata in the Adriatic Province for the ceremony at which Fr Arnaldo Scaglioni took up his new mandate

3 September. He was in the Milan Province for Schools Day.

5 September. At Sulmona he presided at the celebrations for the 20th anniversary of the salesian work there.

7 September. He was back at Rome - San Tarcisio again to receive the perpetual professions.

8 September. He accompanied Fr Van Looy to Lanuvio for the first profession of the novices.

12 September. He was back in the Milan Province again, this time for the celebration of the perpetual profession and jubilees of various confreres.

From 19 September to 29 November Fr Fedrigotti was in Northern India for the *extraordinary visitation* of the recently erected Province (1997) of New Delhi. In this period the Visitor was able to make contact with all the houses of the province and the confreres in formation – aspirants (Bandel-Jabalpur), pre-novices (Calcutta), novices (Siliguri), post-novices (Sonada), coadjutor post-novices (Kalyani) and students of theology (Shillong). In this way Fr Fedrigotti was able to pass through 12 states of Northern India, as well as making contact with the neighbouring provinces of Guwahati and Calcutta, and deepening his knowledge of them.

The Visitation enabled him to experience at first hand the great vitality of the religious and salesian charism in India, the growth of the Salesian Family and of interreligious collaboration, the courage of the provinces in opening new frontiers for a competent service to the young and especially to the poorest of them.

In the hearty welcome he was given by the Indian confreres, he was able to experience at first hand not only the proverbial hospitality of the Indian people, but above all their great affection and

attachment to Don Bosco's Successor.

The Secretary General

In September Fr Maraccani took up again the meetings with groups of provincial secretaries he had begun earlier in the year.

21-24 September. He had a meeting with those of the *South-eastern Cone Region of Latin America* in the provincial house of the Brazilian province of Porto Alegre.

As in the preceding meetings, various matters were dealt with concerning secretaries and provincial archives, with particular reference to historical documentation and juridical matters concerning confreres and communities.

For the Secretary General the occasion was also one for fraternal exchange with the individual secretaries and for obtaining a more direct knowledge of local circumstances. He was able to visit a number of individual communities.

On his arrival, 19 September, after a brief stop at Itajai he was accompanied to Rio do Sul where he was able to take part in the concluding day of the *Provincial Congress on the Preventive Sys-*

tem, an interesting event organized jointly each year by the SDB and FMA provinces and attended by numerous SDBs, FMAs, and teachers and animators of the schools of the two provinces. He had the opportunity in the following days to visit other salesian works in Porto Alegre and also the pre-novitiate and post-novitiate at Viamão.

On 25 and 26 September he went on from Porto Alegre to visit the salesian work at Curitiba, and was able to make a brief trip also to Joinville.

Being so close geographically to Paraguay, Fr Maraccani went on to Asunción to get to know something of that province at first hand. He spent three days in the

country, which enabled him to see the main works in the capital, the significant social work "Don Bosco Roga" of Lambaré, and the novitiate at Fernando la Mora. With the Provincial he travelled as far as Mingua Guazú, calling on the way at the work of Ypacarai and the community of Coronel Oviedo.

The short visit to the two provinces enabled the Secretary General not only to inspect the archives and the organization of the provincial offices, but also to see at first hand the great commitment of the Salesians, the educational impact they have on young people, and the great appreciation they are shown by the people and the authorities.

5.1 Decree on the Martyrdom of the 32 Martyrs of Spain

The Decree on the Martyrdom of the 32 martyrs during the Spanish civil war was read in the presence of the Supreme Pontiff John Paul II on 20 December 1999. The group, with at their head the Provincial, Fr José Calasanz Marqués, includes the martyrs of the then Tarragonese Province (which corresponds to the present Provinces of Barcelona and Valencia), whose cause for beatification was promoted together with other martyrs – diocesan and religious – by the Diocese of Valencia. The group of salesian martyrs includes 15 priests, 8 brothers, 6 clerics, 2 FMAs and one servant of our House of San Vicenç del Horts.

The original Latin version of the Decree can be found in the Italian edition of this number of the Acts. The following is an English translation.

“Those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it” (Mk 8,35).

The Lord Jesus teaches that one must deny oneself to be a partaker in his victory and glory (cf. Mk 8,34), and offer one's life for him and for the Gospel. The

disciples in fact were called to follow in the steps of the Master, who made himself obedient even to the death of the cross, and who for this reason deserved to be exalted and receive the name which is above every other name (cf. Phil 2,8-9).

This teaching was followed in mind and heart by the priest José Calasanz Marqués and twenty-eight confreres of the Society of St Francis de Sales, two Sisters of the Congregation of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians and a layman who worked in one of the salesian houses. These Servants of God believed in Christ, their master and friend, followed him, loved him and bore witness to him in the world, consistently living the obligations of their baptism and particular vocation.

During the Spanish civil war, when a violent persecution broke out against the Church, they followed the way of the Cross and, sustained by the Holy Spirit, remained steadfast in faith, ardent in charity, forgiving towards their persecutors, meek in adversity, and serene in the hope of gaining the reward of eternal life. All of them, united to God and the Church, suffered martyrdom, the supreme testimony

of love (cf. *LG* 42) in 1936, with the exception of one who met his death in 1938 (cf. n.30).

The following are the names of these intrepid witnesses of the faith.

A

The first group is made up of nine religious who were first arrested in July 1936 in the house of Valencia, where they had joined with other confreres for the spiritual exercises. All were imprisoned but released after a few days; many of them managed to flee, but others were recaptured and killed. These latter were:

1. JOSÉ CALASANZ MARQUÉS, priest, born 1872 and ordained 1885. At the time of his arrest he was Provincial of the Taragonese religious province. He was killed 29 July 1936;

2. ANTONIO MARÍA MARTÍN HERNÁNDEZ, priest. Born 1885, ordained 1919 and killed 10 December 1936;

3. RECAREDO DE LOS RÍOS FABREGAT, priest. Born 1892, ordained 1917 and killed 9 December 1936;

4. JULIÁN RODRÍGUEZ SÁNCHEZ, priest. Born 1896, ordained 1930 and killed 9 December 1936;

5. JOSÉ GIMÉNEZ LÓPEZ, priest.

Born 1904, ordained 1934, and killed 9 December 1936;

6. AUGUSTO GARCÍA CALVO, brother. Born 1905, perpetual profession 1933, and killed 10 December 1936;

7. JUAN MARTORELL SORIA, priest. Born 1889, ordained 1923 and killed 9 August 1936;

8. JAIME BUCH CANALS, brother. Born 1889, perpetual profession 1912 and killed 31 July 1936;

9. PEDRO MESONERO RODRÍGUEZ, cleric. Born 1912, first triennial vows 1930, and killed 21 August 1936.

B

Members of the Salesian Community of *Alcoy* (in the province of Alicante):

10. JOSÉ OTÍN AQUILÉ, priest. Born 1901, ordained 1928 and killed in the last days of November 1936;

11. ALVARO SANJUÁN CANET, priest. Born 1908, ordained 1934 and killed 1 October 1936.

C

Members of the Salesian Community at *Sarriá* (in the province of Barcelona):

12. FRANCISCO BANDRÉS SÁNCHEZ, priest, Rector of the Community.

Born 1896, ordained 1922 and killed 3 August 1936;

13. SERGIO CID PAZO, priest. Born 1886, ordained 1912 and killed 30 July 1936;

14. JOSÉ BATALLA PARRAMÓN, priest. Born 1873, ordained 1900 and killed 4 August 1936;

15. JOSÉ RABASA BENTANACHS, brother. Born 1862, perpetual profession 1892 and killed 4 August 1936;

16. GIL RODICIO RODICIO, brother. Born 1888, perpetual profession 1914; after his arrest on 4 August 1936 nothing further was heard of him;

17. ÁNGEL RAMOS VELÁZQUEZ, brother. Born 1876, perpetual profession 1897 and killed 11 October 1936;

18. FELIPE HERNÁNDEZ MARTÍNEZ, student of theology. Born 1913, triennial vows 1930 and killed 27 July 1936;

19. ZACARÍAS ABADÍA BUESA, cleric. Born 1913, perpetual profession 1934 and killed 7 July 1936;

20. JAIME ORTIZ ALZUETA, brother. Born 1913, perpetual profession 1935 and killed 27 July 1936;

21. JAVIER BORDAS PIFERRER, cleric. Born 1914, triennial vows 1932 and killed 24 July 1936;

22. FÉLIX VIVET TRABAL, cleric.

Born 1911, perpetual profession 1934 and killed 26 August 1936;

23. MIGUEL DOMINGO CENDRA, cleric. Born 1909, perpetual profession 1934 and killed 11 August 1936.

D

Members of the Salesian Community of *Tibidabo* (in the province of Barcelona):

24. JOSÉ CASELLES MONCHO, priest. Born 1907, ordained June 1936 and killed in the night between 27 and 28 of the following month;

25. JOSÉ CASTELL CAMPS, priest. Born 1901, ordained 1927 and killed 28 July 1936.

E

Members of the Salesian Community residing at Barcelona in *Via Rocafort*:

26. JOSÉ BONET NADAL, priest; Born 1875, ordained 1904 and killed 13 August 1936;

27. JAIME BONET NADAL, priest, cousin of the preceding Servant of God. Born 1884, ordained 1917, and killed 15 August 1936.

F

Members of the Salesian Community of *Sant Vicenç dels Horts*

(in the province of Barcelona):

28. ALEJANDRO PLANAS SAURÍ, lay celibate, who could not become a Salesian because of deafness, and so remained in the community as a servant. Born 1878, and killed 19 November 1936;

29. ELISEO GARCÍA GARCÍA, brother. Born 1907, perpetual profession 1935 and killed 19 November 1936.

G

Member of the Salesian Community of Gerona:

30. IULIO JUNYER PADERN, priest. Born 1892, ordained 1921 and killed 26 April 1938.

H

Of the College of *Sarriá* (in the province of Barcelona) of the Congregation of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians:

31. MARÍA CARMEN MORENO BENÍTEZ. Born 1885, perpetual profession 1914; she was the vice-superior of her community;

32. MARÍA A REFUGIO CARBONELL MUÑOZ. Born 1893, perpetual profession 1929; she was the community's gardener.

These two Religious, to assist a Sister who was sick, did not go

with the rest of the community which had emigrated to Italy; they were killed 1 September 1936.

After their deaths these Servants of God were held by the people to be true martyrs, and their fame persisted through subsequent years, with the result that in 1953 the Archbishop of Valencia introduced the Cause for beatification or declaration of martyrdom through the Ordinary Informative Process, which was approved by the Congregation for the Causes of Saints by a decree promulgated on 28 February 1992. When the *Positio* had been prepared, an investigation was made – in accordance with the norms – as to whether these Servants of God were to be considered true martyrs. For this purpose there was a meeting of the appropriate Congress of Theological Consultors on 23 February 1999, with positive results. Subsequently the Cardinals and Bishops, in their ordinary session of 1 December of the same year with the Most Rev. José Sebastián Laboa, Titular Archbishop of Zarai, as Presenter of the Cause, declared that José Calasanz Marqués and his thirty-one companions had

shed their blood in testimony of their fidelity to God and the Church, and were killed *in odium fidei*.

When the Supreme Pontiff John Paul II had been informed of all this by means of a report made by the undersigned Prefect, he accepted and approved the vote of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, and disposed that the decree on the martyrdom of the Servants of God be prepared.

Once this had been done, in the presence of the undersigned Prefect, of the Presenter of the Cause, of me the Bishop Secretary of the Congregation, and of

others whom it is customary to call together, the Holy Father solemnly declared that: *There is certainty of the martyrdom and the cause of the Servants of God José Calasanz Marqués, priest and professed member of the Society of St Francis de Sales, and thirty-one companions, killed in the years 1936 and 1938, "in casu et ad effectum de quo agitur"*.

The Holy Father further disposed that the present decree should be published and kept among the Acts of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints.

Given at Rome, 20 December
March 1999.

✠ JOSÉ SARAIVA MARTINS
Tit. Abp. of Tiburnica
Prefect

✠ EDWARD NOWAK
Tit. Abp. of Luni
Secretary

5.2 Our dead confreres (1999 - 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 AIRASCA Chiaffredo	Torino	08-10-99	82	ICP
L ARANDA SANZ Juan	Mohernando (Guadalajara)	08-11-99	93	SMA
P BALOCCO Guglielmo	Calamba, Laguna	01-12-99	88	FIN
P BARATTA Humberto	San Isidro (Bs. As.)	15-10-99	84	ABA
P BIANCO Aldo	Chieri (TO)	04-11-99	82	ICP
P BOCCAGNI Giuseppe	Ala di Trento (Italia)	20-09-99	71	VEN
L BOMBLED George	Coxipó da Ponte (MT)	09-10-99	90	BCG
L BONVISSUTO Calogero	Roma	09-12-99	89	IRO
P BOYLE Peter	Farnborough (Inghilterra)	01-12-99	70	GBR
P BRIANO Enrico	Genova	23-12-99	90	ILT
P BRUNO Luigi	Lecce	11-10-99	72	IME
P CAMILOTTO Guido	Guayaquil	09-12-99	89	ECU
P CERCHI Pasquale	Cochabamba	29-10-99	78	BOL
P CHIARAVIGLIO Santiago	Tucumán	22-09-99	86	ARO
P CHITTILAPPILLY George	Rampurhat	20-09-99	40	INC
P CIOETA Carlo	Roma	26-09-99	91	IRO
P CIPOLAT Romeo	Torino	22-10-99	84	ICP
P CUMBO Vincenzo	Pedara (CT)	23-10-99	82	ISI
P da SILVA Sebastião Teixeira Filho	Belo Horizonte	13-08-99	37	BBH
P D'AMICO Roberto	San Nicolás de los Arroyos	05-11-99	84	ARO
P DEC Władysław	Przemysl	12-11-99	92	PLS
P DEL MONACO Nelson Carlos	Rio de Janeiro	26-09-99	88	BBH
P DELABY Robert	Chaleville-Mèzières	11-11-99	70	FRA
L DESSÌ Livio	Selargius (CA)	05-12-99	86	ISA
P DOCHERTY James	St Leonards on Sea	30-10-99	89	GBR
P DURAN Miguel	Barcelona	17-09-99	80	SBA
P ELLENA Aldo Guglielmo	Torino	21-12-99	77	ICP
P FANESI Antonio	Loreto	21-12-99	86	IAD
P FERNANDEZ César	Montevideo	24-09-99	91	URU
L FILIPPONI Giovanni	Arese (MI)	17-11-99	76	ILE
P FITZGERALD Edward	Dublin	23-12-99	60	IRL
L FOGLIOTTI Francesco	Varazze	24-10-99	88	ILT
P FORNARO Giacomo	Bahía Blanca	29-12-99	82	ABB
L FRANCESCHINI Antonio	Negrar (Verona)	14-12-99	85	IVO
P FREIDENBERGER Adán	Luján (Buenos Aires)	14-09-99	75	ALP
P FURNO Arturo	Caselette (TO)	31-12-99	75	ICP
L GHENO Bartolomé Agustín	Ferré	30-08-99	73	ARO

NAME	PLACE	DATE	AGE	PROV.
P GONZALEZ SORIA Juan	Montevideo	11-12-99	79	URU
P GREGORINI Giovanni	Savona	14-10-99	76	ILT
P GUTIERREZ Alvaro	Santafé de Bogotá	17-09-99	70	COB
L HAMILTON Reginald	Melbourne	03-11-99	84	AUL
P LAPPIN Peter	West Haverstraw	01-08-99	88	SUE
L LE BELLEC Joseph	Guingamp	29-10-99	78	FRA
P LICCIARDO Demetrio	La Plata	07-11-99	83	ALP
<i>Fu Ispettore per sei anni</i>				
P LO GIUDICE Vittorino	Pedara (CT)	26-11-99	93	ISI
P MAJCEN Andrej	Ljubljana	30-09-99	95	SLO
P MIRANDA Carlos	Santa Tecla (El Salvador)	23-09-99	74	CAM
P MONTEIRO Diamantino	Lisboa	03-11-99	79	POR
L MOSER Martin	München (Baviera)	14-12-99	88	GEM
P NICOLA Francesco	Alessandria	13-12-99	92	ICP
E NUTI SANGUINETI Orestes Santiago	Montevideo	02-11-99	80	—
<i>Fu per 2 anni Vescovo di Melo e per 32 anni Vescovo di Canelones (Uruguay)</i>				
P OLIVETTA Vincenzo	Casale Monferrato	10-11-99	77	ICP
P POONOLLY Abraham	Trichur (Kerala)	06-09-99	80	INK
P PREZ Pietro	Castelfranco Veneto	22-10-99	92	IVE
L RENDA Sebastiano	Catania	26-12-99	77	ISI
P RIEMSLAG Adriaan	Schiedam	15-09-99	80	OLA
P SILHÁR Alfonz	Skalica (Slovacchia)	07-08-99	69	SLK
P SOCHA Franciszek	Wrocław	08-12-99	79	PLO
P SOL Juan José	San Isidro (Bs. As.)	21-09-99	74	ABA
<i>Fu Ispettore per sei anni</i>				
P SULEMAN Vincenzo	Manta	19-12-99	82	ECU
L TANCREDI Raffaele	Castellammare di Stabia	18-12-99	97	IME
L THUADI Fidèle	Lomé (Togo)	19-11-99	50	ATE
P TRIBBIA Francesco	Asti	26-12-99	87	ICP
L TROBENTAR Joze	Trstenik	23-12-99	85	SLO
P VANDAME Alain	Paris	06-11-99	66	FRA
P VARELA Francisco	Barcelona	04-12-99	75	SBA
P WOLF Jakub	Wrocław	04-12-99	82	PLO
P ZDRAHAL Alojz	Pescara	18-12-99	67	IAD

