



acts

of the general council

year LXXXI

april-june 2000

N. 371

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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1. LETTER OF THE RECTOR MAJOR

«THIS IS MY BODY, WHICH IS GIVEN FOR YOU»¹

1. **A Eucharistic "hour"** – The ecclesial process – The question – Our Eucharist – Pastoral practice.
2. **An invitation to contemplation** – "Do this in memory of me" – "My body is given... my blood is shed" – "Take and eat" – "I in you and you in me".
3. **The call to celebration** – "I have received from the Lord" – "You are the body of Christ" – "We proclaim your death".
4. **A call to conversion** – Don Bosco, man of the Eucharist – An original pedagogy – The Eucharist and 'da mihi animas' – A journey in our communities – The educative process with young people.
5. **Conclusion** – A "eucharistic" year

Rome, 25 March 2000
Annunciation of the Lord

Within the Jubilee, as has been gradually made evident during the three years of preparation and is now being fulfilled, the mystery of the Eucharist occupies a central position. The Holy Father had already announced in the Apostolic Letter *Tertio Millennio Adveniente* that "the Year 2000 will be intensely eucharistic",² and on many other occasions he emphasized his intention of making the Eucharist the heart of the celebration of the Jubilee.

This is in line with a constant fact in the history of the Christian community: the Eucharist has always been the most expressive moment of its faith and life. According to the beautiful expression of St Thomas, the Church finds in the Eucharist "the perfect embodiment of the spiritual life and the aim of all the sacraments".³

Faith in the initiative of the Risen Christ, which unites us,

¹ Cor 11,24; cf. also Lk 22,19 and parallels

² JOHN PAUL II, *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, 55

³ "Eucharistia vero est quasi consummatio spiritualis vitae et omnium sacramentorum finis" (Summa Th. 3, 73, 3)

speaks to us and offers us communion in his Body and Blood, gives to the Jubilee its deepest meaning. Through the eucharistic presence of Christ in our midst, the memory of the Incarnation is not just the commemoration of a past event, but rather an encounter with a salvation which reaches us today and opens us to the future with confidence.

The International Eucharistic Congress, which will be celebrated in Rome in the month of June, is intended to be a grateful expression of faith in the real presence of Christ in human history and an opening up of the Christian community to his complete self-giving.

And so for us too the personal and communal renewal of the Jubilee, which is also spiritual and apostolic, includes the convinced and joyful rediscovery of the riches the Eucharist offers us and of the responsibilities to which it calls us, in the knowledge that according to the constant teaching of the Church, around this mystery is built the whole of Christian life.

The sacramental process of preparation for this year (Baptism, Confirmation, Reconciliation) brings us to the Eucharist as to a vantage point from which to contemplate the mystery of the Trinity in the life of the world and of our own existence.⁴

⁴ These introductory suggestions on the Eucharist as being at the centre of the Jubilee help us to see from the outset the Eucharist itself – and hence this circular Letter – in its place among the stages of our jubilee pilgrimage, according to what was proposed in AGC 369 (p.48 ff.).

With the feast of Don Bosco, in fact, we have *begun together our salesian jubilee pilgrimage* which we shall conclude with a community celebration at provincial and local level around the feast of the Immaculate Conception.

In the first stage of this pilgrimage, which coincides with the Lenten period, we want to look more deeply at our attitude to *Reconciliation and conversion*. The letter I have already sent you: *He has reconciled us to himself and has given us the ministry of Reconciliation* (AGC 369), can serve as a stimulus in this connection.

The *second stage of our pilgrimage* will extend through the Easter period into the months of May and June, and has the Eucharist as its point of reference, coinciding with the immediate preparation for and celebration of the International Eucharistic Congress to be held in Rome at the end of June. This Letter: *This is my body which is given for you*, takes its place in particular in the perspective of the personal and communal spiritual and apostolic development of this stage of the Jubilee, and is intended

1. A EUCHARISTIC “HOUR”

We who are members of the Salesian Family do not lack guidelines, texts, examples, traditions and artistic representations which recall the importance of the Eucharist in our spirituality, our community life and our educative and pastoral practice.

But there has been a development in reflection and ecclesial praxis which is still in progress. To rediscover the eucharistic mystery and its significance in our life and pastoral work, we must all be aware in the first place of the process followed by the Church, in recent years, of placing it on the foundation of the cultural development which characterizes the various contexts in which we work.

In this framework we can penetrate more deeply into our eucharistic experience, find there an expression more relevant to the questions to which it gives rise, and accept with greater generosity the grace which accompanies it.

1.1 The ecclesial process

Also as regards the Eucharist, the necessary starting-point is the Second Vatican Council. It has provided us with ample guidelines, especially by proposing the courageous liturgical reform of which we are today enjoying the benefits.

The most significant fact emerging from the Council is the relaunching of the celebration aspect of the faith, the liturgy, as the *fons et culmen* of the Christian life.

to foster the “convinced and joyful rediscovery of the riches the Eucharist offers us and of the responsibilities to which it calls us”.

I invite Provincials and Rectors especially to encourage during the period referred to *personal reflection and dialogue, together with a community examination of the points I have suggested*. The lines of application I have put forward at nn.4.4 and 4.5 can be easily taken up in fraternal discussions on the occasion of a retreat or community meeting.

The Council, in fact, has taken on a renewed awareness of the centrality of liturgical and sacramental experience. The reform of rites was not intended to be a simple adjustment of words and gestures to changed historical conditions; it was something much deeper, like a renewal of the ecclesial attitude and mentality which finds in celebration the most genuine and efficaciously visible expression of the Christian faith.

And so the new Roman Missal highlights the communal character of the eucharistic celebration. The whole assembly becomes involved, not only in choral form but also through a distribution of ministries.

Hence also the privileged position given to the Word of God, to foster listening and interior assimilation. The language is closer to contemporary sensitivities and greater opportunity is given for adaptation and for healthy liturgical creativity.

The advantages of the gradual, and not always easy, assimilation of this mentality are plain for all to see and meet with widespread agreement. At the same time they have given rise to new doctrinal and pastoral questions.

In many places the search is still on: theological reflection seeks to provide new syntheses and perspectives which, while losing nothing of the Church's tradition, allow for the expression of the truth of the Eucharist in our cultural categories and in conformity with the new and deeper studies in the New Testament, while pastoral praxis takes into consideration the numerous problems raised for believers by modern life.

Moreover in connection with the Eucharist the Church is living through a period of great change, in which side by side are to be found great possibilities and dangerous confusion, significant innovations and short-lived initiatives.

This awakens our conscience as pastors and educators who, while attending to the needs of the young and of Christian communities, must be able to indicate the *fractio panis* with the abundance of motives and explanations that ecclesial reflection offers, without giving way to fleeting fashions and unconfirmed opinions.

1.2 The question

The ecclesial process has been marked by a cultural transformation which has made its influence felt in connection with the celebration of the sacraments in general and of the Eucharist in particular.

One can speak of the development of spontaneity of expression and of the purely formal value given to rites regulated by norms and customs, of which the underlying significance is easily forgotten. We are in fact at a critical moment as regards historical memory.

Some collective modes of expression which may impress us (discotheques, rock events, etc.) are only self-regarding: in other words they do not pretend to have any meaning for anyone beyond those taking part. They are marked by a strong individualism even in a large crowd, because they lead to personal self-satisfaction and ensnare by their many striking qualities. At the same time they express a need for personal involvement, for direct experience and for emotional expression.

But these are not the most disturbing kinds of phenomena, even though it be not without importance to analyze them because of the influence they exert, especially on young people. There are others which are much more serious. Nowadays, for example, we cannot speak of the Eucharist without having in mind the phenomenon of non-practising believers, for whom an encounter with the Lord is considered separable, and is in fact separated, from the sacramental experience.

While the Council put to itself the question: "how to celebrate the sacraments?", we have to take note that in the post-conciliar period the question for many Christians has become: "why celebrate the sacraments?"

One could provide a wealth of examples, and they concern all the sacraments: if I am already repentant, why do I have to go to confession? If we love each other, why do we have to get married in church? And as regards the Eucharist: if the Lord is

always with me, why do I have to go to Mass?

Such questions have their effect on the particular ways the sacraments are celebrated, dictated always by individualism and spontaneity: why personal confession of our sins to a priest and personal absolution? Why the Sunday participation in the Eucharist? And so on.

They are questions which frequently recur, especially among young people, and which denote a defective formation to the significance of the sacramental experience and also the widespread weakening of the perception of the value which symbolic and ritual behaviour has for man and an exaggerated emphasis on spontaneity.

As pastors and educators we cannot undervalue the incidence of these phenomena, which lead to considering the celebration of the Eucharist to be an act without meaning for life, conditioned by a ritualistic rigidity which would constitute an obstacle to the expression of one's personal religious way of living.

On the other hand, attempts to reply to these questions have often been revealed as weak, and in certain cases have assumed forms which compromised the identity of the sacrament, with the risk of reducing it to a fraternal meeting, a moment of sharing at a purely horizontal level, to an item in the program of some wider celebration considered more important.

The complexity of these phenomena must be kept in mind, so that our experience of the Eucharist be not disjoined from life, and that our pastoral work should not neglect to deal with these questions which are decisive on an educative level.

1.3 Our Eucharist

On the basis of what we have set out so far in summary fashion, we can now try to examine our own eucharistic life, looking for positive elements for further development and with a willingness to recognize problematic aspects in which our process calls for correction.

The liturgical renewal has had positive effects also amongst us. Among the more promising aspects of our fraternal life there is, in fact, the daily eucharistic concelebration which, as our Constitutions put it, "expresses the triple unity of sacrifice, priesthood and community, a community whose members are all at the service of the same mission".⁵

Around the altar, in the joyful celebration of the eucharistic mystery, our communities are reborn every day from the heart of Christ which makes us sharers in his charity, gives us the ability to accept and love each other and sends us as signs and witnesses of his love for children and young people, who are the ones to whom our mission is directed. This becomes more evident on the weekly community-day when it is usually possible to celebrate more calmly and with greater participation.

Some elements for reflection can stem from our manner of celebrating. Instances are not lacking of celebrations that are worthy and joyful, filled with the mystery being celebrated and by the fellowship with Christ which seeks expression. But unfortunately it is by no means rare to find cases in which something is lacking in the quality of the celebration, sometimes due to haste but more often to a lack of concern about the attitudes which predispose and accompany the celebration, to an undervaluing of the symbolic gestures and language of the celebration itself.

To some extent this may be a reaction to a past in which some actions appeared to be only "ceremonies", which added solemnity to the sacrament. Today however the Church, while calling for a serious change in mentality, warns us against giving way to forms of secularization which end in trivializing, for poorly motivated reasons, elements of great importance.

Other aspects of our experience of the Eucharist make us reflect, and call for practical choices which are not always easy to make and must be prompted by wisdom and flexibility. I am

thinking of the generous service we often provide in numerous chaplaincies. It expresses the pastoral charity of our communities towards the people of God, and in particular to the communities of women religious who could not otherwise enjoy priestly ministry. Service of this kind, however, cannot entirely remove the community's need to find frequent occasions for a community concelebration which is the source of our life as brothers in the Spirit.

More pressing remarks need to be made regarding the Sunday celebration of the Eucharist, which constitutes for the whole Church the central sign of the Lord's day and the heart of the Christian week.

The 'secularized' Sunday is considered a day of relaxation to be enjoyed individually. It suggests the idea of an individual, segregated from the human community and even from his own family under the pretext of relaxation or rest from the stress of work and ordinary relationships. This is a mentality which can make its way even among people like us who are dedicated to educative work during the week. If this were to be so, it would be in itself a grave symptom: a Sunday without community and without the Eucharist!

But more frequently, and thanks be to God for it, the situation is different. Generally we give generously of ourselves in ministry. More than a few communities foster some expression or occasion which recalls that the Sunday Eucharist is the pivot about which our consecrated life rotates. Many have arranged a period of eucharistic adoration in the evening, with beneficial effects on their community life.

This brings us to another point which needs looking into: the implications of the Lord's eucharistic presence in our House. Almost everywhere chapels are arranged with taste and dignity and provide an environment conducive to prayer, but there has been a falling off in the personal and communal encounter with the Lord. The significance and value of some time spent before the Eucharist have been occasionally questioned

on the basis of opinions concerning the eucharistic presence and devotion which have no foundation in the Church's teaching, or because it is said that our union with God is already realized through our work.

For us this used to find a simple and efficacious expression in our "visits". It may be useful in this connection to listen to the warning of one of the most outstanding theologians of our time, Karl Rahner: "Anyone who doubts the value of a visit to the Blessed Sacrament should ask himself whether his objections to such a devotion are not in reality the protest of the workaholic against the forceful reminder to place himself occasionally before God with all his being, recollected and relaxed, in a calm and tranquil atmosphere and maintaining a reinvigorating and purifying silence in which the Lord speaks".⁶

1.4 Pastoral practice

Educative and pastoral situations vary so widely that it would be wrong to make a single general evaluation of them.

All in all, we may say that there is great generosity and spirit of sacrifice in presiding at eucharistic celebration. Many of our priest-confreeres, especially on Sundays, devote themselves assiduously to the service of the People of God. Everywhere they are concerned to make their words and actions intelligible to the people and with lawful creativity to lead both young and old into the spirit of the celebration.

In our oratories and youth centres, and in our schools in general, we find difficulties of various kinds in teaching the eucharistic mystery. Even in traditionally Christian settings it is not always easy to make its value understood, because of a lack of support and witness on the part of families, through insuffi-

⁶ K. RAHNER, *Educazione alla piet  eucaristica*, in ID, *Missione e grazia. Saggi di teologia pastorale*. Ed. Paoline, Rome 1964, p. 291-340, 316

cient catechesis or earlier negative experiences by the young people themselves.

This could create a lack of confidence in proclaiming the truth. With the desire to avoid the least appearance of imposition or excess, there are those who limit celebrations to a few big occasions, thus running the risk of distorting the meaning of the sacrament from within, and making it appear as a ritual accompaniment for solemnizing certain yearly events. In some places there are those who think that the youngsters are not prepared either catechetically or spiritually to understand the significance of the Eucharist, forgetting that for them it is not only the "*culmen*" of their lives but also, if properly prepared, the "*fons*" as well.

From some parts you hear as the reason given for less frequent celebration of the Eucharist the need to maintain a certain relationship between the celebrations in our youthful environments and those which involve all the Christian community on a wider scale. It is true that the young people should not be isolated from a broader ecclesial experience, but they should be led into it gradually as pedagogy dictates, and with due attention to the stages of growth in which our tradition is so rich.

It must be said that in many educative projects the problem has been solved successfully with a variety of opportunities for celebration: some are offered to the whole community, others to certain groups, while still others are open for free participation both within and outside normal school and oratory hours.

The most negative aspect, which seems to emerge here and there, is the pretext of a so-called lay aspect of educational activity which would not allow for eucharistic celebrations, whereas it is well known that every Christian community, and hence also an educative community, finds in the Eucharist its highest expression.

We know that the lively participation of children and young people in the celebration awakens in them great spiritual resources. Many confreres and lay people spend their time,

knowledge, imagination and energies. In seeking ways which foster such participation.

Our charism is such that we carry within us, written in our hearts, a way of preaching, of acting, of a certain kind of liturgical music, and of an all-round style to the Eucharist which make the young feel themselves at home. All of this is a great richness and a treasure which with humility and discretion we can offer to the whole Church.

But the risk of misunderstandings and distortions is not just hypothetical. The creativity, which the liturgical norms allow, is something quite different from a completely arbitrary approach, with the introduction of actions which savour of the spectacular, brought in from situations extraneous to the meaning of the Eucharist, and which at the time draw attention not to God but to ourselves and our gestures.

On the other hand every rite develops according to norms and a certain order. This preserves and transmits the highest spiritual values, like the knowledge that what we are doing is an action not invented by ourselves but received as a gift of love, the sense of being in communion with other brothers, near and far, who are celebrating in its essentials the same faith, i.e. it is God himself who works through all of us, as well as doing much besides.

These are things which can be experienced even by children. They often amaze us by their intuitive grasp of liturgical symbols: it goes far beyond our expectations, provided the one guiding the celebration is truly a man of prayer.

A final element for our reflection, from a pastoral standpoint, touches more closely on the figure of the salesian priest as a minister of the Eucharist. The reluctance of secularized cultures to accept the indispensable mediation of the Church and the value of sacramental occasions, causes even for priests a certain difficulty in recognizing the celebration of the Eucharist as an eminent part of their ministry. This hesitation is certainly augmented also by the reaction to a certain outdated

theology, which considered the sacramental task (*munus sanctificandi*) almost as the one and only setting for the exercise of the ministry.

Salesian tradition, thanks to the broad array of educational activity in which it involves us, has always maintained the need to broaden this perspective. But while we renew our awareness that the sacraments are not the priest's only task, we must not forget that they remain his greatest, most specific and most fruitful task.

Problematic indeed would be the figure of a priest who did not feel his highest responsibility to be that of serving the community through presiding at the Eucharist, from which the life of the Church is born and develops, or who, when he cannot celebrate for and with the assembled community, does not perform the offering of Christ in communion with the Church and in its name.

These elements for examination, which are no more than examples, lead us to think that we must insert ourselves into the living current of the Church's reflection with regard to the Eucharist, to acquire a deeper understanding of the meaning of its celebration. Hence the following steps which I would like to make with you in this meditation.

2. AN INVITATION TO CONTEMPLATION

Contemplation is the attitude most fitting for the eucharistic mystery. Here we have a gift that comes to us from on high. Outside the faith it can have no plausibility. To understand it we must give ear to Christ, meditate at length on his word and feel the scandal which his announcement causes, now as yesterday, in the hearts of his disciples.

We too, like the disciples at Capernaum,⁷ want to note the paradox of Jesus' offering, and be amazed at the radical nature

⁷ cf. Jn 6

of what he says, which confounds our human logic with the superabundance of his divine love.

To understand clearly the meaning of the Eucharist is a task which is renewed for every generation of believers: a task which is fascinating, which is entrusted to reflection and prayer, to silence and love, to commitment for our fellow men and to contemplation. But it is also a decisive task, because what is at stake is our acceptance of the true Jesus, born of a woman and who suffered under Pontius Pilate, against every temptation to visualize images of our Lord or representations of his presence which are at variance with the truth of the Gospel.

2.1 “Do this in memory of me”.⁸

The fundamental reference for understanding the Eucharist is the Lord’s Last Supper. There it began and of that it is the memorial. I think it unnecessary to explain that in liturgical language ‘memorial’ and ‘memory’ do not mean a subjective calling to mind, a remembrance in thought, but rather an actualization and prolongation which makes the celebrated event perpetually present, and yet always new.

A continual re-meditation on this event in the life of Jesus, on the basis of the gospel text, is indispensable, and I shall not delay on recommending it to you. Every time you read the New Testament you will find emerging new and unexpected meanings.

In a certain sense the Last Supper sums up the whole of Jesus’ life, and is the key to the interpretation of his imminent death. For this very reason the gospel texts give it particular emphasis.

Without going into a detailed analysis of the individual extracts, we need only recall that John the Evangelist places in the

⁸ Lk 22,19; cf. also 1 Cor 11,24

context of the Supper⁹ the most lofty expression of Jesus' teaching (the farewell discourse), the most intense moment of his dialogue with the Father (the priestly prayer), and the deepest expression of his love for the Twelve (the washing of the feet).

The Supper appears as a long prepared event, ardently desired by Jesus,¹⁰ and anticipated in various ways at significant moments in his life: the proclamation of the Kingdom while eating with sinners,¹¹ the multiplication of the loaves,¹² the parable of the guests invited to the wedding,¹³ the discussion about the living Bread,¹⁴ and so on.

In the texts about the Supper, and more specifically in the words of institution, there is a vast interplay of themes, which range from the saving experience of the ancient Passover to the banquet of Wisdom,¹⁵ from the prophetic theme of the redeeming death of the Servant of Jahvè to the texts referring to the Covenant of Sinai and to the New Covenant.

The Supper is not just *one* of the events in the life of Jesus, but is in reality *the* decisive event for grasping the meaning of his mission and the interpretation which he himself gives of his life and death.

What Jesus does during the Supper is the crowning point of a long story. It is the "new" contract between God and humanity, which realizes what had been promised in all the previous ones. It is a ritual anticipation and symbolic interpretation of his own death. It is a last will and testament for his Church.

Aware of the passion awaiting him, he does not flee in face of the violent reaction humanity opposes to the preaching of the Kingdom, but accepts it and transforms it from within by a

⁹ cf. Jn 13-17

¹⁰ Lk 22,15

¹¹ Mk 2,15-17 and parallels; Lk 7,36-50

¹² Mk 6,34-44 and parallels

¹³ Mt 22,1-14

¹⁴ cf. Jn 6

¹⁵ cf. Prov 9,1-5; Sir 24,18-21

superabundance of love. In this way he consummates the gift of himself, giving himself up to set us free, in the docile acceptance of the saving will of the Father, which the Spirit presents to him as an invitation and loving command.

It is the offering of his life as a gift of the Father for the human race that Jesus anticipates and enshrines in the Eucharist. The ancient rite is filled with an unheard of innovation, because the Lamb who washes away our sins and restores us to God is the Son who has become Man, consubstantial with the Father and a sharer in our humanity.

We shall never sufficiently meditate on and adore the mystery of love enclosed in this event, the sheer extent of which overwhelms us and its freely given nature leaves us totally bewildered. It marks the beginning of the Christian sacramental order of things, which has as its content Christ's salvific Paschal mystery, and offers to men of every place and time communion in his love.

2.2 "My body is given... my blood is shed".¹⁶

The preceding reflections have already helped us to grasp the connection between the Eucharist and the paschal mystery of Christ.

One of the key words in recounting this mystery, and hence for a Christian understanding of the Eucharist, is "sacrifice". For the average man of the present day this seems a throwback to the past, a useless encumbrance not only in daily life where the practice is the pursuit of ease and comfort, but also in his relationship with God. We do not consider sacrificing ourselves worthwhile unless it be with a view to a greater advantage, and so we do not understand why we should sacrifice something for God, and still less why we should attribute such an attitude to him.

¹⁶ cf. Lk 22, 19-20

But apart from the word itself, the reality of the sacrifice cannot go unremarked without distorting the sense and meaning of the Eucharist. And so the tendency to play down the proclamation of this truth in preaching and catechesis, through recourse to other categories which are insufficient by themselves to express the intention of Christ as it appears at the Last Supper and in the awareness of the primitive Church, causes concern.

To speak of the eucharistic sacrifice means linking ourselves on the one hand with an attitude present in all religions, and on the other grasping the innovation of Christ.

In his life on earth, Jesus displays an opposition to and total rejection of a certain concept of sacrifice, but on the other hand he interprets the supreme moment of his mission when he says that he is offering his Body "in sacrifice" for us.

The sacrificial concept which Jesus rejects is one which tries to make the offering to God an attempt by man to win favours for himself, the protection and even the privileges of the divinity, on the basis of his own works which he presents to God as a title of merit.

There are many grounds on which this kind of attitude is misconceived: it implies that God does not love everyone gratuitously and freely, but deals with mankind on the basis of calculated interest; it fosters a relationship with God which is not centred on trusting attachment to his person, but on the juridical implementation of formalities; it sees man concerned not about being converted and entering the Kingdom, but about God responding to his immediate desires.

When participation in the Eucharist is understood more as a precept to be fulfilled than a Grace to be accepted; when we go to Mass for the gifts which God has waiting for us rather than for the Gift which is God himself, we are driven to the conclusion that even though the external forms seem Christian, the reality is far from being so.

The idea of sacrifice manifested by Jesus is, in fact, quite

different and even opposed to this notion. He speaks of sacrifice in connection with his death, understood not as a defeat but as the supreme fulfilment of his mission. The death of Jesus on the cross unmasks every representation of God which projects onto the Father our own paltry shabbiness and our instincts for possession and getting our own back.

The sacrifice offered once and for all on the cross, and made present in every Eucharist, is that in which God himself sacrifices himself for mankind by virtue of an act of charity without either limits or conditions. Jesus sacrifices himself for us in the sense that he gives us his life in a gratuitous action which has no other purpose than that of expressing the love of his Father, of whom in his total oblation he is the perfect image.

And so when we celebrate the eucharistic sacrifice we participate in the mystery of the Cross through which Christ has freed us from our fears of God which are the consequence of our sins, and opens us to a joyful meeting with God who asks of us nothing in exchange for his love, except that we be willing to be loved by him. This is why the name given to this sacrament is "Eucharist", i.e. the "giving of thanks" to God who so freely loves us.

Fidelity to God's love means realistically that we shall be called upon many times to face obstacles and clash with the crucifying opposition of our sins and of those of others. This too forms part of our participation in the eucharistic sacrifice, but it will not lead us to understand this as fulfilling a religious obligation so that God will grant us some favour, nor to understand the offering of ourselves in union with Jesus as a price imposed by God for granting us some grace.

If we want our participation in the Eucharist to be fruitful and motivated by faith, we must correct any distorted ideas and proclaim, like St Paul, the good news that stems from Christ's Cross, of which every Eucharist is the memorial.

For us in particular, meditation on the eucharistic sacrifice constitutes an excellent occasion for renewing our apostolic

dedication as a participation in the attitude of Jesus the Good Shepherd, who saves mankind through the gift of himself. It is in the Eucharist, in fact, that our pastoral charity finds its dynamism and fruitfulness: we participate daily in the sacrifice of Christ to learn from him to give our life every day, moved by his own Spirit of love.

2.3 “Take and eat”.¹⁷

The “table”, the “shared meal” or “banquet” have a long theological and liturgical tradition based on the memorial of the Last Supper. We shall always need to be careful not to centre its meaning on ourselves, as though it were mainly a friendly meeting of Christians, but to refer it rather to the gift of food for the life which the Father gives us in Christ.

The Eucharist in fact is the grace, the invitation and the occasion of our communion with the Risen Christ and with the Father: “You have prepared a banquet for me... my cup is overflowing”.¹⁸

The whole pedagogical process of the celebration leads to this culmination through repentance, praise, listening to the Word, faith and our humble offering. Christ not only fulfils a sacrifice of love but makes us participants in it and sharers in his banquet.

In all his earthly life Jesus presents himself as the life in which we must share, the water with which to slake our thirst, the Bread on which to be fed, the Wisdom at whose table we are to sit, the vine in which we are to be engrafted. The banquet fills the Gospel and the Good Shepherd leads his sheep to “fresh and green pastures and restful waters”.¹⁹ These are all references to a mysterious communion.

¹⁷ Mt 26,26

¹⁸ Ps 22 (23)

¹⁹ cf. *ibid.*

As in the discourse about Bread, in John's Gospel, in the eucharistic celebration too receiving the Word and eating the Body are in a line of continuous ascent. Both are a gift of the Father and communion with Christ.

The Risen Saviour, through the mediation of the Church and the invisible but none the less real action of the Spirit, is given to us in each Eucharist in the first place as Word. Not only, nor principally, has he spoken wise words, but he *is* the total and definitive Word of God for man with all the reverberances this can also have at the level of human significance. In our eucharistic celebration, declares the Constitution *Sacro-sanctum Concilium*, "Christ himself is present among the faithful through his Word".²⁰

Eucharistic communion is possible for man only if his welcoming acceptance of the Word and faith have led him to open the gates to love.

It is important not to lose sight of the fact that "He explains the Scriptures to us (...) especially when he gathers us together for the Sacred Supper".²¹ Our Constitutions favour this perspective which links the Word with participation in the sacrifice: "The hearing of the Word finds its privileged place in the celebration of the Eucharist".²² With greater emphasis on the apostolic meaning, those of the FMA declare: "Nourishing ourselves at the table of his Word and his Body, we become like him 'bread' for our brothers".²³

This is one of the aspects we frequently overlook in our celebrations: the manner of reading, the attitude of listening, proper church fittings and ornaments, with suitable emphasis on these points should make all this more evident.

It is the daily moment which is most efficacious for ongoing formation, especially if – as is clear from the close link it has

²⁰ cf. General Instruction on the Roman Missal, n.33; cf. also n.35, and earlier SC 7

²¹ cf. Eucharistic Prayer 5

²² C 88

²³ cf. Const. FMA 40

with the Eucharist – we make it not an object of learned intellectual cogitation or study but open ourselves to welcome Christ and communion with him. We do not read the pages of the Bible looking for information about things we do not know, but to hear in and through them the living voice of God who here and now speaks to us, to enlighten us and sustain us in the particular period of history in which we live.

An equally strong motive for emphasizing this aspect is the importance attaching to the ministry of the Word for us as educators and pastors. Never do we grasp the significance of this so well, especially as regards the life of the people of God, as in the eucharistic context.

2.4 “I in you and you in me”.²⁴

The Eucharist, the celebration of the offering of Christ to the Father for humanity brings about the most intense form of his presence among us. That of the Eucharist, precisely through *antonomasia*,²⁵ is called the “real presence”.

The Eucharist proclaims that the Paschal mystery has fulfilled the purpose of the Incarnation of the Son of God, or in other words God’s intention to make with man the deepest, permanent and heartfelt communion.

The Cross and Resurrection have not removed the presence of Christ from the rest of history, but have brought him into the warp and weft of human events, precisely through the sacramental sign of the Eucharist. By our contemplation of the eucharistic bread and wine, we come to understand, in fact, that Jesus is truly Emanuel, God with us, who has made his dwelling-place among us for ever.

The living sense of the presence of God which characterizes our spirituality and which Don Bosco was at such pains to in-

²⁴ cf. Jn 14,20

²⁵ PAUL VI, *Mysterium fidei*, cf. AAS 57 (1965), p.764

culcate in his boys and collaborators, finds in this its root and foundation.

Today, as yesterday, only those who learn to see his presence in the Body and Blood of Christ are able to contemplate God in action.

It is there, as we learn from the episode of Emmaus, that our eyes are opened and we recognize the Risen One who until then had been hidden by common words and actions. It is there that the disciples discover the continuity between the One who was crucified and the One who still lives, and come to understand the extraordinary significance of the death of Jesus. In a similar way, in the breaking of the bread an authentic apostolic action begins, which bears the signs of a real encounter with the Lord and proclaims a communion with him which is personally lived and experienced.

In a stimulating and enlightening manner, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*²⁶ and later other texts bring together the different forms of presence of the Risen Jesus, placing first among them the extraordinary one in which Jesus identifies himself with the eucharistic bread and wine, celebrated in his memory by the community of the disciples.

Jesus is really present in his Word, in which he already gives himself to us as light and food. He is also present in all the sacraments, which are "powers that come forth from the Body of Christ, which is ever-living and life-giving"²⁷ through the work of the Spirit: "When anyone baptizes it is Christ himself who baptizes"²⁸, when anyone absolves it is Christ who absolves.

Jesus is present in prayer, especially in the Liturgy of the Hours: the same Jesus, incorporates us into his prayer, the supreme prayer of the Risen Lord, making us concelebrate

²⁶ cf. SC 7

²⁷ Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC), 1116

²⁸ SC 7

praise of the Father and intercession for the world.

Christ is really present in the community, in the minister who presides at the celebration²⁹ and visibly gathers the community to its foundation which is Christ himself.

After the celebration he prolongs his presence in the sacrament for the benefit of all those who want him or seek him (the sick, those who visit him) and have not been able to come to the celebration; he continues to be really present also in the poor and the sick: "You did it to me".³⁰

This understanding of the multiform but unique presence of the Risen Saviour gives unity to our life. The sacraments, liturgical prayer, the community and mission, the experience of fraternity and service to others: all remain united by the conviction that the Lord Jesus is present at every moment, as he himself has assured us: "I am with you always, to the close of the age".³¹

The Eucharist is the sacrament of his presence, just as it is also of his sacrifice: the sacrament in which he comes nearer to us with greater intensity to make himself available to our gaze, our supplications and our friendship.

This presence is not to be understood as one of material reality, as though the body of Christ were enclosed, motionless and static; rather it is alive and radiant, active and working. We are not hosting a stranger or a foreigner; we do not make him a prisoner of some product of our own creating. He is the Risen One, the Lord of the universe and of history who, after expressing his love in the fullest measure, exercises over the world his saving sovereignty, unlimited by space or time, just as he demonstrated after the Resurrection.

This is an aspect of the mystery on which we must meditate at length and contemplate it in a silence permeated by prayer

²⁹ cf. *ibid.*

³⁰ cf. CCC 1397; Mt 25,40

³¹ Mt 28,20

and docility to the interior illumination of the Spirit.

The eucharistic presence, while resisting our temptations to capture the divine, will open us to greater humility and authenticity in contemplating God's Gift. The contemplation of such a Gift is never just the seeing of some "thing"; it is possible only when an understanding has been achieved between the giver and the receiver: it is to this spiritual understanding with Christ that the eucharistic presence silently calls us.

It is on this presence that the cult of the Eucharist is founded, in both its public and private forms. Its surpassing value, constantly proposed by the Church's teaching and by the example of innumerable ranks of saints, must be rediscovered by ourselves. By adoring the Eucharist we shall learn to enlarge our hearts after the measure of that of Christ; we shall discover the joy of listening to him at length, of joyful praise and confident intercession for the needs of so many of our fellow-men, and especially for so many young people whom we meet, or whom we personally shall perhaps never meet.

The Pope once wrote: "Divine intimacy with Christ, in the silence of contemplation, does not distance us from our contemporaries but, on the contrary, makes us attentive and open to the joys and problems of other people, and broadens our heart to the dimensions of the world itself. It makes us at one with our brothers and sisters, and particularly with the lowliest ones, who enjoy the Lord's predilection".³²

In this perspective he addressed a pressing invitation which comes right home to us: "I recommend to priests, to men and women religious and also to the laity, to continue and redouble their efforts to teach the young generations the meaning and value of adoration and eucharistic devotion. How will young people get to know the Lord if they are not introduced to the

³² JOHN PAUL II, *Letter on the adoration of the Eucharist* of 28.05.1996, sent to the Bishop of Liege on the 750th anniversary of the feast of the Sacred Body and Blood of Christ, 5

mystery of his presence? Like the young Samuel, by learning the words of the prayer of the heart, they will be nearer to the Lord who will accompany them in their spiritual and human growth and in the missionary witness they must give throughout the whole of their lives".³³

3. THE CALL TO CELEBRATION

3.1 "I received from the Lord".³⁴

Once we have grasped the significance of the institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper, it should not surprise us that the Church, guided by paschal experience, has placed at the centre of its life and public identity the frequent and persevering practice of the *fractio panis*.³⁵

Events like that of Emmaus, in fact, highlight how the repetition of the eucharistic action is the place of recognition of the Risen Christ, the sign of the new nature and continuity of the relationship of Jesus with his disciples after his death and Resurrection, the most evident manner in which he continues to make himself present in their midst, to speak with them and to admit them to an unimaginable communion with himself.

The repetition of the words and actions of the Last Supper becomes in this way for the emerging Church the new way of approaching the mystery of God. It is no longer possible to think of God, except by way of the death and Resurrection of Christ, and hence through the Eucharist which is their memorial. It is impossible to find an experience of more immediate rapport with the Risen Christ than the recognition of his real and living presence whenever the "breaking of bread" is celebrated.

³³ *ibid.* 8

³⁴ 1 Cor 11,23

³⁵ *cf.* Acts 2,42

And so the celebration of the Eucharist marks the detachment of the Christian community from the ancient rite, the re-reading of all the earthly circumstances of Jesus' life in the light of his Paschal event, and the identification of his disciples as those who "eat the same bread" and form with him "a single body".

The teaching of St Paul to the Corinthians,³⁶ which expresses the tradition of the very first period, shows how Jesus' command regarding the eucharistic rite from the outset penetrated very deeply into the life of the community and became the foundation of all ecclesial experience.

The process which links our Eucharist with the apostolic *fractio panis* and the Lord's Last Supper is marked by a long historical route and a slow evolution of rites which has seen the rich influence of various times and places. Basically the ritual development of the Eucharist goes hand-in-hand with the historical process of the People of God, generated by the Eucharist in which it expresses its own adherence to the Lord.

It is not surprising therefore that the Church preserves the words and actions of Jesus with affectionate attention, placing them at the heart of her finest celebration, and passing them on with faithful care from one generation to the next. We can also understand why the Christian community in times of persecution, even though in a hidden manner, insisted on celebrating the Eucharist not just in any way at random but in that of the universal Church which was their invisible support. In the Eucharist are to be found, in fact, all good things of the people of God: grace and unity, history and mission.

Beyond the variations in the external forms of the rite, which are nevertheless strongly linked with the unchanged central position of the words and actions of the Last Supper, there is a significance we must not overlook.

The Eucharist is a "celebration", or in other words a ritual action which has as its visible subject the community of be-

³⁶ 1 Cor 11,20-34

lievers presided over by its own pastors in communion with the Bishop and with the Pope. Hence immediately from its very essence the act of eucharistic celebration highlights the Church's structure as a communion.

The Eucharist, in fact, does not appear with the characteristics of the private action of a single person or of an occasional group but, on the contrary, manifests the hallmarks of a communal act, which always involves the life of the Church in its totality.

No one can be unaware of how important this is in an era marked by strong individual convictions, which are sometimes reflected in the daily experience of our communities. The celebration of the Eucharist places us immediately in a relationship with others. In fact it is possible only by reason of the continuity of the apostolic ministry and our membership of the Church in communion. In the "memorial", the substantial moment of celebration and ritual, we are joined together with all the Churches of the world and with the disciples who have succeeded each other from the Last Supper to ourselves today.

The very fact of coming together to celebrate is in itself a great act of faith: what moves us to do so is not some plan we have worked out for ourselves, but the knowledge that we must manifest, all of us together as a community of disciples, our obedience to Christ's command.

If we look at the liturgical celebration in greater depth, we become aware that in addition to it being an expression of ecclesial faith, it is a more radical expression and visible presentation of the action of Christ Jesus. The liturgical actions we carry out have meaning only to the extent that they refer us to something that he is doing today, through us. The protagonist in the liturgical action is Christ himself and the whole rite, in its beauty and sobriety, is meant to allow his divine presence to shine through.

The disproportion that exists between the simplicity of the ritual actions and the greatness of the mystery they contain,

and the double epiclesis over the gifts and the assembly which enshrines the account of the institution in the Eucharistic Prayer, remind us daily that what is done in it comes from on high, and it is not we who are at the origin of the sacrament and its saving efficacy. For this reason anything that could give the idea of our own autonomous protagonism in our celebrations, which would distract from the essentials, must be avoided.

Above all, those of us who are priests must call frequently to mind that our duty of presiding at the celebration is not the exercise of authority over the Eucharist, but a service of representing the Lord according to the Church's directives. Anyone who thought that he could interpret and decide for himself about the rites in the name of the ministry he has received, would display an extremely clerical concept of ministry which would impose on the community the priest's personal ideas.

Faced with this kind of temptation, which we can experience in many ways, we must renew our joy at giving our hands, senses and voices to the action of Christ who finds in our willingness to represent him the way to make present his personal initiative of love. In other words, we ministers preside over the Eucharist *in persona Christi*; we have no personal and magic power of our own for capturing the presence of the divine, but only the task of making visible the action by which Christ, in his freely given love, comes and makes himself present in our midst.

3.2 "You are the body of Christ".³⁷

"If you want to understand the body of Christ, listen to what the Apostle says to the faithful: 'Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it (1 Cor 12,27). If there-

³⁷ 1 Cor 12,27

fore you are the body of Christ and its members, on the Lord's table is placed your sacred mystery: the sacred mystery you receive. To what you are, you reply 'Amen', and by so replying endorse it. You hear in fact the words: 'The body of Christ', and you reply: 'Amen'. And so be truly the body of Christ, so that your 'Amen' be the truth!".³⁸

This text of St Augustine leads us to another point we want to consider: the Eucharist as the sacrament which constitutes the Church.

We have often heard the saying: "The Church makes the Eucharist and the Eucharist makes the Church". Both are born and grow together. The Eucharist gathers the Church into unity and makes it visible. This is what happens every Sunday in all churches. But above all the Eucharist builds the interior reality of the Church, as the food we assimilate builds our body: it strengthens in the Church the awareness of the mystery on which its existence is founded.

The eucharistic celebration does not exist as an end in itself, or to remain enclosed in the time and place in which it is celebrated; its purpose is to give rise to a humanity which lives in a communion of love and commitment with Jesus. The bread and wine we place on the altar are transformed into the Body and Blood of Christ, so that all who communicate fruitfully in this mystery may become a single being in Christ. By saying "Amen" to his eucharistic body, we say "Amen" also to his ecclesial body, which we believe is real and of which we want to form part according to its nature.

From this truth derives the spiritual tradition which considers the Eucharist as the sacrament of charity, of unity, and of fraternal communion.

The importance of this truth for our daily life and our pastoral activity will not escape anyone. It teaches us, in fact, that there is no other way to realize communion between men and

³⁸ St AUGUSTINE, *Discourses*, 272

to oppose the disrupting logic of sin than that of entering into the New Covenant offered by the Eucharist, where the loving and welcoming closeness of God enables us to be open to one another, to recognize and accept as a gift our diversity and to be proud to be of mutual service in fraternal friendship.

In the light of the Eucharist, the building of the Kingdom, of the Church and of our fraternal life, does not appear as a task needing a great quantity of goodwill, but rather as the result of the Lord's Easter victory, which we have always before us so that we can tend towards it and let ourselves be permeated by it.

All the recent documents on the religious life endorse this point and prompt us to a deep rediscovery of the eucharistic origin of the common life. So, for instance, the document on fraternal life in community reminds us: "It is around the Eucharist, celebrated and adored, 'source and summit' of all activity of the Church, that the communion of souls is built up, which is the starting point of all growth in fraternity",³⁹ and then it goes on (quoting a text of Vatican II): "From this all education for community spirit must begin".⁴⁰

3.3 "We proclaim your death".

Since it is at the origin of the Church, the Eucharist is also at the origin of the Church's mission. The Second Vatican Council had already taught authoritatively that "all the sacraments, and indeed all ecclesiastical ministries and works of the apostolate are bound up with the Eucharist and are directed towards it",⁴¹ to such an extent that it "appears as the source and the summit of all preaching of the Gospel".⁴²

We do not treat these statements as vague and mere com-

³⁹ Cong. for Institutes of Consecrated Life, *Fraternal Life in Community*, 14

⁴⁰ PO 6

⁴¹ PO 5

⁴² *ibid.*

ments, but we try to identify their real implications for our spiritual and apostolic life.

To say that the mission is born of the Eucharist means that we recognize that our educative and apostolic activity cannot be other than participation in the mission of Jesus.

Now it is precisely this participation that we must not take for granted, nor consider as already fundamentally assured by our consecration. The Gospel reminds us, in fact, with particular insistence that one can be in the Lord's vineyard but without truly working in accordance with his intentions and at his service.

The discovery of our identity as having been sent by the Risen Christ is the fruit of a long apostolic maturing process, marked by the purification of the motives which prompt and direct us to an ever deeper dedication to the demands of the Kingdom. And it is precisely this self-donation which constitutes the real soul of the mission, and distinguishes the good shepherd who gives his life for the sheep from the mercenary who appears to do a great deal, but does not in fact have real love for his flock.

Without freely given self-donation for the love of God and one's neighbour, there is no Christian mission and no evangelization. The latter is born of the Eucharist because it is a participation in the mission of Christ which reached its culmination on the Cross and is made present today by the sacramental action and by the Spirit.

The statement in our Constitutions, according to which "the salesian spirit finds its model and source in the very heart of Christ, apostle of the Father",⁴³ sees its greatest realization precisely in the Eucharist. There the heart of Christ, sent by the Father and true missionary of the Kingdom, conforms us to himself, making us his apostles. No one can be an apostle among young people unless in the eucharistic celebration he is

⁴³ C 11

a disciple who, like John at the Last Supper, can place his head on the Master's heart.

4. A CALL TO CONVERSION

When we apply what we have been saying to salesian spirituality there are some images and sayings which spring almost at once to our minds: our three devotions, the pillars of the preventive system, the dream of the two columns.

But generalized slogans, even though they may contain precise messages, risk remaining inoperative and even incomprehensible if we fail to apply them to our daily lives.

The brief maxims with which Don Bosco summed up for his family his convictions about the Eucharist, were the result of spiritual experience and long pedagogical practice.

4.1 Don Bosco, man of the Eucharist.

Don Lemoyne wrote in the Biographical Memoirs: "Many people told us what we ourselves experienced every day. We assisted at his Mass many, many times and our faith was always intensified at the sight of the devotion which breathed from him by his exact performance of the sacred ceremonies, in his clear pronunciation of the words, and in the fervour which accompanied his prayers. This edifying impression was indelible",⁴⁴ words which show that the eucharistic celebration was an experience of such intensity that it was externally perceptible, so involving as to leave in everyone a memory and a desire to approach the Eucharist personally.

The heights of intensity reached by Don Bosco in celebrating the Eucharist, sometimes accompanied by extraordinary phenomena, were not rare and isolated moments, but the

⁴⁴ BM 1, p.387

result of a process marked by rigorous interior discipline and a well-tried fidelity.

We know, in fact, that Don Bosco surrounded the eucharistic celebration with an atmosphere of silent recollection which he respected himself and inculcated in others. "He required absolute silence to be maintained from after night prayers until the conclusion of Mass the following morning. We met him several times early in the morning as he left his room to go to church. At such moments he would smile at us and allow us to greet him by kissing his hand, but he would not say a word, so absorbed was he in his preparation for Mass".⁴⁵

Though Don Bosco was capable of breath-taking activity and explosive joy, before the eucharistic mystery he appears to us as the man of silent prayer which envelops in recollection the sacramental encounter with Christ.

We need to meditate on this attitude of his. The silence is not, in fact, an extrinsic and merely devotional element of the Eucharist, but an essential component which refers back to the mystery: to those silent nights when Jesus, wrapped in prayer, prepared his mission; especially the silence of that night when he had instituted the Eucharist, when in the Garden of Olives Jesus ratified his filial offering to the Father without being able to involve his tired and distracted companions, who just a little earlier had taken part in the first eucharistic fruits of his Supper.

Often the hectic life to which we are called in days filled with apostolic commitments, has an essential need for this regenerating silence: it is a condition for making sure that the celebration does not become an external formality which finds us incapable of listening to the Word and of communion with the Lord.

The importance that Don Bosco gave to this preparation, and also to thanksgiving afterwards, is such that in his testa-

⁴⁵ BM 4, p.315-316

ment, drawn up in 1884, he made a point of writing: "I must ask you to forgive me if someone may have noticed that several times I was too brief in my preparation for Holy Mass and in my thanksgiving afterwards. To some extent I was compelled by the crowd of people surrounding me in the sacristy who left me no possibility of praying either before the Mass or after it".⁴⁶

When we compare these words with what we know to have been the tenor of his interior dispositions, we cannot but remain confused at this confession and wonder whether we know and take sufficiently seriously the spiritual teachings of our Father.

4.2 An original pedagogy.

His personal experience and priestly concern for the souls of his youngsters led Don Bosco to draw up a catechetical preparation for approach to the Eucharist.

In the pages of the Memoirs of the Oratory in which he speaks of his first communion, are evident some elements of spiritual pedagogy which he will foster all through his life and propose insistently to his boys.

Don Bosco describes how, through the efforts of his mother, he was able to make his first communion a year before his companions. Reading between the lines we can discern his thought as Master of the spirit of young people, as he writes in the Preventive System: "Avoid as a plague the opinion that the first communion should be deferred to a late age. (...) When a child can distinguish between *Bread* and bread, and shows sufficient knowledge, give no further thought to his age, but let the heavenly King come and reign in that happy soul".⁴⁷

Then there are his repeated references to the climate of rec-

⁴⁶ MB XVII, p.272

⁴⁷ *The preventive system in the education of the young*, Appendix to the Constitutions, p.250

ollection surrounding the event: "My mother helped me for days at a time. At home she saw to it that I said my prayers and read good books, and she always came up with the advice which a diligent mother knows how to give her children. On the morning of the first communion itself, she did not let me speak to anyone. She accompanied me to the altar and together we made our preparation and thanksgiving (...). On that day she did not wish me to do any manual work, but spend the time in reading and praying".⁴⁸

With the same insistence Don Bosco emphasizes the link between confession and communion, for which his mother not only encouraged him but prepared him with her recommendations about sincerity, repentance and a purpose of amendment, which were the very teachings that Don Bosco would pass on later to his boys.

And then there is the reference to the newness of life to which the sacramental experience is linked and to the spiritual fruits it brings with it. "My dear son, this is a great day for you. I am convinced that God has really taken possession of your heart. Now promise him to be good as long as you live. Go to communion frequently in the future, but beware of sacrilege". And then Don Bosco comments: "I treasured my mother's advice and tried to carry it out. I think that from that day onwards there was some improvement in my life, especially in matters of obedience and submission to others, though I found that very hard at first".⁴⁹

It is not difficult to gather from these pages the experience of the skilled educator who, while telling the first Salesians the story of his life, highlighted the kinds of behaviour and attitudes to which he attached a permanent value.

A detailed examination of the text would reveal many significant aspects of the spiritual 'vocabulary' of our Founder,

⁴⁸ *Memoirs of the Oratory*, English edtn. p 32,33

⁴⁹ *ibid.*

but for the present it will be enough to gather some pedagogical elements.

A first element is the *symbolism and the powerful impact of receiving the Eucharist*. Don Bosco dwelt deliberately on the way in which Mamma Margaret presented the event of his first communion: not as an automatic step to be taken for granted, but as a decisive factor in the making of choices and daily commitments. He himself followed the same practice at Valdocco, with a wise blending of educative and pastoral practices which, in a atmosphere of freedom, aimed at putting forward the Eucharist as the central and most important moment of the life of the Oratory. A large part of the efficacy of his educational method derived from this approach, with its accompanying fervour and ability to arouse expectation and desire.

This leads us to some self-examination; it makes us wonder whether our pedagogy has the clarity about objectives and emotional impact that the eucharistic mystery has, without which the figure of Don Bosco is inconceivable. The first condition, if not the only one, leading to the discovery of the richness of the sacramental mystery of Christ is, in fact, an environment and a group of educators where the mystery is lived with great enthusiasm. That is how it was in the early Church, and that is how it was for Don Bosco as a boy and for Don Bosco the educator. And only on these conditions can it also be the same for us.

And so we candidly acknowledge that the first cause of difficulty in our pastoral work relating to the Eucharist can consist precisely, even though not necessarily, in the lack of a eucharistic atmosphere in our communities and environments. Where the Eucharist is at the centre of a daily life illumined by faith and inspired by joyful trust, eucharistic pastoral work has already found its most fundamental resource.

The second element, closely connected with the first, is the importance of a *personalized pedagogy* which leads children and young people to an interior encounter with the Eucharist which is not merely ritual. In the significant early experience of

the young John Bosco, Mamma Margaret led him along a path which was basically that of the old-time catechumens. Without knowing it, his mother drew from her treasury of faith and wisdom the elements the Church has always considered indispensable for the sacrament to be fruitful, and which Don Bosco reaffirmed times without number by the word 'preparation': the Eucharist is fruitful when it is well prepared. And the preparation does not consist in technical or extraordinary expedients but in a prayerful and serious approach, with explanation and instruction proportionate to the age of the candidate.

Here too there are some motives for reflection about our own pastoral work, which can run the risk of giving too much weight to techniques for making the celebration more "interesting", and undervaluing the internal attraction exerted by the Spirit on hearts which are open in prayer and committed to the struggle against evil.

This is an action of Grace, which we can in no way substitute, because it is a work of the Spirit which leads by interior persuasion to the fullness of truth. Preparation for the sacrament consists in the first place in helping hearts to be disposed to this action by freeing themselves from sin and learning to savour the beauty of the spiritual life.

And there are many other pages which can throw further light on the bond between Don Bosco and the Eucharist: we need think only of John's formation as a seminarian at Chieri, of the beginnings of his ministry, of the wonderful pages of his Good-Nights and dreams (of which the one of the 'two columns' is an outstanding example) in which reference to "Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament" is constantly emphasized, of the biographies of his boys in which is indicated a process of sacramental pedagogy of which the eucharistic ecstasy of Dominic Savio was a result. Together they form a collection of elements which reveal the effective realization of his program expressed in the words: "Frequent confession, frequent communion and daily Mass are the pillars which must support the edi-

fice of education from which we propose to banish the use of threats and the cane".⁵⁰

4.3 The Eucharist and 'da mihi animas'.

From the brief remarks we have made above the importance of the Eucharist in the thought of Don Bosco is clear, and hence also its place in his unique spirituality which we must translate faithfully for our own time.

But the element which reveals more than any other the extent to which the eucharistic mystery marked the life of Don Bosco, and hence must also mark our life as Salesians, is the relationship with pastoral charity which he expressed in his motto "Da mihi animas, cetera tolle".

These words, which we have repeated and made our own, are the plan and process of Don Bosco for modelling himself on Christ, who offers his own life to the Father for the salvation of mankind. To understand them more deeply, to repeat them with greater conviction and translate them effectively into our daily experience, we must meditate on them in the light of the Eucharist, like the parable of the Good Shepherd.

Seen against the background of the Eucharist, "Da mihi animas" seems to us to be a prayer rather than a motto, an echo of the priestly prayer of Jesus at the Last Supper: "Father, they were yours, and you gave them to me. (...) For their sakes I sanctify myself".⁵¹ This is the highest expression of our dialogue and rapport with God and it helps us to overcome the dichotomy between work and prayer which, at an existential level, we do not always manage to avoid.

"Da mihi animas" is in the first place a recognition that in the mission the protagonist or principal actor is God. It introduces us to the apostolic service of our fellow-men through the

⁵⁰ *The preventive system in the education of the young*, Appendix to the Constitutions, p. 249

⁵¹ Jn 17 6.19

invocation we address to the Father. To say "Give me souls" is primarily to invoke the Lord's intervention, to entrust ourselves to his solicitous love and leave room for his initiative of salvation.

In this way is renewed in us the awareness of Don Bosco and of the great apostles of every age, who have always recognized that the movement of charity towards others and the energies that it produces in us come from God, and to God they must therefore be referred in everything we do.

This, moreover, was the attitude of Jesus himself. He understood his life as a mission entrusted to him by the Father, and has left us his eucharistic offering as a gift of the Father, who "so loved the world as to give his only Son".⁵²

It is this recognition of the Father's initiative that gives to "Da mihi animas" its character of humble and courageous prayer. We are asking the Father, in fact, to make us a centre for the spreading of the Kingdom, able to attract souls to Christ and hence to salvation. It is a very particular kind of request which we can make only because we know that it corresponds to God's own heart, which wants men to be fully and actively involved in his loving design. We make it with faith and courage, knowing that we are not asking for "souls" for our own gratification, but to be able to serve them with humility and dedication.

Such a prayer implies for us a process of patient configuration to Christ. Only on his lips does the prayer "Da mihi animas" not sound pretentious, because when he is raised from the earth he can draw everyone to himself. We know that in the Eucharist Jesus wants to share with us this charity which, in leading to his being raised on the cross in the paschal event, makes him a mysterious centre of attraction.

In this way the Eucharist throws light on another aspect of "Da mihi animas". When Don Bosco interprets his motto

⁵² Jn 3,16

through the words "try to make yourself loved", he is not merely proposing to his collaborators the development of their natural gifts of empathy, which are so important in an educational environment, but more deeply he is asking them to share the process by which Christ "studied to make himself loved", or in other words by the process of the daily giving of himself.

Only evangelical charity, drawn from the heart of Christ in communion with his Body and Blood, can give the educator a true spiritual ascendancy, totally purified of forms of self-promotion and sympathy seeking, and fully free to spread among young people the fascination of men of God.

For this reason "*Da mihi animas*" is completed in "*Cetera tolle*". It is not possible to participate in the saving action of Christ without subordinating to this commitment all other interests and desires. In this way we understand Don Bosco's motto as a prayer of self-offering which, in imitation of the priestly prayer of Jesus, makes him always available, offering his time, friendship, and expertise.

"*Cetera tolle*" applies to everything; it is all-embracing, as is the Eucharist itself. Don Bosco translated it into words and actions of a very concrete nature: he promised God that he would give of himself to his last breath for the young. And that is precisely what he did. Sacramental participation in the sacrifice of Christ leads us to make ourselves one with him in his apostolic sentiments and in his generous dedication for the demands of the Kingdom.

I invite you to renew each day in the Eucharist the personal prayer of "*Da mihi animas, cetera tolle*". In intimate dialogue with the Lord this expression will assume a thousand and one shades of meaning, it will take on within us a new existential importance and will become translated into that "tireless industry made holy by prayer and union with God that should be characteristic of the sons of St John Bosco".⁵³

4.4 A journey in our communities

These reflections we have been developing, suggest many applications, and in the first place for our salesian communities.

The Eucharist is essentially a community celebration; it involves individual Christians in so far as they are members of the People of God, and hence each one of us as members of a community. The latter is the subject of the celebration.

The first line of suggestions concerns the *moments of celebration in the community*. It is a matter of rediscovering the human and spiritual implications of celebrating together and drawing the necessary conclusions.

Faced with the danger of personal distractions and an individualistic management of commitments, the eucharistic celebration brings us back to what is essential, asking us to commemorate Christ together and enabling us to share in his love for others through the power of this greatest of sacraments.

Every community will be able to recognize in what this most evident aspect of the Eucharist consists. Not infrequently it will be a time which is less strenuous, a more active participation, a more careful preparation, a fresh way of looking at daily life.

We need to rediscover a way of celebrating the liturgy in a more dignified manner. In careful attention to expressive gestures, in a worthy proclamation of the Word of God and of the liturgical texts, through the beauty of the singing and respect for the moments of silence, we realize our openness to the One above, who must be perceived, listened to, heard and contemplated in faith, and whose divine presence justifies all the care and generosity we have put into the preparation.

Young people are particularly sensitive to the genuine nature of the symbolic gestures in which the liturgy abounds, and they frequently form an idea of our faith more by observing the sincerity and quality of our celebrations than by listening to

what we say.

In this climate we can suggest the reappraisal of Concelebration by all members of the community, at least weekly on the community-day. We could also consider a greater frequency of communal adoration of the Eucharist, which renews our adherence of faith and our prayerful attention to the presence of Christ among us, or we could give particular attention to the Sunday and Feast-day liturgies through a reflection in common on the Word which we have to share with the young and the people in general.

It would be a good thing too if the communal Eucharist were to be open, as now happens in many places, to the young people with whom we want to form a single family. This would enrich our assemblies with a youthful freshness, while at the same time helping the young to gain valid experiences of interior life and spiritual sharing.

We all have experience of celebrations in which words and actions seem to achieve their full significance. To a visitor from outside there is evident a single heart and soul. At other times there is a different kind of atmosphere: a less than perfect fusion of hearts in the assembly, a lack of association between rite and life, and a eucharistic development which is still unfinished.

Our Constitutions tell us: "The Eucharist is the central act of every salesian community: it is a daily festive celebration in a living liturgy. There the community celebrates the paschal mystery and unites itself to the immolated body of Christ, receiving it so as to build itself in him into a fraternal communion and renew its apostolic commitment".⁵⁴

The second line of suggestions is the *visible linkage between the Eucharist and fraternal life*.

We have meditated on how from the Eucharist the Church is born, the experience of communion among men in the name of Christ and the proclamation of the Kingdom made present in history. It is a matter of drawing from this some practical conclusions which are not automatic, but require a generous effort from each one.

To speak of the Eucharist, and especially to celebrate it, has no meaning if the community does not set itself to overcome the tensions and divisions to which it is liable. In this we must be very sincere and call a spade a spade, knowing that we have to measure ourselves against a biblical teaching that leaves no room for half measures or compromise.

It may be useful to read over again, personally or in common, the text of chapters 10 and 11 of Paul's first Letter to the Corinthians in which he points to the fact that the Eucharist is incompatible with divisions, with mutual exclusions, and with individualism of any kind. As the Apostle says, "Let a man examine himself",⁵⁵ and as he becomes aware that as there is a single bread so we form a single body, let him avoid profaning the Sacrament of the Lord.

Sacramental communion does not lead us to communion of life with Christ if we exclude our brothers from our esteem and our dealings, if we harbour ill-feeling against them, and do not contribute to the building of fellowship. The Eucharistic exists so that we may love each other, forgive each other, and allow the Lord to build the house where he wants to make his abode.

In the eucharistic prayer, after invoking the Spirit that the bread and wine may become the Body and Blood of Christ, we ask that by force of the sacramental action he will unite us in a single body. Brotherly love and the Eucharist are two signs that

⁵⁵ 1 Cor 11,28

cannot be separated. When the first is missing, it "makes the sacrament a lie". When the Eucharist is not lived, love loses its dimensions and is cut off from the source of nourishment. "Lord, grant that by participating in so great a mystery, we may attain to the fullness of charity and of life".⁵⁶ May this be the intense expression of our desires and an authentic commitment of our will.

A third line of thought we may explore is our *personal relationship, internalized and convinced, with the mystery of the Eucharist*.

"We can form praying communities only if individually we become men of prayer".⁵⁷ This statement, which our Constitutions refer in a general way to our life of prayer, is applicable in a quite particular way to the Eucharist.

In the first place we shall need to develop a deeper knowledge of this sacrament. Preoccupied as we are with the urgency of the problems of every day, it may be years since we read any serious work about eucharistic theology, with the result that our understanding of the mystery begins to fade and our interior motivations grow weaker. The World Eucharistic Congress of the Jubilee Year will certainly place at our disposal material and stimuli which we must not leave only for the attention of experts.

We must rediscover too the lesson that comes to us from Don Bosco, i.e. the synthesis, the "splendid blending"⁵⁸ of prayer and apostolic dedication combined together in "Da mihi animas". What we are seeking in prayer and apostolic activity is really one and the same thing: participation in the love of Christ, which the Eucharist makes possible for us.

It will be important therefore for each of us to grasp the occasion of grace of this Jubilee, to return to the most authentic roots of our own vocation and renew our commitment to the pastoral charity towards the young that is characteristic of our spirituality.

⁵⁶ cf. Eucharistic Prayer V

⁵⁷ C 93

⁵⁸ C 21

But in this process we must keep in mind and avoid the risk of certain false notions. The synthesis of work and prayer in a single movement of love for God and our neighbour is not an objective we can attain merely by following some specific course of action. The mystery of the Eucharist is not only inspirational; even more it is the inescapable moment in which the contemplative and apostolic heart is formed in contact with the heart of Christ. Between eucharistic practice and a successful apostolic synthesis there is a relationship that cannot be reversed.

For this reason it would be naïve to think one could be generous and selfless in the service of the young while neglecting to cultivate a strong eucharistic devotion. Where an intense relationship with the Eucharist, as the centre of Christian life, is lacking there can be neither contemplation nor apostolate, because they stand or fall together.

Let us ask ourselves therefore what more we must do personally to correspond with Christ's command: "Do this in memory of me".⁵⁹ In the matter of personal forms of eucharistic devotion our tradition leaves a lot of room for each one's personal initiative; but this does not mean that the required commitment is any the less intense and that one approach is as fruitful as another.

A son and spiritual disciple of Don Bosco will be able to find a daily space for silence before the Eucharist in the traditional form of "visits" or in other expressions of authentic adoration and communication.

4.5 The educative process with young people.

If our communal and personal commitment to the rediscovery of the Eucharist is authentic, it will result in abundant pastoral fruits.

The challenges of our times are almost compelling us to

⁵⁹ Lk 22,19

bring together once again theological knowledge, spiritual life and pastoral praxis.

Conviction and communal experiences are forcing us to recognize the fact that pastoral activity is not a more or less refined technique placed at the service of the Gospel: it is rather the witness of a life which stems from a deep communion with the Lord. The more intense and persevering this proves to be, so much the more will our every word and action be transparent in revealing the coming of the Kingdom.

A first application of this, in the field of pastoral work, concerns the *educative community*. Renewed attention to the Eucharist will enable us to make plans according to the spirit of the Gospel. Charity has its own specific way of seeing, evaluating and reacting to pastoral situations and challenges. It has its own eyes, its own intelligence, its own creativity, its own far-sightedness, which cannot be substituted in any way. These are things we know but which need continual repetition, to avoid the risk of taking up in our apostolic activity models of organization and arrangements that correspond to a dynamic and logic which are not those of the Kingdom.

The Eucharist tells us, for instance, that a Christian community can never organize its experience of faith merely on the model of a business enterprise, and this at many levels ranging from motivations for action to the style of relationships, from criteria behind decisions to the manner of its representation, from the type of authority to the forms of financial management. The kingdom has its own unique and unmistakable dynamics and logic. We must overcome the temptation of thinking it not practical, because the Eucharist itself makes it daily both relevant and practicable for us.

The most immediate application of this point will be the recognition that only the Eucharist will be able to give the proper physiognomy to the educative and pastoral community (EPC) which we are committed to constructing in all our works. The form of encounter, of exchange of views, of sharing

responsibility, of charismatic inspiration, of attention to the Word of God, of the practice of the evangelical charity we want to live, cannot be realized unless we start from authentic communion in the mystery of Christ.

Outside this communion there can be no educative and pastoral community for the simple reason that apart from this communion there can be no Church. We must not be afraid that the Eucharist, placed at the centre of the EPC, will give rise to exclusion or selectivity between those we work for and our collaborators; indeed we can be certain that the opposite will be the case. It is, in fact, precisely and only from communion with Jesus in the Eucharist that we can learn to be open to everyone, with a sincere concern for those who find greater difficulty in their life's journey and in that of faith, and the overcoming of our interior resistance. In a world in which attention to communication is of enormous interest, we know that only communion with Christ will truly enable us to communicate and be builders of communion.

On the other hand, the charismatic experience of Valdocco confirms us in the knowledge that the secret of effective pastoral activity is an explicitly eucharistic environment, in which even those who come in contact with it only marginally or with a kind of question which is not directly religious, know intuitively that the generous and affectionate reply they receive is born of the charity of Christ.

There is a second setting in which the eucharistic mystery requires of us greater attention and growing conviction: it is that of our *educative and pastoral projects*.

The Eucharist can suggest to us ways of examining both the objectives of our projects and the way we attain them.

At the level of objectives we must make our own the objective that was Don Bosco's, i.e. the proposal to young people of Christian holiness. We know that the situations of our own youngsters are widely diversified. As soon as we hear the word "holiness", we immediately get the impression of an abstract

and ingenuous manner of looking at things.

But it is important that we do not allow ourselves to be deceived by an idea of holiness that savours of the miraculous and is meant only for extraordinary youngsters, and that we keep before our eyes the model of youthful sanctity which Don Bosco presented so clearly and naturally to his boys, both privately and publicly: a holiness built on a generous will, on the knowledge and friendship of God, on the use of the sacraments, on the daily commitment to one's own maturing, on genuine happiness, on service to companions, and on self-donation in other fields attractive to the young.

These are our educational objectives, for which we have given and continue to give ourselves every day of our lives, in the conviction that even the most difficult youngsters are called to discover God with joy and experience him in their lives, and that everything is possible to one who has faith.

In any case, the young people who frequent our environments have the right to be told by us, with sympathy and understanding but also with enthusiasm and a certain persuasiveness, of the destiny to which God has called them and how he thinks of them and loves them as a father. There is nothing more beautiful that we can do for them than propose to them, in forms and ways charity and pedagogical experience suggest, a living communion with him who is the Holy One of God, the, Light, the Truth and the Life.

As to how we do it, we need to reflect seriously to see whether we are managing to avoid the risk of putting forward a kind of Christianity characterized more by things to do for the Lord than by personal relationship with him.

The argument of St Paul against a justification that stems from works is a warning to us not to substitute the happy experience of a free and loving encounter with the Lord, who is the centre and origin of everything, with simple involvement in good works and charitable enterprises.

It happens not infrequently in our environments that we

meet well disposed youngsters, who are willing to dedicate a good deal of their time and activity to those who are younger and poorer, but find it difficult to understand and practise a sacramental encounter with the Lord. This should make us reflect seriously on the image of Christianity we are putting across by our suggestions and by our life.

It is a matter of a process of verification which not only we but even the whole Church feels that it must make. In recent years many pastors and many authoritative voices have made similar suggestions. On the other hand, the need to rediscover the primacy of Grace, the central nature of the relationship with Christ and the role of the sacramental experience, is one of the fundamental components of the Jubilee process.

For this reason we need to question ourselves with courage and be able to translate into an educative form the good news that has resounded for two thousand years: the Word was made flesh to offer us his friendship.

It is not possible here to give examples of how this primacy of Grace should be translated into educative processes. It will help us if we go back to the educative experience of Don Bosco. Among his many suggestions on which we can reflect, after transferring them to our own contexts, there is the frequent use of the sacraments as the driving force in grace and in apostolic generosity; there is the pedagogy attaching to feasts, in which daily duties are illumined by a moment of grace which is looked forward to and prepared, as a source of energy and other consequences; and there is the spirituality of the joy which follows a personal encounter with Jesus.

If we once again place the Eucharist at the centre of our pedagogical and pastoral projects it will help us to be aware, and to make others aware, that the desire to commit oneself to the good of others gets off the ground, becomes enduring and attains authenticity only from the experience each one of us has of being welcomed by Christ. That is where love is found, and without limit.

As a third point for our attention I would like to emphasize the importance of an authentic *education to the eucharistic celebration*. We know how liturgical experience, especially in certain cultural contexts, can appear irrelevant to many of the youngsters with whom we work. We are also aware, on the other hand, of the resources which rites and symbols with their sober beauty can provide when we are dealing not with a mechanical and superficial action but with an expression of authentic faith.

In past times eucharistic pedagogy could count on many favourable preconditions provided by the environment. Nowadays there is frequently need for education to the most fundamental attitudes and actions: silence, prayer, singing, choral movements, gestures to be made. We must not undervalue the importance of this factor which, especially among young people, acquires a great influence over their active and emotional involvement in the celebration.

Our experience is that participation in the Eucharist is improved where there are youth groups who are enthusiastic in the preparation of liturgical music, a fresh and effective artistic language when animated by talented people; while being satisfied with improvisations or repetitions, or styles not in harmony with the spirit of the liturgy, merely lower the tone and prove an obstacle to the maturing of the young people.

What is true of music is also true of the liturgical, of the proclamation of the readings, of every expression that forms part of the Eucharist and of the various moments in a communal celebration. We must not forget that in the eucharistic celebration there is also a pedagogy of time and priority between various parts; there is little sense in putting great emphasis on parts which are secondary while giving less attention to parts which are more important.

Particular attention will be needed for education to the listening to biblical texts. The Eucharist is totally permeated by the word of God, not only in the readings which are proclaimed, but because of the constant references to Scripture in

the texts of the Missal. The richness of these in the eucharistic celebration cannot be understood without an appropriate introduction to the Bible.

We often ask too much of the Eucharist, expecting it to become a didactic and pedagogical occasion. Though this aspect may be rightly present, it is not the primary element, and it can lead to an imbalance which makes the rite become heavy and causes the fundamental purpose of the sacrament to be lost sight of.

If we know how to carry out this formative process well, the Eucharist can become in truth a "celebration" of the sacrifice of Christ, in which the community comes together for an encounter with the Lord, in an understanding with him which familiarity with the Gospel has already made possible.

Conclusion – A "eucharistic" year

There remains always in my mind a thought I once heard in a meeting on Catechesis and Eucharist.

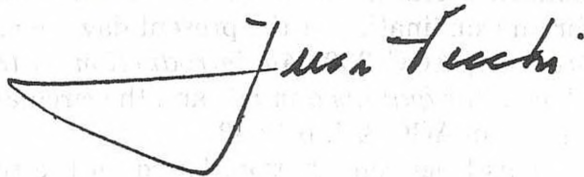
For the first Christians, catechesis was a kind of progressive journey towards the eucharistic mystery celebrated by the community. The catechumens were led by the hand, as it were, to the eucharistic mystery through an ordered explanation of Christian doctrine and life. The baptized, on the other hand, after their introduction to the Eucharist, meditated on and celebrated all God's work, deriving the consequences for their lives, as the apostle Paul often does. By means of **an enriching revision, they came to understand more fully their starting-point and the road they had covered: the desire for truth and life, the life and ministry of Jesus, his passion, resurrection and the gift of the Spirit, and the history of salvation past and present.**

This is, in fact, the journey we still find in our present eucharistic celebration.

Why do we not try to do the same thing ourselves, personally and as a community? Light and generosity will be set free in our lives as consecrated persons, for brotherly love, for the mission, for the quality of our education!

May Mary most holy, "the Virgin Mother of God", whom we recall and with whom we feel ourselves united in the celebration of every Eucharist,⁶⁰ be our guide in these dispositions with which she herself shared in the mystery of her Son, offered for the life of the world: attentive listening to the Word of God, active participation in the sacrifice of Christ at the foot of the Cross, and the love of Christ's Body which is the Church.

I send you my cordial greetings and my prayers that your Jubilee pilgrimage, both as individuals and communities, may be ever more intense in the light of the Risen Christ, who is living and working in our communities and in each one of us.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Juan Turchi". The signature is written in a cursive style, with a large, sweeping initial "J" that extends downwards and to the left, forming a triangular shape. The name "Juan Turchi" is written in a fluid, connected script to the right of the initial.

⁶⁰ cf. Eucharistic Prayer

THE EUCHARISTIC CELEBRATION OF OUR COMMUNITY

- Examining its quality -

Fr Luc VAN LOOY

Vicar General

In his letter on the Eucharist, the Rector Major refers to the manner in which it is celebrated in our communities. He offers ideas and suggestions for improving its quality and points to certain risks. In earlier numbers of the Acts of the Council useful guidelines have appeared which will still serve for an examination at the present day, e.g.: AGC 321, *Our Celebrations*; AGC 330, *An introduction to the Apostolic Letter "Vicesimus quintus annus"*; and the circular letter of Fr Egidio Viganò in AGC 324, p.42-43.

This brief contribution, based on the reflections presented by the Rector Major, is intended to encourage the examination of our style of prayer, and in particular of the quality of our celebrations. It may help us if we refer to some fundamental principles, to make us sensitive to certain risks we run and especially to highlight the significance of what we are doing by celebrating the Eucharist in community.

- *In the Constitutions and General Regulations* we find clear references to the spirit to be cultivated and in which should be lived the various expressions of our dialogue with the Lord (C 85-95) and of the practice which the Congregation, in harmony with the Church and salesian tradition, suggests and asks of us (R 69-77).

The Constitutions speak of a daily and community eucharistic celebration (C 88, R 70), which expresses in concelebration the rich nature of the mystery (C 88) and which is expressed in turn in the presence of the Eucharist in our houses (C 88).

- *In the life of the confreres and communities there are some risks* regarding the quality of our celebrations.

The many commitments of our mission impel us at times to act in a hasty and superficial way and we find it difficult to ensure the calm and serenity needed to live the different moments with due attention and depth. If they are not suitably programmed, the numerous pastoral services, chaplaincies and the like, which we generously provide, deprive the confreres of the time foreseen for prayer, and multiply absences even on significant occasions of community life.

On the other hand today's social climate questions many things, and this can cause uncertainties and doubts also in our own convictions and ways of thinking. The Rector Major mentions confusion, the extolling of spontaneity, haste, the giving of too little importance to actions and symbolic language, and the "secularization of Sunday".

With regard to the faithful application of the norms, there is sometimes the risk of misunderstanding proper creativity, inventing words and actions which are inappropriate or not sufficiently thought out through a desire to be up-to-date and more effective; celebrations are carried out in unsuitable places and without the necessary atmosphere for a proper appreciation of the mystery. With the intention of adapting to cultures and customs, one can easily fall into the use of inopportune expressions or not give due attention to gestures or use inappropriate furnishings. One may add the habit which can creep in in some places of disregarding the use of liturgical vestments required even for concelebration, or even the fact that some priests instead of concelebrating prefer to par-

ticipate in the Eucharist after the manner of the lay faithful. As far as pastoral work is concerned, aware of the weak preparation received by many youngsters in the family or elsewhere, the Rector Major urges us to be courageous in our explanations to them and in preparing them for their meeting with Christ; he emphasizes the need to educate them and to bring them to the eucharistic mystery as to the source of life. Having in mind the commitment of the communities and the challenges of the situation, the Rector Major, after emphasizing the importance of the Eucharist "in our spirituality, our community life and our educative and pastoral practice", encourages us to deepen the sensitivity and care with which we celebrate it.

- The points which follow aim at fostering a *community appraisal*, recalling the significance of some important aspects of the eucharistic celebration, and reminding us that the salesian style of prayer should be always joyful, creative, simple, profound, shared with others, related to and prolonged in life (cf. C 86).

The points made in this contribution are to be considered against the theological background of the Rector Major's letter, placing them all in the context of the mystery of salvation and the guidelines offered us by the Church, and in harmony with the history and pedagogy of salvation.

1. The celebrating community

Every salesian community celebrates the Eucharist daily "so as to build itself in Christ into a fraternal communion and renew its apostolic commitment" (cf. C 88). The usual expression is concelebration which, as the Constitutions say, shows more effectively the community character. The confreres – priests, brothers and clerics – live at this moment the intensity of the common vocation, and so take an active part in the cele-

bration, each according to his own specific vocation and the ministry received. The priest, even if he be not presiding, expresses and bears witness in the community to his particular relationship with Christ the priest.

As the Rector Major reminds us, the Eucharist is the sign of deep fraternal communion. It is a moment when peace and brotherhood are consolidated, when tensions are overcome and we become aware of the common vocation of the confreres. It is a powerful moment for our ongoing formation. The fact of celebrating the Eucharist daily gives credibility to the fact that we are sent by God to the young.

It is important that the celebration be given proper care and attention, and be open to all. The timetable should be so arranged so as to make it possible for all confreres to be present.

Openness to the young and to people in general is an efficacious example and testimony. And so serious consideration should be given to the possibility of participation in our community concelebration by young people, our lay collaborators and people who live nearby. It is useful also to invite to the community celebration on occasion our collaborators and those to whom our mission is directed.

The GC23 instituted the "community-day" (cf. GC23, 222). On this day the eucharistic concelebration, which consolidates the rapport between God and the community and between the members who are one in the same vocation and mission, finds a particularly suitable context. The community celebrates as one, thus realizing what may not be possible every day because of chaplaincies or various other duties assigned to the confreres.

One aspect of the appraisal concerns the celebration of Sunday in our communities. Pastoral concerns frequently make it difficult to plan community events. The Rector Major mentions communities which have been able to find a time for common prayer, a period of adoration, or a sharing of the Word.

It is certainly important to find the best possible way for emphasizing the significance of Sunday, the day when the Christian community is called together around the Eucharist.

2. The community chapel.

The eucharistic assembly needs a worthy setting. Our chapels in general are well cared for, but they are not always suitable for welcoming external persons, because of where they are situated in the house and the space available.

The arrangement of the chapel, space, acoustics, lights, seating, the central position of the altar, and harmonious layout in general, are all matters that require attention. Moreover the continued presence of the Eucharist in the chapel is an invitation to confreres and youngsters to make visits during the day. The chapel should be made a welcoming place where confreres, collaborators and youngsters will go with pleasure.

3. The one who presides and the animator.

The tone of the celebration and the degree of involvement of the community depend to a great extent on the celebrant and on the animator. They must create an atmosphere which makes the mystery come alive.

They have the obligation to find the time and tranquility for preparation, for creating a suitable environment, for arranging everything in a worthy and dignified manner and for using the prescribed vestments. The president celebrates "*in persona Christi*" and as a representative of the Church; he cannot decide arbitrarily about the rite, the texts and his gestures. His function calls for self-discipline, a warm rapport with the assembly, and a witness of faith.

Liturgical animation should be prepared well in advance through study, and more immediately by making the necessary arrangements. The animator guides by the use of suitable

words and gestures. The involvement of those present, through their various roles, common prayer, singing and choral responses should be given special care. The quality and renewal of community singing, attention to words and actions, all contribute to the dignity of the celebration. Every Salesian should develop the ability to be a liturgical animator.

4. The celebration of the Word.

The liturgy of the Word is not just a prelude to the celebration, but an integral part of it, and so must be given the greatest care. It is "He who speaks when the Church reads the sacred Scriptures", says Vatican II, referring to Christ (SC 7, 23). The Word should be listened to in the obedience of faith (cf. Rom 1,5), as daily spiritual nourishment. It is a matter of the Word of God, taken from the biblical texts. The community welcomes and contemplates the Word with silence, singing and prayer. The homily is a commentary linked with the readings to give life to the Word in the particular context, as a personal testimony which generates new life. It is always a proclamation of the initiative of God, who invites us to walk with Christ for the building of the Kingdom.

The Word is to be meditated on, and this is the purpose of the silence which follows; it enables us to pause and think about the readings and let the "revealed" Word re-echo in us. Finally it leads to the prayer of the community in the "prayers of the faithful", which are universal, relevant to the occasion, adapted to the young, and which prompt options for the Kingdom.

The Word should be shared by members of the community at suitable times. It will be useful to foresee for the community-day or other occasions, some well-prepared opportunities for sharing Scripture-readings, following and adapting the method of the "*lectio divina*". In this way the Word becomes the foundation on which the confrere and community build the

mission entrusted to them.

5. Rites and gestures.

The celebration is meant to recall the mystery. Where the Word cannot do this, the gesture or action – which belongs to the sphere of silence – comes in. Signs lead to the sacred, after the manner of pedagogy and initiation. The action gives eloquence to the symbol, as the act of washing the feet points to the purifying property of water. Evidently the sensitivities of different cultures can be expressed through different actions, attitudes and languages. But we must never undervalue the importance of the actions which the liturgy prescribes as an overall expression of the mystery.

The rite forms part of everyone's life, raising it to a higher level and preserving stability in the face of fleeting events. It creates a linkage with the past and opens up new interpretations. While avoiding falling into mere ritualism, the way the rite has matured in ecclesial experience throughout human history should not be overlooked.

Gestures and actions create atmosphere and mood, and reawaken the five senses of man in an overall participation in the celebration. Body language and expression, attitudes and movements, affect the ability to be in harmony with the eucharistic mystery being celebrated.

6. Pastoral relationship with celebration.

The Eucharist is the first expression of "*da mihi animas*", because of its harmony with Christ's plan of salvation. The Eucharist of the salesian community cannot be thought of outside the pastoral and missionary meaning of our vocation. It is communion with the mystery of Christ, on the part of the religious community and the educative and pastoral community.

Within the educative project the Eucharist is an invitation

to holiness, which is the right of every young person. It is an image of the Church and highlights in a particular way the spiritual fatherliness of the Salesian. It is a moment of festive communion of the EPC!

Pedagogy requires that it be a celebration made rich in genuine religious spirit through singing, prayer, periods of silence, the participation of all, the quality of the proclamation of the Word, actions and gestures. The very fact of celebrating regularly creates in the life of collaborators and youngsters a closer connection with the sacrament and the life of faith.

The celebration will find a ready linkage with the experience of the educative community and will broaden into a generous concern for local situations, the world of the young and worldwide poverty. This ensures that the Church will be seen as universal and as one in charity to all.

These guidelines – as I said at the beginning – find their place in the context of the Rector Major's letter. The communities will find it useful, after careful meditation on the letter, to use these points to examine their own manner of celebrating the Eucharist: the rhythm, atmosphere, discipline, dignity, influence on community life, and link with reality. Such an appraisal will certainly bring out many positive elements; it will show up some aspects which may need to be corrected and will renew our commitment to a eucharistic way of living which expresses and daily renews our life as apostolic religious.

4. ACTIVITIES OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL

4.1 Chronicle of the Rector Major

During January 2000 the Rector Major was occupied mainly in the work of the **plenary session of the General Council**, but he was also able to give some time to the following events.

1 January, Saturday, he celebrated the Eucharist at the FMA Generalate, in the presence of the Sisters from all the Roman houses, to whom he offered his best wishes for a joyful and fruitful Holy Year 2000.

2-6 January. Representatives of the General Councils of the Groups of the Salesian Family were present at the Salesian Generalate; Fr Vecchi had a meeting with them.

22 January, Saturday. He had a meeting, once again at the Generalate with the Rectors of Slovakia and the Czech Republic, to whom he gave a conference and presided at a concelebration with them.

In the afternoon of the same day he went to **Brindisi** for the presentation of his newly published book: *I guardiani dei sogni con il dito sul Mouse*.

24 January, Monday. He was

at Turin-Valdocco for the same purpose.

27 January, Thursday. The Rector Major left for **Madrid** to take part in the **centenary celebrations** of the "St John Bosco" Province.

At Madrid, after a meeting with the Provincial Council he had a meeting also with teachers from the IPE (*Polytechnic Institute of the Army*). The reason for this latter encounter was that the Pope had recently declared Don Bosco to be the "Patron of technical specialists of the Army" in Spain.

The same evening he went on to **Alcalá de Henares**, where there are two salesian communities. He visited the youth centre, the parish church, and the Don Bosco professional training centre. Vespers were then celebrated in the chapel, and Fr Vecchi gave the Good-Night, with the confreres of both communities present.

28 January, Friday. The Rector Major visited the **Don Bosco Centre of Higher Studies** (CES), which is celebrating its silver jubilee. After being greeted by the Rector and other authorities

and an inspection of the premises, he presided at a eucharistic concelebration. This was followed by the solemn Commemoration of the Centre's 25 years of work. During the ceremony Fr Vecchi was made an honorary professor of the Centre. To the Rector of the Institute he presented the medal of the Congregation.

Returning to the Provincial House the Rector Major gave an interview to some fifteen journalists from various Spanish publications, and then went to the theologate for lunch and to meet the confreres and novices. To them he gave a presentation with "slides" of the state of the Congregations and what is happening in it, the major pastoral projects, the new frontiers and the coming missionary expedition which will be a truly extraordinary event.

In the evening the Rector Major went to the **Salesian Institute of Atocha** where 150 men and women youth animators were awaiting him. He conversed with them and answered their questions. This was followed by supper with the three communities of Atocha, and Fr Vecchi's Good Night.

29 January, Saturday. He visited the Atocha College, parish and youth centre during which he had

a meeting with representatives of the Salesian Family, to whom he left a message: that they should *grow*; develop a *better communication* between the different branches of salesian spirituality in unity of aims, objectives and mentality; *be united* in the vast field of youth work, using the preventive system; and *study how to live salesian spirituality more deeply*. A concelebration followed in the Sanctuary of Mary Help of Christians.

Still at the College Fr Vecchi next spoke to the assembled confreres and presented to them the latest statistics of the Congregation, with a panorama of the recent Team Visits and the specific themes dealt with in each. In the afternoon he visited some of our other works in the Madrid area: **Parla**, where we have a parish and plans are in hand for building a youth centre and house of formation; then **Fuenlabrada** with its parish, youth centre and training centre for school dropouts; and finally the Salesian College of St Michael the Archangel at **Extremadura**.

In this latter place he was received in the new parish-church. He listened to the welcoming address of the parish priest and was present at a musical interpreta-

tion of some episodes of Don Bosco's life. The evening finished with the Rector Major's Good Night and supper with the salesian community.

30 January, Sunday. Fr Vecchi left Madrid for Colle Don Bosco where the members of the General Council were awaiting him, with many confreres and members of the Salesian Family, for the inauguration of the renewed Don Bosco Temple, which coincided also with the beginning of the salesian celebrations of the Jubilee.

At 4 p.m. there was the eucharistic concelebration, at which the Rector Major presided with the members of the Council and many confreres. The building was thronged with people. At the beginning the Archbishop of Turin, Mgr. Severino Poletto, gave a speech of greetings and good wishes to the Rector Major and all present, and recalled the earlier relationships he had had with the Salesians as Bishop at Fossano and then later at Asti.

During his homily Fr Vecchi sent a **message to all members of the Salesian Youth Movement**. This message, and that which he would send on the following day from the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians to all the

Salesian Family, was transmitted electronically to every province and to all responsible for the Family's different groups.

In the evening the Rector Major with his Council moved to Valdocco.

31 January, Monday. In the morning he went to the "Don Andrea Beltrami" House to visit the sick confreres, and then returned to Valdocco for a personal meeting with the Archbishop of Turin. At 12.45 he went with the other confreres to the new refectory-restaurant which forms part of the new arrangements for the reception of visitors. The Archbishop blessed the new refectory and the Rector Major cut the inaugural ribbon.

In the evening Fr Vecchi presided at the solemn concelebration during which a copy of the *Strenna 2000* was presented to representatives of the various branches of the Salesian Family. During the homily the Rector Major sent a **message to the Salesian Family** of all the world.

1 February, Tuesday. Fr Vecchi returned to Rome.

2 February, Wednesday. Feast of the presentation of Jesus in the Temple, and **Jubilee of the Consecrated Life**. The Rector Major took part in the concele-

bration in St Peter's Square, at which the Holy Father presided.

2-5 February. He took part in the **Team Visit to the Italian Provinces** which was held at the Generalate.

5 February. He went to Castelandolfo to the FMA Retreat House, where the members of their General Council were making their retreat. He had a discussion with them and returned to Rome after supper.

7 February. The Rector Major left for Abidjan, Ivory Coast, for the **Team Visit to the French and Portuguese-speaking provinces of Africa**. He was accompanied by Frs. Nicolussi and Mazzali; Frs Odorico and Tallón were already at Abidjan. He was received at the airport by the Superiors of the AFO and ATE Vice-provinces, with a group of confreres and the FMA novices, and was accompanied to Yopougon where the Team Visit was to take place.

The work followed the usual rhythm, but the afternoon of Thursday, 10 February, merits special mention. The Rector Major and all the participants made a visit to some of the outstanding monuments in the neighbourhood. The first was to the **Marian Sanctuary of "Our Lady of All Graces"**, on a hill which

dominates the city; then on to the **Cathedral**, in the central area of Abidjan, near the four large towers which house the different governmental departments of the Country and the Palace of Justice which goes back to colonial times. The third visit was to the **"Don Bosco Village" at Koumassi**, where the Salesians have the provincial headquarters and the community looks after a parish, a youth centre, and a reception place for a small group of street-children.. This was followed by the **"Maria Mazzarello Village"**, also at Koumassi, where the FMA have their provincial centre, and also a reception centre for street-girls and a professional training centre.

The final visit was to the **parish of St Francis of Assisi**, which has a church built in a very original style. It is open and spacious without side-walls. The parish-priest showed the group around the premises. After the visit a buffet-supper was served to the Salesians and FMA, and this was followed by a well applauded choral concert in the church. Fr Vecchi gave to each of the singers a medal of Mary Help of Christians and Don Bosco, and to two well deserving catechists the medal of the Congregation.

After the Good Night the group returned to the site of the Team Visit.

11 February, Friday. In the evening there was another entertainment in which representatives of all the provinces took part.

12 February, Saturday. After a eucharistic concelebration at which the Rector Major presided, there was a final meeting to hear the reading of the resolutions and the Fr Vecchi's concluding remarks. After this the participants began to disperse. Most of them went to visit the Basilica of Yamoussoukro, but Fr Vecchi, Fr Nicolussi and Fr Odorico went to see two interesting localities in the neighbourhood. The first was a crocodile park pleasantly situated on the lagoon, and the second the Cathedral of Grand-Bassan, the diocese to which the salesian parish of St Francis of Assisi belongs. The place is famous as the place where the French Foreign Missionaries began work in 1895. Between 13 May 1899 and 24 March 1903 all eight of them died of yellow fever and are buried there. The youngest was 29.

In the evening of the same day the Rector Major returned to Rome.

20 February, Sunday. Fr Vec-

chi left Rome again, this time for **Hong Kong** for the **Team Visit to the Provinces of East Asia and Australia**. He was accompanied by Frs Nicolussi, Domenec, Martinelli and Odorico. At Hong Kong the party went first to the provincial house and then, in the afternoon, to the province's retreat house on the island of Cheung Chau where the Visit was to take place.

24 February. In the afternoon the participants visited the salesian houses of **Macao**. The Rector Major inaugurated a new hall in the Salesian Institute, in the presence of the Bishop of Macau, the Coadjutor Bishop of Hong Kong (Mgr. Joseph Zen SDB), the Government's Secretary for Culture and Social Affairs, and others.

Fr Vecchi then made a brief visit to the Don Bosco College, before going on to the Don Bosco Village in Coloane where, alongside the primary, secondary and professional schools, a modern youth centre has been built together with a reception house for young people in difficulties. Three years ago the Rector Major blessed the foundation stone for this building, which has now been completed. He gave the Good Night to the confreres and after supper with them returned to Cheung Chau.

26 February, Saturday. The Team Visit ended with the reading of the conclusions and the Rector Major's final address. The eucharistic concelebration followed, after which Fr Vecchi left with the Provincial, Fr Peter Ho, and Fr Savio Hon, for the Salesian Tang King Po School in Hong Kong for a meeting with the confreres. He spoke about the various stages of the salesian Jubilee and answered questions. In the evening he left for Bombay in India.

27 February, Sunday. The Rector Major reached **Bombay** for the **Team Visit to the Provinces of India**. He was able to visit one or two foundations in the Bombay Province before the Visit began.

At 11 a.m. on the day of his arrival he presided at a eucharistic celebration attended by various groups of the Salesian Family, with whom he subsequently had lunch. In the afternoon he was present at a musical presentation in his honour: *The Witness*.

28 February. Accompanied by the Provincial, Fr Vecchi went to Baroda and then to Chhota Udepur to visit communities working in those places. He met the people, presided at a eucharistic concelebration, attended a display of songs and dances in

his honour, visited a missionary exhibition, and spoke with the confreres: a heavy day. On his way back he visited the "Auxilium Convent" of the FMA at Baroda and the Salesians at the Don Bosco College, where he also met a group of parish collaborators.

29 February – 4 March. The official Team Visit took place at Bombay, interrupted in the afternoon of 2 March for a very pleasant boat-trip in the bay of Bombay.

4 March, Saturday. The Visit ended and the Rector Major went to the house of Bombay-Kurla, where he met the confreres, gave the Good Night and had supper with them.

5 March, Sunday. With the Provincial Fr Vecchi went to Goa to visit the confreres of the Konkani delegation. He was welcomed with great joy and affection by the confreres and members of the Salesian Family, and particularly by the past-pupils who accompanied him to all the places he visited.

At Panjim he presided at a solemn Eucharist at which the Archbishop Patriarch of Goa was present. Subsequently he attended a cultural presentation in his honour and had supper with the Salesian Family and civil author-

ities of the area.

6 March, Monday. He presided at a Eucharist with the confreres and pre-novices, gave them a conference and in the afternoon returned to Bombay. Later in the evening he left for the airport to return to Rome during the night.

10 March, Friday. Fr Vecchi was at the Auxilium Institute of the FMA, where he gave a conference on: *The salesian charism and cultural commitment at the dawn of the year 2000.*

12 March, Sunday. The Rector Major left Rome again, this time for **Caracas in Venezuela**, to preach a retreat to the Rectors of that Province.

19 March, Sunday. After the retreat he inaugurated the salesian vocational guidance centre, met with those responsible for formation and had supper with the FMA.

20 March, Monday. After a meeting with the Provincial Council, Fr Vecchi left once more for Rome.

4.2 Chronicle of the General Council

The plenary summer session of the General Council – the eighth of the present six-year period – began on 7 December 1999 and

ended on 27 January 2000, after 31 full sittings together with other meetings of groups and sectors.

As always, much of the Council's time was given over to the numerous practices coming from the provinces: appointment of provincial councillors and approval of rectors, opening and canonical erection of houses etc. (there were 10 openings of new works, 11 canonical erections of houses and 4 canonical closures), practices regarding individual confreres and other matters of an economic and administrative nature.

Most of the time, nonetheless, was dedicated to matters concerning the government and animation of the provinces, and to the study of themes and problems of a more general kind concerning the life and mission of the Congregation as a whole, particularly in connection with the program for the present six-year period. The following is a list of the main matters dealt with.

1. Appointment of Provincials.

In this session too there were numerous appointments of Provincials, following the usual procedure for this important task: careful analysis of the provincial

consultation, discernment by the full Council, first straw vote on the leading candidates, and definitive vote followed by the consent of the confrere chosen. New Provincials appointed (in alphabetical order) were: Dobravec Aloizij, provincial of Slovenia; Fernández Artime Angel, provincial of León, Spain; Lantagne Luc, superior of the Vice-province of Canada; Matusic Ambrozije, provincial of Croazia; Pérez Godoy Juan Carlos, provincial of Seville, Spain; Pessinatti Nivaldo Luiz, provincial of São Paulo, Brazil. Also appointed was the first Superior of the new Vice-province of Angola, Fr Luiz Gonzaga Piccoli (Biographical notes on the new Provincials can be found at n.5.6 of this issue of the Acts).

2. Reports on extraordinary visitations.

Another important duty of the Council was, as always, an examination of the reports made by Councillors who had made extraordinary visitations in the name of the Rector Major in the period August-November 1999. The presentations of the reports by the respective visitors is for the Council an opportunity for acquiring a

deeper knowledge of the salesian reality of the provinces, of the life and mission of the communities, and for reflection on the effectiveness of the provincial project and future prospects. From these derive not only the indications which the Rector Major makes his own in his letter following the visitation, but also provides initiatives to be followed up by the Councillors.

Reports were made on the visitations of the following provinces or circumscriptions (in alphabetical order): Antilles, Brazil-São Paulo, India-Calcutta, India-New Delhi, Indonesia-Timor, Poland-Krakow, Southern Africa, Spain-Seville.

3. Reports of individual Councillors for information.

As in other plenary sessions, the Councillors at the head of the various Departments (formation, youth pastoral work, salesian family and social communications, and finances), together with the Rector Major and Vicar General, gave a brief account of their own activities, personally and at departmental level, in the service of the animation of the provinces and of the Congregation at world level.

These reports, while providing

all the Councillors with updated information about each sector, have also the purpose of coordinating animation activities and identifying points which require greater attention, or themes for which a further and more detailed examination seems necessary or opportune on the part of the Council as a whole, for the purpose of emphasizing lines of convergence,.

4. Themes for study and practical decisions.

In the course of the session the Council took up some particular themes concerning the government and animation of the Congregation in general, with particular attention to the programming of the six-year period and the life and activity of the Council itself. Some practical decisions were made referring to the themes dealt with. The principal points of reflection were the following.

4.1 Letters of the Rector Major on Communication and on the Eucharist

Continuing the practice already adopted for other Letters, the Rector Major involved the Council

Members in the preparation of two circular Letters: that on *Social Communication* (published in AGC 370), and that on the Eucharist published in the present AGC 371. On the basis of a first thematic outline, Fr Vecchi asked for contributions from the Councillors, derived especially from their experience and knowledge of situations and needs in the various Regions of the Congregation.

4.2 Revision of the "Ratio Formationis".

During this session the Rector Major with his Council completed their task of revising the "*Ratio Formationis*", entrusted by the GC24 to the Councillor for Formation (cf. GC24, 147), and which the Council had included in its program at the beginning of the six-year period. The Council examined the last text prepared by the Formation Department after the observations made in preceding sessions, and gave its positive opinion regarding both the part containing motivations and in particular the normative part.

The renewed text now awaits the Rector Major's promulgation, after hearing the opinion of his Council.

4.3 *Study of the sectors of animation of the Congregation.*

After the reflections – on the verification and perspectives – made in the individual Regions of the Congregation, the Rector Major has submitted to a special study the “Sectors” of the Congregation, with a General Councillor at the head of each, into which – according to the Constitutions – our mission is organized and which represent the broad areas of animation of the Congregation. The purpose and manner of the study have been indicated by the Rector Major himself: a complete and accurate verification of the state and functions of the Sector in the Congregation, with the problems that arise at a general level and in the different Regions, and at the same time a look at future prospects, identifying the points to which our energies should be primarily directed in the coming years. From this standpoint the following three Sectors were studied during the present session:

- Youth Pastoral Work;
- Social Communication;
- Economy.

4.4 *Structures of government.*

Continuing the study begun in previous sessions concerning the

“structures of government”, it was decided to call together a group made up of Salesians with experience of animation and government from different contexts, to whom will be communicated the conclusions reached so far in the study and to draw up questions with a view to devising a questionnaire for Provincial Chapters to consider in the preparation for the GC25.

4.5 *Canonical erection of the Vice-province of Angola.*

After the opinion already expressed in the preceding plenary session of the Council (cf. AGC 369), the Rector Major with his Council – on 24 December 1999 – proceeded to the canonical erection of the new *Salesian Vice-province of Angola*, with as its titular “*Mamá Muxima*” (“Mother of the heart”), and the appointment of its first Superior.

4.6 *New missionary foundations.*

Following the presentation by the Councillor for the Missions, who explained the requests for missionary foundations in new countries and the steps that had been taken to get to know the situations and put forward practical proposals, expressed a favourable opinion with respect to the launch-

ing in 2000 or 2001 of salesian foundations in the following countries: KUWAIT, IRAQ, THE ISLAND OF MAURITIUS, AND MONGOLIA.

Each foundation will be linked, at least initially, with a province which will be responsible for it. The projects are also linked with the extraordinary missionary expedition of the year 2000.

Also accepted was a request from the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples to entrust to the Salesians a **missionary territory "sui iuris"**, resulting from the division of the Prefecture Apostolic of Jimmi-Bonga in the south-western part of Ethiopia. The confreres of the Ethiopia-Eritrea Vice-province will take on the animation of this new area.

4.7 *Decisions concerning the Salesian Family.*

The Council gave its attention also to some commitments concerning the Salesian Family, and in particular the following:

1. A look at the preparation for the coming "2000 Meeting" of the General Councils of the officially recognized Groups of the Salesian Family, scheduled for the period 1-5 June 2000.
2. A reflection on the draft of the

"Missionary Statement of the Salesian Family", which will be examined in the above-mentioned "2000 Meeting".

3. A positive opinion concerning the recognition as a member of the Salesian Family of the "Congregation of St Michael the Archangel" (cf. Letter of the Rector Major at n.5.2 of the present AGC).

4.8 *First Steps towards the 25th General Chapter.*

With an eye to the times laid down by the Constitutions for the preparation of General Chapters, which require the active involvement of communities and confreres, the Rector Major invited the Council to make a first reflection for the purpose of making a preliminary identification of the thematic areas which – on the basis of a first assessment resulting from visits to the provinces – could be objects of reflection for the GC25. On such broad areas Fr Vecchi has asked for the opinion of Provincials and their Councils, leaving them also the possibility of extending the consultation to others. The thematic areas suggested by the Council are the following:

1. The Salesian Community in the new pastoral model;

2. Our ability to inspire vocations today: "Come and see".
3. For an effective presence among the young: "With you I feel completely at home".
4. Vocational unity today: "The grace of unity".

Among the significant moments of the session must be included the *joint meeting of the two General Councils – SDB and FMA* – which took place at the SDB Generalate in the afternoon of 4 January 2000. The meeting had as its theme: *Companionship by the FMA and SDB*, a theme – it was emphasized – which fits in with the process now going on in our Congregations, and which serves to highlight the commitment we have to make ourselves ever more able and available for the help of persons and communities in the face of current phenomena which can cause disorientation and confusion. Companionship of this kind, it was said, guarantees the development of the family spirit, creates strong reciprocal relationships, positive and responsible animation, and the vitality of apostolic life itself. In the group-work and in the assembly an appraisal was made of the ability of companionship on the part of our communities, reflecting on the

most effective means and strategies for making it more efficacious.

The plenary session ended with **the pilgrimage of the General Council to Colle Don Bosco and Turin** where, on the occasion of the feast of Don Bosco, the Rector Major launched the salesian celebrations of the Jubilee of the year 2000.

At Colle Don Bosco, in a solemn concelebration in the afternoon of Sunday 30 January, were inaugurated the restructuring and artistic embellishment of the Temple of Don Bosco, and from Colle the Rector Major sent a message to the young people of all the salesian world.

On Monday, 31 January, the Solemnity of St John Bosco, in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians, the entire Council joined the Rector Major in a concelebration, to which were invited in particular the groups of the Salesian Family. To those present and to *all the Salesian Family* the Rector Major addressed his *Message*.

From Turin some of the Councillors left at once for their journeys of animation in the various Regions.

5.1 Message of the Rector Major to the young people of the S.Y.M.

The following is the text of the message of the Rector Major to the young people of the S.Y.M. transmitted from Colle Don Bosco on 30 January 2000 during the homily of the Eucharistic Celebration.

My dear young people, Brothers and Sisters of the Salesian Family, Friends

1. On this hill everything speaks to us of Don Bosco and today we are celebrating his feast day in a year of Jubilee at the threshold of a new millennium. This great church has been restored and adds depth to our encounter with him. It is from this place and at this time that I would like to speak to the young people of the Salesian Youth Movement throughout the world

The first thing I would like to say to you is "Rejoice in the Lord always" (Phil 4,4). We hear this exhortation each time we celebrate the memory of Don Bosco and today it sounds ever more appropriate and convincing.

"The Lord is near" (Phil 4,5).

Rather He is present. He has shared mankind's journey these past 2000 years; since the Incarnation of His Son He lives with us in a very singular fashion.

Songs of joy surrounded the Birth of Jesus, the beginning of our era. His Resurrection was a proclamation of joy: a victory over death and a guarantee of deliverance from every evil.

Joy and cheerfulness were characteristic of Don Bosco's life as well - from his earliest childhood in this place where he worked, studied and played with other children - all under the watchful eye of his mother Margaret.

Joy is always the cause and source of gratitude; life is a gift wrapped in love from beginning to end. The history of the larger world around us, filled with saints, wise men, courageous witnesses, silent workers in the Lord's vineyard tells us this; but we can learn it as well from the smaller, more personal history of our own lives.

The 2000 years that have passed since the Incarnation are a history of God's unfailing love. In His name so many persons have been involved in an effort to save and civilize the world.

We are gathered here as Salesian youth to commemorate two

centuries of Salesian history. It is a moving occasion that we celebrate with joy and gratitude! In 1815 John Bosco was born here. Today if we look around us we will see an enormous network of works founded in his name that provide shelter, friendship and direction to a vast multitude of young people

I ask you to look back, if only briefly, on your own young lives. Joy and gratitude spring up from something inside of you: you have life; you look forward to a happy encounter with Jesus; you have the gift of Christian faith which you can express freely with your own characteristic enthusiasm in the community of the Church.

How often have you rejoiced and thanked the Lord for the love of your parents and the care of your teachers. How many times have you thanked the Lord for the friendship, activities and authentic, committed celebration of the Eucharist you have shared with so many others

You are the protagonists of this great, personal and beautiful history which has its origin in Jesus. With so many others you share the yearning to be free, the longing for human dignity, fraternity, peace!

Today we find ourselves in that place Don Bosco knew as a little boy. He encourages you to discover and follow the path that will lead you from these aspirations to a full and complete joy.

2. At the beginning of the Jubilee Year a special door is opened and we are asked to pass through it. This symbolic act contains a message for us. By crossing the threshold we enter the Temple: a place where the presence of God is more perceptible. At the same time we enter the Christian assembly which celebrates God's wonders, praises His greatness and thanks Him for His mercy. From Him the Christian community derives the strength to give itself to the service of mankind.

The door has also a personal significance for each of us. Through this door, God and our brothers gain access to our hearts, our activities and our possessions.

Like Mary, our "door" can be open. She said yes to the Lord's request, "*Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord*" (Lk 1,38); she was moved by the needs of her cousin Elizabeth, "*Mary set out at that time and went as quickly as she could to a town in the hill country of Judah*" (Lk 1,39); she showed her concern at the wed-

ding feast of Cana and did all she could to keep the celebration going (Jn 2, 3-5); at the foot of the Cross she showed her openness as a mother to accept the charge Jesus gave her: "*Woman, behold your son*" (Jn 19,26).

Our "door" can also be closed: we are too attached to worldly goods (cf. Lk 18, 22-23); our life is disordered (cf. Lk 12,29); distraction and noise make it difficult for us "*to understand what is going on around us*" (Lk 12,56); ambition becomes an obstacle to generosity (cf. Lk 14, 7-14).

On this hill John Bosco had that dream which guided his whole life, and from this hill he says to you, "Open up your life to that great dream God has for each of you: holiness!"

This is the goal the Pope presents on World Youth Day: "*Dear young people ... of every continent, do not be afraid to be the saints of the new millennium! Be contemplative, love prayer; be coherent with your faith and generous in the service of your brothers and sisters; be active members of the Church and builders of peace.*" (Message of the Holy Father to the Youth of the World, 3).

Do not set your sights any lower!

Trust in God's grace, in the

happiness His invitation will bestow, and in the Holy Spirit who dwells within you. You are not the first ones to feel this attraction to holiness; it is, in fact, a characteristic of the movement to which you belong. Thanks to the sense of God and the boundless charity it learned from Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello it has been a vital part of our movement from the very beginning. Following their example young people have combined the enthusiasm of youth with a generous response to God.

This place still contains the images of that bright day when John Paul II, amidst the songs and applause of so many young people, proclaimed the sanctity of Laura Vicuña.

3. Which door will lead us to that marvelous space - a life that matches the dream of God?

Jesus tells us: "*I am the door*" (Jn 10,7). Through Jesus we enter the mystery of God, the love of the brethren and all that is genuinely authentic with no danger of illusion or deceit.

This is the experience of all who have given themselves to Jesus - especially His dearest and most enthusiastic disciples. The Gospel tells us of the two disciples who

were fascinated by His personality, and began following Him. Jesus turned to them and asked, "*What are you looking for?*" Before they could answer He had read their hearts – they wanted to join Him; He said, "*Come and you will see.*"

Come and see! This is His invitation to you. Come and learn more about Jesus, become His friend, spend time with Him, share your life, your work and your company. It is a challenge to become involved with Him; to keep faithfully a promise of love which will become a source of light and courage.

This door opens up a path that leads us ever further and ever higher. "*I am the way, the truth and the life*" (Jn 14, 6).

On the threshold of this new millennium, with trust in God, and in the light of that commission given us by our father and teacher, Don Bosco, I appeal to you, the young people of the Salesian Youth Movement, and I give you a commission: Go beyond.

Go beyond every day superficial appearances and discover in depth and in detail the great plan God has had for you from all eternity.

Go beyond individual self-interest, open yourself up to the many

appeals coming from all sides: offer a sincere word, a friendly glance, a helping hand.

Go beyond your own nationality and culture to cultivate the seeds of that universal brotherhood which recognizes the value of diversity because it comes from the Father of all men.

Go beyond the smug and often boring habits of consumerism and be tireless in your efforts to create an active and visible solidarity.

Go beyond your own individual views, beyond the experience gained with great effort, beyond the wealth legitimately acquired and share your possessions with those who are in need.

Go beyond the certitude of reason and science and discover the mystery that hides in reality; recognize with filial joy the traces of God the Creator, the energy of the Risen Christ and the presence of the life-giving Spirit.

In your spiritual life as well, go beyond what is obligatory, beyond mere ritual and the search for immediate gratification; anchor yourself in the faith of the great ecclesial community: celebrate the Resurrection of the Lord of Life and the victory of good over evil.

To go beyond is nothing more than following up the logic of the

Gospel. It is the generosity and creativity suggested by the beatitudes: *"for ours is the kingdom of heaven ... for we shall possess the earth ... for we shall be called children of God ... for your reward shall be great in heaven"* (Mt 5, 2 - 10).

This appeal has special resonance here in the birthplace of Don Bosco. This place is called the Hill of the Beatitudes of Youth because it evokes his great passion: "I want you to be happy both in time and in eternity."

4. To go beyond means to cross geographic boundaries as well. Today more than ever the Kingdom of God needs open minds and generous hearts that can feel and work on a world-wide level. In one of his famous dreams Don Bosco saw himself here, on the hill, looking out over the enormous field of his mission: the whole world! This missionary impulse is a characteristic of all Don Bosco's followers, both young and old. We will place special emphasis on this during the year of Jubilee. On November 11 there will be an "extraordinary missionary expedition" - extraordinary for the number and destinations involved.

That first group of missionaries

Don Bosco himself sent out some 125 years ago was made up of generous and bold young men who had been brought up in the oratories and youth groups. This new group of missionaries will likewise go forth from the Altar of Mary Help of Christians to all the ends of the earth.

You too have been called. A number of volunteers will represent you, but the entire Salesian Youth Movement should have a missionary soul. Wherever you are, promote joy and the leaven of hope. Realize that you are sent to be signs and bearers of the love of God. Give life to the human communities in your neighborhoods and cities; become proclaimers of the Word to other young people.

In you and through you the love of the Incarnate God will continue. Salesian spirituality finds its fundamental inspiration in the Incarnation. It is the primary way to be "signs and bearers of God's love." The Incarnation is an example of taking the first step towards our brothers; it is an example of sharing man's journey in history; it is an example of immediate and personal encounter with whoever we find before us.

The Incarnation reveals the value of every-day life - composed of so many fragments but once they

are put together they can reveal the presence of God. In the days between His birth and His resurrection the light of Christ's divinity was revealed in ordinary and extraordinary events.

5. The task is hard – but attractive. There is no lack of help, energy and traveling companions.

The European Encounter celebrated by the Salesian Youth Movement on this Hill last August as well as similar events on other continents – all represent a significant stage in this journey – a stage preceded and followed by study, research, prayer and celebration.

You are now looking forward to the meeting of your representatives in the World Forum which will take place here on the Hill in the days immediately preceding World Youth Day. During the World Youth Day, along with thousands of other young people, either up close or from a distance, you will take part in an encounter with the Holy Father John Paul II.

Renewed by these Holy Year events you will be ready to communicate your experience to so many other young people and to spread the spirituality Don Bosco offers youth.

In all this, you like Don Bosco, have Mary as your “mother and teacher.” Don’t take your eyes from her; listen when she says to you “Do whatever Jesus tells you” (Jn 2,5). Pray with the confidence of sons that the Lord will raise up generous young souls who will answer “yes” to his invitation to a vocation.

Along with John Paul II, I entrust you to Our Lady; and along with you I entrust the whole world of young people to her. May they be attracted, encouraged and led by her; may they grow into new men and women in a new world: the world of Christ, the Master and the Lord (cf. Juvenum Patris, 20).

5.2 Message of the Rector Major to the Salesian Family.

The following is the text of the Message of the Rector Major to the Salesian Family transmitted from the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians in Turin on 31 January 2000, in the Homily during the Eucharistic Celebration.

We have begun at last the great year of Jubilee. Two-thousand years have passed since that never to be repeated moment of grace – the Incarnation of the Word: Jesus the Lord is born of Mary and

enters human history. In Him and through Him we have become the children, the family of God. As God's family we are on a pilgrimage towards our encounter with the Father; our souls are filled with dreams and fears, hope and anxiety, joy and suffering.

We have heard and taken to heart the Pope's call to conversion and reconciliation. One part of his appeal applies especially to us: "Every religious family should celebrate this Jubilee by returning with purity of heart to the spirit of its founder!"

For us, celebrating the Jubilee means a renewed and creative faithfulness to Don Bosco, to his spirituality and to his mission. This is a "Salesian" Holy Year in which we are called to re-live and communicate enthusiastically those life-experiences, those forms of apostolate and traits of spirit which led Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello to holiness.

Holiness: this is the source and life-spring of that vast movement of men and women who in one way or another are working for the salvation of young people: the Salesian Family. Don't be misled into thinking that superior organization or refined techniques have brought this about: it is the Spirit who has raised it up and it

is the Spirit who sustains it.

On this feast of Don Bosco at the beginning of a new millennium and from this Basilica, the center from which Don Bosco's spirit shines throughout the world, I would like to send a message – a road map for our journey, a program for growth.

In the century we leave behind us, the Salesian Family has enjoyed a veritable spring time. It has grown into a robust and flourishing tree, a genuine gift of God to the Church and to the world. At the prompting of the Holy Spirit others with diverse vocations have joined those original groups founded and trained by Don Bosco – they have enriched our common heritage and broadened our Salesian mission.

The family has grown. The work we have done and that we dream of doing in the future grows as well. This work we do for young and old knows no limits.

One thing however has remained constant: our passion for education – especially education of the young and the disadvantaged. Through education we help them to realize their dignity as human beings, and make them aware of the value and possibilities their lives have for God and for the world.

Da mihi animas! This motto of Don Bosco is our motto too. Give us souls! We will look after them and their spiritual needs. We will dedicate ourselves to awakening their vocation as children of God and to helping them live this vocation through the Preventive System – through reason, religion and affection.

If we live this Holy Year as authentic Salesians it will be marked with an intense and productive charity. It was this charity that allowed the young and the humble of his time to recognize in Don Bosco the image of Jesus, the Good Shepherd. Today, in the twenty-first century, we, the members of the Salesian family, are called to model our poor and sometimes sinful hearts on the Heart of Jesus. Through Jesus, God showed Himself to the world as He who gives His life so that man might be happy.

If this same educative charity is our goal and if we are to work for the benefit of mankind, there is one quality we must develop and strengthen. The larger and more unified world needs this quality. The complexity of civil society demands it; the Church nourishes, celebrates and insists on it – it is communion: a strong and solid unity that translates into an ever-

growing ability to work together. Communion in our mission to youth. In other words: we must work and work together as the Salesian Family.

Don Bosco told those who shared his work: *"When weak forces are united they become strong; by itself a single string can be easily torn apart – but it is much more difficult to tear apart three or more interwoven strings."*

The world hungers for unity but cultivates division; it preaches co-operation but makes competition the rule. In this kind of world we would like to offer a sign: a sign that is the source of our joy, that makes our work prosper and spreads peace, harmony and reconciliation all around us.

In this way we can work to accomplish the will and prayer of Jesus. On the night He was betrayed, He asked the Father for the precious gift of unity amongst His own – the Church. *"Keep those you have given me true to your name, so that they may be one like us."* (John 17,11); *"...May they all be one so that the world may believe it was you who sent me."* (John 17, 21). A short time before uttering these words He had instituted the sacrament of unity – the Eucharist, so that throughout the long centuries to

come it would gather His scattered children and reunite His family.

Our unity is not any ordinary sort of unity. It is not just an organizational discipline that we take upon ourselves. Rather it is the seed of that complete happiness we will find in communion with God; it is the secret of our success.

We will understand what living in communion of spirit and unity of intention means if we look at the Trinity: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. For the three years leading up to the Jubilee the Church has invited us to contemplate and praise the Holy Trinity in all its splendor. (Cf. *Tertio Milennio Adveniente*, 55).

The *Father* is a sign of **openness of heart**. We the members and groups of the Salesian Family accept and recognize each other as brothers and sisters, men and women loved by God. He has called each of us, personally, to work in his vineyard with a common purpose. The pettiness of the human heart can raise up barriers or creates distances and separation. Like the apostles we seek places of honor to the detriment of the kingdom. Sometimes our own fears or reservations about working with others produces this

disharmony. To have a heart like the Father means having a true and deep affection for young people and for all who dedicate their lives to them. It translates into cordiality and respect for each and all – a recognition of what each can do and contribute.

The *Holy Spirit* shows us another attitude necessary for building family: the **grateful and joyful acceptance of diversity**. The many languages, the diverse gifts, the various members of the body – all these things are manifestations of the Spirit. There are billions of human beings – each one has been created individually as a child of God. The Spirit does not repeat Himself; He does not mass-produce.

Don Bosco was a master in making unity blossom in the midst of diversity – diversity of people, temperaments, conditions and abilities. In his time sensitivity to diversity was not uppermost in people's minds, but today it constitutes an educational and pastoral challenge if human beings are to live together; it is a challenge to the witness of the Church and of the Salesian Family.

Diversity means an abundance of relationships, a variety of strengths, a fertility of imaginations – in other words incalculable

riches. What an unparalleled chance for dialog. It offers men and women, religious, priests and lay people, as husbands, wives, children, young people, adults, the aged, workers, professionals, students, people from different backgrounds and cultures, healthy people, sick people, saints, sinners – all the members of the Salesian Family – the opportunity to share their spiritual and formative experiences.

On a natural level to create unity from such diversity is not easy. But Jesus prayed precisely for that – that we might overcome our own instincts of self-assertion. *“That they may be one!”* The Holy Year is calling us to this kind of conversion.

Jesus, the Lord, the Son is our companion on this journey. He who reconciles in Himself all things in heaven and on earth and sums them up in God – He shows us a third disposition: the **will to walk together towards a shared goal**. He has brought us together in a place, very much of this world, the Kingdom; He has formed us into a recognizable community of disciples and it is up to us to carry out His command: *“Go forth in all the world.”*

The Salesian Family must work together to make its presence felt

in society and to make its efforts in education more incisive. We face the problems of young people, the need to protect life, to combat poverty in all its forms and to promote peace. We face the task of making human rights a reality, and of making Jesus known. All of this involves observation, reflection, dialog, study and common prayer if we are to find the right path in a spirit of communion. Young people are looking for the sign of love; they will feel its impact and enjoy its benefits.

Finally we must remember that there can be no true family without a mother. We have a Mother. This Basilica proclaims that fact. It is Mary who shows us yet another characteristic of our work together. The Magnificat: Hope lived in the joy of work, in thanksgiving and in waiting.

There is a lesson to be learned from the younger part of the Salesian Family. Dominic Savio wrote: *“Let us make holiness consist of being very cheerful!”* He was translating a Biblical theme into very simple language – a theme worthy of long and complicated tracts. Salesian cheerfulness permeates the life of everything we do. It enlightens our personal relationships; it leads us to plan

with generosity; it prompts us to act with confidence and optimism; it rejoices at our achievements; and anticipates future success that we will celebrate together.

"A bit of heaven will fix up everything." The source of serenity and cheerfulness in the Salesian Family is the fact that our eyes are fixed on heaven – we are certain of God's presence in our own history and in that of the world.

In the last moments of his life Don Bosco whispered to those near him: *"Love one another like brothers. Love each other, help each other, support each other like brothers."*

As the Salesian Family we commit ourselves to bringing together all those elements that constitute who we are; we commit ourselves to living in unity – as a Gospel value and as a style of work that will benefit young people. We will make our own the words of Jesus repeated by Don Bosco – *"That they may be one so that the world will believe."*

In the opening days of the Jubilee Year we place this pledge into the hands of Mary. She has been given to us as the teacher of goodness and wisdom, to observe, to love and to act.

5.3 Decree of canonical erection of the Salesian Vice-province "Mamá Muxima" of Angola.

Prot. n° 353/99

The undersigned,
Fr **Juan E. VECCHI**,
Rector Major of the Salesian
Society of St John Bosco,

- after considering the development of the salesian foundations in the State of Angola which, as part of "Project Africa", has been sustained particularly by the provinces of the Southern Cone Region of Latin America;

- having taken note of the fact that for a more effective animation the same foundations were constituted a "Provincial Delegation" depending on the Province of São Paulo of Brazil;

- having heard the opinions of the Provincials concerned and examined the results of a consultation among the confreres working in the above-mentioned foundations;

- with reference to art. 156 of the Constitutions;

- with the consent of the General Council given in the meeting of 24 December 1999, in accordance with articles 132 §1,1 and 156 of the Constitutions;

CANONICALLY ERECTS

by this present Decree, the new **SALESIAN VICE-PROVINCE of ANGOLA, with the title of "MAMÁ MUXIMA" ("Mother of the heart"), with headquarters in the house of "Mary Help of Christians" in LUANDA, and including the following canonically erected houses:**

BENGUELA, "St Dominic Savio"
CALULO, "St Anthony"
DONDO, "Mary Help of Christians"

LUANDA, "Mary Help of Christians" – Headquarters of the Vice-province

LUANDA, "Mary Help of Christians" – Parish of St Paul

LUANDA, "St John Bosco" [Palanca]

LUANDA, "St Joseph the Worker"

LUENA, "St John Bosco"

N'DALATANDO, "Mary Help of Christians"

The following decisions have been made:

1° Members of the Vice-province are the confreres who, at the date of canonical erection, are living and working in the salesian houses and works listed above.

2° Members also are confreres

from Angola in formation, even though they be in formation communities outside the Vice-province.

3° The relationships of the Vice-Province with the Provinces of origin of the salesian works in Madagascar will be regulated by an appropriate Agreement, approved by the Rector Major.

The present Decree will come into force on 31 January 2000.

Rome, 24 December 1999.

Fr Juan E. VECCHI
Rector Major

Fr Francesco MARACCANI
Secretary General

5.4 Recognition as a member of the Salesian Family of the Congregation of "St Michael the Archangel".

The following is the letter of the Rector Major, addressed to the Superior General, informing him of the recognition of the Congregation of "St Michael the Archangel" as a member of the Salesian Family.

00/0109

Rome, 24 January 2000

Ks. Kazimierz Tomaszewski

Al. M. J. Pisudskiego 248/252

05-261 Marki - Struga, Poland

Very Reverend Father,

I am writing to inform you that in our General Council we have considered your request for recognition as members of the Salesian Family of Don Bosco, and that in a meeting of 21 December 1999 we reached a positive decision.

It provided us with an opportunity to look back over the stages of salesian life in Poland from the time when we first began to work there. The spirit of Don Bosco was warmly welcomed in that country, and the four salesian provinces now existing there confirm the good relationship that exists between Don Bosco and the Polish people.

It is in this context that we see your request for membership of the Salesian Family.

In the first place we share our reference to Don Bosco, to his spirit and apostolic preferences, and in many respects also to his style or organization. In the documents dealing with your spirituality we have found with joy many elements of a tradition we have in common. I would like to review them rapidly, not least because

they are indispensable elements for the recognition of membership of the Salesian Family.

In the field of spirituality:

• **Work and temperance** were always for Don Bosco criteria for living the salesian life.

In the Dream of the mysterious Personage, or the Dream of the Mantle or the Ten Diamonds, at San Benigno Canavese during the night of 10-11 September 1881, Don Bosco heard the words: *"You must have these words engraved on your coat-of-arms as your watchword, your badge. Note them well: Work and temperance will make the Salesian Congregation flourish. Have these words explained repeatedly and insistently. Compile and print a handbook that will clearly explain that work and temperance are the legacy you are bequeathing to the Congregation, and they will be also its glory"* (BM 12, p.338)

This is by no means a secondary aspect. We, who are sons of Don Bosco, link these two realities also with the **Preventive System**. We ask of you also to create this relationship at the level of reflection and experience.

We are convinced that applying and seeing the consequences of the Preventive System in the life of the confreres and in apostolic

commitment will promote growth in the typically salesian spirituality.

In article 14 of your Constitutions you write:

"All the members must be ready to endure, with a spirit of penance, cold and heat, hunger and thirst, annoyance and disdain, whenever this is required for the glory of God, the salvation of souls and the spiritual good of their neighbour".

This is a way of continuing the preceding theme of temperance and work, but it is also the simplest way of expressing our availability for the apostolate and for all the mission may require of us.

For Don Bosco the mission, because of the divine value inherent in it, represents a law of daily life. It gives the particular tone to the whole of existence.

- The phrase 'work and temperance' in the salesian style are enriched by a third word which expresses the strength of work and the quality of temperance: the word is **prayer**. Don Bosco has been called "union with God". He has left us a commitment to prayer which fills the whole of life, apostolic life included. You, dear brothers, give ample space to the presence of God in both your personal and your missionary life.

Your motto is based on an operative prayer, for the greater glory of God.

And I could continue with many other instances which take up the perspectives of Don Bosco and which are also the spiritual patrimony of the groups of the Salesian Family.

It is my hope and prayer that the formal fact of recognition will help you to study more deeply the salesian spirit and thus rediscover the same Don Bosco, in his words, in the options he made, and in the criteria he placed at the foundation of his presence in the Church.

Passing now from spirituality to **apostolic commitment**, I note elements that we can realize in collaboration.

I refer to three points in particular:

- **Commitment to the education of the young.**

Don Bosco received from God a very particular vocation for young people.

The Church calls him the Father and Teacher of the young. The Pope reminds us that we must be missionaries of the young.

In its recent General Chapters the Salesian Congregation has

studied this aspect more deeply.

For us these things are not motives for pride, but an obligation to find others to share with us the responsibility for the education and salvation of the young.

By sharing some perspectives, while preserving the original characteristics of each Institute and at the same time coming closer in certain educative and pastoral criteria, we can carry out together a process beneficial to young people in those specific places where Providence has placed our Institutes.

• Commitment to a sound and healthy press.

You are certainly aware that in 1885 Don Bosco wrote a circular letter to his confreres on the spreading of good books.

It was a most valuable apostolate for his period, an apostolate which is still indispensable at the present day, but now the horizons have become wider. The press has become "social communication".

This is not a matter of a simple change in terminology. It means that we look in a new way at culture and relationship with the world, especially the world of the young. And so we feel that we are being directly challenged.

As Salesians, we have set up a

University Faculty of Social Communication to respond to the new needs of the world. We are forming and qualifying confreres who will be working in this sector of communication.

• Commitment to the promotion of vocations

In this field too we detect a basic harmony with your own constitutional option, which takes us back to Don Bosco.

Our Holy Founder wanted all his houses to have as their aim the human and Christian growth of the young, to the extent of helping each one to find his vocation in life. This has meant that we have had to develop a concrete project, and give specific training to those confreres who are called to the work of vocational promotion, and we have had to give consideration in turn not only to the formation process of adolescents, but especially to that of young adults.

We ask the Lord's blessing that our efforts may be successful.

This letter has been rather long, and I must bring it to an end

I am grateful for the kind words in which you addressed me as Rector Major of the Salesians and Successor of St John Bosco, in making your application: *"We are grateful to the Lord in being able*

to participate in the great charism given by God to St John Bosco”.

As successor of Don Bosco I feel joy at the growth of the Salesian Family and also the responsibility for it.

The Salesian Constitutions and those of many Groups of the Family refer to the Rector Major in similar terms as the “father and centre of the whole Family”.

While expressing my thanks for your desire for communion, I invoke upon you the Blessing of Mary Help of Christians, that your fraternal relationship may increase with all the Groups of the Salesian Family.

May Don Bosco, whose feast we shall be celebrating in a few days time, bless your community life.

I send my cordial greetings to all your confreres.

Fr Juan E. Vecchi

5.5 Central Assistant of the DBV

The following letter of the Rector Major was sent to the President General, informing her of the appointment of Fr Julio Olarte as Central Assistant of the DBV.

00/0245

Rome, 2 February 2000

Presentation of the Lord
Miss Gianna Martinelli
President General DBV
Via San Giovanni Bosco, 4
25125 BRESCIA, Italy

Miss Gianna Martinelli
Dear Sister,

I am writing to let you know that after discussion with you and your Central Council, in view of the change of Fr Corrado Bettiga, who has become the Rector of the Blessed Michael Rua Community of our Generalate, I have decided to appoint Fr Julio Olarte as Central Assistant to the DBV. He comes from the Bogotá Province of Colombia.

Fr Olarte is at present provincial delegate for the groups of the Salesian Family in his own province. He knows all of them very well, and in fact defended his thesis at our University in Rome in a deep and competent manner on the theme of the history, development and life of the Daughters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, commonly known as the Sisters of Fr Variara. He is a wise and prudent person, a capable animator, who can give a valuable service to the Institute of the Volunteers.

I have no need to recommend

him to your kind prayers, because I know that from the first day I spoke of the need to change Fr Corrado Bettiga (to whom I express my fraternal thanks for the generous work he has done) you have begun to invoke Blessed Philip Rinaldi to ask him that a person would be appointed with a fatherly heart like his own.

Please continue to support the new Central Assistant.

I take the opportunity to send to all the members of your Council my cordial greetings, with the assurance of my prayers and esteem for all you are doing throughout the world.

May Don Bosco help you and may Don Rinaldi be your constant companion.

Fraternally in Christ,

Fr Juan E. Vecchi

5.6 New Provincials

The following are brief biographical notes on the new Provincials, appointed by the Rector Major with his Council in the plenary winter session of December 1999 – January 2000.

1. **DOBRAVEC** Lojze, Province of SLOVENIA..

Predecessor: Fr Stanislav Hocevar.
b. 12 April 1954, Ljubljana. Novitiate and 1st profession: Zelimlje, 13 August 1972. Philosophy: Zelimlje. Theology: Ljubljana. Ordained priest: 29 June 1980.

1980-83: Zelimlje. 1983-88: Ljubljana Rakovnik and Kodeljevo. 1988: Rector at Zelimlje, where he renewed the massive scholastic works. 1985-97: Provincial Councillor.

2. **FERNÁNDEZ ARTIME** Angel, Province of LÉON (Spain).

Predecessor: José Antonio San Martín Pérez.

b. 21 August 1960, Gozón-Luanco (Oviedo), Spain. Novitiate and 1st profession: Mohernando, 3 September 1978. Ordination: León, 4 July 1987. Licentiate in Philosophy and Pedagogy.

1987-89: Avilés. 1989-91: Madrid. 1991-98: Provincial Councillor and Prov. Delegate for Youth Pastoral Work. 1998: Vice-Provincial and Rector, Provincial House.

3. **LANTAGNE** Luc, Vice-province of CANADA.

Predecessor: Fr Richard Authier.

b. 3 May 1951, Sherbrooke

(Québec). Novitiate and 1st profession: Newton (USA), 1 September 1972. Philosophy and practical training in Canada. Theology: Turin-Crocetta. Ordination: 16 June 1984, Sherbrooke. Licentiate in Theology.

1984-92: Sherbrooke. 1992: Parish priest, Edmonton. 1994: Rector of combined Edmonton community. 1997: Provincial Councillor.

4. *MATUSIC Ambrozije, Province of CROATIA.*

Predecessor: Fr Stjepan Bolko-
vac.

b. 7 December 1943, Janievo, Croatia. 1st profession: 16 August 1962, Theology: Zagreb. Ordained: Zagreb, 27 June 1971. Licentiate in moral theology.

Teacher and animator for some years in studentate of Zagreb-Knezija and parish activity. 1979: Vice-Provincial. 1982-88: Provincial.

1988-91: Theologate of Zagreb-Knezija. 1991: Rome-Generalate, collaborator in Youth Pastoral Department. 1993-95: Rector of Don Bosco Community at UPS. 1995: Returned to native province to launch salesian foundation at Zepce. 1999: Rector and Parish-priest at Zagreb-Knezija.

5. *PÉREZ GODOY Juan Carlos, Province of SEVILLE (Spain).*

Predecessor: Fr Cipriano
González Gil.

b. 5 November 1959, Burguillos (Seville). Novitiate and 1st profession: Sanlúcar la Mayor, 8 September 1978. Philosophy and pedagogy: Sanlúcar la Mayor. Practical training: Utrera. Theology: Seville. Ordination: Seville, 5 June 1987.

Since ordination: Provincial delegate for youth pastoral work. 1996: Vice-Provincial and Rector of provincial house.

6. *PESSINATTI Nivaldo Luiz, Province of SÃO PAULO (Brazil).*

Predecessor: Fr Antonio Carlos
Altieri.

b. 16 February 1951, Araras (São Paulo). Novitiate and 1st profession: Pindamonhangaba, 31 January 1968. Theology: São Paulo – Lapa. Ordained: Araras, 1 October 1977. Licentiate in Sciences; Doctorate in philosophy.

1984: Rector at Lorena – San Gioacchino and Provincial Councillor. 1988-94: Vice-Provincial. 1994: Rector at São Paulo “Campos Elisios” and Provincial Councillor.

7. PICCOLI Luiz Gonzaga, Vice-Province of ANGOLA.

First Superior of the new Vice-Province.

b. 25 February 1943, São Paulo, Brazil. Novitiate and 1st Profession: Pindamonhangaba, 31 January 1966. Theology: São Paulo (Lapa). Ordained: São Paulo, 25 August 1974.

1966-68: Rome, Licentiate in moral theology. 1969-81: Teacher and animator at Theological Institute 'Pius XI' at Lapa - São Paulo. 1981: Rector of aspirantate at Pindamonhangaba. 1982: Rector and Novice Master at São Carlos. 1987: Vice-Provincial. 1988-94: Provincial of São Paulo.

1994: Left for Angola, at that time a Provincial Delegation depending on São Paulo. Member of community of Luanda - São Paulo. 1996: Rector at Luanda - São José.

5.7 New Salesian Bishops

Mgr. Dominic JALA, Archbishop of SHILLONG (India).

On 26 January 2000, the Osservatore Romano published the news that the Holy Father had appointed our confrere Fr Dominic JALA, Provincial of Guwahati, to

be Archbishop of Shillong (Meghalaya, India). He succeeds Mgr. Tarcisius Resto Phanrang, SDB, who died in May 1999.

A native of the State of Meghalaya, Dominic Jala was born at Shillong-Mawlai, 12 July 1951. He made his pre-novitiate and novitiate at Shillong in the years 1968-69, and his first profession on 24 May 1969. After the study of philosophy and pedagogy in the post-novitiate of Sonada, followed by practical training, he studied theology at the Salesian Theologate of Bangalore. He was ordained priest at Shillong on 19 November 1977, and completed his studies in Rome, where he obtained the Doctorate in Sacred Liturgy.

He returned to his province to be a teacher and animator in the salesian theologate of Shillong. In 1989 he became Rector at Shillong-St. Anthony and from 1990-93 was Vice-Provincial. He was a delegate to the GC23. In 1992 he became Rector of the Provincial House and in 1993 Rector at Shillong - Don Bosco, while continuing as a Provincial Councillor.

In December 1995 he was appointed Provincial of the Province of Guwahati, an office he was still holding when named Archbishop.

2. *Mgr. Stanislav HOCEVAR, Coadjutor Archbishop of BELGRADE (Federal Republic of Yugoslavia)*

On 26 March 2000, the Osservatore Romano carried the news of the appointment by the Holy Father of the Salesian *Fr Stanislav Hocevar*, until recently Provincial of Slovenia, to be *Coadjutor Archbishop of Belgrade (Federal Republic of Yugoslavia)*.

Born at Jalendol in Slovenia 12 November 1945, *Fr Stanislav Hocevar* came to know the Salesians of the house of Skocjan and after his novitiate at Rijeka made his first profession on 16 August 1963, after which he followed the usual salesian formative curriculum. He studied theology at Ljubljana and was ordained priest on 29 June 1973.

After obtaining the Licentiate in Theology he was soon appointed to posts of responsibility. In 1979 he became Rector of the house of formation at Zelimlje and at the same time a member of the Provincial Council.

In 1982 he became Vice-Provincial and in 1984 took part in the GC22 as a delegate. Subsequently he was appointed Rector of the house of Klagenfurt in Austria, where the Slovenian confreres

were carrying out an apostolate among their co-nationals.

In December 1987 he was appointed by the Rector Major with his Council as Provincial of Slovenia, and was reconfirmed in office for a second period in December 1993.

5.8 The CD-Rom: a modern instrument for getting to know Don Bosco.

The Salesian Historical Institute (ISS), has compiled a CD-Rom "**Conoscere Don Bosco. Fonti, studi, Bibliografia**". ("Know Don Bosco. Sources, studies, Bibliography"). It contains the following:

1. Seven volumes of Sources: *Memorie dell'Oratorio di S. Francesco di Sales dal 1815 al 1855*. Introduction, notes and critical text ed. by A. da Silva Ferreira; *Don Bosco educatore. Scritti e testimonianze*. Third enlarged edition, edited by P. Braido, with the collaboration of A. da Silva Ferreira, F. Motto, J. M. Prellezo; *Epistolario* voll. 1, 2, 3. (1835-1872). Introduction, critical texts and notes, ed. F. Motto; *Costituzioni della società di S. Francesco di Sales [1858] - 1875*. Critical text, ed. F. Motto; [*Don Bosco the Founder*]. "*Ai soci Sale-*

siani" (1875-1885). Introduction and critical text, ed. P. Braido

2. The integral study of P. Braido, *Prevenire, non reprimere. Il sistema educativo di don Bosco*. Rome 1999 (3rd ed.)

3. The *Bibliografia generale di don Bosco* Vol. 1°. *Bibliografia italiana 1844-1992*, ed. S. Gianotti.

4. The *Index* of the containers in the Salesian Central Archives of Rome (ASC: Pro-manuscripto, Rome 1995).

The CD-Rom also contains:

5. 49 "original" photographs of Don Bosco; 6. 27 pp. of manuscripts of Don Bosco; 7. 20 min. of film sequence in 4 languages (Italian, English, French, Spanish) on the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians, Turin; 8. 33 min. of polyphonic music of the 19th century of the Salesians: Giovanni Cagliero (1838-1926): *Tantum ergo* - 2 choirs of 4 mixed voices, and a choir of treble voices - 20' 22"; *Sancta Maria succurre miseris* - antiphon for double choir - 9' 39"; Giuseppe Dogliani (1849-1934):

Corona Aurea: Antiphon for 7 voices - 3' 40", performed in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians, 17 May 1903, on the occasion of the coronation of the picture of Mary Help of Christians.

The CD-Rom makes possible the immediate interactive use of thousands of the original pages of Don Bosco, with critical apparatus, notes and indexes prepared by the researchers of the ISS. The same is true for the "studies" and "bibliographical" section. The index to the Salesian Central Archives enables the reader to "navigate" through the Archives, verify the existence of manuscripts he is looking for, and identify their exact position. The CD-Rom is clearly a modern and useful instrument of consultation for all who are interested in the history of Don Bosco, in his pedagogy and in his spirituality. It will be a useful addition to the archives or library of every salesian house.

It is published by LAS (Libreria Ateneo Salesiano).

5.9 SDB Statistics at 31 december 1999

Isp.	Tot. 1998	Professi temporanei				Professi perpetui				Tot. Professi	Novizi	Tot. 1999
		L	S	D	P	L	S	D	P			
AET	88	12	32	0	0	11	3	0	27	85	7	92
AFC	251	13	60	0	0	35	12	0	118	238	31	269
AFE	158	4	41	0	0	19	5	0	81	150	4	154
AFM	64	3	2	0	0	5	2	0	49	61	2	63
AFO	113	3	15	0	0	14	4	0	69	105	5	110
ATE	94	3	16	0	0	12	7	0	56	94	6	100
ANT	190	7	47	0	0	13	6	0	104	177	14	191
ABA	149	2	5	0	0	14	1	0	126	148	3	151
ABB	138	4	8	0	0	12	5	0	99	128	2	130
ACO	149	3	18	0	0	12	4	0	104	141	4	145
ALP	107	10	11	0	0	11	4	0	64	100	1	101
ARO	137	5	19	0	0	13	9	0	83	129	3	132
AUL	132	2	20	0	0	17	0	0	86	125	0	125
AUS	110	1	3	0	0	11	4	1	87	107	1	108
BEN	213	2	6	0	0	24	3	0	178	213	0	213
BES	93	2	5	0	0	12	0	0	73	92	0	92
BOL	153	8	37	0	0	14	6	0	83	148	7	155
BBH	153	4	15	0	0	22	1	0	107	149	7	156
BCG	151	5	17	0	0	22	6	0	90	140	11	151
BMA	128	2	19	0	0	17	3	0	78	119	4	123
BPA	112	2	12	0	0	9	7	0	77	107	3	110
BRE	104	5	26	0	0	14	1	0	54	100	6	106
BSP	223	2	32	0	0	31	5	0	146	216	5	221
CAM	233	6	20	0	1	27	7	0	154	215	7	222
CAN	37	0	0	0	0	5	1	0	29	35	0	35
CEP	198	4	9	0	0	11	12	1	155	192	4	196
CIL	242	2	28	0	0	18	18	0	163	229	9	238
CIN	136	1	5	0	0	34	2	1	90	133	0	133
COB	164	3	16	0	0	26	5	0	110	160	7	167
COM	167	2	29	0	1	19	4	0	105	160	15	175
CRO	83	1	8	0	0	4	1	0	70	84	0	84
ECU	224	4	25	0	0	23	9	0	154	215	6	221
EST	155	3	53	0	0	1	7	0	72	136	6	142
FIN	199	5	28	0	0	18	4	0	135	190	0	190
FIS	98	0	20	0	0	10	4	0	56	90	0	90
FRA*	311	0	5	0	0	51	3	0	238	297	0	297
GBR	127	0	4	0	0	13	1	0	100	118	0	118
GEK	177	7	12	0	1	33	5	0	114	172	4	176
GEM	271	6	4	0	0	56	5	0	191	262	1	263
GIA	145	1	13	0	0	20	10	0	96	140	3	143
HAI	66	3	24	0	0	1	3	0	30	61	2	63
INB	263	4	45	0	0	19	27	0	159	254	12	266
INC	254	5	68	0	0	21	15	0	142	251	8	259
IND	218	4	57	0	0	6	15	0	124	206	15	221
ING	346	13	86	0	0	25	26	0	178	328	20	348
INH	165	3	55	0	0	5	16	0	75	154	13	167
INK	283	6	84	0	0	7	19	0	149	265	18	283
INM*	475	9	74	0	0	24	22	0	194	323	16	339
INN	116	2	37	0	0	13	8	0	53	113	11	124
INT*	0	3	60	0	0	4	20	0	61	148	16	164
IRL	110	0	5	0	0	8	2	0	94	109	1	110
IAD	138	0	29	0	0	20	2	0	91	142	4	146

Isp.	Tot. 1998	Professi temporanei				Professi perpetui				Tot. Professi	Novizi	Tot. 1999
		L	S	D	P	L	S	D	P			
ICP	768	6	42	0	0	197	10	1	498	754	4	758
ILE	422	3	27	0	0	58	12	0	304	404	4	408
ILT	197	2	20	0	0	29	5	1	144	201	1	202
IME	307	1	23	0	0	37	6	0	227	294	4	298
IRO	292	0	8	0	0	61	2	2	209	282	1	283
ISA	67	0	1	0	0	4	2	0	58	65	2	67
ISI	299	1	11	0	0	27	3	1	250	293	5	298
IVE	287	0	36	0	0	49	6	1	185	277	5	282
IVO	212	4	4	0	0	42	3	0	154	207	0	207
ITM*	135	8	71	0	0	7	0	1	33	120	14	134
KOR	101	9	29	0	0	16	3	0	44	101	5	106
MDG	72	2	22	0	0	8	2	0	40	74	3	77
MEG	230	10	49	0	0	11	8	1	135	214	12	226
MEM	184	2	36	0	0	14	12	0	108	172	9	181
MOR	121	0	11	0	1	17	3	0	85	117	4	121
OLA	71	0	1	0	0	19	1	1	48	70	0	70
PAR	107	4	22	0	0	6	6	0	67	105	4	109
PER	193	9	44	0	0	11	9	0	108	181	9	190
PLE	346	4	76	0	0	15	9	0	220	324	5	329
PLN	325	5	64	0	0	11	15	0	212	307	4	311
PLO	237	0	25	0	0	1	6	0	193	225	6	231
PLS	249	1	38	0	0	11	14	0	182	246	4	250
POR	195	3	22	0	0	44	12	1	111	193	5	198
SLK	256	11	72	0	1	10	18	0	133	245	14	259
SLO	135	1	8	0	0	11	3	0	105	128	3	131
SBA	209	0	4	0	0	36	5	1	157	203	1	204
SBI	219	1	9	0	1	56	10	0	136	213	2	215
SCO	128	0	16	0	0	5	5	2	93	121	3	124
SLE	227	3	7	0	0	71	1	0	141	223	2	225
SMA	351	1	16	0	0	89	20	0	213	339	5	344
SSE	177	1	18	0	0	24	13	0	115	171	4	175
SVA	183	2	15	0	0	31	7	1	122	178	2	180
SUE	218	1	9	0	0	44	3	0	159	216	3	219
SUO	119	2	13	0	0	25	3	0	81	124	1	125
THA	89	0	9	0	0	14	3	0	61	87	1	88
UNG	64	2	6	0	0	4	3	0	43	58	2	60
URU	128	0	17	0	0	6	3	0	93	119	6	125
VEN	259	6	49	0	1	17	8	1	169	251	12	263
VIE	169	15	45	0	0	18	28	0	54	160	9	169
ZMB	62	0	10	0	0	5	7	0	42	64	0	64
UPS	130	0	0	0	0	11	0	0	122	133	0	133
RMG	84	0	0	0	0	16	0	0	67	83	0	83
Tot.	17233	321	2374	0	7	2074	660	18	11142	16596	504	17100
Ep.	98									96		96
Tot.	17331	321	2374	0	7	2074	660	18	11142	16692	504	17196

Note (*): - FRA Ispettorica derivante dalla fusione di FLY + FPA (dati iniziali di FLY+FPA)

- INT nuova Ispettorica derivante dalla divisione di INM

- ITM : dati non precisi, a motivo delle difficoltà di comunicazione per la particolare situazione

5.10 Our dead confreres (2000 - 1ST list)

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

NAME	PLAGE	DATE	AGE	PROV.
P BECOT Charles	Caen	02-06-99	80	FRA
P BETTONVILLE Pierre	Sakania (R.D.Congo)	27-11-99	82	AFC
P BOLLINI Felice	Shillong	20-11-99	89	ING
P DARBLAY Pierre	Caen	11-03-99	87	FRA
P GOURIOU Julien	Caen	04-04-99	86	FRA
P JUHÁSZ János	Székesfehérvár	29-10-99	83	UNG
S KABULA Dariusz	Rumia	11-06-99	21	PLN
P LIMONTA Giuseppe	Chiari	05-01-99	87	ILE
P PAGANI Sisto	Santo Domingo	14-04-99	87	ANT
L POMPÉ Ivan	Trstenik	25-11-99	71	SLO
L STEJSKAL Amadeus	Bahía Blanca	27-11-99	88	ABB
P TURSIĆ Jakob	Trstenik	26-09-99	85	SLO
P ZURBRIGGEN Raúl Francisco	San Luis	25-12-99	84	ACO
P ALESSANDRINI Alfredo	Roma	27-01-2000	88	IRO
P AMICO Antonino	Pedara (CT)	22-03-2000	82	ISI
P BAPTISTA Michael	Los Angeles	11-01-2000	45	SUO
P BASTOS Miguel Ângelo	Manaus	28-01-2000	89	BMA
L BIEGAN Józef	Oświęcim	06-03-2000	81	PLS
P BOHAN James	Pallaskenry	22-02-2000	82	IRL
L BOTTO Giuseppe	Stony Point, NY	10-01-2000	85	SUE
L BROTTTO Rino	Castelnuovo Don Bosco	19-03-2000	63	ICP
P BROUSSEAU Pierre	Beaupréau	28-01-2000	79	FRA
L CALLEGARI Emilio	Venado Tuerto	12-01-2000	71	ARO
P CASALIS Carlo	Torino	11-02-2000	91	ICP
P CHURIO BAQUEDANO David	La Puebla de Valverde	01-02-2000	64	SVA
Era Ispettore da tre anni e mezzo				
P DAL BROI Giuseppe	Calcutta	10-03-2000	90	INC
P D'AMICO José Claudio	Rio Tercero	30-01-2000	89	ACO
L DAPARMA Ferruccio	Châtillon (AO)	19-03-2000	86	ICP
P DELÉMONTX Charles	Toulon	02-01-2000	77	FRA
P DEMARIE Michele	Torino	04-01-2000	77	ICP
L DI CICCIO Beniamino	Roma	06-01-2000	90	IRO

NAME	PLAGE	DATE	AGE	PROV.
P FABOZZI Pompeo	Caserta	21-02-2000	82	IME
P FARINA Angelo	Negrar (Verona)	07-03-2000	93	IVO
P FORTI Ernesto	Il Cairo (Egitto)	23-03-2000	78	MOR
P FORTUNA Danilo	Tokyo	10-01-2000	77	GIA
P GAVENAS Pranas	Alytus (Lituania)	07-02-2000	81	EST
P GEUENS Jan	Helchteren	08-03-2000	91	BEN
P GIACOMIN Fortunato	Anisakan (Birmania)	07-02-2000	80	INC
P HACKER Georg	Campbell (California, USA)	08-02-2000	91	SUO
P HÅLASI Hemeric	Torino	15-01-2000	86	ICP
P KLAUDER Frank	Orange, NJ	28-01-2000	81	SUE
P LEFEBVRE Jean-François	Les Herbiers	12-01-2000	75	FRA
P LOSAPPIO Savino	Roma	24-02-2000	80	IRO
P MANNI Albino	Gerola Alta (Sondrio)	16-02-2000	77	ILE
P MASSERINI Severino	Fiorano al Serio (BG)	19-02-2000	72	AUL
P MENDOZA MONTES Miguel	Puebla	04-01-2000	69	MEM
P MIGLIO Paolo	Torino	25-03-2000	77	ICP
L MORASCHETTI Giovanni	Pedara (CT)	14-01-2000	84	ISI
P MURARO Igino	Civitanova Marche (MC)	09-02-2000	85	IAD
P MURPHY José	Bahía Blanca	04-02-2000	94	ABB
L NENCINI Antonio	Savona	31-01-2000	84	ILT
L O'DONNELL Charles	Macclesfield	21-03-2000	79	GBR
P PATRUCCO Martino	Torino	15-01-2000	76	ICP
P PEREZ ROSALES José	Palma del Rio	13-02-2000	74	SCO
P PERONDI Antonio	Forlì	23-01-2000	84	ILE
P PIÑOL Rómulo	Barcelona	04-01-2000	86	SBA
P PODOLOWSKI Tadeusz	Rumia	04-01-2000	65	PLN
P QUARTIER Maurits	Kortrijk	03-02-2000	86	BEN
Fu Ispettore per sei anni				
P ROGGIA Fiorenzo	Torino	15-01-2000	91	ICP
P ROJO OLEA Luis	Barakaldo	23-01-2000	61	SBI
L ROLFO Giuseppe	Torino	07-01-2000	80	ICP
P ROMANI Ulderico	Roma	14-02-2000	90	IRO
L RONCO Giovanni	Torino	11-01-2000	90	ICP
P RUSICH Hemil	Puebla	04-01-2000	85	MEM
P SACCHI Dante	Calamba	14-02-2000	79	FIN
P SANCHEZ MARTIN Nazario	Ávila	28-02-2000	98	SMA
P SCARAMAL Aldo	Torino	24-01-2000	84	ICP
L SCARSO Giuseppe	Torino	11-01-2000	96	ICP
P SCHMID Wilhelm	Eisenstadt (Austria)	22-02-2000	89	AUS
P SCHOLTEN Kurt	Neunkirchen	03-01-2000	68	GEK

NAME	PLAGE	DATE	AGE	PROV.
P SERAFIN Giancarlo	Conegliano (TV)	11-01-2000	73	IVE
P SPITALE Carmelo	Shillong	17-02-2000	87	ING
P TANDA Sebastiano	Selargius (CA)	15-03-2000	92	ISA
P UTRILLA GARCÍA Tomás	El Campello (Alicante)	18-02-2000	78	SVL
P VÁCVÁL Anton	Bratislava	06-02-2000	91	SLK
P VAN EWIJK Reinier	s-Hertogenbosch	12-01-2000	88	OLA
P VAN KERKHOVE Amaat	Kortrijk	24-02-2000	82	BEN
P VARGAS José Bienvenido	Córdoba (Argentina)	24-01-2000	77	ACO
P VIAZZO Antonio	Nizza Monferrato	01-02-2000	84	ICP
P VILLAVECCHIA Giuseppe	Torino	29-01-2000	91	ICP
P WALCZAK Stanisław	Zgorzelec	16-02-2000	61	PLO
P WASIK Jan	Oświęcim	31-01-2000	74	PLS
P WOIRY Victor	Toulon	20-01-2000	79	FRA
P ZORZI Francesco	Castelnuovo Don Bosco	20-01-2000	78	ICP
P ZUCCARO Natale	Pedara (CT)	04-03-2000	81	ISI

Nota: Nella prima parte sono elencati alcuni confratelli defunti nel 1999, che non furono riportati nei precedenti numeri degli ACG, non avendo ricevuto notizia della morte, per varie cause.