



# acts

## of the general council

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year LXXXI october-december 2000

### N. 373

official organ  
of animation  
and communication  
for the  
salesian congregation

Direzione Generale  
Opere don Bosco  
Roma



# acts

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

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OFFICIAL ORGAN OF ANIMATION AND COMMUNICATION FOR THE SALESIAN CONGREGATION

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YEAR LXXXI      **N. 373**  
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## 1. LETTER OF THE RECTOR MAJOR

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### THOUGHT “NOW IS THE ACCEPTABLE TIME”<sup>1</sup>

**1. VOCATIONS: A POINT THAT GIVES US FOOD FOR THOUGHT** – A propitious moment. – In harmony with the Church. – Vocational guidance in our pastoral renewal. – A new approach.

**2. THE SALESIAN COMMUNITY: A SETTING FOR VOCATIONAL EXPERIENCE AND PROPOSALS.** – The logic of “Come and see”. – The vocational force of community life. – Pastoral action of the community. – Follow-up. – Some areas for special attention. – “The angel declared unto Mary”.

Rome, 8 September 2000

*Feast of the Birthday of Mary*

My dear confreres,

I cannot begin this letter without a heartfelt word of thanks to you for your fraternal closeness and prayer during the trial which the good Lord has laid upon me.

It has been his will that this has led to a greater fraternal union within the Congregation and the Salesian Family and all have come to know more about our confrere Bro. Artemide Zatti, for whose beatification all requirements are now substantially complete. Soon we shall see him raised to the altars.

This present letter continues the Chapter theme on the presence and life of the salesian community, to help you in your reflections in the provincial chapters and later in the General Chapter.

We had already identified three areas in which the salesian community must be competent and visibly present in the neighbourhood: fraternal life, witness to evangelical values, and welcoming reception of the young and the poor.

<sup>1</sup> cf. 2 Cor 6, 2

## 1. VOCATIONS: A POINT THAT GIVES US FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Among the topics to which the Congregation showed itself very sensitive at the time of the consultation on the theme of the coming General Chapter, there was that of our ability to attract vocations. And rightly so. This has always been considered an essential characteristic of our witness and was in consequence frequently referred to with various emphases in the GC24: our formation for vocational discernment<sup>2</sup>; unified vocational promotion in the Salesian Family<sup>3</sup>; the salesian community's ability to foster the vitality of the charism and vocational dynamism through its own deep, conscious and radical way of living them<sup>4</sup>; and the recommendation of a follow-up which once again proposes the question of vocations in the EPC<sup>5</sup>. It was therefore a matter demanding our attention, and one we could not fail to take up again.

Even more clearly and decisively the GC23 had placed the vocational field among the essential areas of our journey of faith with the young<sup>6</sup> and a characteristic dimension of Salesian Youth Spirituality<sup>7</sup>.

*Within the theme of the GC25, which refers specifically to the life and mission of our communities, we want to examine the conditions of life and activity which can foster a joyful and encouraging experience of vocation, a way of life that will be both witness and prophecy, an environment that becomes a vocational appeal for all who feel attracted by Don Bosco's spirit and mission.*

Concern about vocations is, in fact, one of the factors that

<sup>2</sup> cf. GC24, 141-142

<sup>3</sup> cf. GC24, 143. 146

<sup>4</sup> cf. GC24, 159

<sup>5</sup> cf. GC24, 165

<sup>6</sup> cf. GC23, 149-157

<sup>7</sup> cf. GC23, 178-180

led to the choice of the theme of the Chapter. In a certain way the crisis in vocations to the consecrated life, which we are experiencing in a good part of the Congregation and of the Church, is profitable for us in the sense that it compels us to evaluate the quality of our personal and community life, the significance of our structures and organization, and the possibility of being more effective and positive at the present day.

Young people need witnesses; they need people and environments that show by their example the possibility of adopting in our society a life style in accordance with the Gospel. This gospel witness is really the first educative service to offer them, the first proclamation of the Gospel.

This letter is intended to be a contribution to the examination the Provinces have to make; it will try to throw some light on the topic, to encourage the great deal already being done, to prompt every confrere and community to become personally involved in vocational witness and proposals, and to open wider horizons so that our pastoral work be not limited in the field of vocations to general and superficial proposals, nor be reduced to seeking for candidates to the salesian life only outside our own settings.

The theme of vocations has often emerged as the leading question or concern in the conversations I have had with confreres during my visits: and this not only through fear of our becoming extinct in vast areas of the north-western world, where every year sees a fall in the number of confreres, a rise in their average age, and a scarcity of newcomers; but also perhaps because the lack of vocational fruitfulness is a clear reflection of the little force of attraction exerted by our communities and the limited depth of Christian life that we propose to young people.

The questions of the confreres always concern the particular situation regarding vocations in each part of the world: they ask about the possibilities of finding more of them to the consecrated life in environments considered to be strongly secularized



and well-to-do, characterized by freedom, by the many opportunities for young people, by short-term life-projects; about the conditions needed to ensure authenticity and perseverance in contexts marked by popular religious devotion, by a demographic situation of very large numbers or by limited prospects in life for the young. Many have asked for this to be included among the reflections on the community for the coming Chapter.

This, on the other hand, is in line with what our Constitutions state when they insert the promotion of vocations among the *objectives of our mission*: “Faithful to the commitments Don Bosco has passed on to us, we are evangelizers of the young, and the more so if they are poor; we pay special attention to apostolic vocations”<sup>8</sup>.

Confirmation is found in art.28, in the chapter concerning those to whom our work is primarily addressed. “To meet the needs of his people the Lord continually calls some to follow him in service of the Kingdom and enriches them with gifts for the purpose. We are convinced that many young people are rich in spiritual potential and give indications of an apostolic vocation. We help them to discover, accept and develop the gift of a lay, consecrated religious or priestly vocation, for the benefit of the whole Church and of the Salesian Family. With equal zeal we nurture adult vocations”<sup>9</sup>.

Every Salesian therefore should be someone who seeks vocations and follows them up. Every community has this same purpose among its main objectives. We must examine whether this directive of our Constitutions shapes the action of every community in the individual provinces and inspires the activities of every confrere; or, on the other hand, we are so poorly informed and attentive with regard to vocation and the ways that lead to an evangelical decision, that we cannot take our pastoral work to its point of full maturity.

<sup>8</sup> C. 6

<sup>9</sup> C. 28



Now All this reflects *the experience and concern of Don Bosco*. The thought of vocations was ever in his mind in a practical manner. We need only recall two facts. The first was his initiative in creating the students section at Valdocco for the benefit of those who by their good nature and intellectual ability gave signs of a vocation to the ecclesiastical state. Their commitment to study, but more especially the intensity of their life of piety and relationship with Don Bosco himself, would lead to the maturing of the seeds he had spotted in their first contacts.

The second fact is the host of priests and religious who came from the Oratory and of whom Don Bosco himself was proud and happy to give statistics, as a sign of the sound Christian formation of his youngsters. We may quote from the Biographical Memoirs: "In 1883 in the presence of Fr Dalmazzo and others, Don Bosco exclaimed: 'I am happy now! I have had careful statistics drawn up, and we have found that more than two thousand diocesan priests have come from our houses. Let us thank the Lord and his Most Holy Mother for having given us the means to do all this good'.

However, his figures were not final; before his death an additional five hundred boys had entered diocesan seminaries. There were also others whose vocation he had encouraged who began studying for the priesthood after his death. We need to add those from other salesian houses who entered the seminary and we should also mention the many who joined religious orders. There is hardly an Institute in Italy that does not have some of Don Bosco's sons among its priests. Another merit of his is that he indirectly helped to strengthen the Church. We could say that it was his example and sometimes his insistence and cooperation that led to the opening of many minor seminaries. It was from him that not a few rectors of minor and major seminaries learned how to look after their charges with loving and fatherly care, and to stress piety – especially Eucharistic piety – that is so indispensable for persevering in a priestly vocation. All this greatly benefited the diocesan clergy in their re-

spective dioceses. (...) From what we have already said and will say, we can infer that it is no exaggeration to state that in his lifetime Don Bosco formed some six thousand priests".<sup>10</sup>

From the school of Don Bosco there came a Rua, a Cagliero, a Dominic Savio and many others. Salesians of today are convinced that the flourishing of vocations in different contexts, through proper attention to pastoral work and the process of Christian formation, is a measure of their ability to communicate a sufficient knowledge and a love of Christ to prompt others to imitate and follow him. And on the other hand they discover how far from the salesian ideal are those who think that vocations should be sought in other contexts or through the efforts of persons with this special task, while the community should be dedicating itself only to providing "services", albeit for the benefit of the very poor.

### **A propitious moment**

There are many points from which one could start for a fuller understanding of the vocational question. In Sacred Scripture we find paradigms where is clearly seen the part of God, who never fails, and the conditions for the response of the man or woman.

The Bible has pages for times of vocation difficulty or sterility. In them God, who is the guarantor of salvation, speaks directly to the heart of people to ensure that his covenant is remembered. I like to recall the episode of Samuel. At a time of decay of religious institutions, when the attention of everyone was concentrated on war efforts, when even the figure of the prophets had been forgotten, Samuel received the direct call of God during the night. There were no models with which to identify and the urgent demands of the people were not of a religious nature. And yet God spoke directly to the heart of the boy to make him his witness and spokesman.

<sup>10</sup> BM V, p. 267

In this letter I want to recall your attention to the fact that we may be living a *phase of special vocational possibilities*, if only we can succeed in expressing our love for Jesus and in passing it on to others.

In the context of the Jubilee we have lived though two events which have made us think about the interior openness of young people to Jesus and to the force exerted on them by Christ and his plan.

The first in order of time was the *Forum 2000* of the Salesian Youth Movement. While I was at Colle Don Bosco, a young man asked me a straight question: "Are there any vocations for the priesthood and consecrated life from the Salesian Youth Movement, and in particular from the animators?"

The Rector Major replied that vocations have certainly matured, but it is also true that this element of salesian youth spirituality has not been sufficiently cultivated from the proclamation to the suggestion, from the suggestion to the personal follow-up of those who show an aptitude, signs or early desires. In his message for the progress of the SYM in the year 2000, the Rector Major included this precise point. You can read it in this same issue of the Acts.

The second event was the *World Day of Youth* in Rome. In his homily during the celebration of the Eucharist the Pope exhorted the young people to think also about the possibility of giving themselves completely in the priestly ministry or the consecrated life: "May every community always have a priest to celebrate the Eucharist! I ask the Lord therefore to raise up among you many holy vocations to the priesthood".<sup>11</sup> And later he said: "May sharing in the Eucharist also lead to a new flourishing of vocations to the religious life. In this way the Church will have fresh and generous energies for the great task of the new evangelization".<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> John Paul II, Homily of 20 August 2000, *Osservatore Romano* (Eng. edtn. 23 August 2000

<sup>12</sup> Ibid..

Individual conversations with young people have revealed how much they think about the radical following of Christ. But it often finds them unprepared to respond and, as has already been said so many times before, it finds them uncertain in the face of discovering the real possibilities that match their expectations for living out such a vocation for the whole of their lives.

It is true that the young people present in these two events do not represent all of the world's youth, and not even all Catholic youth. They were young people who had been chosen, especially in the *Forum 2000*. But these are precisely the youngsters who are open to a committed vocational dialogue, and who have admitted that they have not always experienced such a dialogue.

Perhaps we are living in "new times", in which an adaptation of pastoral work for vocations in terms of images, language and suggestions is essential.

It is not my purpose here to repeat the theological doctrine about vocation, nor to describe the sociological and religious conditions of certain areas in which difficulties seem to be concentrated. We have heard enough about such things. It has been rightly said that we must move on from proposals to practical suggestions.

There is a certain phenomenon which must make us think. In some of the so-called difficult areas there are found together communities, spirituality centres or ecclesial movements which are strongly attractive, and other works and communities which do not manage to give rise to any desire to join in an experience which the young people have right before their eyes.

Also in areas which are still fruitful there is a difference between the kind of young people who are attracted by our life and their behaviour once they have joined a community: it is a matter of authentic motivation, of Christian spiritual formation, of a project of life in Christ, of interiorized faith.

We must give serious thought to this point. Effectively vocations represent our main problem, which we share with other



religious Institutes. There is an abundance of working groups in every continent: it is quite easy to pick them out and count them. The collaboration of lay people has also been developed to an increasing extent to respond to the urgent needs on many fronts. Animation techniques are widespread. But without persons who bear unalloyed witness to the charism, all this gets nowhere!

“Pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest”.<sup>13</sup> This expression of Jesus remains always true, and applies more than ever to our present moment in history.

The Lord is giving us a new opportunity, but at the same time is asking us for a purification, an emphasis on what is essential, an ability to get into living contact with Christ rather than be involved only in personal relationships or in providing services.

### **In harmony with the Church.**

A congress took place in Rome from 5 to 10 May 1998 on vocational pastoral work in Europe. A working document had been circulated in advance which set out, as objectively as possible, the quantitative and qualitative situation of vocations, but also the vocational awareness of local Churches and the methods of pastoral work for the promoting of vocations which they had developed.

The resulting document dwelt naturally on the human, social and religious conditions of young people; but it also pointed to positive signs, the present resources, the seeds of a new season which would need wise cultivating by all communities, and especially by educators.

When the work was ended a final report was published, with many new ideas and a wealth of suggestions.

A similar work was carried out in America, and at the end of February the Congregation for Christian Education pub-

<sup>13</sup> cf. Mt 9, 38

lished a number of the review *Seminarium* concerning the situation of vocations in the future, for which the Rector Major of the Salesians was asked to contribute an article entitled "Youth pastoral work and vocational guidance",<sup>14</sup> a sign of how much our experience is appreciated.

For our part, we have devoted a great deal of study to the *Ratio*, which deals also with the prenovitiate and the criteria for discernment concerning admissions.

There is no point in dodging the issue: the vocational problem is a burning one! Nevertheless the general intention of the congresses is to "foster hope". That is the tone of earlier documents; and that was also the feeling of the meetings. We have confidence that the Lord will continue to raise up prophets and men after his own heart.

The Union of Superiors General of Religious Orders and Congregations also decided to focus reflections on the possibilities and conditions for proposing a vocation nowadays and maturing candidates for the consecrated life, particularly in places where the religious dimension seems to be of very little social relevance, and to be left to personal consideration.

All this provides us with an overall view of the new conditions in which vocations are born and develop.<sup>15</sup> In some places we are undergoing the trial of sterility, like that of Sarah or of Anna, mother of Samuel. But we cannot accept that we should decide we are going to become extinct and simply programme how our charismatic heritage can be passed to others, for example to lay people, and to abandon all hope of Christian life and the *sequela Christi* in the secular culture!

If Christ has been for us the meaning of our pilgrimage, if our experience with him has been a happy one, it is better to do what Abraham did, beg for a son who will maintain the succes-

<sup>14</sup> *Seminarium* Year XL n. 1 January-February 2000, p.67-80

<sup>15</sup> USG - 55° *Conventus Semestralis*. "Le vocazioni alla vita consacrata nel contesto della società moderna e post-moderna", Ed. Il Calamo, May 1999

sion and set about doing something to ensure it. It is necessary, it is said, not only to call but also to challenge, by once again presenting in their paradoxical reality the phases of a way of life conformed to the Gospel, such as the beatitudes, the cross, the freedom of self-realization in God.

### Vocational guidance in our pastoral renewal.

For many years now the Congregation has been reflecting on the process of the education of young people to the faith. It has singled out *in vocational guidance its fundamental and essential dimension*.<sup>16</sup> We want to help the young to face their own future in an attitude of availability and generosity, predispose them to listen to the voice of God, and accompany them in formulating their own plan of life.

In this vocational commitment we give priority to complementary things which are mutually supportive: the guidance offered to all young people within the educational program; the constant effort to discover and follow up with various and appropriate initiatives vocations of particular commitment in society and in the Church; special attention to vocations of service to the Church itself (vocations for dioceses and for other religious institutes) and of the world as a whole (missionary vocations, including those of the laity); a particular responsibility regarding the salesian charism in its many forms, through the discernment and fostering of the seeds of a salesian vocation, both consecrated and lay, present in young people.

We are convinced that we make a gift of a great treasure to the Church when we discover a good vocation. It does not matter whether the person concerned goes to a diocese, the missions or a religious house. It is always a resource placed at the disposal of the Church and the Kingdom.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup> cf. SGC, 374 e 692; GC21, 110ff; GC23, 149ff e 247

<sup>17</sup> cf. MB XVII, p. 262



The situation is not easy. The Congress “New vocations for a new Europe”<sup>18</sup> listed some of the causes or roots of the difficulty: a complex and pluralist culture, without foundations, which tends to produce in young people a fragile identity; a culture of distraction, which risks drowning or nullifying questions about the meaning of life; a mentality which leads to the idea that life’s possibilities must be enjoyed without delay; the fleeting nature of ideas and commitments, which are unconcerned about any definite guiding principles. But it is in a context like this that the Gospel must be passed on and offered as a norm and way of life.

In these circumstances we try to live with an *attitude of serene faith and hope*, and without faultfinding. When Abraham was sad because he could not see how he was going to have any descendants, God invited him to go out of his small tent and place himself under the great tent of the Lord, the sky, and with that much vaster horizon interpret and believe in the story which God, faithful to his promises, was preparing for him.

This attitude of hope must also guide us in reading the signs of the times: the lack of vocations (an evil) can be seen as an invitation to purify our intentions, and recognize the need to concentrate our attention on what is essential in consecrated life and in our specific vocation in the Salesian Family.

When we pray to the Lord of the harvest, it is important that we are moved more by his Kingdom and the desire to do his will, than by the need or anxiety to have successors for each of our present works who will take our place in the many apostolic projects we are animating.

Meanwhile, among the young in the Salesian Family, and among people in general, we are spreading a **vocational culture**. This is an expression first used by the Pope,<sup>19</sup> which we

<sup>18</sup> cf. “New vocations for a new Europe”, n. 11c: *Man without vocation*

<sup>19</sup> John Paul II, Message for XXX World Day of Prayer for vocations (1993)

have later explored.<sup>20</sup> It is a matter of promoting a form of life and the choice of personal options for the future according to a set of values such as generosity, acceptance of the mystery, availability for being called and involved, belief in oneself and one's neighbour, and the courage to dream and desire on a grand scale. In addition there are educative proposals and experiences in line with the values proposed.

The concluding document of the Congress on Vocations in Europe<sup>21</sup> declares that this culture is now becoming the first objective of vocational pastoral work, and perhaps of pastoral work in general.

### A new approach.

Through this process of reflection and experiences which are now taking place, we recognize an availability in the young which is open to the experience of God, and we discover new elements which are important for the birth and growth of vocations.

In them we observe first of all the *new subject to which our vocational discourse is addressed*. It is the young adult, still an adolescent because of the lengthening in the years of compulsory schooling and because of the later age at which a decision is made about a state of life. For us it is important to include vocational elements at every age, but we have a particular place among the animators, volunteers, young collaborators, university students, and the older pupils in schools.

This innovation implies another which touches us very closely: talk about Christian life and vocational guidance for these young adults is something *much more demanding and specific*. They are not joining a team for work or service. If it is a matter of lay work, even though performed voluntarily, they know they have other similar openings and structures

<sup>20</sup> cf. VECCHI J., "La vocazione tra cultura e culture: crisi del modello occidentale?", in *Cultura e Vocazioni*, Rogate, Rome 1994, p. 31-63

<sup>21</sup> cf. "New vocations for a new Europe", n.13b

available. It is the vision and meaning of the particular kind of life which determines the direction they take. Only if they are attracted by Jesus and have understood what kind of life he is offering them do they decide to follow him.

It has been said that we are in an age of "religious barbarism". There is a need to make young people aware of the great originality of Jesus Christ, the *other* and not only the enjoyment of short-term generosity. For the purpose of vocational appeal, religious anonymity of a group constituted in the name of Christ is quite useless. It is much better to declare openly by words and deeds, the choice we have made and the joy with which we live it.

In the Acts of the Apostles we read that while the community of the followers of Christ were giving new and specifically Christian signs, the Lord directed towards them day by day those who were being saved.<sup>22</sup> The two things are necessary and complementary: the voice or grace of the Lord and the signs of the community.

***Some constantly occurring points*** in the conversations I referred to earlier, and that are found as well in experiences of the provinces, can also help in reflecting on the vocational capacity of our communities. Here they are:

1. Vocation is an **attraction**. If the charism and the life of its bearers and representatives at the present day is not, so to speak, enticing, the conditions for raising up followers simply fail. It had already happened with Jesus himself. The apostles were bound to him by a quite extraordinary admiration; they had perceived the goodness which came forth from him and so they had asked: "Where are you staying?"<sup>23</sup> and they went to stay with him.

In the meeting of the Superiors General, various Institutes

<sup>22</sup> cf. Acts 2, 42-47

<sup>23</sup> Jn 1, 38

presented experiences of open and welcoming communities, new and bold mission frontiers, and experiences of consecrated life expressive of the primacy of God, which had stirred up the interest of young people.

I want to stress the genuine nature and community character of the experiences of God, particularly close to youngsters of a “religious” turn of mind at the present day, even if they have to understand the everyday nature of our relationship with the Father in the light of the event of the Incarnation, freeing themselves from the momentary fascination of the extraordinary.

2. The vocation is a **call and a grace**; it is not within our power to inspire it or cause it to be born. The initiative is God’s. This is a constant element in biblical vocations and is repeated by Jesus himself: “You did not choose me but I chose you”.<sup>24</sup> It is necessary to pray and work, to accept and be grateful – even for a single vocation, to observe and discover. In this sense we are not complaining, and our heart is grateful to God for the more or less 500 young people who have this year entered our novitiates.

3. The vocation is a **journey** closely linked to a maturing in faith in a dialogue with God that lasts all through life. The basic condition for it to emerge is the development of every aspect of the Christian life: truth, good behaviour, prayer. Vocations of a “sociological” character have well nigh disappeared. A strong personalization of the faith and a life interiorly bound up with Christ are indispensable for the maturing of proposals in line with the Lord’s words. Do you remember the conversation of Jesus with the rich young man? To be honest and upright is not enough. It is a matter of grasping the mysterious dimensions of our existence.

<sup>24</sup> Jn 15, 16



4. Everyone experiences this call because **God has a plan for every individual**. Everyone needs to become aware of this. It is up to us to help each one to develop his vocation with a suitable program: for the lay life, for the priesthood, consecrated life, consecrated secular life. It is true nonetheless that accompaniment towards the priesthood and the consecrated life constitutes a special aspect, and we must not level everything down in a too general discussion on vocation.

5. A **direct and explicit work** is needed for vocations of particular consecration or service. They do not arise spontaneously, not even in religious environments. Models of ecclesial vocations are little known, even among young people who have been taught their religion. This is why Dioceses and our own Provinces organize animation programs. And we see that where such a service is functioning things go better, always supposing that the communities do not delegate to the service what they can and should be doing themselves. We must avoid falling into genericism by no longer distinguishing the different kinds of calls or appeals which Jesus himself has made.

6. **Every community**, and in them every member, must be deeply involved according to his possibilities in the discovery and helping of vocations. The effort of a "recruiter", or delegate for the purpose, is totally insufficient and gives no guarantee as regards either quantity or authenticity.

Beyond its inadequacy for achieving the desired result, what is at stake is the continuity of the mission of the community and of the individual. Each community represents Don Bosco in the context in which it lives and works and is delegated to continue his charism and mission. It is a mere excuse to say that our mission can be passed on to lay people, or to programme our own extinction even for religious motives.

God will say what our fate shall be; but it is important that it be not influenced either by our own negligence or by mistaken choices, such as that of failing to put to young people

forms of a deeply committed Christian life and the radical following of Christ.

7. Young people feel the need of a **direct experience and contact** with the realities involved in vocational choice. In this sense an important part is played by the environment in which the young person is committed: there models can be found, values can be tested, friendships made and especially responsibilities practised which are typical of ecclesial vocations. Our parishes, schools, oratories and volunteer groups must become communities where ministries at the service of a mission are experienced and an encounter with Christ is fostered.

8. Many vocations, as we have said, now mature at an age older than used to be the case, and that means a **longer period of accompaniment**. A vocation-based catechesis should really begin in childhood or adolescence; but the work must not be abandoned when the young people enter the university or similar environments. The average age of those entering the novitiate at present varies from 21 to 27 years.

As well as being longer, the accompaniment must also be more consistent as regards faith and Christian practice. It must correspond to the intellectual development of the young person, to the questions to which life and society give rise in his mind. Two Encyclicals of John Paul II – *Veritatis Splendor* and *Fides et Ratio* – give us an idea of the questions of ways of thinking and attitudes to life about which young people hear the most widely differing opinions, all put forward with the greatest assurance and in the name of the right of the individual to think and express himself.

There are situations where follow-up is necessary. It is clear, in fact, that ways of thinking and attitudes to life, if not enlightened and guided by the Gospel, are a hindrance to subsequent vocational decisions and block the road to be followed. For this reason in the concluding document of the congress on vocations in Europe there are many proposals for a decidedly

Christian focus: to present Christ as a project for man, to invite him to the *sequela*, cultivate the primacy of the Spirit, foster evangelical radicalism as a prophecy, and provide spiritual direction.

9. The connection with a **community setting** is indispensable. No one has a vocation to solitude and isolation. And so even the local Churches are recommended to organize the community so that it is rich in ministries or services for the mission.

In recent years we too have been able to draw some useful conclusions, as we observe the percentage of young people who have been called who have had the experience of the salesian educative community, of the group, of a youth community, or of voluntary service. .

To contact with the educative community is at present being added the *experience of life in the salesian community* for young people who have already moved a certain distance along the way.

The criterion to be followed is: "*Come and see*". For a short or longer time these young people take part in the prayer, planning and realization of work, and in the community life. It goes without saying that it is a matter of selected communities, which show themselves capable of providing this welcoming acceptance. But in several Provinces an effort is being made to increase their number. The ideal is that every community could be a setting for vocational experience.

10. In the journey of faith there are some **experiences which are particularly revealing** as regards the characteristics and demands of vocation, and which help vocations to mature more rapidly. We can include in these commitment in pastoral work, learning how to pray, further reflection on the faith, work in the volunteer movement, and retreats. In such experiences the religious dimension is felt more directly. They are called significant experiences precisely because of their in-



tensity, and they should never be omitted from a vocational program.

11. In many cases an **explicit invitation** is needed. Today's social environment does not encourage a religious vocation. Its relevance and social significance at the present day is limited; models to refer to for imagining how life will be in the distant future are confusing if not discouraging. To some extent the Church, considered as an institution, is presented as the heir to a past era of intellectual and moral servitude.

The young person may desire to make a commitment, but he is drawn naturally to movements and causes more popular at the present day: peace, ecology, the poor. It needs the strong attraction of Christ to point in a different direction. And here lies our test as pastors and educators of the young.

The young person, moreover, often fails to recognize that he has the requirements needed for a vocation of special service or consecration. The disciples felt themselves captivated by Jesus, but to understand that they could become his followers they had to hear the invitation: "Follow me!"

In conversations with our young confreres we find that for nearly all of them there was someone who made the proposal to them, who gave them a call. It makes us wonder how many of them would not have come without this providential invitation, and how many in fact have not joined us because no one gave them the call or even raised the question.

12. **Accompaniment or spiritual direction** becomes necessary. This had been already stated in the vocational congress of 1982, which recalled the words of Paul VI: "No vocation matures without a spiritual director who follows it up".

But we can take the expression "spiritual director" not in its technical sense but with a broader meaning, referring to someone capable of doing the following-up – provided that this person knows the subject's background and the demands of the spiritual life and is able to lead the young person towards new

goals in the life of grace. And here perhaps we touch on another weak point: our ability to illustrate and be enthusiastic as we indicate stages and requirements, inviting the subject to reach out to more demanding goals, correcting what is not conformable to God and helping him to accept everything that makes space for God in life, with a periodic review of the progress made. We need spiritual guides who are not only understanding but positive in their approach and experts in the spiritual life.

All this was found also in the concluding document of the congress on vocations in Europe, to which I have already referred. The young person feels the need to match up many points of faith with the ideas and suggestions that come to him from his surroundings. He needs someone to talk to. He needs to clarify some aspects of Christian morality. He needs support and guidance. Especially, since he does not have the experience of the path of grace and the possibilities inherent in a life in Christ, he needs someone to open these horizons to him.

It is a recognized fact that around certain spiritual directors, certain centres of spirituality, and certain experiences of faith, candidates are appearing for the priestly, consecrated and committed lay lives.

We are in the same situation as everyone else. In some places we are living through the trial of sterility. But at least we have the advantage that we already work for young people. We carry out an activity in education which is tailor-made for a vocational approach. We have, in the educative communities, environments which can offer an exciting stimulus; and we can even extend the offers of involvement and apostolic work beyond our own foundations.

The SYM of the year 2000 should express itself in volunteer groups and in groups for prayer, reflection on the faith, and cultural development, all of which can be fertile fields for fostering vocations. If it is not our destiny to reap them, let us at least sow the seeds abundantly.

## 2. THE SALESIAN COMMUNITY: SETTING FOR VOCATIONAL EXPERIENCE AND PROPOSALS.

After this brief analysis of the vocations situation, which makes no pretence at being complete, and some general suggestions for pastoral work, let us now refer more directly to the theme which will be the object of our coming Chapter, to reflect on what elements of the community can become part of the vocational invitation.

When we think of the origin of our Congregation and Family, from which salesian expansion began, we find first of all **a community**, which was not only visible, but indeed quite unique, almost like a lantern in the darkness of night: **Valdocco**, the home of a novel community and a pastoral setting that was widely known, extensive and open. Among those making their way there through interest or curiosity were eminent persons of the civic and political world, fervent Christians and ecclesiastics who saw in it a religious revival, and bishops from round the world.

Such a community gave rise to a new culture, not in an academic sense but in that of a new style of relationship between youngsters and educators, between laity and priests, between artisans and students, a relationship which had its effect on the area and on the city itself. And if we can believe what was written at the time, it was a culture that caused raised eyebrows which eventually caused doubts to arise about Don Bosco's mental health.

Furthermore there were new educational initiatives: well known examples include the hostel for boys going daily to work in the city, the teaching of arts and crafts, and the kind of life that was built up.

All this had as its root and *raison d'être* the faith and pastoral charity, which tried to create from within a family spirit, and led to a deep affection for God and our Lady.

The term "religion" in the familiar description of the preventive system was by no means a formality. It included the invitation to undertake a life in God, as we are reminded by the episode of Michael Magone in tears, and to guiding able youngsters on the road to sanctity, as we see from Don Bosco's conversation with Dominic Savio.

This roused in the youngsters desires to belong to so unique a community and to take part in so novel a work. An opportune word from some Salesian or from Don Bosco himself was then a help in reaching a decision.

In this way the Salesian Congregation was made up initially and to a great extent from members of the Oratory, boys who had already had an educative experience with Don Bosco and in his house.

Will our present-day communities be able to produce a similar phenomenon, albeit on a smaller scale?

In this work of Don Bosco for vocations **certain important elements** appear which can throw light on our reflection, even though the language and setting are of the cultural and theological context of his own time.

He takes special care to plant and develop seeds of a vocation in the youngsters. He does not trust to chance but collaborates actively in making God's gift perceived.

With a great variety of means and initiatives, he builds up a suitable environment, in which suggestions about vocation can be favourably received and reach maturity; a central element of this environment is the *family spirit*, being made to feel at home, welcomed and appreciated.

He promotes an *intense spiritual atmosphere* which leads to a personal relationship with Jesus, to frequenting of the sacraments, to devotion to Mary, and to a kind of prayer that leads to an ever deeper rooting in the heart and in life of a personal acceptance of God's plan. The same line was followed in the brief recommendations to foster vocations.



It helps to *purify and mature the motives* for the choice of a state of life, centering them in the glory of God and the salvation of souls, through experiences of generous and enthusiastic commitment to the salvation of the young.

Don Bosco takes great care, moreover, to be the *animator and spiritual guide* of the boys who show signs of a vocation, particularly through confession, but also by making it easy for them to meet and converse with him. In this ministry one of the most striking elements is his great prudence in discernment which enables him to guide candidates with realism and awareness of the spiritual requirements.

Underlying it all is his deeply rooted conviction that every success in the vocational field is to be attributed to God and the motherly protection of Mary Help of Christians. And so he recommends to everyone constant and fervent prayer for vocations.

The intensity of Don Bosco's work in favour of vocations, which we have spoken of, emphasizes his sense of fidelity to the Church and his readiness to be surprised at the generosity of the young. It enables us to understand why he insists so much that we all work hard together to obtain for the Church those great treasures which are vocations.<sup>25</sup>

The vocational movement is no different at the present day, even though we recognize that it is felt less intensely by the Christian community itself. People go to where they feel attracted. Certainly it will not be because of our organization, nor because of our service and work, that young people nowadays will feel attracted to the consecrated life, but because of the depth of the religious element. "The Lord added to their number those who were being saved", says the Acts of the Apostles,<sup>26</sup> as we recalled earlier. There is a close connection between the signs expressed by the community, those of

<sup>25</sup> cf. *Le vocazioni nella Famiglia Salesiana*. IX Week of Spirituality of the Salesian Family. January 1982. LDC, Turin 1982, p.145-183

<sup>26</sup> cf. Acts 2, 48

meeting together for the *fractio panis* and placing everything in common, and the voice of God speaking in the hearts of potential members. This is the profile of the vocational process.

It will be useless for us to offer lay or secular communities to young people who are looking for the sense and warm experience of God, to those who have begun to appreciate the Gospel and want to live it with greater intensity. We must offer them ourselves as a setting where they can experience the Gospel!

### **The logic of "Come and see"<sup>27</sup>**

Modern culture is very sensitive to signs and witnesses, to trials and experiences, and much less to words and promises.

Nowadays vocational proposals occur in the evangelical style of "*Come and see*". This was also the process Don Bosco followed, as we have said. He wanted to show to young people a form of Christian life which would make them happy. And so he took care to see that there reigned in the Oratory a great happiness and a family style that attracted young hearts.

An important objective is to build a salesian community which makes visible the values of the religious life embodied in the confreres, and manifests the motives for the educational options and commitments; a community in which the joy of fellowship and of the family spirit is felt, which is able to communicate by its own life experience, rather than in words; a community capable of enveloping others in its atmosphere and even more in its history, because it gives an effective account of what it is doing, e.g. its meetings with missionaries; a community that shares with others its moments of prayer, that bears witness by its particular experiences and activities, and especially by its style of life.

There was a time when it used to be said that a commu-

<sup>27</sup> cf. Jn 1, 39

nity would be ruined once it became lax. Nowadays it is said that we are living in a time of mystics and prophets and that much more must be done to ensure the future of religious life. After Vatican II, Institutes in general have made great efforts at doctrinal, structural and operational renewal, but not on this account do young people join them. The problem is not to be found so much in their rectitude and observance, as in that "something extra" which attracts; not in the normal upright style of life which serves to preserve things as they are, but in the extra something which forms part of prophecy, of significance, of basic values; or in what might be called the "warm experience" which gives rise to inspirations and the desire for a life commitment.

### **The vocational force of community life.**

It is easy to see that consecrated life has lost its visibility in some parts either because of the strong secularization of the surroundings, or sometimes because of the decision of those who did not want to stand out as "religious men" and had concentrated only on the "human" value of their option.

Even Christians do not always understand the significance of consecration and even less the meaning and value of consecrated life. Frequently the latter is reduced to a greater willingness for the service of others; its witness to the primacy of God and its prophetic significance get lost.

This too has been a focal point in reflection on the religious life: it is asked what contribution is made by the witness and specific activity of a religious person in the fields of health, education, or social service as compared with what is done by upright lay people.

The Exhortation *Vita Consecrata* frequently repeats the urgent need to give visibility to consecrated life: "Their lifestyle too must clearly show the ideal which they profess, and thus present itself as a living sign of God and as an



eloquent, even if often silent, proclamation of the Gospel".<sup>28</sup>

"Young people will not be deceived: when they come to you, they want to see what they do not see elsewhere. An immense task awaits you in the future: in a special way young consecrated persons, by witnessing to their consecration, can lead their contemporaries to a renewal of their lives. An impassioned love of Jesus Christ is a powerful attraction for those other young people whom Christ in his goodness is calling to follow him closely and for ever. Our contemporaries want to see in consecrated persons the joy that comes from being with the Lord".<sup>29</sup>

In the meeting of Superiors General of May 1999, we asked ourselves about the ability of our young people to understand in what way ours is a *sequela Christi*. We reflected especially on the ways or forms of life that can evoke in the minds of the young the image of a gospel lifestyle. It is evident in fact that neither external solemnity nor normal daily life means very much to them. Here are *some elements* that should characterize our communities and *make visible their consecrated life*.

**a. *Show the joy of brotherhood and of the family style of life.***

The most efficacious environment for the discovery and guidance of vocations is the family atmosphere of welcome and faith, created by the testimony of a community which gives of itself with joy.<sup>30</sup> Witness of this kind arouses in the young the desire to know and follow the salesian vocation.<sup>31</sup> This is what our Constitutions tell us.

We must *make more visible the fact that we are a religious community that lives and works together*. It often happens that youngsters never meet a community of persons, but only individual Salesians who work on their own.

<sup>28</sup> VC 25

<sup>29</sup> VC 109

<sup>30</sup> cf. C. 37

<sup>31</sup> cf. C. 16

It is well to remember that the salesian mission is never an individual fact but is always the expression of a community. Don Bosco himself thought at once of a group of collaborators and was much concerned about the unity of his Congregation. Even today young people need to see Jesus through a united fraternal and joyful community. This means that we have to give attention to our personal relationships and brotherly communication. In a world which is divided and torn apart, in a society of mass dimensions in which individuals are often treated as so many mere numbers, the witness of evangelical brotherhood offered by our communities can become ever more significant and effective.

**b. Testify to the joy of vocation.**

"No one will be able to take your joy from you", said Jesus.<sup>32</sup> We are called upon to live and communicate the experience of having received a gift: "O Lord, you have enticed me, and I was enticed",<sup>33</sup> "Christ Jesus has made me his own".<sup>34</sup> "*Vidimus Dominum*". We have experienced a meeting, a revelation, a "vision" of the Lord.

"The eager enthusiasm of this experience must not grow less as we grow older or acquire deep-rooted habits. It is destined rather to increase and fill the whole of life. If it fell short, religious life would lose its motivation and be drawn into functionalism, i.e. into nothing beyond the correct fulfilment of one's duties. What would happen to us would be what takes place in old couples who continue to live together in peace, but do not expect either anything new nor further happiness".<sup>35</sup>

We must examine ourselves to discover whether tiredness or some disappointment has taken from us, if not the will to live our consecration seriously, perhaps the conviction and ini-

<sup>32</sup> Jn 16, 23

<sup>33</sup> Jer 20, 7

<sup>34</sup> Phil 3, 12

<sup>35</sup> AGC 365, pag.15

tiative to present our lives to others in an effective manner. This joy and enthusiasm should lead us to overcome in our daily life and our relationships with the young and with people in general the inclination to make the minimum of effort, a kind of leveling down, and to proclaim instead reasons for satisfaction, for contentment, for hope, rather than for displeasure, ill-humour and discouragement.

**c. *Show, in our manner of life, the human and educative value of the evangelical counsels.***<sup>36</sup>

Nowadays there is much insistence on the anthropological significance of the counsels: they do not put limitations on the individual, but open a much wider field to his aspirations and energy. "The decision to follow the counsels", we read in the Exhortation *Vita Consecrata*, "far from involving an impoverishment of truly human values, leads instead to their transformation. (...) Thus, while those who follow the evangelical counsels seek holiness for themselves, they propose, so to speak, a spiritual "therapy" for humanity, because they reject the idolatry of anything created and in a certain way they make visible the living God".<sup>37</sup>

This demands of us an effort to live them not only honestly and faithfully, but also in attentive dialogue with today's culture, so that their humanizing value can clearly appear, especially to young people.

Our Constitutions emphasize this *educative value* in the vows: "Obedience leads to maturity by extending the freedom of the sons of God".<sup>38</sup> "The witness of our poverty, lived in a common sharing of our goods, helps the young to overcome their selfish possessive instinct and opens them to the Christian sense of sharing".<sup>39</sup> "Through chastity we bear witness to the predilection of Christ for the young; it allows us to love

<sup>36</sup> cf. C. 62-63

<sup>37</sup> VC 87

<sup>38</sup> C. 67

<sup>39</sup> C. 73

them in an open and uncomplicated way, so that they know they are loved, and it enables us to educate them to love and to purity".<sup>40</sup>

How are we to translate these values in the reality of our community life?<sup>41</sup> How can we make the evangelical counsels become a novel part of education? If religious working in this field had only more time available than their lay counterparts, or possessed better structures, they would contribute little of substance to the work. The frequently recurring question about the specific value of their presence in education would be justified. It is our duty, as individuals and communities, to see to it that our *sequela Christi* becomes a force, a lesson and educative plan that is not generic but specific: regarding the attitude towards material goods and their use in a time dictated by wealth and economics; regarding attitudes towards sexuality and love, and the meaning of freedom at a time when the principle of pleasure and individual choice is the order of the day; and regarding relationship with God throughout life at a time when some aspects of religious belief are absent or "disembodied".

This prophetic value is also shown when we make statements about the great themes of human history and the world of youth, intervening to create evangelical opinion on reality and current situations. Our profession must become the proclamation, serene but decisive, of the benefits the Gospel proposes with respect to sexuality, riches and freedom.

#### ***d. Spiritually animate a broad educative community.***

This means being signs of God and educators to a personal relationship with him<sup>42</sup> for young and old, individuals and institutions.

The most evident expression of our presence as conse-

<sup>40</sup> C. 81

<sup>41</sup> cf. also GC24, 152 and AGC 363, p.36-37

<sup>42</sup> cf. C. 62; GC24, 151 and 159



crated persons in education is the orientation of all – teachers and pupils – towards the Father. Our consecration is an invitation to rethink and realize the implication of *evangelizing by educating* – a formula in which *evangelizing* indicates the purpose and *educating* the overall way we choose.

Communities capable of communicating and sharing salesian spirituality, of creating environments with a strong evangelical quality, of encouraging young people towards sanctity, of offering to educative communities motives and experiences which animate and encourage them despite their limitations and difficulties: these are the kind of communities we have in mind today, open and with initiative, and not lacking in an identity and visible dimension: just in fact like Valdocco.

Nowadays many younger and older lay people want to see and take part in our prayer and work. We must arrange matters so that it is possible to pray with young people, share moments of fellowship and programming with lay collaborators and even bring some of the likely young people in with us for a temporary experience of community life.

In this way our community “becomes a leaven giving rise to new vocations after the example of the first community of Valdocco”.<sup>43</sup>

This openness can be achieved in various ways and at different complementary levels: through a welcoming community environment attentive to the quality of personal relationships; with special moments of communion and sharing between us, cutting down if necessary on other occupations and services, as a sign of the importance of community life; by always speaking positively to the young and lay people about our community life, our confreres and our common plans. It is effectively achieved also: by sharing as a community in the work and life of the neighbourhood community; by taking part in the more important events in the life of the local area, and giving our generous

<sup>43</sup> C. 57

collaboration; by offering to the young and to lay people moments of sharing in which all the confreres take an active part; by also fostering the external image of our own work and that of the Congregation, and other similar initiatives.

### **Pastoral action of the community.**

In addition to representing salesian life and offering themselves as places for spiritual experience, our communities carry out an educational and pastoral activity. In this connection there are some points to keep in mind lest we lose our aim and miss the mark.

To help in living our own vocation, to give rise to vocations to special consecration, is – as we have said – one of the *objectives of the mission of the Congregation* and is therefore an essential dimension in every foundation, project or pastoral action: it constitutes the *highpoint of our educative and pastoral activity*, and is the force that gives direction, unity and authenticity. It is like the main axis of the whole process, in each of its stages.

The guarantor for this commitment is the salesian community, as responsible for the authenticity of the educative project, and with it the EPC, properly motivated and instructed by its animating nucleus.<sup>44</sup>

One of the features distinguishing between Provinces which have a certain number of vocations, as far as circumstances permit, and those which still remain sterile, is the presence in the Province of active communities which pay particular attention to spotting boys and young men with special aptitudes, following them up as they mature, and finally calling them. Where the communities have delegated this work to a single confrere, the results are poor.

Where all are committed to this task, including those with a particular talent for such work, we are gathering at least the

<sup>44</sup> cf. GC24, 252

little that every foundation should be able to give. Today, especially in northern and western parts of the world – but the phenomenon is extending more and more – there are no places where large numbers of vocations are to be found. In every setting we must gather in those whom God puts in our path: they will differ widely in age, condition, religious background, personal history, and contact with the Congregation.

This concern for vocation is a *fundamental service* in the first place for every young person, so that he may discern God's plan for him and so fulfil his life to the full: in this sense it aims at developing in him availability for taking up his life as a gift and service, for discovering his hidden qualities and awakening his responsibilities towards others.

It is also a service to the Church. The latter becomes a sign and instrument of salvation to the extent that every baptized person brings to it new possibilities and energy. And so every Christian must be helped to discover the riches of the vocation to holiness and to share the responsibility for the Church's mission in the world.

And finally it is a service to the salesian charism, the legacy we have received from God for the Church and for the young.

For its authenticity and development we bear the responsibility. This charism unites us in the Salesian Family, of which the different groups mutually enrich each other through the exchange of the different ways of living it, each of them bringing an original contribution to the whole. We joyfully try to communicate to others the different forms (religious, priestly, secular, male, female) for taking up salesian spirituality, by fostering together the vocational call.<sup>45</sup>

From what we have said can be seen the *close link between youth pastoral work and vocational guidance*, which we must consciously establish and translate into action.

<sup>45</sup> GC24, 143



Youth pastoral work is aimed from the outset at a particular objective: to make the believer attentive to the Lord's call and ready to respond to it. To make all pastoral work "vocational" means making its every expression lead the individual to discover the gift of God in his life – faith, membership of the Church, the particular talents he has received, his particular vocation and mission – and help him to recognize it, develop it, and place it at the service of the community.

Following the fundamental objective stated above, work with the young in all our foundations should ***give priority to certain options***.

In the first place I would put *preferential attention to people*, rather than to the implementation of previously prepared programs, the transmission of intellectual content, overriding concern about administration or the maintenance of structures. Attention to people means approaching them, getting to know them, making friends with them, and encouraging them to adopt a life plan.

Alongside this should be placed the *priority of evangelization*, making Christ known to young people, motivating them to allow themselves to be enlightened and questioned by him, directing them to meet him and to an ever more convinced acceptance of the meaning of life which he reveals. This is linked with a unified and progressive process of education which helps to personalize the faith and gospel values; this is well described by the GC23 which starts from the encounter with Christ and shows, with plenty of suggestions, how to start the young on the way to a commitment for the Kingdom.<sup>46</sup>

In such a process the active participation of the young people themselves is important; they must be encouraged to reflect and ask questions, urged to express themselves and give full play to the desire to try themselves out and not hesitate to live in conformity with the radical demands of the Gospel.

<sup>46</sup> cf. GC23, 149-156

It can happen that under the pressure of a multitude of activities, concerned about structures and busy about organization, we run the risk of losing sight of the horizon of our activity and appearing like so many activists or grass-roots theorists, managers of works or structures, admirable benefactors but poor as explicit witnesses to Christ, mediators of his saving work, formers of souls, and guides in the life of grace.

It is urgently necessary at the present day that in all our foundations primacy is given to evangelization, through a clear and explicit manifestation of our evangelical motivation, the effective proclamation of the person of Jesus, direct and pedagogically prepared contact with the Word of God, moments of celebration and of personal and community prayer, meetings and meaningful communication with believers and Christian communities or with those seeking the right path.

It must also be emphasized that the vocational guidance of which we are speaking is given ***following certain criteria***: we must not limit ourselves exclusively to seeking candidates for a certain kind of life, but – without neglecting a specific type of vocational pastoral work – set about rather *providing a guidance service for every young person*; fostering in both ecclesial and civic settings a *vocational culture*, i.e. a vision of life as gift and service rather than an excessive desire for self-fulfilment, as though all one's personal efforts should be directed to self-aggrandizement; we must suggest and develop some *fundamental human and evangelical attitudes* for making a responsible choice about a form of service, as an ability for self giving, for relationship and dialogue, for collaboration and sharing. Finally we must open up the vocational panorama of the Church, not least through meetings and contacts and a detailed knowledge of some outstanding witnesses.

We can also include some ***particularly important points*** to prevent our pastoral activity being mistaken as regards the intention, spirit and vocational objective which must guide it.

- *Every salesian community bears the first and main responsibility for the vocational animation of the young people with whom it is working. I repeat that vocational guidance is not the duty of only certain confreres who have received this special task, but an essential dimension of the educative and pastoral activity of the whole community and of every Salesian, as we were reminded by the GC23.*<sup>47</sup>

The young must experience the salesian community not only as a group working to provide a service for their benefit, but especially as a fervent community of faith, wanting to pass on its own unique experience and making its own vocation contagious: this is the first and most efficacious way to promote vocations.

- *Let us never neglect to pray constantly for vocations and to want them.* This is the lesson of Jesus and his reaction in the face of the crowd following him and the small group of apostles who would have to collaborate with him in the mission. Before sending them out, he asked them to pray to the Father that he would multiply the workers: "When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest'. Then Jesus summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every disease and every sickness".<sup>48</sup>

The community which does not pray unceasingly for vocations, involving others in praying for the same intention and especially the young, cannot live to the full the apostolic mandate of Christ.

The Diocese of Rome has experienced a big change in its vocational situation. At its centre it has Thursday as a day of

<sup>47</sup> cf. GC23, 247ff

<sup>48</sup> Mt 9,36 - 10,1

prayer for vocations in which the young also take part. Certainly the Lord asks us to do something about matters ourselves, but that night the Apostles spent the whole time fishing without him proved only tiring and fruitless!

– *And then we must be practical and positive.* Sometimes we have a certain reserve, a kind of fear as to what kind of reception we might get if we talk about vocations, or we may be moved by a false respect for the freedom of the young. This prevents us from putting clear and explicit proposals to them, while they are hearing them in abundance from the environment, often with little educative meaning. We get lost in the initial stage of the process and we end up with a rather general sort of Christian formation, like an impersonal *new age* with little encouragement and accompaniment for those who are avidly seeking and aiming at the highest goals.

Fr Egidio Viganò wrote: “Silent testimony and implicit invitations are not always sufficient to awaken vocations. (...) There has been unfortunately, and maybe it still lingers on in some confreres, a doubt or negligence about giving appropriate open expression to personal invitations. Failure to do so becomes, in fact, a pernicious ‘vocational silence’; one might even speak of cowardice or unawareness in respect of one’s own ministry, because a young Christian has an objective right to know of the Church’s vocational possibilities”.<sup>49</sup>

Practical and positive too should be the care given to situations where the clear and joyful living of Christ’s project is expressed in different vocational options, with a positive attitude to the world of the young, the poor, and human values; elements of spirituality are offered to those able to accept them, such as initiation to prayer, to listening to the Word, and to participation in the sacraments, the liturgy and Marian devotion; groups and associations of the Salesian Youth Movement are promoted as settings where Christian and vocational maturing is fostered,

<sup>49</sup> AGC 339, p.29



and where experience can be gained of commitment, gratuitous self-giving and volunteer work. The fostering of ecclesial and liturgical ministries is not overlooked, such as altar-servers, animators, readers and liturgy guides for assemblies, and a personal invitation to cultivate one's vocation through participation in some community connected with vocations.

– In a context of first evangelization or of re-evangelization special importance attaches to the effectiveness of the Church (and hence of our participation) in the *animation of the Christian community* which should make its presence felt in the neighbourhood, and in particular among young people. If it seems practical and close to the young from a social, cultural and religious standpoint, vocational proposals become more viable. Hence the need for the formation and development of a robust group of responsible Christians able to put forward specific suggestions which are serious and demanding.

### Follow-up.

Follow-up, or accompaniment, has been found to be decisive in the educative and pastoral process which is centred on the young person. Particularly is this the case in the salesian educative system, founded on the presence of the educator among the pupils and on a personal relationship based on mutual knowledge and interest, and on understanding and trust.

At this Don Bosco was a master without compare. The main ways of his guidance were to make contact with the youngster in the latter's own setting, and then educative conversation, spiritual direction, and sacramental contact.

In our own times much emphasis has been laid on the urgent need for follow-up through a valid counsellor, on account of the complexity of the problems young people have to face and of the personal attention they consequently need.

It is desirable, therefore, to go beyond the normal run of work (valid and indispensable though it undoubtedly is) and



follow-up each individual according to the level he has reached, and especially those who give signs of a desire and willingness to make further progress in education in the faith. This is something that is a challenge to our own preparation.

We know how to teach catechism; but do we also know something of the pathways of grace, so that we can point out habits to be avoided and others to be acquired? Do we take the time to guide those who desire it in the spiritual life, and not be content with basic religious knowledge? Don Bosco was able to give Dominic Savio pointers for a journey to holiness: how do we feel in such a connection?

To avoid all misunderstandings and for peace of mind, it is well to remember that when we speak of follow-up or accompaniment we are not talking only about individual dialogue; we are referring to a whole web of personal relationships which help the young person to interiorize the values and experiences he lives through, to adapt general proposals to his own particular situation, and to clarify and deepen his motivation and criteria.

In this way follow-up includes the whole educative environment provided by the salesian community to foster the interiorization of educative proposals, and with them vocational growth, presence among the young with the intention to get to know them and share their life – with all this promoted by the whole community and by every confrere; it leads to the growth of groups where the young are followed up by an animator and encouraged by their own companions.

An important field for follow-up, available to nearly all confreres consists of those brief occasional contacts which show an interest in the individual and his world; attention to certain moments of special significance for the youngster; moments of regular personal dialogue following a pre-designed plan concerning a simple but challenging plan of life; and contact with the salesian community to learn from it and share its life of prayer, community life and style of apostolate.

To which of these options should we give priority so that in

our works there may be this overriding attention to individuals, with various opportunities for contact and personal dialogue?

### **Some areas for special attention.**

For some time now, and after more than a little confusion in thought and action, the distinction has been recognized between vocational pastoral work in general (i.e. for everyone), and specific vocational pastoral work, i.e. the kind that tries to discover and accompany vocations of special significance in building the Kingdom.

We must promote all vocations in the Church. But today, says the document "New vocations for a new Europe", there are some vocations which call for special attention on our part. In a time like our own, in need of prophecy, it is wise to foster those vocations which are a particular sign of 'what we shall be (which) has not yet been revealed'<sup>50</sup>, like vocations to special consecration.

It is wise and indispensable to foster the special prophetic aspect of every Christian vocation, including the lay vocation, so that before the world the Church may be ever more the sign of the future, of that Kingdom which is 'already with us and is yet still to come'.<sup>51</sup>

### **– *The vocation to consecrated life***

Our society, and often the Christian community itself, does not have an adequate knowledge of the religious life, so as to understand its meaning and value.

Our way of living the consecrated life has lost visibility and in several aspects seems incomprehensible. This is something that becomes more disturbing in face of the growing presence of laity in the Church and, for us, in the salesian mission. It is true that these lay people can contribute a great deal, but

<sup>50</sup> 1 Jn 3, 2

<sup>51</sup> cf. "New vocations for a new Europe", n. 22

it is equally true that Don Bosco wanted at the centre of his Family a community of consecrated persons.

The salesian vocational proposal, nowadays more than in the past, requires that we live and present, in fidelity to Don Bosco's project, a model of the consecrated person which is meaningful for the young and which brings out the fundamental aspects of consecrated life, rather than its ministerial or functional characteristics.

It is not enough to talk about Don Bosco and the salesian mission; we must also indicate the importance and value that, in Don Bosco's plan, life in God has, as the specific reference point for the charism. "Don Bosco wanted consecrated persons at the centre of his work, persons oriented to the young and their holiness (...); with their total dedication he could give the solidity and apostolic thrust needed for the continuity and worldwide extension of the mission".<sup>52</sup>

### ***– The vocation to lay and family life***

Our educative and pastoral activity is frequently not very direct as regards vocational opportunities. It seems as though we are concerned only about certain special options of life, and that we do not consider lay and family life as a true vocation.

Many young people who are both committed and open, engaged and young married couples, university students and young workers, ask us to accompany them with more attention at the moments when they are searching for and making their vocational choice. For this reason Youth Pastoral Work and vocational animation must present to these young people the different vocational models in the Church, giving proper value to the vocational option for lay and family life. We ourselves must give greater value to Christian matrimony as a true vocation and commit ourselves to accompanying the young people in their process of discerning and maturing in this option.

<sup>52</sup> GC24, 150

### ***– Young adults: animators and volunteer workers***

There are young people who generously share in many aspects of the salesian mission; they have an authentic will for service and are looking for a life project that is meaningful for them, even if they still have to set about realizing their early dreams. We have to help them so that their experience of animation or volunteer work may have a vocational aspect and encourage them to think about their life according to the Gospel and God's plan for them.

This puts on us an obligation to enable each of them to deepen the faith and reflect on their own experiences of animation, by offering them practical opportunities of personal follow-up and making it easier for them to take part in special occasions of spirituality and Christian life. It can sometimes happen that we are more concerned about the service they provide than about them and their vocational development.

### ***– Families***

Another group of people that I think it important to link in with vocational animation are families. For a variety of reasons and many different situations, many of them – even Christian families – find it difficult to understand, respect, encourage and promote the vocational choice of their children. They often think of their future using criteria which are different from, if not opposed to, evangelical values with a vocational dimension. For this reason it is important that on our part we should know and interest ourselves in the family experience lived by our young people, accompany and help the parents in their responsibility as educators in the faith, deepen with them their sense of vocation and get them involved in the educative and pastoral process being offered to their children. There are some wonderful examples in the Congregation of families which meet together to support the vocation of their children by prayer and support; these are initiatives we should encourage!



## **"The angel declared unto Mary"**

I finish, as always, with a Marian reference.

Among biblical vocations, that of Mary is not only the most crucial in the whole of history, but also the one most clear and simple. The story is built up with references from the Bible which recall ancient hopes, express present expectations and anticipate dreams of man's salvation. Mary, who personifies the whole of humanity, feels all this in her heart and is called to place herself in God's hands so that it may be realized.

We often pause to think about Mary's words and attitudes, and rightly so. She is the icon of the Church and the model of availability.

In the Annunciation there is *an image of God*. A controversial film has tried to explore it. He is a "personal" God, who follows the vicissitudes of man and saves him by his love through recognizable mediators and actions.

*God sends an angel*: he communicates with Mary, as in many other places in the Bible through a message and a voice which is heard first interiorly before being heard exteriorly. God makes his designs known to us not only, and maybe not even principally, in solemn moments or with great panoply, but in ordinary life. The annunciation took place at Nazareth, in a private house, to a young espoused maiden living the human experience of love, family and responsibility.

We shall hear God within ourselves as we go through our lives and fulfil our duties. But as we see boys and girls around us, we must be aware that a communication with God is taking place in their hearts too. Mediations are important, but in the history of salvation God has often done without them, as in the case of Abraham, of Samuel, and of Mary. And this may be one of the experiences of the *Forum 2000* and of the *World Day of Youth*. The Lord had preceded us in the mind and desires of many young people.

God also has the mysterious power of making fruitful what



to the human eye is sterile, limited or lost. And it is not an ordinary fruitfulness but one that is rare and precious, from which the children of God have taken their origin.

This is an invitation to review our faith in the action and power of the Spirit. Just as a virgin can conceive a son, so our apparently sterile world can be fertile – through the action of the Spirit – with possibilities of which we hardly dare to dream.

Often we pause to examine the soul of Mary through her words and behaviour so as to discover something behind the external appearance. We understand that the most important and mysterious thing takes place in her heart and mind. Her conversation with the angel, whether it was a revelation, a vision, the hearing of a voice or just internal inspiration, is something private that remains hidden. It certainly involves her own life, a careful discernment of what was echoing within her. It is a trusting dialogue with God about her destiny; it is availability to God's plan; it is an entrustment of herself to him for the realization of what he is now asking of her, for all the intermediate stages and for the final result.

In every life there is an annunciation; indeed there may be many of them, all linked in some way: they propose something new, they provide light for understanding and are an invitation to be open in hope.

The annunciation reminds us that our docile, trusting and continuous response to God is something personal. There is nothing produced by man or woman that has not been conceived and matured interiorly. Thoughts, feelings, desires, plans and events take shape in our heart. There is God's sanctuary. From that sanctuary Mary confesses her intention to remain a virgin, but also her availability, her trust in God.

The Spirit does not work by compulsion nor mechanically but by suggestion, by interior dialogue, by inspiration: he takes all the time necessary to perform calmly, at human pace, a work that is complete and well ordered.

This too is our road and the one we want to help our young people to follow. May Mary grant us to be able to "amplify" and be mediators of the personal word of the Lord which resounds, not always intelligibly, in the heart of the young.

This is the wish I send you together with my fraternal greetings; may reflection on this theme of the coming General Chapter strengthen the vocational capacity of every community and every confrere.

With the protection of Don Bosco and of Mary Help of Christians,

*John F. Smith*

### A NEW PHASE FOR THE SALESIAN YOUTH MOVEMENT

Fr. Antonio DOMENECH

*Councillor General for Youth Pastoral Work*

Last August saw the celebration of the SYM World *Forum*; it was a moment of grace and a very significant salesian experience for the more than 200 young animators and the 100 between SDBs and FMAs who took part.

The SYM is not merely a desire or a dream, but a reality full of life and present in all five continents. Don Bosco, with his person and charism, creates among these young people, so diverse in language and culture, something like a current of communion, so that they all feel immediately at home; they themselves expressed it in the concluding message: *"We speak different languages, have various traditions, histories and cultures but we are united in: one passion: life in all its expressions; one rule: the Gospel of the Lord; one dream: the happiness of all young people, especially the poorest among them; and one lifestyle: salesian youth spirituality"*.

The most important result of this event will certainly be the new development of the SYM in the world, with growth in its educative quality and a deepening of the experience of salesian youth spirituality. This is the hope expressed by the Rector Major in his message to the *Forum*.

As Salesians we cannot let this event pass by without further comment: we must grasp all its implications, work to make it yield abundant fruit in the various groups and associations of the SYM present in our communities and provinces, follow up and help the young people in their commitment of animation and leadership.

In this brief communication I would like to share with you

some of the experiences of these days and the challenges to which they give rise.

### 1. Some significant experiences.

Among the numerous impressions and experiences that struck the participants, I choose some which seem to have been most widely shared and most meaningful for us Salesians.

- The enormous ***attractive force of the person of Don Bosco and of Mother Mazzarello*** and of their way of Christian life.

A deep and joyful communion was created at once among all the young participants; through different tongues they spoke the single language of salesian youth spirituality. We saw how Don Bosco's plan, his passion for life and his style marked by sincerity and the openness of personal relationships, by joy and trust in the positive qualities of the individual, attracts young people and disposes them for a total response. We have had to admit once again that the salesian charism is a gift of God for today's young people, something able to reach their heart and stir up the richest qualities of their personal dynamism.

- Youngsters with a great ***thirst for spirituality and a deep evangelical life*** in the simplicity of the normal daily round. In the various testimonies, in the communications and sharing by the groups, in the intense moments of celebration and prayer, it was very clear that many members of the SYM are looking for silence, for interior reflection, for a personal relationship with Jesus and Mary; and this not only in extraordinary moments but in the normal development of their daily life. This is evident among other things from their commitment *"to develop a personal experience with Jesus by deepening the Word of God, through reflection, personal prayer and*



*community prayer as well as sacramental celebrations, thus reliving the experience of Mary*" (cf. Concluding document).

It may happen at times that the young people of our environments and groups seem superficial, but very often they are trying in their noisy and festive manner – and indeed many are making a great effort – to live a true spiritual life. There were many requests for help, for follow-up and support in this process, precisely because they are aware that the surrounding environment is no encouragement. And this help they are waiting to receive especially from the SDB and FMA.

- Youngsters with a great ***sensitivity with regard to different situations of the present world, especially the world of very poor and marginalized young people.***

In the first two days of the *Forum* the participants presented very realistically and sometimes dramatically the situation of youngsters in their respective continents, pointing out the great challenges they have to meet. It was clear moreover from many of the testimonies that commitment to the very poor, especially through the volunteer movement, was a school in which the volunteers matured as citizens and Christians and deepened the vocational sense of life. Among the fields of action mentioned in the final document this preferential option for the poor gets special emphasis. *"The SYM must reach out beyond the familiar walls to migrants, the marginalized, the poorest wherever they are to be found"*; also emphasized was the presence of the SYM in the social and political field.

But it is interesting to note that the young people themselves are aware that the model for reference and the criteria inspiring this commitment is the Gospel. *"Those among us who shared their experiences from the different continents, reminded and encouraged us to be present among the poorest young people... and we have recognized that in order to offer an effective service, the following are necessary: adequate ed-*

*ucational competence, human maturity, and deep awareness of a relationship with Jesus, driving us into significant action”.*

- An ***experience of dialogue and true reciprocity*** among young and old in the Salesian Family.

The participants in the *Forum* were young adults who for years have been living in a salesian style and animating the SYM in their own countries; and so the young protagonists who spoke and put forward their experiences and requests also expressed clearly and decisively some guidelines for the future of the Movement in the years ahead. But it should be noticed that these young people not only accepted with interest the presence and contribution of the SDBs and FMAs who accompanied them, but wanted it and esteemed it. In the sharing sessions of the groups, in the presentation of points for reflection, in the visits to salesian places, in the moments of festivity and celebration, there was a true reciprocity in contributions which made the event, even for us adults, a real and practical school of salesianity and of youthful sensitivity.

As educators and animators these young people can be true protagonists and responsible for the SYM, as the Rector Major invited them to become in his message; but they want and seek our collaboration and our contribution as witnesses and fellow travellers.

## **2. Some important challenges and appeals.**

Looking carefully at an experience like this, we can identify some challenges which give an impetus to our educative and pastoral commitment. I point out some of them.

- A new phase of the SYM: ***towards a more mature and more flourishing future.***

This *Forum* has been a clear demonstration of the quality and maturity of the young animators of the SYM, the result of a patient educative process in the different groups, associations and salesian works, of the daily contact with persons and communities who have challenged them and stimulated their growth, of ever more total and radical experiences of commitment.

It can be said in all truth that in the Church the SYM is one of the "*providential expressions of the new spring begun by the Spirit*" and, as such, a privileged expression of salesian pastoral work for the young.

In work of this kind youth groups are the setting for the educative and pastoral relationship where educators and youngsters live a familiarity and confidence which opens hearts, the environment in which salesian values are experienced and processes of education and evangelization are developed, the surroundings in which is fostered the commitment of the youngsters themselves for their own formation and for their critical and responsible insertion in society and the Church. The SYM, as the communion of all these groups, is one of the forms of pastoral presence and allegiance which is broadest and most comprehensive.

The quality of the young animators we have witnessed in the *Forum* is, for us Salesians, a call to discover with enthusiasm the *identity of the SYM as the youthful environment in which young people can live and experience the educative and pastoral project of Don Bosco*, collaborate in its further spreading and consolidation in all our foundations, and offer it with conviction to many other youngsters outside our establishments who are awaiting suggestions of practical ways for the educational development of their capabilities and resources.

- ***The meeting of the Salesian, religious or lay, with the youngster***; is a key point in the process of human and Christian growth.

Listening to the young people telling of their experiences in the SYM, I came to realize that in the majority of their testimonies was evident the fundamental importance of their personal contact with a Salesian or a community. That first encounter started many of them on a demanding journey of faith. One of them declared: *"I discovered Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello in the Salesians and Salesian Sisters who gave me a warm welcome and accompanied me with trust and fidelity"*. Once again the youngsters have asked us to be present among them and to share their lives, especially at spontaneous and informal moments; they want to have close to them people who can see the positive things in life and regard them with hope, who live and present Jesus and the Gospel with joy and clarity, people who will accompany them in their process of Christian formation and maturing.

The FMA Mother General, Sr. Antonia Colombo, ended her intervention at the *Forum* with this brief message addressed especially to the FMA and adult members of the Salesian Family: *"Live in the world of the young, not in a desperate effort to be young yourself, but to meet real youngsters in the magnificent and dramatic reality characteristic of the present day; live in the outskirts where they are to be found; live their desires and foster their dreams, urging them forward; be able to read the questions they are feeling within themselves, the need to know where the Master lives and to respond to his call: 'Come and see'"*.

The same young people in the concluding stages of the *Forum* proposed: *To promote an active presence of Salesian priests, brothers, sisters and animators amongst the young. To take the time to listen and accompany them. This accompaniment should be one to one as well as community oriented, continuous and systematic, and it should help each person find their own Gospel path in life"*. And that, I think, is a commitment that we must all make personally!



- ***The formation of the animators***, a fundamental condition for the development of the SYM.

In recent years the SYM has seen a notable development in the formation of animators; it has passed from a rapid and intermittent formation to one that is systematic, from an occasional preparation to one that is well thought out and planned. This is a positive sign of growth. But the young people themselves are aware of the need to improve it. The Rector Major himself presents this as one of the future lines for the movement: "The responsibility and animation of the SYM demands a solid Christian life and a strong salesian identity. This is why I encourage you to give special care to your personal formation"; and he goes on to indicate some objectives to this end.

These proposals place a special obligation on our salesian communities; among the specific responsibilities pointed out to us by the GC24, is that of - "promoting spiritual, salesian and vocational formation" (cf. CG24, 159).

The young people are asking for a formation which is primarily practical, i.e. starting from personal experience in animation, from professional, social and political commitment; an experience reflected on, analyzed more deeply and shared in the group and in the Christian community. Animation of this formation requires of us a special dedication, as the GC24 further reminded us: *The SDBs must retain their specific commitment, which is also a priority and a privilege, of responding positively to the demand for and the right to formation and animation which reach them from the lay members of the Salesian Family, so that such members may become in due course animators and formative agents, in their families, in their environments and places of work, in the ecclesial community and in society.* (GC24, 145)

These are clear and precise words which we must apply directly to the formation of the animators of the SYM.

- ***The SYM, an environment of orientation and vocational promotion for all young people.***

A young woman concluded her testimony at the *Forum* with the words: *"I urge you to continue choosing the cause of Christ every day, wherever you may happen to be. Not only can we dedicate a year or two of our lives to volunteer work, but we can and must convert the whole of our life into an instrument for spreading God's Kingdom in our families, among our friends, in our work..."*. A true vocational invitation, which shows how the process of Christian formation realized in the SYM can lead, if it is well developed, to a vocational vision of life and vocational discernment and choice.

In several parts of the world, in fact, many vocations to the religious or priestly life and also to the committed lay life in the Salesian Family are flourishing among the animators. But this aspect needs further care and development. Our young people, and especially the young animators, have the right to receive from us a stimulus to think about their life and commitment in a vocational key; in their personal accompaniment we must put clearly the vocational suggestion and encourage their generous response. In the letter of the Rector Major in this present number of the Acts, there are some indications in this sense.

- ***Be among young people as true spiritual animators and effective witnesses to the preferential option for the very poor.***

There are two specific requests that the youngsters of the *Forum* make to the SDB. They want to see in us coherent and convinced witnesses of the Gospel: men truly poor and men of prayer, who are able to live and work in community; people who can accompany them and help them in the process of translating into life the values of salesian spirituality; communities which by their decisive choice for the poorest and most needy encourage them to respond with generosity to the enor-

mous problems of the world of youth. Once again their request coincides with the precise indications we have received from the GC23 and GC24, when we commit ourselves to carrying out in the EPC a specifically animating activity (cf. GC24, 159).

A call to ***work together with all the groups of the Salesian Family.***

*"The members of the different groups of the Salesian Family, young people and adults, must work together with coordinated plans for which they share responsibility, highlighting the things they have in common":* this is another pressing request from the young, and at the same time a joyful experience we lived through in those days. It is interesting that in the requests addressed to both Mother Antonia Colombo and the Rector Major, this matter of working together was always present in some form. Young people do not have the structural and historical problems that we can have, and so they prompt us to work together in virtue of the common charism and mission.

The SYM is *a reality of the whole Salesian Family*; in its animation we must collaborate with all the groups in a solid and converging activity (cf. AGC 358 pp.40-41). This is already taking place, but the future must see it consolidated and extended also to other fields and sectors.

As I said at the beginning, the *Forum* was a moment of grace and a powerful experience of salesianity; we have experienced the gift that the Lord grants to our Family in so many young people, who at the school of Don Bosco and of Mother Mazzarello are maturing in a truly Christian life heading for holiness. This is something that encourages us to continue and deepen our educative commitment and Christian formation, fostering its quality especially, so that without excluding anyone we may find adequate opportunities and possibilities for giving a decisive response to the demand to those who are trying and wanting to live a more radical Christian life in their vocational option and their salesian identity.

## 4. ACTIVITIES OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL

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### 4.1 Chronicle of the Rector Major

As already recorded in the preceding number of the Acts of the Council, the Rector Major began the month of June 2000 by presiding at the Assembly of the General Councils of the Salesian Family, which took place at the "Salesianum" from 1 to 5 June, concluding with an intervention of synthesis and guidance, which can be found at n. 5.2 of the present number of the Acts.

For the rest of the month he dedicated the greater part of his time and work to the plenary session of the General Council which began on **6 June** (cf. n. 4.2 of the present AGC).

In the meantime the ordinary work of animation of the Congregation continued (audiences, visits, meetings etc.) among which were included some items of greater significance.

One of these was the feast organized around the Rector Major at the Generalate for a family celebration of his birthday (**23 June**) and Name-day (**24 June**, feast of St John the Baptist).

On Friday, **30 June**, Fr Vecchi went with Fr Francesco Cereda,

Superior of the UPS Vice-province to Sondrio for the *Commemoration of Fr Egidio Viganò* on the 7<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his death. On this occasion he *blessed the newly re-structured premises of the salesian work* there.

In the afternoon everything went according to plan, but during the night the Rector Major suffered an excruciating headache, and the following morning it was obvious to the confreres that he was far from well. They would have liked to keep him at Sondrio for medical advice, but Fr Vecchi preferred to return to Rome as already arranged.

At Rome, on Monday **2 July**, the Rector Major underwent a nuclear magnetic resonance scan, which revealed in the right temporal region of the skull the presence of a newly formed mass of heterogeneous tissue.

When his doctor saw the results, he arranged for Fr Vecchi to be admitted immediately to the Gemelli Hospital where, in the evening of Wednesday **3 July**, he underwent an operation at the



hands of Prof. Massimo Scerrati and his team for the removal of the neoplastic tissue, which appeared to be circumscribed and had not spread.

During his stay at the Gemelli Hospital, the Rector Major was constantly assisted by members of the General Council and confreres from the Generalate, who remained with him day and night until Tuesday 18 July when he was allowed to return home. While in hospital he was visited several times by the Mother General and by various sisters and confreres. On leaving hospital Fr Vecchi was taken to our house of 'San Callisto' – which enjoys a good climate in a pleasant and protected environment – for a period of convalescence; he was assisted by Salesians of the local community and others from the Generalate, and by Sister Maria Eulalia Piñarte, a Sister of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary belonging to their community at the UPS.

Meanwhile the Vicar General kept the Congregation informed of Fr Vecchi's state of health by regular messages sent through the ANS.

On Wednesday 2 August the Rector Major returned to the Generalate and began to gradual-

ly take up his usual commitments (including meetings of the General Council). As prescribed by the doctors, about a week later he began a course of radiotherapy, which requires a daily visit to the Gemelli Hospital, and would continue for almost the whole of September.

In this period the Rector Major has had to suspend any long journeys already scheduled. But he was able to be present at some particular events.

On Saturday **12 August**, accompanied by the Vicar General, he left Rome-Fiumicino for Colle Don Bosco to meet the participants in the Youth Forum.

From the Caselle Airport he was taken to Valdocco for lunch with the confreres. There he visited the sick confreres in the infirmary and celebrated Mass in Don Bosco's rooms. In the afternoon he went on to Colle where he gave the young people his message (cf. n. 5.2 of these Acts).

In the morning of Sunday 13 August, he presided at the solemn Concelebration in the Temple of Don Bosco, and in the afternoon returned to Rome.

Back at the Generalate he celebrated the **Solemnity of the Assumption** with the confreres,

presiding at the eucharistic celebration of the community. He then took up once again the therapy routine. On **22 August**, accompanied by the Economer General, Fr Giovanni Mazzali, he made a rapid visit to the UPS to see the advanced state of work on the new "Don Bosco Library" and on the restructuring of a sector designed to house a community of students.

On **7 September**, Fr Vecchi took part in a meeting of representatives of the IUS (Salesian University Institutions) gathered at the *Auxilium* in connection with the Jubilee of university students. Fr Vecchi gave an intervention on the theme: *the salesian charism challenges university institutions*.

Among other significant moments must be recorded also a visit of the Rector Major to the sick confreres in the provincial infirmary at the Pio XI Institute of Rome, in the afternoon of Sunday 17 September – a very fraternal visit made in the family spirit.

#### **4.2 Chronicle of the General Council**

The summer plenary session of the General Council – the ninth

of the present six-year period – began on 6 June 2000 and ended on 26 July, with 26 full sittings and other meetings of groups and sectors.

As always, for a part of each sitting the Council was concerned with the numerous items coming from the provinces: appointment of provincial councillors and approval of the appointment of Rectors, the opening and canonical erection or closing of houses and their activities (during the session there were 13 openings of new foundations, 20 canonical erection of houses and 6 canonical closures), practices concerning individual confreres, and financial and administrative matters. Most of the time nonetheless was dedicated to items regarding the government and animation of the provinces, and the study of themes or problems of a more general character concerning the overall life and mission of the Congregation. We list below the main topics dealt with.

##### **1. Appointment of Provincials.**

The appointment of Provincials or Superiors of Vice-provinces was also in this session a demanding task of the Council: it followed the usual procedure, as

described in previous issues of theses Acts. The following were appointed (in alphabetical order): Álvarez Díaz Armando, provincial of Medellín, Colombia; Bastres Florence Bernardo, provincial of Santiago, Chile; Boguszewski Henryk, superior of the Special Circumscription of Eastern Europe; Cardozo Ramos Miguel Ángel, provincial of Paraguay; Filippin Claudio, provincial of the East-Venice Province of Venice-Mestre; Gore Robert John, superior of the Vice-province of Southern Africa; Mulayinkal Thomas, provincial of Dimapur, India; Rozmus Tadeusz, provincial of Cracow, Poland. Brief biographical notes on these confreres can be found at 5.4).

## **2. Reports on extraordinary visitations.**

Another important duty of the Council, as in every plenary session, was the examination of reports on extraordinary visitations carried out in the name of the Rector Major in the period February – May 2000. The reports, presented by the respective Visitors, provide the Council with a special opportunity for knowing and reflecting on the salesian reality of each province, on the life and mis-

sion of the communities, on the effectiveness of the provincial project and on prospects for the future. These result not only in useful indications for the concluding letter of the Rector Major, but also follow-up initiatives suggested by the Councillors.

Reports were made on visitations to the following provinces or circumscriptions: French West Africa, North Belgium, Brazil-Campo Grande, North Germany, India-Hyderabad, East Venice, Spain-Madrid, United States East.

## **3. Informational Reports by individual Councillors.**

As in other plenary sessions, the Councillors heading Departments (formation, youth pastoral work, salesian family and social communication, missions, finances), and also the Rector Major and Vicar General, gave brief accounts of their main activities and those of their Departments, in the service of animation of the provinces and of the Congregation at world level.

These reports were followed by discussions in the Council for the purpose of emphasizing lines of convergence, points which require further attention, or items for

which a deeper examination on the part of the full Council would seem necessary or opportune.

#### **4. Themes for study and practical decisions.**

In the course of the session, together with matters concerning the provinces and Regions, the Council took up some more general topics concerning the government and animation of the Congregation, with particular reference to points included in the six-year program, or to aspects relating to the Congregation's future. Some practical decisions were made concerning particular themes. The following were the main items dealt with.

##### **4.1. Conclusion of the revision of the "Ratio Formationis".**

During the session the Rector Major with his Council continued the work of the revision of the "*Ratio Formationis*", which the GC24 had entrusted to the Council, through the Councillor for Formation (cf. GC24, 147). In particular a new careful check was made on the normative part (*Practical rules and guidelines*) which had been studied in April, and a further examination was made of the text of the "*Criteria and norms for vocational discernment. Admis-*

*sions*", which had not been revised previously. The Councillor for Formation presented to the Council the text as reformulated by the Department after taking into account the observations received from formation guides and the consultation of specialists.

This concluded the work of revision of the *Ratio* by the Council, which consigned its observations to the Rector Major through the Councillor for Formation for eventual promulgation of the renewed text.

##### **4.2. Matters in view of the GC25.**

During the extraordinary intermediate session of April 2000 (cf. AGC 372, n. 4.1), the Rector Major with his Council studied and defined the theme of the Chapter, appointed the Moderator and laid down the criteria to be followed by the preparatory technical commission – appointed later by the Rector Major and subsequently called together by the Moderator. During the present session the Council gave some time to some practical points presented by the Moderator for an adequate preparation of the Chapter, as regards both its convocation and subsequent realization.

In particular the "Outline for reflection" drawn up by the tech-

nical commission was examined. The observations made by the General Council on the various items considered will be useful to the Moderator and the preparatory commission.

#### 4.3. *Some practical decisions.*

Among the decisions taken during the course of the session were the following:

##### 4.3.1 *Appointment of a Delegate with special faculties for the zone of Ruanda-Burundi-Goma.*

The Rector Major with his Council – after examining once again the difficult situation of the countries of Ruanda and Burundi and the area around Goma in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and considering the grave difficulties in communication (already pointed out earlier) – has decided to confer on the *Delegate of the Provincial of Lubumbashi*, appointed for the whole of this region, some special faculties for the purpose of facilitating animation and coordination. At n. 5.5 of these Acts will be found the decree of the Rector Major in this connection.

##### 4.3.2 *The process of reuniting the two Venetian Provinces.*

In connection with the process

of reunification of the two salesian provinces of the Venice area – the “San Marco” province of Venice-Mestre and the “San Zeno” province of Verona –, already considered on previous occasions, the General Council carefully examined the results of the consultation of the confreres promoted by the Rector Major, in accordance with art.157 of the Constitutions. In the light of these results and keeping in mind the observations made by the confreres, as well as elements emerging from previous meetings with the provincial councils, the Rector Major with his Council has defined a process leading to the reunification which should be completed in 2003.

##### 4.3.3. *Layout of “Don Bosco’s rooms” at Valdocco.*

The General Council examined a project for a changed layout of Don Bosco’s rooms at Valdocco, which the Council itself had asked the superiors of the ICP to have studied and prepared by qualified technical personnel.

On the project presented – made up of an architectural part and a multimedial integration – the General Council made some observations with a view to a more effective result.

The intention is still to proceed



to an adequate layout of this area, which is so precious to us, so that it can be of ever greater use, not least for pastoral purposes.

#### 4.3.4 *Examination and approval of the consolidated balance sheet for 1999.*

The consolidated balance sheet for 1999 of the "Direzione Generale Opere Don Bosco" was presented by the Economist General for examination. After careful study and discussion the Council gave its approval in accordance with the General Regulations.

The plenary session was espe-

cially noteworthy for the very serious sickness and surgical intervention suffered by the Rector Major at the beginning of July, as reported in the Chronicle of the Rector Major himself. The Vicar General and Councillors remained close to Fr Vecchi, assisting him during his stay in hospital and his subsequent convalescence.

The Council meetings continued in order to complete the program fixed at the beginning of the session; they were presided over by the Vicar General, Fr Luc Van Looy, who kept in constant contact with the Rector Major.

## 5. DOCUMENTS AND NEWS ITEMS

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### 5.1 *Strenna* of the Rector Major for the year 2001.

*The following is the text of the Strenna of the Rector Major for the year 2001. It is again inspired by the Great Jubilee of the year 2000, of which Fr Vecchi invites us to gather the fruits. Among these, particular attention is directed to missionary commitment – “our missionary spirit and solidarity” – in the light of the great and extraordinary departure of missionaries of 11 November 2000.*

*The text of the Strenna runs as follows:*

CHRIST IS GIVEN TO EVERYONE.  
LET OUR JUBILEE EXPERIENCE  
RENEW AND STRENGTHEN  
OUR MISSIONARY SPIRIT  
AND SOLIDARITY

### 5.2 A “culture of the Salesian Family” for efficacious synergy.

*Intervention of the Rector Major at the conclusion of the Assembly of the General Councils of the Salesian Family*

*The following is the text of Fr Vecchi’s closing address to the Assembly, which was held at the “Salesianum”, Rome from 31 May to 5 June 2000.*

*The intervention provides a synthesis of the work of the meeting, together with some indications and guidelines for the future.*

We have reached the final part of our meeting, which some have referred to as “historic”. According to the program there is an intervention of the Rector Major to close the work, and with it we bring to an end the reflections we have made over the past few days. After it we shall celebrate the Eucharist, which is an important aspect of our spiritual experience; then there will be the fraternal gathering for lunch, and finally the moment for leave-taking, which is also – like lunch, and sometimes more than lunch – a moment of fraternity because it is always accompanied by memories, sentiments and expectations.

### A word of thanks

I feel it a duty in the first place to thank all those who, after the Rector Major’s decision to convoke this meeting, undertook the work of its preparation and followed out its subsequent development: to Fr Martinelli who is, as you know, the Rector Major’s Councillor for the Salesian Fami-

ly in the Salesian Congregation; to those who were assigned by the Rector Major as assistants or delegates to particular groups which, from the time of Don Bosco, have been assisted by Salesians, and who form a team for reflection and work: Fr Patrick Laws, Fr Alen, Fr Bettiga and Fr Julio Olarte.

I must thank also the Rector and personnel of the Generalate who have been involved in the process of reception. You have seen that there is also a Brother who looks after the Salesianum itself. And then too I must thank the spokespersons of the different groups who expressed the results of discussions with much diligence and creativity.

Particular thanks are due to all the participants, and in the first place to those in posts of the greatest responsibility. It was no easy matter to involve all the members of the General Councils of the SDB, FMA and of the Congregations or Institutes of consecrated life, or of the lay groups, and in the case of the latter not least for reasons of work and expense. The response was prompt and confident. I saw no signs whatever of hesitation.

## Participation and results

Participation was lively and attentive in the complexity necessarily involved in a common process of reflection made by twenty or more groups. Rapid too was the convergence on conclusions, especially the more substantial ones because on those more debatable it is both wise and prudent to leave time for their deeper study. In everyone I have seen the manifest will and desire to continue the work we have begun together.

This means that our meeting, which we have called an assembly only in an informal and not a juridical sense, has already achieved its more important results which are the *mutual encounter and updated knowledge* with respect to the meeting of 1988, because – as I said in my opening intervention – the Salesian Family of the year 2000 is far different from that of 1988.

Another result is the awareness we have acquired of the geographic extent and the living reality of this Salesian Family, which is clearly not an “*Ens Rationis*” but an entity full of life in its various parts. This we have seen for ourselves, not only from the presentations of the various groups but also from our mutual conversa-

tions and exchange of experiences. We have also glimpsed *new levels of communion* beyond those already in use. Our meeting has been an experience of communion which has enabled us to discover new possibilities, different ways and means for the realization of a network of communion, to use a modern phrase.

### **Guidelines for the future**

A result of this meeting are also the lines that have emerged for future work, for a combined effort more visible and more concrete with regard to the mission. Many are the proposals that must be assessed, keeping in mind the evolution of life and a certain priority. As I looked through the final sheets of proposals that have been submitted, I became aware of their great number and realized the impossibility of implementing all of them immediately; some however could be integrated with others. What we have done, in fact, is produce a database of proposals from which a reasoned and well-considered choice can be made.

### **The Mission Statement**

Among the results of this meeting, the reflection on the possibil-

ity of communion in and through the mission, and the resulting document expressing our intentions and convergences, the *Mission Statement*, represent one of the most important points.

I particularly want to emphasize some aspects of this document, at the risk of repeating myself to some extent. It is a declaration of intent or lines of action and not a legislative text or regulations to which one can require adherence. Its primary purpose is to create an awareness, and must serve therefore for the formation of the groups and of each member of the individual groups. It must give rise to synergy of different kinds which is multiple but not institutionalized. One use of it, and this is important, is already possible from this very moment, from what I am now saying even though it may be as yet imperfect, because it serves to form a "mentality". The same thing will happen again after we have improved the statement to the best of our ability. Then too it can be used again in the same sense.

### **Kinds of synergy in the mission**

This reference to the Mission Statement provides me with an opportunity for adding some-

thing to the *possible conditions for synergy* in the mission. We must keep in mind, first of all, that we already have a common mission and that we are giving effect to it. It is the mission spelled out by the Holy Spirit in different services and initiatives, in different ways of intervention, and in a convergence of objectives, content and methods as described in all our Constitutions. The Holy Spirit has already done this when from the salesian trunk he has brought forth a new branch with specific features. This should bring us to understand that the first condition for the common mission is that each group should fulfill, with the greatest possible effort, its own particular mission with creative realization and ever new vitality. All this is already 95% of the common mission of the Salesian Family. The Spirit in fact has already organized us in groups that are male and female, consecrated and lay, with work among the young, the sick, peoples not yet evangelized, etc. If each group, with the spirit and objectives already set out in its own statute or constitutions and which are consistent with salesian spirituality, fulfils this objective, 90 or 95% of the salesian mission is already accomplished.

The first great help and the best realization therefore of the Mission Statement is the awareness of this *complementarity* in a great mission, to which must follow the openness and availability to support and sustain the common mission on the part of each group. But present-day situations need and demand *new expressions of this common mission*. Nowadays, as the groups have emphasized, there are transverse causes (such as the abuse of children, the problem of peace, the advancement of women) which concern all of us together. There is in particular global solidarity, which is being expressed in various forms and requires adherence, public declarations, and pressure on organisms which shape the life of nations and of the world. And there are also new possibilities of communication and of linkage in networks, which make possible forms of intervention and synergy of various kinds which were previously unknown. We want to give positive exploitation to these possibilities (which are still not fully explored) in the salesian mission, and to seize the opportunity offered us by our times to bring together skills we have acquired and creative innovations.



## Resources

On which resources shall we concentrate?

In the first place on the formation of personnel and the strengthening of the communities or groups.

But we need to draw up and acquire a *common culture* and a more *charismatic mentality*, for which the Mission Statement must help us.

Organizational support is certainly useful, but it has only a secondary value and must be adapted to concrete needs and situations.

Hence we continue to believe that the Salesian Family is still today primarily a charismatic reality of which the great resources are the Spirit and creativity, and with all this resting on a sufficiently organized structure.

## Co-responsible, not conditioned

There is another thing I want to say to you about the mission. We say that we share responsibility for the mission. But we must keep in mind that the mission refers to fields (areas, dimensions), objectives and spirit, and does not necessarily imply shared responsibility for every individual initiative or in every individual

place. As we gradually come down from the vision of the great extent of the mission to its practical realization, we look to see whether there are any bilateral or trilateral possibilities of collaboration, without sticking rigidly in advance to some global structure designed to guide everything. What we need is to have a clear objective and follow the course of life and reality, as we have said more than once in these days, about thinking globally and acting locally, giving strong vitality to the cells, to the essential organisms, to the intermediate organisms, and ultimately to the overall structure.

Some of the fields or aspects in which we are collaborating call perhaps for a word of comment.

## The young.

We are all trying to work with the greatest possible number of young people in various initiatives. Amongst the young people themselves are becoming solidly established, especially in recent times, youth groups which intend to follow a process of human growth and of faith in conformity with the preventive system, which is not only a method but a mode of understanding its con-

tent. In these groups arise leaders or animators – the name does not matter. You know that the *Salesian Youth Movement* is rather like a lake into which flow and converge all the groups formed in any of the branches and which want to participate in the Movement. It is a possibility offered to all of them. So far the strongest collaboration is between the Salesians and the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. At the last “*Confronto*” the Cooperators were invited and the Past Pupils Association was asked to send any youth groups of Christian formation which were arising among them. In this coming August there will be a very important meeting, already well defined in its dimensions and objectives.

This too is an initiative agreed between the branches of the Salesian Family which are close to each other and more involved in the field of the young. The FMA and SDB, in fact, have much experience, with many works and animation organisms that have been already active for a long time. But participation is open to all the others. Participation starts from a platform drawn up for each encounter or event. For the youth groups it is useful to

have a common platform of human formation, of pilgrimage of faith and of the idea of vocation, because all this contributes to the realization of the educative concept of Don Bosco.

And so there are kinds of synergy already existing and the possibility of openness to others in the Salesian Youth Movement, which is already felt to be of world extent. In Venezuela, on my recent journey, I explained once again the message sent from Colle Don Bosco, and I saw for myself how the message of the Rector Major brings together at world level the groups present in the different continents. The same thing happened in Africa.

There is therefore a field of youth where we can educate youngsters too to future synergy and future solidarity.

### **Vocational proposition**

Linked with the theme of the SYM is that of vocational suggestion, vocational guidance and our own witness. You know that Don Bosco, who held the laity in high esteem, rejoiced when he was able to give to the Church priests and candidates for the religious life. If it is true, in fact, that all men are equal in dignity and are

equally called to holiness, it is also true that in the temporal dynamics of the Kingdom of God there are vocations of particular significance in the ecclesial community. Not without reason did Fr Emma say to me with satisfaction that from his lay movement had come so many priestly vocations. It is interesting, therefore, that *we are united also in this*: that as we lead our groups and young people in a process of human and Christian formation we offer them also a range of vocations, pointing out the greater commitment to the "*sequela Christi*" represented by some of those vocations.

The purpose of the youth groups formed by particular branches of the Family is not to have a breeding round for "chickens" for our own association. Our aim is the Christian education and guidance of the young in life. We must be able to get over to the youngster the call of Christ: if in the temporal dynamics of the Kingdom one is seeking something more meaningful, there are vocations of greater commitment. We must be able to stir up in the young desires of formation and availability; we must be able to guide them towards vocations of service and

great significance (and among these I would put also the volunteer movement), all in the realism of the Kingdom.

### Missions

A third field where we are already collaborating and where the present solidarity and synergy can be increased through the provision of new possibilities, is the *missionary mentality and movement*. You know that this year marks the 125th anniversary of the first missionary expedition and that this will be a highpoint in our Jubilee celebrations: there will be an *extraordinary departure of missionaries*, enriched with lay components. In this assembly we have already seen that there are groups of the Family which include the missionary denomination in their official title.

Missionary work, nevertheless, includes a variety of expressions and initiatives, and we speak – especially at the present day – of globalized solidarity. There are new possibilities. There is the possibility of personal presence, there is the possibility of twinning and of support from a distance in various forms. As I came back from Africa and noted the

difference between the European and African worlds, I thought to myself: would it not be wonderful if there existed a twinning network able to send resources to places where they are really needed; and, where there are forces available, to be open to temporary or even definitive collaboration. This is something for planning purposes and then also for the creation of synergy.

### **The Salesian Bulletin**

Another field where we are already collaborating and one which is of great importance is that of our communication with the Church and society. Each group has its own internal organ of communication, which circulates also outside the group. But you know also that there is a review or publication which represents all the groups: it is the *Salesian Bulletin*. We say that it is an organ for the Salesian Family, for the Salesian Movement and for the whole of salesian opinion in the world, which presents the point of view of the Family on the realities through which we are living, and opens to the world a window on the salesian reality itself.

It is true that the Bulletin is

managed by the Salesian Congregation. It would be superfluous and top-heavy to create for it a huge representative organism. Greater space is being given continually to the editorial board, and the aim is to present our realities, rather than engage in a struggle for page-space which would not be seemly. From the image the Bulletin manages to create we all benefit.

### **Ecclesial visibility of the salesian presence**

It would be interesting, by means of all the things we have been thinking about, through the areas we have mentioned and others we could invent, to have a *visible presence*, as was stated in some of the groups. For my part I would rather speak of a *presence modestly visible* in the ecclesial reality, rejecting a too blatant protagonism, but equally not evading responsibility or being totally absent. From this standpoint the reserve of the Don Bosco Volunteers is perhaps a good example, precisely to emphasize that rather than being famous or a matter of widespread propaganda, it should be clear that in the local Church we are solid with the Bishop and other



priests; we must show that we are able to work for other causes, that we are concerned not only for our own particular work but for the work of the ecclesial community, which is in turn working for the salvation of the world. The *Mission Statement* will certainly help us to provide a substantial contribution which will include whatever each group or individual can offer.

### **Collaboration with salesian Bishops**

I want to emphasize this point because next year, as one of the fruits of the Jubilee Year, we are going to call together all our salesian bishops, and to them we shall speak of the particular availability of all members of the Salesian Family to collaborate with each of them in the promotion and animation of his diocese. This too we shall try to do without a fanfare of trumpets, so as to avoid compromising the bishops themselves. The dioceses of salesian bishops could well be one of the testing grounds of our ability to be present not only in the environments of the Salesian Family but specifically of the dioceses themselves, so as then to pass on further still. I remind you of

what I said on the opening day about the thought of Don Bosco: "You are collaborators of God with the salesian spirit". Where it is convenient it is expedient that you work with the Salesians and in close proximity to them. But the dream is that you will be in the local Churches, in the parishes and in the dioceses, valid collaborators and supporters of the Christian community under the unifying action of the Bishop and priests.

### **A culture of the Salesian Family**

A final reflection I would like to make is on *what is to follow this meeting*. I think that its historic character is linked to some extent with the fact that it is taking place in the year 2000 and that it has brought together the supreme moderators and their councils. Why do I say this? Because *the culture of the Family*, i.e. the vision and mentality of working as a Family, passes to the whole of the branch which you guide through your work of animation, government and formation. In this way all the members of each group become aware of this and are ready for the synergy, the convergence, the many different ways of collaboration,



flexible and easily updated, which we have hoped for when we said that all this must not result in an unwieldy organization with those at the vertex deciding what is to be done, but a powerful spiritual impulse to give life to the cells and organisms so that they themselves can create in turn the possible collaborations.

The draft of the *Mission Statement* will serve you even now to lead you to take up the substantial ideas that have to be passed on. You can have it read in turn by those of your Institutes who are able to grasp its substance and then pass it on to others. I am convinced that far more even than by the *Mission Statement* you will be helped by the experience of these days: the experience of living together, of spirituality, of fraternity, which has given a great lift to our interior trust and confidence, and the appreciation of the possibilities inherent in the charism and real Family of Don Bosco.

With the guidance afforded us by the *Statement* and with this increased confidence stemming from our experience of spirituality and fraternity, we go forwards towards the future, beginning from tomorrow, or from today if you prefer it, and even from this

very moment with the Eucharist we are about to celebrate, so that God may make it possible for our dreams to come true.

### **5.3 Message of the Rector Major to the SYM Forum**

*On Saturday 12 August the Rector Major addressed the following message to the young people and animators taking part in the SYM Forum at Colle Don Bosco. It is a message which presents a summary of some fundamental elements of the SYM, which have matured through the experience of recent years, and offers valuable indications of the path to be followed and guidelines for the future.*

#### **1. The Salesian Youth Movement has a story to tell**

The Salesian Youth Movement has a story behind it. We can certainly say it began with Don Bosco, with that typical and original experience that was the Oratory. In fact, the educational environment of Valdocco – and later that of Mornese too – turned out to be a fertile ground for fostering initiative and commitment in young people. Think of how the

various "sodalities" gave the boys a chance to engage in some meaningful group experiences to further their own growth and formation, to animate the Oratory itself, and also to show solidarity with their neighbourhood and the city. Recall, for instance, the generous help given by the boys of the Oratory to the victims of cholera in the famous epidemic that broke out in Turin in 1854. The Oratory was the place for spreading ideas and values; that is where the holiness of Dominic Savio blossomed as well as the generous availability of many other boys with whose help Don Bosco was able to launch the Salesian Congregation.

Going still further back in time, we can say that the SYM was born here at Colle, in those first apostolic experiences that John Bosco the adolescent had with his classmates and playmates. It is enough to recall his "Cheerful Society"!

Of course times change, and so do group experiences. Today's context of society, culture and the Church is quite different from that of the 1800's. Even the needs of education have changed, posing newer challenges. Nevertheless, the original intuitions

still maintain their perennial relevance and fruitfulness today. This is why, since the 1970's, the SYM has been reinventing itself as an aggregation of groups and associations aiming to meet young people's expectations in the rapidly evolving context of Church and society. It has become a constellation of groups possessing a Christian identity and recognizing in Salesian Youth Spirituality the path to faith and personal growth. A common spirituality and increased communication have created the bonds of union and belonging in this vast Movement.

The last phase of development of the SYM has centred chiefly on three points:

- a) **A growing awareness of the SYM itself.** In formulating its key-elements, in examining it more closely, and in trying to give it concrete expression in daily life, young people have been finding an answer to their quest for a way of living the Christian life inspired by the Salesian charism in a world that is pluralistic and globalized, confused and restless, beset by conflicting models and ideas, by serious problems of conscience and the search for meaning.

b) **Better and more frequent communication**, and the establishment of points of reference and wide-ranging coordination at various levels. At the national level, there are organs of linkage and meeting schedules as well as increased space for young people themselves to run the Movement. At world level too this mutually beneficial communication has grown. In the year 1988, the centenary of Don Bosco's death, the SYM displayed a tremendous vitality and grew in the awareness of its identity. Subsequently Europe hosted the 1992 and the 1999 Meetings, while similar Meetings were also held in Latin America and Asia. And now this international *Forum* is taking place. I mentioned "better communication" because, if we started off in a festive mood – and this should never be missing because it is a part of our spirituality – we have now come down to a dialogue and exchange of views on important themes of our spirituality, letting ourselves be challenged by the times in our role of educators and animators.

c) **The formation of animators.** Animators are extremely

important for communication within the SYM, for promoting a step-by-step approach to growth, and for linkage at local, national and international levels. This is why the transition from a rapid and sporadic preparation of animators to one that is sustained, systematic and well thought out is a positive sign. In different parts of the world, I have enjoyed sitting in on meetings for planning the formation of animators with the help of programmes extending over several years and having clear objectives, contents and experiences.

From all that has been said so far, we can conclude that the SYM is not just a desire or a dream; it is a reality! I have seen it in my visits to the different continents where I have come across a full range of expressions of the SYM; at other times I have met with those who have made a conscious and explicit choice of the Salesian brand of spirituality and have formed an "animating nucleus" – just like yourselves here at this Forum where you represent so many of your friends.

a) This is truly a "youth" Move-

ment, made up for the most part of young people, who however are not averse to or dismissive of the presence and friendship of lay and consecrated adults walking side by side with them. It is a "youth" Movement too because of its style and modality of animation and involvement. In many places there is a Consulting body of young people that meets regularly and even has a voice in the local Church.

b) It is a uniquely **"educative"** Movement. In other words, there are different levels of identifying with it or belonging to it, and a varying intensity of participation and involvement. All take part in it - children, boys, young men and even adults - and their education and formation takes place together. For many persons the SYM has become the place where they recharge their batteries, drawing from the sources of spirituality and zeroing in on certain fundamental values that they want to translate into concrete life-choices.

c) It is a **"world"** Movement. Here at the *Forum*, the international aspect is clearly in ev-

idence. But the reality is far more widespread than what is represented here. All this means that there is a golden opportunity for "networking", that is, for working in support of those causes that are concerned: the dignity of the person, the advancement of the young, solidarity with the poor, and the new evangelization. This world dimension can also provide opportunities for "twinning" arrangements between groups and countries, associations and Salesian works; it also makes it possible to identify possible synergies and forms of collaboration with the local Churches and civil institutions.

## 2. The Salesian Youth Movement has a future that needs to be built

And now, after taking a rapid glance at the history of the SYM and noting the progress achieved, what recommendations for the Third Millennium would I like to offer to you young people here present at this *Forum* and to the vast SYM in the world? Here are some points I entrust to you in the hope that they may help you continue along the promising



road traced out for you by the SYM.

**2.1 Live deeply the kind of Christian life that Don Bosco offers you, viz. the Salesian Youth Spirituality.**

Don Bosco has been defined by the Holy Father as a “teacher of youth spirituality” (cf. *Juvenum Patris*, n. 5) because he made the Gospel come alive for young people by latching on to their expectations and to their zest for living. He was the founder of a new and attractive apostolic spirituality. He worked out his own personal holiness through his work of education which he carried out with zeal and an apostolic heart, and at the same time he proposed holiness as the concrete goal of his pedagogy. He would often say to his boys: “I want you to be happy – in time and in eternity.” This was entirely in line with the words of Jesus in the Gospel of John: “I have told you these things so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full” (Jn 15,11).

Many young people are still stuck with the mistaken idea that the Christian life is an obstacle to full, authentic human development. Don Bosco instead offers you a way of spirituality by which

you can live every aspect of your life and every dimension of your being in all its intensity and completeness. Choosing Jesus as your Friend, Teacher and Saviour does not at all mean choosing a God who breathes down your neck, hems you in or thwarts you; it means rather choosing the God of life who wants your complete fulfilment and genuine happiness.

Live these values and this spirituality, then, and communicate to everyone the joy of following Christ after the example of Don Bosco! This is what you will be doing in a few days’ time in Rome, when the various events of the World Youth Day will invite you to grow in awareness of your heritage of faith and witness (*traditio*) and you will undertake your missionary commitment for the millennium which is about to begin (*redditio*).

In your journey of faith, aim high and do not remain satisfied with “half measures”. You too are called to holiness, to a holiness that flows from your daily life as you live in joy and optimism, as you nurture your friendship with Christ, as you take an active part in the Church and engage in responsible service. Consider yourselves called above all else to be evangelizers of your companions:



offer them the Gospel message through your cordial friendship, generous service and contagious joy of living.

## **2.2 *Live your life as a vocation and as a service***

Every young person must find in the SYM the space to discover and mature in his human and Christian vocation, and above all his vocation to follow Jesus in the service of the young in the footsteps of Don Bosco, particularly among the different groups of the Salesian Family.

For this reason take care of your interior life: prayer, the Word of God, the sacraments. Be generous and constant in service, always remembering that "there is greater joy in giving than in receiving". Take care too to grow in your affective capacity, always choosing authenticity and the fullness of love. Make an effort to learn about the various vocations in the Salesian Family and in the Church. Learn to find out and courageously embrace the path that God has traced out for each one of you, allowing yourselves to be assisted and accompanied along your path of discernment.

Above all, being educators and animators of the SYM, look upon your service as a true and proper

vocational service. Do not act "in your own name" but always consider yourselves to be collaborators of the Spirit of Jesus who calls you to educate and evangelize other young people. Live this vocational service as a fundamental attitude in your life, not only occasionally or temporarily, but constantly and perseveringly.

## **2.3 *Take care of your formation***

Your responsibility for, and animation of, the SYM requires you to have a solid Christian life and a strong salesian identity. This is the reason why I wish to encourage you to pay particular attention to your personal formation:

- a formation that enables you to live deeply your Christian vocation and your service of animation;
- a formation that enables you to be leaders in animating the SYM, in communicating the values of the SYS, and in accompanying groups and individuals in their human and Christian growth;
- a formation that enables you to critically evaluate and effectively live out your options and commitments so that you are present with your ideas and your competence in the social

- and cultural context in which you live;
- a formation that enables you to bring to maturity your resources of nature and of grace so as to offer them joyfully for the life and salvation of everyone.

**2.4 Consider yourselves the leading, responsible figures of the SYM and make sure to involve many other young people in this experience**

The SYM is in your hands; this meeting of yours is a sign of the growth and maturity of the Movement within the Salesian Family. Don Bosco wanted the Salesian group experience to be something not only “for” young people but “by” young people, something in which they feel they have the leading role.

As educators and animators, God entrusts you with the SYM as a gift for your own lives and for the lives of so many of your companions and friends. Make sure, then, that you multiply in society and in the Church this gift of Don Bosco, his spirituality and pedagogy. Joyfully communicate the richness of the experience you have lived. Be witnesses of the values of the SYM you have learned and chosen as your way of life. Get things going; try to in-

volve many other young people, and above all, those who do not belong to any group, the very poor, those who lack a point of reference, those who are searching, those who remain at a distance etc.

Help the SYM to grow by fostering a linkage among the various groups and the different faces of the Movement - within salesian establishments, and also in the several places frequented by the young “outside the walls” of salesian houses...

As young people involved in the SYM, look upon yourselves as builders of God’s Kingdom through your living insertion in your locality and in the Church as you seek to transform and enrich them with the style and values of the salesian charism.

In particular, I invite you to promote the defence of human life in all its forms, to strive to build a civilization of love based on justice, peace, solidarity and respect for every person, and to oppose every form of discrimination on the basis of race, language, economic or political status, and religion. Let the liberating announcement of the Gospel be visible in your youthful settings, according to those words of the apostle Paul: “There is no

more Jew or Greek, no more slave or free man; no more man or woman; but you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3,28).

## **2.5 Entrust yourselves to Mary, whom Jesus gave us as our Mother and Mistress**

Dear young people, you know how much Don Bosco loved Mary and considered her throughout the whole experience of his life as the Mother and Mistress that Jesus had given to him and to all his collaborators. He always entrusted to her important events and key enterprises, assuring himself always of her help. In these days when we shall celebrate her as "the one assumed into glory", let us entrust to her all our enthusiasm and the dreams of our hearts so that we may be courageous and enthusiastic leaders at the dawn of the Third Millennium.

## **5.4 New Provincials**

*The following are brief biographical notes on the new Provincials, appointed by the Rector Major with his Council in the plenary session of June-July 2000.*

1. **ALVAREZ DIAZ Armando**,  
*Provincial of Medellín, Colombia.*

Predecessor: Fr. Vidal Niebles.  
b. 22 October 1951, Medellín.  
Novitiate and 1<sup>st</sup> profession at Rionegro, 18 Jan 1971. Perpetual profession 1977. Theology: Salesian studentate, Bogotá. Ordination: Medellín 25 August 1979. Licentiate in Theology and Educational Sciences.

Member of formation community of Rionegro, and Rector there in 1987. 1994, transferred to Provincial House of Medellín and provincial councillor. Later appointed Rector of "El Sufragio" College in Medellín. 1997, recalled to Provincial House as Rector and Vice-provincial.

## **2. BASTRES FLORENCE**

*Bernardo, Provincial of Chile.*

Predecessor: Fr Natale Vitali.  
b. 21 February 1955, Santiago.  
Novitiate and 1<sup>st</sup> profession: Santiago-La Florida, 14 April 1974. Theology at Salesian studentate of Santiago. Ordination: Santiago, 31 July 1982. Completed studies in Rome (UPS) to become a formation guide. Gained Licentiate in Canon Law.

1990: Rector of prenovitiate.  
1992: Rector of studentate of philosophy, Santiago-La Florida.  
1993: provincial councillor. 1998: Rector of theologate, Santiago.

3. **BOGUSZEWSKI Henryk**, *Superior of the Special Circumscription of Eastern Europe with headquarters at Moscow.*

Predecessor: Fr Zdzislaw Weder.

b. 27 July 1946, Slupsk, Poland.

Novitiate and 1<sup>st</sup> profession: Czerwinski, 2 August 1963. Philosophy and practical training in what conditions were possible in the difficult circumstances of the time. Theology: Salesian studentate of Lad. Ordination: Lad, 19 June 1973.

After pastoral work in Warsaw Province, in 1992 (when travel was again possible) he left for Belarus and was Rector and parish priest at Asmiana/Baruny. 1994: provincial councillor of new Eastern Circumscription. 1997: sent to begin the new postnovitiate formative community at St Petersburg, where in 1998 he became Rector.

4. **CARDOZO RAMOS Miguel**, *Angel, Provincial of Paraguay.*

Predecessor: Fr Cristóbal López.

b. 18 March 1952 at Asunción.

Novitiate and 1<sup>st</sup> profession: La Plata, Argentina, 31 March 1982. Philosophy and pedagogy: Asunción. Theology at Rome (UPS). Ordination: Minga Guazú, Paraguay, 15 August 1990.

1991: provincial councillor and member of the provincial animation team. 1994: Vice-provincial and Rector of postnovitiate. 1999: Rector of "Mgr Lasagna College" at Asunción.

5. **FILIPPIN Claudio**, *Provincial of Venice-Mestre.*

Predecessor: Fr Roberto Disegna.

b. 30 December 1956, Treviso.

Novitiate and 1<sup>st</sup> profession: Albarè di Costermano (VR), 2 September 1973. Philosophy at Cison di Valmarino. Theology at Treviso Seminary and UPS. Ordination: Treviso, 17 March 1984. Licentiate in Educational Sciences from UPS, Rome.

For many years responsible for the aspirantate of Mogliano, and provincial delegate for youth pastoral and vocational work. 1994: Rector at Udine. 1996: provincial councillor.

6. **GORE Robert John**, *Superior of the Vice-province of Southern Africa.*

Predecessor: Fr Patrick Naughton.

b. 4 September 1947, Wittebome (Cape Town). Novitiate and 1<sup>st</sup> profession: Daleside-Clonlea, 16 September 1967. Perpetual profession 1973. Theology:



Maynooth, Ireland. Ordained: Lansdowne, South Africa, 1 January 1978.

After ordination involved in pastoral work at Daleside "Don Bosco". 1981: Episcopal Vicar for Education of Diocese of Johannesburg, and in charge of Centre for missionary animation. 1989: Rector at Cape Town and provincial councillor. 1994: Vice-Superior of AFM Vice-province.

7. *MULAYINKAL Thomas, Provincial of DIMAPUR, India.*

Predecessor: Fr Varghese Palathingal.

b. 2 March 1947, Kolani-Kottayam, Kerala (India). Novitiate and 1<sup>st</sup> profession: Shillong, 7 April 1966. Philosophy: in Guwahati Province. Theology: Bangalore. Ordination: 22 December 1974. Completed studies with degree of Master in Theology. Passed to Province of Dimapur, when this was erected in 1981.

1982: Rector of studentate of philosophy, Dimapur. 1985: provincial councillor. 1988-1994: Rector of Provincial House and Vice-provincial. 1994: Rector at Imphal and director of novices.

8. *ROZMUS Tadeusz, Provincial of Cracow, Poland.*

Predecessor: Fr Marian Dziubinski.

b. 29 April 1957, a Bielsko-Biala (Katowice, Poland). Novitiate and 1<sup>st</sup> profession: Kopiec, 22 August 1976. Philosophy at Cracow. Theology: Cremisan, Palestine. Ordination: Cracow, 18 June 1966. Licentiate in Sacred Scripture.

Worked for some years in the house of Oswiecim. 1992: Rector at Swietochlowice. 1997: provincial councillor.

## 5.5 Appointment of Provincial Delegate for Ruanda-Burundi-Goma.

Prot. N. 142/2000

### THE RECTOR MAJOR OF THE SOCIETY

OF SAINT FRANCIS DE SALES  
(Salesian Society of St. John Bosco)

– after considering the social and political situation prevailing in the region of the salesian foundations of the Provincial Delegation of the AFC Province (**Ruanda**: 4 works and **Burundi**: 3 works), and the difficulties experienced by confreres in communicating with the Centre of provincial animation at Lubumbashi (RDC);



- keeping in mind that to this reality of foundations which have already been a provincial delegation for many years, there has been added the area of **Goma** (RDC) with two works and the same difficulties of coordination and relationship with the provincial centre;
- after having heard the opinion of the Provincial and his council, and after having had a study made by a commission of the possible solutions for a normal salesian animation of the communities and works in the two countries and in the area of Goma;
- and with the consent of the General Council given in the meeting of 9 June 2000;

**appoints  
the priest**

**FRANS VANDECANDELAERE  
DELEGATE OF THE PROVINCIAL  
OF THE AFC PROVINCE**

**for all nine of the above-  
mentioned communities  
(Ruanda-Burundi-Goma),**

even though the membership in this Delegation of the works at Goma must be considered as temporary until the overall situation becomes more stable.

The Rector Major **confers on the Delegate the following powers and duties:**

1. To maintain **regular contact with the Provincial**, so as to know and promote his directives and to suggest and throw light on opportune decisions with reference to the salesian work in the zone.
2. **To visit the communities**, speak with the confreres and give fraternal guidance to the religious life and mission of the communities. The making of the yearly canonical visitation belongs to the Provincial, who can however ask the Delegate to make it in his name.
3. To promote and consolidate among the communities **all the common aspects** of these works that can lead in due course to the setting up of a juridically independent Circumscription when, in the judgement of the Rector Major with his Council, conditions permit.
4. To promote, in practical ways, the adaptation of the **Provincial Directory and PEPS** to the reality of the Delegation. The Provincial, moreover, will cause to be drawn up and approved a **Statute of the Del-**

- egation**, in which will be set out everything laid down in this decree.
5. To foster, among the various sectors, the **administration** of the communities and works, so as to realize within the Delegation what is required by our Constitutions, keeping the Provincial and his council duly informed. This whole sector must be organized in line with the directives of the AFC Province.
  6. To suggest **movements of personnel** within the works of the Delegation. The letters of obedience will be sent out by the Provincial.
  7. To coordinate the **Spiritual Exercises, retreats** and other meetings for formation or animation for the confreres of the zone.
  8. To follow up with special attention **pastoral work for vocations** and the quality of **formation** in its various phases. In this regard he will have, with the assistance of a council, the power to **admit candidates** to the novitiate, to profession and to sacred orders, keeping the Provincial and his council always informed.
  9. To guide and coordinate the suitable formation of the various **lay groups of the Salesian Family**.
  10. To propose the opening of **new houses** for the decision of the Provincial and his council. To propose also the operations referred to in **art.188** of the Constitutions, but it remains the task of the Provincial to present requests to the Rector Major, in accordance with the Constitutions and Regulations.
  11. **To visit the Bishops** of the dioceses where Salesians are working, for the realization of work that is ever more ecclesial and effective.
- As a temporary measure** it is also laid down that:
12. For the **Provincial Chapter 2001**, because of the difficulties of those in the zone to take part in it, the Delegation will hold a special meeting "after the manner of a provincial chapter", and its proposals will form part of the contributions of the AFC provincial chapter to the GC25; (any proposals at provincial level will have to be approved by the AFC provincial chapter).

For the participation of confreres at this special meeting, norms will be followed similar to those laid down for the participation of the communities of a province in the provincial chapter. The Delegate and a representative elected at the special meeting will take part in the provincial chapter of the Province, taking with them the points of view of the confreres.

In carrying out the tasks entrusted to him, the Delegate will keep in contact not only with the Provincial, but also with the Rector Major through the Regional Councillor, keeping them properly informed.

For anything else the Delegate will act according to the Constitutions and General Regulations. In respect of duties of the religious life the Delegate will depend on his own Provincial of origin.

The present decree will enter into effect on 1 September 2000, and will be in force for three years (September 2000 - September 2003).

Rome, 9 June 2000.

Fr Juan E. VECCHI  
Rector Major

Fr Francesco MARACCANI  
Secretary general

## 5.6 Appointment of the Central Delegate of the Association of Salesian Cooperators

Prot. N. 00/0889

Rome, 17 June 2000

### Fr Antonio Martinelli

Direzione Generale Opere Salesiane  
Via della Pisana, 1111  
00163 ROME

### Mr. Roberto Lorenzini

V. Castello, 19  
37010 RIVOLI VERONESE VR  
Italy

After a broad consultation and the study of various alternatives, on 17 June 2000,

**I have appointed  
Fr Julio Olarte  
Central Delegate  
of the Association  
of Salesian Cooperators.**

It is my earnest hope and prayer that the Association may develop in quantity and quality, in conformity with the plan of Don Bosco and the present needs of the world and the Church, and that Fr Julio Olarte may be successful in the mission with which he has been entrusted.

In union of prayer,

Fr Juan Vecchi

## 5.7 New Salesian Bishop

*Mgr. Luigi Antonio SECCO, Coadjutor Bishop of WILLEMSTAD (Dutch Antilles).*

On 24 July 2000 the Osservatore Romano published the news of the appointment by the Holy Father of our confrere Fr *Luigi Antonio SECCO*, of the Province of Venezuela, as *Coadjutor Bishop of Willemstad (Dutch Antilles)*.

He was born at Piazzola sul Brenta (Padua) on 8 June 1947, and left for Venezuela when he finished his aspirantate at Bagnolo Piemonte. In Venezuela he made his novitiate at Antonio de los Altos, and his first profession on 16 August 1964. After the study of philosophy and practical training, he was sent to Cremisan in Palestine for theology and was ordained priest at Jerusalem on 27 March 1975.

On his return to Venezuela, he was for some years attached to the community of the aspirantate of Los Teques – Santa Maria. In 1979 the Superiors sent him to the salesian community of Curaçao, in the Dutch Antilles, where he subsequently became Rector (1982-1985). At Curaçao he carried out an apostolate which was highly esteemed. In 1985 he was recalled to Venezuela as Rector of the prenovitiate of Los Teques (1985-1991). At the end of six years here he was granted a year at the UPS in Rome for deeper studies, and was then in 1993 sent once again to Curaçao as Rector until 1997, when he was appointed Rector and director of novices at San Antonio de los Altos. There he received the news of his appointment as a Bishop.

### 5.8 Our dead confreres (2000 - 3<sup>rd</sup> list)

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

NAME	PLACE	DATE	AGE	PROV.
P AMORETTI DOMINGUEZ Juan	Madrid	09-09-2000	66	SLE
P BARBIERI Dino	Roma	29-09-2000	77	IRO
P BARDINI Silvio	San Juan	04-08-2000	71	ACO
P BELLUGI Aldo	Sanremo	22-08-2000	69	ILT
L BENAZZATO Giovanni	Funchal (Madeira)	15-08-2000	78	POR
P BERNIK Paul	Dimapur	17-07-2000	38	IND
P BERTI Dino	Castelfranco Veneto (TV)	25-09-2000	76	IVE
L BRUN Noël	Montpellier	12-07-2000	78	FRA
P BUNDSCHUH Johannes	Trottenbuch (Baviera)	26-07-2000	85	GEM
P BUSATTO Mario	Torino	24-07-2000	81	ICP
P CAÑO HERNÁNDEZ José	Sevilla	12-07-2000	86	SSE
L CANTÓ Remigio	Barcelona	22-04-2000	84	SBA
P CANZIAN Antonio	Civitanova Marche (MC)	07-07-2000	85	IAD
P CHIUMENTO Michele	Napoli	19-08-2000	88	IME
P CICHECKI Kazimierz	Lusaka (Zambia)	09-09-2000	81	ZMB
L COLOMBO Carlo	Arese (MI)	24-07-2000	92	ILE
P da SILVA Ramos Manoel	Recife	03-09-2000	88	BRE
P DANIEL József	Bad Tölz (Germania)	16-09-2000	79	GEM
P de la RIVA Eduardo	Buenos Aires	17-05-2000	89	ABA
L DURANTE Ettore	Torino	24-08-2000	74	ICP
P EGAN Michael	Limerick	19-07-2000	84	IRL
P ESPASANDIN RODRIGUEZ Alberto	Montevideo	03-08-2000	79	URU
P FAURE Élie	Hyères (Francia)	20-09-2000	86	FRA
P FERNANDEZ CRUZ Enrique	Málaga	24-07-2000	86	SCO
P FINOCCHI Elio	Treviso	17-09-2000	72	IVE
P FOGARTY Edward	Cochabamba	01-07-2000	81	BOL
P GAVINELLI Giovanni	Roma	03-07-2000	88	IRO
P GIUSSANI Antonio	Vighignolo (MI)	18-07-2000	86	ILE
P GUASTELLA Raffaele	Castellammare di Stabia	28-07-2000	78	IME
P GUFLER Franz	Guiratinga (MT)	25-09-2000	83	BCG
P HABIC Herman	Ljubljana	19-06-2000	77	SLO
P HOMOLA Jan	Praha	16-08-2000	69	CEP
P KACZMARCZYK Wiesław	La Isieta (Edo. Amazonas)	17-08-2000	67	VEN
L KEPPENS Gerard	Hoboken	21-08-2000	73	BEN
P LAIRESSE Georges	Caen	27-08-2000	84	FRA
L LOBINA Ottavio	Torino	31-08-2000	86	ICP
P LOSS Nicolò M.	Roma	09-07-2000	79	UPS



NAME	PLACE	DATE	AGE	PROV.
P MAESTRO Claudio	Varazze	06-09-2000	86	ILT
P MAGNI Dante	Roma	18-08-2000	79	IRO
<i>Fu Ispettore per quattro anni</i>				
P MANDÁK Josef	Brno	21-09-2000	76	CEP
P MARTINELLI Matteo	Bari	12-09-2000	74	IME
L MEDABALIMI Lourduraj	Madras	28-07-2000	61	INM
P MIKOLAJCZAK Wincenty	Lublin	01-08-2000	76	PLS
P MOLING Serafino	General Pico (La Pampa)	18-07-2000	70	ALP
P MORERA Mario	San José (Costa Rica)	17-07-2000	100	CAM
P O'BRIEN Terence	Isleworth (UK)	11-08-2000	91	GBR
P PACHACÁMAC Manuel	Ibarra	05-08-2000	80	ECU
P PARRONDO MARTIN Luis	Málaga	04-09-2000	88	SCO
L RONCO Giuseppe	Torino	11-08-2000	69	ICP
P ROSSO Eugenio	Río Gallegos	17-08-2000	91	ABA
P SABATELLI Michele	São Paulo (Brasile)	15-08-2000	60	IRO
P SAEZ MORENO José Crispín	Sevilla	10-09-2000	74	SSE
L SANTOS Ferreira João	São Paulo	21-07-2000	71	BSP
P SARZOSA Vicente	Guayaquil	17-07-2000	83	ECU
L SCHILIRÒ Francesco	Gela (CL)	28-07-2000	79	ISI
P SERRANO Luis	General Pico (La Pampa)	19-09-2000	74	ALP
P SILVA Armando Augusto	Porto	09-07-2000	68	POR
P TRENTIN Umberto	Castelfranco Veneto (TV)	02-10-2000	87	IVE
L VALESANO Severino	Roma	25-08-2000	78	RMG
P van VLIET Bertus	Prägraten (Austria)	29-08-2000	70	OLA
P VICENZI Victor	Rio do Sul	23-08-2000	93	BPA
P VILLAR Vicente T.	Miami, Florida	02-08-2000	78	SUE
P YU Ping-chiu Thomas	Hong Kong	10-08-2000	78	CIN