



acts

of the general council

year LXXXII

april-june 2001

N. 375

official organ
of animation
and communication
for the
salesian congregation

Direzione Generale
Opere don Bosco
Roma

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

OFFICIAL ORGAN OF ANIMATION AND COMMUNICATION FOR THE SALESIAN CONGREGATION

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“I HAVE COME TO DO YOUR WILL”¹
Our obedience: a sign and prophecy.

Let us talk about it again. – 1. The First and radical Beatitude. – 2. Value of religious obedience. – 2.1. “*In the head of the book it is written...*” – 2.2. Following Christ. – 2.3. Together with Mary. – 2.4. Like Don Bosco. – 3. A value in transformation. – 3.1. Cultural elements. – 3.2. Ecclesial elements. – 3.3. Signposts. – 3.3.1. From the ascetical to the mystical aspect. – 3.3.2. Members responsible for community obedience. – 4. An obedience for the present day. – 4.1. Our vocation an obedience “in formation” – 4.2. A pedagogy of obedience. – 4.3. Our vocation an obedience of life and mission. – 4.4. Our life a prophetic obedience. – 5. An obedience for the third millennium. – 6. The Annunciation: an appeal and response.

Rome, 25 March 2001
Solemnity of the Annunciation to Mary

My dear confreres,

It is not easy nowadays to speak about obedience. A change is taking place in the very concept, and it would be naïve to ignore it. It is a price we have to pay for the continuing development of democratic principles and, in many ways, from the individualistic vision of life, such as leaving everything to authority, to more mature ways of collaborating for the common good, and from the belittling of authority to giving it a more humble foundation against a background of faith.

“Obedience is no longer a virtue”, proclaims the title of a well-known book. There are those who, with a touch of non-conformist pride, declare themselves “disobedient”. And there are even those who see in obedience the “sign of an adult who never matured”. There is an element of truth in this if it refers to the delegation of responsibility which some place entirely on the one who commands. *Gaudium et Spes* assures us that a person is defined by his responsibility to history.² Our own re-

¹ Heb 10,7

² cf. GS 55

sponsibility is defined with reference to our neighbour and world history. And so obedience is a virtue when the responsibility for our life and charism is seriously assumed and shared, according to our particular situation. The Provincial Chapters are already taking place and with the approach of the GC25 it is worth our while to remember that we are all called upon to discern the will of God with regard to our future, setting aside any visions which are too individual or which smack of grinding our own axe.

But there are plenty of people who risk minting false coins. There are lone operators about, who fight their own battle and seem incapable of joining any community process. There are mavericks – it must be acknowledged with a certain bitterness – who are unconcerned about the communal objective, do not defend their own house, and are not even able to associate with the other members of the community. These are all signs of an unease which needs a remedy.

We have to admit therefore that in the current culture obedience does not have a good press. It is not one of those virtues which immediately excites fellow feeling, nor perhaps is it one of the gifts which today's young person or adult wants to possess to the extent that it becomes a habitual request in his daily prayer, for example. But the deepest reason is not found in the practice but in the failure to grasp the theological foundation we have expressed in the title. Religious obedience, in fact, is meant to be united with that of Christ for the redemption of the world.

It has been said that "if obedience is removed as a theological virtue from consecrated life, it re-emerges as a sickness". But then we find ourselves at grips with fundamentalism, which would seem to reflect a blind ideology. We find on our path strong leadership, but it does not always seem of great help in the maturing process. We have to acknowledge forms of manipulation, which in one way or another bear witness to much immaturity, and at the same time to unjustified indi-

vidualism at variance with the salesian project of life that we have taken up.

There is nothing new under the sun, but there is always the need to go back to the beginning and reflect also on the obedience of the Salesian in the prevailing ecclesial and social context, to recognize its meaning, its great value, and its new style. This gives us the opportunity to complete our reflection on the signs our community life is called upon to give to young and old through the evangelical counsels,³ not as a sacrifice of our humanity, but as an opening to a transfiguration according to Christ's humanity, as is abundantly explained in *Vita Consecrata*.⁴

1. THE FIRST AND RADICAL BEATITUDE.

Obedience is in fact an adult virtue. It can only be an adult virtue. We propose it to our pupils not to keep them always children, but to help them to mature. We speak of it in the context of consecrated life, not only because it belongs to the *a b c* of community life, but because it represents the way of entry into the Mystery of Christ, and also to his "*sancta sanctorum*", the most fruitful place of his secrets and revelations. Newman wrote: "They will not know what it means to see God, until they have obeyed him", and again "perfect obedience is the yardstick of evangelical holiness".⁵

The religious who sets out to follow Christ takes from him some fundamental attitudes. He lives a love of total donation, which renounces a seeking of anything for himself and is expressed in chastity. Through poverty he proclaims a radical sharing of his goods, which he places unswervingly at the service of communion and solidarity. By the vow of obedience he consigns his very existence to God's plan which he accepts un-

³ cf. AGC 366 and AGC 367

⁴ cf. VC 87-92

⁵ cf. J.H. NEWMAN, PPS VIII,S.5; VIII, S.14

questioningly through the mysterious interweaving of humble human mediations, often all too humble.

The vows represent the three roots of the tree of our life. It is certainly not our intention to lay down roots which are dried up and dead: what we want to do, rather, is to transplant a living tree, to give it further growth by transferring it from our own soil to his. Obedience is the sign of the "new earth" in which our life has already pitched its tent. It is the attitude underlying the cry of *Totus tuus*, which we see proclaimed on the banner of John Paul II: with him we turn to the Father, after the example of Christ, to make of his Kingdom our home.

In the Gospel there is a beatitude which explicitly speaks of the "pure of heart". There is another which refers to the "poor in spirit". Others speak of the meek, those who seek after justice, the peacemakers and the persecuted. Obedience does not receive specific mention, but we could well say that it is proclaimed in every line of the Gospel. It leads all the others. It is the totality of the Gospel which from the Annunciation to Christ's death on the cross, proclaims the beatitude of communion with the Father.

The Son obeys the Mother and the Mother the Son. In the parables good and faithful servants obey while awaiting the return of the Lord. The spirit of obedience is manifest in those brought in from the highways and byways to eat at the banquet, carrying their white robes.

It is the beatitude which links the Son intimately with the Father. Whoever wants to follow in the way of Christ is called to enter into the Mystery of his obedience.

When we read over once again what Don Bosco used to say to his sons about obedience, a topic very close to his heart, the central place given to it by the holy educator is evident, in the life of the Congregation, in the spiritual life of every Salesian, and in the light of the effectiveness of educational activity.

Don Bosco's idea is accurately reflected in the so-called "dream of the diamonds":⁶ "the largest and most brilliant sparkled in the very centre, and on it was written 'Obedience': the foundation of the whole edifice of sanctity". It is the image of a central and powerful source of energy which is transmitted at the turning points of life. And he was certainly not referring only to the kind of obedience which ends in mediation, but to that which reaches and reflects the gentle will of the Father.

Obedience, notes Don Bosco, is the easiest way to become holy; it is an energy able to sanctify every action. It is the soul of the Congregation, the hub of religious life, the compendium of perfection. It is the guardian of all virtues, the multiplier of energy and all that is good. It must be practised in an evangelical manner, not with long faces but with open hearts living in a family spirit and bearing witness to the joy and peace of those who feel themselves close to their Lord.

If you glance through the salesian constitutions and reach the section concerning the vows, you will find that the first place is given to obedience. It was not always like that. Faithful to the original arrangement made by Don Bosco, and distinct from the order followed by the Council and by ancient monastic tradition, the GC22 (1984) which prepared the definitive edition of the renewed Constitutions decided that the vow of obedience should return to the first place among the three.⁷ Don Bosco, in fact, had changed the order of the vows as found in the sources, and placed obedience first, to emphasize its power with respect to the mission, to sanctification and to communion. It is a choice which provides us with a message.

It is meant to suggest to us that "being sent" to the young is the heart of the salesian vocation: we receive it as a mandate to place ourselves on a risky but vital frontier and to stay there to the end, cost what it may. To know and to feel that he is re-

⁶ cf. BM XV,148

⁷ cf. *Project of Life of the Salesians of Don Bosco*, pp. 517-518

sponsible for young people is a characteristic of anyone who has received such a mission. "By carrying out the mission entrusted to us we relive ... Christ's own obedience".⁸ This first and telling reference to the Father who sends us and to Christ in whose obedience we insert our own, must never be debased by reducing obedience to no more than a effort of the will or an exercise of discipline.

It is also the foundation of fraternal life, in which "we all obey even though we have different tasks to perform",⁹ recognizing that it is availability to the will of God that holds the group together spiritually and saves it from the fragmentation which could derive from the subjective ideas of many persons without a principle of unity.

An obedience, practised in imitation of Christ, invokes an authority which takes its inspiration from the paternity of God, in that "family spirit of love",¹⁰ which accompanies an obedience which is prompt, joyful and sincere,¹¹ which equally rejects any feeling of victimization or any deception.

"In the community, in view of the mission entrusted to us, we all obey".¹² Obedience is seen as a condition common to all Salesians, even though they have different tasks to perform. It looks unswervingly to Christ, is nourished by his word, and lives by the daily gift of the Eucharist. It is the guarantee of unity and continuity in the Congregation, the principle which unifies its existence and offers it as a complete gift for the salvation of the young and the life of the community.

⁸ C 64

⁹ C 66

¹⁰ C 65

¹¹ cf. *ibid.*

¹² C 66

2. VALUE OF RELIGIOUS OBEDIENCE.

2.1. *"In the head of the book it is written..."*

For the apostle Paul, as sin is concentrated in Adam's disobedience, so the force of redemption is expressed in the obedience of Christ.¹³

Psalm 40 – interpreted by the writer of the Letter to the Hebrews – evokes the "Here I am" of the Son in the act of the incarnation: "Thou hast neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings; then he added, 'Lo, I have come to do thy will', as it is written of me in the roll of the book."

Obedience with, in and through Christ is an expression of the intimate and continual acknowledgement that God is our Father, which establishes the depth of his Mystery, the source of his exaltation and the thrust which leads him to always do his Father's will. This translates into speaking not our own words but those of the Father, in not performing our own works but his, in being nourished every day not by our own desire but by the daily food that is his will.¹⁴

Obedience in Christ is the awareness of "knowing himself as generated in order to be sent" – as a missionary of the Father, among broods of vipers and the hard of heart,¹⁵ to work with the Spirit's strength not for his own ends, but solely to serve the cause of the Kingdom in the ways and times and with the results known only to the Father, setting prisoners free, proclaiming the good news to the poor and to sinners the Lord's year of favour.

Christ is the *Amen*.¹⁶ He is the *Yes*¹⁷ and *Here I come*.¹⁸ He is

¹³ cf. Rom 5,18-20

¹⁴ cf. Gv 4,34; 6,38; 8,28-29; ...

¹⁵ cf Mt 12,34; 23,33; Ex 32,9; 33,5

¹⁶ Rev 3,14

¹⁷ 2 Cor. 1,19-20

¹⁸ Heb 10,7

the obedient Servant who learns obedience through his own suffering.¹⁹

Obedience in Jesus is not a simple virtue, but the very definition of his identity and the expression of his Sonship, of his being called by the Father through generation and of his continual response "Behold I come!".

Nor does Jesus limit his obedience to when he is in a heart to heart situation with the Father. He obeys even when he is heart to heart with the world. He accepts mediations with humility and realism: Joseph and Mary, who treated him as a normal boy, growing in obedience; the religious laws and customs which required him to be faithful to prayers in the synagogue and a devout pilgrim to Jerusalem; the severe rule of work and its accompanying circumstances which, especially in the case of the poor, always involve hard obedience.

Obedience sums up the entire pre-history and story of Christ, but especially the events of the passion. For Christ it was obedience to be born and lose himself, so to speak, in human flesh. It was obedience to live the hidden life of Nazareth. Obedience too was the ministry of his public life: "My food is to do the will of the Father".²⁰ And obedience finally, taken to its extreme, was committing himself to the Father's will, even to the passion and cross.

There coincide the Mystery of the salvific will of the Father, the Mystery of the redeeming obedience of the Son, and the obscure and sorrowful Mystery of human disobedience – which prompted the cowardly arm of Pilate and the actions of the executioners – destined to be vanquished once for all by the obedience of the Son of God.

"The whole existential attitude of Christ is concentrated in obedience to God, an obedience which does not arise spontaneously, but is learned through suffering (cf. Heb 5,8) and

¹⁹ Heb 5,8-9

²⁰ Jn 4,34

which leads to the cross (cf. Phil 2,8)".²¹ It is superfluous to repeat that in the actions and attitudes of Jesus we discern the secret of the transformation of the world according to the Father's will.

2.2. Following Christ.

It is in Christ's obedience that we find joined together the love of the Father and of the Son and the manifestation of the abode of the Spirit. The Spirit of obedience becomes diffused, because those who are of Christ are called to become like him, welcoming him in faith and hence in an unimaginable rapport with God.

Sacred Scripture presents obedience as being the very heart of faith, because faith is self-consignment and total abandonment to the word in the hands of God, who is wisdom, light, truth and joy, as the Psalms tirelessly repeat. Obedience means receiving from him with trust all that life has in store, the criteria of judgement, the truth of what exists, the truth of the relationship between time and eternity. Faith means readiness in receiving through grace and baptism a new identity which progressively transforms us into sons in the Son: and hence it is not out of place to call all this "obedience". Such a dimension is seen more clearly in moments of sorrow: when Abraham was to sacrifice Isaac, John the Baptist's agony in prison, Jesus accepting the bitter chalice in Gethsemane, Mary offering her crucified Son on Calvary, and the martyrs of all ages saying their joint yes to God and to death in incredibly painful circumstances.

It is no different for us who are transfigured in Christ through the sacrifice of obedience, which places us totally at God's disposal.

It is our participation in the total self-emptying of the Son, of his triple kenosis: that of the incarnation which immersed him in our human condition; that of the passion, which stripped him

²¹ ABS, *Parola di Dio e spirito salesiano* (LDC 1996), pag. 122

also of his human dignity; and that of the Eucharist, which consigns him in its daily mystery to the love and pains of man.

2.3. Together with Mary.

We obey with greater joy when we realize that we have received a Grace, after the example of Mary who, though surprised by the gift, responds with a most generous *Yes*.

Obedience prompts us to raise our eyes and contemplate the Mother of God and of the Church who with her acceptance proclaimed herself an obedient servant and became the model – or the icon, as we like to call it nowadays – of all obedience of faith. If we can see in the obedience of Abraham the beginning of the Old Testament, it is in the obedience of Mary that we greet the beginning of the New.

Being a true experience of faith, her obedience is presented in dialogue form. Mary is not just a passive listener; she does not act on her first impulse, she does not remain inert and accepting whatever comes. She questions, she wants to understand, she tries to bridge the gap, so to speak, between the unfathomable Mystery of God and the seriousness of a human experience.

Never was the obedience of a pure creature greater or more fruitful, never was a *fiat* pronounced in heaven echoed more faithfully on earth. Mary's *fiat* – notes Paul Evdokimov – “is a compendium of world history, its theology summed up in a single word”. The Armenian Mass calls the Mystery of the Incarnation – of which it is the fruit – “the ‘economy’ of the Virgin”. Into it we are called to enter, in the company of Mary.

Mary's obedience shows us the way to what Augustine calls the “greater freedom”, because it is directly linked with liberating Grace. This was well understood by the inhabitants of the city of Lucca who, in the seventeenth century, entrusted themselves to Our Lady of the Stars with the prayer: “*Vera libera, serva nos liberos*” (O thou, who art truly free, keep us free also).

Like Mary, we obey because we believe that God is there in the unfolding of our history. We recognize that we must deal with him, through mediators approved by his Church. We believe that he is deeply involved in our project of life which is also part of his.

Obedience, in the religious life, means recalling today and re-living Christ's obedience, speeding up the process of our transfiguration into him. There is also in obedience an intimate eschatological tension which expresses the desire to embrace the Christ who is coming, which becomes ever more in the intervening time and space a "sacrament of filiation" in him. In this way is sampled and, so to say, anticipated that air of freedom we shall breathe in heaven: because in heaven in God's presence, we shall be not only "free" to make further choice, but "super-free" in the sense that the choice has already been made, in full adherence to him with all the power of our will".²²

2.4. Like Don Bosco.

It was not difficult to detect in recent General Chapters an increased effort on the part of the Congregation to better understand its Founder and his place in God's plan.²³ And this not for reasons of theological academics, but to clarify the *grace and mystery* of our identity.

Meditating once again in the light of the Spirit on the whole story of Don Bosco, we find it to be a salvation event in which we too are involved, and that "for this reason his story is our story also".²⁴ "The relationship of sons and disciples that Salesians live with regard to Don Bosco"²⁵ is a true and enduring grace.

We recognize in Don Bosco the guide moulded by the Risen Christ to point out to us – educators and young people to-

²² VIGANÒ E. *Un progetto evangelico di vita attiva* (LDC 1982), pag. 139-140.

²³ cf. ABS, *Parola di Dio e spirito salesiano* (LDC 1996), pag.321-331.

²⁴ GC24, 69

²⁵ cf. ABS, *Parola di Dio e spirito salesiano* (LDC 1996), pag.323

gether – a gospel way of missionary and youthful sanctification.

For this reason it is a good thing that we should continue to love and sing, in the salesian world, that old hymn of the beatification “Don Bosco ritorna”, which well expresses our continuing commitment to “bring Don Bosco to life again in ourselves” (Bl. M. Rua).

There is a powerful analogy between the great biblical Fathers and the founders of religious families, between the descendants of the former and the followers of the latter. The descendants of the Fathers returned continually to the story of their origins to define their particular identity and better understand it: from this effort at re-reading derive many pages of the text of Sacred Scripture, in confirmation of its great holiness and presence of the Holy Spirit! In the same way, the sons of the great Founders are called upon to explore the “originating grace” of their vocation – which is made concrete in the story of the Founder – as a check on their own fidelity and to better discern the will of God.

There is therefore a mystery of obedience to God, which – because it is of a filial nature – represents the pinnacle of our human condition. It sends the Salesian back to Don Bosco and binds him with the bond of obedience as to a sign of the most authoritative testimony to his spirit – the Constitutions – in which (as Bl. Philip Rinaldi noted) “we have the whole of Don Bosco”.²⁶

This, perhaps, is the root of some of the problems in which we feel ourselves involved. We have not yet studied at sufficient depth, from a vital and spiritual standpoint, our relationship with Don Bosco, God’s prophet for us. And perhaps sometimes we have slackened too much the bond of obedience we professed “according to the way of the Gospel set out in the salesian Constitutions”,²⁷ which are centred mainly on the mission to be fulfilled with shared responsibility.

²⁶ cf. Circular Letter, 24 January 1924, ACS 23

²⁷ C 24

Undermined by subjectivism, worn down by individualism, left more upset than active on life's fringe, obligations associated with the mission sometimes become disregarded if not actually opposed, because they are linked more with the fragile and changeable sphere of law than with the solid and rocklike domain of the "gift of God" – which is the charism of Don Bosco – on which it is possible to build our own life. The GC25 with its substantial recall to the community character of our way of living, being seen and working, refocuses our attention on seeking together the will of God, which does not eliminate mediations, but gives them their full prophetic force.

3. A VALUE IN PROCESS OF TRANSFORMATION.

3.1. Cultural elements.

If the foundation of evangelical obedience is what it has always been, we must admit nonetheless that the protagonist has changed, the cultural context is different, and there has been a profound change in the relationship governing the rapport between those called to the service of authority and those who have embraced willing obedience.

The *protagonist* has changed through the ever more widely stated principle of the possibility of the individual contributing to the making of decisions and the interiorization of new attitudes linked with them. The individual enjoys greater freedom for personal expression, he feels encouraged to express his own personal initiative as a form of authentic docility and obedience, and is called upon to express his personal responsibility in ever more decisive ways, both at the stage of discernment which leads to the more important and vital decisions, and in that of accepting the consequences of what has been decided.

The safeguarding of his own happiness, the withdrawing from others the right to make decisions about his own life, the

desire to see his own point of view given proper consideration, the need to know the reason for what is happening to him beyond the pure principle of authority, his intuition about the inalienable dignity which still belongs to a person who becomes an obedient religious: all this makes us realize that the protagonist of obedience today is not as he was in the past.

It is clear of course that it is all lived and experienced with different degrees of intensity and enlightened in different ways. And it is here that applies what we said earlier. When left to human assessment, religious obedience loses its value and consistency.

The passage from a static to a dynamic society, from a structured epoch to one that is critical, from the local to the global village, has brought about a big change in the backdrop against which obedience must be viewed.

Norms, both written and unwritten, which formerly derived their strength from their very antiquity and duration are contested, or at least submitted to frequent verification.

The participative style which has come into civil life is already gaining ground in religious houses, especially as regards decisions which affect group-life, the community's future and the apostolic project with which it is entrusted.

The perception of the complex nature of reality (including pastoral reality) brings about a greater sensitivity to the frailty, unilateral nature, and problems in the making of decisions in themselves quite lawful – and sometimes even necessary – stripping authority of any facile infallibility, but at the same time leaving it a role.

The secularization of authority has led to some extent to a secularization of obedience, which must be continually enlightened by its deep Christian and charismatic sense.

The practice of placing numerous confreres in civil roles and contexts, often through legally enforceable contracts, tends to lead in such contexts to modifications, and even reserve, in the indi-

vidual's approach to obedience. It must then be strongly recalled that we professed the vow of obedience with a theological root. Everything else must be understood and accepted in this light.

The increase in formative processes, also within religious Institutes, the acquiring of an overall professional approach by many confreres, the rise of many new fields of specialization (and the consequent difficulty in being in command of them) can sometimes create a real imbalance in areas of competence between superior and religious which deeply affects the rapport of authority and obedience.

If on the one hand this makes loyal and methodical dialogue ever more indispensable, on the other it can give rise to superiors who are too timid, or who withdraw, or are held back by an acute sense of their own incompetence, and can be tempted to let things go their own way, without making the laborious effort to guide them.

3.2. Ecclesial elements.

It is precisely in this context that the obedience of the consecrated person can take on an increased theological and humanistic significance which is a mark of serene maturity. In the more properly ecclesial setting there has been a development in those areas which tend to reshape the manner and meaning of the exercise of authority and obedience.

Obedience in the Church forms part of the post-paschal attitude, through which Christ makes himself present through his Spirit. He intervenes through charismata recognized by the Church, and these include also the rapport between authority and obedience, in its particular manifestations, which are lived in the different forms of consecrated life. The religious community is a part of the Church, from which derives the authority proper to the consecrated life. And the religious delivers himself over to Christ through his body, which is the Church-Community.

The Church – like the attentive Virgin – remains in an attitude of obedience. She is called to build the Kingdom according to God's design. She is sent with the mission of evangelization and salvation she has received, and is accompanied by the tireless and fertile breath of the Spirit.

If it is true that the Church shares in the passion of Christ until the end of time – as Pascal observed – it is no less true that she is equally called, again to the end of time, to be the expression of his obedience to the Father's plan: it is Christ who obeys in us; and for this we are called to obey in Christ. But for our joy and consolation, what we follow is the gratifying will of the Father.

This is true for every Christian, and with particular force for every religious who makes of obedience a privileged channel for his fidelity and sanctification. Thomas Aquinas was convinced that man could make no greater offering to God ("*nihil maius potest homo Deo dare*"),²⁸ because in this way he hands over all that he is. This explains why the vow of obedience is considered – and not only in the Dominican tradition – the most important of the three.

The emphasis placed on the charismatic Church-as-communion, rather than on the hierarchical Church-as-institution has implied the parallel passage from accent on the duty of obedience imposed on the faithful, to accent on the discernment of the gifts of the Spirit required of the superior and those responsible for the life of the community.

The strength of the community derives from the gifts in each of its members, and the best superior is not the one who is best able to impose his will, but he who can best discover and give due value to the contribution of each member. Don Bosco's contemporaries bear uniform witness to his wisdom not only in his discernment in placing a person in the position

²⁸ cf. S.T. II,II, Q 186, art.5 e 8

best suited to him, but also in being able to exploit the true values of those who may have been set aside too hastily as being difficult, or even on the wrong track.

In speaking of discernment we must emphasize the double component of the process which, on the one hand takes place quite openly, but on the other is made through the fragile process of human mediation. It is done in the context of seeking God's will, which is normally done on vertical and communal lines. It is linked less with elements of efficiency and more with attitudes of trust. And so the elements which mark the various stages are dialogue, listening, patience, the joyful discovery of the real member, and they lead to the maturing of an obedience which – in its most successful outcome – seem more an advancement of the person concerned than an imposition of authority.

3.3. Signposts.

Cultural and ecclesial elements cause an evolution in the concept and practice of obedience.

From a prevalent insistence on the ascetical aspect of the virtue, emphasis has now passed to a deep and convinced appreciation of the mystical and Christological aspect; from an individual emphasis on a duty to be performed we have passed to a much more careful contextual assessment of its community value.

3.3.1. *From the ascetical to the mystical aspect.*

Special attention must be given to redefining our freedom, to the charismatic operation of religious obedience.

Obedience remains a kind of “dead space”, marked by the cross, because even our freedom must have its Passover if it is to be truly free and lose itself – to use the gospel expression – if it is to really find itself.²⁹

²⁹ cf. Mt 16,25; Mk 8,35; Lk 9,24

From an insistence on the renunciation of freedom, we have to pass – at the suggestion of Vatican II – to the appreciation of a freedom which is “fortifying”,³⁰ “more mature”,³¹ “more extensive”³²: it is the result of the arrival of the Spirit of freedom, who takes possession of the heart of the believer and expands there into a “space of life and resurrection”.

The flexibility of the concrete “form” of our existence is the proper mode of our obedience, by which we are always ready to “conform” ourselves to the Lord’s call (which can sometimes take us by surprise) through a disarming and bold availability which derives from abandoning ourselves into the Father’s arms.

Psalms 118 praises God’s law with a series of verses that correspond to each letter of the alphabet, as though to show that it is obedience that gives rise to the sounds, syllables and words with which we write the story of our life as believers.

For this reason, obedience is a sign and manifestation of faith. “By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called by God”.³³ Paul speaks of the “obedience of faith” in the opening and closing of the letter to the Romans (Rom 1,5; 16,26),³⁴ where he sets out a mature summary of his experience as a prophet and as a believer.

In obedience, the fundamental polarization lies not in the confrontation between superior and subject or between personal projects and the order received, but in the dialectic between the design of God and the plans of man, between the Word of God (the builder of history), and obedient listening to it by men who live in that history. “The becoming ever more ourselves will be nothing else than a continually saying of ‘yes’ to the word by which God calls us to an ever greater fullness of existence. True freedom consists in living in this attitude

³⁰ cf. LG 43

³¹ cf. PO 15

³² cf. PC 14

³³ Heb 11,8

³⁴ cf. Rom 1,5; 16,26

of listening, with our ear turned to the one who speaks so as to build his reality".³⁵

The road of obedience to God coincides with a faith that is not merely theoretical but lived in depth: it represents the sphere of our sharing in the sonship of Christ, given to us in Baptism. In this sense our obedience becomes a prophecy of faith, which consists not only in truths to believe but especially in the will to accomplish: "Not those who say Lord, Lord... but those who do..."³⁶ For this reason the vow of obedience has been defined as "the most biblical of them all", precisely because it enables us to enter into Christ's own sentiments.

Obedience is a pervasive spirit before being a particular and decisive gesture. More than a habit of prompt response, it is a permanent state of mind which engrafts us into the soul of Christ. It is a "*fiat voluntas tua*", which resounds as a fundamental chord in life's symphony and makes of each one of us "the Father's son" after the example of the Lord Jesus.

The heart of our consecrated life is an "obedient charity" which welcomes God's plan for us by living it each day in our personal vicissitudes and in the community perspectives.

3.3.2. Members responsible for community obedience.

The second point I want to emphasize, after this indispensable theological reflection, highlights the communal energy which obedience expresses.

The ecclesiology of communion – which has been revived and emphasized so much in the light of Vatican II – has made us sensitive to the community as the first recipient of the ecclesial mission, as the Body of Christ, which dwells in, animates, and is the saving force in history. When we have embraced this in faith, it makes us pass from the frustrated search for individual self-realization to the joyful gift which is the engrafting of self-transcendence, from the simple act of obedience to that

³⁵ A. PIGNA, *Consigli evangelici* (Roma 1993), pag. 425-426.

³⁶ cf. Mt 7,21

of a shared project, from the style of the "lone operator" to the humble commitment of one who is well aware that his first mission is communion. From all this emerges a change of mentality with respect to our relationship with the community and with obedience.

Nowadays, to obey means to be well aware of the interdependence and mutual relationship which characterizes our presence in community. It means also the full recovery of a sense of belonging, which cannot be only sociological but must also become affective and spiritual.³⁷ In times when filiation is weak or in decline, when membership is fragmented and fidelity uncertain – circumstances from which religious communities are not immune – an obedience properly understood and lived with joy becomes the foundation for renewed hope. And it must be said also that when we are acting in communion with renewed effort, our actions have greater salvific force.

If in some periods the aspect was prevalently that of *I obey*, today we are called upon to live the more ecclesial aspect of *We obey*. For this reason the present reflection is addressed to all Salesians without exception, confreres and superiors alike: before any distinction is considered on the basis of roles of authority, in fact, there must be unity as regards obedience of faith which we all profess. If there is a crisis, it first affects not authority but the community, which needs to rethink in consequence its whole style of obedience. The latter must be lived, in fact, also as the ability to assume a serious, mature and responsible role in the community in which we have been placed by the Lord's call.

If in times past the direct rapport with the superior was central to obedience, today greater relevance is attaching to the presence of obedience in the fabric of the community. Many acts of obedience have to be realized within the community, after the

³⁷ cf. MERKLE J. *Gathering the fragments, New times for obedience*, in *Review for religious*, June 1996

example of Jesus who obeyed the Father, but also accepted the mediation of Mary and Joseph. What happens is that lack of attention to "small mediations" leads, almost unconsciously, to neglect of those which are greater and authoritative. And yet, even in the small mediations is repeated the invitation of Ex 20,19: "You speak to us, and we will listen". In this light we must not undervalue, for example, the friendly talk with the superior,³⁸ which – albeit with the necessary adaptations³⁹ maintains a central place in the life of the salesian community.

If in the past the executive aspect could sometimes prevail, it is the participative aspect that is better emphasized and lived. It spurs the awareness of our own share in the responsibility for formulating guidelines, options and decisions concerning ourselves and the life of the community and the Congregation. Community discernment then becomes – in the case of more serious problems – a preliminary stage before the intervention of authority, and a moment of grace for both superior and confrere. In this way each one is obedient to the will of God, through an effort at discovery and realization in line with the lights each one has received, and against the common background of all of us within the charism of the Founder. Frequently the "convergence of views"⁴⁰ – which the superior should never discount without serious reasons – will help in the making of broadly agreed decisions. Sometimes, on the other hand, the confrere will need to accept the authority of the superior as the decisive element in the discernment process, "an aid and a sign which God uses to manifest his will".⁴¹

The community, therefore, is called to be the place not only of obedience but also of discernment and creativity, and not only for young confreres but for mature ones too, a place of authoritative leadership but also of shared responsibility and dialogue.

³⁸ cf. C. 70

³⁹ cf. the excellent work of Fr P. BROCARDO *Maturare in dialogo fraterno* (Rome LAS 1999)

⁴⁰ cf. C 66

⁴¹ C 67

4. AN OBEDIENCE FOR THE PRESENT DAY

4.1. Our vocation an obedience “in formation”

It has been said that “every vocation is a new day”, and so we are called to open every day – and hence our whole life – saying to our Lord: “*Here I am, to do your will*”.⁴²

It is a matter of a vocation which, at the stage of full maturity, can be recognized more as a call from the Lord than the realization on our part of a desire, perhaps lawful in itself, but which by itself is incapable of providing long-term support for our pilgrimage in life.

The Lord’s call is very often manifested through a joyful interior attraction towards the charism of one of the great Founders, who live on in the Church through their sons and daughters. It is a movement of the Spirit, who opens up a horizon and gently encourages our scared ego to say ‘yes’ with calm and confidence. Something of this kind took place in our own lives in the days when we were making our vocational option,⁴³ but it continues to take place every day through the grace of perseverance.

Our task in life therefore consists in growing in the quality of our vocational obedience, aiming at an obedience which is mature, free and joyful. This is not something we can take for granted: we see, in fact, examples of vocational obedience which have flourished even to sanctity, and others unfortunately which have faded away to insignificance.

Our own history has sometimes known the danger that some ways of living out obedience can lead to childish forms of dependence, of not accepting personal responsibility, of inability to accept roles of risk or government. Nowadays the

⁴² cf. *Nuove vocazioni per la nuova Europa*, a cura delle Congregazioni per l’educazione cattolica, per le chiese orientali, per gli Istituti di VC e le società di VA, n.26a)

⁴³ cf. VECCHI J. *Spiritualità salesiana*, LDC Turin 2001. pp.42-43

picture is changed to some extent. The hidden dangers to the fullness of evangelical and vocational obedience come especially from other sources.

They can derive from an over-emphasis on the autonomy of conscience, disjoined from one's community, or from the dimension that is at the basis of our human dignity, which is the assiduous search for God's presence and plan in our life.

Damage is sometimes done by an anti-institutional attitude – which has many roots in today's cultures – which sees authority more as a danger than a help, more as competition than collaboration, more as an adversary than an interlocutor, more as an enemy to defend ourselves against than as a grace from which to draw profit.

In such environments a mentality can get abroad which has little esteem for the Rule, for tradition and for religious discipline, which are no longer accepted as ecclesial efforts for putting the Gospel into practice, but considered rather as obsolete and cumbersome relics of a past that no longer exists.

In line with certain social trends there can arise a secular and functionalist reading of authority in the Church and in religious life, which is an obstacle to the recognition in faith of the "mediations" which, even though imperfectly, bring us into contact with the Mystery of God.

The absence too and evasion of the exercise of religious authority – which can be a tacit indication of its lack of significance on the part of those called to give it human and evangelical weight and depth – can well have lessened the joy and effectiveness of the religious obedience to which Don Bosco attributed great importance in giving serenity to salesian life.⁴⁴

The task of all who are responsible for formation (both initial and ongoing) is to build a "pedagogy of obedience" solidly centred on Christ (*"do whatever he tells you"*),⁴⁵ but capable

⁴⁴ cf. *Obedience*, in the introduction to the Constitutions.

⁴⁵ Jn 2,5

also of coming to grips with the new era in which we are called to live, changing what must be changed, but without running the risk of throwing out the baby with the bath-water.

There are some **human aspects** of personality which must be educated to make possible the serene practice of obedience. The emotive and aggressive elements which characterize our present-day culture could encourage “fusional” attitudes (re-entry into the maternal womb) which would be a serious handicap to the maturing of an adult obedience. Help is needed to live in a balanced manner the tension between dependence expressed in the need for approval, filiation and security) and independence (which involves confidence in one’s own resources, acceptance of risk and responsibility, ability to carry the cross and meet with failure etc.).

A sufficient degree of autonomy must be encouraged for the management of fraternal and social relationships, for positive integration into groups for working and communication, breathing the “relational spirituality” of which the GC24 speaks.⁴⁶

Each one should adopt the way of authenticity, able to speak and discuss with arguments and not improvisations based on laziness or compromise; he should not remain silent through fear of contradiction or isolation, but maintain a watchful journey of faith.

The new edition of the *Ratio Formationis*, recently promulgated by the Rector Major with his Council, could among other things provide means and processes leading to the attainment of these objectives.

At the same time some **spiritual attitudes** need to be strengthened.

Fundamental among these is the ability to *read with faith the events of one’s own life*. This helps us to realize that even

⁴⁶ cf. CG24 91-93

“in the valley of darkness” we need fear no evil,⁴⁷ and that through a thousand and one apparently chance events it is really God who is weaving for each one a narrative of salvation.

The discovery of the salesian charism is a personal grace⁴⁸ which the Lord has prepared for us and offers us; it will be a source of joy and tranquility, and will allow us to be active “in the manner of the *confessio fidei*”,⁴⁹ which – once we have recognized the gift we have received – will sustain the enthusiasm which leads to a knowledge of its great value. And from that stems almost contagiously the vocational evangelization which is most effective in our present-day world.

A correct understanding of the “spirituality of the incarnation” will help us to a calm acceptance of the presence of meditations as “day by day interpreters of God’s will”.⁵⁰ Rooted as they are in the Church, the universal sacrament of salvation,⁵¹ they lead us, through a humble sign, to the possibility of a real contact with God. While they urge us to live as though seeing the invisible,⁵² they make us more familiar with God’s Mystery, through which he comes close to every human being, and helps us to insert the whole of created reality into a network of grace which envelops our life in order to save it.

Church and sacraments, Founders and charismata, Rules and communities, Bishops and superiors, the world of nature and that of history, are all channels of grace which tell us something of God in the mystery of his hidden closeness to us. But among all the mediations the most noble and eloquent remains man himself, made in God’s image, and – among men – those who have received the vocation and mandate to be signs of him in a special way as shepherds. The acceptance of mediation

⁴⁷ cf. Ps 23,4

⁴⁸ cf. VECCHI J. *Spiritualità salesiana*, LDC Turin 2001, p.42 ff.

⁴⁹ cf. *Nuove vocazioni per una nuova Europa*, a cura delle Congregazioni per l’educazione cattolica, per le chiese orientali, per gli Istituti di VC e le società di VA, n.34,c)

⁵⁰ C 64

⁵¹ cf. LG 48

⁵² cf. Heb 11,27; C 21

means the understanding and realization of one of the forms of the recapitulation of all things in Christ,⁵³ transfiguring the world by the light of our faith, while we hasten towards him with the joy of sons, crying out “Maranatha”.

On occasion Don Bosco liked to distinguish between personal obedience and religious obedience, emphasizing the superior quality of the latter which is not dictated by mere empathy or the human qualities of the superior concerned, but especially by the recognition and willing acceptance of a mediation recognized in faith. From this stems freedom and peace in the act of entrustment to God and to those he has given us to guide us on our way. John XXIII expressed this in the motto: “*Oboedientia et pax*”.

4.2. A pedagogy of obedience

The “pedagogy of obedience”, to which I have referred, is meant to make less burdensome the practical life and throw light on it by basing it on the suggested attitudes in the humbly endured **concrete character of daily life**. It would be a fundamental error to present obedience as a heavy yoke when we are dealing with the loving will of the Father.

In particular, it seems necessary – in formation environments but also in all houses, especially when important issues are at stake – to launch the understanding and practice of **community discernment**, in the spirit of articles 44 and 66 of the Constitutions, in an atmosphere of prayer and mutual attention with a guide careful to make good use of all resources and let each one express his ideas. It is a matter of collecting all items that can throw light on a problem, of identifying the most decisive criteria, and of drawing the most urgent practical conclusions. This is a context in which obedience must use an outlook of faith that can read the “signs of the times”, can heed the word and heart of others, and each can make his own con-

⁵³ cf. Eph 1,13; cf. GS, 45

tribution, in joy and humility, to the reaching of a decision which concludes the common seeking process. This is something requiring all the resources of reason; discernment requires as much and there are no shortcuts.

Personal help should be given about how to *handle possible conflicts*, linked with obedience. The most serious case is that of a conflict *between obedience and personal conscience*. Sometimes complex and even dramatic situations can arise, which call for a process of calm clarification; they cannot always be decided by the exclusive judgement of the superior, but call rather for his respect and prayer. But even in these cases dialogue with the superior should accompany the confrere in charity and clarification to help him to discern the values in question, the many just criteria of judgement, and possible lines of solution.

But here I want especially to refer to occasional cases in which conscience becomes simply opposed to obedience, which may be asking for the sacrifice of a change of house or of office, a more faithful observance of the Constitutions, or to accept in connection with some fact or problem the considered judgement of the superior, which may be at variance with that of the confrere.

I point out a few simple **criteria of evaluation**.

In the first place, it should not be assumed that conflicts of this type are frequent. In religious life they are rare and exceptional, because "a religious should not easily conclude that there is a contradiction between the judgment of his conscience and that of his superior".⁵⁴

It will frequently be necessary on the other hand to devote time, prayer and dialogue to bring to the superior the indispensable contribution of our experience and our love for the young and the Congregation, and to accept from him serenely the motives and decisions reached at the end of the common process of research.⁵⁵ "In this pursuit, the religious will be able

⁵⁴ ET 28

⁵⁵ cf. Cost. 66

to avoid both an excessive agitation and a preoccupation for making the attraction of current opinion prevail over the profound meaning of the religious life".⁵⁶

Next we must try to be certain that, in the sight of God, we have a "*salesian religious conscience*", which has accepted and made its own the essential elements of our vocation as consecrated persons, according the spirit of Don Bosco and the vows we have made to the Lord.

Sometimes, when handling choices or problems which are uniquely "Christian, religious and salesian", you have the impression of being in dialogue with consciences that have lost their rich internal vocational qualities and are letting themselves be guided by purely worldly criteria or by principles which are rigidly subjective. For such consciences the salesian Constitutions risk losing all their force, the religious community loses its meaning, the superior's authority becomes unlawful and the salesian mission an exclusively personal choice. In these cases the conflict experience can be the occasion of an authentic vocational revival and sometimes, sadly, of a final decision.

Generally, however, it is not vocational consistency that is at stake, but there is a conflict about the implicit or explicit application of criteria, which need to be better specified.

Sometimes a tension can arise *between obedience and efficiency*: it may seem that the act of obedience required is not sufficiently consistent with the confrere's professional expertise, nor the kind of work he knows how to handle successfully, nor his natural processes and various working and apostolic capabilities.

There is an undeniable efficacy about obedience, but it is attainable only with the eyes of faith, as a great witness of our time who was very close to the Salesian Family teaches: John Baptist Montini. In a critical and troubled phase of his life he got to thinking seriously about the meaning of his obedience.

In a letter to his father in 1942, the future Pope Paul VI wrote: "I have become difficult with friends and see little of them; I hardly ever go out...and even books seem to turn their backs on me from silent shelves; I no longer write anything and I have little time for thought and prayer (at least I would like to do something good and useful!). I must be patient! God will provide"). And God did indeed provide.⁵⁷

Friction can arise *between obedience and self-fulfilment*: each of us has his own plans in mind: objectives, ways to achieve them, time to do so. To put all this aside so as to accept God's plan – through human mediation – is not something to be taken for granted. "I seem to be here (at the Secretariat of State) through a rather strange combination of circumstances", wrote Montini on another occasion⁵⁸ – "while waiting to go back to something simpler and more to my taste. I think about the studies I have left behind, my reduced contact with the ministry, the less time I have for prayer...". "To lose oneself in order to find oneself again" is an evangelical paradox, difficult to digest by anyone who judges by the shortsighted view of his own little world.

Sometimes there is a contradiction, at least apparent, between obedience and *apostolic fruitfulness* which may strike us at first glance. Which of us, when he feels he is doing a good job in some particular post, would not find it difficult to move to another in which he sees no prospect of successful results but feels he has been sent to gather up handfuls of dead leaves. And yet, as Fr Viganò told us sorrowfully in his last Strenna, there are some times in life when fruitfulness is linked with *activity*, and there are others when it comes from *suffering*. But here worldly and secular measurements have no place: the only yardstick is the Cross.

⁵⁷ FAPPANI-MOLINARI, *G.B. Montini giovane: 1897-1944. Documenti inediti e testimonianze* (Marietti 1979), pag.364

⁵⁸ *ibid.* p.365

"I do not want to analyze my feelings", notes Montini again, "though it might enable me to overcome my sadness at having accomplished nothing of great significance; the strange thought often comes to my mind that I have not yet begun to do something real and serious that I intended when I set out to do it. But I want only to take refuge in God's grace, through which he has given the blessing, which I have never sufficiently explored, of being bound to the service of the Church and the Gospel".⁵⁹

By no means rare are cases in which is revealed a break *between obedience and prophecy*. We have the impression that we have done something really well, we have shown how it should be done, we relish the applause, we hit the headlines, we have brought honour to the Church and the Congregation... And then we get an obedience which puts a damper on the whole affair. In such circumstances we need to have a clear awareness that the true moment of real prophecy does not necessarily coincide with the moment of success or of our personal satisfaction.

The point is that, in the midst of every kind of difficulty, we must never lose sight of the suffering and obedient Christ. In times in which has rightly been recognized the dignity of "*conscientious objection*", there is all the more reason why there should be people who, with an evangelical and Pentecostal spirit, are able to exemplify – more by their deeds than by their words – the dignity of *conscientious obedience*, following the example of Jesus.

"The more you exercise your responsibility, the more you must renew your self-giving in its full significance".⁶⁰

4.3. Our vocation an obedience of life and mission.

When we read again the story of various vocations, we are

⁵⁹ *ibid.* p.363

⁶⁰ ET 27

struck by the pressing request for obedience which accompanies the Lord's call.

To Abram: "Go from your country ... to the land that I will show you".⁶¹

To Moses: "The cry of the people of Israel has come to me... Come, I will send you to Pharaoh".⁶²

To Jeremiah: "Do not say, 'I am only a youth'; for to all to whom I send you you shall go, and whatever I command you you shall speak".⁶³

To Paul: "Get up and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do!"⁶⁴

From these examples it is clear that obedience precedes the going and proclamation.

In reality what is necessary is that the one who is sent submits himself in the first place to the word he proclaims, so as to increase its effectiveness.

The hidden life at Nazareth was not time wasted, because the heart of Christ the Evangelizer was being shaped by obedience. St Benedict's three years as a solitary hermit in the grotto of Subiaco was not a parenthesis in his life but a time of obedience and listening, and the source of future fruitfulness. The Don Bosco of the 'Convitto', in the library and studying under the guidance of Fr Cafasso, precedes – and not only chronologically – the Don Bosco who loved to mix with the boys of Valdocco and scour the Porto Palazzo market-place in search of youngsters to save.

Since education is a matter of the heart, of which God alone is the master, "we can achieve nothing unless God teaches us the art and hands us the key".⁶⁵ The first stage of the mission is the obedience of the missionary. He must be a listener before

⁶¹ Gen 12,1

⁶² Ex 3, 9-10

⁶³ Jer 1, 7

⁶⁴ Acts, 9,6

⁶⁵ BM XVI, 376

he can be a preacher. The first missionary terrain is the heart of the missionary, because before all else the mission is an interior reality before it becomes an external commitment. The missionary commitment is one of personal holiness: "We must purify ourselves before we can purify others; we must be instructed before we can instruct others, be light ourselves before we can give it to others, be close to God to bring him close to others, be holy ourselves to bring holiness to others" (St Gregory Nazianzen).⁶⁶ This enables the Salesian "to make of his own life a convincing motive for credibility, and an acceptable apologia for the faith".⁶⁷

The obedience which places us in God's hands is the same obedience that ensures our fruitful insertion in the salesian community and determines our field of apostolate.

Interiorly educated by the Lord, to whom we are entrusted, and accompanied by the community in which we are serenely inserted, we go to the young not in our own name but in his: with a plan for men and women, and educative love, hope and energy which come from him through grace.

The awareness of being "sent" to the young gives to our ministry an inner stability and resilient quality: i.e. the evangelizing patience which enables us to face difficulties, meet failures in a positive manner, wait patiently for the times to mature, without letting crises transform us into a state of stagnation and vocational frustration, or into bitter and fruitless discouragement.

"Lord, make me an instrument of your love": this is a prayer attributed to St Francis of Assisi. The vow of obedience expresses the willingness to put ourselves in God's hands, to be used by him so that we become instruments for the building of the Kingdom. "To make oneself an instrument", to quote Montini again, "is the essence of self-sacrifice for anyone who knows

⁶⁶ cf. Congregation for Clergy, Conclusion of *Il presbitero Maestro della Parola, Ministro dei sacramenti, e guida della comunità in vista del terzo millennio cristiano*,

⁶⁷ cf. Congregation for Clergy, *Il presbitero Maestro della Parola, Ministro dei sacramenti, e guida della comunità in vista del terzo millennio cristiano*, C.II,2

the great value of divine action and hierarchic activity".⁶⁸ This flexibility, this total availability, whenever the salvation of the young or the service of the Gospel is at stake, Don Bosco liked to express with a gesture that the first Salesians handed down to us: "If I had twelve boys as manageable as this handkerchief I would spread the name of Jesus Christ not only throughout Europe, but far, far into the remotest lands".⁶⁹ As though in response to such an invitation a tradition grew up in the Congregation encouraging confreres who felt themselves called, to make to the Rector Major a special offer of their availability for the missions *ad gentes*. Overcoming all geographical limitations, it makes them "prepared in spirit to preach the Gospel everywhere",⁷⁰ and gives to salesian obedience a special worldwide dimension of totality. This availability for obedience – which is proper to our traditions – we celebrated with particular solemnity in the missionary expedition of the year 2000, as I already explained in an earlier letter.⁷¹

4.4. Our life a prophetic obedience.

With regard to the future of consecrated life, it has been observed that its hope of life will have a better foundation the more it can be proposed as authentic prophecy.⁷² Evidence of this is Elijah – whom both East and West include among the inspirers of consecrated life – the "courageous prophet and friend of God", who "lived in God's presence and contemplated his passing by in silence; he interceded for the people and boldly announced God's will; he defended God's sovereignty and came to the defence of the poor against the powerful of the world".⁷³

⁶⁸ o.c. p.381

⁶⁹ BM IV, 294

⁷⁰ PDV 18

⁷¹ cf. AGC 362, pp.37-39

⁷² cf. VC 84-95

⁷³ VC 84

The great "prophecy" proclaimed by religious obedience is Christ. One need only glance through the Rules of Basil, Augustine, Benedict, etc. to see that from the beginning of consecrated life, the soul of religious obedience has been the desire to commemorate Christ and his total donation to the Father and to the mission he had been given. "Indeed, the Son's attitude discloses the mystery of human freedom as the path of obedience to the Father's will, and the mystery of obedience as the path to the gradual conquest of true freedom".⁷⁴

The true prophecy – particularly requested of religious nowadays, even by reason of the vow⁷⁵ – is their style of and commitment to *ecclesial obedience*.

In the Apostolic Letter *Tertio Millennio adveniente*, in preparation for the Jubilee, John Paul II drew attention to a "crisis of obedience vis-à-vis the Church's Magisterium"⁷⁶ on which he asked us to reflect so as to face effectively the risks of our present era.

In the same document the Pope emphasizes the expediency of deepening our faith, especially in the matter of the Church's unity and the service rendered to it by the apostolic ministry. And this to "bring the members of the People of God to a more mature awareness of their own responsibilities, as well as to a more lively sense of the importance of ecclesial obedience".⁷⁷ It is a request that the sons of Don Bosco and the Salesian Family feel themselves compelled to accept, even by virtue of a family tradition, now even more relevant than in the past, which sees in loyal fidelity to the Pope and the Bishops one of the essential elements of the salesian charism.⁷⁸

The complex nature of the present time and of the changes

⁷⁴ VC,91

⁷⁵ cf. C 125

⁷⁶ TMA, 36

⁷⁷ TMA, 47

⁷⁸ cf. C 13

now taking place, the commitment to inculturation of the faith and its comparison with other religions and denominations, the ever new and massive contributions of modern human sciences, the powerful thrust of the relativism and subjectivism of our culture, the opening up of new fields of research which pose previously unasked questions, require a maturity and wisdom of choice that can maintain a dynamic and watchful balance between freedom of research and a convinced acceptance of the Magisterium of the lawful Pastors, and the proclamation of the whole truth by which the Spirit leads God's people.

Obedience of this kind appears particularly fruitful, urgent and meaningful in everything that concerns the Mystery of Christ and of the Church, the celebration and catechesis of the sacraments, the moral life of the young of the family and of Christian people in general. It is a matter of the truth with which faith enlightens our life and leads us to its fullness.

Consecrated obedience, moreover, is a powerful manifestation of the demanding nature of our donation to God; it corrects an unmotivated and badly ordered autonomy which is a widespread temptation in today's world, and proposes the dignity of a rapport which is filial and not servile, rich in a sense of responsibility and animated by mutual trust and confidence.⁷⁹

This implies – as St Thomas notes – “*quaedam disciplina*”, i.e. the style of discipleship. It rejects therefore the prejudice of the haughty self-made man, to rediscover in humility the spiritual fruitfulness which recognizes the competence and contribution of our companions in the ways of God. It acknowledges the presence of grace in the web of relationships and highlights the frailty of the situation of anyone who sets out to be “*judex in causa propria*”, at the risk of making sad if not indeed mortal mistakes.

Obedience is a discipline given to our freedom to make it a

⁷⁹ cf. VC 21

suitable instrument of liberation. Blessed is he who learns to live it according to the motto of John XXIII: *oboedientia et pax*. It is not by chance that many men and women religious are among those who have deliberately given their whole life for the Kingdom, for the cause of human rights, for the defence of women and children, for the education of individuals and peoples in general. They are the prophets and martyrs whom John Paul II prompts us to remember in connection with the Jubilee of the year 2000.

Part of salesian obedience is the courage to accept the limitations of our historical condition, which asks of us not only obedience to God but also to man, especially in certain phases and circumstances of our life. Obedience is esteemed in the young person who accepts the educator and adult as interlocutors and guides for growth. But it is also sought after in the adult as the ability to become serenely and successfully inserted in a particular context, in a working team, in a planned process, which cannot always be begun again from square one. In aging people it is expressed in the form of "placing oneself in God's hands", allowing oneself to be carried along by him as he pleases, until he takes us home to himself.

Our obedience has to proclaim the style of authority and obedience inaugurated by Christ as a service and as proclaimed in his Gospel. It is a style seen as an authentic service of God for his brethren – a service far removed from all authoritarian and complacent ways of exercising authority, and one that removes any risk of drifting into forms of power; it is a safeguard against corruptive manipulation in the exercise of authority. "The Son of man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many".⁸⁰

The obedience of the consecrated person is an expression of

⁸⁰ Mt 20,28

solidarity and intercession for all those who are called by life's rigours to obey by force or necessity; for those who have been stripped of their freedom and are unjustly imprisoned; for anyone, even within a family, who is a victim of authoritarianism or abuse and cannot taste the liberating power of love.

The voluntary obedience of the Salesian highlights the relative nature of human options and opinions, which run the risk of haughtily opposing one another, sometimes at the cost of charity.

In the rule of St Benedict there is frequent invitation to the members to try to outdo each other in mutual obedience. It is a contest which has meaning only for those who have found the pearl of freedom in the shell of obedience.

It is also authentically prophetic to place oneself obediently in "marginal" areas of service and apostolate, bearing witness to less popular or initial values, finishing up as "outcasts with the outcasts" and giving flesh to the mysterious logic of the "stone rejected by the builders", which was willingly used by the Lord for the rebuilding of his Church and the increase of its welcoming capacity.

5. AN OBEDIENCE FOR THE THIRD MILLENNIUM.

I have spoken to you about obedience because as we look at the commitments of the Congregation in the opening century to the third millennium, it is one of the elements which guarantees the consistency of its service, the quality of its mission, and the internal power of the communities. To meet these expectations obedience certainly needs to be renewed and lived at greater depth, with the expression of new and rich qualities. And in what concerns the community, calmly seeking the effectiveness of its presence, witness and service this is substantially linked with the GC25.

In the past it was customary to speak of an "obedience of place", referring especially to moving from one house to another, or to an "obedience of role" which concerned the passing from one office to another. Looking to the future we shall have to speak of a multi-purpose obedience, more complex and with more subdivisions, which will enable us to respond as individuals and communities to the challenges of the present day.

The need is felt in the first place for a *creative obedience*, which is proof against routine, and capable of giving new responses to new demands. This is the obedience proper to the prudent virgins, who were not satisfied merely to keep their lamps alight, but also had oil in reserve for going out to meet the bridegroom. It is the obedience of the servant, who does not keep his talents hidden in the ground but trades with them and makes them profitable. It is the obedience of the shepherd who in the middle of the night goes out to look for the lost sheep.

In today's society it seems difficult to follow only a conservative policy, repeating on one hand what has already been done on another. New responses have to be found for new needs. The task of a good superior is not to discourage creativity, but to guide and encourage it in the wake of what has been already accomplished. For this reason the opinion has been expressed that Don Bosco was able to transform his first followers into so many other "founders" – (we may think particularly of our missionaries).

If creativity is not to be a mere beating of the air nor end up as a short-lived firework display, it must find a place in a *community project of obedience*. The houses and their educational projects come before the confreres now called to live in them and serve them. Obedience associated with planning means, in the first place, becoming aware of the plan to which the house is working and becoming part of it in a spirit of service, and only then setting about modifying what needs modification, or making innovations where necessary.

How often, when visiting houses, one comes across groups of lay people or collaborators who are frustrated because they are tired of having to adjust perpetually, not to a plan which is continually beginning again from scratch, but to individuals, called to be rector, or parish priest, or in charge of an oratory, who seem to say – more by their deeds than by their words naturally – “*I am the plan!*”. And if the others do not like it, they do not need to stay.

A Salesian educative and pastoral plan – and it is obedience that brings it to life – necessarily refers to an educative and pastoral community. The plan is marked by a strong *communal obedience*. It is an invitation to discover the community’s available resources – especially personnel; to see how its own role is linked with those of others, which must be recognized and given their proper value; to believe with Don Bosco that “to live and work together”⁸¹ is the source of effective and valid witness, if it be true that our communion is our first mission. Obedience and community are closely linked, not only because any falling off in the first leads to a deterioration of the second, but also because the superior – the normal reference point for obedience – is also the one chiefly responsible for the religious community.

Through the community dimension we must understand that our obedience is also and always a *relational obedience*. Its central nucleus is not the “things to be done”, but the persons to be met”, the “relationships to be built”, the “hearts to be reached”. A salesian educator cannot be a solo navigator, a lone worker like a Prometheus Unbound in a relational desert. “In the community, in view of the mission entrusted to us, we all obey,⁸² and this common obedience gives rise to a relational network that we must keep in mind when constructing our

⁸¹ cf. C 49

⁸² C 66

project and offering our service. It will be of great help in this connection to embrace and cultivate the “relational spirituality”, to which the GC24 invites us.

The field and context of missionary obedience becomes broader nowadays in the *relationship with the groups of the Salesian Family* and in the ability to make effective the Common Missionary Statement which, as I said in its promulgation, is not a fixed rule for work, but a mentality and platform on which to build possible and effective collaboration. In this connection it is a matter of some importance to know and find ways of meeting the afflictions suffered by young people which are not solved but only made worse by globalization: child labourers, boy soldiers made prematurely to bear arms, children lacking even a bare minimum of family support and those submitted to criminal sexual abuse.

The relevant environments are interpersonal, professional and educative, and today we are also bound to add social and political, national and international as well.

Past-pupils, cooperators, collaborators and educators must accompany us in “founding” a right of young people to an assured normal education.

All this can be more successful if we are able to cultivate a *formative obedience*, which makes of learning a constant factor and of the working group entrusted to our care or animation a learning community. From this new style – imperative and inevitable in a society in which knowledge and information are going to play an ever more decisive part – what is still wanted is personal growth, a better quality product (including the educative product), technological updating, and a renewed organization of work and its capacity to meet the demands of the local environment.

All these elements we have mentioned should help us to live a *purposeful obedience*, i.e. one that carries a message and testi-

mony, showing to young people in a crystal-clear manner the meaning of our life. A purpose of this kind appears today to be linked especially to two factors, which are among those most sought after by today's youngsters in the matter of vocational discernment, and of which we have frequently spoken: the spiritual and community dimensions. The spiritual intelligibility of our obedience – which becomes a trusting self-abandonment to God's providence – and its ability to build a family are so many channels which make obedience intelligible to the young people of today.

In a letter of 1617 – written to Mother Favre, who was then superior of the Visitation Sisters of Lyons – St Francis de Sales examines the problem of a Sister who was very fervent and devout but not very obedient, and apparently incapable of renouncing her own opinion, lawful in itself (concerning the frequency of receiving communion, for instance, or the duration of mental prayer) so as to embrace the common practice.

“She is well off the track”, notes Francis, “if she thinks that prayer can lead her to perfection without obedience, the virtue most dear to her Spouse: in it, with it and through it he died. We know from history and experience that many religious have become holy without mental prayer, but not one of them without obedience”.⁸³

There is no doubt that, as we enter the third millennium, we are called as Salesians and communities to commit ourselves to a renewed obedience. Then we shall be ready, docile to the signs of the times to proclaim to young people Christ and the “project for mankind” made incarnate in him, with the fullness of Don Bosco's spirit.

⁸³ S.F. di Sales, *Tutte le lettere*, vol. II, 1294, (Roma EP 1967)

6. THE ANNUNCIATION: AN APPEAL AND RESPONSE.

"Let it be done to me according to your word".⁸⁴

I cannot conclude without making another reference to the Annunciation to Mary, on which I have already commented in my letter on vocations,⁸⁵ but who is also a sublime model for our obedience in faith.

The story of Mary's Annunciation is among the most beautiful in Luke's Gospel.⁸⁶ It applies not only to the past, but is a key to the reading of the present. The Gospel, in fact, is not only history, it is always proclamation as well.

The narration is built on biblical references which recall ancient hopes, express present expectations and anticipate dreams of man's salvation. Mary, who represents the whole of humanity, feels all this in herself and is called upon to place herself at God's disposal so that it may be realized.

"Rejoice": this is a greeting used by the prophets when they address the Daughter of Zion. It ensures a particular attention, the gaze of love, the goodwill of God for an individual and carries a proof of this that can be verified. It proclaims a choice which brings with it incomparable happiness. "Exult! An amazing good fortune has befallen you!"

"The Lord is with you":⁸⁷ this phrase frequently appears when God is calling someone to a mission; it is repeated in the accounts of the callings to tasks which are important for salvation. It shows that God's attention and gaze will be translated into presence, assistance, accompaniment and covenant.

"With God nothing is impossible":⁸⁸ these were the words

⁸⁴ cf. Lk 1,38

⁸⁵ cf. AGC 373, p.44 ff.

⁸⁶ Lk 1, 26-38

⁸⁷ Lk 1, 28

⁸⁸ Lk 1, 37

said to Sara, Abram's wife, desperate about her sterility at the beginning of the generation of the believers. It expresses God's decision to intervene in human history in favour of man, overcoming all limitations of nature and human freedom, and to do so through certain persons of his choice.

We are dealing with the proclamation of an event of particular importance for humanity. This is the "vocation", the "calling" of Mary to collaborate in the plan of salvation and the response of her who was to be the instrument and human mediation of the event..

She was invited, first of all, to believe that the event was possible and to believe also in herself (something much more difficult!); and then to accept to be committed to it, and furthermore to remain faithful in collaboration all through her life. And all this as an unconditional act of trust in God.

God has the mysterious power of rendering fertile what to human eyes is sterile, limited or even lost. It is an invitation to revise our faith in the action and power of the Spirit!

The Annunciation reminds us of our own vocation. It was an annunciation that moved us to follow Christ after the example of Don Bosco. Further annunciations were also the calls to accept responsibilities which call for confidence in God and awaiting the future with trust.

The Annunciation reminds us especially of how our personal response to God must be: docile, trusting and continuous, like that of Mary: *"Let it be with me according to your word"*. Mary allows herself to be moulded by the Word of God, by the Spirit of God to be the Mother of the Word. The grace of the Spirit has worked in the inner sanctuary of her heart to make her a Mother. We begin to understand the expression so dear to the Fathers of the Church that Mary conceived in her soul before conceiving in her womb.

Our own obedience in faith must likewise mature in dialogue with God and in docility to the Spirit. Our active life,

whether consecrated or lay, sometimes involves a certain tension: on the one hand there is the personal rapport with God, i.e. attention, dialogue, affectionate and grateful welcoming of the Lord; and on the other, we are concerned about the results of our activities. This is a challenge and often a temptation. We always want to do more; and little by little we begin to put our trust more in means and activities, which end up by leaving us empty unless we continually refer them to the source from which they take their force and meaning: God's invitation to collaborate with him. This is the real meaning of our obedience.

Let us pray to Mary, whom we recognize as the founder of our Congregation and the Salesian Family, that her journey of faith, manifested at the Annunciation, may also be ours, that we too may hear the call within, allow ourselves to be moulded and made fruitful by the Spirit, and respond with our own *"Here I am"* to produce apostolic results.

I do not forget you in my prayers that the work of every confrere and community may, in obedience to God's will, flourish in doing good for the young people to whom we have been sent.

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

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

2. GUIDELINES AND POLICIES

SPIRITUAL AND PASTORAL ANIMATION OF THE GROUPS OF THE SALESIAN FAMILY STRENGTHENED BY THE CHARISMATA OF PRIESTLY ORDINATION

Fr. Antonio MARTINELLI
Councillor for the Salesian Family

Setting of the theme.

The Salesian Family – declared the Special General Chapter – is a spiritual and ecclesial reality which becomes a sign and witness of the vocation of its members through their special mission according to the spirit of Don Bosco (cf. Special General Chapter 159).

It expresses moreover the communion between the various ministries of service to the People of God and integrates the particular vocations so as to manifest the richness of the Founder's charism.

In the present communication I want to draw attention to the service the *salesian priest* is called to provide through his insertion in different ways in the Groups of the Family, according to the function entrusted to him.

Some preliminary clarifications are indispensable for a correct understanding of what follows.

First: in the Salesian Family all the members are animators and operate as such. This is not a function reserved to some and excluding others.

Hence priests and lay people, men and women religious, are all animators. No one is excluded.

Animation is not the prerogative of the priest alone.

The *second* clarification is that the animation of the mem-

bers of a Group is the main task of the Group itself, of its internal organisms and of its leaders.

This means that every group organizes its own animation.

Among other animators there is the priest who must define his own service keeping in mind at one and the same time the particular grace of his ordination and the specific nature of the group within which he is called to work.

Within the limits of these clarifications the salesian priest is asked to become involved in a practical and effective manner in his salesian and priestly service.

The starting point.

Number 33 of the **Common Missionary Statement** recalls an aspect which is essential for the fulfilment of the salesian mission. It states:

"A specific role for the priest formator.

The Second Vatican Council presents priests as guides and educators of the people of God.

It writes: *"Ceremonies however beautiful, or associations however flourishing, will be of little value if they are not directed toward the education of men to Christian maturity"* (cf. PO 6).

And it justifies the statement: *"Priests therefore, as educators in the faith, must see to it either by themselves or through others that the faithful are led individually in the Holy Spirit to a development of their own vocation according to the Gospel, to a sincere and practical charity, and to that freedom with which Christ has made us free"* (cf. *ibid*).

In this way the salesian priest is called to his most significant responsibilities in the sector of formation.

The Word of God, the sacraments and particularly the Eucharist, the service of unity and charity represent the greatest treasure of the Church.

Paraphrasing some words of the Council, we may say that it is not possible to bring about the spiritual formation of an apostolic family other than by taking as its root and stem the celebration of the sacred Eucharist, which must therefore be the starting point for any education tending to form the spirit of a family.

The Groups of the Salesian Family have always shown this need for formation, and they put it forward once again through the present document”.

In this way the Common Mission Statement expresses once again a reflection and a relationship between the priest and the Salesian Family, on which we have frequently dwelt.

By way of example, I recall the circular letter of Fr Juan E. Vecchi, **The Salesian Family Is Twenty-Five Years Old** (cf. AGC 358, 1997). In the section “Service to the Salesian Family”, at point 3, *A competent service from a salesian standpoint*, the Rector Major writes:

In all of this there is a specific service I want to recall: our *priestly* service! I consider it important and that it should be offered in a more emphatic fashion. It has been improving and many confreres could tell us of their experience of the results obtained. But there is the risk of it becoming reduced to pure ‘chaplaincy’ work in celebrations at fixed times or fixed days and nothing more. In Don Bosco’s mind and practice it is of decisive importance. He is the Father and shepherd of his Family.

All that Vatican II had to say about priestly service, the many reflections made in the Congregation on this theme, the requests we receive from the Church at the present time, all these things should find our priests attentively aware of the richness of the priestly charisma.

We have to ask ourselves, dear confreres, whether we carry out the service of the word with generosity, with interior joy, competently and in a manner adapted to times and persons. Do we dedicate ourselves to the ministry of sanctification, putting forward a spiritual process and following it up by the

use of all that the Church puts at our disposal? Do we try to build up and bring to life that communion which has its origin in the vocation, its energy in the Spirit, its root in Christ, or do we sometimes remain at the level of convivial socialization?

The priestly service is one in which we can put to good use all the grace and preparation we have received" (AGC 358, pp. 33-34).

For the various priestly animators of the Salesian Family, art. 45 of the Constitutions should be kept in mind; in the paragraph concerning the salesian priest it says:

"The salesian priest or deacon brings to the common work of promoting human development and of educating in the faith the specific quality of his ministry, which makes him a sign of Christ the Good Shepherd, especially by preaching the Gospel and administering the sacraments".

Furthermore, some years ago the Department for the Salesian Family organized a **study-seminar** for the deeper analysis of the role of the priest and his service in the Groups of the Family.

For various reasons the content of the meeting, which was restricted to a few persons with experience in various areas of the Salesian Family, did not receive the usual wider publication. The meeting included representatives of the SDB, FMA, Cooperators, Past-pupils and Don Bosco Volunteers: 18 persons in all.

The seminar lasted two days and a half, and from it emerged many elements.

Recalling the contents of the study-seminar.

The reflections and group-work were organized around themes expounded by speakers who were specialists in each area concerned.

The themes were the following:

- *Pastoral* and *spiritual* animation at the present day.

- Pastoral and spiritual animation: in the light of the new demands raised by reflection on the *woman*.
- Pastoral and spiritual animation: in the light of the new perspectives raised by reflection on the *priest* of today.
- Pastoral and spiritual animation: in the light of the new perspectives raised by reflection on *consecrated life* today.
- Pastoral and spiritual animation: in the light of the new perspectives raised by reflection on the formation of *adults* today.

A schematic presentation of the contents of the days of work at this point, some years later, can serve two purposes:

- it can make clear the complexity of the theme, and
- it can offer some points of reference for provincial communities, because the theme is more urgent now that it was when the seminar was organized.

In a rapid summary I can present some of the many perspectives arising from the fruitfulness of the argument.

The contexts of the seminar.

The reflection began from the **expectations** expressed by the Groups of the Salesian Family to the Salesians meeting in the 21st General Chapter (cf. documentation of the GC21 in the central archives of the Generalate), and from the replies given by the same Chapter (cf. GC21, 529-532 for the FMA; 533-541 for the Cooperators; 542-546 for the Don Bosco Volunteers; 547-551 for the Past-pupils. The replies indicate clearly enough the requests that were made!) and which were later gathered into articles 36-45 of the present Regulations.

Also examined was the context of ecclesial **renewal** in the various sectors, reflected in the presence and action of Salesians at the service of the Groups: biblical, catechetical, pedagogical, liturgical and ecclesiological renewal.

Reference was made also to perpetually changing **culture**. Social communication, new scientific and technological discoveries, new ways of thought, are all elements which involve the Christian, consecrated and religious life.

Finally, consideration was given to the **experiences** now taking place in the Salesian Family with the object of checking up on what we have done so far, the difficulty of viewing the reality and the difficulties in the way of the practical realization of doctrinal perspectives, and the horizons at which we are aiming, so that the Salesian Family may live its vocation to the full.

The guidelines that emerged.

The lines indicated by the seminar to be followed to ensure the significant and effective presence of the salesian priest are three in number:

- a *doctrinal preparation*, suited to the new requirements of the members of the various Groups.

We need only call to mind the rich diversity existing within the Family: priests and laity, religious and consecrated persons, young people and adults.

- an initial and ongoing *formation* of the Salesian, open to the originality of the various Groups which live a common vocation.

The community can be positive in its role of animating nucleus in proportion to its openness to other roles.

- a shared experience among all the Groups which realize the salesian charism, with the peculiarities linked with personal and community identity.

Nowadays the services to be provided for the Christian growth and maturity of others arise from practical life, reflection on which can lead to light and strength.

We must recognize that the indications of the study-

seminar and its deeper analysis remain decisive still at the present day.

I will try to re-express the guidelines to make them more immediately practical.

The doctrinal preparation of the salesian priest.

A first element to be recalled was competence, sustained by solid doctrine.

The roles of the salesian priest in the Groups of the Salesian Family, vary from one Group to another:

- *delegate*: for the Cooperators and Past-pupils,
- *ecclesiastical assistant*: for the Don Bosco Volunteers and the Male Volunteers (CDB),
- spiritual *animator*: for the ADMA,
- *spiritual director*: for the Damas,
- *chaplain* for religious services: for all the other Groups that require the services of a priest.

Defining the function of the priest is not just a question of words. Underlying the words are different realities.

The most exacting service is that of *delegate*, which to some extent includes all the other indications.

The one implying the minimum effective presence would seem to be that of *chaplain*. And yet, that of chaplain, unless its function be reduced “to celebrations at fixed times and on fixed days and nothing more” – as the Rector Major says in the above-mentioned letter – can become a service for the human, Christian and salesian growth of the Group.

The seminar recalled two indispensable conditions:

- working as *animators*, filling the word with the rich content that animation has in salesian reflection.
- the study and recognition of the *unique nature* of each Group.

These are the aspects to which I want to recall the attention of confreres who are called to animate a Group of the Family.

Study more deeply the reality of animation.

The first condition here is to make of animation one's normal attitude of being, thinking and acting.

There are some terms circulating nowadays among the Groups which indicate the objectives for action and organization of the group's internal and external life. Frequently heard are the words *autonomy*, *communion* and *reciprocity*.

The thoughts expressed in the following paragraphs are another way of speaking of the same reality, and especially for indicating the root and reason for the choice of the three words mentioned.

The salesian priest, as an animator within the Groups of the Family, is called to live certain fundamental criteria, which form the substance of spiritual and pastoral animation.

– *To be able to recognize and understand the difference.*

The Salesian Family is not a kind of leveling down. Quite the contrary.

The difference is to be seen and lived as a rich value for the members and as a contribution towards a useful and enriching comparison.

Precisely because one is different from others, the exchange is possible of something important and profitable which may be of mutual help.

The educative environment, in which we are involved as Salesians, becomes a relationship between elements that are "different"; and it is always a relationship properly described as asymmetric.

Respect is given to the dignity of all, and the identity of each is maintained.

The salesian priest must always operate as a priest with Don Bosco's charism.

– *Acceptance is not the same thing as indifference.*

Acceptance of the difference between Groups is not synonymous with indifference and still less with a badly understood mutual tolerance.

Animation requires that the *freedom* of each one to express his own identity be recognized..

But acceptance is also a way of committing the *responsibility* of the other with respect to all; the latter have the right to expect the gift implied in the difference.

Acceptance thus expresses trust in the good which lives and operates in everyone, and also the hope of succeeding in the transformation of the reality through the educative processes.

For the salesian priest, educative concern invests also the environments of pastoral work and of spirituality.

Hence skill in animation is just as important as knowing the specific contents of pastoral work and spirituality.

– *The comparison should provoke and stimulate a process of growth.*

Animation cannot be reduced to the use of techniques or of certain instruments. It must encourage innovation and bring about coherence. It is a skill which has to be acquired and experienced.

For the salesian priest inserted in the Groups of Don Bosco's Family it represents a personal manner of living and acting; a formative model for acquiring certain abilities of identity and rapport, a method for selecting resources and practical interventions.

And so *verification* is necessary of the *ability for animation* of the salesian priest who is called to render a service to the Groups of the Family.

The new requirements which have emerged in the awareness of believers now demand a competent service. We need do

no more than refer to the doctrinal and theological innovations which the Church is living today with respect to some themes. Among the most evident are:

- the service of the Word,
- the celebration of the Sacraments,
- the organization of charity,
- the prophetic nature of consecrated life,
- lay protagonism,
- woman's dignity,
- the formation of adults.

The growth of the Salesian Family as a spiritual and ecclesial reality calls for a new doctrinal attention in the Salesian.

Giving due value to the unique nature of the individual Groups.

The second condition is concerned with the originality of each Group.

Studying the unique nature of the Groups of the Salesian Family enables the salesian priest to adapt himself to the cultural and personal needs and requirements of the various members.

Furthermore, a knowledge of the originality of the groups helps him to be concrete in suggesting ways of life and action, and in the process of personal and communal growth in line with the charism concerned.

Finally, it will help in exploiting the gifts of each group in the overall harmony of the Salesian Family.

It will be useful in the present context to recall how much the *Formation of the Salesians of Don Bosco* insists on the need for understanding and animating the different vocations within the Salesian Family (cf. FSDB n.469). The same insistence is evident at various other points which concern young confreres and confreres immersed in the work of the community.

I refer back to a page of Fr Egidio Viganò in his letter on the **Salesian Family** of 24 February 1982, in the section *In the harmony of a single Family, each shares the whole charism, but giving greater emphasis to certain elements*. He gives an immediate example of an eventual commitment to animation.

“Thus it is that in our Salesian Family we are able to share a veritable wealth of values, hearten one another and benefit from the example of others; and each becomes more staunch and enthusiastic in his vocation. We see the *consecrated* groups emphasizing the energy and drive of the radical Gospel message; the *non-consecrated* groups proclaim the centrality of man, the importance of temporal values and the close and indispensable link between the consecrated life and the task of transforming the world (cf. LG 31). The *priest* members live pastoral charity in a special way by the exercise of their sacerdotal ministry (cf. PO 8); *other members*, in their many lifestyles and lay commitments at all levels, are able to perform many specialized services in our vast and complex mission to the young.

Furthermore there is a wide range of spiritual aspects in the different groups; these should be present in every salesian heart, but they are more characteristic and more in evidence in certain individual groups. The Salesian Family as a whole is able to put these special facets at the disposition of all.

The following list is very incomplete but will serve as an example:

- The *Salesians*: kindness and happiness, educational initiative, untiring animation, research into the common salesian heritage, missionary courage.
- The *Daughters of Mary Help of Christians*: feminine salesian perspective and delicacy, loyalty and sacrifice after the example of Mary, service of motherly and sisterly intuition, profound prayerfulness.
- The *Cooperators*: realistic view of life (ability to use daily tasks and professions as a means of apostolic commitment,

active contribution to mankind and society.

- The *Don Bosco Volunteers*: profound significance of secularity, importance of creature values, quiet leavening of the masses, individual personal witness.
- The *Past-pupils*: binding force of salesian education, cultural area a central element for us, importance of an updated and adequate pedagogy to suit the changing times, pressing need of special care for the Christian family.
- Other *Institutes of salesian religious women* (such as Fr Variara's *Daughters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary*, and Bishop Cognata's *Oblates of the Sacred Heart*); special spirituality of suffering and oblation as instanced in Fr Andrew Beltrami. These Sisters remind all the other members of the Salesian Family that self-oblation and patient suffering are indispensable for all in life's vicissitudes, misunderstandings, illnesses, forced inactivity and old age.
- And similarly, still other Groups, with their own specific characteristics" (AGC 304, pp. 27-28).

Work is plentiful for the salesian priest, and from many aspects it is both delicate and important. It involves the identity of the Groups, the salesian mission, the image of Don Bosco's Family, and the building up and spreading of the salesian movement.

Communion, Autonomy, Reciprocity.

The values of communion, autonomy and reciprocity shape, in a specific manner, the activity of the salesian priest within the Family.

Before all else, the priestly animator – like all Salesians – is called to be a servant of *communion* in the salesian spirit because of the specific sacramental grace he received at ordination.

Next, what is asked for in art. 5 of the Constitutions as the particular responsibility of the Congregation in respect of the Family, finds its fulfilment in the priestly; practice of the word,

the sacraments and charity. The *Formation of the Salesians of Don Bosco*, at n.39, suggests the theme around three nuclei: the ministry of the word, the service of sanctification, and the animation of the Christian community.

Moreover he is called – again like all Salesians – *to promote the pastoral methodology* of the preventive system, adapting it with the typical openness of the evangelizer and missionary to the different life situations of individuals, and to the particular vocation of service to the world and the Church.

And finally he is called, in common with all Salesians, to promote the faithful and creative communication of the values lived in the Groups of the Families. These are a richness to be spread both within and beyond the walls of our houses.

4. ACTIVITIES OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL

4.1 Chronicle of the Rector Major

The Rector Major began the month of **January 2001** with a brief period of rest, during a pause in the work of the General Council. On January 1 he left Rome for Turin, accompanied by Sr Eulalia Piñarte. He had lunch at Valdocco with the confreres of the provincial community, and the same afternoon went on with the Provincial Economer of the ICP to Les Combes in Valle D'Aosta, to the house where the Holy Father had stayed in July of the previous year. During this period he received visits from various confreres and other people of the locality.

9 January. After Holy Mass in suffrage for the dead Fr Vecchi returned to Valdocco and in the evening went back to Rome, to take up again the work of the General Council which continued until January 26.

10-17 January. He presided at the *course for new Provincials*, giving them conferences and receiving them individually.

21 January, Sunday. The Rector Major went to the UPS to the Community of the Daughters

of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, to greet the Sisters. He was received by Fr Francesco Cereda, Superior of the UPS Vice-Province, and then went to the premises of the Sister's community to greet the members. After lunch he returned to the Generalate.

30 January, Tuesday. Fr Vecchi, accompanied by Sr Eulalia Piñarte, went to Turin to celebrate the feast of Don Bosco.

At Fiumicino Airport he had the pleasant surprise of meeting Mgr. Adriano Van Luyn, the salesian Bishop of Rotterdam, who also was on his way to Turin. At Valdocco they went immediately to the community refectory for supper.

31 January, Wednesday. Feast-day of Don Bosco. At 8.30 a.m. the Rector Major presided at the Eucharistic Concelebration, in which numerous confreres took part. Present too were the pupils of the Salesians and FMA of Valdocco and many members of the public. The Mass was animated by pupils of the school of St Dominic Savio. Fr Vecchi gave the homily, in

which he sent a *message to the Salesian Youth Movement* (cf. n. 5.1 of this issue of the Acts), introduced by a linkage to the feast being celebrated.

After Mass, in the sacristy, many persons came to greet the Rector Major. He also had a cordial meeting with the Archbishop of Turin, Mgr. Severino Poletto, (one of the recently appointed Cardinals). Fr Vecchi then went to the neighbouring Church of St Francis de Sales where a group of boys from the Agnelli Institute were making a day's retreat, and addressed them briefly.

He then paid a visit to the sick confreres in the infirmary, and in the afternoon returned to Rome.

1 February, Thursday. The Rector Major went once again to the UPS and specifically to the Community of the Daughters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, where he was to stay for a period of rest. Each day he was visited by the Vicar General, Fr Luc Van Looy or by other members of the Council, and by various confreres. He received the regular correspondence and was thus able to attend to the government of the Congregation.

11 February, Sunday. Accompanied by the Superior of the UPS Vice-Province, Fr Vecchi went

to the Pius XI Institute in Rome to visit the sick confreres in the infirmary. It was a cordial encounter, like all visits to the sick. After songs and greetings the Rector Major spoke briefly, emphasizing the contribution which sickness, received with faith, gives to the Congregation's mission; he also passed on some news about the Congregation, before returning to the UPS.

15 February, Thursday. Solemn blessing of a bronze bust of Fr Luigi Variara, in the presence of some thirty persons, including Frs Olarte and Liberatore from the Generalate.

16 February, Friday. Accompanied by Sr Eulalia, Sr Sonia, (members of the Don Variara community at the UPS), and by Fr Eugenio Fizzotti, the Rector Major went to Castellammare di Stabia to visit the sick confreres who live there. He returned to Rome in the afternoon.

23 February, Friday. Fr Vecchi came back to the Generalate for the celebrations in honour of the new Salesian Cardinals. The festivities began with the celebration of Vespers, with Fr Vecchi presiding and with Cardinals Oscar Rodríguez Maradiaga, Alfonso Stickler, Obando Bravo, Antonio Javierre Ortas present, together

with Abp. Tarcisio Bertone and Bishop Luis Santos Villeda. The evening concluded with a fraternal supper, after which the Rector Major returned to the UPS.

6 March, Tuesday. He made a further journey to visit sick confreres, this time to Civitanova Marche, Villa Conti, in the Adriatic Province. He was accompanied by Sisters Eulalia and Sandra, of the Don Variara Sisters. Afterwards he went on to have lunch with the community of Loreto, where he had a joyful reunion with Frs Scrivo and Verdecchia.

11 March, Sunday. In the community of the Sacred Hearts at the UPS, Fr Vecchi received the relatives of the Spanish martyrs beatified that morning by the Holy Father. They were accompanied by the Provincials of Barcelona and Valencia and by other confreres. To all of them Fr Vecchi gave a commemorative medal of Don Bosco. Supper was provided by the UPS community as a prolongation of the joy of the beatification.

20 March. A day of great significance – the anniversary of the Rector Major's election. Fr Vecchi returned to the Generalate for the event. Before lunch there was a showing of the video made on the

occasion of the election itself five years ago. After the festive meal, he went back once more to the UPS for a concelebration with the confreres and further festivities.

4.2 Chronicle of the General Council

The summer plenary session of the General Council – the tenth of the present six-year period – began on 5 December 2000 and ended on 26 January 2001, with 25 full sittings and other meetings of groups and sectors. The meetings were presided over by the Rector Major.

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/or their activities (during the session there were 4 openings of new foundations, 15 canonical erection of houses and 7 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.

In this session too there were numerous appointments of Provincials, following the usual procedure for this important task: careful analysis of the provincial consultation, discernment by the full Council, first straw vote on the leading candidates, and definitive vote followed by the consent of the confrere chosen. The following (in alphabetical order) were appointed: Guerrero Cordova Héctor, provincial of Guadalajara, Mexico; Hon Tai-Fai Savio, provincial Hong Kong, China; Lete Lizaso Ignacio, provincial of Bilbao, Spain; Spronck Herman, provincial of Holland; Valerdi Sánchez Luis Rolando, provincial of México, Mexico. Short biographies of the newly-appointed are given in n.5.3 of the present Acts.

2. Reports on extraordinary visitations.

Another important duty of the Council, as in every plenary ses-

sion, was the examination of reports on extraordinary visitations carried out in the name of the Rector Major in the period August – November 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 mission 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: Argentina – Buenos Aires, Austria, Belgium South, Canada, Hungary, India Guwahati, Italy – Genoa, United States West, Venezuela.

3. Reports of individual Councillors for information.

As in other plenary sessions, the Councillors at the head of the various Departments (formation, youth pastoral work, salesian family and social communications, and finances), together with the Vicar General, gave a brief account of their own activities, per-

sonally and at departmental level, in the service of the animation of the provinces and of the Congregation at world level.

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

4. Themes for study and practical decisions.

In the course of the session, 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 its present-day life, or to aspects relating to the future. Some practical decisions were made concerning particular themes. The following were the main items dealt with.

4.1. Preparation for the GC25.

The General Council also reflected on the preparations in

progress for the GC25. After work in this connection in previous sessions, this time it examined certain concrete decisions, indicated by the Chapter Moderator Fr Antonio Domenech, concerning the development of the Chapter itself, e.g. logistic organization, the translation of documents and of interventions in the assembly, discernment in view of the elections, etc. Suggestions were given to the Moderator as to how to proceed.

With respect to the Chapter the Rector Major also gave the Councillors some indications for the contributions he needed from them in preparation for the his own report to be made to the GC25.

4.2. Some practical decisions.

Among the practical deliberations made during the session were the following:

- a special reflection, made on the occasion of the appointment of the new Provincial, of the salesian work in Holland, with an indication of a process of collaboration with the neighbouring Province of North Belgium concerning future prospects;
- a reflection on *Don Bosco International* and on the service it could render to salesian work, especially in Europe;

- the examination of a proposed *Photographic Agency* at the service of Social Communication – with its various instruments – and of the Archives.

During the period of the session there took place also the *course for new Provincials* from 7 to 17

January. There were 18 participants, and the course proved very valuable not only for the reflections provided by the Rector Major, the Vicar General and the Councillors but also for the exchanges among the participants themselves.

5. DOCUMENTS AND NEWS ITEMS

5.1 Message of the Rector Major to the Salesian Youth Movement.

The following is the Message addressed by the Rector Major to the Salesian Youth Movement from the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians in Turin, in the course of the Concelebration on the feast of St John Bosco, 31 January 2001, taking up and emphasizing once again some of the themes of the recently concluded Jubilee Year.

1. Dear members of the Salesian Youth Movement.

Just recently our unique experience of the Jubilee Year came to an end.

It was a year of intense events lived at both local and world level. Many times we have heard the invitations of John Paul II, and with others we have followed them as present-day pilgrims towards a meeting with the Lord Jesus: the centre and reason for all the jubilee celebrations.

We willingly became involved also as the Salesian Family and Youth Movement in the Church's pilgrimage. Among so many other events how could we ever forget the World Youth Day in the month of August preceded by the Youth Forum of the SYM, and the missionary celebrations of October

and November, with the canonization of our salesian martyrs of China, Bishop Versiglia and Fr Caravario, and the departure of the missionaries from the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians in Turin.

All these things have certainly helped us to check up on our vocational state of health. The singing, games and general expressions of joy and happiness have certainly made clear in a visible and external manner our interior joy at finding ourselves strengthened frequently in our faith and involved in a process of education and service in line with the model of youthful holiness given us by Don Bosco.

I cannot forget the same joy evident on the tired and work-worn faces of those who gave their service, often in hidden ways, to bring about a sharing of that joy with others, so that the various gatherings could be welcoming and fruitful, prayer could be well made and efficacious, and the necessary organization be provided for so many needs. I am thinking particularly of the numerous volunteers, young and old, who gave their service with such competence and generosity.

2. *"Who are you looking for?"*

This is a question I am not afraid

to put to you as I think of your search for joy and happiness, of your dreams for the future and also of the moments of discouragement after a disappointment or failure.

"It is Jesus in fact that you seek when you dream of happiness; he is waiting for you when nothing else you find satisfies you; he is the beauty to which you are so attracted; it is he who provokes you with that thirst for fullness that will not let you settle for compromise; it is he who urges you to shed the masks of a false life; it is he who reads in your hearts your most genuine choices, the choices that others try to stifle. It is Jesus who stirs in you the desire to do something great with your lives, the will to follow an ideal, the refusal to allow yourselves to be ground down by mediocrity, the courage to commit yourselves humbly and patiently to improving yourselves and society, making the world more human and more fraternal". (*John Paul II, 19 August 2000, Vigil at Tor Vergata, World Youth Day 2000*)

3. Where can we find Jesus? We are accustomed to say that Jesus is in every one of our brothers and sisters who needs us and is waiting for us to come close to him.

And this is true. Charity to our neighbour is to some extent the yardstick of our willingness to manifest the love of God. St John reminds us of this in his Letter. It is the teaching of the parable of the Good Samaritan.

In the final message of the World Forum you expressed the intention, among the various commitments, "to make everyday life the place where we meet God, finding his presence in the young, especially the poorest of them", and moreover, "to cultivate spiritual discernment that leads us to discover our personal vocation in society and in the Church. This same spirituality will help us to practise a Christian life-style which makes us good news for young people particularly those who are aloof and distant from the Church".

These are lofty commitments, worthy of attention and encouragement. They call for constancy, faith and hope. Frequently they will clash with our daily routine and the limitations imposed by our selfishness, which sometimes leads to sin. We cannot depend only on our own strength and enthusiasm: we must continually have recourse to the source from which comes the strength of God's love.

During the celebration at the World Forum of the SYM I gave you an assignment in the words: "*I am the bread of life!*" This is the assignment Jesus gives you at the end of the Forum you lived during those days. It is an assignment that prompts you to face with courage the process of the Third Millennium, while you already have an uplifting foretaste with the Pope and a great Church of youth, capable of gathering together so many disciples and friends of Jesus from all over the world".

And I went on to say: "*I am the bread of life!*" Jesus calls us first of all to come close to him and develop an enthusiastic and flourishing friendship with him, like that of the disciples who were in contact with him personally and with his way of thinking and his mission. Recall how much the apostles learned in the three years they lived with him: it was a deep friendship of great familiarity, a true school of life. You cannot be just occasional followers of such a Master: it is not enough to display him on your T-shirt or take part in a musical entertainment centred on him. What is needed is to follow him persistently with friendship and love, with the desire to learn from him, to be conformed

to him, to take up the style of life he puts to us".

4. This is indeed very true: it is not enough to be occasional followers of such a Master. The Pope, again in his address during the Vigil of the World Youth Day, pointed out to the young people the central position held by the Gospel: "This evening I will give you the Gospel. It is the Pope's gift to you at this unforgettable vigil. The word which it contains is the Word of Jesus. If you listen to it in silence, in prayer, seeking help in understanding what it means for your life from the wise counsel of your priests and teachers, then you will meet Christ and you will follow him, spending your lives day by day for him!"

You yourselves have repeated in the final Message of the Forum the commitment to "develop a personal experience with Jesus by deepening the Word of God".

In salesian spirituality the Word is closely united with the Eucharist: the table of the Word and the table of the Eucharist are intimately united and mutually recall each other. Of this I reminded you once again at Colle Don Bosco during the Forum: "The Word leads us to the Eucharist. In the celebration there is conti-

nuity and mutual reference between the Word that is heard and the Body of Christ which is eaten. It is not possible to understand one without the other. To the zealous company listening to the Word must be given the nourishment of the Bread of Life: in this way the Eucharist received and assimilated will be lived in charity and brotherly love. It has been the strength of all who have struggled, the reference point of all the saints, the companion of every apostle”.

Daily frequentation of the Word will not only lead us to a more frequent participation in the celebration of the Eucharist (beginning with that of Sunday), but above all will be the first and most efficacious instrument for that *workshop of the faith* to which the Pope refers.

5. This then is my message to you: *Listen to the Word!*

Listen to the Word and meditate on it to find the will of God and compare it with your own way of life.

Listen to the Word to detect the signs of the presence of God in your personal story, which is a valuable part of the great history of salvation.

Listen to the Word so as to in-

crease your faith and acquire an ever greater and clearer knowledge of the God of Jesus Christ against every form of idolatry.

Listen to the Word to enlighten your mind and adopt criteria of judgement on the world and history that will lead to the growth of justice and peace.

Listen to the Word to strengthen your character and enable you to face the difficulties and trials of life with joy and courage.

Listen to the Word to purify your conscience and love your neighbour with generosity, purity of heart and interior freedom.

Listen to the Word to train yourself in Christian formation and give daily nourishment to your charity.

6. “Be it done unto me according to your Word”. Once again Mary’s words are our guide: like her, you too are invited to listen to and meditate on the Word, to believe and stake your life on it. Like Mary, you too are invited to bring the Word to life and make of it a daily living entity.

Only the Gospel will sustain you. Only the Gospel will create around you an atmosphere of light, an area of truth, a strength of love. Return regularly to the Word. Make the teachings of the

Gospel an internal conviction. Constantly compare your own life with its picture of the fullness of life and of integral salvation.

5.2 Decree on the heroicity of the virtues of the Servant of God María Romero Meneses, FMA.

We print below, in an English translation, the Decree on the heroicity of the virtues of the Servant of God María Romero Meneses, FMA, which was read and promulgated on 18 December 2000 in the presence of Pope John Paul II and by his command. By this Decree the Servant of God is recognized as Venerable, and the way is opened to future Beatification.

CONGREGATION FOR THE CAUSES OF SAINTS

SAN JOSÉ OF COSTA RICA
BEATIFICATION AND CANONIZATION
OF THE SERVANT OF GOD
MARIA ROMERO MENESES
PROFESSED RELIGIOUS
OF THE INSTITUTE OF THE DAUGHTERS
OF MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS
(1902-1977)

DECREE ON THE VIRTUES

“Be imitators of God, as beloved

children, and walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God” (Eph 5,1).

The Servant of God Sister Maria Romero Meneses followed with diligent fervour and enthusiasm the example of the Lord Jesus, who went about doing good to the poor and offering his life to the Father for the redemption of men. She committed herself to efficacious activity to spread the light of the Gospel in society and build the Kingdom of Christ in justice and peace.

This worthy disciple of St John Bosco and St Mary Domenica Mazzarello was born at Granada in Nicaragua on 13 January 1902, into the well-to-do family of Félix Romero Arana – then Minister of Finance – and Ana Meneses Blandón: persons of deeply Christian life, who gave to their children a solid human and religious education.

At baptism the child was given the name of Mary; in 1904 she was Confirmed and at the age of eight made her first Communion. Like other girls of her standing she studied the piano and violin, and also drawing and painting. She became a pupil in the school of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, but had to interrupt

her attendance because of a serious rheumatic condition from which she was cured through the intercession of the Virgin Mary, whom she invoked with great trust and confidence.

She then returned to school and was particularly successful in music, for which she had a special talent. In college she was able to cultivate and increase her devotion to the Mother of God and at the age of 14 years, with the consent of her confessor, she made a private vow of chastity. Some time later she told her parents of her desire to embrace consecrated life, but was told to wait for a few years. In 1920 she finally obtained permission to follow her vocation, and entered the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians as a postulant.

During her novitiate, in Salvador, she was given the task of teaching music and singing to her companions, to whom she gave a constant example of obedience to superiors and diligence in carrying out whatever work she was given. At the same time she became more and more imbued with the spirit of St John Bosco and St Francis de Sales, who became her teachers on the path to holiness and the apostolate.

At the end of the novitiate, on 6

January 1923 she became Sister Mary, making her temporary religious profession, which from that day onwards she renewed each day with increasing love.

In the following year she returned to her own country, to Granada, as a teacher of art and music; in 1929 she made her perpetual vows and in 1931 was transferred to San José of Costa Rica, which was to become her second homeland.

While she taught regularly in the College of Mary Help of Christians, she also gave herself to Christian formation in the Oratory and to catechesis and works of charity for children in the outskirts of the capital; little by little her activities grew and eventually gave rise among her pupils to a group of youngsters who enthusiastically shared in her activities; they were known affectionately as *little missionaries*. She then started up Catholic Action in the college and oratory, and propagated devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and to Mary Help of Christians, setting up their pictures in families and branches of the oratory that were being opened.

She also organized a regular distribution of food and clothing for the very poor and managed to provide a cinema for the children;

she was able to build a large chapel, a free medical dispensary for those who had no means of social assistance; she planned courses of professional training for young women who were poor and unemployed.

in 1971 she laid the foundations of a new Lay Association to be known as *ASAYNE* (*Association for Help to the Needy*), with the specific objective of building small but worthy dwellings for the homeless who were compelled to live under bridges or on river-banks. The project began with seven small houses, and after her death continually expanded through the active commitment of the Association.

All of these works were undertaken and carried on with the approval and blessing of the Archbishop of San José, and were sustained by the generous contributions and personal commitment of many people, won over by her zeal in the cause of social work and works of charity.

While working with tireless zeal for the human and Christian advancement of the poor, Sister Mary did not neglect to cultivate her own spiritual life with great diligence, perseverance and inner joy. Immersed in the contemplation of the divine mysteries, she

was endowed from on high with particular charisms which she placed at the service of the Church and of the good of society.

In her efforts to be daily conformed to Christ she practised the Christian virtues and attained a high degree of evangelical perfection. Faith was the light and strength of her life of her multi-form apostolate: she firmly believed in God and in his Word and confidently abandoned herself to his Love and Providence. She lived the truths in which she believed, offering to everyone a splendid example of fidelity to God, to the Church and mankind, to the salesian charism and to her own consecration.

She walked with God and her deep union with him was sustained by tireless prayer, in the contemplation of the eternal truths and in fervent eucharistic and Marian devotion.

Enlightened by faith she knew how to see God in the Pope, in superiors, in the poor, in her neighbour and in the joyful and sad circumstances of her own life. By loving God with all her mind, heart and strength, she was always faithful in doing his will, in fleeing from sin and in dedicating herself to the building of his Kingdom. She was entirely for God,

the Church and the poor, whom she loved not only in words but in deeds and in truth, spending her daily life for them (cf. 1 Jn 3, 16-18).

Endowed with an exceptional missionary sensitivity, she never lost an opportunity for proclaiming Christ as Saviour and for gaining new children for God and for Holy Mother Church. No difficulties, obstacles or sickness could disturb her serene interior peace, nor change her unswerving availability for dedication to others. Her hope was founded in God and in the strength of prayer. Disinclined for worldly things and detached from herself, she sought only eternal goods, and strove to merit them by fulfilling God's will.

She practised prudence, choosing always the option that seemed best in view of her own sanctification and the salvation of her neighbour. She was moderate in speech, courageous and thoughtful in taking initiatives, shrewd in giving advice. With great sensitivity she took account of the needs of her time, and of the people with whom she dealt, always concerned to offer to everyone the greatest possible help and to cause suffering to no one. She practised justice to both God and her neighbour: she was persevering in good and strong in difficul-

ties: "God is my strength", she used to say. She was watchful over herself and her temperament, and cultivated mortification and temperance.

Throughout her life she faithfully observed the religious vows of obedience, poverty and chastity, and was able to keep herself humble despite the esteem and fame she enjoyed because of the success of her pastoral work. Her presence radiated joy, because her heart was full of God, who sanctified her life. To the end of her days she worked to make herself all things to all men, to save some of them at any cost (1 Cor 9,22). The Lord, whom the Servant of God liked to call "her King", took her to eternal life on 7 July 1977.

The fame of her holiness, which had already shone so brilliantly during her life, increased after her death; and so the Archbishop of San José of Costa Rica began the Cause of beatification and canonization, the validity of which was recognized by the Congregation for the Causes of Saints in a Decree of 8 January 1993. After the preparation of the *Positio*, the question was examined by the Cardinals and others concerned as to whether the Servant of God had practised the virtues in a heroic manner. On 7 March 2000 the

Congress of Theological Consulters gave a favourable response, as also did the ordinary Session of the Cardinals and Bishops held on 3 October of the same year, with Mgr. Lorenzo Chiarinelli, Bishop of Viterbo, as Presenter of the Cause.

Of all this the undersigned Prefect presented an accurate report to the Supreme Pontiff John Paul II, who accepted and ratified the voting of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, and disposed that the decree be prepared on the heroicity of the virtues of the Servant of God.

When this had been done, and after calling together the undersigned Prefect, the Cardinal Presenter of the Cause, me the Bishop Secretary of the Congregation and others whom it is customary to convoke on such occasions, the Holy Father solemnly declared in their presence: *"There is certainty that the theological virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity, as also the cardinal virtues of Prudence, Justice, Fortitude and Temperance, and others connected with them, were practised in a heroic degree by the Servant of God MARIA ROMERO MENESES, professed Sister of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, in view of eventual canonization"*.

He further disposed that the present Decree be published and preserved among the Acts of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints.

Given at Rome on 18 December 2000.

✠ JOSÉ SARAIVA MARTINS
Tit. Abp. of Tournai
Prefect

✠ EDWARD NOWAK
Tit. Abp. of Luni
Secretary

5.3 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 December 2000 – January 2001.

1. GUERRERO CORDOVA Héctor, Provincial of Guadalajara, Mexico.

Predecessor: Fr. Salvador Flores Reveles,

b. 14 September 1941. Novitiate and 1st profession at Coacalco, 16 August 1959. Perpetual profession 20 July 1965. Theology at Studentate of Coacalco. Ordination: Mexico City, 28 December 1968.

1972-74: Rector at Sahuayo;
1974 Rector at León "Ciudad del Niño". 1983-92 Rector at San Luis Potosí. 1992, Rector at Guadalajara "Garibaldi". 1995 Provincial Councillor. 1996 Vice-Provincial.

2. *HON TAI-FAI Savio,*
Provincial of China.

Predecessor: Fr Peter Ho.

b. 21 October 1950. Novitiate and 1st profession Hong Kong, 15 August 1969. Theology at Rome (UPS) after gaining B.A. in philosophy. Ordained: Hong Kong, 17 July 1982.

Licentiate in Theology (UPS) Professor at Salesian Studentate, Hong Kong. 1989 Rector of Provincial House. 1995-96 Vice-Provincial. 1998 Rector of Salesian Studentate. 1999 Director of Chinese Salesian Bulletin. Delegate to GC24.

3. *LETE LIZASO Ignacio,*
Provincial of Bilbao, Spain.

Predecessor: Fr. Isaac Díez de la Iglesia.

b. 23 April 1952, San Sebastián, Guipuzcoa, Spain. Novitiate and 1st profession, Logroño, 16 August 1971. Perpetual profession 1977. Theology at Vitoria. Ordination: 3 May 1981.

1985-86, pastoral work at Urnieta; then to UPS, Rome, for further studies. 1991-97, Rector at Bilbao – Deusto "María Auxiliadora". 1997, Vice-Rector at Santander. 1998 Vice-Rector at Logroño.

4. *SPRONCK Herman,*
Provincial of Holland.

Predecessor: Fr. Wim Flapper.

b. 26 March 1936, Maastricht (Limburg). Novitiate and 1st profession, Twello, 16 August 1958. Perpetual profession, 16 August 1962. Theology at PAS (Turin and Rome). Ordained: Utrecht, 10 July 1967. Licentiate in Theology.

Worked for several years for handicapped youth in pastoral ministry in a public church. Member of Apeldoorn community from 1985 and then of community of provincial centre. 1995-99, Provincial Councillor. Delegate to GC24.

5. *VALERDI SANCHEZ Luis*
Rolando, Provincial of México
(Mexico).

Predecessor: Fr Luis Felipe Gallardo (now Bishop Prelate of Mixes).

b. 6 August 1951, Mexico City. Novitiate and 1st profession, Coacalco. Perpetual profession 1977. Theology at Mexico. Ordained: 8 December 1979.

Worked in education and pastoral field in several houses. 1988, Rector of work "Santa Julia" at México, 1990 Provincial Councilor. 1991 Rector at Barrientos.

5.4 New Salesian Cardinals. Greetings of the Rector Major.

In the public Consistory held in St Peter's Square in the morning of 21 February 2001, the Holy Father John Paul II elevated to the College of Cardinals of the Holy Roman Church 44 new members, giving them the Cardinal's biretta and assigning to each his title in the Church of Rome. On the following day, the feast of St Peter's Chair at Rome, the Holy Father concelebrated with the new Cardinals., and gave them their rings which signify their special linkage with the See of Peter.

Among the new Cardinals were two Salesian Bishops, who join another four of our confreres already present in the Sacred College, bearing witness to the pastoral style proper to Don Bosco's charism.

The two new salesian Cardinals are:

- Card. **Oscar Rodríguez Maradiaga**, Archbishop of Tegucigalpa (Honduras), appointed Auxiliary Bishop in 1978 (cf.

AGC 291, p. 62), and promoted in 1993 to the Metropolitan See of Tegucigalpa;

- Card. **Ignacio Velasco García**, Archbishop of Caracas (Venezuela), appointed in 1989 Vicar Apostolic of the Vicariate of Puerto Ayacucho (cf. AGC 332, p.84), and promoted in 1995 to the Metropolitan See of Caracas.

In the evening of 23 February the Salesian Cardinals (new and old, with the exception of Card. Ignacio Velasco and Card. Rosalio Castillo, who had been compelled to leave the same day for the funeral of a previous Archbishop of Caracas) gathered at the Generalate around the Rector Major, the Vicar General, members of the General Council present in Rome, and the confreres of the local community. There was first a celebration of Vespers in the Chapel, at which the Rector Major presided, to give thanks to God and to invoke the Holy Spirit on our Cardinals.

A festive supper followed in which was expressed fraternal joy at this new gift to the Congregation.

We print the words of greeting and good wishes addressed by the Rector Major to the Cardinals in the Chapel:

"With great pleasure I greet His Eminence Oscar Rodríguez Maradiaga, and also His Eminence Ignacio Velasco García who I hope may have heard me through the Internet and by Fax, since he cannot be present here this evening. I greet also the old Cardinals, if I may call them so, who have already acquired the merit of several years in their tasks. I will not delay in a homily or a long address, or even in the presentation of biographical details, useful though they might be; I want only to express in a few words our joy at being able to welcome them today to our Generalate, the central point of convergence of 1,800 salesian communities and 17,000 confreres. This is our charismatic and administrative centre, while Valdocco remains the spiritual and charismatic centre.

With lively satisfaction and great affection I want to offer our hearty congratulations and the assurance of our prayers, on my own behalf and that of all the Congregation, to the two confreres whom the Holy Father has recently raised to the dignity of Cardinal.

Today we have a happy coincidence: not only are present the Salesians; there are also the Daughters of Mary Help of Chris-

tians and the Daughters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, through whom the Salesian Family is here with us in union.

The words associated with this dignity and office ('cardinal', 'purple', 'Papal Senate', 'college' etc.) are at one and the same time both *truth* and *prophecy*, and could be summarized in the category of "fidelity", a category defined by a manner of "being Church" and "in the Church" of the *Cardinal Faithful*.

We have especially two powerful reasons for celebrating and rejoicing with you and remaining still more united in prayer. As you know, Don Bosco made a famous study on the coming of St Peter to Rome, and yesterday we celebrated the feast of St Peter's Chair at Rome. Every creation of new Cardinals is a commitment and strengthening for all the members of the People of God – and in particular for us Salesians, characterized as we are by a particular devotion to the See of Peter – in fidelity and integrity for the one Church which has in the ministry of the Bishop of Rome its foundation and the divine promise of indefectibility in its mission of salvation.

The second reason is our pastoral charism which, at your level of Cardinals and Bishops, is seen

as consecrated with the greatest responsibility with which you are entrusted. The coadjutor is a shepherd, the priest is a shepherd, and especially the Bishop is a shepherd. In our history there have been 195 Salesian Bishops, of whom 102 are still alive. And especially, the role of Cardinal is recognized by the Church as that of a shepherd.

Salesians – as we well know – do not aspire to ecclesiastical offices; but nevertheless the creation of two new Cardinals among our confreres takes on a particular significance. It is a most authoritative recognition, on the part of Peter's Successor, of the highly competent level of the pastoral mission carried out by our Congregation and the Salesian Family in the Church and in the world for the benefit of the young.

For this we thank you, Most Eminent Confreres, and I am sure you will continue to look upon your Congregation with gratitude and love.

What else can I say to you at this most important moment for your own lives, for that of our Congregation and that of all the Church?

I would like to remind you only of an episode in the life of Don Bosco which goes back to 7 De-

cember 1884, when our Father was present at the Episcopal consecration of his beloved son, John Cagliero. A few weeks afterwards, when the new Bishop was leaving for Patagonia as Pro-Vicar Apostolic, Don Bosco accompanied him by a written note:

"God bless you", he wrote – and in Don Bosco's name I repeat the same thing to you – "and may Mary be your guide in winning many souls for heaven". He also gave him the words of a hymn to be sung later on the banks of the Rio Negro in Patagonia, close to Viedma, the city of my birth.

The words were in Latin, but I repeat them now in translation:

"O Mary, Virgin most powerful, you are our glorious protection and defence; you are the extraordinary help of Christians; you are terrible as an army drawn up in battle array; you alone have overcome all heresies in every part of the world; in our difficulties, our struggles, our anxieties, defend us from the enemy, and at the hour of our death welcome us into eternal joy" (MB XVII, 309-310).

Yes, your Eminences and dear confreres, with these same words of Don Bosco I entrust you to Mary Help of Christians, Mother of the Good Shepherd.

May Mary, the star of the new

evangelization, who shines at the dawn of the new millennium, guide your steps. Welcome her again at this moment as the Mother given you by Christ on the cross, and go ahead with courage, together with the Churches entrusted to you, towards the blessed goal which awaits us all.

5.5 New Salesian Bishop

*Mgr. Giuseppe BAUSARDO,
Vicar Apostolic of Alexandria
of Egypt.*

On 25 February 2001, the Osservatore Romano carried the news that the Holy Father had appointed the salesian priest *Fr Giuseppe BAUSARDO*, Rector of the salesian house of Cairo, Egypt, to be *Vicar Apostolic of Alexandria of Egypt (of the Latins)*, assigning him the titular see of Ida of Mauritania.

Giuseppe Bausardo, of Italian extraction, was born at Cairo on 24 April 1951. He entered the salesian novitiate of the Middle

East Province at El Houssoun in Lebanon, and made his first profession on 29 September 1968. After philosophy and practical training, perpetual profession followed on 14 September 1974. He studied theology at the salesian studentate of Cremisan and was ordained priest 2 July 1978.

After a period of educational and apostolic experience he went to Italy for further studies in view of teaching in the schools of the province. While residing at the Crocetta he followed courses at Turin Polytechnic and gained the doctorate in mechanical engineering.

On returning to his Province, from 1988 to 1991 he was Head of the Don Bosco Professional and Technical Institute at Alexandria, and from 1991 to 1995 Rector of the salesian community. From 1993 he had been a member of the Provincial Council.

Now the Holy Father has entrusted him with the far from easy task of animating and guiding the Latin Vicariate in Egypt.

5.6 SDB statistics at 31 December 2000

Isp.	Tot. 1999	Professi temporanei				Professi perpetui				Tot. Professi	Novizi	Tot. 2000
		L	S	D	P	L	S	D	P			
AET	92	11	31	0	0	11	4	0	27	84	3	87
AFC	269	14	71	0	0	36	12	0	120	253	20	273
AFE	154	4	40	0	0	18	7	0	85	154	4	158
AFM	63	6	2	0	0	5	0	0	48	61	2	63
AFO	110	4	20	0	0	12	4	0	69	109	4	113
ANG*	0	6	14	0	0	8	0	0	30	58	4	62
ATE	100	3	18	0	0	10	2	0	57	90	9	99
ANT	191	5	42	0	0	14	8	0	105	174	13	187
ABA	151	0	6	0	1	14	1	0	120	142	1	143
ABB	130	3	10	0	0	10	1	0	105	129	1	130
ACO	145	4	18	0	0	12	3	0	101	138	4	142
ALP	101	8	7	0	0	13	8	0	62	98	0	98
ARO	132	7	15	0	0	12	4	0	85	123	6	129
AUL	125	3	15	0	0	17	1	0	84	120	5	125
AUS	108	1	3	0	0	10	3	1	82	100	0	100
BEN	213	2	4	0	0	22	2	0	174	204	0	204
BES	92	0	4	0	0	13	0	0	71	88	0	88
BOL	155	8	37	0	0	14	7	0	77	143	4	147
BBH	156	6	17	0	0	20	4	0	106	153	10	163
BCG	151	6	22	0	0	22	7	0	91	148	5	153
BMA	123	1	18	0	0	15	3	0	75	112	5	117
BPA	110	1	7	0	0	9	8	0	77	102	5	107
BRE	106	6	26	0	0	14	4	0	52	102	5	107
BSP	221	1	16	0	0	22	3	0	120	162	4	166
CAM	222	3	15	0	1	29	8	0	154	210	5	215
CAN	35	0	0	0	0	5	1	0	28	34	0	34
CEP	196	4	8	0	0	12	11	1	157	193	0	193
CIL	238	3	27	0	0	18	16	0	163	227	6	233
CIN	133	1	4	0	0	33	2	1	88	129	0	129
COB	167	3	21	0	0	24	4	0	110	162	7	169
COM	175	4	31	0	1	18	7	0	105	166	7	173
CRO	84	1	5	0	0	4	4	0	67	81	0	81
ECU	221	4	26	0	0	22	10	0	151	213	7	220
EST	142	2	40	0	0	1	9	0	73	125	19	144
FIN	190	3	24	0	0	19	3	0	138	187	10	197
FIS	90	0	16	0	0	11	5	0	59	91	5	96
FRA	297	0	4	0	0	45	3	0	227	279	2	281
GBR	118	0	3	0	0	12	1	0	99	115	0	115
GEK	176	6	12	0	1	33	3	0	113	168	0	168
GEM	263	4	9	0	0	56	2	0	194	265	0	265
GIA	143	1	13	0	0	20	12	0	96	142	0	142
HAI	63	1	20	0	1	2	4	0	27	55	1	56
INB	266	3	44	0	0	20	25	0	168	260	20	280
INC	259	8	63	0	0	22	14	0	146	253	19	272
IND	221	4	61	0	0	6	14	0	127	212	16	228
ING	348	13	88	0	0	24	23	0	177	325	15	340
INH	167	3	54	0	0	4	20	0	75	156	13	169
INK	283	4	93	0	0	7	22	0	154	280	22	302
INM	339	9	83	0	0	21	21	0	201	335	23	358
INN	124	2	38	0	0	12	7	0	57	116	7	123
INT	164	5	67	0	0	4	19	0	64	159	13	172
IRL	110	1	4	0	0	8	2	0	92	107	0	107

Isp.	Tot. 1999	Professi temporanei				Professi perpetui				Tot. Professi	Novizi	Tot. 2000
		L	S	D	P	L	S	D	P			
IAD	146	0	27	0	0	19	4	0	94	144	3	147
ICP	758	5	39	0	0	193	10	1	478	726	4	730
ILE	408	4	25	0	0	56	10	0	302	397	2	399
ILT	202	2	24	0	0	28	5	1	142	202	1	203
IME	298	1	24	0	0	35	5	0	225	290	6	296
IRO	283	0	8	0	0	55	0	2	199	264	1	265
ISA	67	0	3	0	0	4	1	0	58	66	0	66
ISI	298	1	15	0	0	26	2	1	243	288	5	293
IVE	282	1	29	0	0	46	7	1	181	265	4	269
IVO	207	4	4	0	0	44	3	0	151	206	1	207
ITM	134	7	55	0	0	7	5	1	31	106	9	115
KOR	106	9	25	0	0	14	4	0	49	101	2	103
MDG	77	2	20	0	0	8	6	0	42	78	5	83
MEG	226	8	37	0	0	12	13	1	138	209	13	222
MEM	181	2	27	0	0	13	14	0	109	165	6	171
MOR	121	1	13	0	1	19	5	0	87	126	2	128
OLA	70	0	0	0	0	19	2	1	45	67	0	67
PAR	109	5	16	0	0	6	7	0	68	102	0	102
PER	190	9	42	0	0	12	9	0	103	175	8	183
PLE	329	3	71	0	0	15	10	0	218	317	11	328
PLN	311	3	50	0	0	12	22	0	219	306	14	320
PLO	231	0	25	0	0	1	6	0	194	226	12	238
PLS	250	1	31	0	0	9	14	0	187	242	9	251
POR	198	2	31	0	0	43	15	1	110	202	2	204
SLK	259	12	61	0	0	9	24	0	139	245	13	258
SLO	131	0	6	0	0	10	2	0	104	122	0	122
SBA	204	0	4	0	0	34	3	1	156	198	2	200
SBI	215	1	7	0	0	54	5	1	138	206	0	206
SCO	124	0	13	0	0	5	5	1	88	112	2	114
SLE	225	3	5	0	0	71	3	0	137	219	2	221
SMA	344	1	16	0	0	89	22	0	209	337	5	342
SSE	175	1	19	0	0	25	8	0	116	169	2	171
SVA	180	2	15	0	0	28	3	1	122	171	2	173
SUE	219	0	9	0	0	40	5	0	143	197	3	200
SUO	125	1	11	0	0	27	4	0	82	125	0	125
THA	88	0	8	0	0	14	3	0	61	86	2	88
UNG	60	2	4	0	0	4	3	0	43	56	2	58
URU	125	0	17	0	0	6	3	0	95	121	2	123
VEN	263	5	46	0	2	18	10	1	157	239	8	247
VIE	169	13	46	0	0	18	24	0	62	163	16	179
ZMB	64	0	9	0	0	5	4	0	44	62	0	62
UPS	133	0	0	0	0	11	0	0	115	126	0	126
RMG	83	0	0	0	0	16	0	0	69	85	0	85
Tot.	17100	313	2273	0	8	2025	678	18	11086	16401	512	16913
Ep.	96									101		101
Tot .	17196	313	2273	0	8	2025	678	18	11086	16502	512	17014

Nota (*): Nell'anno 2000 ha avuto inizio la nuova Visitatoria dell'Angola (ANG), prima Delegazione ispettoriale di São Paulo, Brasile. Questo va tenuto presente nella lettura dei dati.

5.7 Our dead confreres (2001 - 1st list)

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

NAME	PLACE	DATE	AGE	PROV.
L ADÁMEK Viliam	Manaus	05-06-2000	85	BMA
L BONELLI Jean	Toulon	11-06-2000	88	FRA
P CASATI Giovanni	Arese (MI)	26-11-2000	84	ILE
P COLOMBO Pietro	Monza (MI)	12-12-2000	79	ILE
P CRNJAKOVIC Franjo	Zagreb	20-11-2000	77	CRO
P GARCIA PADRON Luis Antonio	San Isidro (Bs. As.)	05-04-2000	70	ABA
P GOMBOS Mihaly Gyula-Karoly	Edmonton	31-12-2000	76	CAN
P HAWRANEK Franz	Wien	05-04-2000	85	AUS
L IGEL Josef	Benediktbeuern	29-11-2000	87	GEM
P IOVINE Horacio	Rosario	14-12-2000	96	ARO
P LÁZARO CÁMARA Juan	Bilbao	07-12-2000	79	SBI
L REMIGI Angelo	Roma	08-08-2000	78	IRO
P BARRAGAN Jorge	Agua de Dios	03-03-2001	67	COB
L BERNER Konrad	Bamberg (Baviera)	03-01-2001	84	GEM
P BOCCOTTI Andrea	Castiglione d'Adda (Lodi)	26-02-2001	61	THA
P BOYENS Benoît	Woluwe-Saint-Lambert	25-01-2001	54	BES
P CARTIER François	Chambéry	05-03-2001	77	FRA
P CICUTA Mario Adone	Torino	24-01-2001	91	ICP
P CIFUENTES Fernando	Santiago de Chile	26-01-2001	88	CIL
P DE PRETTO Luigi	Venilale	06-01-2001	75	ITM
P DEMMELER Franz	Ensdorf (Baviera)	09-02-2001	84	GEM
P DITTLER Celestino	La Plata	02-02-2001	67	ALP
P DOSSI Luigi	Varazze (SV)	28-01-2001	69	ILT
P ELVIRA PRIMERO Alício	Barcelona (Spagna)	19-01-2001	67	COB
P FERRARINI Ezio	Varazze (SV)	23-01-2001	91	ILT
P FRANZINI Clemente	Roma	03-01-2001	74	IRO
P FULHABER Auguste	Toulon	26-01-2001	77	FRA
P GARRIDO MELGAR Antonio	Sevilla	21-03-2001	77	SSE
L GELPÍ RIPOLL Francisco	Campello	06-01-2001	91	ITM
P GHISLAIN Jean	Verviers	06-02-2001	68	BES
P GOMEZ CALAMA Ildefonso	Sevilla	13-03-2001	77	SSE
P GRANATOWSKI Jan	Stupsk	14-02-2001	62	PLN
P HEIMLER Adolf	Lan Ingolstadt (Baviera)	01-03-2001	72	GEM
P INVERNIZZI Dante	Castel de' Britti (BO)	29-01-2001	84	ILE
P JABLONICKY Viliam	Trnava	09-03-2001	80	SLK
P JEGOUSSO Lucien	Yaoundé (Cameroun)	22-01-2001	69	ATE

NAME	PLACE	DATE	AGE	PROV.
P JIMÉNEZ SÁNCHEZ Jesús	Madrid	15-01-2001	69	SMA
P LEIDI Libero	Torino	05-02-2001	85	ICP
L LUCCA Francesco	Castellammare di Stabia	27-03-2001	79	IME
L MANETTI Giuseppe	Varazze (SV)	11-01-2001	86	ILT
P MARTON Dino	Castello di Godego (TV)	05-02-2000	83	RMG
L McLINDEN John	Lynwood	16-01-2001	74	SUO
P MILLAN Clímaco Abel	Medellín	25-02-2001	55	COM
P MUÑOYERRO DIAZ Bernardo	Pamplona	09-02-2001	68	SBI
P MURARO Giuseppe	Santiago de Chile	28-02-2001	88	CIL
P NOWACKI Józef	Le Creusot (Francia)	07-03-2001	62	PLS
P O'BYRNE Pearse	Hammersmith (London)	15-02-2001	83	GBR
P PAPA Calogero	Pedara (CT)	13-01-2001	72	ISI
P PERIN Giovanni	Pietrasanta	22-01-2001	81	ILT
P PEROTTO Luigi	Torino	22-02-2001	59	ICP
L PINAMARUKIL James	Krishnagar	21-01-2001	55	INC
P RATHOD Edward	Gujarat	15-01-2001	38	INB
P ROBIJNS Albert	Liège	12-03-2001	85	BES
L RODRIGUEZ GARCIA Gumersindo	Vigo	21-01-2001	89	SLE
P SCHINCARIOL Emilio	Civitanova Marche	26-01-2001	86	IAD
P SUSANA Ferruccio	Castello di Godego (TV)	12-02-2001	87	IVE
P SZMYT Eugeniusz	Rumia	28-02-2001	65	PLN
P SZÜCS József	Székesfehérvár	15-01-2001	85	UNG
P SZULEJKO Władysław	Debrzno	27-02-2001	83	PLN
P TASSELLO Francesco	Mogliano Veneto (TV)	03-01-2001	86	IVE
P TUREK Marian	Lubin	17-03-2001	69	PLO
L VALLEJO José Ramón	La Plata	03-01-2001	91	ALP
P VAN LEUKEN Piet	Antwerpen (Belgio)	20-01-2001	70	BEN
P VERANO Jorge Enrique	Bucaramanga	28-01-2001	70	COB
S WREH Bartholomew	Monrovia (Liberia)	14-01-2001	27	GBR
P ZAJAC Gustaw	Szczecin	15-02-2001	54	PLN
P ZANTKUYIL Emmanuel	Oud-Heverlee	08-03-2001	82	BEN
P ZAPPA Luigi	Parma	10-01-2001	77	ILE
P ZERDIN Stefan	Trstenik	16-02-2001	78	SLO

Fu Ispettore per sei anni

Nota: Nella prima parte sono elencati alcuni confratelli defunti nel 2000, che non furono riportati nei precedenti numeri degli ACG, non avendo ricevuto notizia della morte, per varie cause.





