



acts

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year LXXXII

july-september 2001

N. 376

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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BEATIFICATION OF BRO. ARTEMIDE ZATTI: A SENSATIONAL PRECEDENT

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Rome, 31 May 2001
Feast of Mary's Visitation

1. THE MISSING FRAGMENT

The mosaic of our saints and blessed, though rich enough in the categories represented – Founder, Co-founder, Rector Majors, missionaries, martyrs, priests and young people, still lacked the figure of a coadjutor brother. Now, even this gap is being filled.

On 11 March of this year we had the joy of honouring as Blessed *the first seven coadjutor martyrs*, among the 32 members of the Salesian Family beatified as martyrs by Pope John Paul II. By their life and death they proclaimed very clearly the radical nature of their adherence to Christ and their fidelity to their vocation.

On 24 April the decree confirming the miracle obtained through the intercession of Brother Artemide Zatti was read. In the process of a Cause, this stage is a prelude to Beatification. He will therefore be the first 'coadjutor not a martyr' to be proclaimed Blessed. Three other members of our Salesian

Family are also close to the honours of the altars: Sister Maria Romero, Fr Luigi Variara, and Sister Eusebia Palomino. We expect that the beatification of Bro. Zatti will take place during the GC25: it will be an outstanding event in the Chapter's calendar!

I invite you to give thanks to God for the recent beatification of our Spanish martyrs and for that, soon to take place, of Artemide Zatti. This present letter is intended to prepare our communities for the coming event by gathering together the particular points stemming from the holiness of this confrere of ours. At the same time I want to highlight the relevance of the salesian brother, his value in our community life and mission and, above all, the need for a more decisive work for vocations.

The title given to this letter could rightly give rise to questions. And they should be faced without any alarm! That among our coadjutor confreres God's providence has raised up exemplary and even holy Salesians there was never any doubt. We have seen them, we have lived with them in our ordinary working communities and on the missions. We have experienced the valuable contribution they make competently and faithfully to the salesian mission. Some indeed have filled roles which may appear of secondary importance (doorkeeper, sacristan, infirmarian, cook, house maintenance, etc.); everywhere, however, they have been educators of the first order, confirming Don Bosco's words reported in the Biographical Memoirs: "A good doorkeeper is a treasure for a house of education".¹ And this without detriment to the highly qualified roles (in charge of workshops, teachers and headmasters, catechists and pastoral animators, etc.) filled by very many Brothers we could all name.

We have read the story of many of them or heard it recounted. They have received medals and decorations, from

¹ cf. BM 4, p. 383

which we can clearly deduce what it has meant for these men to live out their historic responsibility, full of the love of Christ and working in Don Bosco's orbit: in other words to attain their desire for holiness in pastoral charity, by living a total consecration in the service of the young. The fundamental aspects that have characterized their vocational experience are still decisive in our history even at the present day. Consecrated life is expressed, as it always has been, through holiness, which knows no substitutes.

I have known personally more than a few of these Brothers: biographies have been written about many of them, which enable us to understand their vocational path through life. They appear as "men of Don Bosco", attracted by him and identified with his spirit and mission. They would have said with Don Cagliero: "Monk or no monk, it is all the same to me. I am determined, as I have always been, never to leave Don Bosco!"² This is the underlying substance! It means a felt relationship with the Father, zeal and enthusiasm for Jesus Christ, the desire for holiness and perfect charity, and the conviction of the call of God to live all this in the salesian mission and fellowship.

Today's *precedent*, referred to in the heading of the letter, consists specifically in the inclusion of a Brother among those whom the Church has considered worthy, by public act, of being proposed as a model of spiritual life and charity to his brothers in religion and, on a broader scale, to all Christians. And this on the basis of the testimony of many people, confirmed by God through a "miraculous" event attributed to his intercession.

Artemide Zatti is the *first salesian coadjutor not a martyr to be beatified* and this fact, as I have said, gives a touch of completeness to the series of models of salesian spirituality, which the Church has officially declared to be such.

I have called this precedent "sensational", in the sense that

² BM 6, p. 181

it shakes us up, it challenges our fidelity to our charism and our ability to offer at the present day examples of the salesian lay vocation that are truly meaningful and attractive.

In referring in this letter to the salesian Brother, it is not my intention to enter into questions already dealt with in previous documents, such as the indispensable character of such a figure³ or the relationship between the service of salesian authority and the ministerial priesthood.⁴ Nor do I intend to address the question of the nature of our Congregation about which, however, I will say a word later on. There are other settings in which to reflect on these and other questions, and also times and appropriate authorities for dealing with them.

But what I do intend is to issue a pressing invitation to meditate on the figure of Zatti, so as to give rise to practical steps and a commitment, at provincial and regional level, regarding the vocation of the salesian coadjutor brother. When we cannot communicate with and inspire others at this level, our work is of little effect, and our dreams of global reform become sterile. To be truly effective it is indispensable to think globally but also act decisively at local level.

2. DON BOSCO'S COADJUTOR BROTHERS

Let us begin from Don Bosco and from the first experience of our particular style of holiness. From the first years we come across the figure of coadjutors, formed directly by the Founder, who had a strong influence on the appearance of the Congregation. We may think – for example – of a Peter Enria,

³ cf. GC21, 197-198

⁴ On salesian authority, and its relationship to priestly ministry, v. the reflection of the GC21 on the role of the Rector (GC21, 49 ff.), the circular letter of Vigano, E, *Animation of the salesian Rector* in AGC 306, and Vecchi J. *Spiritualita salesiana*, LDC Turin 2001, p. 184-194.

to understand how much poorer Valdocco would have been without his presence. They contributed decisively to making the Congregation great, especially in the area of trade schools and in the service to the poorest of the poor.

Every province, every country, every continent has its picture gallery. There is no lack of relevant publications illustrating the more outstanding of them, thus enshrining in history the contribution they have made to the sanctity of our Family.

This is the case, for example, with Brothers who have lived in the Holy Land and done honour to holiness in the native land of Jesus. Their most outstanding representative is the venerable Simon Srugi, who is linked with Zatti by their common role of infirmarian at the service of their sick confreres, whom we hope to see joining him on the altars.

Among **Don Bosco's first coadjutors** some were boys who had grown up at the Oratory, others came to him already adults with their life as laymen matured in the world and in the Church. In contact with Don Bosco, they came to understand that they could use the professional skills they had acquired by committing themselves to his educative and pastoral work. The enthusiasm grew in them which Don Cagliero expressed in the phrase: "I am staying with Don Bosco!" It was the spark of a true vocation, as indicated in art. 21 of our Constitutions: the fascination of the mission and of the Founder, the desire to continue his charism and spread his spirit.

Their early professional training, coupled with good intelligence, a mature temperament and already developed human qualities, made them able to give a valuable service to the community and educative environment. They were to be found not only in Turin, but even in the extreme south of Patagonia, cordial and trustworthy doorkeepers, front-line missionaries, building supervisors, heads of workshops.

The salesian vocation from the outset offered many possibilities for its realization, determined more by the promptings of charity and the call of the mission than by the importance of the service or the role in the community. For the identity and placement of the Brother there were no rigid norms, but a discernment which gave scope for his generosity, availability, community spirit and joy in his vocation.

Don Bosco looked at the quality. He does not seem to have been over-worried about the proportion, for example, between clerics and laymen. He welcomed those whom God sent him, priests or laymen, and united them in religious consecration, in the mission and in charity.

We can present a few examples, from among many others, to confirm what we have been saying.

Joseph Buzzetti was one of the first of Don Bosco's boys. He made his profession as a coadjutor brother at a much later date, because he "did not feel worthy", but in practice he lived and collaborated with Don Bosco all his life. He came to the Oratory with his brother Charles, who was to become a master builder who put up several salesian houses. Originally he wanted to become a priest, but after being wounded by a bullet aimed at Don Bosco by someone who wanted to kill him, he had to lay aside the clerical habit and passed through a difficult time. He was about to leave the Oratory, but after a conversation with Don Bosco he decided never to abandon him. He was an assistant, a teacher of catechism, in charge of the bookshop, choirmaster and organizer of lotteries: he was Don Bosco's right arm and a faithful witness to all the heroic deeds of our Founder.

Peter Enria was also late in officially becoming a coadjutor. He was quite a prodigy, able to turn his hand to anything: teacher, music master, producer of theatrical presentations, artist, cook, and infirmarian. It was especially in this last activity that he showed his gifts of sensitivity and delicacy.

He spent himself for Don Bosco in various situations, especially in the last illness which brought our Founder to his death.

Joseph Rossi was the first of the Brothers not to come directly from the ranks of the Oratory boys. At the age of 24 he came across the "Companion of Youth", written by Don Bosco. He immediately became fired with enthusiasm, left his village in the province of Pavia, and came to Valdocco. He made his profession in 1864. He looked after the linen-room, was an assistant in the workshops, and made the necessary purchases in the town; he was, in fact, an administrator, a man of trust, with responsibility for all the material goods of the Congregation. His duties made it necessary for him to travel at times, both in Italy and abroad. Don Bosco was very fond of him and used to joke with him a good deal.

Marcello Rossi had to wait until he came of age before he could freely decide about his future and go to live with Don Bosco, who entrusted him "temporarily" with the task of door-keeper, which he faithfully fulfilled with punctuality and trust for a "temporary" 48 years. He was known as the sentinel of the Oratory and Cardinal Cagliero pointed him out one day as the "real monument to Don Bosco".

We could continue with many other examples of Brothers of the early years. Because of his similarity with Zatti in his experience of emigration and falling under the "spell" of Don Bosco, I will refer briefly to **Sylvester Chiappini**, whose parents were Italian immigrants in Argentina. He had no particular tasks, but was the **first son of Don Bosco in the new world**.⁵ He was working as a cook in a hotel of Buenos Aires, and at the age of 18 met the Salesians in the church entrusted to them, where he himself frequently went to pray. He became part of the community and did the cooking. Later he asked to

⁵ This testimony on Sylvester Chiappini (or Chiappino, as appears in some documents) is from Joseph Vespignani, who refers in the obituary letter to the "first salesian profession in the new world".

become a Salesian. He was accepted, became a Brother and for forty years continued as a cook, infirmarian and odd-job man looking after many small needs of the community.

The salesian community whose members, beginning with Don Bosco himself, were so visibly hardworking, attracted others by the witness of their outstanding example, and this attraction was not limited to young people but brought in "good Christian" adults. The Institution became a house and a family, not least through the presence and sensitivity of the Brothers, and their creative contribution enriched the mission in new ways.

3. VOCATIONAL PROFILE OF ARTEMIDE ZATTI ⁶

Now let us direct our attention more specifically to Artemide Zatti and his experience of salesian sanctity. In anyone getting to know him at any depth for the first time some questions arise spontaneously. Who was Artemide Zatti? What does he represent for our Family? What words and messages have come down to us through his life? What challenges does he put to us at the present day? These are the things we shall try to discover by re-reading the details of his life and identifying the underlying messages.

3.1. Meeting with Don Bosco in Patagonia.

The call of Artemide Zatti to join the missionary ranks of Don Bosco illustrates various traits of the vocation of the first Brothers, though each individual evidently has his own originality.

⁶ Much of this section is taken, frequently in the exact words, from the *Positio* of the Cause for beatification, even though a reference is not always given in the notes, and quotations are not always enclosed in inverted commas..

As an immigrant looking for better living conditions, **Artemide Zatti** was 17 when, after leaving Italy with his family, he reached Bahía Blanca. His parents, *Luigi Zatti* and *Albina Vecchi*, had eight children, four boys and four girls. The Zattis, who lived at Boretto in the province of Reggio Emilia near the Po, had no property of their own but worked on land they hired from others.

Artemide, third of the eight children, was born on 12 October 1880, and was baptized the same day with the names Artemide Gioachino Desiderio. Though the family had few material possessions, they led an intense Christian life which was evident when they emigrated to Argentina. In the family circle, Artemide soon learned to face the fatigue and responsibility of work.

"In January of 1897", we read in the *Positio*, "we do not know whether on a sudden impulse or after due consideration or because of some fact in the family, Luigi Zatti, head of the family, decided to leave Italy and with his wife and children emigrate to Argentina. At the end of the century the emigration of Italians to America was a common phenomenon, justified by many reasons... The decision may have been influenced by the invitation of an uncle, Giovanni Zatti, who was already in Argentina in the growing town of Bahia Blanca, where he had found suitable employment"⁷.

"Separation from his own country opened for the Servant of God the possibility of exploiting in a new world not only the work of his hands, but still more the spiritual resources of a solid Christian education. It seems that he went, facing the unknown and following the path marked out for him by God"⁸, which was to lead him to meet Don Bosco.

The Zatti family reached Buenos Aires on 9 February 1897, and four days later arrived by train at Bahia Blanca, where they joined a large group of Italian emigrants already there.

⁷ *Positio*, p. 27

⁸ *Ibid.*

In addition to the positive elements, such as commitment to work and love of family, the emigration process also involved some important factors undermining cultural homogeneity. Among the emigrants was a sizable group who had taken with them the anticlerical attitude and opposition to the Pope and the Church that had developed rapidly in Italy in the second half of the nineteenth century. Each year on certain special days, this attitude gave rise to noisy demonstrations against the parish and the salesian community.⁹

At Bahia Blanca the Salesians were responsible for the Parish of Our Lady of Ransom, and it was in this parish that the Zatti family went to live. The parish had two schools, a high-school and a trade-school. In the salesian work the Catholics and other people of good will, who included even some of the fanatical demonstrators, saw the signs and found a meeting place; many of them began to gather around the parish. Among those who decided to do this and so entered into the orbit of Don Bosco was Artemide Zatti. His family struck up a strong and fruitful friendship with the parish priest, Fr Carlo Cavalli, a good and zealous missionary, particularly concerned for the poor and the sick.

Artemide found in Fr Carlo a sincere friend, a wise confessor and a skilled spiritual director, who formed him to a daily life of prayer and weekly reception of the sacraments. He established with the priest a spiritual rapport and one of collaboration.¹⁰

With the example and encouragement of Fr Cavalli, Artemide joined to his desire for his own formation that of doing good to others. We read in fact that he used to spend his spare time in the parish church, and would accompany the parish priest on his visits to the sick, at funerals, in serving Mass, and in fulfilling the duties of sacristan.¹¹

⁹ For a humorous anecdote in this connection, v. footnote in the Italian edition of the Acts.

¹⁰ Cf. *Positio*, p. 35

¹¹ Cf. *Positio*, p. 36

The broad social field of Catholic workers was one of the sectors to which the missionaries were committed. Artemide Zatti was a zealous assistant of the groups of workers who used to meet on Sundays; he would spend the afternoon with them, making friends, taking an interest in their different circumstances, encouraging them, and urging them towards good works.

All this he did quite spontaneously, without any recompense, as an affectionate and generous service to God and to his neighbour. "As a young immigrant into the materialistic and commercial world of Bahia Blanca, more than this could not be expected of him. This kind of life and interior attitude he kept up for about three years from his arrival at Bahia Blanca in 1897 to 1900, while his vocation was maturing".¹²

3.2. Salesian vocation.

"The **salesian vocation**", we read in the *Positio*, "was bound to arise spontaneously, as something quite natural, in the life of the Servant of God. It was a consequence of the seriousness of his spiritual commitment and of his will to serve God and his neighbour. Moreover living in daily contact with Fr Cavalli and other confreres of the hardworking salesian community, meant that he had always before him a testimony bound to encourage him to dedicate his life in a most radical form".¹³ The apostolic generosity of Fr Cavalli, the salesian environment and the developing work of Don Bosco in Patagonia exercised a daily attraction and proved to be an ideal more powerful than any other prospect for a good but rather bewildered immigrant from Italy.¹⁴

In the parish library he was able to read the biography of Don Bosco, and was entranced by it. This was the true begin-

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Cf. Ibid.

ning of his salesian vocation. At the origin of the vocation of each one of us there is always an inspiring encounter with the Founder and with his followers.¹⁵

When Fr Cavalli suggested that he should set out on the road to the priesthood in Don Bosco's Congregation, Zatti had already shown a solid maturity with a supernatural sense, and an unyielding conviction of faith and zeal, and the ability which leads young and old to God.

And so, with the consent of his family and moved by the sincere desire of following his vocation, the 20-year old Zatti on 19 April 1900 entered with full docility into the rhythm of the life of the **aspirantate of Bernal**, which housed also the novices and post-novices. He found no difficulty in sitting in the benches with boys aged 11 to 14; he willingly carried out all the tasks which the Superiors, seeing his maturity and generosity, entrusted to him; he immersed himself in study to make up for lost time, without complaining of the physical work which interrupted his application. Following his vocation was always at the front of his mind and, without being upset by difficulties, he tried to make full use of all the resources placed by God at his disposal.¹⁶

"Letters written to his family during that period provide ample witness to the interior attitude of the Servant of God. Optimism, joyful involvement in the life of the community, cordial and faithful submission to Superiors, a profound religious sense which at the same time left him with a practical approach to everything, humble abandonment to God's will, tranquility in the face of every trial: these are the characteristics that emerge from his collected letters".¹⁷

In the Bernal aspirantate, Artemide Zatti passed nearly two years of study and intense formation.

¹⁵ Cf. Cost. 21

¹⁶ Cf. *Positio*. p. 41

¹⁷ Ibid.

3.3. The trial of sickness and its acceptance.

An unforeseen circumstance changed his life. Because of his reliability the superiors entrusted him with the task of assisting a young priest suffering from tuberculosis. Zatti carried out the work with generosity, but soon afterwards caught the same disease himself.¹⁸

The illness which put his own life in danger, and the consequent leaving of Bernal, seemed to place a large question mark over his progress towards the priesthood, and became a determining factor in Zatti's life.

"His state of mind can be easily imagined, but we are bound to say that he never spoke a word of complaint at what had happened, either in connection with the sickness itself, nor against the Superiors, nor against the circumstances in which he now found himself".¹⁹ On the contrary, this experience, which continued for years, and the uncertainty it implied, highlighted his spiritual strength through the conscious and generous acceptance of the evil, something not easy in a young man of that age.²⁰

On 4 September 1902, he wrote to his parents from Viedma to comfort them. "My dear mother and father, I think the letter I wrote about my health may have upset you, because although it said that I am getting better, I knew that you would not be pleased to hear that I cannot get rid of the cough. Dear parents, I am sure you will not forget the saying '*nothing happens unless God wills it*', and so if I am here in Viedma with a cough, it is *because* God wants it so for his greater glory, and for the benefit of my own soul by giving me this opportunity to do some penance for my sins... If you can do so, try to perform some good work, so that God may give me the grace to be conformed to his will, because very accept-

¹⁸ Cf. *Positio*, p. 47

¹⁹ Cf. *Positio*, p. 49

²⁰ Cf. *Positio*, p. 76

able to him are works done for what he loves. Be at peace, and *may the will of God be done* in everything".²¹

After seeking medical advice the Superiors had sent Zatti to Viedma, which was to become the definitive place of his mission. The flourishing salesian work there, the centre from which the missionary movement spread out into Patagonia and the residence of the Vicar Apostolic, the mild climate and the presence of Fr Evasio Garrone, the salesian physician, were the reasons for the choice.

The arrival of Artemide Zatti at Viedma coincided with that of Zeffirino Namuncurá, who came from Buenos Aires and was suffering from the same illness. The two lived together in a friendly relationship until Zeffirino left for Italy in 1904 with Mgr. Cagliero.

At the time of Zatti's arrival in 1902, Viedma had little more than 5,000 inhabitants of various origins and nationalities. The great majority of them were poor.

The salesian work was of great significance. Two colleges, one of the SDB and the other of the FMA, exercised a great influence in raising the moral and material conditions of the area. The Salesians had a complex work which included a primary boarding and day school, a trade school which trained Patagonia's first qualified workers, and an agricultural school on the outskirts of the town. At the centre of the salesian work was the Cathedral, which served as the parish church. Alongside the church were the Hospital and Pharmacy.

The St Joseph Hospital had been founded in 1889, with pioneering zeal by Mgr. Cagliero and the Rector of the salesian work, Fr Bernard Vacchina, to meet the needs of the poor. Fr Evasio Garrone, who had studied and practised medicine in Italy before becoming a salesian and missionary, was given the task of organizing and directing the hospital on 15 June 1889, a few hours after his priestly ordination.²²

²¹ *Positio*, p. 76

²² Information on the salesian work at Viedma: cf. *Positio*, p. 61-65

The Hospital and Pharmacy were to become Zatti's field of work.

3.4. Always with Don Bosco, as a Salesian Brother.

When Artemide Zatti left Bernal, he was not yet a Salesian. Despite his illness the Superiors had sent him to Viedma as an aspirant because of the good qualities they saw in him, and also because of his desire to become a Salesian, which he continued to manifest unwaveringly. It was an act of mutual trust between the Congregation and the Servant of God.

Artemide had not abandoned his initial inclination. He continued to think about a priestly vocation in the Salesian Congregation, not least because there came a point when his health began to improve and he was able to take up a continuous and exacting task in the pharmacy of Fr Garrone.

It is touching to note his **unswerving attachment to his vocation**, even when it seemed that sickness removed any possibility of achieving it. He wrote, for example, to his relatives on 7 August 1902: "I want you to know that it was not only my own wish but also that of my Superiors that I should receive the cassock; but there is an article of the Holy Rule which says that no one can receive it who has even the slightest problem about his health. And so it means that God has not yet found me worthy to wear the cassock, and so I trust in your prayers that I may soon get well and see my desire fulfilled".²³

At a certain point however, in order that the uncertain situation should not drag on indefinitely, a clear decision was made. The Superiors, while noting his improvement in health, could not be fully persuaded about his future prospects. With tuberculosis, at that time, one could never be sure of a definite cure; the curriculum of studies which the Servant of God

²³ *Positio*, p. 79

would have to face at his age (23-24) was long and hardly suitable for a sufferer from tuberculosis. On the other hand he had already begun to work, and this evidently with success and mutual satisfaction, in the pharmacy, doing a job suited to a layman; it may even be that Fr Garrone exerted some pressure to keep him working at his side.

Given all these circumstances, the Superiors had to suggest to Zatti, who was persevering in his desire to be consecrated to God, that he be professed as a salesian Brother: leaving aside the problems of precarious health this seemed a prudent solution. It would be the total donation of himself to God in the salesian life to which Artemide aspired in the first place. The proposal by the Superiors and its acceptance by the Servant of God must have taken place between 1904 and 1906, but we do not know at what precise point.

It does not seem that the decision implied a negative judgement on his intellectual capacity; indeed never was any doubt expressed about the confrere's gifts of intelligence, nor of his cultural preparation or level headedness.²⁴

Nor does it seem that the Superiors were ever aware of the promise he had made to Our Lady, at Fr Garrone's suggestion, to dedicate himself to the good of his neighbour if he should be cured; this seems to have become public only when Zatti himself testified to it in 1915.²⁵

It was in that year, in fact, on the occasion of the dedication of a tombstone on the grave of Fr Garrone, that was published a special issue of the review *Flores de campo*, which carried the following testimony of the Servant of God: "If I am now well and in good health, and able to do some good to my sick neighbours, I owe it to Fr Doctor Garrone – (as Zatti always used to refer to him, *Editor's note*) – who saw that I was getting worse every day from the effects of tuberculosis, coughing blood, and told me point blank that, if I did not want

²⁴ Cf. *Positio*, p. 79 ff

²⁵ Cf. *Positio*, p. 74

to finish up in the same way as so many others, I should make a promise to Mary Help of Christians to remain always at his side helping in the care of the sick and trusting in Mary, she could heal me. I BELIEVED, Because I knew of his reputation that Mary Help of Christians helped him in visible ways. I PROMISED, because I had always wanted to help others in anything I could do for them. And after God had heard the prayer of his servant, I RECOVERED". (*Signed*) Artemide Zatti"²⁶

It was a solemn declaration, signed and made public, which is a clear expression of the faith of the Servant of God and of his determination to dedicate himself totally and for ever to helping the sick.

In this way, Artemide Zatti, aware of his situation and – as we read in the *Positio* – “inclined as he was to see God’s will in the decisions of the Superiors, accepted to become a lay Salesian, and in this way to live out his firm commitment to consecrate himself to God. The promise made to Our Lady for his cure seems to fit in with this solution, to the extent that as a layman he could more fully and directly help in the care of the sick in a way he could probably not have done as a priest”.²⁷ “His fundamental attitude was always to do *whatever was pleasing to God*”.²⁸

We can see that Artemide Zatti sought the way of God before all else, and his firm intention was to stay with Don Bosco and be of help to him in any way possible. He already belonged to Don Bosco because God had brought him into con-

²⁶ We print the testimony in the original Spanish: “Si yo estoy bueno y sano y en estado de poder hacer algún bien a mis prójimos enfermos, se lo debo al Padre Garrone Doctor, quien viendo que mi salud empeoraba cada día, pues estaba afectado de tuberculosis con frecuentes emoptisis, me dijo terminantemente que, si no quería concluir como otros tantos, hiciera una promesa a María Auxiliadora, de permanecer siempre a su lado ayudándole en la cura de los enfermos y él, confiando en María, me sanaría. CREÍ, porque sabía por fama que María Auxiliadora lo ayudaba de manera visible. PROMETÍ, pues siempre fue mi deseo ser de provecho en algo a mis prójimos. Y habiendo Dios escuchado a su siervo y SANÉ. (Firmado) ARTEMIDE ZATTI.” (*Positio*, p. 75)

²⁷ *Positio*, p. 80

²⁸ *Positio*, p. 81

tact with this Saint who was so fascinating, and was indeed, in the land of Patagonia, the decisive prophet of evangelization and formation for a colourful group of God's people. He was therefore more than ready for a pilgrimage to holiness in the salesian life.

Priest? Brother? He himself once said to a confrere: "You can serve God as a priest or as a brother: before God one is as good as the other, provided you live it as a vocation and with love".²⁹

There was no sadness or reaction, therefore, at the change in his vocational perspective. On the contrary, there was deep gratitude for the fact of being a Salesian and for having had clear signs of God's will. And so he wrote to his family in January of 1908, after making his religious profession at 27 years of age: "With my heart full of a holy and enviable joy at this extraordinary grace which the good Lord, *beyond all my hopes has deigned to grant me* (but I attribute it to your prayers and those of others who pray for my intentions), I write to you now to beg you to join me in thanking the good God and the Blessed Virgin, by assisting at a holy Mass and receiving communion..."³⁰

Each one receives his own gift, expressed in charity, in the salesian mission, in holiness: these were the key words guiding his life. Zatti set about living out his own gift. And God did not fail him.

3.5. A full-time Good Samaritan.

At Viedma Artemide Zatti recovered his health and found his mission in the care of the sick; from being a patient himself he became an infirmarian, and the illnesses of others became his apostolate, his mission. He gave himself to it full-time and with all the uncompromising approach of *da mihi animas*, constantly extending his activities.

²⁹ *Summarium*, p. 310, n. 1224

³⁰ *Positio*, p. 84

It was from this perspective that he decisively planned his future. From then onwards, the different aspects of his unique personality, sparkling tranquility and good humour, and the development of his professional skills grew more and more, prompted by the internal desire to be faithful to God's grace and be of the greatest possible use to the mission. The latter he fully assumed, day by day, as it took on new dimensions and requirements, which Zatti met with a spirit of service and sacrifice.

The hospital and the houses of the poor, which he visited night and day, using a bicycle now considered a historical relic in the city of Viedma, were the front line of his mission. He lived the total donation of himself to God and the dedication of all his strength to the good of his neighbour, first as the efficient and generous collaborator of Fr Garrone, and then after the latter's death in 1911 (and especially from 1915 when the new premises were inaugurated), as the one with chief responsibility for it, the director and administrator of the work. He turned his hand to everything: received people, trained others, directed activities, and paid the employed personnel; he did the purchasing of whatever was needed, kept an eye on maintenance work, assisted doctors in their consultations and surgeons in operations; he dealt with families, but especially he worked to make ends meet because expenses were always greater than income.³¹ One of his sayings has gone down in history: "*Yo no pido a Dios que me dé dinero, sino que indique donde está*" ("I do not ask God to give me money, but to show me where it is to be found")³².

The hours he worked and his daily toil are practical evidence of his total dedication to the mission, his community sense, the care of his spiritual life and professional skill. Let us follow him through a typical day.³³

³¹ Cf. *Positio*, p. 93

³² *Positio*, p. 149

³³ Cf. *Positio*, p. 104-105

The Servant of God rose at 4.30 or 5 a.m., spent some time in personal prayer in the church, and then made his meditation with the community and assisted at Mass.

Then he would go to the hospital wards, where he always arrived smiling and with the cheerful greeting: "Good morning everyone. Long live Jesus, Mary and Joseph". Then he would ask: "Everyone still alive?" and the old men would turn towards him in their beds and reply: "Everyone, Bro. Zatti". "*Deo gratias*", was his jovial rejoinder, and then he would pass from one bed to another to see what each one needed, and also to see whether anyone in fact was no longer breathing; if so he carried him on his own back to the mortuary.

After this visit he had his breakfast, and then went round the sick again to provide them with what they needed. With this job done he next got on his bicycle with head uncovered and wearing a white shirt, to give injections to the many sick people scattered around the neighbourhood. When antibiotics became available his work multiplied, because it was often necessary to give injections every two hours and even at night. "Rarely", said one of his helpers, "did he sleep all night". He traveled everywhere by bicycle, or by truck if he was offered a lift, but never by car.

At 12 noon – and no one knows how he managed to be always punctual – he was there to say grace with the community before the midday meal. He prayed with faith, his eyes closed, his lips and hands clasped together to concentrate his attention. He was nearly always the bell-ringer to call the confreres; and he did it with devotion – they say – because it was the voice of God!

After lunch he used to join those who were convalescent at a game of "bocce", which he played with enthusiasm. The period from 2 to 4 p.m., more or less, found him once again on his bicycle. He never skipped tea, but afterwards went out once again into the town, or went round the wards again, or attended to accounts or repairs.

At 6 p.m. he was there for spiritual reading, and benediction of the Blessed Sacrament on the days it took place. After the sick had eaten their supper he used to go round the wards once again to see that prayers were said, and to give the salesian 'Good Night', i.e. leave behind a good thought from the life of some Saint, from Don Bosco, or from the liturgy. Few words, but a serious thought. Then more work and a 'good night' to the nurses, to whom he left reminders and special indications and guidance for their work.

At 8 p.m. there was supper with the community, another visit to the wards, and finally to his own room to do some reading or personal work. During the night he usually had to get up at least once and usually more often for calls to the sick.

His life was lived in an environment in which the same difficulties were repeated every day, but where understanding and sympathy were also to be found. The maturity he had already attained and the help of a fervent community life could not but foster his anxiety and decisive will to become holy. The Servant of God lost nothing of what God was offering to his soul, and he made use of everything that would enable the heroic practice of the virtues.³⁴

Over forty long and laborious years the figure of the Servant of God grew continually in generosity of service and the seeking of professional skill. Artemide Zatti was not just a run-of-the mill kind of worker; he was an competent hospital administrator, endowed with deep practical knowledge, which medical authorities could not overlook. The "Department of Public Health" had given him an official recognition as an infirmarian (n. 7,253), while he himself through private study obtained from the La Plata University the qualification as a pharmacist, which was indispensable before he could open and manage the Hospital pharmacy.³⁵ The combined witness of

³⁴ Cf. *Positio*, p. 103

³⁵ Cf. *Positio*, p. 92

doctors, given individually by each of them, provides an admirable demonstration of the dedication, competence, faith and respectful attitude of Zatti in their regard.

During the forty years he spent at Viedma, there were several extraordinary facts that bore witness in various ways to Zatti's solid virtue and salesian spirit. We could recall the tranquility with which he accepted the few days he was put in prison, after a prisoner who had been hospitalized on the orders of the prison governor absconded from the hospital (1915); the prudence and patience displayed when, against his wishes, the old hospital was demolished and transferred to a new site that was not ready (1941); his deep salesian joy during the three months he was able to spend in Italy for the canonization of Don Bosco.

3.6. Towards a long prepared meeting with God: popular recognition as "kinsman of the poor".

After being cured of tuberculosis in the first years of the century, Artemide Zatti always enjoyed excellent health, which enabled him to face continual heavy work and great sacrifice. Only his burning zeal for the good of his neighbour can explain the labours he faced with nonchalant tranquility and without in fact almost any rest until the end of life.

But the Lord called him once again to be associated with him in his passion and to share the sufferings of those whom he himself was serving. It was in July of 1950 when, as he was being treated after falling from a ladder, he was found to have a faulty liver function, and later a tumour was diagnosed.

He accepted the fact and knowingly followed the development of the illness (he himself prepared his death certificate for the doctor!); he maintained his joyful serenity despite painful sufferings, and spent what remained of his strength in work and in the community, as he lived the final months

awaiting the call of the Lord. He recalled: "Fifty years ago I came here to die, and I have reached the present moment. What more could I wish for? I have spent all my life preparing for this moment".³⁶

The time for his meeting with God came on 15 March 1951.

On the day of the funeral no inhabitant of Viedma stayed at home: adults took part in the ceremonies through admiration and gratitude, and the children were there to learn at first hand a piece of the important history of their town.

The whole of Viedma did honour to the "*kinsman of the poor*", as he had been known for some time, the one who had always been ready to welcome those with particular maladies and people who came from the distant countryside; the one who had been able to enter the poorest of houses at any hour of the day or night without causing raised eyebrows; the one who, though he was always 'in the red', had maintained a unique relationship with the city banks, which were always open to friendship and generous collaboration with those engaged in the medical care of the citizens.

And we could continue in the same vein. The biography resulting from the testimony of the *Positio* is rich indeed, with abundant episodes, facets and assessments. We who have known him and remember his words and gestures, bear witness to the truth of these things. Stories of events circulated wildly among the people and often with exaggerations. It is not surprising that long before the cause was introduced, the general opinion among the people was that they had been in contact with a giant of charity, made even greater by the malicious and vague accusation of practising medicine illegally, from which charge he was cleared by the people themselves.

As though to prolong his presence in the city's life, one of the main streets was named after him, as also the modern State Hospital, and a monument was erected to commemorate him.

³⁶ *Positio*, p. 198

The salesian Brother Artemide Zatti was truly a “good Samaritan” in the style of Don Bosco, a “sign and bearer of the love of God”, of his compassion, of his healing and consoling presence, which opened up horizons of faith and hope to the sick and to the young: he loved them all, and was able to win their love in return, as Don Bosco wanted.

4. MESSAGE OF ARTEMIDE ZATTI: PROSPECTS FOR TODAY

4.1. Unique testimony to salesian holiness.

The brief snippets we have given of the biography of Zatti have introduced us to the heart of **his spiritual story**. As we contemplate the changes in him brought about by his salesian vocation, marked by the action of the Spirit and now proposed by the Church, we can discern some traits of the typical kind of holiness to which we too are called. We have already perceived some of its characteristic expressions: his deep sense of God and the full and serene openness to God’s will, his attraction to Don Bosco and wholehearted membership of the salesian community, his animating and encouraging presence, the family spirit, spiritual life and prayer cultivated personally and shared with the community. The attentive observer cannot fail to note his total dedication to the salesian mission lived in welcoming the poor of every kind, his concern for the needy and his medical care for those with contagious or repugnant ailments, in finding space for society’s outcasts, in his pastoral care in bringing the sick and dying to God. His was an active presence in society, completely animated by the charity of Christ which drove him on!

Some of his actions were not only unusual but even heroic, as when he gave up his own bed to the latest arrival.

Even though fifty years have now gone by since his death and there has been a deep evolution of Consecrated Life, of

salesian experience, and of the vocation and formation of the Salesian Brother, the **salesian path to sanctity** traced out by Artemide Zatti is a sign and message which opens up perspectives at the present day for all of us who are called to live Don Bosco's charism in apostolic consecration. In this way is fulfilled what is stated by our Constitutions: "The confreres who are living or have lived to the full the gospel project of the Constitutions are for us a stimulus and help on the path to holiness".³⁷ The beatification of this confrere of ours is a concrete sign of that "*high standard of ordinary Christian living*" to which we are encouraged by John Paul II in *Novo Millennio Ineunte*.³⁸

His testimony is addressed to every Salesian, to every local and provincial community. It tells of vocation as an experience of life in God, in line with the characteristics of the charism given to us by the Spirit. This is the path we have to follow: if we stray from it, everything else will be adrift!

4.1.1. The magnetism of Don Bosco.

It is always useful to try to identify in God's mysterious plan for each one of us the underlying theme of our own existence. If I had to express in a simple formula the secret which inspired and guided every step in the life of Artemide Zatti, I think it could all be contained in the following words: **following Jesus, with Don Bosco and in Don Bosco's manner, always and everywhere.**

In this expression there is **the magnet** which constantly attracted him and guided him in the *following of Jesus*: **Don Bosco!** There is **the total dedication** – *always and everywhere* – without regard to place, role or occupation. There is **the educative slant** to every activity, *in the manner of Don Bosco.*

Let us pause for a moment to consider these elements.

³⁷ Cost. 25

³⁸ *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 31

4.1.2. Total dedication to the mission.

“Our mission sets the tenor of our whole life...”, say the Constitutions.³⁹ Artemide Zatti lived the salesian mission in the field to which he had been entrusted, by personifying educative pastoral charity as a **good Samaritan in the style of Don Bosco**.

His faith led him to see Jesus in the sick, and even in those with dangerous, deforming or repugnant diseases. A series of anecdotes show us that he cared personally for those of the sick from whom others recoiled because they were deformed, repugnant or difficult to treat. This already shows us the mentality with which he worked. But still more edifying are expressions like the following, related by the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, his constant and sensitive collaborators, always willing to give their loving assistance in the section of the Hospital reserved for women: “Sister, please prepare some clothing and a bed for a Jesus of 14 (or 75) years”.

In long years of proximity to the seriously ill and dying, it never became for him a matter of routine: the suffering and death, especially of young people, always moved him deeply, giving rise to feelings of deep compassion but without making him lose his peace of mind. He had a special gift for dealing with sick youngsters and even for helping them to close their eyes in the Lord with a feeling of trust, joy and tranquility. Among many others, I like to recall the following anecdote related by one witness. To a young lad who had arrived at death's door, Zatti came close as a father and brother, and said: “Let us go to our Father: close your eyes and join your hands. Now let us say together: Our Father...”. During the prayer the soul of the youngster went to heaven. In this way Zatti accompanied him towards his meeting with the Lord.

This is certainly a gift of God, but it is also the fruit of unbroken union with him and of a charity that had become a way

³⁹ cf. C 3

of life, capable of being poured out on those we serve, and in whom we discern the love of the Father and the countenance of his Son. It is the personal dedication of a life totally consecrated to God and the service of our neighbour, which is like the driving force of the mission: Don Bosco condensed it into the expression *da mihi animas, cetera tolle*.

Artemide Zatti reminds us in a practical way of the deep meaning of our mission, totally centred on the love of God: a love which moves us interiorly and which we want to pour out on those to whom we are sent.

4.1.3. Infirmarian and educator.

Artemide Zatti was not only an infirmarian, but also an **educator in the faith** for everyone in the time of trial and sickness. In the Hospital he created a family atmosphere which – as I have said already – was reflected in the choral response to his morning wake-up call: “Everyone still alive?”, followed by personal assistance to the needy and thanksgiving to God. There was another family moment after lunch at the game of ‘bocce’, and the particularly salesian evening event of the “good night” each day. And to all this must be added his personal contacts with the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians and the other collaborators.

It is said that the principal medicine he used was Zatti himself: his attitude, his jokes, his cheerfulness and loving kindness. Many people have borne witness to it. It was not just a matter of administering medicines to fight disease but of helping bystanders and the patients themselves to lend a hand, and see in the situation a sign of God’s will, especially when death was approaching.

Zatti, indeed, had made of the mission to the sick his own area for educative activity, where he lived each day the criteria of Don Bosco’s preventive system – reason, religion, loving kindness – in close and loving assistance of the needy, in helping them to understand and accept their condition of

suffering, in his living witness to the presence of God and his unfailing love. For this reason we can speak of the *educative slant* of the holiness of this our infirmarian confrere.

Here I would like to say a word about health care as an area of our mission. It is not without significance that the two Brothers on their way to the honours of the altars, Artemide Zatti and Simon Srugi, worked in this area; and to them we must also add Fr Luigi Variara. When we think of the part occupied by the care of the sick in Jesus' preaching, and also of the role which the question of health has in our missions and, in general, in the life of our members and the people we serve, we can draw inspiration from Artemide Zatti to identify aspects of fraternal charity as yet unexplored, where our availability can become a sign of God's love, responding to the urgent needs of people and especially of the young.

I want to draw attention to the possibility of this link between health and education, quite apart from any formal professional relationship. Sometimes we find both needs present in our pupils. I have had the personal opportunity and good fortune to attend two General Chapters of a Congregation of women, which had originally expressed their educative charisma through institutions of a specific kind, and then later, precisely because of contact with sickness, particularly among young people, had courageously accepted responsibility also for care of the sick. The discussion was enlightening: it was said that the role of the religious was to educate *in* and *to* sickness. The necessary medical decisions could be left to the professionals. As a matter of fact, in our larger educative communities we have always had to take care of the various aspects which concern all the needs of young people: instruction and culture, exercise, games and social aspects, catechesis, physical and mental health – both directly and indirectly, protection from the environment, etc. This opens the door to a variety of possibilities to be carried out with an education of quality and consistency.

4.1.4. "Sanctified work":

synthesis of spirituality and professional skill.

A careful study of the life of the Venerable Artemide Zatti will lead us to recognize in the content and manner of his service the recognition of the **dignity proper to human values** and daily activities, which are the daily background to lay life in the world.

It is the proof, lived for a lifetime, that everything that is human is open to Christian values, expressed in the theological virtues and through baptism, which the Council has proposed once again so forcefully.

Like our own, the life of the Servant of God was continually filled with the tiny daily details that belong to a service like nursing, and which could easily become routine. But everything was invested with constant **charity**, that so permeated and transformed it as to make it the driving force of unification of life and unspoken evangelization. Moreover his constant effort to make himself better able to fulfil his tasks – through study and ongoing formation – must be understood as a manifestation of the flower of charity through which the Salesian tries "to do everything with simplicity and moderation".⁴⁰

If on the one hand this derives from the legitimate autonomy of natural laws and realities, on the other it expresses the conviction that "what is good should be done well" and that Christ's members (i.e. the sick and poor, young people in difficulties) must be embraced with a charity enlightened by industrious and creative intelligence.

What stands out clearly in the life of the Venerable Artemide Zatti is his passionate search for a greater harmony **between the seeking of a more professional approach and growth in genuine spirituality.**

The seeking after professional excellence – which nowadays appears as an unavoidable requirement in our societies,

⁴⁰ Cf. C 18

and especially in those more developed – represents a challenge to the religious life. This, indeed, could run the risk of hiding behind the secular aspect, and making it the source of its identity, and concealing (or at least relegating to second place) the true identity of the religious life which is linked with supernatural motives.

Such a challenge must be met with the particular “*grace of unity*”, which transforms professional activity into a resource of the consecrated life and, if we may so express it, gives to it a higher quality.

At the basis of such a unity it is not difficult to discern an hardworking charity, a serene trust in the progress of science and technology, the need to be able to discuss with others at their own level, so as to strengthen our own vocation and its message to give to it the evangelizing vigour and competent presence of the Church.

The Servant of God had both well learned and well lived what Blessed Philip Rinaldi called “**sanctified work**”, asking a special indulgence for it from the Holy Father,⁴¹ and seeing in it an essential trait of salesian spirituality.⁴² The concept of “work” includes all the professional competence of which we are capable, and that of “sanctified” embodies the vitality of charity, self-giving, and a spirit of sacrifice.

Quality of this kind in our work is the fruit of a salesian life, ever careful to avoid the risk of a self-centred professional attitude aimed at promoting our own image or exclusively technical, in order to attain the objective of an altruistic professional approach directed to the good of others and their overall education.

⁴¹ Rescript of Pope Pius XI to Fr Philip Rinaldi, 10 June 1922. It should be noted that after the Apostolic Constitution *Indulgentiarum doctrina* of Paul VI of 1 Jan. 1967 and the subsequent Decree of the Apostolic Penitentiary, this Indulgence no longer exists. On 31 January 1968, the Penitentiary granted special plenary indulgences that could be gained by Salesians and Daughters of Mary Help of Christians on particular occasions.

⁴² Cf. C 95

The Salesian, by virtue of his experience, will therefore be in a position to lead his charges – first implicitly and then even explicitly – to a **new kind of professional attitude**, inspired by the Gospel and able to renew the quality of life. It is the harmonious result of specific technical and cultural competence, of sound relational ability, and of deep ethical and spiritual motivation. And it seems able to redeem and give new significance to the work of man – which is a substantial part of his life – and, at the same time, to sustain and encourage the civilization of love.

4.1.5. *Evangelically rooted reflection of God.*

What gave weight to all of this – dedication to the mission and professional and educative ability – and immediately struck those who came across it was the interior life of Artemide Zatti, that of a disciple of the Lord, who lived his consecration at every moment, in constant union with God and in gospel fraternity.

From the judgement of doctors who spent long periods at his side in professionally sensitive moments like lengthy operations, from the evaluation of colleagues and cooperators, from the words of public figures, and from the testimony of confreres, emerges a **complete personality**, also on account of that salesian level-headedness through which the different dimensions become joined in a harmonious, unified and serene personality, open to the mystery of God lived in daily life.

We find it wonderful that despite all his tasks and commitments Artemide Zatti never lost his sense of community, but always took part in and enjoyed the daily prayer, fraternal moments at table and occasions for sharing family joys, which he did in a manner all his own. For him the salesian community was the place where he experienced God and gospel fellowship.

We may quote some evidence taken from the *Summary* prepared for the declaration of the heroic nature of his virtues.

Speaking of the intensity with which the Servant of God lived his faith *in continual union with God*, Mgr. M. Pérez declared: "The impression I received was of a man united with God. Prayer was like the breath of his soul, and his whole attitude showed that he lived to the full the first commandment of God: he loved him with all his heart, with all his mind, with all his soul".⁴³

The same thing was confirmed by Fr. F. López: "It was evident that the Servant of God prayed continually: on his bicycle he prayed while he pedaled, when he was attending the sick he spoke quite naturally about faith and said things which uplifted the spirit, even with religious".⁴⁴

As regards religious and community life in general, in the *Positio* it is stated that the holy infirmarian **was in the first place a religious and member of a community**. The service he gave to the sick never became an excuse to absent himself from his duties to community life or a reason to distract him from his great familiarity with God.

Fr. Prieto testified: "In the fulfilment of community acts he was exemplary. I mean that he never made use of the freedom given him by his particular work to absent himself from community practices".⁴⁵ And he goes on: "The Servant of God was outstanding as an observant religious, unfailingly punctual and never absent. I never heard him say: 'I was not here because...' His was always a positive presence in the community...".⁴⁶

Let us listen again to Fr. López, who was his Rector, concerning his practice of evangelical poverty: "He showed it in an exemplary manner, and well beyond the obligations of the poverty of a salesian Brother. He showed in a perfect degree that he was detached from earthly honours and selfish desires. While he was autonomous in administration no one ever saw

⁴³ *Summarium*, p. 43, n. 160

⁴⁴ *Summarium*, p. 179, n. 73

⁴⁵ *Summarium*, p. 60, n. 231

⁴⁶ cf. *Summarium*, p. 65, n. 248

or knew him to acquire anything for himself or his personal satisfaction, nor did I ever hear of such a thing...The Servant of God loved poverty; we could even say that he was wedded to it. He was outstanding as a poor person".⁴⁷

With regard to the spirit of obedience. Fr L. Savioli declares: "I know from my personal observation that with the Superiors he practised a filial and reverential obedience. I remember that he sought advice from Fr. Pedemonte and my general impression is that he did the same with the other Superiors. I know that he practised an obedience which was always simple, prompt and joyful".⁴⁸

All this shows us the exemplary nature of the gospel witness of our confrere, whom we can well define as a "reflection of God".

4.2. The Salesian Brother.

I want to dwell in particular on the **specific nature** of the vocation of Artemide Zatti, that of the Salesian Brother, which has left its mark on all his activity and on his path to sanctity.

If it is true – as has been authoritatively stated – that the salesian charisma would be lacking in an essential element without the figure of the Brother, it is easy to understand the importance attaching to the fact that the Church is raising to the honours of the altars a representative of a component so unique and indispensable to our identity.

And so it is fitting that the whole Salesian Family should celebrate this event with particular enthusiasm and use it as a motive for relaunching the figure of the Brother, as he has matured alongside Don Bosco in sharing, in the *Da mihi animas*, in the warmth of his pastoral and educative charity, in the continual seeking after holiness: hence not as additional to the working strength, but as an experience of God, lived in the community and in the service of the young.

⁴⁷ cf. *Summarium*, p. 187, n. 768-771; p. 51, n. 199

⁴⁸ cf. C.P. f. 730 t.

4.2.1. *The figure of the Brother in the salesian community.*

In Artemide Zatti's experience as a salesian Brother some eminent characteristics emerge of this specific vocation, and we are offered a particular grace to accept it, live it, and propose it in our communities and formation activities.

The path lived by Artemide Zatti in the salesian vocation calls for careful study because it is typical of the original source to which we must always return.

We have already explained briefly how the first nucleus of Brothers was formed around Don Bosco at the service of his educative and apostolic mission: some of them came from the ranks of the Oratory boys, others were mature laymen with a leaning towards works of charity, who found in Don Bosco's community the possibility of satisfying that leaning and increasing it for the good of the young by many contributions in line with the professional training they had already received. In Don Bosco's environment they grew at a human, professional and religious level, and became real treasures, not so much for the role they assumed, but rather for the educative quality they displayed.

In this way, in the environment of the Oratory of Don Bosco, and in the first salesian communities, the figure of the salesian Brother was forged, with the characteristics that still remain in the Congregation as an authentic expression of the charism, albeit with the changes and adaptations that have taken place.

The Constitutions, at art. 45, present the essential elements of some of these traits; they place the Brother within the one salesian vocation and mission, to which he brings his own specific contribution as a consecrated layman, "a witness to God's Kingdom in the world, close as he is to the young and to the realities of working life",⁴⁹ while the salesian priest "brings to the common work of promoting human development and of educating in the faith the specific quality of his ministry".⁵⁰

⁴⁹ C 45

⁵⁰ Ibid.

The figure of the salesian Brother must be viewed in the context of the consecrated salesian community with its many rich qualities. In this connection I do not think it out of place to recall what I wrote three years ago in the letter on our apostolic consecration: *The Father consecrates us and send us*,⁵¹ which I consider of fundamental importance, under the sub-heading of: *The many gifts of our consecrated community*.

"The salesian community", I said, "is enriched by the significant and complementary presence of the salesian priest and the salesian brother"⁵². Together they provide an unusual complementarity of energy for witnessing and the educative mission.

We may wonder **what exactly the figures of the salesian brother and the salesian priest demonstrate** in the experience and witness of apostolic consecration; what does the lay character emphasize in 'consecration', and what does 'consecration' give to the lay state, both of them moulded and fused by the salesian spirit? Similarly we may wonder what the ministerial priesthood highlights in salesian consecration and what the latter gives to the ministry.

The special value is not found in external additions of status or categories of members, but in the resulting character of the salesian community itself.

The **salesian Brother** "combines in himself the gifts of consecration with those of the lay state".⁵³ He lives the lay state not in secular conditions but in the consecrated life; as a salesian religious he lives his vocation as a layman, and as a layman he lives his community vocation of a salesian religious".⁵⁴

"To his consecrated brethren", declares the GC24, "he recalls the values of the creation and of secular realities; to the

⁵¹ Cf. AGC 365

⁵² cf. GC24 174; C 45

⁵³ GC24, 154; cf. 236

⁵⁴ cf. *The Salesian Brother*, Rome 1989, n. 119

laity he recalls the values of total dedication to God for the cause of the Kingdom. To all he offers a particular sensitivity for the world of work, attention to the local environment, and the demands of the professional approach associated with his educative and pastoral activity”⁵⁵.

In his professional skills, secular fields of work, practical forms of involvement show their basic orientation towards the ultimate good of mankind, especially the young, and towards the Kingdom. “Everything is open to him, even those things which priests cannot do”, but everything is placed in the light of the radical love for Christ, polarized in the direction of evangelization and the eternal salvation of the boys. [...]

Especially in certain contexts and in face of a certain way of perceiving and conceiving the priest as a sacred or cultic figure, the style of consecration of the salesian brother proclaims in a concrete manner the presence and communication of God in daily life, the importance of becoming disciples before being teachers, the duty of witnessing to a personal experience of faith over and above functional or ministerial commitments. [...]

In the salesian community clerics and laymen build and bear witness to a model brotherhood, eliminating the separation based on roles and ministries through their ability to share different gifts in a single project. This relationship is the source of mutual enrichment and stimulus for a harmonious experience, in which the priesthood does not eclipse the religious identity and the lay characteristic does not conceal the radical nature of the consecration”.⁵⁶

It must be said that the presence of the lay religious in the **Orders and Congregations** is a common fact but, depending on the origin, evolution, objectives and location in the community, his appearance varies. It is one thing to be

⁵⁵ GC24, 154

⁵⁶ AGC 365, p.40 ff.

born as monks and be spiritually “monks among monks”, but quite another to have heard the call to collaborate in a “pastoral” community, which places the sacramental relationship with the Trinity at the highest point in the formation of young people and the faithful in general. Certainly we are not the only Congregation that considers its lay confreres an essential component for its particular identity and mission. Recent studies – including those undertaken by the Committee set up by the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life, with the task of analyzing more deeply the “form of Institutes” – have indicated that in each Institute the figure and situation of the consecrated lay member must be decided in conformity with each charism, giving due weight to sociological and theological considerations in general, but without separating them from the particular charisma and mission.

For us in this connection, there has been a reflection put forward authoritatively by the GC21,⁵⁷ taken up by Fr Egidio Viganò,⁵⁸ and endorsed by the Constitutions.⁵⁹ It explains how the lay dimension traverses the whole of our life and family, even to leaving a deep impression on our character: we are educators, working in many fields of secular activity where management, administration and pastoral guidance are inter-mixed. Included in our mission are secular commitments which follow paths of human development such as work, teaching and sport. Within the compass of the Salesian Family and in our own works we work with lay people to quite a large extent (cooperators, past-pupils, collaborators). For this reason the religious community, and still more the educative community, shows the countenance of the Church, the people of God in human history.

⁵⁷ Cf. GC21, Documento 2; *The Salesian Brother*, n. 166-211

⁵⁸ Cf. *The lay component of the salesian community*, Circular Letter of 24 August 1980, ASC 298

⁵⁹ Cf. C 45; *The project of life of the Salesians of Don Bosco*, p. 415-419

And yet the point of attraction or our principal activity remains quite clear: to place young people in a sacramental relationship with God, to reveal to them their condition as children of God and enable them to live accordingly. In our communities the lay dimension is fused in a unique manner with the pastoral dimension and the priestly ministry, in which we all have the task of representing and bringing to life once again Jesus Christ who is the foundation of the community. It was Don Bosco's wish that superiors should use their gifts of priestly ministry for the good of the community through the exercise of the Word, the ministry of sanctification, and the guidance of all towards the goal of sacramental communion with God. This is why, according to the Constitutions,⁶⁰ Rectors, Provincials and the Rector Major must be "priests" of their respective communities, and not only guides or coordinators of activities.

The consequences are by no means insignificant, both as regards the exercise of authority and the spiritual life of communities. The latter are not simply groups requiring technical coordination and management, but communities to be sanctified in line with what Jesus did with his disciples, uniting them vitally with the Father using all possible means.

But in this context, the Brother has no less possibility of contributing to the sanctification of his confreres and the young, of assuming important responsibilities in the educational field, or of following in a mature manner the paths of salesian spirituality.

The Brothers do not lack opportunities for taking full and mature responsibility, which have their effect on community life and the apostolic mission. There are vast educative and lay sectors which are necessary for overall pastoral work. The vocation of the Brother is open to charity in all sorts of different forms. And these are the expressions of his consecrated vocation.

⁶⁰ cf. C 121

This shows the **very many ways** in which the vocation of the salesian Brother can be realized within the salesian community. "The concrete possibilities of living the consecrated state in the Congregation are many and varied",⁶¹ as is proved by the life of Artemide Zatti and many other confreres. The lay characteristic of the salesian mission, attention to poor youngsters and critical situations, sensitivity and skill in the world of work, involvement in the social context, the areas of commitment which occur in the missionary dimension among ordinary people and in social communication – all these find, as they have always done, a particular accord with the vocation of the salesian Brother; they are found in well known traditional roles, and are also open to new forms and expressions, as is made clear by present-day experience.

Salesian history teaches us that often the Brother has been able to give weight and effectiveness to the community's mission to the young and the poor by a particular contribution, even on missionary frontiers. Think, for instance, of the unique relationship that exists between dedication to poor youngsters, trade schools, evangelization of the poor and the salesian Brother. It is a many-sided contribution but it is not undefined. Lack of definition leads to vagueness, but the plurality of complementarity forces enriches the community and the mission. One should never think, therefore, that humble tasks, that seem from a human point of view of little consequence, are without their importance. Earlier I recalled Don Bosco's expression: "A good doorkeeper is a treasure for a house of education". It was the expression of a man who well knew that education depends on the sum total of all the relevant factors, and I myself could tell the story of a doorkeeper who was a treasure in the far-flung "pampas" of Patagonia.

⁶¹ GC21 301; FSDB 324

4.2.2. Some particular points.

As I mentioned already, in speaking of the salesian Brother it has not been my intention to deal exhaustively with all the different aspects of his vocation and mission. Drawing inspiration from the figure and experience of holiness of Artemide Zatti, I have considered some elements which touch on the identity of the Brother, his particular contribution to the mission and his place in the community.⁶² There are others that could be analyzed at greater depth. I will now refer to one or two particular aspects.

4.2.2.1. *The Institutional form of Institutes.*

What I said a little earlier about the presence of lay members in numerous Orders and Congregations, has direct reference to the institutional form of the Institutes concerned. We know that this is at present the object of discernment at ecclesial level. On the occasion of the Synod on Consecrated Life, in fact, the suggestion was made once again that there should be reflection on the relationship between the various charismata, the figures of the members and the *different institutional forms of the Institutes* (clerical institutes and lay institutes). In the Exhortation *Vita Consecrata* the Pope spoke of an appropriate Committee to be set up by the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, for the purpose of going more deeply in this context into the theme of the so-called “mixed” Institutes.⁶³

With specific reference to this proposal and in relationship with the work of the said Committee, the GC24 provided the following guideline, in view of an updated reflection on the “form” of our Society: “In the light of the Apostolic Exhorta-

⁶² On these elements of the vocation and mission of the salesian Brother, cf. also: GC21, doc.2; *The project of life of the Salesians of Don Bosco*, p. 415-419; *Il salesiano coadiutore. Storia, identità, pastorale vocazionale e formazione*, Editrice SDB – Rome 1989; FSDB, *passim*

⁶³ Cf. VC 61

tion *Vita consecrata* and of the juridical developments now in progress on the "form" of Religious Institutes, the GC24 considers it important that a study be made of a possible "mixed" form of our Society, and that there be a deeper investigation to see whether the innovations in such a form respond to our charism and to the original project of the Founder".⁶⁴

We are aware that the above-mentioned Committee has not yet completed its study, and hence we do not yet have any authentic and definite guidelines. But at least we know that in any case what will prevail will be the criterion of charismatic fidelity in each Institute.

The urging, however, of the GC24 remains valid that the matter should be taken up again when the results of the Committee's study are made known; they can enlighten our reflections in association with what has already been decided about the aspects of our charism in preceding Chapters.

4.2.2.2. The salesian Brother and lay collaborators.⁶⁵

A theme on which I have often been questioned, in the context of the GC24, includes queries of the following kind: What place has the salesian Brother in the new operative model made up of Salesians and laity? If the subject of the mission, the operational nucleus, is composed of Salesians and laity, what is the specific contribution or effectiveness of the Brother? Does not the presence of so many lay people, who share in Don Bosco's spirit and mission, render less meaningful the presence of the Brother as an expression of the lay dimension of the salesian vocation and mission?

Let it be said at once that if we are going to put religious consecration in parentheses, so as to argue in terms of roles and actions, this not only changes the terms of reference but completely alters the dimensions. Rightly in recent times has the

⁶⁴ GC24, 192

⁶⁵ The GC24 dealt at length with this theme. Cf. analytical index under: *Relationships between Salesians and Laity*; and specifically re Brothers in n. 154

same Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life emphasized the triple condition in line with which the Christian lives his union with Christ: minister or priest, layman, consecrated according to a particular charisma.

Here then you have the first substantial difference between the lay religious – and hence the salesian Brother – and lay collaborators: it stems from his identity as a “consecrated” person, even though with lay connotations, i.e. how he lives the covenant relationship God has established with him, and his own rapport with God. There is no future for a religious who does not express immediately, and almost emotionally, a transcendent dimension – like an arrow pointed to the divine and to love of his neighbour, which stems from the divine. It would be a pointless exercise to look for the difference on the basis of roles, importance or hierarchy. We should read again those Gospel passages which speak of the service of the disciples to others.

The weakening of the identity of the salesian religious community as the specific animating nucleus, or its merely functional presence in the EPC without a witnessing role, could lead to a leveling down of the consecrated salesian and the lay collaborator to a practical equality, especially in their activities. These are preoccupations which are evident in the following expressions of the Chapter document: “The maturing in the period following Vatican II of the lay vocation challenges the SDB identity from the specific standpoint of consecration. In some SDBs one notes sensitivities which give rise to concern: (...) it seems to some that lay persons can now do everything or nearly everything that the consecrated person does, while still remaining a lay person; others think that the good they can do as consecrated religious in a community which “limits” their activities, they could do more efficaciously outside, as committed laymen”.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ GC24, 45

To these preoccupations the GC24 replied by referring to the salesian community and the Salesian seen as a member of the community of consecrated persons, especially when speaking of the "community of consecrated persons which is the soul of the EPC".⁶⁷ I myself emphasized the point at the conclusion of the Chapter, when I declared that many participate in Don Bosco's charism, "but the latter is concentrated in the SDB community in a special way by virtue of the force of consecration, the community experience, the plan of life (profession), and total dedication to the mission".⁶⁸ And in my recent letter on pastoral work for vocations, inviting you to put forward clearly the vocation to the consecrated life, I wrote: "It is true that these lay people can contribute a great deal, but it is equally true that Don Bosco wanted at the centre of his Family a community of consecrated persons".⁶⁹

On the other hand, it is evident that no one can demand that a man engaged in educative work should express only the religious dimension. There are activities with valid secular aspects which call for special skills, and they are distributed among those qualified in this respect. But for the consecrated person there is another and deeper dimension; his ideal of life is the rapport with God that Jesus wanted for his disciples: i.e. consecration as the reference point and paradigm of sanctity.

4.2.2.3. *The formation of the salesian Brother.*

Another question that is often raised, and rightly so if it is asked "with discernment", concerns the process and level of the formation of the Brother. In effect, the formation and qualification of the Brother remains the key to a meaningful experience, a formation which renders effective his presence and contribution.

⁶⁷ Cf. GC24, 149-155

⁶⁸ GC24, 236

⁶⁹ AGC 373, p. 41

The argument needs to be treated sensitively, in the sense that we need to be clear that spiritual, educative and pastoral formation are the foundation of our vocation, while specific technical or professional qualifications are related to concrete and personal forms of educative activity. The *Ratio*, which has been recently revised, with the contribution also of Brothers, has addressed this point with due concern. And in the various regions practical implementation can already be seen.

We can safely say that a quality formation, which gives meaning to the Brother's vocation and also to his presence and specific contribution in the mission, is the secret of the Brothers' future. Among the Brothers presented earlier there is a clear link between qualification and the daily practice of educative and pastoral charity.

In this connection we have already traveled a fair distance in the field of initial and ongoing formation, a process the *Ratio* prompts us to continue.

The fundamental trend of the Congregation is clear in what refers to every Salesian, brother, priest or candidate for the priesthood, and must be responsibly applied by the Provinces.

With regard to formation, the Constitutions say that "it normally follows curricula of equivalent level with the same phases and similar content and objectives. The necessary differences are determined by the specific vocation of each one, by his personal gifts and inclinations and the duties of the apostolate".⁷⁰

In the *Ratio* are indicated the formation requirements for every salesian educator and pastor, the criteria, content and conditions for ensuring an equivalent but not standardized formation; one that is specific and differentiated, so as to provide professional qualifications suitable for the mission, for the many ways of participating in it and the capacity of the confreres.

Particular attention on the part of those responsible must be given to the quality of the formation process to specific consecration formation; and to professional qualification and initiatives to support the process of ongoing formation. For this purpose, in some cases it will be indispensable to have recourse to interprovincial collaboration. The essential points must never be lost sight of, nor allowed to take second place in the life of young candidates or of mature Salesians. "We Salesians", the Constitutions remind us, "form a community of the baptized. Submissive to the bidding of the Spirit we are resolved to carry out the Founder's apostolic plan in a specific form of religious life: to be in the Church signs and bearers of the love of God for young people, especially those who are poor".⁷¹ If we ever lose this, our identity and our project go with it.

5. PASTORAL WORK FOR VOCATIONS: INVITATION TO A SPECIAL COMMITMENT.

From the reflection on the vocation of the salesian Brother, in the light also of Artemide Zatti's experience of holiness, and from the conviction concerning the effectiveness of his presence in the salesian mission and hence in the Congregation, derives the need and importance of a special commitment to the promoting of this vocation at the present day.

If it is true that around our Father and other Salesians, men of God, there has been a force of attraction which needed neither manuals nor great organization, it is also true that history, through practical efforts and shared experiences, has revealed to us different ways and conditions for the birth and growth of this form of vocation, in view of the salesian mission and its full realization – even to the point of sanctity. The deeper study which has been done has shown up its originality, its beauty and its efficacy.

⁷¹ C. 2

We must therefore seek to discover this gift where it has been given, and to cultivate it. We must commit ourselves decisively to vocational pastoral work, which includes approach, contact and proposal. To recognize and welcome God's gift is the first attitude to be adopted in all work of this kind. We are convinced that the Spirit has raised up this kind of religious in our community and continues to do so.

Of pastoral work for vocations as one of the primary obligations of our mission, and of its characteristics at the present day, I spoke to you a few months ago in the letter "*Now is the acceptable time*",⁷² and the third part of the book "*The Salesian Brother*" is dedicated to the same theme.⁷³

It is not my intention to repeat what you can find in these two sources. I prefer rather, on the extraordinary occasion of the beatification of Brother Artemide Zatti, to ask from every Province, every community and every confrere in the coming years – beginning with the present one – **a renewed, extraordinary and specific commitment for the vocation of the Salesian Brother**, within our vocational pastoral work: in praying for this, in suggesting and proclaiming it, in welcoming it and following it up, in living it personally and together in the community. The first reflection and practical application of this must take place in the local context: in every house and in every Province, and then at interprovincial and regional level. A worldwide Congregation like ours lives in widely differing contexts, just as the sensitivities, possibilities and perspectives, even as regards those referring to the figure of the salesian Brother, are diverse. Among the Superior Generals we often come across this plurality in the vast phenomenon of globalization, and we are aware of the importance of charismatic communion without resorting to rigid models and standardizing formation processes.

⁷² Cf. AGC 373

⁷³ Cf. *The vocation of the salesian brother in salesian pastoral work for vocations*, in *The Salesian Brother*, – Rome 1989, p. 133-161

Commitment for vocations was proposed by some Provinces as the theme for the coming Chapter. Even though it was not selected as the specific point, it has its place within the capitular discernment which will verify the conditions that can foster a joyful experience of the vocation in the community, and it is not difficult to foresee that there will also be reference to the different forms of the salesian vocation.

I know that every time we reflect together on this vital point, there immediately emerge **challenges to be faced and difficulties to be overcome**.

A first and evident challenge arises from the **small number of Brother vocations** and from their slow and progressive diminution in the Congregation, a phenomenon experienced in all Institutes, often in a still more serious form, and in particular in lay Institutes. At the time of Artemide Zatti's death, the Congregation was living an era of strong development of the Brother's vocation, both as regards growth in numbers and commitment to qualification. From this standpoint the situation has undergone a profound change, as we can see very clearly from statistics. They are indicators which apply to the broadest context of the vocational situation, of consecrated life, and of the various areas in which the Congregation is present.⁷⁴

The statistical aspect can be a consequence also of **other challenges or difficulties**, which the above-mentioned book on the Salesian Brother presents as follows: "There is a certain difficulty in presenting to young people the religious, spiritual and apostolic physiognomy of the lay Salesian in all its richness, in a manner which they can understand and may meet their aspirations. Various congresses on the vocation of the lay religious have sought to specify the causes for this: the somewhat obscure role played by the lay faithful in the Chris-

⁷⁴ It cannot be said however that there were no Brother vocations. The yearly average of Brother professions from 1990 to 1999 (10 years) was: first professions 57.3, perpetual professions 32.8.

tian community, the scarcity of models with whom to identify, the "clerical" mentality of some religious communities, the lack of distinctive signs about the lay religious, a history which at times may have made him look like a secondary figure in religious families predominantly priestly in character, the line of approach in the vocational apostolate, and the natural tendency of young people to link vocation with religious service to people".⁷⁵

In my letter on vocations I emphasized the **present-day difficulty of proposing the vocation to the consecrated life**. "Our society, and often the Christian community itself," I wrote, "does not have an adequate knowledge of the religious life, so as to understand its meaning and value. Our way of living the consecrated life has lost visibility and in several aspects seems incomprehensible. This is something that becomes more disturbing in face of the growing presence of laity in the Church and, for us, in the salesian mission".⁷⁶

These difficulties, of which we are well aware, far from weakening our resolve should stimulate it and **make it more convinced**. In this connection I consider most opportune the words of John Paul II in the Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consecrata* referring to vocational difficulties and perspectives: "New situations of difficulty are therefore to be faced with the serenity of those who know that what is required of each individual is not success, but **commitment to faithfulness**".⁷⁷ It is a matter of fidelity to our commitment: fidelity to God's gift and to Don Bosco's project.

Our first attitude must be one of **trust in God** and of **recourse to him**. In this connection I can quote some words written to me by a Brother: "Today too resounds the call 'Come and follow me'. And I find it always a source of wonder that even today there are young men who seem to lack nothing

⁷⁵ *The Salesian Brother*, n.165

⁷⁶ AGC 373, p. 41

⁷⁷ VC 63

they would need for heading towards the priesthood, and instead they choose to become consecrated laymen in the Salesian Congregation. And so in our pastoral work for vocations we must have faith in this vocation which is complete in itself, and pass on to others esteem for it as by osmosis, without any forced comparisons or distortions in respect of the clerical figure. We must be convinced that there are young men who do not identify with the priestly model, but are attracted by that of the consecrated layman. What are the reasons for this choice? All reasons are insufficient: fundamentally it is a mystery of Grace and freedom”.

There are many **ways for proposing** the vocation of the salesian Brother: recounting incidents from Don Bosco and salesian history, presenting the Congregation's experiences of the present day, bringing people into direct or indirect contact with models, and deepening the lay character of vocation.

We know the **conditions for ensuring** a reawakening of interest, for animating, encouraging and following up vocations.

It is indispensable that we **make known the vocation of the salesian Brother by a specific and explicit presentation**, which highlights consecrated life according to Don Bosco's unique charisma and explains how it is realized in the Brother and in the salesian priest. In this perspective can be indicated the criteria for specific discernment, avoiding any stereotyped decisions or those based simply on the absence of requisites for the priestly vocation.

Such a presentation may be opportune, and sometimes even indispensable in the “ecclesial” environment in which the vocation of the lay Christian and hence of the lay religious – like the salesian Brother – is often little known or indeed not known at all, and this even in the context of the Salesian Family.

But I cannot recall any well-founded salesian vocations without the following four characteristics: the thought of God

and desire for him, to the extent of giving him first place in love and in the organization of life; attraction of Don Bosco; a passion for the educative and pastoral mission to the young; and the sense of kind, tolerant and generous complementarity in the community, without any complexes about respective status.

It is often said that the vocation of the salesian Brother, though complete and significant in itself, is **not easily perceived**, and this refers especially to his experience as a consecrated person, as an educator and pastor, and to the fact that he is able to animate and communicate the values of the charisma. This is a point that challenges every salesian and every community in the present context and new 'working model'. What can we do to get across to our youngsters and collaborators the basic motivations in our life which make it unique, and stir up in them the desire to follow the same path?⁷⁸ The answer can come from the fostering of our personal experience of life, from its communication, from the quality of formation, and from the **exploitation of those forms of "visibility"** that manifest the underlying significance which we live and to which we give witness. We shall also need to be attentive to certain forms of "visibility" of which we are reminded by the Constitutions and Regulations, such as the "responsible and effective participation" in the life of the local, provincial and world community, the selection of those responsible for government, and presence in Chapters and the teams for formation and animation.⁷⁹

An organization or explanation which lacks authenticity will evidently be useless. The interaction of persons required for the practice of the preventive system, the welcoming and attractive presence, the radical following of and witness to Jesus Christ, the primacy of God and his love, are nowadays more than ever the factors and motivations behind every reli-

⁷⁸ Cf. AGC 363, p. 26

⁷⁹ Cf. C 123; R 169; FSDB 234. 284

gious vocation. It is deceitful to base vocational appeal on other attractions. Only a robust Christian formation can give rise to the following of Jesus Christ. And, as is always the case, anyone who receives this gift has the responsibility of making it known and passing it on to others. Vocation is passed on by direct contact. So it has always been among charismatic men, and so it will continue to be through the beauty of this vocation. The more convinced and serene are the confreres in living their life in God, the more effectively will they be able to attract others to their experience.

It is helpful if our centres of spirituality and ongoing formation organize meetings and courses of study on the different vocations – lay and priestly – which make up our community and are the driving force behind our mission, each in its own way. Such studies are not only useful for a deeper and updated knowledge of our vocation, but are also a stimulus to effective pastoral work for vocations. I have asked in particular the Province of the Middle East and the centre at Cremisan to promote initiatives of this kind: the biblical aspect – in the land which has known the experience of the Word of God made flesh – can open up significant perspectives.

The intercession of Artemide Zatti and the flourishing of vocations: an outstanding testimony.

It will be worth our while to listen to one who has experienced the efficacious intercession of Artemide Zatti precisely with reference to the vocation of the consecrated layman, and kindly made it a point to tell us of his experience. He is His Eminence Cardinal Giorgio Mario Bergoglio, now Cardinal Archbishop of Buenos Aires, who was Provincial of the Jesuits at the time of the following testimony.

I quote from the text of a letter written to Fr Cayetano Bruno SDB, dated: Buenos Aires, 18 May 1986.

“Dear Fr Bruno: Pax Christi! In your letter of 24 February you asked me to write something about my experience with Bro. Zatti (who became a great friend of mine) concerning the vocations of Brother confreres. [...]

We had a great dearth of lay confreres. I take as an example the year 1976, when I first got to know of the life of Bro. Zatti. In that year our youngest lay confrere was aged 35; he was an infirmarian and four years later died of a tumour on the brain. The next youngest was aged 46, and the next after that was 50. The others were all of venerable age (though many still continued to work as best they could despite their 80 years). This demographic picture of the lay confreres in our Argentine Province led many to think that the situation was irreversible and that there would be no more vocations. Some, in fact, wondered whether the lay confrere had any longer any relevance among the Jesuits, because – looking at the facts – it seemed that he would soon be extinct. Moreover efforts were being made in various places to outline a ‘new image’ of the lay confrere, to see whether by this means a stronger appeal could be made to young men to follow this ideal.

On the other hand the Father General, Fr. Pedro Arrupe S.J., insisted strongly on the need of the vocation of the lay confrere throughout the Society, going so far as to say that the Society would not be the Society at all without lay confreres. The efforts made by Fr Arrupe in this area were great indeed. The crisis was not one of only a few Provinces, but was general throughout the Society (in respect of lay confreres).

In 1976, and about September as far as I recall, during a canonical visitation of the Jesuit mission in northern Argentina, I stayed for a few days at the residence of the Archbishop of Salta. There, as we were chatting together after a meal, Mgr. Pérez told me about the life of Bro. Zatti; he also gave me a biography to read. His example, that of a complete

lay religious, made a deep impression on me. At that moment I felt that I must ask God, through the intercession of that great Brother, to send us some lay vocations for the Jesuits. I made novenas and got our novices to do the same. [...]

At Salta on various occasions I had felt inspired to recommend to Our Lord and Our Lady of Miracles an increase in vocations in the Province (this in general, and not specifically in brother vocations, as I did with Bro. Zatti). Furthermore I made a promise that the novices would make a pilgrimage on the feast of the Lord of Miracles if we reached the number of 35 novices (a number we reached in September 1979).

I come back to the request for lay vocations. In July 1977 the first young brother entered (he was aged 32, as a matter of fact). On 29 October of the same year came the second (he was aged 33)".

And the letter goes on, detailing year by year a list of 16 other lay-brothers who entered between 1978 and 1986. The letter then continues:

"From the time we began to pray to Bro. Zatti 18 young lay-brothers entered and persevered, with another five who left during the novitiate or juniorate: a total of 23 vocations.

The novices, students and lay-brothers have several times made the Novena in honour of Bro. Zatti, asking for lay vocations. I myself have done the same. I am convinced of his prayers and intercession for this intention, because the numbers involved make it a rare case in our Society. As a mark of our gratitude, in the 2nd and 3rd edition of our Booklet of Devotions to the Sacred Heart, we have included a Novena asking for the canonization of Bro. Zatti.

Another interesting point is the quality of those who entered and are persevering. They are young men who want to be the kind of lay-brother that St Ignatius himself wanted, without them having to be spoon-fed. For us the vocation of the lay-brother is very important. Fr Arrupe used to say that without them the Society would not be what it is meant to be.

They have a special charisma which is nourished by prayer and work. And they are a benefit for the whole body of the Society. [...] They are hard workers, pious, happy and level-headed, of manly bearing and well aware of the vocation to which they have been called. They feel a special responsibility to pray for the young Jesuit students who are preparing for the priesthood. They display no inferiority complex for the fact that they are not priests, nor do they have any idea of applying to become deacons, etc.; they know what their vocation is and that is how they want it to be. This is helpful, and a very good thing.

These have been the general lines of my relationship with Bro. Zatti on the question of Lay-brothers for the Society. I repeat that I am convinced of his intercession, because we have prayed so much through him as our advocate.

And that is all for the moment.

Affectionately in the Lord and his Most Holy Mother,
Jorge Mario Bergoglio, S.J. “

This is a wonderful stimulus for us too to ask for the intercession of Artemide Zatti for an increase in good and holy vocations of Salesian Brothers.

Conclusion: our vocation to holiness.

Dear confreres, let us prepare ourselves to welcome the grace and message given to us by the Church through the witness to salesian holiness of this confrere of ours.

The figure of Artemide Zatti constitutes an encouragement and inspiration to make us sensitive to new areas in urgent need of pastoral work at the present day, and especially to prompt us to rethink with generosity and breadth of outlook the presence of the salesian Brother, marked by the following typical traits:

- the determination to stay and work with Don Bosco in line with *da mihi animas*;
- the living out of a total consecration, which has its immediate and strongest expression in participation in the community mission and in brotherly love;
- the continuous updating and untroubled development of personal preparation as a means of doing good.

The occasion of his Beatification, which will propose him as a unique model to our Family and the Church, emphasizes a fundamental element of our life as consecrated persons at the beginning of the third millennium: it is *the priority given to the spiritual dimension of life*, a new consequence and prophecy following from the Incarnation, which is manifested in a charity capable of performing man's greatest actions. It is the main prophetic form of Christianity: to surprise others by our radical choice of love, fearlessly rejecting all ambiguity, and fighting decisively against the evil which humiliates people. Perhaps what is urgently needed today is not the foundation of a large number of institutions for formal education, but to revise the message transmitted by our personal and community life as the gospel unfurled at the present day,⁸⁰ and as a prolongation of the life and actions of Jesus. In a word, *our sanctity!*

I cannot conclude without a reference to the presence and role of Mary Help of Christians in the vocation of Artemide Zatti and in his road to sanctity.

"I believe", declared one witness, "that the Servant of God had a devotion to Mary Help of Christians that was matched by few others".⁸¹ And in the *Positio* we read: "To understand the flavour of his love for Mary, one must go to his letters in which he advises his relatives to have recourse to her (S, p. 2, p. 3, etc.), where he declares that if he is in the Congregation he owes it to

⁸⁰ Cf. VC 62

⁸¹ *Summarium*, p. 270, n. 1080

her (S. p. 17), where he recognizes that to Mary he owes his life (S. p. 33) and where there are continual reminders to seek her help and intercession (S. p. 15, p. 16, p. 20 etc.).⁸²

In effect, as we have seen, it was to Our Lady that he attributed his recovery from tuberculosis, and on this account dedicated his whole life to God in the persons of the sick and the poor. Every day he honoured her by the recitation of the Rosary, even as he cycled through the streets of Viedma, and he also got the sick to recite it every day. Characteristic was his Marian greeting on entering houses: "Hail Mary most pure".⁸³

These are all signs which bear witness to the constant awareness of the presence of Mary which sustained the Servant of God in his mission, and from which he drew the faith and inspiration that prompted him to imitate the Good Samaritan in the service of those in need. Realized to a wonderful degree in Artemide Zatti – as it must be realized also in us – was what our Constitutions say: "Mary Immaculate, Help of Christians, leads us to the fullness of our offering to the Lord and gives us courage for the service of our brethren".⁸⁴

Dear confreres, may the Virgin Mary, our Mother and Helper, support the pilgrimage of each one of us and of the whole Congregation along the road to salesian sanctity for the benefit of the young people to whom we have been sent.

This is the finest thing I can wish you, not least in view of the GC25.

Affectionately in Don Bosco,



⁸² *Positio*, p. 229

⁸³ Cf. *ibid.*

⁸⁴ C 92

2. GUIDELINES AND POLICIES

A RENEWED AND EXTRAORDINARY COMMITMENT FOR THE VOCATION OF THE SALESIAN BROTHER.

Fr Antonio DOMENECH,
Councillor for Youth Pastoral Ministry

Fr Giuseppe NICOLUSSI,
Councillor for Formation

In announcing the approaching Beatification of the salesian brother Artemide Zatti the Rector Major asks "from every Province, every community and every confrere in the coming years – beginning with the present one – **a renewed, extraordinary and specific commitment for the vocation of the Salesian Brother**, within our vocational pastoral work".¹

Fr Vecchi devotes several pages in his letter to this task: he refers to recent salesian documents, recalls the challenges and difficulties of today and points out the attitude to be cultivated, the way forward and the conditions to be ensured. All of this is in a context of the way of thinking about vocations and an approach to them, and in view of an educative and pastoral mission characterized by a vocational dimension.

To encourage a practical response to the Rector Major's invitation we intend to briefly indicate *some guidelines* and offer *some practical suggestions* which could help the provinces to take up this task. Many of them have been suggested by confreres, most of them brothers, who were asked to recommend some practical working methods regarding the vocation of the salesian brother.

A renewed commitment at provincial level to the vocation of the salesian brother implies among other things: promoting

¹ cf. Letter of RM in this issue, p. 48

the involvement of every confrere, being aware of the vocation and role of consecrated persons, decisively accepting the responsibility of making the vocation of the brother known, of proposing, fostering and promoting it.

1. Making every SDB a convinced promoter of the vocation of the salesian brother.

It might seem a superfluous comment, yet it is a necessary task. Without knowledge and appreciation there cannot be an adequate proposal of a vocation. The Rector Major in his recent letter on vocations entitled "*Now is the acceptable time*" wrote: "Vocation is an attraction. If the charism and the life of the bearers and representatives at the present day is not, so to speak, enticing, the conditions for raising up followers simply fail."

This can also happen with the vocation of the salesian brother: if we ourselves, as individuals and as communities do not know sufficiently well and especially do not appreciate this particular form of the salesian religious vocation, it will be difficult for us to communicate it and motivate young men to follow it.²

For this reason a first requirement for relaunching vocation work for the salesian brother is that *every salesian community and every confrere especially salesian priests, knows, appreciates and values this kind of vocation.*

In this regard the Congregation has provided us with authoritative statements. It is sufficient to refer to the document of the GC21 on "*The Salesian Brother*", the letter of Fr Egidio Viganò on "*The Lay component of the salesian community*",³ the commentary on article 45 of the Constitutions⁴ and, as a

² cf. Letter, p. 52

³ ASC 298

⁴ *The Project of Life of the Salesians of Don Bosco*, pp. 343-346

synthesis, the book "*The Salesian Brother. History, Identity, Vocational Apostolate and Formation*"⁵ prepared at the request of the GC22. These are all documents, some of them scarcely known, which are available in different languages.

It should be the special task of the Provincial Formation Commission *to foster this knowledge in the context of ongoing formation and also initial formation*, not only at a doctrinal level but especially sharing among the confreres the different vocational experiences and motivations in which the doctrinal principles are embodied.

2. Promoting a meaningful vision/understanding of the vocation of the consecrated salesian.

The vocation crisis of the salesian brother cannot be separated from the loss of meaning which the vocation of the consecrated person has undergone in the Church. For this reason, a proposal of a vocation to the salesian life requires, today more than in the past, that the living out and the presentation of the consecrated person's life is done in a way that is meaningful for young people and that demonstrates clearly those aspects which go to make up the religious life and does not limit itself to those of ministry or function.

In this sense it would be useful to *reflect on* and so clarify *some aspects of the salesian vocational experience*, which have influenced the view of vocation and the arrangement of our life and our activity; in particular: the centrality of religious consecration to our identity, the special contribution that we are called upon to make as religious in the context of the EPC and therefore the relationship with lay collaborators, and vocational complementarity in the SDB community.

⁵ Editrice SDB – Rome 1989

2.1. *Being aware of the central place religious consecration occupies in the salesian mission.*

It is essential to be aware of and to highlight *the fundamental value of consecrated life* in the carrying out of the salesian mission, which is an educative mission aimed at developing the whole person and with a strong secular element. In it we must offer something new: "The salesian SDB, by his very life, translates the Gospel into language accessible especially to the young; through the values of consecration he raises questions and indicates possibilities of sense; through his dedication he proclaims that the secret of happiness is to lose his life so as to find it again; through his style of life he makes attractive the spirit of the beatitudes and proclaims the joy of the Resurrection..."⁶

If *the centrality of religious consecration* does not clearly appear in the development of the salesian mission, it will be difficult to make a meaningful and attractive proposal of the vocation of the salesian brother, in which the gifts of consecration and the lay state need to be very closely linked. In his letter the Rector Major declares: "There is no future for a religious who does not express immediately, and almost emotionally, a transcendent dimension – like an arrow pointed to the divine, and to the love of his neighbour which stems from the divine".⁷ One runs the risk of considering the salesian brother as simply an additional helper in the work and not as a witness to a particular experience of God lived in community and at the service of young people.⁸

Not infrequently in looking at the salesian vocation and in presenting it we give the impression of concentrating on the functional aspects leaving in the shade or taking for granted or undervaluing those of the consecrated life. "If we are going

⁶ GC24, 151

⁷ cf. Letter p. 44

⁸ *ibid.* p. 35

to put religious consecration in parentheses, so as to argue in terms of roles and actions, this not only changes the terms of reference but completely alters the dimensions....”⁹ The specificity of the SDB vocation is lost sight of, the person of the salesian brother appears less significant, and that of the salesian priest loses its charismatic character.

2.2. *Being aware of the specific role of the community of consecrated SDBs in the EPC.*

A similar reflection can be made with regard to the identity and the role of the SDB community within the EPC. The GC24 states: “Don Bosco wanted consecrated persons at the centre of his work, persons oriented to the young and their holiness”.¹⁰ “The weakening of the identity of the salesian religious community as the specific animating nucleus, or its merely functional presence in the EPC without a witnessing role, could lead to a leveling down of the consecrated salesian and the lay collaborator to a practical equality, especially in their activities...”.¹¹ Such a mentality and such a presentation lead to the vocation of the salesian brother being less clear and less significant: a vocation in which are found together the lay state and the dimension of consecration. “Here then you have the first substantial difference between the lay religious – and hence the salesian brother – and lay collaborators: it stems from his *identity as a “consecrated” person*, even though with lay connotations”.¹² He is a link between the consecrated persons and the lay people within the EPC, and as such is able to carry out educative and pastoral animation with greater effect. In this area it is vital *to foster and encourage the presence and the qualified activity of salesian brothers precisely as lay religious.*

⁹ *ibid.* p. 43

¹⁰ GC24, 150

¹¹ *cf.* Letter, p. 44

¹² *ibid.*

In a correct ecclesiological perspective of communion and of the specificity of gifts, and in view of a proper vocation proposal, the particular value and role of salesian consecrated life in the animation of the EPC should be reflected on and witnessed to. The GC24 document will help us to do this.

2.3. *Being aware of vocational complementarity in the community of consecrated SDBs.*

The figure of the salesian brother should be seen and above all lived in the context of the community of consecrated Salesians. Our Constitutions speak of “the significant and complementary presence of clerical and lay Salesians in the community”.¹³ This statement of the Constitutions is not always borne out in practice, not only because of the diminishing numbers of salesian brothers in the communities, but especially because in our communities there is *little sharing* of the specific vocational and spiritual experience of each one; and as a result this complementarity is not made clear or is seen merely at a functional and superficial level.

The presence of the salesian brother and his particular spiritual experience enrich the life and apostolic activity of the community. The brother confrere “reminds the priest members of the values inherent in the lay religious vocation and recalls them constantly to an active collaboration with lay people. It also recalls to the salesian priest the vision of an apostolic goal and ideal that is complex in its reality, because it goes beyond priestly and catechetical activity in the strict sense”.¹⁴ But so that this can really occur in our communities there needs to be a possibility for the communication and sharing of the vocational, spiritual and specific apostolic experience of each confrere. *This sort of communication and sharing of*

¹³ C 45

¹⁴ *The Salesian Brother*, n. 133

vocational experiences proper to each one of what we perceive in the others that is helpful, enriching and encouraging etc. needs to be fostered and encouraged in every community.

To summarize: we can say that the challenge launched by the Rector Major requires us to foster in every SDB a vision and an experience of the salesian vocation that gives the proper place to religious consecration, to the specific task of the SDB community and to the complementarity of the different kinds of vocation, overcoming theological and charismatic views that are generic, weak and confused. To this end it would be good for the **Provincial Formation Commission to promote initiatives** for studying, reflecting and sharing on the main contents of the vocational identity of the salesian brother from both an historical and a theological point of view.¹⁵ This reflection can lead the communities to assess how they live among themselves vocational complementarity, how they give witness to it and how they present the value of consecrated life in the practical carrying out of their mission, and to set out some working principles for a vocational proposal that reaches out to the young and to lay people.

3. Making the vocation of the salesian brother known and proposing it.

“To recognize and welcome God’s gift is the first attitude to be adopted in all work of this kind”,¹⁶ making it known is the first task.

While avoiding pressurizing and every kind of psychological pressure, it is essential, the Rector Major writes: “*to make known the vocation of the salesian brother* by a specific and ex-

¹⁵ cf. *The Salesian Brother*, ch. 1 and 2

¹⁶ cf. Letter, p. 48

plicit presentation, which highlights consecrated life according to Don Bosco's unique charisma and explains how it is realized in the brother and in the salesian priest".¹⁷

The relaunching of vocation work for the salesian brother asked for by the Rector Major in every Province requires the involvement of every confrere, and includes all the aspects and all those responsible for animation at provincial and local level: the Provincial and his Council, the animators of youth pastoral and vocational ministry, those responsible for initial and ongoing formation, the delegates for the Salesian Family and for Social Communication, retreat centres and centres for ongoing formation...

In every Province and in all the different areas of provincial animation there must be **an assessment of the situation and of vocational activity and the establishment of an extraordinary program**, which assists with the knowledge, the proposal and the subsequent guidance of salesian brother vocations.¹⁸

- The **assessment** will provide an opportunity to evaluate:
- the impact of our experience as consecrated persons in the EPC and the perception of the consecrated lay vocation in the various contexts in which we find ourselves;
 - the presentation of the different kinds of the salesian vocation and their relationship with other forms of sharing in the salesian spirit and of collaboration in the mission;
 - whether from the beginning of formation there is an adequate presentation of the salesian vocation as consecration to God for young people, which is expressed in a lay or clerical dimension, or whether in fact there is too much identification of the salesian vocation with the priestly vocation;

¹⁷ cf. Letter, p. 51

¹⁸ cf. *The vocation of the salesian brother in salesian pastoral work for vocations*, in *The Salesian Brother*, nn. 156-189

- how the vocation of the salesian brother is presented and is present in programs of vocational promotion and in formation programs;
- what knowledge there is of the vocation of the brother in the different groups of the salesian family and in the different areas in which we work;
- what are the features to emphasize, in the different areas, to propose the vocation of the salesian brother in an understandable and convincing manner;
- with what criteria for vocation discernment we operate;
- in the various contexts of the salesian mission how can we bring out and focus on the charismatic and apostolic contribution of the salesian brother;
- whether those involved in vocation promotion and in formation are suitably prepared to present the vocation of the salesian brother etc.

From this assessment a **new planning process of commitment** in the area of vocations for each confrere and each community can emerge. It is a question of a commitment which can be expressed in *a great variety of ways*: from prayers to communication, from the proposal to accompaniment. The Rector Major refers to them in his letter on vocation ministry and also in the letter devoted to the beatification of Artemide Zatti.

There are a great number of *ways, means and opportunities* for proposing the vocation of the salesian brother, within the provincial program for vocations: "recounting incidents from Don Bosco and salesian history, presenting the Congregation's experiences of the present day, bringing people into direct or indirect contact with models, and deepening the lay character of vocation."¹⁹ One can take advantage of ordinary or extraordinary means and channels, simple or more demanding, as for example the various means of communication (Salesian Bul-

¹⁹ cf. Letter, p. 51

letin, Newsletters, magazines, videos, web sites...), publications of different kinds (biographies, experiences, testimonies, projects...) meetings, local or provincial days for providing information, sharing of experiences, prayer, etc.

The presentation and proposal of the vocation should be fostered *in the different areas and contexts* in which we operate or to which we can have access: in church circles (parishes, inter-congregational vocation teams, etc); in the context of the Salesian Family and in other groups; in all our own works (parishes, youth centres, groups, schools, Salesian Youth Movement, etc.).

In the proposal one should avoid too great an identification of the role of the salesian brother with the technical field, paying too little notice to the aspect of educative and pastoral activities. The specific criteria of discernment should also be indicated, not concentrating on presentations based on stereotypes or on the simple absence of the requirements for a priestly vocation.²⁰ One should be aware that a non-differentiated salesian vocational proposal in many cases is in fact a priestly vocation proposal.

A process to enable the salesian brother to be known is *to make him suitably visible*, avoiding however, a presentation that is not genuine.²¹ To this end, in addition to paying attention to personal experience of the life and its communication, giving sufficient weight to those forms of "visibility" that demonstrate a significance that is lived and witnessed to, can be effective, for example:

- ensuring that the brother confreres themselves are the first to make the vocation known and that they are the protagonists in vocation promotion, becoming qualified for this purpose;
- having salesian brothers as members of vocation animation teams, and present at vocation meetings;

²⁰ cf. *ibid.*

²¹ cf. Letter, p. 52

- presenting the great variety of ways in which the vocation of the salesian brother can be lived and the areas of responsibility assigned to him;
- bearing in mind the spirit of article 169 of the Regulations, as the Rector Major himself recalls, not only with regard to the composition of Chapters and Councils, but also in reference to the participation of the salesian brother at meetings, and to his presence in different areas and forums, and to different kinds of contribution at different levels;
- avoiding the use of language (“Salesian Fathers”) or ways of presenting or referring to the community and to salesian activity which lead to identifying or limiting it to the presence and activity of the salesian priest...

The formation and qualification of brother confreres remains the high road for a significant experience. “We can safely say”, the Rector Major affirms, “that a quality formation, which gives meaning to the Brother’s vocation and also to his presence and specific contribution in the mission, is the secret of the Brothers’ future”.²² It is important therefore to give priority to the formation – initial, specific and ongoing – of the salesian brother; a formation that is strongly identified, which underlines “religious quality” and spirituality that is so challenged in a secularised society; cultural, educational and professional preparation. In some cases this preparation requires a generous and determined interprovincial collaboration. Above all in certain contexts this formation will require particular attention being paid to the specific vocational aspect proper to the brothers and to the candidates for the priesthood.²³

²² cf. Letter, p. 46

²³ For the formation, v. the *Ratio*

4. A more intense prayer for vocations, in a special way for salesian brother vocations.

The commitment to the vocation ministry of the salesian brother is already a reality in some provinces. The task assigned by the Rector Major constitutes for everyone an invitation to **intensify it** and to give to it the **highest priority**. It is a concrete way of welcoming the message and the grace that the Lord is giving to the Congregation through the beatification of Artemide Zatti, a pre-eminent witness to our specific form of salesian religious life and the first brother not a martyr to reach the honours of the altar.

We know that a vocation is above all a gift of the Spirit, whom we need to invoke with a more intense personal and community prayer. At the end of his letter, the Rector Major invites us to this, offering us an example of its efficacy.²⁴

For this reason we **propose** that all the salesian communities **should plan during this period of preparation and throughout the year of the beatification of Artemide Zatti a weekly occasion of prayer for salesian brother vocations.**

In this way we want to feel ourselves *united as a Congregation*:

- *in thanking* God for the gift of Artemide Zatti and of so many other brother confreres who have lived the salesian vocation with admirable fidelity and missionary zeal;
- *in asking* the Lord of the harvest to raise up salesian brother vocations in every province in order to give full significance to the salesian vocation and mission;
- *in expressing our personal and community commitment* to receive, appreciate and cultivate this gift.

²⁴ The prayer-formulas can be taken from those found in the *Project of Life of the Salesians of Don Bosco*, as conclusions to the commentaries on articles, 4, 45, 106 and 116.

In this special and more fervent prayer we can also involve the other groups of the Salesian Family and the young people.

Here then are some practical suggestions to respond to the call made to us by the Rector Major. To our confidence in the Lord and our faithfulness in our work the fruit of new vocations will not be lacking, nor in the first place the reinvigoration of our own vocation.

4. ACTIVITIES OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL

4.1 Chronicle of the Rector Major

As in the preceding period the Rector Major spent most of his time in the Luigi Variara community of the Daughters of the Sacred Hearts at the UPS, from where he followed and guided the affairs of the Congregation, replying to postal and other messages, and receiving the members of the Council who went frequently to confer with him. He also received confreres, sisters and friends. Periodically he returned to the Generalate.

26 March, Monday. Fr Vecchi went to the FMA Generalate to greet the Sisters. He gave a brief address and explained the reasons for the gifts he had brought them.

3-11 April. He was present at the Generalate for a longer time to preside at the meetings of *the intermediate session of the General Council*, at which the Vicar General and the Councillors in charge of Departments took part. This session dealt with the following themes: a first look at some projects for the third millennium; the preparation for the GC25; updated information about new missions and missionaries; a reflec-

tion on some groups of the Salesian Family, and particularly the Cooperators; a project for an 'on-line' IUS course of the salesian system of education.

6 April. The Rector Major went to Turin for a medical examination by the eye-specialist Silvio Grasso at Bruino. He used the occasion also to meet the Valdocco confreres.

23 April, at the UPS Fr Vecchi gave to Fr Renato Butera an interview for the section of the *ANSMag*: "Of pressing concern". The theme chosen by the Rector Major was that of the salesian lay people.

25 April. The salesian and academic communities of the UPS celebrated the feast of the Vice-province. Fr Francesco Cereda, Superior of the Vice-province presided, and Fr Vecchi concelebrated with the other confreres. At the end of the Mass he gave his blessing preceded by a brief address, emphasizing the Holy Father's declaration that the third millennium would mark a crossroads between humanism and faith, between civilization and re-

ligion. It was therefore a challenge and call to educators like ourselves, who have the mission to propose a pedagogy leading to this new humanism. For this reason Fr Vecchi recalled the importance of our cultural commitment, and expressed the hope that many would come from all parts of the world to the Salesian University to prepare themselves for the heavy work that lies ahead.

7 May, Monday. The Rector Major returned to the Generalate where a meeting of the CISI was taking place. He expressed his pleasure and congratulations to the Provincials that they were studying the revised *Ratio*, of which he highlighted the purpose: to raise the level of initial formation from a cultural and theological standpoint; to strengthen the capacity of the communities for ongoing formation; and to increase the number of highly trained confreres, so as to provide personnel for our affiliated centres at university level.

15 May, Tuesday. Feast of St Mary Domenica Mazzarello. Fr Vecchi celebrated the Eucharist in the chapel of the community of the Daughters of the Sacred Heart, with the three Sisters of the community and the Superior General of their Congregation, Sr.

Rosa Inés Baldión, who was visiting Italy. In a brief homily Fr Vecchi said: "Mother Mazzarello was without any doubt one of the greatest gifts received by Don Bosco. She applied the salesian charism to the feminine environment and enriched its spirituality with feminine traits. We should notice how Mary Mazzarello's personal contact with Don Bosco brought about a change in her life. She declared this herself when she said that Don Bosco was a saint, *her* saint, and that she intended to follow him. Something similar has happened in the case of our own vocation. Let us keep this in mind in connection with our pastoral work for vocations: the attraction of a holy person leads others to God, who bestows his love on them and touches their souls from within through the Holy Spirit.

21 May, Monday. The Rector Major returned to the Generalate for the meeting with the Salesian Bishops on the theme: "*Salesian spirituality in the episcopal condition*".

In the evening Vespers were celebrated with the confreres of the Generalate, followed by a word of welcome by the Rector, Fr Corrado Bettiga, in the name of the Rector Major.

22 May, in the Aula Magna, the opening session took place, at which was present also the Mother General of the FMA, together with the Bishops and the General Council. Fr Vecchi gave the official welcome and explained the reasons for the meeting (cf. n.5.3 of this number of the Acts). This was followed by the prepared addresses and group work. In the evening Vespers were celebrated in the same Aula Magna with the members of the community. Fr Vecchi gave the Good-Night, replying to the question: "What are the feelings and reactions of the Rector Major when another salesian bishop is appointed?"

23 May. This was the very significant day of the "Good Shepherd". It was marked by two highly ecclesial events: the concelibrated Eucharist in St Peter's Basilica with Cardinal John Baptist Re presiding, and the audience with the Holy Father in St Peter's Square.

After the audience the Rector Major, and then the Bishops and Councillors, were able to greet the Holy Father personally and kiss his ring. As the Bishops filed past, Fr Vecchi remained at the Pope's side to introduce them.

In the afternoon of the same day the Rector Major and the Bishops

left for Turin-Valdocco to take part in the feast of Mary Help of Christians.

24 May. Fr Vecchi presided in the Basilica at the solemn Concelebration with the salesian bishops in honour of Mary Help of Christians. At the Rector Major's side was Cardinal Castillo Lara. This was one of the most moving moments of the day, because of the presence of the great number of salesian bishops and especially the presence of the Rector Major.

In his homily Fr Vecchi referred to three items from salesian history and tradition: the *picture of the Help of Christians*, above the altar in the Basilica; the *dream of the two columns*, described by Don Bosco to his boys in the evening of 30 May 1862; and the event of the *consecration of the first salesian bishop*. Starting from these three items, Fr Vecchi highlighted "the fertility of the Church from whose womb, through the work of the Holy Spirit, the Salesian Congregation was born", and the "fertility of the Congregation in serving the Church through the salesian charism", a dedication which through a variety of commitments "extends to the entire world, and reaches even the highest service of the episcopal ministry". Fr Vec-

chi saw in the 104 salesian bishops now living, six of whom are Cardinals, "the mature fruit of Don Bosco's ecclesial mentality".

In the afternoon the Prelates went to Colle Don Bosco to visit the boyhood home of our Founder, and the Temple recently enriched by the restoration work and the completing of the internal re-arrangement.

In the evening, they took part in the solemn procession through the streets of Valdocco, accompanying the Statue through thousands of the faithful. With Cardinal Severino Poletto, Archbishop of Turin, who presided, were three other Salesian Cardinals (Castillo Lara, Rodriguez Maradiaga e Javierre Ortas) and the salesian bishops. The Rector Major also joined in the procession, deeply moved by this exceptional event of ecclesial and salesian faith.

25 May, Friday. In the morning were blessed and inaugurated the rooms of Don Bosco, restructured and equipped with modern informational technology which won universal approval. After this the final meeting of the bishops took place, and was followed by a celebrated Eucharist in the Basilica, at which Cardinal Javierre presided and preached the homily. In the evening the Rector Major

and a group of bishops returned to Rome.

27 May, Sunday. In the parish church of Our Lady of Hope, the Rector Major was present at the ceremony during which the Salesian Cardinal Oscar Rodríguez Maradiaga took possession of the church, assigned to him as his titular church, and at the same time gave recognition to the Cardinalatial title of our church.

5 June, Tuesday. Fr Vecchi returned to the Generalate for the opening of the summer session of the General Council of June and July, during which period he would spend more time at the Generalate.

4.2 Chronicle of the General Council

The Vicar General

After the winter session of the General Council Fr Van Looy remained as far as possible at the Generalate, cutting down absences and journeys to the indispensable minimum.

24 February - 10 March. He was in the Far East. In Japan he took part in the celebrations for the 75th

anniversary of the first salesian missionaries and visited the site of the first foundation at Miyazaki. In Korea he was able to visit various communities and meet the confreres and members of the Salesian Family. He made a brief stop in Hong Kong and was able to visit all the salesian houses in Sri Lanka.

11 March, Rome. He took part in the Beatification of the Spanish martyrs.

23 March, again at Rome. He was present at the inauguration of the new Korean College, blessed by the Holy Father himself in the presence of all the Korean bishops.

27-30 March. He presided at the Extraordinary Assembly of the Generalate community in preparation for the GC25.

2 April. Fr Van Looy was at Monteortone for a meeting with the Rectors of the Venice and Verona Provinces.

3-11 April. Intermediate session of the Council, with the Rector Major and Councillors in charge of Departments.

20-22 April. Meeting of the National Presidents of Catholic Educators (UMEC) at Rome.

22 (evening) - 28 April. He preached a retreat at the *Salesianum* to confreres and Sisters of the Roman Provinces.

29 April. At Vercelli for the centenary celebrations of the salesian work.

5 May. At Naples-Vomero for the centenary celebrations.

21-25 May. At Rome and Turin for the meeting with the salesian bishops.

27 May (evening). At Testaccio, to preside at the centenary celebrations of the salesian work.

3 June. Ravenna for the first anniversary of the new parish and oratory, and for the inauguration of the new road named "Via don Carlo Sala", on which the new work is situated.

5 June. Summer session of General Council.

The Councillor for Formation

The Rector Major has decided that during this year there will be a systematic presentation of the *Ratio SDB* and the booklet *Criteria and Norms for Discernment* in all areas of the Congregation, and that this presentation be made in the first place to Provincials, members of provincial councils, and provincial formation teams. The purpose is to launch a process of getting to know and assume, and then give effect to the guidelines of the Congregation in the

field of formation. The principal task of the Councillor and the Department in this period has been this presentation in various Regions or to various provincial conferences.

During the first six months there have been meetings animated by a team from the Department and those responsible at local level in the following places: Brussels from 2 to 4 March for the ten provinces of the Western European Region; Campos do Jordão (BSP) from 23 to 27 April for the six provinces of Brazil; La Plata (Argentina) from 30 April to 3 May for the eight provinces of the South Cone; and at Quito (Ecuador) from 9 to 13 May for the fourteen provinces of the Inter-american Region. These meetings have fostered the knowledge of the text and the frame of reference proposed by the Congregation, together with an indication of the formative priorities for the immediate future and the beginning of the process of wider diffusion of the *Ratio*.

In the same period brief presentations have been made in the international communities of Rome and in other parts.

In the provinces where there have been these meetings, the Councillor has been able to make

contact also with the formation communities and formation guides.

From 3-4 February, Fr Nicolussi was also present for the celebrations of the 122nd anniversary of the foundation of salesian work at Nice (France), the first work founded by Don Bosco outside Italy.

From 21 to 25 March he made a visitation of the international community for priestly formation at Cremisan (MOR), where there are at present some 40 confreres, students of theology, from eleven provinces. The project of the work, which provides a good formative service, needs verification to specify the conditions of working and the forms of shared responsibility at various levels.

The Councillor for Youth Pastoral Work

30-31 January. Fr Domenech met with the students of theology of the Crocetta, Turin, to reflect with them on "*Pastoral work in the salesian oratory*, a fruitful relationship between the welcoming of all and the serious formation of the animators".

6-8 February. He presided at meetings of rectors, parish priests

and pastoral animators of the Southern Province of Italy (IME), during which he presented the fundamental lines of salesian youth pastoral work.

9-12 February. At Berlin he took part in the annual meeting of the European Team for Marginalization, which seeks to share, deepen and coordinate experiences of formation of educators in works for young people at risk, and prepare a process of reflection on the reality of immigration in Europe and the salesian response to it.

21 February - 1 March. The Councillor preached a retreat to Rectors and young Salesians of Venezuela; he was also able to meet the provincial council, the provincial team for youth ministry, the pastoral coordinators of the communities and the animators of the SYM.

Meanwhile Frs Raúl Rojas and Tadeusz Wojcieszak represented the Department at a meeting of the European Consulting Group (SDB) and Committee (FMA) - from 1 to 5 March - on the school and professional formation in Europe.

10 March. This was a study-day organized by the Department with the Institute of Spirituality of the UPS, to analyze more deeply cer-

tain aspects of salesian spirituality and of pedagogy in youth ministry.

11-17 March. At the Generalate Fr Domenech preached the retreat for the chapter members of the Roman Province.

6-12 April. He preached another retreat for the confreres of the UPS.

3-11 April. He took part in the intermediate session of the General Council.

12 April. He went north to begin the Extraordinary Visitation, in the name of the Rector Major, of the communities of Colle Don Bosco and of Valdocco - Mary Help of Christians (ICP).

27-30 April. Fr Raul Rojas, represented the Department at the European meeting of the Salesian Volunteer Movement at Benedikt-beuern.

29 April. The Councillor returned to Rome after the Extraordinary Visitation, and a few days later left for Ecuador.

4-5 May. In Ecuador he had a meeting with the rectors, parish priests and pastoral coordinators to consider with them the fundamental lines of salesian youth ministry.

6-12 May. He took part at Cum-bayá, with 250 representatives of the different groups of the Sale-

sian Family working in scholastic education, in the second *Meeting on the Salesian School in the American Continent*. The purpose of the meeting was to "promote a relaunching of the salesian school in the American continent, so as to provide a significant response, from an evangelizing standpoint and as the Salesian Family, to the challenges presented by a continent becoming ever more impoverished".

22-25 May. He took part in the meeting with the Salesian Bishops in Rome and Turin.

27 May - 3 June. He was in Angola for a visit of animation, during which he took part in the seminar for the elaboration of a process for the education to the faith for the groups of the SYM in Angola.

The Councillor for the Salesian Family and for Social Communication

A. SALESIAN FAMILY Sector

1. In connection with the **Association of Salesian Cooperators**, Fr Martinelli realized the following interventions:

- *participation in Regional Congresses:*

- in Brazil - Cachoeira do Campo (23/25 March 2001) - for the region of the Cooperators of Brazil;
- in Chile - Santiago (27/31 March 2001) - for the region of the Cooperators of the Southern Cone;
- in Italy - Rome (27 April / 1 May 2001) - for the region of the Cooperators of Italy and the Middle East.

Each Congress had its own particular characteristics, in line with the animation carried out in recent years by the Salesians and Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.

The general theme for all the Cooperator Congresses was: *Cooperators for the third millennium. Autonomy and communion.*

From the topics they dealt with, it is easy to trace the lines of development of the Association.

They wanted to face up to the commitments stemming from the Great Jubilee of the Church, which could not be reduced to simple external celebrations.

The Cooperators wanted to make a serious response to the new realities born of the many jubilee meetings: Laity, families, young people, solidarity, responsibility, etc.

The desire in the Association is to move decisively towards organizational, apostolic and juridical autonomy. On the other hand there is no intention to lose sight of communion in the charisma and in spirituality, with all the other groups of the Salesian Family.

- various meetings with the Coordinator General, the Central Delegate and the Representative of the FMA for the Cooperators Association, in view of the meeting of the *World Council*, 22-28 July 2001, which has a lengthy and demanding agenda. In line with the regional congresses, ways will be sought for bringing autonomy and communion to the level of the World Council.

2. There were fundamentally three significant meetings with the **Past-pupils**:

- at the level of the *Confederal Presidency*.

On 17 April 2001, a change was announced in the person of the Confederal Delegate.

Fr Henri Alen, who had been actively present in the Confederation for nine years, particularly in the sector of the formation of the past-pupils, deserves the most sincere thanks of all for the valuable work he has done. His place will be taken by Fr Mark Vellanganny,

of the Province of Madras, whom we thank for his generous availability.

- at the level of the *Confederal Council*.

An aspect that needs to be emphasized because it could become a fertile seed: the Council has met with those in charge of the FMA Confederation for a deeper study concerning possible collaboration.

The meeting took place on 2 June 2001, in an atmosphere of great cordiality and sincere fraternity. It proved very practical as a step to closer links between the two Confederations.

Some months earlier (23-25 April), Fr Martinelli had already been present at the European Convention of the Confederation of the FMA Past-pupils, called together to draw up lines of action for the coming years.

- at the level of the *National Council for Italy*.

From 8-10 June, the Councillor for the Salesian Family had taken part at San Giovanni Rotondo in the National Council of the Past-pupils.

Two elements came out very strongly:

- the will to be involved in the cultural project of the Italian Church, by the offer of the typically salesian characteristic of

education, in the various environments where the past-pupils exercise their professions;

- the more explicit commitment to collaborate in bringing to birth a civil society more in line with the needs of the young and the world of work.

Among other meetings must be recorded one on 11 May, with the Salesians and Daughters of Mary Help of Christians of Rome, for a reflection on the Common Missionary Statement.

B. SOCIAL COMMUNICATION Sector

The following items were studied during this period.

- the **manual of the provincial delegate** for social communication.

At the end of the meeting at the Generalate with the provincial delegates for social communication in December 2000, it was decided to prepare an aid to put in the hands of the delegates.

The material collected together during the meeting was abundant and interesting.

In the time until Easter 2001, it was organized and studied in the Department. Then it was sent to the delegates for their comments

in view of a second draft. They have been asked to send in observations by the end of August before a further revision.

The manual is in three parts:

- formation and animation of the social communication sector,
- internal and external information regarding salesian experience,
- organization of the social communication structures managed by the Salesians.

In its final form the manual will be made known to all the communities, so that all of them may be interested directly or indirectly in the theme of communication.

- the organization of a possible future **professional photographic agency**, for the service of the Congregation and of those who may wish to use salesian productions.

In the regional meetings with directors of Salesian Bulletins the need emerged to make available the vast wealth of photographic material that we have at the Generalate, Mission Offices, Bulletins, reviews, etc.

During various meetings between February and May, two firms have been consulted which specialize in the indexing and archiving of photographs.

A first project is being examined.

- the new style and structure of **ANSMag**, of **News7** and of the **Web-page**.

Confreres who follow the products arriving from the Generalate will have already noticed the innovations.

In the field of information there are many salesian possibilities.

A more frequent dialogue between salesian communities and their neighbourhoods, between the Centre and the Provinces, between experiences and reflection, will be of advantage to Don Bosco's charism.

Our steps of renewal are moving in the right direction.

The Department has been enriched by new member, *Fr Peter Gonsalves* of the Mumbai Province, who has taken the place of *Fr Sagayaraj Devadoss*.

- the manner of participation in the **extraordinary visitation** used by the Regional *Fr Fedrigotti* in the ICP, for the communication sector of the Province.

On 16 February 2001 a meeting was held in Turin of the provincial council of the IPC and the Councillors General who were to help *Fr Fedrigotti* in the realization of the Visitation.

To *Fr Marttinelli* fell the task of carrying out the visitation of the community of *Torino Leumann* and the structures of social communication present in the province.

- the study of the preparation of certain **aids** for provincial delegates of **social communication**.

The Department has prepared a great deal of material for the animation of provinces in the area of social communication.

They include ecclesial texts with the comments of provincial delegates, reflections prepared by a team from the Department on contemporary problems of communication, etc.

- the foreseeing of **possible services to be provided during the GC25**, in agreement and coordination with the Moderator of the Chapter.

Two other events figure in the Councillor's calendar:

- the **intermediate session of the Council** from 3 to 10 April 2001.

Among the items studied were the Salesian Family and Social Communication.

- the meeting of the Rector Major with the **Salesian Bishops** at

Rome and Turin between May 21 and 25, 2001.

In conclusion.

25-26 March. There was a very productive meeting with the persons responsible for social communication in the Bishops Conference of Brazil.

There was an exchange of views and experiences leading to mutual help in providing an efficacious evangelizing presence through the instruments of communication.

The Councillor for the Missions

28 January. Fr Odorico had a meeting for missionary animation in the Roman parish of Testaccio, and then three days later celebrated the feast of Don Bosco at the international mission office of Madrid, Spain, where he had a meeting with all the provincial delegates of missionary animation of Spain.

4 February. After a brief stay in Rome he left for Hong Kong on the first stage of a journey to Mongolia. In the provincial house he had a meeting with the six missionaries recently sent to China, and found that the province is open to receive further help. He also made a brief visit to the new

school at Shitan in mainland China, where a fine new work is developing.

By way of Beijing Fr Odorico reached Mongolia, accompanied by the Provincial of Vietnam and the Superior of the new Mission. The latter has begun in excellent fashion and another four confreres will reach Mongolia in August.

Returning to Beijing, he then went to Yanji to visit the Don Bosco technical school for a second time. This year will see the first graduation ceremony of 120 students. It is the pedagogical and salesian response to the needs of Chinese youth.

After a rapid visit to Indonesia to get to know the new missionary work at Tigaraksa (Jakarta), Fr Odorico returned to Rome.

18 February. He presented the missionary Strenna for 2001 to the Salesian Family of Piedmont.

25 February - 2 March. He presided at Rome over the seminar: "*Salesian work in an Islamic context*": it was a meeting for the sharing of experiences and practical guidelines for the orientation of our work in this difficult setting.

4-9 March. The Councillor made a visit of animation to the Brazilian Provinces of Porto Alegre and Recife, Brazil, with visits to mission stations, animation meetings

with those in formation and the Salesian Family, and with guidelines for an efficacious program of provincial missionary animation.

11 March. He presided at a day of intense missionary animation at Vercelli, where there is great interest in world missions.

13 March. He left for Kenya where he had a meeting with the Provincial.

16-25 March. He was in Madagascar and Mauritius. In Madagascar he had a meeting with those in charge of mission stations, and in Mauritius shared with the confreres the positive beginnings of the new work. He then returned to Rome.

1 April. He presided at Messina at a day of commemoration of the Salesian Martyrs for the various groups of the Salesian Family: it was a day of lively participation and salesian fellowship.

3-10 April. Fr Odorico took part in the intermediate session of the Council.

11-22 April. He visited the Vice-province of Zambia, to see the works in Malawi, and especially the mission of Nkhotakota, and the two foundations in Namibia, now well developed. In Zambia itself he preached the retreat to the members of the provincial chapter at Lusaka.

22-25 April. He made a brief visit to Mozambique, in particular to see the new foundation at Tete. With the return to a stable state of peace, the work in Mozambique is growing and becoming consolidated.

5-7 maggio. The Councillor made a visit of animation (including meetings with confreres in formation, and animators of missionary groups) to the Province of Chile. From there he went on to Peru to visit the new mission of San Lorenzo in the Amazonian area: it has begun extremely well and completes the international nature of the salesian work in the Amazonian missions.

16-19 May. He presided at New Rochelle at the meeting of the various Mission Offices for the detailed examination of all the projects in preparation or already in execution.

21-25 May. He was back in Italy for the meeting with the Salesian Bishops.

1-3 June. Fr Odorico visited Kosovo with the Provincial of the IME and the Delegate for Albania, to take stock of the new work at Pristina. Meetings at various levels give us hope that all is going well and that soon there will be also at Pristina an institute for the training of young workers.

After brief visits to Tirana and Scutari, he returned to Rome for the summer session of the General Council.

The Economist General

During the winter session of the Council Fr Mazzali took part in the *Forum*, organized by the Past-pupils of Piedmont on the theme of the new economy.

1-9 February. The Councillor was in Ethiopia for the celebration of the 20th anniversary of salesian work in Ethiopia and Eritrea, and also to preach the retreat to the members of the provincial chapter at Debre Zeit. After the retreat he presided in the house of Mekanissa, Addis Ababa, at the concelebration for the opening of the provincial chapter and took part in the preliminary session. While he was in Ethiopia he was also able to visit the salesian work at Zway.

11 February. After returning to Rome he presided at the Eucharist introducing the course at the Generalate of the FMA for provincial economists from many parts of the world.

15-17 February. At the Salesian Generalate, together with the collaborators of his Department, he

presided at the meeting of provincial economists of the CISI.

3 March, Saturday. He was at Colle Don Bosco for the inaugural concert on the new organ of the upper Temple.

4-8 March. He preached the retreat to the members of the provincial chapter of the Vice-province of Sardinia.

Some commitments programmed for the month of March had to be postponed because of a road accident in which he was involved on 13 March.

18-20 April. After the intermediate session of the Council, together with Fr Baptist Personeni he presided at the meeting of provincial economists of the Inter-american region at the provincial house of Guadalajara, Mexico.

25 April. He shared the joy of the feast of the Salesian Family of the Adriatic Province at Loreto, and spoke to the group of the relationship between entrepreneurship and the salesian charism.

29 April - 1 May. Fr Mazzali preached a retreat to the animators and youngsters of the Don Bosco Oratory of the parish of the Sangano Martyrs.

11-16 May. He made his delayed visit to Slovakia, during which he was able to visit almost all the salesian works of that country.

After the meeting of the Salesian Bishops, accompanied by Fr Mario Sala, he presided at the meeting of the provincial ecomomers of BEN, GBR, IRL (+ Malta) and OLA at Stockport in the provincial house of Great Britain.

The Regional Councillor for Africa and Madagascar

Fr Antonio Rodriguez dedicated the four months of this period to the *Extraordinary Visitation of the Central Africa Province (AFC)*.

27 January. He left Rome for Rwanda to begin the Visitation in the provincial delegation of *Rwanda, Burundi and Goma*, with 11 communities of which two are formation communities.

He celebrated the feast of Don Bosco at Goma with the two salesian communities there, with all our traditional elements: the Eucharist, an academy, sporting events and a shared meal. More than a thousand youngsters gathered for the feast.

After Goma, the Councillor continued with the visitation of the other communities in Rwanda and Burundi.

8 February. He was able to participate in the solemn act of clo-

sure of the celebrations for the centenary of evangelization in Rwanda and of the celebrations of the Jubilee Year 2000. Cardinal Roger Etchegaray, the special envoy of the Pope, presided at the celebration in the Amahoro ("Peace") Stadium, and two days later came to visit the salesian work at Gatenga. He was accompanied by the Apostolic Nuncio and the Archbishop of Kigali, and was received in the usual youthful salesian style with singing, dancing and acrobatics.

24 February. The Councillor held a meeting with the Delegation Council to pass on his impressions on the visitation and then left for Rome.

At Rome, at the Generalate, he took part in the meeting of SDBs and FMAs working in countries of a mainly Islamic religion and culture. It was an interesting experience which highlighted once again the missionary and educative spirit of our confreres and sisters, who are well aware that salesian education is a platform of dialogue which is needed and even essential in the variety of cultures and religions in the midst of which we work. The meeting ended on 2 March.

3 March. The Regional left for Lubumbashi via Johannesburg.

5 March. He began the visitation of that part of the province. It kept him busy until 16 May, when it concluded with a two-day meeting with the provincial council for the exchange of impressions.

During this period he was present for the inauguration of the provincial chapter (16 April), and for some other significant moments for the province: the Salesian Family study-day, and the closing of the Salesian Games.

Despite the difficulties in traveling and moving about, the councillor was able to visit all the houses, meet the Bishops of the dioceses in which we are working, and speak individually with all the confreres of the province.

20 May. He traveled by road to Zambia for a brief visit of animation.

24 May. He moved on to Zimbabwe, where he remained for a week; from there he also visited the new salesian foundation at Tete in the Delegation of Mozambique.

30 May. He returned to Rome for the plenary session of the General Council.

The Regional Councillor for Latin America - South Cone

After the winter session of the Council Fr Baruffi left for Porto Alegre, Brazil, to spend a few days with his family.

18 February. He began the *Extraordinary Visitation of the Province of Paraguay*, with a meeting with the Provincial and provincial council at Asunción.

24 March. The visitation ended with a further meeting with the Provincial, provincial council and rectors to reflect together on the situation of the province.

26 March. The Councillor began the *Extraordinary Visitation of the La Plata Province of Argentina*. After an initial meeting with the Provincial and provincial council, he began the visitation by meeting the confreres of the province who were in houses in the Province of Buenos Aires.

22-28 April. The visitation was interrupted to allow the Regional to take part in the meeting at Campos do Jordão, Brazil, organized by the Formation Department for the first presentation of the new *Ratio*. While there he presided over a meeting of the CISBRASIL (Brazilian Provincial Conference).

30 April-4 May. He was also

present at the meeting for the presentation of the *Ratio* to the Salesians of the CISUR (Southern Provincials Conference) and presided at a meeting of the same Conference.

18 May. The visitation of the La Plata Province ended with a series of meetings: with the Provincial and provincial council, with the rectors, and with the confreres of the province, for the communication of some general indications.

20 May. Fr Baruffi returned to Rome to take part in the meeting with the Salesian Bishops and to celebrate with them the feast of Mary Help of Christians at Turin.

The Councillor for the Interamerican Region

After the winter session of the Council, Fr Chavez left for Mexico City, to preside at the Eucharist for the inauguration of the new Provincial, Fr Luis Rolando Valerdi. He stayed a few further days in the province for a series of meetings. He then spent a few days of rest with his family at Saltillo.

5 February. He left for Bolivia to begin the *Extraordinary Visitation*, which continued until 28 April. The visit coincided with the

solemn funeral of Fr Dante Invernizzi, who died in Italy on 29 January but had asked to be buried in the salesian cemetery at La Muyurina. At the end of the visitation of the missionary community of Sagrado Corazón, Fr Chavez received the news of the unexpected death of one of his nephews. He takes this opportunity to thank (also in the name of his family) all who expressed their condolences and offered prayers on this sad occasion.

29 April - 4 May. The Regional moved to Lima for a visit of animation to the Province of Peru, which was still rejoicing at the appointment of the Vice-Provincial (Fr Elio Pérez) as Bishop of the Juli Prelature. While in Peru, Fr Chavez greeted the participants in the First National ADMA Congress, held a meeting with the provincial council, took part in a meeting of the Brothers of the province, spoke personally with various confreres, and visited all the houses of formation and the works in the Lima area. He was well impressed by the progress in the building of the Sanctuary of Don Bosco at Rimac, where salesian work in Peru first began.

5 May. The Regional moved on to Quito for the meeting on *The salesian School in America*, and

subsequently for the meeting for the *presentation of the new edition of the Ratio*. For the first meeting he could remain only two days, for the opening event and to preside at the Eucharist. For the meeting on the *Ratio*, however, he was there all the time with Fr Nicolussi and the Provincials of the Region, with also the provincial delegates for formation and one or more of the Rectors of formation communities. The meeting was very productive thanks to the splendid work of Frs Nicolussi and Mario Llanos, who were a great help in getting to know the content of the *Ratio* and how to apply it in the government of the province and in formative practice. The participants were well integrated, as also were the group reflections and the discussions in assembly.

16-18 May. Fr Chavez made a visit of animation to the Province of Medellin. While there he met Fr Camillo Castrellón who, from being Provincial of Bogotá, had been appointed Bishop of the Diocese of Tibú. He also had a meeting with the provincial council and visited the houses of formation and the new foundation in Armenia for the benefit of youngsters orphaned by the earthquake of 1998 and of street-children.

19-25 May. While the meeting with the Salesian Bishops was going on in Italy, the Regional was launching, at the Rector Major's request, the consultation in Bogotá for the appointment of a new Provincial. Originally he had intended to visit the Cuba communities, but was obliged to change his program. From Bogotá he passed once again through Mexico to take part in two family events and make a brief visit of animation to the Guadalajara Province.

3 June. Fr Chavez finally returned to Rome.

The Councillor for the Australia-Asia Region

2 February. Fr Joaquim D'Souza began the *Extraordinary Visitation of the Province of Bangalore* (INK), with a meeting with the provincial council, after which the visitation proceeded in accordance with a plan agreed with the Provincial. He visited first the main houses of formation, i.e. the theologate "Kristu Jyoti College" at Bangalore and the post-novitiate at Aluva, since the time was near for the examinations and summer vacation.

1-3 March. The Councillor interrupted the visitation to go to

Madras to preside at a meeting of the Indian Provincial Conference, which examined the work of coordination and animation carried out by the Conference in the last five years, and its effect on the Provinces and salesian communities of India.

31 March - 3 April. Another interruption was necessary to travel to Yemen to meet the four missionaries from the Bangalore Province who have been working for the past ten years in various parts of that country, at the request of the Vicar Apostolic of Arabia, Mgr. John Baptist Gremoli, as chaplains to the Missionaries of Charity of Mother Teresa, and as parish priests for the local faithful, made up largely of foreign workers.

The Extraordinary Visitation was to have concluded on 24 May with the first profession of the novices in the novitiate of Padivayal in the State of Kerala. But the tragedy of 15 May in another novitiate, that of Ngarian in Imphal in the State of Manipur, where three Salesians were brutally assassinated, caused a change of program. The visitation was therefore concluded on 22 May, and the Regional went to Dimapur to receive the profession of the twelve novices whose lives

were saved by the martyrdom of their superiors. He also took part in a meeting of confreres, who had assembled for the professions, to consider the resulting situation more deeply and take the necessary steps to safeguard the lives of confreres in places more exposed to the danger of terrorists.

After a brief rest with his family, the Regional then returned to Rome for the summer session of the General Council.

The Councillor for the West Europe Region

Fr Filiberto Rodriguez spent the first part of February in Mexico, where he took part in the celebrations for the Golden Jubilee of the salesian work in Puebla de los Angeles; he then preached a retreat for the Rectors of the two Mexican provinces, visited the formation houses of both provinces and a good number of other works in the Province of Guadalajara.

Returning to Spain, he went to Huesca where, in preparation for the coming centenary of salesian work in that city, he gave a conference on the reality of the Congregation in today's world, emphasizing the social and evangelizing character of its activities for

the benefit of young people in need.

He concluded the month of February by preaching another retreat, this time to the rectors of Portugal, which was open also to other confreres and salesian sisters.

1-5 March. He was at Brussels for the meeting of the West European Region. The theme of the meeting was the presentation of the new *Ratio* by Fr Nicolussi and the members of his Department.

11 March. Fr Filiberto had the joy of celebrating with the Holy Father in St Peter's Square for the beatification of Fr José Calasanz and companions, martyrs of the Spanish civil war. We hope that the beatification may soon take place of all the Salesians whose cause for martyrdom has been recognized and whose Causes have reached their conclusion.

13 March - 13 May. He carried out the *Extraordinary Visitation of the Province of Córdoba* (Spain). He noted the vitality of the Salesian Family, the good organization of salesian pastoral work, and the deep educative, social and pastoral approach of the individuals and teams working in the different salesian foundations..

21-25 May. He was present with the Rector Major and other Coun-

cillors at the meeting of the Salesian Bishops in Rome and Turin.

The last week of May he spent in Spain. He presided over the Governing Council for the Missions Office and had meetings with various confreres in houses which depend on the Iberian Conference, to make arrangements in the various communities for the coming pastoral year.

3 June. He returned to Rome for the summer session of the General Council.

The Councillor for the North Europe Region

4 February - 26 March. In this period Fr Albert Van Hecke carried out the *Extraordinary Visitation of the Province of the Czech Republic*. He was also able to meet various groups of Salesian Cooperators and Friends of Don Bosco, the communities of the FMA, and various Bishops of Bohemia and Moravia.

He was able to hear about the "blind salesianity" during the clandestine period, got to know the reality with which the confreres of the present day are carrying out the salesian mission with courage and total dedication, especially in youth centres and

parishes, where they find themselves often in the "front line", bringing back lapsed Catholics to the Church.

He noted the vitality of the Salesian Youth Movement, and gratefully recalls the meetings with confreres in initial formation at Sebranice and at České Budejovice. He also emphasized the missionary work in Bulgaria where the confreres are at the service of the Bishop of the Byzantine rite and make a considerable contribution to ecumenical dialogue.

26 March. The Regional returned to Rome for a few days.

1 April - 19 May. He carried out the *Extraordinary Visitation of the Slovene Province*.

In addition to personal talks with the confreres, this period has served to highlight the effort being made by the province to restructure the present works while being open to new initiatives and foundations for the benefit of the young. The Visitor noted particularly the robust "school for animators" and the many suggestions for the use of free time.

The program for the Visitation provided an opportunity to meet Slovene confreres in the "diaspora" in Serbia, at Muzlja in Vojvodina and at Belgrade; at Podgori-

ca in Montenegro and at Pristina in Kosovo. In all these places the population has been wounded by recent wars; they are poor people longing for peace, justice and the possibility of access to human and Christian development. Our work is truly significant from a salesian standpoint, situated as we are among Catholic minorities, but open to all youngsters whatever be their ethnic origin or religion.

12-15 May. Fr Van Hecke presided at Prague at the annual meeting of the *Provincials of the Northern European Region*. The meeting, which had in mind the preparation for the coming General Chapter, had as its theme: *The salesian community*. It took stock of what the provinces had done to prepare for the GC25, reflected on some guidelines for the salesian community proposed by Fr Stefan Turansky (SLK), did a verification of the Congregation's structures of central government, and exchanged some significant experiences concerning the life of the Provinces.

Returning to Rome, the Regional was able to be present for part of the meeting of Salesian Bishops, and from 31 May to 4 June spent a few days with his family in Belgium.

The Regional Councillor for Italy and the Middle East

12-15 January. Fr Fedrigotti took part in a meeting of the CISI Presidency.

27-29 January. He visited Corigliano Calabro and the local youth pastoral centre which represents, with Lamezia Terme, the effort of the CISI to collaborate with the Southern Province in the Italian "mezzogiorno".

4-10 February. At Brescia he preached a retreat to the students of philosophy at Nave.

12 February. He began the *Extraordinary Visitation of the Special Circumscription of Piedmont and the Valle d'Aosta*, which will continue until the end of next November.

4 April, he took part in the ROME-CEI session of the National Centre for the Catholic School.

21 April. At the Crocetta, Turin, he conferred the ministries of Reader and Acolyte on various candidates, and in the afternoon, took part in the priestly ordination of the deacons, conferred by Cardinal Severino Poletto.

25 April. At Vercelli he presided with Fr Luigi Testa at the feast of

the provincial community, celebrated on the occasion of the centenary of the local Oratory, which was founded by the diocesan priest Fr Lorenzo Rossi, who has the merit of having brought the Salesians to the city.

28 April - 1 May. He took part at the Generalate in the Regional Assembly for Italy and the Middle East of the Salesian Cooperators, during which took place the election of the new Regional Consul-tor, Enrico Sacchi.

10 May. He was again at the Generalate for a meeting of the Missionary Consulting Group, and in the afternoon for a meeting of the CISI, at which Frs Chrys Saldanha and Mario Comoglio, led the assembly to a deeper understanding of the new *Ratio*.

23-25 May. Fr Fedrigotti was at Valdocco with the Rector Major and the Salesian Bishops to participate in the various events of those days.

3 June. At Cairo-Eliopolis he represented the Rector Major at the episcopal ordination of Mgr. Bausardo, the new Vicar Apostolic for the Latin faithful of Alexandria, Eliopolis and Port Said.

5.1 Decree on the miracle for the Beatification of the Salesian Brother Artemide Zatti

We print below, in an English translation, the Decree "regarding the miracle" promulgated by the Congregation for the Causes of Saints for the approval of the miracle attributed to the intercession of the Venerable Artemide Zatti in view of his Beatification.

CONGREGATION FOR THE CAUSES OF SAINTS

 DIOCESE OF VIEDMA
BEATIFICATION AND CANONIZATION
OF THE VENERABLE SERVANT OF GOD
ARTEMIDE ZATTI
PROFESSED LAY BROTHER
OF THE SOCIETY
OF SAINT FRANCIS OF SALES
(1880-1951)

DECREE REGARDING THE MIRACLE

The Venerable Servant of God Artemide Zatti was born on 12 October 1880 in the town of Boretto, in the Province of Reggio Emilia. After emigrating to Argentina with his family he began to work in a brickworks, to regularly attend the local parish and help the parish priest. When he was twenty he joined the Society of Saint Francis de Sales. After being asked to care for a priest suffering

from tuberculosis, he contracted the disease and was sent to the mission hospital at Viedma. There, after being restored to health, he devoted the rest of his life to the sick as a chemist, nurse and director of the hospital.

With a reputation for holiness he died on 15 March 1951.

On 7 July 1997 the Supreme Pontiff John Paul II publicly declared that the Servant of God had practised the theological, cardinal and other virtues connected with them to an heroic degree.

Recently the Promoter of the Cause presented for the judgement of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints a supposed miraculous cure that took place in Buenos Aires. The case referred to the priest Charles Albert Bosio who following severe abdominal pains was taken to hospital on the 5 March 1980 and had an operation for a seriously inflamed appendix.

Because of complications which followed the operation, extensive peritonitis developed. As his condition deteriorated he was taken to Buenos Aires and given medical treatment with drainage tubes, drips and the use of an oxygen tent.

All this without any improvement in his state of health; so that on 3 April an unfavourable verdict was pronounced.

On account of the seriousness of the situation the confreres in the salesian community fervently prayed to God for a cure through the intercession of the Servant of God Artemide Zatti, and made novenas. Suddenly, beginning on the following 18 April, the medical condition changed completely and in a short time there was complete remission of the illness.

The claim of a miraculous cure was examined in 1998 by the Curia of Buenos Aires in a diocesan process which was approved by the Congregation for the Causes of Saints by a decree promulgated on 30 November 1998.

Subsequently, the Medical Board of the Department in a meeting on 9 March 2000 unanimously declared that the cure was extremely rapid, complete and long-lasting, and as regards its manner, inexplicable according to current medical knowledge. On the 27 October 2000 the special assembly of the theological consultants took place, and on the 6th February 2001 the ordinary session of the Cardinals and Bishops with the Presenter of the Cause his Eminence Cardinal Henry Schwery. In both the meetings, that of the Consultants and that of the Cardinals and Bishops, to the question whether it was clearly a matter of a miracle

worked by God the answer was in the affirmative.

Of all this the undersigned Cardinal Prefect presented an accurate report to the Supreme Pontiff John Paul II, and His Holiness accepted and ratified the voting of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, and disposed that the decree be prepared on the aforementioned miraculous cure.

When all this had been done, and after today calling together the undersigned Cardinal Prefect, the Cardinal Presenter of the Cause, me the Secretary of the Congregation and others it is customary to convoke on such occasions, the Holy Father solemnly declared in their presence: *"There is certainty that the miracle took place, worked by God through the intercession of the Venerable Servant of God Artemide Zatti, professed lay brother of the Society of Saint Francis of Sales, i.e. the extremely rapid, complete and long-lasting cure of the priest Charles Albert Bosio from "serious complications of infection following a ruptured appendix, with many abdominal abscesses, general septicemia and blood poisoning."*

His Holiness directed that the present Decree be published and preserved among the Acts of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints.

Given at Rome on 24 April 2001.

✠ JOSÉ SARAIVA MARTINS
Prefect

✠ EDWARD NOWAK
Tit. Abp of Luni
Secretary

5.2 Decree regarding the miracle for the Beatification of the Servant of God Maria Romero Meneses, FMA

We print below, in an English translation, the Decree "regarding the miracle" promulgated by the Congregation for the Causes of Saints for the approval of the miracle attributed to the intercession of the Venerable Maria Romero Meneses, FMA in view of her Beatification.

CONGREGATION FOR THE CAUSES OF SAINTS

DIOCESE OF SAN JOSÉ DI COSTARICA
BEATIFICATION AND CANONIZATION
OF THE VENERABLE SERVANT OF GOD
MARIA ROMERO MENESSES

PROFESSED RELIGIOUS
OF THE INSTITUTE OF THE DAUGHTERS
OF MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS
(1902-1977)

DECREE REGARDING THE MIRACLE

The Venerable Servant of God
Maria Romero Meneses was born

on 13 January 1902 at Granada in Nicaragua. Having received a good human and spiritual formation, at the age of 18 she entered the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. After perpetual profession she was sent to San José di Costarica where for forty years she devoted herself to education, to catechesis with young people and adults, and to caring for poor families. She successfully established many social works such as dispensaries, schools, dwellings for the homeless or travelers. She died with a reputation for holiness on 7 July 1977.

On 18 December 2000 the Supreme Pontiff John Paul II publicly declared that the Servant of God had practised the theological, cardinal and other virtues connected with them to an heroic degree.

Recently the Promoter of the Cause, in view of her beatification, presented for the judgement of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints a supposed miraculous cure that took place in the diocese of San José di Costarica, regarding the little girl Maria Solis Quiros. While she was still in the womb, a hare lip and a split palate on the left hand side were diagnosed.

Since it was not possible to operate before she was born, the relatives of the little girl and other

people began to pray for divine help, through the intercession of the Servant of God Maria Romero Meneses.

Contrary to all the expectations of the doctors on the 28 November 1994 the little girl was born perfectly healthy without any deformity.

The diocesan process in connection with this case, which was considered miraculous and attributed to the intercession of the above mentioned Servant of God, was carried out in 1997-1998, and its authority and validity were approved by the Congregation for the Causes of Saints on 9 October 1998. The Medical Board of this Department in their meeting on 30 March 2000 declared: "This pathological deformity was present at the end of the eighth month of pregnancy; when the little girl was born it had disappeared without leaving any trace of a scar. This fact from a medical point of view is absolutely inexplicable." On the 30 January 2001 the special assembly of the theological consultors took place and on the following 3 April the ordinary session of the Cardinals and Bishops with the Presenter of the cause Mgr Lorenzo Chiarinelli, Bishop of Viterbo. In both the meetings, that of the Consultors and that of the Cardinals and

Bishops, to the question whether it was clearly a matter of a miracle worked by God the answer was in the affirmative.

Of all this the undersigned Cardinal Prefect presented an accurate report to the Supreme Pontiff John Paul II, and His Holiness accepted and ratified the voting of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, and disposed that the decree be prepared on the aforementioned miraculous cure.

When all this had been done, and after today calling together the undersigned Cardinal Prefect, the Cardinal Presenter of the Cause, me the Secretary of the Congregation and others it is customary to convoke on such occasions, the Holy Father solemnly declared in their presence: "*There is certainty that the miracle took place, worked by God through the intercession of the Venerable Servant of God Maria Romero Meneses, professed religious of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, i.e. the total cure, in the foetal state, of Maria Solis Quiros from "a split palate diagnosed in the 7th month of pregnancy.*"

His Holiness directed that the present Decree be published and preserved among the Acts of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints.

Given at Rome on 24 April 2001.

✠ JOSÉ SARAIVA MARTINS
Prefect

✠ EDWARD NOWAK
Tit. Abp of Luni
Secretary

5.3 Meeting of the Salesian Bishops. Greetings of the Rector Major and concluding events.

From 21 to 25 May 2001, in two successive periods at Rome and Turin, the meeting of the Salesian Bishops took place; it had been convoked by the Rector Major in connection with the great Jubilee, at the beginning of the third millennium.

The 69 Bishops present, who were joined later at Turin by three Cardinals (prevented by the Consistory from being present earlier), manifested the grace and richness of these days lived in salesian joy and fraternity around the Successor of Don Bosco and the members of the General Council. They reflected together on some elements of "*Salesian spirituality in the episcopal tradition*" and on the contribution the salesian charisma can offer in the pastoral animation of a Diocese. At the same time they expressed, by means of a questionnaire some guidelines for the guidance of the Congregation in the present ecclesial phase.

Of particular significance at Rome was the solemn concelebration in the Basilica of St Peter, presided over by Cardinal John Baptist Re, followed by the audience with the Holy Father, who had a special greeting and message for the Bishops; and at Turin the concelebration in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians on May 24, with the Rector Major presiding, and the procession in the evening of the same day amid huge crowds through the streets of Valdocco.

The following is the text of the initial address of the Rector Major in the morning of May 22 in which, in addition to his greetings, he set out the *reasons and main objectives* of the meeting:

"Dear episcopal confreres,

I am happy to extend to you a heartfelt welcome and to express my joy that it has been possible to arrange this meeting. This is and will always be your house and home, and whenever you come to Rome you are welcome here. We are always very pleased to be able to talk with you about questions regarding the Church and the Congregation in the world.

I want to emphasize two words that I have used: *confreres*, because as I have seen for myself in

my various journeys, the communion between you and us has always been great. Everywhere I have found Bishops beside me in celebrations and meetings, brought together by the love of our Founder. I have seen reflected in you the fascination for Don Bosco and his apostolic incentive.

But you are not only confreres, but *Bishops, Archbishops and Cardinals*, as well; and in this is recognized your pastoral role and your ecclesial experience.

This meeting has had its precedents, but not of the same kind: in 1975 there had been a meeting of our missionary Bishops to celebrate the first centenary of the salesian Missions. In 1988 salesian Bishops were invited for the centenary of the death of Don Bosco, and a sizable number were able to spend a day at Colle Don Bosco amidst great emotion: there was a concelebration, followed by a meeting at which a number of Bishops spoke to express the same adherence and communion to which I have already referred.

On this occasion we wanted to bring the Bishops together to *spend together a few days in fraternity and reflection*. On the one hand we wondered whether such an initiative would be possible, given your commitments and the

fact that some of you and some of us are getting old and are not in the best of health. And on the other hand we wondered what would be the most interesting themes for you and us that we could deal with in a few days of work but also of relaxation.

It is only right therefore to ask what are the motives, objectives and program of this meeting.

The idea began to mature when in the Congregation we found ourselves giving ever more attention to *spirituality*. This was emphasized by the Holy Father in *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, where he points out that at the root of all lay, civil, educational and pastoral activity spirituality is to be found: the vision of the countenance of Christ who attracts and stimulates our faith.

When we looked at the number of our Bishops – 104 still living of the 199 in the Congregation's history – it was noted that these confreres live their salesian spirituality in a particular condition: that of the episcopacy, i.e. in relationship with the body of the Bishops, raised up and sent by the Holy Spirit to guide and sustain the Church as the sign and instrument of salvation. Often during my journeys when I met one or other of you, the idea came up of a meeting like this. It

was formulated more explicitly when we found ourselves as a group at the Synod for America. Why not have a meeting, we said, to reflect on the theme of the salesian Bishop? It seemed an idea that was both interesting and possible!

The desire for such a meeting became even greater when the appointment of Bishops began to reach dizzy heights: the last ten years have seen the appointment of 42 salesian Bishops!

Quite apart from the numbers (to the 199 Bishops we have to add another 12 prefects or administrators apostolic, for an overall total of 211), it has to be said that the Congregation has contributed with personnel and financial assistance to the structuring of many Dioceses, Vicariates and prefectures Apostolic. Just recently we have been entrusted with a Prefecture Apostolic at Gambela in Ethiopia and a "misio sui iuris" at Azerbaijan, in the Caucasus.

There is therefore a considerable number of our confreres (we are not speaking of quality!) who have lived and are living *salesian educative and pastoral spirituality in the episcopal state*.

Among the basic reasons for organizing this meeting, this fact was the most compelling.

On the other hand, as I have said already, I have always been impressed in my visits to salesian communities by the attentive and filial presence of the salesian Bishops who have taken part in celebrations and meetings, and have shared their points of view with the Rector Major. I came to understand that in the vast majority of cases their vital links with the Congregation were in no way weakened but rather strengthened. Speaking informally with them I found them favourable and even enthusiastic about the possibility of the kind of meeting in which we are now engaged.

It should be added that this episcopal experience can reflect positively on both the Congregation and Dioceses, especially where Salesians are in charge of education, catechesis or vocations.

And this brings me to a second *keynote*: This meeting has been arranged in close connection with the Jubilee which finished only recently, and the Pope has given us the document *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, which we intend to take up in a particular way in our coming GC25. This meeting is therefore at a halfway point between *Novo Millennio Ineunte* and the General Chapter. We wanted to

hear your opinions, and hence the purposes of the meeting.

The *first purpose* is to *gather your spiritual experience* for ourselves who participate in the pastoral ministry as pastors, recalling – in the words of John Paul II – “that spirituality is at the root and source of every kind of cultural, political, educational and apostolic activity”.

In the last six years I have not had an opportunity to write a circular letter on the figure of the episcopal confrere, because of other anniversaries and events of the Congregation. Maybe this meeting and your reflections can give rise to a communication of a lighter and less hierarchical kind, in which you express aspects of your salesian experience.

Since we go forward in communion, there is a *second purpose*: *to discuss and exchange views on some realities we have at heart*: the youth condition and our service to it. In this youth condition there are two strong and important aspects: the new humanism, i.e. the new harmony between reason and faith, or – more than harmony – the serious comparison which has always inspired our education. This is our service to the condition of the young who have to learn to think. The Pope insists very much on truth as an attitude

of the mind for enabling us to discern the sense of reality. You are well aware of the problems there are in connection with truth. The Salesian Youth Movement brings together the best of young people. This movement should not be restricted to salesian environments: it is a salesian process of human and Christian maturing open to all the young.

Together with the SYM there is also the reality of the Salesian Family. This year there has been the full-scale meeting of the General Councils of all Groups of the Family, which studied the *Common Identity Card*, an item which is not meant to be merely a topic of discussion but has to lead to the mission. Hence the drawing up of the *Common Missionary Statement*.

The *third purpose* is to hear what you have to say about *Novo Millennio Ineunte*: in what way are its tendencies, perspectives, tone and guidelines of particular concern to the Congregation. You are not members of the Chapter (its members are already numerous enough!), but you have an experience, information and a unique sensitivity which your episcopal state in no way detracts from the charism.

The *fourth purpose* is to *celebrate the presence of Mary* at the

beginning of this new millennium, remembering – as Salesians – the dream of the two columns and the particular task or mission of giving to the local Churches a solid Marian relaunching linked with the mystery of the Incarnation. In the last part of the previous century we have heard a great deal said about Mary and devotion to her, and this without the least possibility of being accused of fear or millenarianism. As the Church gradually takes on its physiognomy in history, it becomes closer to that of Mary and vice versa.

Mary shapes it ever more, as the woman who was able to meditate on and preserve in her heart the mystery of the Incarnation, of which she knew the origin and conditions. This is what the Church does, what it did in preparation for the Jubilee: meditation anew on the mystery of the Incarnation, and on what it means for man in this period of advanced civilization. It is true therefore that the third millennium is marked by Mary's presence.

Now we have a Marian spirituality; in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians we have a picture that presents her in a living form amid the Father, the Son, the Apostles and the history of the Church. At the other end of the Basilica is depicted the dream of

the two columns. The Holy Virgin is the image of the Church and the protector of Christian communities, the Helper and great element of all our pastoral work. This is what will be principally in our minds at Valdocco on the feast of Mary Help of Christians. We start again from where our fathers began. Why therefore should we not entrust the Congregation to Mary once more? I recall that this is what we did in 1984, and later we participated in the entrustment made to Mary by the Holy Father in the name of the whole Church. Every day we Salesians entrust ourselves to Mary in prayer, and invoke her as the Immaculate Help of Christians.

Finally, the *fifth purpose* is to *foster rapport and contact between you yourselves*. Perhaps you may be able to help each other by the process of "twinning" in various ways through the activities of the Cooperators and Salesian Family. This is not something new: I have seen it in many situations of the salesian reality in the world, and I think it is possible even between Dioceses.

This prompts the idea that, by helping each other a little in our pastoral experience, we shall be able to establish some forms of what is now called *exchange of gifts* between continents, the abil-

ity to welcome others and collaborate with them as an example of communion that is able to overcome ethnic and cultural limitations.

In conclusion, I say to you that I perceive the fullness of the Holy Spirit. We are as though in a cenacle. Wherever are gathered together a portion of the Successors of the apostles, with the intention of giving a better service to the Church, the Holy Spirit is present. St Thomas declares that when God finds a willing disposition, he raises it to perfection. The presence of the Spirit gives rise to fruitfulness, and so I have great confidence in the overall result of this meeting, and also in the individual fruits that will mature from our mutual contacts between Bishops and Councillors, and from your prayer. I hope and pray that these days may be for you a time of calm reflection, and also of rest, spiritual repose, and that you may enjoy the esteem with which I assure you that the Congregation surrounds you".

At the end of the meeting, by gathering together the principal elements from papers that were read and discussions in the assembly, in the final session on 25 May certain points were highlighted *with reference especially*

to the theme of spirituality. They were as follows:

1. In the wake of salesian spirituality, drawing its inspiration from the Bishop St Francis de Sales, and from Don Bosco who lived it in "da mihi animas", the salesian bishop lives "pastoral charity" as the central nucleus, with some traits typical of the salesian spirit (cf. C 10): the attitude of the Good Shepherd who conquers by gentleness and self-donation (C 11), translated into Don Bosco's "strive to make yourself loved" and the "family spirit", which is manifested in close relationship, availability, listening and the understanding of all.
2. The pastoral charity of the salesian bishop, without detriment to his conviction that it must be shown to all, is revealed in a predilection for the young and the poor (C 11), particularly for young people in need, whom he approaches through the application of Don Bosco's preventive system. The challenge of the education and evangelization of the young, who are the future of the Church and humanity, is one the salesian bishop must always have in mind; for him it remains always a pastoral priority.

3. In imitation of Don Bosco, the salesian bishop is attentive to the urgent needs of times and places, to which he tries to respond with a spirit of initiative, and with courage and realism (cf. C 19). They are the pastoral needs and those of evangelization in the different contexts of the Church, and also those which arise from the social situation, from the poor, the marginalized and those at a distance from the Church, as well as from different cultures.
4. If all this is to be realized and produce the desired results, the Bishop – convinced of the sacramental grace within him – knows that he must count not so much on his own efforts as on the active presence of Jesus and his Spirit, and on the motherly accompaniment of Mary, Mother and Helper. Like Don Bosco he puts the Eucharist at the centre of his life and pastoral activity, and trusts in the intercession of Mary, whom he presents as the perfect model of the Christian vocation. This inspires and sustains him also in his pastoral work for vocations.
5. Finally, the salesian bishop lives salesian spirituality as the spirituality of the Church, with the ecclesial vision characteristic of

Don Bosco (cf. C 13). With this vision in mind and in the line of pastoral charity, he cultivates the gift of communion within his own local Church – with the priests, men and women religious, the laity and the various ecclesial charisms –, towards other traditions and religious denominations, and with those responsible for civil society. He preserves a special linkage with the Salesian Family, with whom he maintains constant communication.

Together with these fundamental principles, the Bishops emphasized some other aspects, referring to various points that had emerged during the meeting:

6. In connection with the theme of communion the importance was recognized of cultivating expressions of solidarity among salesian bishops in respect of the great themes of the new evangelization and especially for the benefit of poor youngsters.

A common statement by salesian bishops on the more urgent needs and problems – at international or continental level and made in the appropriate quarters – could carry considerable weight and significance.

7. Also recalled was the missionary slant of the salesian bishops (of whom many are working in missionary areas at the present day), which is a reflection of the missionary outlook given to the Congregation by Don Bosco, and which is testified to by the great work done for the foundation of Churches, the inculturation of the Gospel, and the formation of the clergy and the faithful. The canonization of the first salesian bishop and martyr, Mgr. Luigi Versiglia, is an incentive to continue in the same way.
8. The exchange of ideas between Bishops and Superiors in this meeting has been of great value. In order that it may continue, it was suggested that similar exchanges should be arranged at provincial or inter-provincial level with provincial councils and those responsible for the Salesian Family. Matters dealt with can be questions concerning the themes of spirituality and pastoral work, especially in connection with the youth sector.
9. Finally, to ensure the continuation of the grace of this meeting – for both the Bishops and the Congregation – the importance was emphasized of com-

munication by means of suitable instruments, and if necessary even by some particular kind of linkage and way of reference. It is necessary to extend communication even externally.

By way of conclusion, after the Bishops had expressed their gratitude to the Rector Major for arranging this meeting, Fr Vecchi thanked the Bishops in turn for their fraternal and active participation. Recalling some of the topics that had emerged, he emphasized in addition to the essential reference to spirituality and the mission the importance of communion and communication, starting from local level. He himself, with his Council, remains a point of reference for such communication. And so, if circumstances and other considerations are favourable, another similar meeting could be arranged for some future date.

5.4 New Provincial

The following are brief biographical notes on the new Provincial of Bogotá, appointed by the Rector Major with his Council in June 2001, in the course of the previous plenary session.

RIVERA PENAGOS Nicolás,
Provincial of Bogotá, Colombia.

Predecessor: Fr Camilo Castrel-lón Pizano, (appointed Bishop of Tibú, cf. n. 5.5).

b. 18 June 1945. Novitiate and 1st profession at Tena, 29 January 1962. Perpetual profession, 18 January 1968. Theology at studentate of Bogotá. Ordination: Bogotá, 2 December 1972.

1982: Rector at Duitama. 1984: Rector or studentate of theology, Bogotá, and provincial councillor. 1991 Rector at Neiva. 1994 to Barcelona (Spain) to complete studies in philosophy and theology and gain the Licentiate.

1997: Rector of post-novitiate formation community, Bogotá. 1998: provincial councillor. April 2001: Vice-provincial.

5.5 New Salesian Bishops

1. **PÉREZ TAPIA Elio Alevi,**
Bishop Prelate of Juli (Peru).

The Osservatore Romano of 24 April 2001 published the news that the Holy Father had appointed Fr **Elio Alevi PÉREZ TAPIA** to be Bishop of the *Prelature of JULI*, in Peru.

He was born 12 February 1946 at Huambos, in the Diocese of Cajamarca, Peru, made his novitiate

at Lima-Rímac, where he also made his first profession on 29 January 1965. Perpetual profession followed on 15 January 1971, and the study of theology at the Pontifical Faculty of Lima and the Xaverian University of Bogotá. On 6 June 1975 he was ordained priest. In addition to the Baccalaureate in Theology, he has the civil qualification of Professor of Chemistry and Biology, and obtained the Diploma in Spirituality from the Pontifical Salesian University, Rome.

He was Rector of the post-novitiate of Magdalena del Mar from 1979 to 1983; then Rector of the aspirantate of Chosica from 1983 to 1986, and provincial councillor; from 1986 to 1990 he was Rector and Director of novices at Chosica, then Rector and parish priest at Calca (Cusco), and at the same time Delegate for the missions of Valle Sagrado and again provincial councillor. In November 1995 he became Vice-Provincial and was recently also parish priest at Lima - Auxiliadora.

2. **CASTRELLÓN PIZANO**
Camilo Fernando,
Bishop of Tibú (Colombia).

The Osservatore Romano of 23-24 April gave the news that the Holy Father had appointed as the new Bishop of **TIBÚ**, in Colom-

bia, Fr *Camilo Fernando CASTRELLÓN PIZANO*, who for a little more than two years had been Provincial of Bogotá.

He was born at Bogotá on 22 September 1942 and made his first profession at Tena on 29 January 1963.

After perpetual profession on 23 December 1968, he studied theology at Bogotá and was ordained priest on 2 December 1972.

He obtained the Licentiate in Theology from the Xaverian Pontifical University in 1972, the Licentiate in Educational Sciences at the UPS in 1983, and later the Licentiate in Philosophy from the University of St Thomas, Bogotá.

After ordination, he worked in the apostolate and the field of formation, and 1985 was called to the provincial house as a member of the team for pastoral work. In 1988 he became a provincial councillor and in 1993 Rector of the work of "Niño Jesús" in Santafé di Bogotá. In June 1998 he was appointed Provincial of Bogotá.

3. *PANFILO Francesco*, *Vescovo of ALOTAU-SIDEIA* *(Papua New Guinea)*

The Osservatore Romano of 25-26 June 2001 gave the news that the Pope had appointed Fr *Francesco PANFILO* to be Bishop

of the Diocese of *ALOTAU-SIDEIA*, in *Papua New Guinea*.

He was born at Schilpario, in the Diocese of Bergamo (Italy), on 23 November 1942, was an aspirant at Chiari (Brescia) and made his novitiate at Missaglia (Como), where he also made his first profession on 16 August 1964.

Immediately after the novitiate he left for the Philippines, where he studied philosophy and gained his first experiences of salesian work. He returned to Italy to study theology at Turin-Crocetta, and was ordained on 27 April 1974 at Vilminore di Scalve, in his native parish.

Returning to the Philippines he was catechist at Don Bosco Technical Institute, Makati, from 1974-1977, then Rector of the Don Bosco Technical College of Mandaluyong (1977-1985), Provincial Councillor (from 1980), and Director of Novices (1985-1987). In 1987 he was appointed Provincial of the Philippines (which at that time was a single province covering the whole of the Philippines, and the missions in Indonesia-Timor and Papua New Guinea). After his six years as Provincial he was Rector of the theologate at Parañaque, Manila. In 1997 he was sent to Papua New Guinea as Delegate of the Provincial for the work in

that country, where he subsequently became Vice-President of the "Federation of Religious", and Secretary of the "Conference of Clerical Major Superiors".

4. In addition we publish the news that *Mgr. Héctor LÓPEZ HURTADO*, formerly Bishop of Granada (Colombia), has been appointed by the Holy Father as

Bishop of the Diocese of *GIRAR-DOT (Colombia)*. The information was given in the *Osservatore Romano* of 15-16 June 2001. *Mgr. Héctor López Hurtado* was originally appointed in 1987 as titular Bishop of Elicroca and Vicar Apostolic of Ariari (cf. AGC 325, p.48). In 1999 the Vicariate Apostolic was raised to a Diocese with headquarters in Granada.

5.6 Our dead confreres (2001 - 2nd list)

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

NAME	PLACE	DATE	AGE	PROV.
P ARAUJO Luiz Santiago de	Porto Alegre	09-03-2001	81	BPA
P BERTOLLI Giuseppe <i>Fu Ispettore per sei anni</i>	Bergamo	22-04-2001	83	ILE
P BONICELLI Alejandro	Las Heras (Mendoza)	18-04-2001	83	ACO
P BORGHI Luigi	Arese (MI)	01-07-2001	86	ILE
L BOUDARD Pierre	Roanne (Francia)	16-05-2001	79	FRA
P BURBA Mecislovas	Kaunas (Lituania)	23-04-2001	78	EST
L CALÌ Giovanni	Pedara (CT)	06-04-2001	88	ISI
P CANTÙ Enrico	Arese (MI)	03-04-2001	88	ILE
P CASTELLI Michele	Torino	11-06-2001	90	ICP
P COLUSSI Antonio	Formia	07-05-2001	81	IRO
P da COSTA José Antonio	San Isidro (Bs. As.)	28-05-2001	68	ABA
P DAL FIOR Luigi	Tokyo	19-06-2001	88	GIA
P DIEBOLD Wilhelm <i>Fu Ispettore per sei anni</i>	Bonn	09-04-2001	91	GEK
P DIVOS Karel	Vizovice (Rep. Ceca)	24-06-2001	87	CEP
P DOYLE Michael	Moston (Manchester)	24-05-2001	82	GBR
P ERUMPOOZHIL Chacko	Calcutta	19-05-2001	64	INC
P ÉTRILLARD Auguste	Giel	27-05-2001	77	FRA
P FANELLO Alcide	Lima	14-06-2001	89	PER
P FANTIN Ottorino	São Paulo	02-04-2001	80	BSP
P FARESin Santo Cornelio	Guiratinga - MS	17-06-2001	77	BCG
P FLORES PERALES Severino	Saltillo	01-06-2001	66	MEG
P FOKS Szczepan	Kraków	21-05-2001	85	PLS
P GALLI Carlo	Arese (MI)	03-01-2001	90	ILE
P GRANADO Pedro Diego	Córdoba	30-04-2001	79	ACO
L GRIX Michael	Manchester	07-05-2001	63	GBR
P KINDO Andreas ¹	Imphal	15-05-2001	31	IND
L KLOSTER Lucas	Bolívar (Bs. As.)	20-06-2001	80	ALP
L MACIAS Fausto	Cartagena	01-07-2001	73	COM
P MAHER James	Falkirk (Scozia)	01-06-2001	86	GBR
L MARAK Angelo Solomon	Tura	25-05-2001	78	ING
P MAREK Roman	Rzeszów	14-05-2001	57	PLS
P MARTIN Apolinar	San Isidro (Bs. As.)	29-04-2001	79	ABA
L MOCARSKI Ludwik	Czerwińsk	22-05-2001	90	PLE
P MURARO Angelo	Castello di Godeno (TV)	30-06-2001	80	IVE
P NOWACZYK Wacław	Łądy	06-04-2001	91	PLN

NAME	PLACE	DATE	AGE	PROV.
P ORTOLANI Cesare	Frascati (RM)	15-06-2001	72	IRO
P PALIAKARA Raphael ¹	Imphal	15-05-2001	46	IND
P PERAZZI Biagio	Foligno (PG)	15-05-2001	67	IAD
L POLLINI Franco	Albarè (VR)	17-04-2001	59	IVO
P RYCHLOWSKI Bruno	Santiago de Chile	03-05-2001	89	CIL
P SANTIN Rolando	Venezia	14-04-2001	82	IVE
P SAVASTANO Pietro	Napoli	15-04-2001	81	IME
L SIX Bernard	Roubaix	21-04-2001	61	FRA
P SNOEKS Albert	Wilrijk (Belgio)	25-04-2001	86	BEN
P TORTORA Alfonso	Buenos Aires	18-04-2001	80	ABA
P URSELLA Nino	Roma	25-06-2001	84	IRO
L VALLA Chiaffredo	Torino	28-05-2001	91	ICP
S VALLIPARAMBIL Shinu Joseph ¹	Imphal	15-05-2001	22	IND
P VAN ASTEN Gérard	Kafubu (Congo R. D.)	10-06-2001	70	AFC
P VAN DER LOCHT Theodor	Nevers (Francia)	30-04-2001	84	GEK

¹ Ucciso in modo violento nel Noviziato di Ngarian, Imphal, stato di Manipur, India





