



acts

of the general council

year LXXXIV july-september 2003

N. 382

official organ
of animation
and communication
for the
salesian congregation

**Direzione Generale
Opere don Bosco
Roma**

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

OFFICIAL ORGAN OF ANIMATION AND COMMUNICATION FOR THE SALESIAN CONGREGATION

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1. LETTER OF THE RECTOR MAJOR

«YOU ARE MY GOD. MY HAPPINESS LIES IN YOU ALONE»

(Ps 16,2)

1. «I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you » (*Rm* 1,8) - 2. «I have promised God that to my last breath ...» (MB XVIII, 258) - 3. The malaise of consecrated life - 4. Objective excellence of consecrated life - 5. A model in crisis - 6. GC25, an invitation to adopt this line of thought - In conclusion

8 June 2003

Solemnity of Pentecost

My dear confreres,

At the beginning of the summer session of the General Council I come back to you once again, following the three-monthly rhythm of the letters I try to send to the whole Congregation. I am doing this on the feast of Pentecost which celebrates the descent of the Holy Spirit on the disciples of Jesus, gathered with Mary in the Cenacle. According to what we are told in the Acts of the Apostles (cf. *Acts* 2,1-11), this was an event that deeply disturbed the heart of each of them, “rushing upon them like a mighty wind”. The Holy Spirit, who is the power by which God intervenes in history, enveloped them and penetrated them deeply “like fire”. Their fear gave way to courage, their indifference was replaced by compassion, warmth supplanted their inward closure on themselves, and selfishness gave way to love. This is the way in which the Church began its journey through history. It is my hope and prayer that the fire and rushing wind of the Holy Spirit may renew the experience of Pentecost in the Church and in our Congregation, so that we may become ever more convinced, courageous and credible witnesses of Jesus and his Gospel.

My previous letter contained a report on my activities during my first year of service to the whole Congregation; in consequence you now know me a bit better and are aware of what the Rector Major is doing and thinking. Time surely does not stand still; in the last three months I have been very busy: there was the day at Boys Town in Rome, the Retreat at Fatima, the visit to the Portuguese

Province, the journey to the Holy Land, the inter-sessional meeting of the General Council, the visit to Great Britain, the days at Treviglio and Chiari, the visits to the Sicilian Province, to Bilbao and Munich, the day at Bonn and Cologne, the visit to the Verona Province, the meeting of the Union of Superiors General, and the visit to the Adriatic Province.

I can tell you that I have acquired an ever better knowledge of the reality of the Congregation, of its resources and problems, of its challenges and potentialities. And I become more and more aware of the tasks I must fulfil as Rector Major. It is a wonderful mission but a demanding one, and in facing it I feel inadequate with regard to its needs and expectations. It makes me feel the need for your understanding and especially for your prayers that I may become, as I would wish, a Successor of Don Bosco who is fatherly and farseeing, faithful and dynamic.

1. "I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you" (*Rom 1,8*)

Before sharing with you some reflections concerning the religious life – in the hope that you may find them spiritually, pastorally and vocationally stimulating – I would like to thank each and everyone of you for the gift of your lives to God in the steps of Don Bosco.

I feel it my obligation to thank you and I do so willingly by means of this letter, just as I do so personally when I meet you on visits to the Provinces and communities. On the one hand every confrere is a treasure for the Congregation; I shall never tire of repeating it and trying to make you feel it. And on the other, the salesian vocation, whether lay or priestly, is an extraordinary gift for each of you. That is my experience and I imagine it is yours as well. I like praying some of the psalms in this light, as for instance Psalm 16 (15), where we read: I say to the Lord: "You are my God. My happiness lies in you alone... The lot marked out for me is my delight: welcome indeed the heritage that falls to me" (vv. 2.6). And

I am not referring to my role as Rector Major, which is a ministry to be carried out only for a certain period, but to the inestimable gift of the vocation as a life-project centred on Jesus who calls us by name, chooses us to be with him and to share his passion for God and men (cf. *Mk* 3,13-15). To have a vocation means that we have discovered that life has meaning: there is a wonderful “dream” to be realised, a mission to be carried out that God has given us, a goal to be reached in the persons who have been entrusted to us. And this fills with strength and joy the whole of a life which becomes one with that of Don Bosco (cf. C 21). This is the salesian vocation.

It is a gift from God, so precious that it must be carefully cultivated and clearly proposed to young people, because we want them to share our happiness. I become ever more convinced that the greatest and most widespread problems among the young are not those that hit the headlines like drugs and alcohol, and not even confusion in the area of sexuality, even though so many young people are unfortunately involved in them – and this is a problem to which we cannot remain indifferent. The real problem is the lack of direction, of horizons, of meaning, of a project of life. This leads them to live at a superficial level, trying out things and experiences but without any element that unifies their life and gives it vitality. I thank you therefore for the response to your vocation, which will always be far richer than even the best biography. How in fact, at the end of life, could one gather into a book or an obituary letter a story of fidelity to God for the young, shot through with joys and sadness, dreams and disappointments, hopes and frustrations, sweat, smiles and tears?

And so, allow me to make Paul’s words my own in thanking God for what you are – consecrated by God for young people, and for what God is for you – the one and only Supreme Being. I too like the Apostle, “thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed in all the world. For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I mention you always in my prayers, asking that

somehow by God's will I may now at last succeed in coming to you. For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you, that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine". (*Rom* 1,8-12).

2. "I have promised God that to my last breath ..." (MB XVIII, 258)

You may remember that already in my first letter I expressed the desire to make holiness a programme of life, a choice of government, a plan of education. From this standpoint I ventured to say that that first letter was not just one among others but was meant to be a programme for my six years of office.

And when I refer to holiness I am not thinking of it in general terms or as an ideal to be proposed alike to everyone; I am thinking of us Salesians. When I speak of holiness, I have in mind a life of holiness which is specifically ours: *salesian* holiness, lived with our beloved father Don Bosco as its model. I am thinking of the kind of holiness that can only be achieved and lived by those *consecrated by God* in the salesian mission: "We live as disciples of the Lord *by the grace of the Father, who consecrates us* through the gift of his Spirit and sends us out to be apostles of the young" (C 3).

Ours therefore is a *consecrated holiness*, a specific gift we receive from God for the young people to whom we are sent. And all this has its consequences. I would like to dwell with you on this aspect of salesian holiness which I consider very significant, because we Salesians of Don Bosco intend "to carry out the Founder's apostolic plan *in a specific form of religious life*" and because "by carrying out this mission we find *our own way to holiness*" (C 2).

Not infrequently, in visiting the Congregation, I have come across confreres brimful of apostolic energy and courage who are working in amazing works for the benefit of youngsters, but who do not seem motivated and animated by an similar zeal for God. If on the one hand one cannot but admire their dedication, on the other one cannot help wondering what is the real motive force behind

such great activity. We know that the salesian mission and the Congregation, which came into being at its service, were born of God and in God are reborn: the Salesian in fact is sent by God to the young (C 15); the Society to which we belong “came into being not as a merely human venture but by the initiative of God” (C 1); moreover the most characteristic trait of our vocation, the one most dear to us – predilection for the young – is a “special gift of God” (C 14). God is at the origin of our salesian mission; he is its source and foundation, and so he must remain. This objective reality is lived by each confrere and is made clear by the way he lives his life.

This was precisely the personal experience of Don Bosco. A priest and shepherd of the young by vocation, he became for them and with them a solicitous educator; and as the educator and shepherd of the young he founded religious Institutes; “a religious himself, and one who formed consecrated men and later of consecrated women, the youth problem, in fact, seemed to him to be too complex and demanding for one to think it could be solved by the occasional and voluntary involvement of transitory collaborators”.¹ Experience showed that voluntary personnel could not guarantee the stability, continuity and homogeneous nature of the work, especially as the world of youth was becoming ever more complex, and forms of abandonment and poverty ever more widespread and diversified. A natural consequence was a radical rethinking of the problems of the working people, their spiritual and juridical status, and their organization. Don Bosco eventually decided on the form of a religious Society, flanked by other associated forces.²

And so, in the awareness that the mission among young people, and especially those who were very poor, abandoned or at risk, required a “vast movement of persons” (C 5), Don Bosco had to look for his best collaborators among his own youngsters, those who shared with him the same spiritual and apostolic experience of Val-

¹ P. BRAIDO, *Don Bosco Prete dei giovani nel secolo delle libertà*. Vol. I. Roma, LAS, 2003, p. 14.

² P. BRAIDO, *Don Bosco Prete dei giovani nel secolo delle libertà*. Vol. I. Roma, LAS, 2003, p. 360.

docco and who responded to his invitation to “stay with him” and became the first Salesians. “He began from boys who had no idea of religious life... From being in Don Bosco’s house he gradually inculcated in them the desire to live and work permanently with him in community, leading them eventually to the decision to share his mission and bind themselves to it by religious vows, thus becoming members of a true and proper Society of consecrated persons”.³

It is true that, at least for us Salesians, it was the mission that required the creation of a group of consecrated persons: the youngsters led us to God, and this not as a hobby or a pastime but as a goal and motivation. To guarantee his work among young people Don Bosco found that he needed people fully dedicated to God; he needed collaborators totally consecrated to his boys, Don Bosco became a founder. I do not know whether this was a pragmatic choice on the part of our beloved father when he became aware that ordinary collaborators were not enough to ensure the daily effort of apostolic work, twenty-four hours a day and seven days a week, or rather a logical conclusion from his own experience, stamped with the dream at the age of nine years, which led him to think that God has a “dream” for each one of us, a special calling which results in a consecration by God for a specific mission. In this way, starting from his own spiritual and pastoral experience, Don Bosco became aware of the powerful possibilities of a religious life born for the service of the salesian mission.

3. The modern malaise of consecrated life

It is evident that at the present day there is a certain unease concerning consecrated life, and it is also felt in our own Congregation. Signs of this are the decline in numbers and increasing average age of the confreres, at least in some Regions, as well as the

³ P. BRAIDO, *Don Bosco Prete dei giovani nel secolo delle libertà*. Vol. II. Roma, LAS, 2003, p. 56.

fact of a vocational frailty which is a phenomenon common to all Orders, Congregations and Institutes. This malaise is all the more difficult to understand and accept when we maintain that the Congregation has been faithful to the requests of the Church, to the demands of the world and of culture, and to the ever new needs of the young, and has tried to meet them with fidelity and creativity.

It must be admitted that a certain unease stems naturally from consecrated life at the present day, because its primary task is “the affirmation of the primacy of God and of eternal life”, whereas it has to live nowadays in a world “where it often seems that the signs of God’s presence have been lost from sight” (VC 85). Moreover the experience of God, who exceeds all probability and description, is always something arduous; consequently it can become heroic, even though not impossible, to bear witness to God where his presence is no longer felt or he has been put to silence – something that happens quite frequently. But the malaise from which religious life is suffering at the present day is not born only of external causes, from its natural lack of compatibility with the world,⁴ but stems also from within, because among other things it has found itself suddenly deprived of those roles in society which for so long gave it security and social relevance.⁵

The way we speak today of “re-newal”, “re-creation”, “re-foundation” of religious life is neither comfortable nor pleasing, but it compels us to look and see whether the expected renewal launched by Vatican II has remained something merely formal, without having reached the minds and hearts of members at any depth.

It is commonly said that in the days preceding Vatican II it was easy to “identify” religious, their form of life and their place in the Church. Religious life was a form of life characterized by the profession of the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obe-

⁴ C. J. B. METZ - T. R. PETERS, *Gottespassion. Zur Ordensexistenz heute* (Friburgo-Basilea-Vienna: Herder, 1991) p. 29.

⁵ Cf. D. O’ MURCHU, *Rehacer la vida religiosa. Una mirada abierta al futuro* (Madrid: Ediciones Claretianas, 2001) p. 14-15.

dience, according to the constitutions of an Institute approved by the Church's authority. Religious lived in religious houses, monasteries or convents, and were distinguished, inside and outside their Institutes, by their habit and customs. Their life-style and the clear visibility of their members provided a real separation from the 'world' and made them different from 'lay' people within the Church itself.

Vatican II brought about a change of radical proportions, which involved all Institutes and modified them so that they could be relocated *within the Church in the world* (GS), with a *new ecclesiology of communion* (LG), according to which all the baptized form a single people of God with a diversity of vocations, roles and charisms.

The truth is that after all the process of renewal, religious life has been transformed to such an extent that nowadays it is difficult to 'identify' it and define its specific place in the Church, something that on the other hand can be done for the laity and secular clergy (bishops, priests and deacons). Clearly the difficulty does not stem from external elements, e.g. from the fact that the habit has been left aside and a secular manner of dress adopted; rather is it the result of an interpretation of the universal call to holiness and of a series of internal and external factors which have destroyed, or at least blurred, the characteristic traits of its true countenance. This explains why there is so much emphasis today on its "objective superiority" (VC 32), its "visibility" (VC 25), and hence its significance, credibility and primary attraction.

We can say therefore that religious life has been placed in crisis, externally by secularization and internally by its lack of identity.

- *External crisis*

The most serious phenomenon of our time is no longer atheism (GS 19),⁶ but the *secularization* of society that has reached extre-

⁶ PAUL VI, "*Ecclesiam Suam*": AAS (1964), p. 650-651.

me levels and has managed to create a culture of non-believing, a culture without religion, which is in practice atheist. We are living in a culture of indifference and relativism. The existence of God is not denied, but he is given no space for survival; the reasonableness of faith is not denied, but in practice life is lived more or less without it; nowadays lack of faith requires no justification, but faith does; God is no longer a problem, because his presence is no longer evident.⁷ Religious practice becomes less visible; the gospel is no longer heard in a society worn down by new messages; if God and the sacred still persist among us, it is because they have been interiorized. The profane has gained ground; it has taken over the social area and is winning control of the private area as well; the individual conscience and personal privacy are fields where God may no longer enter.

This diagnosis may seem exaggerated; I quote in its support a passage written by Fr Viganò in similar terms at the end of 1991; his remarks remain eloquent and valid:

"In the past many social and cultural expressions were permeated by a religious dimension. But now whatever is religious is becoming increasingly more irrelevant in society, a situation which renders more difficult and prolongs the process by which faith matures, both as regards its content and still more as a living practice. (And this is true for both young people in our works and for young Salesians in formation).

To be Christians, i.e. to live out the baptismal option, in a pluralist society become just one way among many others to which every citizen has a right. The result can be the development of a climate of relativism, of the obscuring of traditional ideals, of a loss of the sense of life: many young people seem to be afloat in a ship without a compass. They lose the perspective of what is transcendent, which is the firmament of faith, and cocoon themselves in short answers about the sense of life which are

⁷ J. GÓMEZ CAFFARENA, *Raíces culturales de la increencia* (Santander: Sal Terrae, 1988).

quite insufficient for meeting the great yearnings of the human heart. Even the responses offered them by science end up meaningless, because they have no connection with the ultimate end of life and the global sense of history”.⁸

This secularization can appear in three ways in consecrated life. It may be manifested as:

- *A loss of transcendence*, which becomes evident when faith is weakened or lost as the horizon of life and vocation, which thus becomes a purely human project; the motivation of living as a person consecrated to God and centred on the mission entrusted by him is made more difficult and may disappear altogether.
- *Anthropocentrism*, which places not God but Man at the centre of life as the ultimate point of reference, so that life is shaped according to the demands and development of the dynamisms of nature, leaving no space for the values of the Kingdom.
- *Social and economic praxis*, which leads to the strong conviction that man develops himself in creative work, in domination of the world and in accompanying others in their personal maturing and social success; the apostolic mission is reduced to social work, or is identified with commitment to change.

In my opinion, great influence has been exerted in this secularized perspective of religious life by a narrow theological reading of the principle of the incarnation, which insists so much on the first term – the “quod non assumptum” of Irenaeus – as to reduce to second place or overlook altogether the innovation that comes to us from God through the incarnation. Blinded by God’s decision to become man, we may forget the fundamental fact that the God-Man never ceased to be God, and consequently it was not man that became divine but God who became man and, though truly man, he remains nevertheless truly God.

⁸ E. VIGANÒ, “*There is still good ground where the seed can fall*”: AGC (1991) 339, p. 12-13.

- *Internal crisis*

Naturally the crisis of religious life does not arise either exclusively or prevalently from external factors, though we must admit that the latter have had a powerful conditioning effect; it arises rather from within and appears especially through various symptoms:

- *A weakening of the ecclesial identity of religious life.* We were accustomed to defining religious life as a state of perfection; Vatican II has declared that the vocation to holiness is given to all the baptized. How are we to define the significance and role of religious life within the universal vocation to holiness?

Still more radical is the debilitation of the aspect of the mission. We have grown up in a climate in which it was held that the twofold task of proclaiming the Gospel and the service of charity belonged exclusively to priests and consecrated persons. Vatican II reminded us that the mission is the responsibility of all the baptized, each according to his own vocation; the growth of the laity at every level is a sign that confirms this. What then can be the significance of the presence of religious life?

We have even become aware that not even the charism, with its associated spirituality and mission, can be possessed in an exclusive manner as the Institute's property. It is addressed to all who come in contact with it, and attains its goal when it is lived also by them. What task do consecrated persons have with respect to the charism?

These questions, even when not expressed in explicit terms, weaken the clarity and strength of the understanding of the particular identity and function in the Church.

- *A vision of religious life centred on its function*, i.e. on what it does rather than what it is in itself. Religious life of the 19th century was defined and, more importantly, was lived as a means for the mission. The time and duties it required were evangelically significant. But the evolution of our modern society has brought it about that the State or social groups now assume many of the services created and formerly carried out by religious life. Today

in the very works of religious communities, lay people play an ever greater part in the management and responsibility for the direction of such works.

In general the works of religious function well and much better than their public counterparts; but there is also a point that is very disturbing: not only do vocations still fail to appear, but it is becoming clear that while people accept the services we provide, when it comes to motives for living they look for them elsewhere. And then a question begins to be asked with growing intensity: what meaning does our presence have in such a situation?

- The *surmounting of outmoded structures*. Consecrated life has run the risk of enclosing its members in a network of precepts and norms, which have not always helped the members to mature and live in the freedom of the children of God. Moreover the forms of religious life, even after renewal, do not always correspond to the new situations in which we must live our life and mission at the present day: we need think only of the schemes of community life or forms of prayer. On the other hand traditional forms and structures can no longer express the new values, such as personal autonomy and the sense of dialogue and sharing.

There is a feeling that we are well aware of the direction in which we should move, but in practice we have still not found a model of life and activity to facilitate and support such movement. We find ourselves in a very difficult situation: we have abandoned the inadequate and outmoded structures of the past, but we have not yet succeeded in defining new ones.⁹ The Superiors General (USG) have expressed this idea in a statement which is rather strong but none the less true; they say that we have a model of religious life that has become exhausted, and can no longer motivate even the members themselves. Fr Mac-cise adds that today we cannot say what tomorrow's model of religious life will be like.

⁹ Cf. ANGELO ARRIGHINI, "Carisma e Istituzione. Intervista a Rino Cozza": *Testimoni* 10 (2003) p. 9-11.

These symptoms had already been identified by Fr Viganò¹⁰ and by Fr Vecchi,¹¹ who had tried to point to a solution through the development of the meaning of the apostolic consecration, of the grace of unity, and of the specific nature of salesian spirituality. Perhaps we are in a better position today to diagnose the deeper causes and so find solutions.

4. Objective excellence of consecrated life

What we have said above, i.e. that consecrated life is passing through a delicate and taxing period, is confirmed by the words of John Paul II, who writes: "The Church has gone through a difficult and trying period. It has been a period full of hopes, new experiments and proposals aimed at giving fresh vigour to the profession of the evangelical counsels. But it has also been a time of tension and struggle, in which well-meaning endeavours have not always met with positive results" (VC 13). These difficulties however cannot obscure "the special value of consecrated life" in the Church; indeed they make more urgent a clarification of its theological identity, not least in comparison with other states of life (cf. VC 31-32).

In this connection, at the recent meeting of the Italian Episcopal Conference held in May on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of *Mutuae Relationes*, one of the Bishops wrote: "In the light of what has been said, the charism of consecrated life *needs to be better understood and lived with greater theological and pastoral clarity*, with respect to both other vocational expressions in the Church and to the Church's mission in the world. *The interpretation that is most widespread*, even within the Christian community, *evokes a functionalist vision of consecrated life rather than an on-*

¹⁰ E. VIGANÒ, *An invitation to bear greater witness to our "consecration"*, AGC 342; *USG Congress "Consecrated life at the present day"*, AGC 347; *The Synod of Consecrated Life*, AGC 351; *Reading the Founder's charism again at the present day*, AGC 352.

¹¹ J. VECCHI, *The Father consecrates us and sends us*, AGC 365.

theological one... Consecration is not a means for guaranteeing the functionality of services provided by works, but the fundamental content of the mission of the consecrated persons: it is a statement, to men concerned too much about penultimate things, of the primacy of God, the value of ultimate realities, and of the world's forgetfulness of God".¹²

As Fr Tillard remarked, "at the root of all authentic religious life we find as the primary and all-explaining motivation not a "for the purpose of" but a "because of". And the object of this "because of" is none other than Jesus Christ. One does not become a religious "for the purpose of" doing something but "because of" someone, of Jesus Christ and the attraction he exerts".¹³ There are no two ways about it. Generally it is taken for granted, but if there is one thing that should not be taken for granted it is precisely this. The real challenge of consecrated life today is that of restoring Christ to religious life and religious life to Christ, without assuming that it has been done already.

I think that the problem began in part when an incomplete understanding of *Lumen Gentium* led to the abolition of the specific identity of religious life, removing or at least lessening the *objective excellence* of the "sequela Christi" that it represents. A rethinking of the theological status of religious life "is one of the greatest challenges that men and women religious have to confront at the present day".¹⁴

Without prejudice to the personal holiness of so many priests and laity, we must insist that the "sequela Christi" and the "imitatio Christi" find in religious life their most fertile field of growth; it is precisely a living memorial of Jesus' way of living and acting as the Incarnate Word in relation to the Father and in relation to the brethren" (VC 22). "The evangelical counsels, by which Christ

¹² "A 25 anni dalla Promulgazione del Documento *Mutuae Relationes*", p. 4 (cyclostyled, with author's emphasis).

¹³ J.M.R. TILLARD, *Carisma e sequela* [Bologna: EDB 1987] p. 54

¹⁴ O' MURCHU, *Rehacer la vida religiosa...* p. 67.

invites some people to share his experience as the chaste, poor and obedient One, call for and make manifest in those who accept them an explicit desire to be totally conformed to him... His way of living in chastity, poverty and obedience appears as the most radical way of living the Gospel on this earth, a way which may be called divine, for it was embraced by him, God and man, as the expression of his relationship as the Only-Begotten Son with the Father and with the Holy Spirit. This is why Christian tradition has always spoken of the objective superiority of the consecrated life" (VC 18). "Within this harmonious constellation of gifts, each of the fundamental states of life is entrusted with the task of expressing, in its own way, one or other aspect of the one mystery of Christ. While the *lay life has a particular mission* of ensuring that the Gospel message is proclaimed in the temporal sphere, *in the sphere of ecclesial communion an indispensable ministry is carried out by those in Holy Orders*, and in a special way by Bishops... As a way of showing forth the Church's holiness, *it is to be recognized that the consecrated life, which mirrors Christ's own way of life, has an objective superiority*. Precisely for this reason, it is an especially rich manifestation of Gospel values and a more complete expression of the Church's purpose, which is the sanctification of humanity. (VC 32)

There is no doubt that the mission of religious life is *to be a sign or a metaphor*:

- *A sign of the living memory of Jesus*, who prolongs his revealing presence through the life of those who bear in their own body the "marks" of the Lord's passion (Gal 6,17). To consecrated life corresponds the living and public expression of the "*conformity of one's whole existence to Christ*" (VC 16), which leads to configuration with the Risen Lord. "This implies a particular communion of love for Christ who has become the centre of their life and the continual source of every initiative" (RdC 22).

Consecrated life, in fact, is in itself "a progressive taking on of the attitude of Christ" (RdC 15; cf. VC 65). "Therefore it is necessary to adhere ever more closely to Christ, the centre of con-

secrated life, and once again take up the path of conversion and renewal which, like the initial experience of the apostles, before and after the resurrection, was a *starting afresh from Christ*. Yes, one must start afresh from Christ" (RdC 21).

- *A sign of the presence and primacy of God* in the world, of the God of Jesus, source of life and humanity, manifested in the folly and weakness of the Cross (cf. 1 Cor 1,22-31), which denounces sin and opens up to the life-giving action of the Spirit in the Resurrection. We need therefore to really give to God the primacy due to him as an absolute value in our personal and community life, both privately and publicly.

To **experience God** is not for us a merely sporadic or secondary task, but our whole *raison d'être* in the Church and our first mission: "It is precisely in the simple day-to-day living that consecrated life progressively matures to become the proclamation of an alternative way of living to that of the world and the dominant culture. Given this style of life and the search for the Absolute, it suggests, as it were, a spiritual therapy for the evils of our time" (RdC 6).

- *A sign of the originality of the Kingdom of God* which is in this world but not of it (cf. Jn 18,36), which takes up human values but transcends and redeems them, introducing into them a true and absolute innovation. "Consecrated life itself, guided by the action of the Holy Spirit, becomes a mission. The more consecrated persons allow themselves to be conformed to Christ, the more Christ is made present and active in history for the salvation of all" (RdC 9).

This implies the joyful and radical living of the Beatitudes as a programme of life and a leaven capable of transforming the world. A particular **mission** of consecrated life is, in fact, "to remind the baptized of the fundamental values of the Gospel, by bearing splendid and striking testimony that the world cannot be transfigured and offered to God without the spirit of the Beatitudes" (VC 33).

- *A sign of ecclesial communion*, lived by those who by profession live to the full the commandment of Jesus in a ***life of communion***, in which it should be evident in some way that, “more than an instrument for carrying out a specific mission, fraternal communion is a God-enlightened space in which to experience the hidden presence of the Risen Lord (cf. *Mt* 18:20)” (VC 42). The specific contribution of consecrated persons, both men and women, to evangelization “is first of all the witness of a life given totally to God and to their brothers and sisters, in imitation of the Saviour” (VC 76; cf. *RdC* 34).

This takes place thanks to the mutual love of those who make up the community, which is part of the divine plan before becoming a human project (cf. *VFC* 7). “The life of communion is the first message of consecrated life, since it is an efficacious *sign* and persuasive *force* which leads to belief in Christ. Thus communion itself is mission, indeed *communion begets communion* and is essentially a *missionary communion*” (*RdC* 33; cf. *ChL* 31-32): “those who have come into genuine contact with Christ cannot keep him for themselves, they must proclaim him” (*NMI* 40).

“Consecrated life today needs a spiritual rebirth which will help to concretely bring about the spiritual and evangelical meaning of baptismal consecration and of its *new and special consecration*. The spiritual life must therefore have first place in the programme of Families of consecrated life, in such a way that every Institute and community will be a school of true evangelical spirituality” (*RdC* 20; cf. VC 93). Called as we are to be signs of the prophetic originality of the Gospel, which must be a source of enlightenment and a point of reference for everyone who is baptized, we have a great responsibility in the Church: if all are called to holiness we must make of sanctity a style of life, our true “profession”, so as to become a clarion call among Christians. To live as persons consecrated to God is our first apostolic mission.

And this is the more urgently necessary for us as educators of young people, who are in need of and are seeking incentives and

proposals for life, persons who by their own lifestyle can give them motives for life and hope and accompany them in their human and Christian development.

5. A model in crisis

With this identity as our starting point, we can better define the roots of the present crisis in religious life, of which the lack of vocations, poor image and weak significance are no more than symptoms.

A reductive – and I would say *liberal* – concept of religious life maintained that its renewal must consist in its adaptation to modern times by incorporating what is best in enlightenment, emancipation and human rights. In this way the person came to take centre stage with his awareness, dignity and personal project. This contributed to a healthy liberation consisting in a richer and more human maturing, more respectful of the person, but it also introduced some negative elements:

- The denial to consecrated life of any particular *mark of distinction*; all signs of belonging to a particular social group, such as the habit, structures, customs, language, and characteristic ways of presentation to the public were being given up; all ways of appearing as different were to be avoided. *Lack of visibility* was considered important, and the treasure was to be kept hidden (cf. *Mt 13,44*).

But if consecrated life itself cannot be a visible sign of something, what meaning can it have? This is why so much is said nowadays of it recovering a place in the world and in the Church by means of its *visibility*, as a means of making perceptible the “characteristic features of Jesus” (VC 1).

- The ardent desire to become *normal*, like the rest of the world, with nothing to distinguish us from others and without having to bear our characteristic trait of being won over by Christ and

being *in love* with him, i.e. committed “to live in imitation of Christ with a passionate love” (RdC 8)

But if consecrated life stands for no *more* than this, if it does not give rise to deeper sentiments and less common resources, why become a religious? If there is nothing extraordinary, or unusual, or a bit of “madness” about the vows, could it not be because we have reduced them to our own terms of measurement. If consecrated life is no more than the normal way of living it means it has lost its prophetic force;¹⁵ if it does a bit of everything but nothing in particular, if it aims at nothing better, neither proclaiming nor denouncing anything at all, what purpose does it serve?

- To this is added the reaffirmation of *professionalization*. First perhaps there was the desire that the grace of profession could substitute for our professional incompetence; We often heard it said that “obedience works miracles”. Nowadays, on the other hand, the necessary professional preparation often becomes a pretext for being unavailable for the mission. We are losing the freshness of evangelical availability, the spontaneity of the apostle, to become simply professional educators. I wonder whether all Salesians would be willing to leave their particular line of work for a service to the Congregation? My experience is that many do this, and willingly; but unfortunately not everyone is willing to do so.

But if consecrated life relies only on professional health workers or educators or professional workers in the field of marginalization, we must admit that a tragic mistake has been made: the means have become the end. *Doing* has taken precedence over *being*; but is it right to give priority to the work of our own hands rather than to God’s will for each of us?

- So came into being a great deal of *individualism*, that made obedience well-nigh impossible. The situation is all the more serious

¹⁵ F. J. MOLONEY, *Disciples and Prophets: A Biblical Model for Religious Life* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1980) p. 155-170.

the less one is conscious of it; or when one becomes aware of it one sets out to justify it. In the face of personal rights and projects or the fulfilment of one's personal vocation, there is nothing to be done: these things are never questioned nor even assessed.

But if consecrated life is interpreted from the standpoint of *self fulfilment*, it has wandered from the gospel path. Let us recall those very clear words of Jesus: Whoever would save his life will lose it (cf. *Mk* 8,35; *Jn* 12,25). Self-realization gives central place to one's own self and personal interests. The Gospel, on the contrary, decentralizes ourselves and puts at the centre God and our neighbour. The culture of self-realization distorts *community discernment*; the latter becomes not so much a process of detachment and purification to harmonize one's will with that of God, but rather a strategy for imposing one's own personal decision, often already made. Where therefore is the *sequela Christi*, where is the making of the will of God one's food as Jesus did (*Jn* 4,34)?

Behaviour of this kind leads to a loss of the sense of the *community mission*, because primacy of self rules out the common mission. But if consecrated life leaves space for this individualistic view of vocation and mission, it is headed for self-destruction. The risk is by no means imaginary; it is in fact so real that nowadays it has become a problem for formation and for government.

- The *cutting back of prayer* is another element of this "liberal" model of consecrated life. The practices of piety are reduced "ad usum privatum", they lose their frequency, visibility and obligatory nature; they are performed when there is time and there is nothing more urgent to be done; or when the need is felt because there is something to be asked for. It is true that formerly a certain routine and formality could creep in, and spontaneity and authenticity could be lost; but it is equally true that without a practice of prayer requiring discipline and method, with daily

fidelity and regularity of life, an interior emptiness develops together with a deep fragmentation of the believer.

But it is absurd when consecrated life separates someone from God because he has no time for him. In fact “consecrated persons extend a persuasive invitation to reflect upon the primacy of grace and to respond to it through a generous spiritual commitment” (*RdC* 8; cf. *NMI* 38). How can it be that a Salesian has more important concerns than God? This is the kind of thing that led the Latins to say: *Corruptio optimi pessima*; there is nothing worse than religious with a worldly way of life. Of what use is salt if it becomes tasteless (*Mt* 5.13)?

- The kind of *community* promoted in this model is envisaged as a space of tranquillity, of mutual respect, of personal wellbeing, where one can be comfortable without feeling out of place. For its achievement the value of homogeneous communities is recognized, made up of similar people; and if this is not possible, recourse must be had to pluralism and tolerance as the ideal to be attained. The most important element would be the absence of conflicts and clashes or simply different points of view. And so things go happily along with everyone content since nothing is demanded beyond what everyone is ready to give and by not insisting on gospel requirements. And so the number of cars increases, as also do rooms with television, the financial independence of the confreres, autonomy as regards journeys and holidays, and openness to relations with the opposite sex; poverty becomes lax; the superior is no longer a father and animator but only a facilitator, and the house becomes transformed into a boarding house.

But if consecrated life does not form robust personalities, men of communion who see their brother as “one who is a part of me” (*NMI* 43), it has no reason to exist, because communion, lived and witnessed to, is one of the elements that give it significance and make it enlightening and evangelical. Nowadays in fact “the Church entrusts to communities of consecrated life the particu-

lar task of spreading the spirituality of communion, first of all in their internal life and then in the ecclesial community, and even beyond its boundaries, by opening or continuing a dialogue in charity, especially where today's world is torn apart by ethnic hatred or senseless violence" (VC 51).

- Perhaps the weakest and most painful element of this model is the obstacle it places in the way of *new vocations*. It makes us ponder over the fact that it is precisely the new movements and recently founded institutes that have most success in this field. There is something missing, without any doubt. I wonder whether the explanation lies in the "liberal" model of consecrated life which has grown up here and there with undeniable anti-vocational traits! In fact the groups with more success from a vocational standpoint present three fundamental elements: a robust, visible and shared spirituality; a life of community that is intense, joyful and attractive; and a strong, sure and clear commitment in favour of the poor, leading the members to live *with* them and *like* them.

In my opinion the biggest problem of the "liberal" model is that of attempting to evangelize modern culture, while taking it on board to the detriment of evangelical options and values. In consequence we come under the transforming influence of worldly logic instead of becoming evangelizers of this culture. We should be like salt, which is able to be immersed to the point of being completely dissolved but without ever losing its identity and efficacy so that it can return to its pristine state.

This is the model of consecrated life that is in crisis. We Salesians are right to remain faithful to our vocation and mission: to be signs and bearers of God. Re-founding religious life means nothing else than returning to the essential, the absolute nature of God, the Gospel values, the beatitudes and evangelical counsels, to the strength of community, to being present among young people, as Don Bosco exhorted us in his letter from Rome of May 1884.

6. GC25, an invitation to adopt this line of thought

Reading over again the documents of the GC25, I have become aware that the Congregation was trying to respond to these challenges when it addressed the reality of the Salesian Community Today, presenting an overall view of the whole of our consecrated life. The theme was the community, but the contents covered the experience and witness of God, the fraternal community and our presence among the young. In this way mission, fraternity and evangelical life were seen in the perspective of the kind of community the Congregation feels itself called upon to promote, in an effort to bring about a deep renewal.

The community, in fact, was not seen as a kind of social club or working team, even though it be very important – because of the salesian spirit – that there is a cordial and welcoming atmosphere from a human standpoint and a professional efficiency from an educative and pastoral point of view. It was presented primarily as a consecrated community, one of apostles, with a clear charismatic identity and heir to a spiritual patrimony on which it could draw to be able to provide a competent response to the new challenges.

The second section, entitled *Evangelical Witness*, dealt explicitly with this theme, drawing its inspiration from the *Dream of the ten diamonds*, which described the model of the true Salesian. We can declare with Fr Viganò that Don Bosco himself “was all through his life the living incarnation of this symbolic personage”.¹⁶ Seen from the front, the personage portrays salesian life especially in its outward activities (the diamonds on the front of the garment); seen from the rear, it shows salesian life in its interior spirituality (the diamonds on the back). *In front*, if you like, you have the social features, the “da mihi animas” figure; *at the back* the secret of the tenacity and asceticism, the foundation and nervous system, the “cetera tolle”.¹⁷

¹⁶ E. VIGANÒ, *The Salesian according to Don Bosco's dream of the ten diamonds*, ACS 300 (1981) p 13.

¹⁷ *Ib*, pag. 14.

Applying these fundamental characteristics to the salesian community, the GC25 declares: "Every community is made up of men, living in society, who express the gospel ardour of "da mihi animas cetera tolle" with the optimism of faith, the dynamic creativity of hope and the kindness and total self-giving of charity. This commitment is sustained by a strong and essential spiritual support characterized in particular by the ascetical practice of the evangelical counsels and by a hard-working and temperate life-style" (GC25, 20).

It is clear that the modern cultural environment, marked by secularism, individualism and hedonism, does not encourage esteem for consecrated life, nor anyone taking it on nor its development; and so the challenges to be faced become clearer. But understandable too is the prophetic force religious life can have when lived to the full, as an alternative way of life that reveals new kinds of humanism in line with the Gospel.

"The evangelical counsels should not be considered as a denial of the values inherent in sexuality, in the legitimate desire to possess material goods or to make decisions for oneself. Insofar as these inclinations are based on nature, they are good in themselves. Human beings, however, weakened as they are by original sin, run the risk of acting on them in a way which transgresses the moral norms. The profession of chastity, poverty and obedience is a warning not to underestimate the wound of original sin and, while affirming the value of created goods, it *relativizes* them by pointing to God as the absolute good. Thus, while those who follow the evangelical counsels seek holiness for themselves, they propose, so to speak, a spiritual "therapy" for humanity, because they reject the idolatry of anything created and in a certain way they make visible the living God. The consecrated life, especially in difficult times, is a blessing for human life and for the life of the Church" (VC 87; cf. GC25, 33)

No wonder therefore that we speak of the *primacy of God*, "who has entered our life, won us over and placed us at the service of his Kingdom, as signs and bearers of his love" (GC25, 22); of the hu-

manizing and prophetic value of the *sequela Christi* as a response to the idolatry of power, possession and pleasure; of the *grace of unity*, “which is a gift of the Holy Spirit and a vital synthesis of union with God and dedication to one’s neighbour, of an interior evangelical life and apostolic activity, of a praying heart and working hands, of personal needs and community commitments. In this way is achieved, in the covenant with God, a harmonious integration of the apostolic mission, the fraternal community and the practice of the evangelical counsels” (GC25, 24).

All this should be applied to the central position of the Word of God in personal and community life, in the celebration of the Eucharist, in the quality of prayer-life even to the community becoming a “school of prayer”, in the ‘revision of life’, in spiritual direction, in the personal and community life-plan. Once again, the appeal is addressed to the local community and its fraternal life present in the life of the young.

In conclusion

I cannot end this letter without mentioning the Virgin Mary, the model of consecration and the following of Christ. If “to look upon the face of Christ, to recognize its mystery amid the daily events and the sufferings of his human life, and then to grasp the divine splendour definitively revealed in the Risen Lord, seated in glory at the right hand of the Father, is the task of every follower of Christ” (RMV 9), we Salesians want to make this contemplation of the face of Christ with Mary and as she did. She is the “incomparable model”; “no one has ever devoted himself to the contemplation of the face of Christ as faithfully as Mary” (RMV 10), no one knows Christ better than Mary; no one can introduce us to a profound knowledge of his mystery better than his Mother” (RMV 14).

“Let us then look upon Mary, Mother and Teacher of all. She, the first consecrated person, lived the fullness of charity. Fervent in the Spirit, she served the Lord, joyful in hope, strong in trial,

persevering in prayer, she intercedes for us (cf. *Rom* 12:11-13). She reflects all the aspects of the Gospel; all the charisms of consecrated life are mirrored and renewed in her” (*RdC* 46). I wonder whether it is not precisely here that her beauty, her charm, her originality, her splendour are to be found!

I want to finish with a quotation from *Vita Consecrata*, because it can be an incentive to us to acquire a better knowledge of this important document; and I also strongly urge you to study more deeply the Instruction “Starting again from Christ”.¹⁸

“Mary’s presence is of fundamental importance both for the spiritual life of each consecrated person and for the solidity, unity and progress of the whole community. Mary in fact is the *sublime example of perfect consecration*, since she belongs completely to God and is totally devoted to him. Chosen by the Lord, who wished to accomplish in her the mystery of the Incarnation, she reminds consecrated persons of the *primacy of God’s initiative*. At the same time, having given her assent to the divine Word, made flesh in her, Mary is the *model of then acceptance of grace by human creatures*... Consecrated life looks to her as the sublime model of consecration to the Father, union with the Son and openness to the Spirit, in the knowledge that acceptance of the ‘virginal and humble life’ of Christ also means imitation of Mary’s way of life” (VC 28).

Let us ask her to teach us to be open to the transforming and sanctifying action of the Spirit. Let us entrust to her our salesian vocation so that she may make of us “signs and bearers of God’s love for the young”.


Fr Pascual Chávez V.
Rector Major

¹⁸ CIVCSVA, *Starting afresh from Christ. A renewed commitment to consecrated life in the third millennium*, Rome 2002.

2. GUIDELINES AND POLICES

2.1 THE CARE AND PROMOTION OF THE VOCATION OF THE SALESIAN BROTHER

A commitment to be given practical form during the six year period

Fr Francesco CEREDA

General Councillor for Formation

Starting with the beatification of Brother Artemides Zatti, it can be said that the Congregation has been living a special “*year of celebration*” recalling the new Blessed and promoting the vocation of the Salesian Brother. From the Provinces news has come of the many events that have taken place. One can think for instance of the various liturgical celebrations and commemorations of Blessed Artemides Zatti, of the Salesian Brothers presented in the Salesian Bulletin or recalled in the Provinces, of the Provincial or Interprovincial meetings held on the subject of the Salesian Brother’s vocation. But one can also think of the more specifically vocational initiatives realised, the videocassettes produced, events for young people put on by the educative and pastoral communities, discussion carried out by Provincial Formation Commissions and the Provincial Youth Ministry Teams.

After a year of celebration, which has contributed to the creation of a deeper awareness and the taking of the first steps, the time has come for each Province in a practical and organised way to set itself aims and objectives, propose procedures and interventions to promote the vocation of the Salesian Brother throughout the coming six year period. The year of celebration should lead on into a “*six year programme of work*”. In this way those proposals will be put into operation that are provided by the “Project of animation and government of the Rector Major and his Council” in which, taking up Fr Vecchi’s words, one speaks of “a renewed

commitment, extraordinary and specific regarding the vocation of the Salesian Brother." The guidelines in this article are meant to assist the Provinces with their plans for the Provincial Chapters, according to the recent letter sent to the Provincials by the Vicar Fr Luc Van Looy, and for giving special attention to this vocation during the six year period.

1. Recent reflections and guidelines

In the Congregation we already have reflections and authoritative and significant guidelines regarding the vocation of the lay Salesian.

We can find a start being made with the re-examination of this figure in 1975 with the *"World Congress of the Salesian Brother"* and in 1978 with the document of GC21 on *"The Salesian Brother."* In 1980 the Rector Major Fr Egidio Viganò once again took up the discussion of this vital theme in his letter: *"The lay component in the salesian community"* (AGC 298); in this he analysed more deeply the originality and the charismatic implications of this vocation for the salesian community and for the Congregation. One could then mention the text: *"The Salesian Brother: History, Identity, Vocational Apostolate and Formation"* of 1989; this was the fruit of the GC22, which asked that there should be an examination of «the vocational identity of the lay Salesian and its significance essential for the life and mission of the Congregation, taking into account the reflection currently taking place within the Church». The basis of every reflection and directive for today however, remains *article 45 of the Constitutions with its commentary*, provided in the text *The Project of Life of the Salesians of Don Bosco. A guide to the Salesian Constitutions* of 1986.

Then there can be no doubt that the *24th General Chapter*, although it did not deal with the topic of the vocational figure of the Salesian Brother, explicitly asked for a better understanding of the identity of the lay component of the salesian community

(GC24, 154), produced some reflection on the specific nature of such a vocation in relation to lay people, and suggested that its value be better appreciated in the educative and pastoral Community, at least to the same extent as lay people themselves.

In the year 2000 the third edition of the *“Ratio”* was promulgated, in which there was very considerable development in the area of the formation of the Salesian Brother. It presents his identity as a salesian (FSDB 40). In addition it develops the topic of his initial formation, paying particular attention to the phases of the postnovitiate (FSDB 408-409; 420-421; 424) and to specific formation (FSDB 446-458), for which, in an appendix, it gives guidelines for the arrangement of his studies (FSDB 596-599). It also mentions a “quinquennium” for them after specific formation (FSDB 248; 532; 534). Finally it asks for the supporting role of Salesian Brothers in formation communities, possibly through their services of animation and teaching (FSDB 234 e 284), and specifically for their presence in the novitiate (FSDB 378) and the postnovitiate (FSDB 416).

More recently the Rector Major Fr Juan Vecchi offered the Congregation some new reflections with his letter of 31 May 2001: *“The Beatification of Brother Artemides Zatti: a sensational precedent”* (AGC 376), in which he asked every Province to make a special effort on behalf of the vocation of the Salesian Brother. This letter was accompanied by some guidelines from Fr Giuseppe Nicolussi and Fr Antonio Domenech: *“A renewed and extraordinary commitment for the vocation of the Salesian Brother,”* in which the Provinces were invited to be aware of their own responsibilities in promoting this vocation. They speak about the need for «an assessment of the situation and of vocational activity» and the need for «an extraordinary programme», to foster knowledge and the presentation of this vocation.

To this should be added the commitments that the GC25 wished to assume. These are presented in the document of the Chapter and in the message to Salesian confreres: *“Let us welcome the grace that has been given to us with the beatification of the Sale-*

sian Brother Artemides Zatti". The Rector Major Fr Pascual Chávez also in his "*Closing Address of the GC25*" emphasised this need, asking for "a more convinced vocational proposal, and a more visible presence of this figure in the educative and pastoral community." Finally the "*Project of animation and government of the Rector Major and his Council*" set out some objectives, strategies and interventions, requesting a particular commitment from the Formation sector and that of Youth Ministry.

2. The new situation

As can be seen, in our Congregation there has been no shortage of reflection and guidelines. Today these reflections are taking place in a new situation that needs to be taken into consideration and analysed.

The ecclesiology of the Council and the postcouncil period has emphasised the perspective of a Church of communion, pointing out the complementary nature of different vocations, the baptismal dignity shared equally by all Christians, the importance of all the charisms and the universal call to holiness. This has led to a justified *promotion of the laity* within the Church, to the recognition of their active role in evangelisation, to the need to overcome clericalism. Commitment to the promotion of the vocation of the consecrated lay person has taken place at a time of the clear identification of lay people in the Church and their relevance; while on the other hand, the identity of the religious brother is unclear and in need of a specific and urgent analysis and examination. The unanswered question remains: why become religious brothers when it is possible to live and do the same things as lay people? There is a real identity crisis. Sometimes this has created inferiority complexes or vocational dissatisfaction. This has led some religious brothers to seek priestly ordination as the only way to achieve personal self-fulfilment and to overcome uncertainties about one's identity.

The Church is living through a serious *crisis in religious life*, especially regarding female religious life and the vocation of the religious brothers as they are called. While religious life is giving up old models of expression, it has still to find new ones. The crisis is accentuated in the case of apostolic religious life, affecting more closely the Congregations that historically have had and today still have a strongly social impact. In addition the centrality and the visibility of the priesthood in the life of the Church, linked with the correct emphasis on the life and mission of the laity, does not help to give prominence to the religious vocation as such. The reduction of the consecrated life to its ministerial or functional aspects, almost as though its mission were limited solely to activity and works, contributes to obscuring its identity even further. In this context the identity of the consecrated lay person is much more unclear than that of the religious priest.

In our Congregation we are witnessing a numerical diminution in Salesian brother vocations which have dropped from 3924 confreres in 1970 to 2260 today. Already in 1984 Fr Egidio Viganò launched a “*cry of alarm*”. The image of the priest in some of our environments seems to be far more prevalent than that of the Salesian religious. Also salesian religious life is often seen in functional terms, as though the salesian mission were reduced to roles and tasks to be performed. In addition, the specific contribution to the animation of the EPC on the part of the salesian community as a witness to God and a prophecy of «the missionary dynamism of ‘Da mihi animas’» (ACG 363, p. 37), is also scarcely to be found; more in general, our communities are not seen as religious communities. In some provinces a weakening in the Salesian Brother’s vocational identity is also due to a persistent clerical mentality or to the reduction of their presence in technical schools or in contexts of our mission that are specifically educational and secular.

The times in which we are living demand that we take into account these new situations which can raise new questions. For the moment it is a matter of assimilating and reflecting more

deeply on the ideas that the Congregation has considered so far, but especially to put them into practice. From this assimilation and practice new questions to be considered will arise.

3. The need for structured and practical action

According to the Project of animation and government of the Rector Major and his Council, the basic lines of action for the promotion of the Salesian Brother's vocation regard a deeper awareness of his vocational identity, his "visibility", his high quality formation and vocation work. These need to be developed simultaneously; they are related to each other, and only if they are carried together will they be effective.

3.1. Awareness of vocational identity

Above all a decisive change of mentality is required about the way of understanding our salesian vocation, developing the theology of the religious life, its identity in the Church, the relationship between apostolic consecration and our mission, and its contribution to the animation of the educative and pastoral community. In the salesian community it is the apostolic consecration that unites us prior to any vocational difference; only within the shared religious life is it possible to understand the identity of the Salesian Brother's vocation.

Then it is necessary to promote initiatives for further reflection and discussion on the main elements of the vocational identity of the Salesian Brother. It is a matter of assimilating the reflection and the guidelines proposed by the Congregation, through an ongoing formation programme in the Provinces, that envisages communication, discussion, and the development of community thinking about the originality, the motivation for and the models of this vocation. This is a task for the Provincial Formation Commission, which ought to provide stimulating ideas and

proposals for the Provincial Council, for provincial animation, and for the communities.

Sometimes there has only been a token acceptance of this material and therefore there has been only a weak practical strategy. Probably, Salesian communities have more easily tended to respond to the absence of Salesian brothers by replacing them with lay people who have professional and educational competence, in this way running the risk of losing a specific feature of their charism.

3.2. *Visibility of the person*

The visibility of the person of the Salesian brother is strictly connected with the presence and the visibility of the salesian community in the EPC, precisely as a religious community. Without the presence among the young of a salesian community in its totality, in all the aspects of its fraternal, spiritual and evangelically active life, it is very difficult to understand the vocation of the lay Salesian. In the strengthening of the visibility of the Salesian community he too will draw strength.

It is necessary to project the presence of the lay Salesians in such a way that they have educational roles within the EPC; it is important to put the Salesian Brothers in direct contact with the boys and youngsters; it is also necessary for the Salesian Brother to do more than assign to him exclusively organisational or administrative roles. It is necessary to think of new models of lay Salesians.

It is a question of appreciating and giving the person of the lay Salesian greater visibility in the salesian community and in the educative and pastoral community not only in "professional roles"; a professional approach is necessary, but it is not sufficient in itself to communicate the experience of a charismatic vocation. Lay people too have professional competence. The specific character of the vocation of the Salesian brother requires that the vital synthesis of professional competence, spiritual experi-

ence, and an educative and pastoral commitment is able to be seen.

In the communities and in the provinces the presence of the Salesian brothers needs to be strengthened in various representative roles, in organisation for provincial animation, in the distribution of responsibilities. It is also necessary to think about what can be done for those provinces that do not have Salesian brothers. In all these cases it is up to the Provincial Formation Commission to carry out an assessment and prepare a proposal to present to the Provincial and the Provincial Council.

3.3. High quality Formation

There are a number of points with regard to the formation of the Salesian brother that need to be considered further and especially experienced. In "*Criteria and Norms for salesian vocational discernment*" we have some vocational criteria that can help us to discern what the characteristic features are to identify the one salesian vocation, that of the Salesian priest and that of the Salesian brother (CNVD 84 - 86); these criteria need to be further studied by the Provincial Formation Commission and by the Formation Department, in order to find other specifications.

For all those who begin the prenovitiate, whether future Salesian brothers or Salesian priests, it is necessary to ensure the same conditions for entry from the point of view of secondary school studies, requiring «a general cultural foundation» (FSDB 342). The discernment for the vocation of the Salesian priest and the Salesian brother is carried out in the novitiate, prior to the request for admission to profession, and should become definitive before the specific formation after practical training (FSDB 323).

The postnovitiate is the phase in which, in continuity with the novitiate, the common religious identity is further considered and in which one begins to prepare oneself to be educator and pastor; for this reason the "Ratio" states that «it is desirable » that the

Salesians preparing for the priesthood and Salesian brothers live in the same formation community, “where they see properly appreciated the two forms of the single Salesian vocation.» (FSDB 421). In the Congregation, however, there are still some situations that seem to require a different kind of experience. In the postnovitiate it is necessary to experience the fact that the “curricula of equivalent level” may also mean that there is the possibility of following the same course of studies as well as the possibility of different courses. (FSDB 398).

It is necessary to find a place in the formation communities of the prenovitiate, novitiate and postnovitiate for the Salesian brother with roles of formation and teaching. Certainly this also applies to the communities for the specific formation of the Salesian brother, and it would also be desirable in the communities for the specific formation of Salesian priests. It is important, however, that these presences are ensured at significant moments in the life of the formation communities.

The most innovative feature of the “Ratio” regards the specific formation of the lay Salesian. In this area attempts are being made, but we have still much to try out and to plan for. We have a tradition for the specific formation of the Salesian priest, but not for that of the Salesian brother. It is important not to be satisfied with half measures, because it is a question of re-enforcing the vocational identity and of providing a high quality formation that is theological, spiritual, educative and pastoral. It is necessary to ensure this formation after practical training; “it is something different from professional training» (FSDB 446); certainly it is also necessary to think about courses for professional training (FSDB 456).

Finally the ongoing formation of the Salesian brothers should not be neglected, so that they may live their vocation today to the full and with creative fidelity. All these matters are the responsibility of the Provincial Formation Commission and the Provincial Council, and there should be guidelines provided and decisions taken in the Provincial Formation Plan.

3.4. *Work for vocations*

In addition to an «assessment of the situation and of vocational activity», the Provinces have already been asked for «the establishment of an extraordinary programme» which assists with the knowledge, the proposal and the subsequent guidance of the Salesian brother (cf. AGC 376 p. 66). The Youth Ministry team and the vocation animation commission have this task; the promotion of this particular vocation is only possible within a vocational culture and a broader animation activity.

It is especially important to present the salesian vocation as apostolic consecration at the service of the mission. Consecrated life is often understood in terms of providing services, and then it is recognised especially for the function that it carries out and little for the testimony it gives. In addition not sufficiently appreciated are the beauty and the necessity of the apostolate of lay people in the secular field. How many lay teachers see themselves as apostles in school? How many doctors consider the exercise of their profession a real apostolate? How many sportsmen see what they do as a field for ministry? There is still a long way to go in people recognising the importance of the apostolate in the secular field. It is in this twofold context that the vocation of the Salesian brother can more easily develop.

Then in those cases in which one is convinced of the need to promote this specific salesian vocation, there is not always a programme of vocation work that is progressive, simple and well focused, that through the years helps the youngsters to come to know the number of vocations in the Church, that helps them to see the differences between them and that then accompanies them to understand and appreciate the vocation of the lay Salesian.

Finally, not always and not many lay Salesians are involved in promoting such a vocation. It is forgotten that with young people today direct contact counts much more, the experiences they have, the “hands on approach” in order to help them understand and appreciate a vocation. The visibility of the presence of the lay

Salesian in the educative and pastoral community also has an impact in terms of vocation work. Salesian brother vocations emerge where there are models with which to identify, since it is difficult to talk about this vocation in the absence of concrete examples.

In conclusion, what is needed in the Congregation is a *structured and practical course of action* that shakes up the communities and the confreres and mobilises them in this daring enterprise. Since it is a question of gradually creating a mentality more favourable to the Salesian brother's vocation, this course of action cannot be limited to a year but must last several years. The same needs to be said about the commitment to making the lay Salesian more visible, ensuring a high quality formation for him, and making this vocation known to youngsters and suggesting that it is for them.

This sort of activity according to the "Project of animation and government for the six year period," is motivated, animated and sustained by the Rector Major and by all the members of the Council, and in particular by the Councillor for Formation and the Councillor for Youth Ministry; but above all it needs to be taken on board by the Provincials, and those responsible for the animation of the Provinces, by all the communities and each confrere; it needs to find support and be given collaboration in the Regions.

A course of action of this sort can only begin and be sustained by *constant prayer* by everyone in the Provinces and the communities; only prayer prepares minds, creates a spiritual climate, sustains motivation and commitment, obtains from God the gift sought.

4. The commitment of every Province

Provincial animation requires organisation in order to deal with the problems and a practical approach in order to produce proposals. It is important to involve everyone and everything: Salesian priests and Salesian brothers, initial formation and on-

going formation, youngsters and lay people, at provincial level and local level; without this convergent activity progress will be difficult. To sustain interest and commitment on all sides to the Salesian brother's vocation requires that in every province there should be a confrere with a team, to whom is entrusted the task of animating this promotional activity; the need to create a unified approach in animation and government will then be felt.

It is suggested for this that the *Provincial Delegate for Formation*, together with the Provincial Formation Commission, assumes among its main tasks for this six year period the objective of fostering «a renewed, extraordinary and specific commitment to the vocation of the Salesian brother» throughout the Province, in salesian communities and in the confreres. This objective takes form in four areas: the analysis in the salesian communities and the salesian family of the nature of vocation, the giving of due prominence to the Salesian brother, the high quality of his formation, collaboration with the Youth Ministry team for vocation work.

The Provincial Delegate for Formation then has the task of encouraging and providing proposals regarding *provincial vocation work*. In particular, he suggests ideas and creates the links between the various Commissions and the Provincial Council; he keeps the interest of the Province and of the communities alive; he encourages a campaign of prayer; he gathers together the experiences of the Congregation in promoting this vocation and makes them known. An important task is certainly that of the Youth Ministry Team, regarding vocation work, group activities, the SYM, and the media. It is necessary to establish close collaboration between the Provincial delegates for Formation and for Youth Ministry.

The *Provincial and his Council* ought to be the focus of all this varied activity and they should support and direct it, providing the necessary directives and taking the decisions for the whole Province; they are the primary animators in this enterprise. The Province has available to it some means for planning in which the decisions taken for the promotion of this vocation come together;

in particular there is the Provincial Formation Plan, the annual programme of ongoing formation, the Provincial Plan for vocation promotion.

During the year 2003-2004 through the *Provincial Chapter* the Provinces have a great opportunity to foster the closer examination of the nature of the vocation, to involve all the communities, to draw up a plan for their own commitment with regard to the "promotion of the vocation of the Salesian brother." The Chapter, however, would not constitute the whole of this commitment for the six year period..

5. The Commitment of the Regions

It is important that through the Provincial Delegate for Formation each Province is linked with its own Region and with the *Regional Formation Coordinator*. At Regional level the aims, the strategies and the activities that each Province is working on can more easily be known.

In the Region it is also possible to carry out some initiatives *in collaboration*. There are in fact particular activities or initiatives that the Regions can encourage, such as for example regional meetings for ongoing formation for Salesian brothers and the programmes of the formation communities for their specific formation.

On the occasion of the next *Team Visit* the Regions or the Interprovincial Conferences could give a presentation of what was being planned and what was being done in the individual Provinces.

6. The Commitment of the whole Congregation

The *Rector Major and his Council* want to urge the confreres to increase their practical commitment to the promotion of the Salesian brother's vocation following the first incentive which was given to the Congregation with the beatification of Brother

Artemides Zatti. They are also called upon to keep in mind the problems, the questions, and the challenges that today are put to vocational identity.

The *Departments* can make a contribution in different ways. The Formation Department is giving particular attention to the promotion of this vocation and to the creation of links with other Departments; while the Youth Ministry Department has the great task of updating its vocation work; both these departments have specified their roles and their collaboration more clearly in the "Project of the six year period." The Salesian Family Department needs to become involved especially in terms of an appreciation of the originality of this vocation. The Missions Department can direct the choices of Salesian brother missionaries towards those areas where as yet there is not a significant presence or knowledge of this vocation. The Social Communications Department can continue its support through information and communication.

The *Regional Councillors* can carry forward the animation of the Provinces by also giving attention to this issue; I think that above all they can encourage the communities of specific formation of the Salesian brother at the level of the Region or of the Provincial Conference.

Finally, it would be interesting if the idea came to maturity of the need to deal with the topic of the Salesian brother in the *26th General Chapter*, thirty years after the reflections of GC21.

Prayer

Let us confide the gift of Salesian brother vocations for our Provinces and for the Congregation to the intercession of Blessed Artemides Zatti through the trusting prayer of our communities. Co-involving in this prayer, the youngsters, the educative and pastoral communities, the Salesian Youth Movement, the Salesian Family. Let us also entrust this commitment to those consecrated persons in the Church who devote themselves to a life of prayer.

*“O God,
who in Blessed Artemides Zatti
have given us a model of the lay Salesian,
help us to recognise the gift of this vocation
for the whole Salesian Family.*

*Give us the wisdom and the courage
to propose to the young
this particular form of evangelical life
in the steps of Christ and
at the service of the young who are poorest.*

*Make young people
open to the action of the Spirit,
so that they may let themselves be attracted by your call
and generously accept your invitation.*

*Teach us how to accompany
those you call to this way,
along well-defined formation paths
and with expert and well-prepared guides.*

*We ask you this
through the intercession of Blessed Artemides Zatti
and through Christ our Lord.
Amen.”*

2.2 SUGGESTIONS FOR THE REVISION OF THE ECONOMIC PART OF THE PROVINCIAL DIRECTORY

Fr Giovanni MAZZALI
Economer General

In the Project of animation and government of the Rector Major and his Council for the six year period 2002-2008, in the sector of the Economer General's Department, evangelical poverty is mentioned as the first area of animation with some major objectives: "prophetic austerity in the personal style of life of the confreres and of the communities and openness and accountability in the use of money and the application of the means put at our disposal by Providence." (AGC 380, pag. 55).

To achieve the first objective there is mention in particular of the following intervention: "Guide the Provincial Councils in the verification of the economic part of the Provincial Directory, with special reference to the use of material goods and accountability on the part of confreres and communities." (AGC 380, pag. 55).

The indications that follow on from this have the purpose of guiding and assisting in the drawing up or the revision of the economic part of the Provincial Directory, on the occasion of the next Provincial Chapter.

They provide a scheme which makes it possible to identify topics on which the Provincial Chapter intends to guide the life of the communities and of the confreres with regard to the practice of poverty and consequent economic, administrative and management issues.

We have tried to carry out a comparative study of a number of Directories in order to arrive at a complete view of the related issues.

Some Provinces have put in their Directory a chapter concerning the economic and administrative part, others have in fact actually produced an economic directory for the province trying to be as exhaustive as possible.

The headings can vary according to the particular approach or specific arrangement: poverty and economy; poverty and the administration of goods; the administration of goods...

It is important, however, to deal with all the personal and community aspects that regard the practice of poverty and that area that is part of the charism, the administration of goods both from the point of view of the local community and from that of the provincial community.

It is crucial to take into account the particular cultural context in which the communities in the province are located and obviously the different mentalities of the confreres, when the communities are international communities. Topics such as the relationship with the family, personal access to goods necessary for the mission, the style of life and standard of living should always be related to the context and to the culture in which one is working.

From this point of view the “economic directory” needs to be frequently monitored, so as to specify or integrate in it those aspects that need urgent attention, and regarding which directives have not been provided.

1. General criteria in the area of poverty and economy

- reading the situation;
- reference to the Constitutions (art. 72-73 in particular) and to any relevant Provincial Chapters;
- poverty and the community;
- poverty and the mission to youth;
- work and temperance;
- solidarity:

- relationship between poverty, social justice, poverty considered in the light of the Gospel;
- educational aspects in salesian tradition.

2. Personal poverty

- Reference to the Constitutions 75 and Regulations 55.
- Salaries, stipends for sacred ministry or professional services, pensions...
- Working "tools" (computer, mobile phone, books, various machines, etc);
- Availability of money and personal credit cards;
- Personal bank or post office accounts;
- Cars and other means of transport;
- Holidays and rest periods;
- Personal deposits (from legacies, gifts from benefactors for pastoral or missionary activities);
- Gifts or presents;
- Personal will and testament;
- Personal review of poverty;
- Leaving the Congregation.

3. Poverty and administration at local community level

- Community aspects of poverty and the community *scrutinium paupertatis*;
- Tasks and responsibilities of the local economer (watchful regarding the style of life of the community; responsible for the budget and annual account; ensure that information is prudently provided for the community through the community assembly; in agreement with the provincial economer providing information and advice; responsible for purchases and maintenance, etc.).

- Preparation and ongoing training of the local economers (training and updating).
- Opening, management and control of post office and bank accounts (detailed norms regarding who may open them, the choice of the bank in agreement with the provincial economer, the relationship between community and personal accounts...).
- Management of investments.
- The reserves of money being kept at local level (specifying the reasons, where they should be preferably kept, under whose responsibility...);
- Book-keeping (differentiated for the various aspects of the work; centralization of cash flows and control at the level of the provincial economer's office; a single system adopted and applied by all the houses of the province);
- Work contracts and management of personnel;
- Ordinary and extraordinary maintenance of property;
- Authorizations;
- Records kept uptodate of property, insurance, contracts, registration of invoices and economic and financial documents; an inventory of goods.
- Contracts and agreements with the diocese or other bodies regarding the use of goods not our own, or responsibility for a parish or an oratory (in agreement with the Provincial and his Council);
- Taking out bank loans and making loans of money to third parties.

4. Poverty and administration at the level of the provincial community

- The responsibility of the Provincial and his Council for promoting the spirit of poverty in the communities of the province.
- Tasks and responsibilities of the provincial economer (economical/financial committee, coordination of consultants; provincial

budget and annual account; control of the accounts and bank balances of the houses; informing the Provincial Council and the Provincial Chapter; supervision and monitoring of all building works in the communities).

- Determining the provincial contributions and surpluses on the part of the local communities.
- Deposits of the houses kept at the provincial centre.
- Provincial Funds (health, study bursaries, formation, solidarity...).
- Rational organisation of provincial solidarity.
- Extraordinary expenses of the local communities (maintenance and new buildings, sickness, travel, natural disasters...).
- The management of inheritances and legacies.
- Severance indemnity fund.
- Procedures for the approval of new buildings and the documentation to be sent to the Rector Major and his Council;
- The annual *rendiconto* to be sent to the Economer General.

With regard to the methods to be followed it is possible to identify different ones, given that most Provinces already have a Economic Directory. It would be a good idea for the Provincial Economer to prepare with the help of his advisers a first draft, with any necessary additions or changes and that he submits it to the Financial Committee or other consultants for their consideration. The comments made will provide the Provincial Council with useful material for a careful assessment and in order to produce the text to be submitted to the examination and approval of the Provincial Chapter.

Following the approval arrangements should be made for communicating it to the communities and the confreres in the most suitable way taking especial care that the provincial and local economers take responsibility for putting into practice the norms laid down by the Provincial Chapter. The provincial economer will see to it that, in accordance with standard practice or in a way to be determined, the most appropriate means be established for the essential verifications/evaluations at various levels.

I finish by expressing the readiness of the Economer General's Department to provide any further information that may be required in order to produce in a satisfactory manner the instrument the purpose of which according to the Project of the Rector Major and his Council for the six year period 2002-2008, is to assist the communities and each confrere to live to the full their own consecration to the mission to youth.

4. ACTIVITIES OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL

4.1 Chronicle of the Rector Major

The work of the Rector Major in the period February-June 2003, was – as always – very intense, both at home and on the numerous journeys he undertook to encourage the confreres. Here is an account of the more significant events.

On Saturday **1 February** the Rector Major in Turin for the Feast of Don Bosco (cf. AGC 381 pages 70-72), presided at Mass in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians with the Valdocco community for deceased confreres. During the day there was the inauguration and blessing of the new premises of the video production and multimedia section of the *Missioni Don Bosco-Media Centre*. After this he went to the ‘Turin-Exhibition-Centre’ Pavilion, to take part in the exhibition “*Education is to prepare for a better tomorrow*”, organised by the Archdiocese of Turin and the ‘Don Bosco Together’ Cultural Association. From there he went to Pinero-lo, Monte Oliveto, where he met the novitiate community. Returning to Turin, he once again went to the ‘Turin-Exhibition-Centre’, where he took part in a discussion on the subject “*Providing a future for the*

family, chaired by a journalist from the ‘*Corriere della Sera*’ Gianni Riotta, with Prof. Lorenzo Caselli also taking part.

The following day, the Rector Major visited the Andrea Beltrami house, where he said Mass with the sick confreres, and spent time chatting with them and the staff, before returning to Rome.

After some days working in the office, on Friday 7 February, accompanied by the Provincial and the Economist of the Southern Province (IME), the Rector Major left for Albania. Arriving at Tirana, he was welcomed by the confreres and youngsters from the “Don Bosco” Technical Training Centre. Then he made a courtesy call on the Apostolic Nuncio, before going to the Hotel Rognert, where he took part in a public discussion on “*Educational challenges for the young in a globalised world.*”. Back in the community, he gave the Good Night to the confreres and then chatted with the VIS Volunteers.

The next day, accompanied by confreres from Tirana and Pristina, Fr Pascual Chávez went to Scu-

tari, where he visited the formation house, Aspirantate and Novitiate, as well as the Oratory-Youth Centre and Parish and the Catechetical Centre. At Scutari the Rector Major met the Salesian Family and took part in the consecration of the new Church dedicated to Don Bosco, by the Metropolitan Archbishop of Scutari, Mgr. Angelo Mas-safra. The celebration was attended by a huge number of members of the Salesian Family, of Religious, diocesan priests, and various civil authorities. In the afternoon the Rector Major met with all the Salesians in the Delegation, reminding them of the need to study and put into practice the 25th General Chapter. The day ended with the first seven Cooperators making their promise, and with a demonstration of some dances typical of southern Albania.

On Sunday 9 February the Rector Major visited the Don Bosco Social Centre in Tirana, saying Mass in thanksgiving for the 10 years presence of the Salesians in Albania; during the Mass a small group of new Salesian Cooperators who are working in the two centres made their promise. That evening he returned to Rome.

On 13 February Fr Pascual Chávez left for Mexico for a few days rest with his family, at Saltillo.

He was there until 25. Even though he was on holiday, the Rector Major attended several events: a meeting with the López Del Bosque family, distinguished benefactors responsible for the Salesian work in Saltillo, which has already celebrated 50 years of life; the celebration in the Cathedral of the city; a visit to the *Colegio México*, the salesian school where Fr Pascual studied before going to the aspirantate; a visit to the Palace of the Governor, who wanted to pay him his respects for his election as Rector Major; and finally, a meeting with the confreres in the communities in northeast Mexico.

For the last two days of February Fr Chávez was at Guadalajara for a medical checkup. Here too he took the opportunity to meet most of the Salesians in the Province and visit the two communities in the theolodate at Tlaquepaque.

– March

Having returned to Rome, Fr Chávez devoted the first days of March receiving visits from members of the Council, of the community, some Provincials, Salesian Bishops and missionaries.

On 5 March in the community he presided at the celebration of Ash Wednesday and on Saturday 8 at the funeral of Fr Raimondo Cau, a

Salesian missionary in Australia who had died in Rome.

On Sunday 9 March, the Rector Major took part in some of the events organised by the community of "Borgo Ragazzi Don Bosco" in Rome, one of the most significant works on behalf of youngsters in the Roman suburbs, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of its foundation. A number of the civil authorities also took part.

During the following days while he continued his work at home, receiving a number of confreres, the Rector Major took part in several important meetings. On Wednesday 12 March he celebrated Mass for the SDB, FMA and lay people working in the area of the middle schools in Italy. The following day he met a group of Brothers from the Generalate. On Saturday 15 March it was the turn of the Regional Delegates for Formation who had come for a week's work together.

Between 16 and 22 the Rector Major preached a Retreat at Fatima, for the Rectors and Sister Superiors of the Southern Italian Provinces. Then between 23 and 25 March he visited the Portuguese Province, and went to some of the houses in Porto, Mogofores, Manique, Estoril and Lisbon, meeting most of the confreres and

groups of the Salesian Family. During the visit there were a number of different meetings: with the youngsters in some of the salesian schools and in the Salesian Youth Movement, with more than 200 teachers and staff and lay collaborators in several salesian houses, with the Rectors and members of the Provincial Council, and with the Cardinal Patriarch of Lisbon, José Policarpo. The visit concluded with a meeting in Salesian College of *Officinas de S. José*.

On Wednesday 26, on his way back to Rome the Rector Major stopped off briefly in the Madrid Province where he had been invited to receive a Gold Medal which the Guadalajara local council had decided to give to the Salesians as a mark of recognition for their 50 years educational work and their influence on the development of the city. Before the event there was a Mass for the Salesian Family.

Back in Rome, the Rector Major received a visit from Cardinal Ignacio Velasco, Archbishop Caracas, who called to see him.

On Friday 28, after some private meetings, Fr Chávez preached a quarterly day of recollection for the formation community at Gerini, where he presided at Mass and had lunch with them. That evening at the Pisana he gave a Good Night to

a group of FMA, who were staying at the Salesianum for a meeting of Superiors and others who were making a retreat.

The following day he had a very full programme of meetings, and in the afternoon he met with the Regional for Italy and the Middle East; Fr Adriano Bregolin, and the Provincials of Verona, Fr Giannantonio Bonato, and Venice, Fr Claudio Filippin.

On the morning of Sunday 30 March, the Rector Major presided at Mass for those attending a meeting of the Mission Office Directors, arranged by the Councillor for the Missions.

– April

On 3 April, accompanied by the Regional for Italy and the Middle East, the Roman Provincial and his personal secretary the Rector Major travelled to the Holy Land to take part in the celebrations for the centenary of the Middle East Province. He visited the communities of Nazareth, Beitgema, Cremisan and Bethlehem and went in pilgrimage to the Basilica of the Annunciation, to the Holy Sepulchre and to the Basilica of the Nativity. In various places he met confreres, youngsters, representatives of the educative and pastoral communities, members of the Salesian

Family and religious and civil authorities who expressed their appreciation for the presence of the Salesians which they consider to be positive and significant. The main event took place in Bethlehem on Sunday 6 April with a Solemn Mass and the commemoration of the centenary in the School Hall.

On his return to Rome, Fr Chávez presided at the *Intermediate Meeting of the General Council* in which the Vicar of the Rector Major and the Departmental Councillors took part and which lasted until Wednesday 16 April, with sessions in the morning and evening.

On Friday 11 he went to the infirmary at the UPS to see Fr Pier Giorgio Marcuzzi who was at the point of death, and he returned the next day to pray for him and offer condolences to the Superior of the Vice Province and to the Rector of the University.

On 13 April the Rector Major presided at the Palm Sunday ceremonies which were also attended by confreres from the UPS who were making a retreat at the Salesianum, and the faithful who come to our Church for the Sunday liturgy.

On Wednesday 16 Fr Chávez went to the Generalate of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians to greet Mother Antonia

Colombo. The next day, in the morning he gave a concluding homily to the group of confreres from the UPS who were finishing their Retreat, and in the evening he presided at the Evening Liturgy for Holy Thursday.

On Good Friday in the morning he had a meeting with the General Coordinator of the Cooperators, the National Coordinator of the Cooperators in Spain, the Member of the World Council for the West European Region, and the Central Delegate. In the evening after celebrating the Lord's Passion, he had a meeting in the Salesianum with those taking part in a Seminar of the IUS.

On Saturday 19 April, in the evening, the Rector Major presided at the Easter Vigil.

On Easter Sunday evening he again met those taking part in the IUS Seminar as it came to a conclusion.

On Tuesday 22, in the afternoon, Fr Pascual Chávez went to the Offices of the USG to take part in a meeting of the Theological Commission, to which he belongs. When this finished he went to visit the salesian community in the Vatican.

During the last weekend in April, the Rector Major went to the Great Britain Province where he visited some communities and in particu-

lar attended two large meetings with the Salesian Family, one in Bolton and another in Chertsey, in which he spoke about what it means to be a consecrated Salesian today starting from his own vocation and experience in vocational ministry, and what it means to be the Salesian Family today.

On Tuesday 29 and Wednesday 30 April the Rector Major visited in turn the houses in Treviglio and Chiari, in the Lombard-Emilian Province. With a very full schedule, at Treviglio he met the confreres, and discussed with them the questions that arise from a reflection on the theme of the Strenna for 2003, the youngsters of the middle and senior school, civil authorities and benefactors and celebrated Mass in the Sanctuary of The Weeping Madonna, where the first Salesians who arrived at Treviglio on 14 October 1882, were welcomed. At Chiari, the Rector Major celebrated Mass and then in the Sports Hall met the students of the Sixth Form College where he answered the questions they put to him about their concerns. Also present were the students from the senior section of the Don Bosco Technical Institute in Brescia. Next to the Rector Major at the table were the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Education, and representatives of

local government and of the Province. The new premises of the High School and of the Oratory-Youth Centre were inaugurated. In the afternoon the Rector Major made a quick visit to the "Auxilium", a centre which welcomes and caters for individuals and families in need. After supper with the SDB community, the FMA and their Novices, there was a performance by the *Piccola Accademia di San Bernardino*, who presented the musical "*Il Giardino del Gigante*".

– May

Throughout the month of May, on those days when he was at home, the Rector Major saw missionaries, confreres and cooperators from various parts of the world including a group from the Czech Republic, those in charge of youth work in Havirov, and some Bishops who came to call on him including Mgr. Vincenzo Savio. In the course of the month there were also some Council meetings for administrative and ordinary business matters.

Between 2 and 4 May Fr Chávez made a visit to the Sicilian Province in the course of which he met some youngsters in the "Nazareth" community a drug rehabilitation centre and then at Zafferana Etnea saw most of the confreres working in the eastern part

of the island. At Caltanissetta he celebrated 50 years of the presence of the Salesians. Here he met a group of Salesians from the communities in the centre of Sicily. At Palermo the Rector Major met the Salesian Family from the whole island. It was very impressive from the point of view of the number of branches of the Salesian Family and the number of members from each group and for the well-developed educational and pastoral commitment. The visit ended with a celebration in the courtyard of the St Clare Oratory, a work that has been in the news on account of the social commitment of the confreres. It is encouraging to see how the work of the Salesians and of the Salesian Family can provide a breath of much needed fresh air in a difficult situation.

Between 8 and 13 May the Rector Major visited the Bilbao Province on the occasion of the celebrations for 75 years presence in Pamplona. During these days Fr Chávez managed to visit many of the communities in the province and to meet youngsters, the Salesian Family, religious and civil authorities: Bilbao-Deusto, Santander, the parishes of El Carmen and San Martín, Pamplona, Logroño, Burgos, Vitoria, Urnieta, Azkoitia, Barakaldo.

The most significant events were the meeting with the youngsters of the Salesian Youth Movement of the province, and that with the Salesian Family, the celebration of the Provincial Community Day in which various jubilees of the confreres' salesian life and priesthood were commemorated, the visit to the house and to the tomb of Fr Carreño at Alzuza, Mass with the postnovitiate community, the audience with the Prime Minister of Navarre, who had awarded a Gold Medal to the Salesians in recognition of what they had done for the city and the region through their technical training and also with the Mayor of the capital of Navarre, and finally a guided tour of the house-museum of St Ignatius Loyola.

In the middle of May the Rector Major visited the Province of Munich in Germany (GEM), where he had the opportunity to get to know the Don Bosco Publications project which is working in collaboration with other Provinces in the Region, and then to admire the work at Waldwinkel, where, in collaboration with the State, confreres are running a technical training centre for workers with various disabilities. At Benediktbeuern, in his role as Grand Chancellor, Fr Pascual Chávez chaired a meeting of the

Curatorium, and emphasised the importance of the Faculty for the North European Region, and at the same time invited them to make youth ministry a distinguishing feature of this philosophical, theological and educational centre. Visiting the whole site, the Rector Major was impressed by the excellent condition of the premises and by the variety of the courses available and their imaginative presentation. On 18 there was a gathering of the Salesian Family with a large representation of all the braches and of all the houses in the Province. The day included Mass, lunch, a meeting with the members of the Provincial Council, with those responsible for the Salesian Family and an excellent concert.

On 23 May the Rector Major took part in the celebrations for the threefold jubilee of Fr Karl Oerder, which was the occasion to express gratitude for all his work but also to introduce his successor and at the same time to make the missionary activities of the Congregation better known. Fr Chávez took the opportunity of this visit to the Cologne Province (GEK) to meet some of the Rectors of the province.

The following day, the feast of Mary Help of Christians the Rector Major was at Turin-Valdocco, where, in the rooms of Don Bosco he inau-

gured the new website of the Congregation, an event to which he gave great significance and importance. In the afternoon he presided at the Concelebrated Mass in the Basilica, he called on the FMA, who had gathered together in their Mother House. Later, the Rector Major took part in the solemn procession, led by the Cardinal Archbishop of Turin, Mgr. Severino Paletto, together with his auxiliary Bishops.

On 26 May, the Rector Major, accompanied by Fr Adriano Bregholin, made a short visit to the Verona Province. First he went to see the sick confreres in the "*Casa Perez*" at Negrar, then met the youngsters at the "San Zeno" Institute and had lunch with the confreres; in the afternoon he went to the "Don Bosco" Institute where after seeing the youngsters in the school, he held a meeting with many of the confreres of the Province, who had gathered for the Provincial Feast. The day concluded with Mass at which the religious and priestly jubilees of the confreres were commemorated, and with a festive supper.

Between 28 and 31 the Rector Major took part in the six-monthly meeting of the Union of Superiors General. Over the weekend he went to the Adriatic Province to the houses of Aquila and Vasto.

4.2 Chronicle of the General Councillors

The Vicar of the Rector Major

On 11 and 12 January Fr Van Looy was in Munich in Bavaria (GEM) for a meeting with members of the Salesian Family. On 17 and 18 he was in Spain at Seville for various meetings including one with former Salesians from the Province. On 23 January with the members of the Generalate community he commemorated Fr Vecchi on the first anniversary of his death. On 25 he celebrated the feast of Don Bosco in the Don Bosco parish in Rome. He spent the whole of 26 with the community and parish in Latina for the 70th anniversary of the parish and of the town. On the evening of 29 he gave a commentary on the Rector Major's Strenna in the Don Bosco parish in Rome. This year Fr Van Looy celebrated the feast of Don Bosco in Malta and then in Pordenone with the past-pupils from there.

He spent the first week of February at Monteortone (Padua) in the salesian community. On 9 and 10 February he visited the missionary community in Germany at Mainz. On 20 February he took part at the

UPS in the presentation of two new books by Fr Pietro Braido. On 23 he was in Arborea in Sardinia, for a study day on the formation of the laity with representatives of the Salesian Family.

On Sunday 2 March he led the monthly day of recollection for the Polyglot community in the Vatican and on 3 March he was present at the presentation of a book on the Salesian missionary Tone Bresciani on Vatican Radio.

Between 4 and 21 March he was in India, successively in the Provinces of Bombay, Bangalore, Guwahati and Calcutta. The main reason for his visit was to listen to the confreres regarding any possible reorganisation of the Provinces. On 23 March he presided at the celebrations for the first anniversary of the beatification of Brother Artemides Zatti in his birthplace at Boretto.

Between 25 and 29 March he carried out the *Extraordinary Six Yearly Visitation* of San Callisto community in Rome and on 30 was present for the annual Assembly of the Italian Salesian Cooperators held in via Marsala, Rome.

On Monday 31 May he led an educational study day for the Educative and Pastoral Community of Metanopoli (Milan), a work of the FMA.

Between 7 and 16 April he took part in the intermediate session of the General Council held in the Generalate. On 22 April he led a morning reflection at Porto near Fiumicino, for the Congregation of the Daughters of Mary Immaculate.

Between 25 April and 2 May, at the Pisana, he led the Retreat for the FMA from the two Provinces in Sicily. On 26 in the Generalate of the FMA he said Mass for the feast of Mother Antonia Colombo.

On Saturday 3 May he visited the postnovitiate at Nave (Brescia) to meet the postnovices and the Salesian Family and on Sunday 4 May he presided at the celebration of the young people of the PGS and the SYM at Turin. Between the evening of 4 May and the morning of 7 May he carried out the *Extraordinary Six Yearly Visitation* of the Polyglot community in the Vatican. Between 14 and 21 May he led the Retreat for the two Roman Provinces of the FMA at Loreto. On 17 he went to Turin for the centenary of the coronation of Mary Help of Christians, and after returning to Rome on the afternoon of 21 he took part in a meeting of the Brothers in the Roman Province. He celebrated the feast of Mary Help of Christians with the community of the Generalate.

On 29 and 30 May he took part in the six monthly meeting of the Union of Superiors General at the Pisana, and between 30 May and 1st June he presided at a meeting of the World Council of the Salesian Family, on the subjects of the common mission, vocations and Spirituality Days.

The Councillor for Formation

During the first part of 2003 the Councillor for Formation, accompanied by his collaborator Fr Chrys Saldanha continued his visits to the Regions and the formation communities. Between 17 January and 8 February he was in the *South Asia Region*, where in Hyderabad he presided at a meeting of the Provincial Formation Delegates and formation staff, and afterwards at Guwahati had a meeting with the Regional, the Provincials and Delegates of the Region. He then visited the formation communities of the *Provinces of Hyderabad, Chennai, Tiruchy and Bangalore*: he met the novices in Manoharabad, Yellagiri and Padivayal; the postnovices in Karunapuram, Yercaud, Aluva; the students of theology, the teachers and formation staff in Bangalore, Poonamallee and Tiruchirapalli;

the confreres from the National Ongoing Formation Centre, and the confreres preparing for perpetual profession. He also visited the communities of the Provincial houses of these Provinces and that of Mumbai and New Delhi and the communities in Mampetta, Kochi - Vennala, Bangalore - Lourdunagara, Siga of Chennai, Salem, Yellagiri Hills. Finally he visited the Novitiate at Sunnyside and the Theologate in Shillong.

Between 12 and 20 February he visited the formation communities of the *Central African Province*: the novitiate and postnovitiate at Kansebula and the studentate of theology at Lubumbashi, also taking part in the "Curatorium". He then met with the Provincial Formation Commission and visited the confreres in the communities of Lubumbashi: Imara, Salama, the Mission Office and Catechetical Centre, Tabacongo, Bakanja and Magone. On 20 February he went to visit the novices in Johannesburg. After that between 21 and 25 February he went to the *Vice Province of Madagascar*. Here he inaugurated the new novitiate at Ambuidatrimo; he visited the postnovices, the students of theology and the diocesan seminary at Fianarantsoa; he went to the aspirantate at Betafo; he met with the

Provincial Formation Commission and the confreres in the Provincial house and the Radio "Don Bosco".

Between 2 and 4 March he made a visit to the formation community and the "*San Tommaso*" Study Centre in Messina. On 14 March he met the Provincials of the *Iberian and Lisbon Conference*, to consider the formation communities. Between 16 and 20 March at the Generalate he organised a meeting of the *Regional Formation Coordinators* of the Congregation, at which thirteen confreres took part. On this occasion there was further consideration of the project of the department for the six year period; the role and responsibilities of the regional coordinator were mapped out, and some steps to be taken until February 2005 indicated.

Between 21 March and 2 April the Councillor was in *Argentina*, where, at Cordoba he met the Provincials, the Provincial Formation Delegates and the formation staff from the *CISUR Conference* and with them he examined ways to implement the "Ratio". He visited the formation communities and met the Provincial Formation Commissions of the Provinces of Córdoba, Rosario, La Plata and Buenos Aires. In particular, in the *Córdoba Province* he met the communities of the aspirants, pren-

ovices, postnovices, of specific formation for the Salesian brothers and for Salesian priests in Córdoba and the novices in Alta Gracia; he visited the salesian Training College, the diocesan Seminary and the Institute of Religious Studies in Córdoba. In the *Province of Rosario* he went to the aspirantate, prenovitiate and postnovitiate at Funes; he met the community of the theology students at Fontana and the President of the Seminary at Resistencia. In the *Province of La Plata* he met the young men and the formation staff of the prenovitiate and postnovitiate at Avellaneda and the community of students of theology at Devoto. In the *Province of Buenos Aires* he met those doing their practical training the prenovices at La Boca, the formation staff and teachers at the Study Centre for Philosophy, Theology and Media Studies at Buenos Aires. He also had the chance to see the confreres in the Provincial houses and some of the other communities in these Provinces.

During the intermediate session of the General Council between 7 and 16 April he prepared and presented the topics: "*The promotion of the vocation of the Salesian brother*" and "*Vocational frailty*". Between 27 April and 12 May he

carried out the *Extraordinary Visitations of the International Communities "Gerini" and "Testaccio"* in Rome. On 9 May, with the General Councillor for Youth Ministry, at *Genzano* he had a meeting with the Provincials of the Italy and Middle East Region and Provincial Delegates for Formation and for Youth Ministry on the subjects "*The figure of the Salesian educator and Pastor*" and "*Educational and pastoral formation in initial formation.*"

Between 14 May and 1° June he made a *third visit to the Africa Madagascar Region* meeting the Provincial Formation Commission and the formation communities. In particular, in *Angola* he visited the prenovitiate at Dondo, the aspirantate and postnovitiate at Palanca, the site of the new aspirantate, the St Paul's parish in Luanda. In *Mozambique* he met the communities of the aspirantate and prenovitiate at Matola, the novitiate at Namaacha, the San José Mission in Maputo. In *Rwanda* he visited the communities of Kikali and Gatenga and Kimihurura, the prenovitiate and the novitiate at Katenga, the postnovitiate at Kabgayi and the Seminary, the community in Butare. In the *West Africa Delegation* he met the aspirants, the prenovices and the novices in Ondo and

the postnovices in Ibadan; he also went to the new site of the postnovitiate where building is in progress. In the *Africa French-speaking Vice Province* he visited the postnovitiate at Lomé, where he also took part in the "Curatorium"; he met the novices in Gbodjome and went to the "Maria Auxiladora" parish in Lomé, where there are some prenovices. Finally he visited the *Province of Equatorial Tropical Africa*, in particular the community of the students of theology at Yaoundé and the "Saint Cyprienne" Study Centre and the community of Yaoundé-Mimboman, where there are some prenovices.

The Councillor for Youth Ministry

When the winter plenary session of the General Council finished, the Councillor took part in a meeting of young SYM leaders from the Seville (Spain) Province which were celebrating the 25th anniversary of the "*Cristo Vive*" movement. On 14 January he was at Colle Don Bosco with those in charge of the youth pilgrimages to the salesian places of the European Provinces to exchange ideas and encourage coordination among them and with the organising teams from Colle and Valdocco.

Between 2 and 8 February the Councillor was in Turin again to lead a Retreat for parish priests and Oratory directors from the ICP Circumscription.

Between 21 and 23 February in Barcelona (Spain) he took part in a European meeting about Salesians involved with immigrants. From there he went to Cracow (Poland) and between 24 and 28 February there was a meeting of Provincial Delegates for Youth Ministry from the four Polish Provinces and those responsible for the National Centre.

At the beginning of March, between 7 and 9, he took part at the Pisansa in the first meeting in preparation for *Confronto Europeo 2004*. Between 12 and 14 March in Lisbon the Councillor took part in a meeting of Provincials and Delegates from the West Europe Region, in which they studied some plans for collaboration in pastoral work in the region and with the other Provinces of Europe.

On 26 March he took part in an international congress looking into "The Youth Scene in Europe" which took place in Sampierdarena - Genoa in which he presented the topic "*Young people today*." From there he went to Turin where from 28 to 30 March he took part in a meeting of the European

Committee on Salesian Schools and Technical Institutes. On returning to Rome on 3 April he took part in a meeting commemorating the 25th anniversary of CNOS/FAP.

Between 6 and 20 April there was an International Seminar in Turin and then Rome for tutors in the *IUS Virtual Course*, to improve their knowledge and experience of Don Bosco's Preventive System in the places where he lived and worked.

At the same time the Councillor took part in the meetings of the intermediate session of the General Council between 7 and 16 April. On 25 April he attended an Italian meeting of CGS, presenting the topic "*The Community Hall a choice for the Congregation and for Youth Ministry*".

On 26 April he left for Africa, where between 27 and 30 at Yaoundé (Cameroun) he took part in the first meeting of Provincial Delegates for Youth Ministry from the Provinces of Africa, and between 1 and 4 May in the meeting of the Rectors AFO at Lomé (Togo).

On 9 May with the Councillor for Formation he met with the Provincials, the Provincial Delegates for Formation and for Youth Ministry from Italy took examine together the question of pastoral formation in initial formation.

Finally, between 26 and 31 May there was a meeting at the Pisana of the World Consulting Body for Youth Ministry, at which those in charge of National Centres and the coordinators of interprovincial teams and delegates took part, in order to develop the Model of Salesian Pastoral work and the Project of animation and government of the Department, exchanging information about the situation of Salesian Youth Ministry in different areas, and offering suggestions and practical proposals for pastoral animation in the different regions.

The Councillor for Social Communication

At the beginning of January 2003 the Councillor set in motion with the communication firm *Litos* of Rome, the project for the drawing up of the first draft of the design for a new Logo for the Headquarters, on the basis of suggestions from an enquiry carried out in the Congregation and discussed with the General Council. The refining process continued until June with some work done within the Council, some further enquiries in Provinces of Brazil and Germany and a continual series of new designs.

Also at the beginning of January the evaluation programme of the *Fusagasugá Project* continued, for the media businesses: book publishers, radio and television in Latin America. The process will continue until the plenary session of the Council in June when the results of the evaluation will be presented, with guidelines for the businesses involved and indications of a general policy of the Congregation in this area. As part of the process the Councillor with the Economist General met the Provincials, Economists the those responsible Salesians and lay people for the EDEBE' publishing houses of Argentina (ALP, ABB, URU), Chile and Mexico (MEG and MEM), between 16 and 23 March, and those of Barcelona (Spain) on 3 April.

On 18 January the Councillor took part in a day of recollection with the "St Dominic Savio" community at the UPS.

On 23 and 24 January in Rome he took part in a meeting organised by the Union of Superiors General, in Rome, on the publishing houses of Religious Congregations.

From the end of January until 15 February, Fr Tarcisio Scaramussa visited some of the Provinces in Brazil (Belo Horizonte, Campo Grande and São Paulo). With different programmes in different

Provinces he had the opportunity to take part in the first profession of the novices, to meet members of the Provincial Councils, Rectors and formation communities, and to explain the project for the six year period, with particular reference to the programme for social communication. He met the delegates for social communication from these provinces and visited some works for social communication in different cities. With the Provincial of São Paulo, President of the Provincials' Conference of Brazil, and with the Executive Secretary of the CISBRASIL, he also had a meeting with the Director of the ANDI (National Agency for the Rights of Children and Teenagers) Agency, to consider possible projects for collaboration.

On 25 April he took part in the Feast of the Salesian Family for the Adriatic Province at Loreto.

On 25 and 26 April, he then took part in Rome in the National Congress on "*Community Halls*", which had the intention of relaunching the positive constructive role of salesian communities in this area of social communications.

A very significant event in these days was a meeting of the SDB and the FMA Departments for Social Communications at the Pisana, in which it was possible to share in-

formation, programmes and experiences, and suggest some common courses of action and projects to be followed.

Another important event was the first part of the re-structuring of the website of the Headquarters, after several months of intensive work by the personnel in the SC Department, and other departments and offices in the Generalate and of translators. The new site was inaugurated by the Rector Major on 24 May, in Turin, in which the Councillor and other Salesians from the department took part.

The Councillor for the Missions

Between 12 and 16 January 2003 Fr Francis Alencherry went to visit the new salesian foundation in Kuwait. On this occasion, he met all the personnel involved and the collaborators who are helping with this new work. There is a school for immigrants and for Arabs. Among the immigrants a good number are Catholics. The Councillor was pleased with the progress made in the school since it was begun in April 2002 until his present visit.

Later in January Fr Alencherry visited three Mission Offices. On 20-21 he was in Sherbrook, Cana-

da. From there he went to New Rochelle, USA, where he stayed from 21 until 24. Between 25 and 27, he visited DMOS-COMIDE, Brussels. These were his first visits and they gave him the opportunity to get to know the people and the various programmes and the way each Office operates.

Between 28 January and 2 February Fr Alencherry visited the Province of Hungary, celebrating the feast of St John Bosco in a number of different places. He took the opportunity to see a number of salesian houses: at Obuda, Kazincbarcika, Balassagyarmat, Nvergesujfalu, Péliföldszentkereszt. Through these celebrations and meetings of different kinds he was able to understand better the situation of the Salesians in Hungary, who at present on account of the shortage of personnel have great difficulties.

On 8 February Fr Alencherry was at the "Sacred Heart", in Rome for a meeting of Provincial delegates for Missionary Animation (DIAM). All the delegates from the Italian provinces were present as well as Fr Ferdinando Colombo, the National Delegate. It was the second meeting of this kind at national level attended by the Councillor, following that held in Spain last November.

During the weekend of 15-16 February, Fr Alencherry presided at a Missionary Day organised by the Adriatic Province (IAD) at Loreto. There were about 100 young people between 18 and 30 years of age taking part from the various houses of the Province. A number of them are preparing to undertake voluntary service.

On 22 February, Fr Alencherry arrived in Yangon, Myanmar, for a week's visit to the salesian foundations in Myanmar. He had the opportunity to visit all the houses except those of Kunlong-Wa States and Namtu, since he had not received permission from the government to visit these places. At Myitkyinah a new salesian centre is in preparation with a technical school; for the present lay people attached to the Salesians are running the new school. On 1 March Fr Alencherry flew from Yangon to Kolkata, the Province he originally came from. In this first visit there since being Provincial, although he was only passing through, he took the opportunity to speak about the Salesian Missions in the world to more than 50 confreres in the Provincial house. The next day before leaving for Bangalore, he went to see Sr. Mary George T., FMA Provincial of Kolkata, who was suffering from a serious brain tumour

(she died on 11 April). He was also able to congratulate Sr. Rose Kureekattu, whose appointment as the new Provincial had just been announced.

On 3 and 4 March Fr Alencherry chaired a meeting of all the DIAM of India in the new provincial house in Bangalore. This third national meeting of DIAM was similar to those that had already taken place in Spain and Italy. Together the Delegates drew up a joint plan for missionary animation for all the Provinces.

At the end of the meeting, beginning with "Kristu Jyoti College", Bangalore, until 14 March the Councillor visited different houses and mission stations in the Bangalore Province (INK). In particular, in the formation houses he visited he spoke about the need for missionaries for our missions. One area of special interest was that of the new missions in Deodurga and Yadgir in Karnataka. In this area, quite undeveloped and poor the Province has begun new works as a missionary initiative to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the founding of the Province.

From the Province of Bangalore Fr Alencherry went to that of Hyderabad. Between 15 and 25 March he visited almost all the centres especially the mission centres of the

Province. He visited not only the centres but also several mission stations to have a better idea of the work carried out by our confreres. In the formation houses he visited, as usual he spoke about the missions and the need of personnel for the missions. He was very pleased to see the progress made by evangelisation in different centres and the transformation taking place in many villages on account of it. On 25 March, returning to Rome via Mumbai, he took the opportunity to meet the Provincial and the confreres of INB in the Provincial House.

Back in Rome, together with the confreres in the Department he prepared for the meeting of those in charge of Mission Offices to be held in the Salesianum between 30 March and 1st April. 45 Salesians and 8 lay people from the different Salesian Mission Offices around the world took part in the meeting. Its purpose was to look at the work of the Offices from the perspective of our missionary work and commitment to human development. After the meeting until midday 2 April the International Offices and the NGO linked with the Salesians held their six monthly meeting together with the Councillor.

On the evening of 2 April Fr Alencherry left for Poland for a se-

ries of missionary visits and a meeting of the DIAM of Poland. He visited all the formation houses except the novitiate at Czerwińsk (the novices, however, came to Łódź for a conference). In the formation houses the Councillor always spoke about the same things: the salesian missions today and the need for new missionaries. On 6 April the meeting of the DIAM of Poland took place at the Mission Office in Warsaw with the same purpose as the other meetings of the DIAM.

Between 7 and 16 April Fr Alencherry took part in the intermediate meetings of the General Council. Between 17 and 20 he went to the parish of Lonigo, in the diocese of Vicenza, to help with the Holy Week services.

On 20 April the Councillor was due to leave for Mongolia and from there to go to China, Hong Kong and Taiwan. However, unfortunately on account of the SARS he was unable to leave and had to stay in Rome.

On 25 April Fr Alencherry went to Bari, to the community of the Redeemer to take part in a missionary day organised by the Missionary Youth Movement of the dioceses of Puglia. About 150 young people took part in the event.

On 3 May some representatives from salesian NGO met at the Generalate with the Councillor for the Missions to review the Statutes of the DON BOSCO NETWORK, a new network of NGO that is being formed.

On 11 May Fr Alencherry left for Albania with Fr Franco Gallone, Provincial of IME, with Fr Matteo Di Fiore, Delegate for Albania-Kosovo and Bro. Francesco Gippetto, a member of the future community of Pristina in Kosovo. The visit to the salesian foundation in Albania, Kosovo and Montenegro lasted until 16 May and had the purpose of assessing the progress of the Delegation in order to plan further development for the future. In 10 years the Salesians have worked very hard and the works are very well developed. However, from the point of view of personnel, the foundations are in a weak condition and need strengthening from outside during at least the next five years in order to consolidate the Delegation with Salesians. Returning to Naples, on 17 May, Fr Alencherry held a meeting with those responsible for the assessment of the new work at Pristina and with the Provincial Council to share some impressions about the Albanian Delegation. Then on 17-18 May, he took part in the missionary

Harambee organised by the Southern Province at Potenza: a very well-organised gathering of youngsters and Salesians in which the young people took part with great enthusiasm.

On 22 and 23 May Fr Alencherry was in Bonn. On 22 he held a meeting with some representatives of the NGO to discuss further amendments to the statutes of the *Don Bosco Network*. On 23 he took part in the celebrations organised to thank Fr Karl Oerder, retiring Mission Director after 25 years' service, and to welcome Br. Jean Paul Muller, the new Mission Director. At the same time Fr Oerder was also celebrating the 50th anniversary of his profession and his 75th birthday.

From Bonn Fr Alencherry went to Bratislava on 24 May. On 26 and 27 May he led the quarterly days of recollection at Bratislava and Zilina for the confreres of the Slovak Province (SLK). About 120 confreres from the Province took part in these two days. Fr Alencherry spoke about the missionary nature of the salesian charism and about the missions that need new missionaries, inviting the confreres to volunteer for the missions.

From Bratislava on 28 May Fr Alencherry went to Vienna for a short visit to the Mission Office

and to the NGO *Jugend Eine Welt*. He had the opportunity to meet those responsible for the Missions and the NGO and their collaborators. Although it is only a small NGO, JEW provides significant help to the missions with various projects. He also visited the community at Wien-Stadlau, where he celebrated a parish Mass for the Solemnity of the Ascension and spoke about the missionary vocation, and the community at Unterwaltersdorf, from where over the years about 75 missionaries have left for all parts of the world. Today there is a school here (the only one in the Province) with 550 students.

On 30 May Fr Alencherry returned to Rome.

Economer General

Following the conclusion of the winter plenary session of the General Council, between 15 and 18 January Fr Mazzali in Cairo directed a three-day formation course for the local community economers of the Middle East Province.

He then visited the new school at Fidar and the studentate at El Houssun in Lebanon. Between 22 and 26 January he was in

Cremisan, dealing with some important issues relating to the MOR Province.

On 29 he led a day of retreat for the confreres from Tuscany in the parish of Scandicci and then took part in a triduum of preparation for the feast of Don Bosco in the community of Figline Valdarno.

Between 6 and 19 February Fr Mazzali visited all the salesian works in Haïti, holding a meeting for all the Rectors and Economers of the communities in the Vice Province.

Back in Italy, on 24 February he took part in a meeting of the Board of Administration of the SEI and the following day he chaired a meeting of the Committee of the Board of Administration of the UPS.

Between 1 and 16 March the Economer General visited the two Salesian Provinces of Colombia, Bogotá and Medellín, in both places holding meetings of the local community economers. Between 17 and 22 with Fr Tarcisio Scaramussa he took part in evaluation meetings regarding the publishing houses Edebè, in La Plata (Argentina), Santiago (Chile) and Mexico City (Mexico).

Between 30 and 2 April he took part in the meeting of Salesian Mission Offices.

At the conclusion of the intermediate session of the General Council, between 21 and 26 April, Fr Mazzali gave a retreat to a group of confreres of ATE in the spirituality centre of M'Balmayo, Cameroun. After the retreat he held a meeting for all the local community economers in the Vice Province.

Between 1 and 8 May he visited South Korea, attended a meeting of the Provincial Council, and one of Rectors and visited almost all the communities in the Vice Province.

Between 15 and 22 May at Mornese, he preached a retreat to a group of FMA from the Province of Emilia-Liguria-Tuscany.

Councillor for the Region Africa - Madagascar

The Regional Councillor for Africa - Madagascar, Fr Valentin de Pablo, completed during these months a first visit to the whole region which he began last year. Although a quick visit, it enabled the Councillor to get to know people and works and to have an overall view at the beginning of the six year period. In the different situations he gave special importance to meeting the confreres spontaneously, holding a meeting with the

Provincial Council and visiting the formation houses, taking part in scheduled meetings of the "Curatorium". During this period there was the consultation requested by the Rector Major about whether it would be appropriate or not to set up a new juridical circumscription in the countries belonging to the current Delegation of AFW (Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone and Liberia).

The Regional took part in *Ghana* (01-05 January) in a meeting of the Provincials responsible for the AFW Delegation with the Council of the Delegation and the Rectors. As a result of the meeting the Provincials requested the Rector Major to set in motion the constitution of an independent circumscription in AFW.

Between 25 and 28 January the Regional visited the community of Dekamhare, in *Eritrea*, the single salesian foundation in the country and which as a result of the war between Ethiopia and Eritrea is cut off from the AET Vice-Province. He had the chance to celebrate the feast of Don Bosco with the youngsters in the Technical School and with the aspirants, who are in the same community.

Following the arranged programme between 20 January and 03 February he was in the Province

of *Kenya* to take part in the "Curatorium" of the postnovitiate of Moshi (Tanzania) and of the theologate of Utume (Nairobi). There were five Provincials there (AFM, ANG, AFW, AET, AFE).

After a short visit of support to the confreres in the *Ivory Coast* at a time of political and social instability, the Regional Councillor staying in *Togo*, between 05 and 07 February, went to visit the formation communities of the novitiate and postnovitiate at Lomé, where there are confreres in formation from the two Vice Provinces of AFO and ATE. From there he went to *Benin*, visiting the communities in Cotonou and Porto-Novo, between 08 and 11 February.

Between 13 and 18 February he went to the *Republic of the Congo* visiting the communities of Kinshasa and going on to Lubumbashi to take part in the "Curatorium" of the Studentate of theology. At this meeting the Councillor for Formation Fr Francesco Cereda was present and also the Superiors of the circumscriptions of ANG, AFC, AFO, ATE, MOZ.

From the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Regional went to visit the *Cameroun*, where he stayed between 19 and 23 February. In the capital, Yaoundé, he took part in the "Curatorium" of

the community of the students of theology and a meeting of the two Provincial Councils of AFO and ATE. After this he visited the communities of Ebolowa and Mimbo-man.

From the Cameroun he went to *Equatorial Guinea*, where he stayed from 24 to 28 February visiting the salesian communities of Mikomeseng, Bata and Malabo, on the mainland and on the island. From Guinea, the Regional went to *Madrid* to take part in an evaluation meeting regarding the "Convention" that the Vice Province ATE has with the Province of origin of the circumscription.

From Madrid, on 3 March the Regional went towards Sudan, with a stop in the city of Cairo (*Egypt*), where he took the opportunity to see the salesian houses in the city. He stayed in Sudan until 11, visiting the communities of Karthum and El Obeid, and also seeing the confreres from Wau being unable to travel south. The Regional was able to see on the spot the valuable work the Salesians are doing in the midst of not insignificant difficulties.

Between 11 and 17 March he was in Lisbon (*Portugal*) to take part in the evaluation meeting regarding the "Convention" that the Vice Province AFO has with the

Province of origin of the circumscription.

Afterwards between 18 and 22 March, the Regional moved to *Nigeria*, where he visited the confreres and the communities of Ibadan, Akure and Ondo. From Nigeria he went to visit the communities in *Sierra Leone* and *Liberia* between 23 and 31. In these two countries the Salesian foundations have been sorely tried by wars and political instability that are still being experienced.

During the first two weeks of April, the Regional was in *Angola*. The peaceful situation now prevailing in the country after more than thirty years of civil war allowed the Regional to visit the communities in the interior: Dondo, Kakulo, N'Dalatando, Lwena and Benguela. In the capital, Luanda, he visited the communities and held a meeting of the confreres.

Between 18 and 30 April, the Regional was in *Madagascar*; where he took part in an assembly of the confreres and visited the new house of the novitiate and some of the communities at some distance from the capital, such as Tulear, Ankililoaka and Mahajanga.

Travelling to Rwanda, the Regional stopped off at *Nairobi* where he held a meeting with the Provincial Council of AFE to consider to-

gether the possibility of strengthening the salesian communities in the Sudan.

Between 01 and 10 May the Regional visited for the first time the Delegation of *Rwanda, Burundi, Goma and Uvira*. These are countries and communities that have suffered greatly, but where the Salesians still maintain a generous dedication to the service of the young most in need, and with an increase in vocations and new foundations. Accompanied by the Delegate, the Regional was able to visit all the works and meet the confreres.

During the second half of the month the Regional visited the *Democratic Republic of the Congo* (AFC). On this occasion he directed his attention to those places he had not yet visited, mission centres (Mokambo, Tera, Sakania) and those in the cities (Bakanja-Magone, the "farm" Chem-Chem and Jacaranda, the Polyclinic, Home Zanin, the parishes of Ruashi and Tabakongo). He took part in a meeting of Rectors, a meeting of the Provincial Council and visited the communities of the novitiate and the postnovitiate at Kansebula. On his way out of the country he stopped at Kinshasa, where he made a quick visit to the communities and took part in the closing

of the "Salesian Games" in the technical school at Lukunga.

Between 24 and 28 May he was in Lomé (*Togo*), where he took part in a meeting of the "Curatorium" of the two formation houses, the novitiate and the postnovitiate, belonging to the Vice Provinces of AFO and ATE. This meeting was chaired by the Councillor for Formation Fr Francesco Cereda.

On 29 he returned to Rome for the summer session of the General Council.

Councillor for the Region Latin America - Southern Cone

- Visit to the São Paulo Province

After the winter session of the General Council, the Regional Councillor spent a week in the São Paulo Province. With the Provincial he visited the new aspirants at Piracicaba, and the pre-novices and post-novices at Lorena and the Pius XI Theological Institute at São Paulo. At Campos do Jordão he took part in an updating course for teachers organized by the Provincial Centre. He also had a meeting with the confreres of the works of Campinas and Americana and of the new oratory at Araras. The Province displayed an atmosphere of tranquillity and preparation for

the beginning of the new scholastic year.

From 28 January to 5 February the Councillor visited his family at Itajai, and subsequently at Porto Alegre; from 7 to 16 February he underwent a medical check-up.

– *Extraordinary Visitation of the Córdoba Province*

From 17 February to 17 May the Councillor made the *Extraordinary Visitation* of the Province of Córdoba, Argentina, during which he was able to meet several times with the Provincial Council and twice with all the Rectors, in addition to visiting all the works and speaking personally with all the Salesians, and meeting the educative communities, pupils, members of the Salesian Family, and the various local Bishops.

During this time he was also able to make the consultation for the appointment of the new Provincial as the present holder of the office is nearing the end of his mandate. This involved the holding of three discernment meetings, each of a day's duration, in each of the three regions of the Province: Córdoba, Cuyo and North. In each case there was a time of prayer, then group work to assess what had been done in the past six years, followed by a plenary assembly to report back on

the work of the groups and, after a period of reflection, send in a personal choice of three names for the new Provincial. The day closed with a Eucharistic concelebration. There was a total participation in every meeting, demonstrating a great love for the Province and a mature approach to the evaluation of its realities.

The Visitation concluded with two formation days for the Rectors and Provincial Council animated by the Visitor, and a specific meeting with the Provincial Council for the presentation of some guidelines.

– *Meetings with Provincial Conferences.*

From March 21 to 27 the Regional took part in a meeting of the Provincial Conference of the South (CISUR) at the retreat house of Cabana in the Córdoba Province. The 23rd and 24th were animated by the Councillor for Formation Fr Francis Cereda and his collaborator Fr Chrys Saldanha with all the Provincials and formation guides of the Conference, to reflect on the application of the *Ratio* in each Province and in the CISUR; the desirability of the provinces working in synergy was emphasized. The meeting continued with the formation teams of the Conference

for a deeper study of the "Provincial formation project" with consultants from the Cardinal Silva University of Santiago, Chile.

The meeting of the CISBRASIL Conference took place at Brasilia from 24 to 28 April, in three important phases: a meeting with the Provincials and Rectors of Universities or University courses of Brazil, with the presence of Fr Carlos Garulo, to study the document on the identity and policies of the IUS; a second phase, in which the Provincials and delegates of the CISBRASIL Conference reflected on the specific problems of the Conference, with the evaluation and approval of the programme for the period 2003–2005, and a recognition of the steps needed for the implementation of the pedagogical project for the salesian school network; and finally, the inauguration of the new premises in Brasilia of the Mission Office "*União pela Vida*", which is now the responsibility of the CISBRASIL. The Office, which for the past ten years has operated from Manaus under the direct responsibility of the Manaus Province, will now function from the centre of national government.

– *In the Province of Chile*

From 18 to 22 May the Regional was in the Chilean Province where

he was able to meet all the Salesians of Santiago and present to them the Project of animation and government of the Rector Major and his Council for the six-year period 2002–2008. He also had a meeting with the Rector of the Cardinal Silva University, now officially recognized as autonomous, and with the Provincial Council; he was also able to visit each of the houses of formation: prenovitiate, novitiate, postnovitiate, and students of theology.

On 25 May the Regional returned to the Generalate for the summer session of the Council.

Councillor for the Region Interamerican

After the winter session of the Council, Fr Esteban Ortiz González, went to the United States for a course in English at Berkeley in the Western Province. While there he was able to take part in some of the provincial events as, for example, the celebration for the 75th anniversary of the Salesian High School at Richmond, centred on a concelebrated Eucharist at which Bishop John Cummins of Oakland presided.

On 16 February he went for a visit of animation to the Province of

Guadalajara where he visited the theological studentate of Tlaquepaque, the communities of students of theology of both Mexican Provinces, the novitiate and salesian communities of Guadalajara City; he also had a meeting with the Provincial Council and was able to visit the oratories of the area and greet the confreres working in them, who had gathered at Ciudad Juárez.

On 20 February Fr Ortiz began a visit of animation to the MEM Province, going from México City to Oaxaca to meet the salesian missionaries working in the Mixeopolitana Prefecture. In the morning of the 21st, after visiting the Don Bosco Institute in Mexico City, he had a meeting with the city's communities, including the confreres of the postnovitiate belonging to the MEG Province. In the afternoon, after a visit to the project for street-children, he greeted the members of the University Community who were celebrating the University's silver jubilee; the Apostolic Nuncio presided at the Eucharist in the church of Mary Help of Christians. Finally he had a meeting with the members of the Salesian Family, during which he presented the Strenna of the Rector Major for the present year. On the 22nd he visited the novitiate community of Coacal-

co where he had a meeting with the confreres in initial formation, and later a further meeting with the Provincial Council.

On 23 February, after celebrating the Eucharist with the Provincial and Vice-provincial in the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe, the Councillor left for Guatemala for a visit of animation to the Province of Central America. There he had a meeting with the Provincial Council and then, until 1st March, went on to visit the six countries included in the Province, holding a meeting with the confreres in each capital city and visiting as many local communities as possible. At Guatemala and Costa Rica he was able to meet the Salesians in initial formation, and at Managua paid a visit to Cardinal Miguel Obando Bravo.

On 2 March Fr Ortiz began a visit of animation to Ecuador. At Quito he had a meeting with the Provincial Council, visited the houses of formation and the Regional Centre for Ongoing Formation (CSRFP), and had a meeting with the Salesian Family at Guayaquil.

One of the main points presented by the Councillor in every Province was the Project of Animation and Government of the Rector Major and his Council.

On 9 March he arrived at Lima for the *Extraordinary Visitation* of the Peruvian Province. After examining the material prepared in advance for the visitation, he held a meeting with the Provincial Council and then began the rounds of the individual communities, starting with the new missionary work of San Lorenzo (in the Vicariate of Yurimaguas). Between this date and 22 May he passed through all 22 communities that make up the Province of Peru.

During the Visitation the Councillor saw for himself that an affective and effective communion of the Province with the Rector Major animates the life of the communities and confreres in line with the guidelines of the GC25 and the priorities of the Project of Animation and Government for the current six-year period, and verified the effectiveness of our works from a salesian standpoint. He also had meetings with the Salesian Family, visited the communities of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, and presented the greetings of the Rector Major to the Bishops of the dioceses in which we are working.

The Visitation ended on 26 May with the presentation to the Provincial Council and the assembled Rectors of the final Report of the Visitor.

The following day Fr Ortiz moved to Haïti to animate the consultation for the appointment of a new Superior for the Vice-province. On 30 May he held an assembly at Port au Prince at which 44 Salesians and 7 novices took part.

On 31 May he went on to Santo Domingo to meet the Provincial of the Antilles Province, and on 2 June returned to Rome for the summer session of the Council.

Councillor for the Region East Asia - Oceania

As soon as the winter plenary session of the Council finished, Fr Václav Klement left for his first visit to the two communities of Pakistan at Lahore and Quetta, (which belong to the FIS Province). There, between January 10 and 16, he was able to meet the first Pakistani prenovices and give thanks for the extraordinary development of our work which began only in 1998.

The Regional then accompanied the Rector Major on his Asian journey to the Philippines and Thailand (16-29 January). After the retreat preached by Fr Chávez in Hua Hin (Thailand), Fr Klement presided over the annual meeting of the Provinces of the Region (28-29 January), which considered the

two areas of animation of the Region in accordance with the Rector Major's Project for the present six-year period.

He then continued his journey to the Indonesia Vice-province and East Timor (31 January – 16 February), concentrating on the future of formation and meeting young confreres in the formation communities and their formation guides. On 31 January he was present at the first parish church in Indonesia to be dedicated to St John Bosco. He was also able to visit the first salesian foundation in Indonesia outside Jakarta – the community of the Island of Sumba, begun in October 2002 at the invitation of the local Bishop, Mgr. Cherubim, a past-student of the UPS.

Subsequently Fr Klement represented the Rector Major at the episcopal ordination of Mgr. Patrick Buzon in Cebu (FIS) on 19 February and shared with the confreres the joy at the ordination of a third Filipino Salesian Bishop.

From the Philippines the Regional went on to Papua New Guinea (20-28 February), where he met the confreres of the two formation communities of East Boroko and Vunabosco. In the same period he was able to make a few days' visit to the Solomon Islands to see for the first

time the wonderful development, despite the recent ethnic violence, of our work at Honiara-Tetere (GIA Province).

From Port Moresby the Councillor left for the Province of Australia, where for the next two months (1 March to 1 May) he carried out his first *Extraordinary Visitation* in the Region, meeting all the confreres in Australia, Samoa and the Islands of Fiji.

After the Visitation in Australia Fr Klement spent ten days (1-10 May) in the Province of Vietnam to make the consultation for the new Provincial; the period was also of use in enabling him to get a better knowledge of the reality of our communities, and especially the work of formation and its development.

The last three weeks prior to the summer session of the Council he spent in Croatia, where he made the Extraordinary Visitation (12 May - 2 June).

Finally the Councillor returned to Rome on 3 June.

Councillor for the Region South Asia

When the Council's winter session came to an end, Fr Joaquim D'Souza made a brief visit of ani-

mation and guidance to the post-novitiate of Nashik before going on to Dimapur by way of Guwahati, where he animated the confreres in a monthly retreat. On his arrival at Dimapur he received the perpetual profession of a young salesian seminarian on the feast of Don Bosco.

The following day, 1 February, he began the *Extraordinary Visitation* of the Dimapur Province (IND). He had a meeting with the Provincial Council and a further meeting with the Rectors and Parish Priests. From 3 to 6 February he presided over a session of the Indian Provincial Conference at Guwahati, at which were present on the last two days also Fr Francis Cereda and Fr Chrys Saldanha.

The Visitation went on for three months and twenty days, following the programme previously agreed with the Provincial. During this time the Regional was able to meet with all the confreres present in the Province and visit all the 38 houses and foundations in the four States of Assam, East and West Arunachal, Nagaland and Manipur. He also had three meetings with the Provincial Council, two meetings with the Rectors and Parish Priests, and others with the leaders of the provincial commissions of animation and representatives of the Salesian Family. He also had

meetings with the confreres in State groups, and made courtesy visits to the two salesian bishops in whose dioceses the Province is working: Mgr Robert Kerketta of Tezpur and Mgr Joseph Aind of Dibrugarh, and also to the Major Superiors of the Religious Congregations of women working with us in the missions, among them a Mother General (MSMHC) and various Mother Provincials.

The Visitation ended on 20 May, after which Fr D'Souza spent a few days of rest with his family before returning to Rome on May 29.

Councillor for the Region North Europe

At the end of the winter session of the General Council, Fr Albert Van Hecke spent some days with his family until 17 January. On 18 January he went to see the Provincial of North Germany and the community of Trier. On 19 January he attended the solemn installation of Mgr. Alois Kothgasser, SDB, as Archbishop of Salzburg in Austria. On his way back to Rome 20 January, he visited the confreres in the community of Fulpmes in Austria.

The next day, 21 January he left for Kraków (Poland) for a course in Polish until 13 February. During

this time he had the opportunity to visit the following communities: Oswiecim, Skawa, Witow, Wisla, Szczyrk, Swietochlowice, Zabrze, Kraków-Nowa Huta and the student confreres in Kraków and Łódź (in the Warsaw Province.)

After his language course, the Regional went at once to Wrocław to begin the *Extraordinary Visitation* of the Province which continued until 14 April.

During this period he was able to listen to the joys and pains of the confreres, admire the new educational and pastoral proposals, especially with regard to the schools and on behalf of youngsters "with problems", and the impressive arrangements for vocation ministry.

On 12 and 13 April he chaired the meeting of the Polish Provincial Conference at Wrocław. The following items were dealt with: the organisation of the Past Pupils in Poland; the statutes of salesian schools in Poland; the evaluation of the National Youth Centre at Kraków; the situation of the Circumscription EST (with information provided by the Provincial, Fr Henryk Boguszewski); also considered were the Provincial Organic Plans, the community projects, economic solidarity, the translation of ANS-Mag, the Polish Salesian Bul-

letin; the definitive Polish language version of the "Ratio".

Between 15 and 21 April the Regional was back in Rome.

On 22 April he left for a Visit to the Circumscription EST, as envisaged in the General Project, which continued until 24 May. During this period he had the opportunity to visit: - between 22 and 27 April the confreres in the Ukraine at Lviv, Bibrka and Peremyshlany, Odessa and Korostyshiv and the aspirants at Obroshyno. At Lviv he was able to see how well the new Technical Training Centre was functioning, recently officially recognised by the Ukraine government. On 28 April he flew from Kiev to Moscow, leaving the same day for Siberia, where he stayed until 3 May. In Siberia he visited the two communities at Jakutsk and Aldan and admired the courage and dedication of the confreres in these far off lands.

Returning to Moscow on 3 May he visited the aspirants at Oktiabrskij, then the house for "street boys", before taking the night train to St Petersburg. Here he met the formation staff and the clerics in the postnovitiate and theologate. He then went to Gatchina to see the delicate and complex situation in which our courageous confreres find themselves there.

On 6 May he returned to Rome to prepare for the annual meeting of the Provincials of the North Europe Region, scheduled for 09 until 12 May. This time the Provincials were the guests of the Provincial of Great Britain at Womersley (Guildford), near to London. The purpose of the meeting was: to consider the progress made since the GC25, regarding interprovincial collaboration, and to exchange ideas and information about significant activities in the provinces in the last twelve months. In addition to enjoying the time spent together, the Provincials were able to enjoy the great hospitality of the communities in Chertsey and Farnborough and the great cultural tradition of this country by attending a musical, visiting Windsor Castle and assisting at Vespers in the Royal Chapel there, and taking a walk through central London.

Having returned to Rome on 12 May, the Regional left again on 14 May to continue his Visit to the Circumscription EST. He went to Lithuania, where he visited the communities in Vilnius and Kaunas, between 14 and 16 May. He met courageous confreres who are trying to make our charism grow in Lithuania.

From Lithuania on 17 May he left for Byelorussia, where he visit-

ed the confreres working in Baruny, Zurany, Novojelnia, Dziatlowo, Niestaniski, Varniany and in the large parishes of Smorhon and Minsk. At Minsk he was able to admire the great development that has taken place in six years. During the Visit he was able to speak to all the confreres individually, present the priorities for the six year period and leave behind some suggestions.

At Minsk on 21 and 22 May there was a meeting of the Provincial Council of the Circumscription. Important issues for future development were dealt with: an evaluation of initial formation, the Provincial working Plan and the economic situation. Finally the Councillor left behind some suggestions.

On 23 and 24 May the Regional returned to Rome, via Vilnius, to prepare for the summer session of the General Council.

Councillor for the Region West Europe

When the winter session of the General Council was over, on 10 January, Fr Filiberto Rodríguez at once left for Paris to take part in the annual meeting of the French-speaking (France and Belgium)

Provincial Councils of the FMA and SDB. After a short stop in Madrid, on 13 January he was in Lisbon to begin the *Extraordinary Visitation of the Portuguese Province*; the Visit would continue until 9 March, interrupted by a quick visit to Madrid for a meeting in Archbishop's House in an attempt to finally clarify the possibility or not of having a Centre for Youth Ministry within the structure of the Centre of Higher Theological Studies at Madrid-Carabanchel; in addition, for two days Fr Filiberto accompanied the Portuguese Provincial after the sudden unexpected death of his brother a Salesian Rector of the "Oficinas de São José" at Lisbon. The rest of the Visitation proceeded as normal according to the established programme.

Between 11 and 13 March the Regional took part in the annual meeting of the West Europe Region which rightly took place in Lisbon. It is a matter of building a sense of the Region starting from collaboration in different areas of the mission: formation and formation together with the laity; marginalisation and the problems of the new kinds of poverty: evangelisation and education in the faith in terms of vocations; the salesian youth movement and volunteer move-

ment. Fr A. Domènech, Councillor for Youth Ministry was there and made a valuable contribution. The members of the Iberian Conference then remained in session on 14 and 15 March. They examined the progress of the CCS Publishing House and the Salesian Missions House in Madrid in its various departments.; the Convention between the Vice Province AFO and the Provinces of Spain and Mexico was renewed, and a series of reflections begun on the situation of initial formation within the Iberian Conference attempting to resolve through interprovincial collaboration the many problems emerging from the drastic fall in the number of vocations in the Region. The presence of Fr F. Cereda, Councillor for formation was of considerable assistance in this matter.

Between 16 and 22 March Fr Filiberto took part in the Retreat preached and directed by the Rector Major at Fatima for all the Rectors and the Superiors of the Southern Italian Provinces (FMA, SDB). Between 23 and 26 he accompanied the Rector Major on a short visit to the Portuguese Province.

After touching down in Madrid, on the same day 26 March the Regional arrived in *Bilbao* to begin the *Extraordinary Visitation* of this Province. Here too the Visitation

followed the usual pattern and timetable. There was a break during the presence of the Rector Major in the Bilbao Province: Fr Filiberto accompanied the Rector Major throughout his programme visiting the various communities.

On 18 May the Regional went to Madrid for a meeting of the Provincials of Spain, who were continuing their examination of ways to collaborate in the field of initial formation.

After the solemn celebration of the feast in honour of Mary Help of Christians at Deusto – Bilbao, Fr Filiberto concluded his Extraordinary Visitation of the Province with two sessions in which he presented his report of the Visitation and the possible priorities for future action that might emerge as the result of the Visitation. On 25 he met the members of the Provincial Council and on 26 presented the report to the Rectors and Provincial Councillors together.

After two days in Madrid and with his family, on 29 May Fr Filiberto was in Burgos for two meetings. The first was the Committee of the Foundation NGO-JTM and the second, once again with the Provincials of Spain to take final decisions regarding collaboration next year in the interprovincial houses of formation.

During the last days of the month of May the Regional was in Galizia: he visited some salesian communities, took part in the annual act of homage by the Salesian Family to Mary Help of Christians at Ourense and attended the wedding of a pastpupil at Santiago de Compostela.

On 2 June he returned to the Pisana to take part in the summer session of the Council which began the following day.

The Councillor for the Region Italy and Middle East

The Regional Councillor for Italy and the Middle East Fr Adriano Bregolin, at the end of the General Council session, between 10 and 12 January took part in a meeting of CISI (Italian Provincials' Conference) at Genzano in the Roman Province.

Afterwards on 14 January he continued with the *Extraordinary Visitation of the South Italy Province (IME)*. He then visited these houses in the Puglia region: Lamezia, Vibo Valentia, Corigliano Calabro, Soverato Institute and parish, Bova Marina, Locri, Taranto Institute, Taranto Don Bosco and Taranto Sacred Heart. During a break in these visits on Sunday

19 January 2003, he attended the enthronement in the diocese of Mazara del Vallo, of the Salesian Bishop Mgr. Calogero La Piana. The following day he was in Venice-Mestre for the joint Provincial Council meeting of the two Venice Provinces East and West.

On the Solemnity of Don Bosco, 31 January he took part in the community feast in Taranto, presiding also at the inauguration of a small monument dedicated to the saint of youth in the district of Don Bosco's parish.

During February the Extraordinary Visitations continued in the houses in the Puglia region: Manduria, Lecce, Corigliano d'Otranto, Cisternino, Brindisi, Bari, Andria and Cerignola. Two special occasions that month were the meeting in Rome of the Rectors and Provincial Council of the Rome Province for the official opening of the *Extraordinary Visitation* of the Rome Province (IRO) on 22 February (feast of the Chair of St Peter), and the inauguration of the second part of the Oratory at Corigliano Calabro on Sunday 23 February.

In March the visits to the IME houses were completed: at Foggia, Napoli (Amicizia), Molfetta, Napoli Provincial Centre, Napoli Don Bosco, Piedimonte Matese.

On 14 March the Regional returned to Rome-Pisana and on 17 he began the Extraordinary Visitation of the houses in the Rome Province: Civitavecchia, Castelfandolfo, Roma-Predestino, Roma-Boemi, Roma-San Lorenzo and Roma-Pio XI. On 25 March he went to Mogliano Veneto for a meeting with the local salesian community.

During April from 3 to 7 he accompanied the Rector Major on a visit to the Middle East Province, which was celebrating its centenary. With the Rector Major he visited the communities of Nazareth, Beit Gemal, Cremisan and Bethlehem. Afterwards, continuing the Extraordinary Visitation of the Rome Province he went to the community of Don Bosco in Rome. During the Easter period he visited the Studentate of Theology at Messina, presiding at the conclusion of the Retreat for Young Salesians and then meeting the confreres from the Southern Province (IME).

On 22 April he had a meeting with the IME Provincial Council at Naples. He then went to visit the community at Cassino. He took part in a meeting of Rectors of the IME Province (24 and 25 at Pacognano and Salerno) for the official conclusion of the Extraordinary Visitation to IME.

On 28 April he took up again the Extraordinary Visitation of the Rome Province, in the communities of Roma-San Tarcisio, Roma CNOS-FAP, Genzano, with an interruption on 8 until 10 May for a meeting of the CISI committee, together with a group of Delegates for Youth Ministry and Formation.

The last houses to be visited were those of Roma-Gerini, Roma-Santa Maria della Speranza, Frascati, Formia, Latina, Roma-Sacro Cuore. Also during this phase there were two breaks when he took part in the Celebration of the Past Pupils of the Manfredini di Este Institute (17 and 18 May) and a trip to Verona when the Regional accompanied the Rector Major

on a visit to the "San Zeno" Province.

On 27 May Fr Adriano Bregolin celebrated the 25th anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood with other Salesians from his Province in the Church of Mary Help of Christians in Trento, before going on to Vigliano Biellese, where he had been invited by the local salesian community.

The conclusion of the Extraordinary Visitation of the Rome Province was on 11 June, with a meeting with all the Rectors and other confreres. On that occasion the Vicar of the Rector Major Fr Luc Van Looy and the Councillor for Formation Fr Francesco Cereda. joined Fr Adriano Bregolin.

5. DOCUMENTS AND NEWS ITEMS

5.1 New Provincial

The following are brief biographical notes on the new Provincial of FIS appointed by the Rector Major with his Council in the course of the plenary session June-July 2003.

**1. SANCHEZ Arthur Junior,
Provincial of SOUTH PHILIPPINES, PHILIPPINES.**

To succeed Fr Patricio Buzon – appointed by the Holy Father Bishop of Kabankalan – as Provincial of the “Mary Help of Christians” Province of *SOUTH PHILIPPINES* has been called *Fr Arthur Junior SANCHEZ*.

Born in Cebu (Philippines) on 23 October 1955, Arthur Junior

Sanchez became a Salesian on 1 April 1976, when he made his first profession at Canlubang, where he had made his novitiate.

Perpetually professed on 20 march 1983, he studied theology at the Theological Study Centre in Parañaque, Manila, where he was ordained a priest on 8 December 1984.

After ordination he held a number of responsible offices in various houses of the Province, including: Parish priest and Rector in Cebu - Pasil (1991-1997), Provincial Councillor from 1995, Rector in Cebu - Talamban (1997-1999), Rector in Cebu - Punta Pincesa, from 1999 until his appointment as Provincial.

5.2 Our dead confreres (2nd list and 2003)

"Faith in the risen Christ sustains our hope and keeps alive our communion with our brothers who rest in Christ's peace. They have spent their lives in the Congregation, and not a few have suffered even to the point of martyrdom for the love of the Lord... Their remembrance is an incentive to continue faithfully in our mission." (*Cost.* 94).

NAME	PLACE	DATE	AGE	PROV.
P AGUAYO ARELLANO Pablo <i>Fu Ispettore per 6 anni</i>	Guadalajara (Messico)	16.06.2003	68	MEG
P ARRA Antonio	São Paulo (Brasile)	30.04.2003	85	BSP
L BARRUECO BARRUECO Felipe	Jérez De La Fronterra (Spagna)	05.05.2003	82	SSE
P BERTOLDI João Borges	Campinas (Brasile)	14.05.2003	85	BSP
P BLANCO José	Buenos Aires	10.03.2003	94	ABA
P BONAVENTURA Bruno	Araçatuba (Brasile)	30.03.2003	75	BCG
P BOSCO Roberto	Roma	02.06.2003	101	IRO
L BOURSIER Yvon	Angers (Francia)	18.05.2003	78	FRA
P BRAINARD Arthur	Oakland, California	14.03.2003	81	SUO
P CALDERÓN Cirilo	Lima (Perù)	25.05.2003	93	PER
L CAON Pio	Castelfranco Veneto	07.06.2003	90	IVE
P CAU Raymond	Roma	06.03.2003	65	AUL
P CAVIGLIA Giovanni	Torino	16.06.2003	65	ICP
P DALY Martin	Cape Town	10.05.2003	84	AFM
P DE FRANCESCO Egidio	Trento	15.06.2003	81	IVO
P DEL PEZZO Pio	Castellammare di Stabia	21.04.2003	84	IME
P DEL VALLE ÁLVAREZ Nicanor	Madrid	19.03.2003	73	SMA
P DI FALCO Anthony	Oakland, California, USA	23.03.2003	89	SUO
P DI FALCO Antonino	Pedara	28.04.2003	94	ISI
P DÍAZ Robert Miguel	Bahía Blanca	19.02.2003	92	ABB
P DUGAILLIEZ Père Henri	Tournai	04.06.2003	83	BES
P ENNA Giovanni	Cagliari	22.05.2003	82	ISA
P ESPEJO GÓMEZ Rafael	Ronda	03.03.2003	73	SCO
P FABÍK Josef	Jemnice (Rep. Ceca)	10.06.2003	87	CEP
P FONSECA Armando	Cisternino	30.04.2003	84	IME
P GARCÍA Angel	Barcelona	21.03.2003	82	SBA
P GEFFRAY Michel	Caen	13.01.2003	79	FRA
P GONZÁLEZ RUIZ Jesús	Zaragoza	20.04.2003	74	SVA
P KEARNS Pierce	Dublin	08.05.2003	85	IRL
P KHONGSHUN Peter	Shillong	28.04.2003	58	ING
L LLEBARIA Manuel	Barcelona	21.02.2003	85	SBA
P LO PARO Vittorio	Messina	21.03.2003	73	IME
L LOCATELLI Carlo	Nave	21.04.2003	85	ILE
L LOPEZ Carlos	Bogotá (Colombia)	04.05.2003	71	COB
P MAGALHÃES Manuel	Maputo - Mozambico	02.06.2003	66	POR
P MAINA Giuseppe	Torino	04.06.2003	71	ICP

NAME	PLACE	DATE	AGE	PROV.
L MANTOVAN MARANGONI Antonio	Cochabamba (Bolivia)	30.04.2003	75	BOL
P MARCON Umberto	Verona	30.04.2003	73	IVO
P MARCUCCI TIEZZI Marino	San Fernando de Atabapo	14.03.2003	77	VEN
P MARCUZZI Piero Giorgio	Roma - UPS	12.04.2003	68	UPS
P MARTELOSSI Bruno	Castelfranco	22.04.2003	76	IVE
P MAZÉ Jean Louis	Caen (Francia)	13.05.2003	85	FRA
E MEINVIELLE Jorge	Roma	02.03.2003	72	--
<i>Fu Ispettore per 6 anni, eletto Vescovo nel 1980, fu per 11 anni Vescovo di Concepción (Argentina) e per 12 anni Vescovo di San Justo (Argentina)</i>				
P MORATELLI Arcanjo	Santa Rosa (Brasile)	08.06.2003	87	BPA
P PEENEN Jan	Wilrijk (Belgio)	13.06.2003	90	BEN
P PIANELLO Giulio	Sesto S. Giovanni (MI)	15.06.2003	82	ILE
E PRAPHON Michael	Suratthani (Thailandia)	20.05.2003	73	--
<i>Fu Ispettore per 6 anni, eletto Vescovo nel 1988, fu per 15 anni Vescovo di Surat Thani (Thailandia)</i>				
P SANTINI PEREZ Juan Lidamo	Irapuato (Messico)	09.05.2003	83	MEG
P SPINA Juan	Córdoba (Argentina)	10.02.2003	95	ACO
E TER SCHURE Jan	Nijmegen (Olanda)	11.04.2003	81	--
<i>Fu Ispettore per 3 anni, per 13 anni Consigliere Generale. Eletto Vescovo nel 1984, fu per 14 anni Vescovo di 's-Hertogenbosch (Olanda)</i>				
P TOIGO Rodolfo	Macas	06.03.2003	61	ECU
P TOMASSETTI Vittorio	Roma (Sacro Cuore)	05.06.2003	82	IRO
P TRIVERO Bartolomeo	Torino	16.05.2003	89	ICP
P VISMARA Giuseppe	Seregno (MI)	09.04.2003	74	ILE
P WEISS Carlos	Santiago de Chile	26.04.2003	85	CIL



