



acts

of the general council

year LXXXIV

january-march 2004

N. 384

**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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Editrice S.D.B.
Edizione extra commerciale
Direzione Generale Opere Don Bosco
Via della Pisana, 1111
Casella Postale 18333
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Finito di stampare: gennaio 2004

“But who do you say that I am?” (Mk 8,28)
LOOKING AT CHRIST THROUGH THE EYES
OF DON BOSCO

1. Contemplating Jesus Christ from a salesian standpoint – 2. Jesus Christ in the life of Don Bosco – 2.1. The Christ of the Gospel – 2.2. Conformed to the image of Christ – **3. Jesus Christ “Apostle of the Father and the Good Shepherd”** – 3.1 Gratitude to the Father for the gift of the divine vocation to all men – *“Gratitude to the Father ...”* – *“for the gift of the divine vocation to all men”* – 3.2. Predilection for the poor and the little ones – 3.3. *“Zeal in preaching, healing, saving, under the urgency of the coming Kingdom”* – 3.4. Attitude of the Good Shepherd who wins others over by meekness and the gift of himself – 3.5. The desire to gather the disciples into the unity of brotherly communion – **4. Jesus Christ “our living Rule”** • in the realization of the mission; • in the life of community; • in the evangelical counsels; • in the life of prayer; – in formation – **Conclusion: “Let us be imitators of Don Bosco, as he was of Christ!”**

Rome, 25 December 2003
Solemnity of the Lord’s Birth

My dear confreres,

We are celebrating Christmas, when we commemorate the event of the Incarnation, in which God has made his own reality visible in the Son and has manifested his sharing in our human nature. It is something great and wonderful because this is the good news, this is *the Gospel* – to know that God is not a long way off but stays close to us, that after creating us he did not abandon us but became one of us, taking on our flesh and becoming man so that we might become his children. God-made-Man is the most complete revelation of both man and God, the definitive Word on man and on God; God, in fact, “in many and various ways spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets. But in these last days he has spoken to us by the Son” (*Heb 1, 1.2a*).

The Son of God willed to live our human experience and become part of our family; this has given him the name of Jesus and the countenance of the Nazarene, but it also made himself

similar and close to us. That is perhaps why the Christmas atmosphere is characterized by a strong sense of family and closeness. Houses are decked out in light; family memories come flooding back, we want to meet our dear ones, we like to be with our friends or at least make them virtually present through Christmas cards and good wishes. Christmas cribs have undoubtedly contributed to the creation of this atmosphere of human warmth, deep affection and family proximity.

Christmas is a great feast: the angels proclaim the joy of the birth of the Saviour and peace to men of good will. But the Gospels do not conceal the fact that the birth of Jesus took place in a stable, because Mary and Joseph could find no other place (*Lk 2,7*); neither do they hide the fact that his parents had to flee into Egypt, because Herod "was seeking the child to destroy him" (*Mt 2,13*). The message of Christmas is therefore both fascinating and tragic. With the incarnation the dignity of every individual has been raised to the divine condition which, however, is always exposed to the risk of refusal (cf. *Jn 1,10*): from the moment God willed to take the path of man, man has been the road for finding God, a road which is sometimes hidden, rough and uneven (cf. *Jn 19, 5*).

This is the context, dear confreres, in which I meet you again, in the first place to wish you a blessed Christmas and a happy New Year, filled with grace and blessings, especially those given us by God in the incarnation of the Son; and secondly to take up again the reflection on our vocation to holiness and on our consecrated salesian life as the specific way to attain it.

To this end I propose to consider how we should respond to the question put by Jesus to his disciples: "*Who do men say that I am? And who do you say that I am?*" (*Mk 8, 27.28*). These are fundamental questions for us believers and consecrated persons, but we cannot adequately recognize the identity of the One who has called us and whom we have committed ourselves to follow,

unless we live a powerful experience of faith and feel that he loves us. This is the sense of the words with which Jesus, in Matthew's Gospel, responds to Peter's reply: "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven" (*Mt* 16, 17). Luke too follows the same line; he locates the question in the meeting of Jesus with the disciples when he had taken them aside to pray (cf. *Lk* 9, 18), indicating in this way that only those enlightened by the Spirit can recognize who Jesus really is. "Both indications converge to make it clear that we cannot come to the fullness of contemplation of the Lord's face by our own efforts alone, but only by allowing grace to take us by the hand".¹

Mark, on the other hand, through a question repeated several times "Who then is this?" (*Mk* 4, 41; cf. 1, 27; 2, 6.12; 6, 48-50), seems to tell us that Jesus deliberately avoids giving a definitive reply and that man cannot grasp it once and for ever. Jesus can be fully identified only by God, as happened at the baptism in the Jordan: "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased" (*Mt* 3, 17), and in the transfiguration on Tabor: "This is my beloved Son; listen to him" (*Mk* 9, 7). Jesus can be recognized as the Christ and Son of God only by believers; only those who live and profess the faith can truly "go to the heart and touch the depth of the mystery: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (*Mt* 16:16)." ²

No different is the content of the Gospel which, in line with the first verse of Mark, could be expressed: "The beginning of the good news that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God". No different either is the purpose of the story related by the gospels: "These things are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name" (*Jn* 20, 31).

A short time ago I said in my previous letter that "the real

¹ NMI n. 20.

² NMI n. 19.

challenge of consecrated life today is that of restoring Christ to religious life, and religious life to Christ”.³ Now “Christ gives a person two basic certainties: the certainty of being infinitely loved and the certainty of being capable of loving without limits”.⁴ Dear confreres, what great need we have of these certainties! “Through them, consecrated persons gradually become free from the need to be at the centre of everything and to possess others, and from the fear of giving themselves to their brothers and sisters. They learn rather to love as Christ loved them, with that love which now is poured forth in their hearts, making them capable of forgetting themselves and giving themselves as the Lord did”.⁵ This is why I want to point out to you the contemplation of Christ as the surest means for succeeding in this task: “The path which consecrated life is called to take up at the beginning of the new millennium is guided by the contemplation of Christ”.⁶

1. Contemplating Jesus Christ from a salesian standpoint

The contemplation of the face of Christ must be our first passion and concern, as is pointed out to us by our Rule of Life: “Our highest knowledge therefore is to know Jesus Christ, and our greatest delight is to reveal to all people the unfathomable riches of his mystery” (C 34). This text becomes all the more significant when we remember that it is found in the chapter of the Constitutions in which our educative and pastoral service is described. I invite you to undertake the wonderful task of contemplating the beloved *par excellence*, the One who has fascinated us and continues to do so, from a salesian standpoint, through the eyes of Don Bosco, so that with him and following

³ AGC 382 (2003), p. 16.

⁴ CIVCSVA, *Fraternal life in community*, n. 22.

⁵ CIVCSVA, *Fraternal life in community*, n. 22.

⁶ CIVCSVA, *Starting afresh from Christ*, n. 23.

him “in reading the Gospel we may become more aware of certain aspects of the figure of the Lord” (C 11).

The contemplation of Christ is the starting point of the spiritual journey and pastoral programme outlined in the Apostolic Exhortation *Novo millennio ineunte*, which appeals to us to “set our gaze ever more firmly on the face of the Lord”.⁷ The Instruction *Starting afresh from Christ* takes up the same strategic objective and points out the various features to be contemplated and the places where experience of Christ may be obtained: “These are the paths of a lived spirituality, a priority commitment in this time, taking the opportunity to re-read in life and in daily experiences the spiritual riches of one’s own charism, through a renewed contact with the same sources which, inspired by founders’ and foundress’ experience of the Spirit, gave rise to the spark of new life and new works, the specific re-reading of the Gospel found in every charism”.⁸ In this way the contemplation of Christ places us, as Salesians, on the Church’s journey following the Jubilee and in the present-day commitment of consecrated life.

Contemplating Christ means knowing him more deeply, loving him more faithfully, and following him more radically. You cannot love him, in fact, without knowing him, and you cannot know him unless you follow him (cf. *Jn* 1, 38-39); and you do not follow him, unless you are in love with him to such an extent that you leave everything so as “to be with him” (*Jn* 21, 15-19). The knowledge, love and following of Christ are three inseparable realities which mutually lead to each other.

The two questions put by Jesus to the disciples – “Who do men say that I am?” and “Who do you say that I am?” are directed towards this interpretation of the contemplation of Christ. They could be paraphrased as follows: “What do those

⁷ NMI n. 16.

⁸ CIVCSVA, *Starting afresh from Christ*, n. 23.

say who do not love me and so do not follow me closely and consequently *cannot know me?*” “What do you say, you who love me so much and, considering all else as dross compared with being my follower, are able to know the deepest identity of my person?”

The replies given by the disciples confirm this same interpretation: Christology is not only the fruit of knowledge but also of the love of Jesus and the following of him. In the opinion of the ordinary people Jesus is John the Baptist or the prophet Elijah or another of the prophets (cf. *Mk* 8, 28). In the course of history too, Jesus has been described in many different ways: he is a revolutionary, a romantic, a communist, a liberator, a superstar, a devout Jew, etc.; but none of these titles does justice to the mystery of the person of Jesus. Only the disciples can declare: “You are the Messiah, the Christ, the Son of the living God” (*Mt* 16, 16). As time has gone by, believers too have tried to understand more deeply this confession of faith through theological reflection and the history of discipleship; those who know Jesus better love him the more and follow him more closely in an effort to become more like him.

It is not enough therefore to be ‘admirers’ of Christ, we must become ‘imitators’ of him. As one prominent theologian puts it, while “an imitator aspires to become what he admires, an admirer remains personally separated..., he does not see that the object contains in his regard the demand (or at least the aspiration) to become what he admires”.⁹

The contemplation of Christ, therefore, is not an aesthetic diversion; nor is it just a hobby, nor even an intellectual curiosity; it is rather a never satisfied passion, an urgent need for knowledge, love and quest: we want to contemplate more fully Christ to whom we want to adhere more closely, because “to adhere ever more closely to Christ” constitutes the “centre of consecrated life”.¹⁰

⁹ S. KIRKEGAARD, *Esercizio del cristianesimo*, in *Opere*, traduzione a cura di C. FABRO, Sansoni, Firenze, 1972, p. 812.

¹⁰ CIVCSVA, *Starting afresh from Christ*, n. 21

We Salesians contemplate Jesus from our own specific standpoint. Our form of life realizes the apostolic project of Don Bosco: "to be in the Church signs and bearers of the love of God for young people, especially those who are poor" (C 2); by carrying out this mission "we find our own way to holiness" (C 2). The salesian mission, which "sets the tenor of our whole life" (C 3), makes us more "aware of certain aspects of the figure of the Lord" (C 11), and brings it about that our contemplation of Christ and our Christian activities are permeated by zeal for God and compassion for the young. *We Salesians know, love and follow Jesus, while remaining among young people.* Immersed as we are in the world and in the concerns of the pastoral life, we learn to meet Christ through those to whom we have been sent (cf. C 95). Our access to Christ passes through the young. We Salesians cannot think, see, find, love and follow Christ without being surrounded by youngsters, or at least without being conscious that to them we are sent. Young people are our mission, "our portion and cup, the heritage that falls to us" (Ps 16, 6). Apart from the young we cannot *contemplate Christ*, or at least we cannot see the Christ contemplated by Don Bosco; the young to whom we have been sent are the place and reason of our Christian experience. This means that there is a *salesian way* of contemplating Jesus, and consequently of knowing, loving and following him.

Since Christology is the systematic reflection on the person and work of Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ, the Son of God, it could be asked whether we can speak of a "*salesian Christology*" or whether Christology, to be authentic, must be without any qualifying adjective.

It is clear that, by its very definition, christological reflection must be faithful to its task, concerning the comprehending and understanding in faith of the real, concrete and historical person of Jesus of Nazareth, confessed to be Christ and Son of God. It must also remain faithful to the manner in which the normative Christian tradition has understood and explained such a figure through the centuries.

But this fidelity does not exclude different approaches to the person and work of Jesus, without ever exhausting its richness; the personal mystery of Christ indeed demands it and makes it inevitable. If it be true that no human person can be defined by a single phrase, nor be fixed by a single attitude, nor be seen from a single perspective, much more true is this of Jesus, son of Mary and Son of God, true man and true God. The closer we draw to it, the more we perceive the figure of Christ as a *mystery*. Hence the question put by Jesus to his disciples has lost none of its relevance or urgency, and he continues to put it also to us: "And who do *you* say that I am?" (Mc 8, 29).

Among the many factors which "diversify" the perspectives and hence *multiply* the replies to the christological question may be mentioned:

- the permanent *ecclesial profession of faith* which, for the past two thousand years, has made use of a variety of concepts and terminology for the understanding and expression of salvation in Christ, and in which appear more than the immutability of formulas the commitment to fidelity of the believers;
- the different *geographical and cultural contexts* in which faith in Christ has grown and developed, with attention also to popular devotion which, especially in the field of Christology, presents a very broad and inexhaustible variety of expressions and symbols.
- the *charismatic sensitivity* of consecrated life which, "inspired by the founders' and foundress' experience of the Spirit, gave rise to ... the specific re-reading of the Gospel found in every charism".¹¹ Charisms, gifts of the Holy Spirit to the Church, have at their foundation a "christological intuition" and tend to the following and imitation of the Lord Jesus from a particular perspective without any pretence to be either exhaustive or exclusive.

¹¹ CIVCSVA, *Starting afresh from Christ*, n. 23.

We are aware of this charismatic sensitivity and proud of it: "We know that the Gospel is one and the same for everyone, but it is also true that it can be *"read through salesian spectacles"*, from which derives a salesian manner of living it. Don Bosco looked at Christ so as to try and copy in himself those features which corresponded most closely to his own providential mission and to the spirit which must animate it".¹² And does not this express perhaps the need to live our own proper and specific experience of Christ, born of the mission to the young, which when put into words necessarily becomes *"salesian christology"*? This very reason would seem to justify us in speaking of a *"salesian christology"*, one which highlights the *"traits of the figure of the Lord"* to which our mission has made us *"more sensitive"* (cf. C 11). On this salesian christological re-reading is founded a deep spirituality and an effective pastoral practice, completely centred on Christ and with a clear charismatic identity; in other words a contemplation of Christ is needed which is explicitly salesian, if we are to live a spiritual experience and carry out a pastoral praxis with a clear identity.

2. Jesus Christ in the life of Don Bosco

At the beginning of a charism that God gives to his Church, and through the Church to the whole world, there is always a *founder* or a founding community. And precisely because it is a gift that characterizes Christian life in a particular manner, the charism gives to the believer who receives it special and specific traits in his manner of understanding, loving and living Christ.

The salesian spirit, that *"original style of life and action"* which *"Don Bosco lived and handed on to us under the inspiration of God"* (C 10), *"finds its model and source in the very heart of Christ, apostle of the Father"* (C 11). It is true that *"we discover [Christ] present in Don Bosco who gave his life to the*

¹² *The Project of Life of the Salesians of Don Bosco*, p. 168.

young”; but “to understand *the central element of our spirit* we must go beyond the person of Don Bosco and reach the Source from which he himself drew: the *very person of Christ*”.¹³

For this reason it is of concern to us to know and love the Christ that Don Bosco lived and thought about, to identify the traits of his personality of which as Salesians we “become more aware” (C 11), and so, captured and fascinated by him, we decide to follow him. And precisely because it is in Don Bosco that we perceive his way of knowing, loving and following Christ, it is also in Don Bosco, through his spiritual and apostolic life, that we are called as Salesians to draw near to Christ Jesus.

2.1. The Christ of the Gospel

More than the faith professed by Don Bosco and his christological beliefs, we are interested in recalling how he lived his faith and the fundamental attitude that characterized his personal relationship with the Lord Jesus; in other words it is more important to consider Don Bosco’s “*fides qua*” than his “*fides quae*”. From this standpoint it seems that his theological formation may have only a relative value as compared with his Christian experience.

For Don Bosco Christ was a *living person, present* at every moment of his life and activity; he was never merely an abstract truth or an ideal to be attained. I would say that the attitude that marks out his Christian faith is that of *relationship - closeness - friendship*. This can be verified in the first article of the Constitutions of 1858, where he had written: “The purpose of this Society is to gather together its members... to help them to become perfect by imitating the virtues of our Divine Saviour, especially in charity towards young people who are poor”.¹⁴

This relationship is characterized by the conviction that Jesus is the *Son of God become Man*; indeed, in line with the

¹³ *The Project of Life of the Salesians of Don Bosco*, p. 166.

¹⁴ MB V, p. 933. Cf. COSTITUZIONI DELLA SOCIETÀ DI SAN FRANCESCO DI SALES, Testi critici, LAS 1982, p. 72

theology of his time, Don Bosco for practical purposes identified Jesus Christ with 'God', without detriment to the Trinitarian reality of the Divine Mystery; and so in Don Bosco the terms "Jesus Christ" and "God" became practically interchangeable.

Within this same idea of "contemporaneity" with Christ, we do not find in Don Bosco a sensitivity for the historical Jesus and hence a concern for reaching "Jesus of Nazareth", as modern exegesis and theology is trying to do. For him Jesus was always and simply the Lord Jesus of the Gospels.

2.2. Conformed to the image of Christ

To describe Don Bosco's attitude towards the person of Jesus Christ, I think it makes matters clearer if we recall the *dream of the ten diamonds* with which Don Bosco presented the "identity of the Salesian", as the recent GC25 reminded us.¹⁵ With Don Rinaldi we can assert that "all his life Don Bosco was the living embodiment of this symbolic personage!"¹⁶ But in the description of this symbolic model of the Salesian we find a difference between the front part of the mantle and the rear; in the latter are presented the *hidden* qualities, which in a certain way sustain and strengthen faith, hope and charity, in which *visible* testimony specifically consists.

In presenting the Lord Jesus to his boys and the people to whom his preaching and writings were always addressed, he emphasizes especially the *mystical* dimension of the contemplation of Christ, i.e. the inexhaustible *kindness* of the Master, his *mercy*, his *willingness to forgive*. In particular, in the "Lives" he wrote of the exemplary youngsters of Valdocco who died at an early age, he highlights a typically salesian trait: *friendship with Jesus*. An example of this is the phrase by which Dominic Savio on the day of his First Communion summed up his plan of life:

¹⁵ Cf. GC25 n. 20.

¹⁶ F. RINALDI in ACS 55 (1930), p. 923. Cf. E. VIGANÒ, *Profile of the Salesian in the dream of the personage of the ten diamonds*, ASC 300 (1981), p. 753-819.

“My first friends shall be Jesus and Mary”. This attitude forms, so to speak, the front part of the mantle.

On the other hand, in his writings for the confreres, beginning with the Introduction to the Constitutions and the Constitutions themselves, Don Bosco emphasizes the *ascetical* dimension, which involves the following and imitation of Jesus Christ in the various dimensions of the consecrated life and particularly in the evangelical counsels. The fact is so evident that, if you do not keep in mind the different groups he is writing for, you could get the impression that Don Bosco is contradicting himself.

For example, when speaking of obedience Don Bosco writes: in this “our example must be our Divine Saviour, who practised it even in the most difficult things, even to the death of the cross”. With regard to poverty he writes: the Salesian “follows the example of our Saviour who was born in poverty, lived deprived of everything and died naked on a cross”. And speaking of fidelity to one’s vocation, he gives this advice: “Let each one strive to persevere in his vocation until death, having always in mind those very serious words of the Divine Saviour... No one who puts his hand to the plough and looks back, is fit for the Kingdom of God” (*Constitutions of 1874*, art. 21).

It must be clearly emphasized nonetheless that the following and imitation of Jesus Christ are not to be considered a painful renunciation but a free and joyful offering; not a detailed list of things to be done, but a *total* consecration. “We are not imitating just a virtue (obedience, poverty, chastity), nor an activity (education, the missions, etc.); we are following a Person whom we want to imitate in all his fullness, and a Gospel that we want to live in all its implications”.¹⁷ I wrote in similar terms myself a short time ago: “One does not become a religious “for the purpose of doing something” but “because of someone”, of Jesus Christ and the attraction he exerts”.¹⁸

¹⁷ *The Project of Life of the Salesians of Don Bosco*, p. 167.

¹⁸ AGC 382 (2003), p. 16.

This apparent dichotomy disappears if we remember the intimate and inseparable relationship between gospel and life, between *faith and morality*, as it was understood and lived by Don Bosco. In his life and educative system morality is never an end in itself; the carrying out of one's duty, for instance, does not derive from a "categorical imperative" in the style of Kant, but from the desire for the sake of love to fulfil God's will in everything, even life's smallest details. Vice versa, this friendship with God never falls into a "camaraderie" that overlooks the keeping of the commandments; one who loves takes care to carry out the expressed will and even the hidden desires of the loved one. Jesus said so himself: "If you love me, keep my commandments" (Jn 14,15). This is what is expressed by the bower of roses, using a typical salesian image.

In particular, Don Bosco's insistence on the frequent use of the Sacrament of Reconciliation is very significant: it constitutes one of the pillars of his educative system. This is very evident in the "*Lives*" he wrote, in which he insists on it at times: trust in Jesus does not destroy the awareness of one's own moral frailty; indeed, the greater this awareness, the greater is the trust and confidence.

Finally, the relationship with the Lord Jesus that Don Bosco had and inculcated in others is inseparable from devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary. In reality, in his educative presentation of the faith, Grignon de Montfort's expression: *Ad Iesum per Mariam* became his sure slogan. In this connection, as in many other respects, the *dream at the age of nine* provides an example: Jesus and Mary appear together, but she is given to him as his teacher, precisely to help him to become "humble, determined and strong" and a disciple of Jesus.

3. Jesus Christ “Apostle of the Father and Good Shepherd”

After having considered at some depth the justification for a “salesian christology”, in the sense of a charismatic re-reading of some aspects of Christology and after a brief reference to the central position of the relationship with Christ and the importance of conformed to him in Don Bosco’s experience, it is now time to speak of the *specific points* we Salesians stress in contemplating Christ. We find it briefly but densely expressed in art.11 of our Rule of Life; “the strict linkage with the person of Christ with regard to the ‘charity’ of the Good Shepherd should be noted”.¹⁹

Although we are dealing with evangelical aspects that every Salesian must try to cultivate in his own “charismatic identity”, we meet them in Don Bosco in an almost “connatural” form which is extraordinarily characteristic. It is practically impossible to separate in him the wealth of the *gifts* of the Holy Spirit and the “human infrastructure” that sustains them. This is why we can speak of “a splendid blending of nature and grace” (C 21). In analyzing these traits I take for granted that they are central in the life of Jesus; it would be enriching to go into them more deeply in this regard, but here we are considering them *only as they were lived and reflected* in our Father and Founder, and so I limit myself to offering a simple comment.

3.1. Gratitude to the Father for the gift to all men of the divine vocation

“Gratitude to the Father...”

Gratitude is one of the most noble and outstanding sentiments in Don Bosco’s human personality, which he wants to pass on in the highest degree to his sons. But it is a *derived* attitude, since it is a response to *gratuitousness* in both the field of human relationships and above all in relation to God. In the development of such an attitude the figure of Mamma Margaret was of

¹⁹ *The Project of Life of the Salesians of Don Bosco*, p. 169.

great importance; it was linked, in fact, with the strong sense of *Providence* that his Mother inculcated in him in both the contemplation of nature and in the evaluation of his own life.

In the fusion of the human and Christian aspects “in a closely knit life project, the service of the young” (C 21), gratuitousness has an essential part. Article 20 of the Constitutions presents it as the first trait of the preventive system which for him “was a spontaneous expression of love inspired by the love of a God who provides in advance for all his creatures, is ever present at their side and freely gives his life to save them” (C 20).

As a student of philosophy John Bosco had assisted some boys of well-to-do families at a summer camp of the Jesuits near Turin, to which they had sent some of the boarders from their schools during an epidemic. Although he had no difficulty in relating to them – indeed some of them were friends who loved and respected him – he became convinced that his ‘method’ was not compatible with a system of ‘mutual payment’. “At Montaldo [...] he came to know that he could not exercise over boys of this social class that influence without which it is impossible to help them spiritually. He became convinced then that his field of work was not among the children of the wealthy”.²⁰

The pastoral educative system of St John Bosco is unthinkable without the experience of gratuitousness on *both* sides: manifestations of the gratitude of his boys were moving and numerous, because they were thanking him not for what he was giving them, but because he gave them himself as an expression of the freely given and anticipatory love of God. And this is how, in fact, Don Bosco saw himself, as witness the *Biographical Memoirs* which tell us that 1859 gave himself as the Strenna: “Whatever bit of knowledge and experience I have gained, whatever I am or have my prayers and labours, my health and my very life, all of it I wish to use in your service...As far as I am con-

²⁰ BM I, p. 294.

cerned, I give you myself as a New Year's gift – a meagre gift perhaps, but a total one."²¹

"...for the gift to all men of the divine vocation"

In the thought and educative and pastoral praxis of our Founder there is a basic presupposition: the certainty that every individual has not only rights and duties, or is the object of "horizontal" philanthropy, but that in every situation and despite all limitations, deficiencies and sin he is the *image of God*; all are God's children, *called* to his friendship and to eternal life. This conviction gave rise in Don Bosco to *hope*, understood as trust in every person, especially the young, which reawakens in them self-esteem and the power of doing good. This spark of goodness which he not only met but *took for granted* as present in every youngster, even in those considered by others as irretrievable, is the typical expression of his pedagogy. It is important that all of us in our educative and pastoral praxis believe in and apply this conviction of our beloved father, who used to say: "In every youngster, even the most wretched, there is a point which responds with generosity if the educator can discover and stimulate it".²²

On the other hand, albeit within the limitations imposed by the ecclesiology of his time, this conviction was the source of Don Bosco's 'ecumenism' and *missionary* concern: he could not rest as long as he had not proclaimed to *all* men and women in the world, without distinction of race or language, the Good News of the Love of God in Christ which calls us to form the great Family of his sons and daughters which is the Church. This in fact was the source from which his tireless activity and his prodigious pastoral creativity arose.

It must be said that Don Bosco fully embodied the theological intuition of St Paul who reminds us that from the Father "all

²¹ MB VI, p. 202.

²² Cf. BM V, p. 236.

fatherhood in heaven and earth takes its name" (*Eph 3, 15*); he was able to be an exceptional channel of God's motherly and fatherly love for those who felt least worthy of him or those who had never had a positive experience of a father or mother.

3.2. Predilection for the poor and the little ones

There is no need to demonstrate this attention to the poor and lowly, either with reference to the attitude of Jesus, because there are many relevant evangelical texts with regard to this point, or in reference to Don Bosco's commitment. But we do need to note that the predilection in Don Bosco stems not only from the magnanimity of his fatherly heart, "great as the sands of the seashore", nor from the calamitous situation of the young people of his time – much like that of our own – and much less from a social or political agenda. At the base of it there is a God-given *mission*: "The Lord made clear to Don Bosco that he was to direct his mission first and foremost to the young, especially to those who are poorer" (C 26). And it is well to recall that this took place "through the motherly intercession of Mary" (C 1); she it was, in fact, who "showed Don Bosco his field of labour among the young and was the constant guide and support of his work" (C 8).

Normative in this sense, and not simply anecdotal, is the attitude adopted by Don Bosco at a decisive moment of his priestly life before the Marchioness of Barolo and her offer, certainly holy and apostolic as it was, to collaborate in her works and abandon his ragamuffins: "You have money and will have no trouble finding as many priests as you want for your institutions. It's not the same with the poor youngsters ... I will resign from any regular responsibility and devote myself seriously to the care of abandoned youngsters".²³

It would be very interesting to go more deeply into the typical characteristics of those to whom our mission is preferentially ad-

²³ J. BOSCO, *Memoirs of the Oratory of Saint Francis de Sales*, Don Bosco Publications, New Rochelle, 1989, p. 251.

dressed: “*the young who are poor, abandoned and in danger*”. Though we speak nowadays of “new forms of poverty” among young people the direct reference is to their social and economic situation; *abandonment* implies the “theological note” of lack of support through the absence of adequate mediation of God’s love; and *danger* refers back to a determining phase of life, adolescence, the time of decision after which habits and attitudes formed can be changed only with great difficulty. A deeper study of this kind serves as a starting point for deciding in each Province (cf. R 1) and community who are those to whom our mission is directed here and now, in the light of the criteria we have just mentioned.

Predilection is intensified in some contexts in which our mission is carried out where poverty, and especially poverty among the young, is most acute. The Salesian is the last person to engage in clashes or class struggles. Predilection is not just a choice or option: it presupposes a “universal love” which, however, implies certain emphases: it excludes no one, *but does not give preference to all* – that would be self-contradictory. What is important in our witness is that our predilection is seen to be *clearly evangelical*, which in practice means “*giving the most to those who in their life have received least*”. Salesian charity begins not with the first but with the last, not with the ones who are richer from an economic or spiritual standpoint (who already have care and attention), but with those who need us to kindle their hope and boost their forces.

3.3. Zeal in preaching, healing, saving under the urgency of the coming Kingdom

“Zeal in preaching...”

“Don Bosco’s interior life is an imitation and prolongation, especially for the benefit of the young, of the apostolic zeal displayed by Christ in his public life”.²⁴

²⁴ *The Project of Life of the Salesians of Don Bosco*, p. 155.

Right away at the beginning of his Gospel, Mark tells us: "After John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, *preaching the gospel of God*" (Mk 1,14). And though there are other texts in which Jesus' activity is summed up in three kinds of action – preaching the Gospel, casting out devils, healing sickness and suffering (cf. Mk 3,13; Mt 9,35) – there is no doubt that his main mission was that of "proclaiming the Gospel, the joyful message of God".

For Don Bosco this element was so important as to constitute his main request on the day of his First Mass: "It is a pious belief that the Lord infallibly grants the grace requested of him by a new priest at his first Mass. I prayed most ardently for *efficacy of speech*, that I might do good to souls. It seems that the Lord truly heard my humble prayer".²⁵

This aspect is closely connected with the educative character of the preventive method, in particular with *reason* – part of the basic trinomial with *religion* and *loving kindness*. "The 'reason', in which Don Bosco believed as a gift of God and an unfailing obligation of the educator, indicates the values of what is good, and also the objectives to be aimed at and the means and manner of using them".²⁶ It also prevents the living out of the Sacraments, a column of his educative and pastoral system, from degenerating into "*sacramentalism*", but transforms it into a true life of communion with God.

It is true that Don Bosco did not use the word "evangelize"; he spoke, in fact, of teaching catechism to children and preaching to the people. By this he intended what Paul VI defined as the Church's *raison d'être* (cf. EN 15). And it is in this same sense that the concern of our Founder has been expressed in our Rule of Life in an article that begins by citing his own phrase: "The Society had its beginning in a simple catechism lesson". For us too evangelization and catechizing are the fundamental characteristics of our mission" (C 34).

²⁵ BM I, p. 386.

²⁶ JOHN PAUL II, *Juvenum patris*, n. 10.

“... healing...”

There is no need to emphasize the central nature of this aspect in the life and practice of Jesus; it is enough to recall his reply to the messengers of John the Baptist: “Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them” (Mt 11,4-5). In John’s Gospel too, the whole of the first part is centred on Jesus’ “signs,” of which the majority are of this kind.

While not forgetting that Don Bosco had also from God the charism of healing, it is not to this that art. 11 of the Constitutions refers, and still less does it apply to the work of his sons; we are not a Congregation dedicated by preference to the sick.

This, nevertheless, is an essential point of our charism, and it emphasizes two dimensions. In both the psychological and medical fields at the present day, the concept of ‘health’ or ‘healing’ has been broadened; there is no doubt that those to whom we are *primarily* sent are, in general, boys and girls who are ‘sick’ because of the fact that they have been abandoned in ways ranging from traumas in infancy to physical dependence or psychosomatic addiction. “All of this”, wrote Fr Vecchi, “has led us to re-think the concept of *prevention*. For many it could mean, perhaps, being concerned only with youngsters still untouched by evil. Anticipation is certainly a golden rule; but ‘prevention’ has the added meaning of preventing the ultimate ruin of those already on an evil path but who have still some healthy energy to develop or restore. In current social and pedagogical reflection consideration is given to a first prevention (which is basic), a second prevention (consisting in recovery and strengthening), and a third and ultimate action that checks the worst of the evil consequences”.²⁷

On the other hand we must not overlook what is *signified* by

²⁷ J. E. VECCHI, *Spiritualità Salesiana*, LDC, 2000, p. 114.

Jesus' miracles. One of the leading specialists in this field writes: "A miracle is directed to the *salvation of the whole man*: his heart and his body. By pardoning and healing man's wretchedness Jesus makes him aware of his impotence in the face of sin, illness and death [...] A miracle is a concrete sign of what Jesus is for man: the one who saves totally, both physically and spiritually"²⁸.

This is the complete backdrop to the salesian charism. With the application of the "oratory criterion" Don Bosco seeks the *total* well-being, of his youngsters. Those who deny the reality of miracles frequently do so in the name of "spiritualism", as though God were concerned only with "the soul" and religious activities.

"... and saving ..."

The three verbs "preaching, healing and saving" form a clear progression, moving towards a climax: the *salvation* of the youngsters, which was the peak of Don Bosco's attention, as Don Rua testifies: "He took no step, he said no word, he took up no task that was not directed to the saving of the young... Truly the only concern of his heart was for souls"²⁹.

If we forget that the ultimate purpose of salesian work is salvation following the example of Jesus, we fall into a reductionism which represents a betrayal of the preventive system. In line with what we have said above, the aim must be one of *total* saving which is made concrete in the fundamental slogan "*da mihi animas*". The term does not imply any dichotomy but is used in the figurative manner of metonymy: for Don Bosco 'anima' ('soul') signifies the whole person, in the context of God's plan; and holiness, which becomes synonymous with *salvation*, is the realization of the divine vocation of every human being.

Driven on in our educative and pastoral work by this integral anthropological concept, we can never remain only on the threshold of evangelization, but in every circumstance we must

²⁸ R. LATOURELLE, *Milagros de Jesús y Teología del Milagro*, Salamanca, Sígueme 2^a, 1997, p. 288.

²⁹ M. RUA, cited in Cost. 21.

try to open the young to religious transcendence, which is not only applicable to all cultures, but can also be successfully adapted to non-Christian religions.

“... under the urgency of the coming Kingdom”

On this point, which is central in the preaching and practice of Jesus, we cannot say that Don Bosco insisted *explicitly*: it would be anachronistic to expect from him an emphasis that was adopted only in the twentieth century, and even then more in exegesis and theology than in the ordinary life of the Church. But it is not just a matter of a form of words: the fundamental intuition implied by the Kingdom is to some extent present in Don Bosco and in his charism with other words and other ways.

Let us take one of the more important of the gospel texts: the Sermon on the Mount (*Mt* 5-7). From a *formal* standpoint it includes various literary genres: beatitudes, norms, new respect for the Old Law, the prayer of the ‘Our Father’, etc. But the whole is unified by the central position occupied by the Kingdom: for this reason it has been called the “*Magna Carta of the proclamation of the Kingdom*”. It is a Kingdom in which the fatherhood of God is not characterized by his dominion, but rather his dominion is governed by his fatherhood, so that in the “Kingdom of heaven” there are no slaves, and not even servants, but *sons and daughters*.

If we lose sight of this perspective, all its elements come apart. Even the proposal of Jesus, in contrast with the Old Law, becomes a burden that cannot be borne: if the latter *kills*, the former *obliterates entirely*. It is what one writer calls “the theory of the *non-realizability* of the precept”, represented by Lutheran orthodoxy. “Jesus demands that we free ourselves completely from anger: even a single hostile word deserves death. Jesus demands a chastity that avoids even an unchaste glance. Jesus demands an absolute truthfulness, love of our enemies”.³⁰ Accord-

³⁰ J. JEREMIAS, *Abba. El Mensaje central del Nuevo Testamento*, Salamanca, Sígueme 4ª, 1993, p. 240.

ing to this way of thinking, the New Law has been given to us solely so that we can really understand that we cannot keep it, and that in consequence we may have recourse with humble trust to God's mercy.

When, on the other hand, everything is centred on the Kingdom, we understand in what the "joyful news" of Jesus really consists: "The Kingdom of God is at hand" (*Mk* 1, 15). It is a *new situation*, the *gift* of God with human collaboration, which has deep roots in *metanoia*. To the extent that the fatherly dominion of God (*Abbà*) becomes a reality, and we human beings live in it as brothers and sisters, utopia too becomes a reality. The kingdom is not "built up" by assembling pieces of the Sermon on the Mount; it arises from the proclamation of the Kingdom as from a nuclear source.

Is not this perhaps what Don Bosco was trying to create in his works and which goes by the name of "*environment*"?³¹ It is a matter of a situation made up of persons, resources, values and activities, which allow youngsters – even the poorest and most abandoned – to experience "the beauty of virtue and the ugliness of sin". It helps us to understand Don Bosco's famous phrase: "place the young person in the moral impossibility of committing sin", not by curtailing his freedom but by strengthening "affectively" his Christian life and will, so that he can live with full freedom his characteristic as a child of God with brothers and sisters. The significance of this educative and pastoral '*ecology*' could be the salesian translation of the centrality of the Kingdom and of the urgency of its coming.

3.4. The attitude of the Good Shepherd who wins others over by meekness and the gift of himself

The symbolic character of the figure of the shepherd is obvi-

³¹ J. BOSCO, *The preventive system in the education of the young*, in *Constitutions and Regulations*, p. 249.

ous when applied to persons who have the responsibility of caring for others, with the ambiguity implied in such a figure: one can serve others or be served by them. Such an ambiguity is found also in Revelation, even from the Old Testament. One of the most important texts in this connection, presented incidentally in a messianic key, is that of Ezekiel 34, which in some of its verses seems like a quotation from the beginning of the Constitutions. It is boldly applied to Don Bosco, called to be "shepherd of the young", and hence is applicable to every Salesian called to make Don Bosco's mission his own: "I myself will search for my sheep and will take care of them... I will set up over them one shepherd... he shall feed them and be their shepherd" (*Ezek* 34, 11.23).

In the preaching of Jesus such a figure occupies an important place, especially in the presentation of the Lord as the Good Shepherd in Jn 10, 1-18; 25-30, and also in the parable of the lost sheep in Lk. 15, 4-7 and Mt. 18, 12-24 with widely different literary and theological contexts.

Looking at these texts as a whole we come across some interesting characteristics of the Good Shepherd that Don Bosco assumed in his own following and imitation of Jesus Christ. We may recall that in the dream at the age of nine the image of the good shepherd shaped his vision of the mission to the young; this image would be repeated some years later in the second dream which was to include a mild reproof for not trusting sufficiently in God.

Jesus, the good shepherd is the *gate* of the sheepfold. The Catholic exegete Raymond Brown says that E. F. Bishop "gives us an interesting modern example of the shepherd who lies down to sleep across the gateway, so that he is both shepherd and doorkeeper for the animals".³² We could put into the shepherd's mouth and also on the lips of Don Bosco these words:

³² R. E. BROWN, *Evangelio de San Juan* I, Madrid, Cristiandad, 1979, p. 632.

"If they want to reach my sheep, they will first have to get past me".

He *knows his sheep* and calls them individually by name; the sheep follow him, because they recognize his voice. This trait avoids the hoary old misunderstanding of herd-instinct and standardization or "submissiveness". In an apt exegetical and spiritual commentary on the meeting of the Risen Christ with Mary Magdalen, another exegete writes: "But when Jesus turned towards her and said the word 'Mary!', it became her passover. We are reminded of Jesus' words passed on to us by the evangelist: 'My sheep hear my voice and I know them' (...). There is no doubt that John wants us to ponder on these consoling words".³³

Don Bosco achieved to an exceptional degree this personal knowledge of his youngsters, each of whom felt that he was *known* and *loved* personally, to such an extent that they argued about who was first in their father's affections – they all felt they held that place. We remember the "word in the ear" and the knowledge of each one's situation; "he could read our minds" said the youngsters, full of admiration. This was due in great part to his presence among them, a typical presence that goes by the salesian name of *assistance*: not only physical but more especially personal, affectionate and anticipatory; the human expression of "*God sees you*".

He goes *looking in love for the lost sheep*. This is a typical and most 'outrageous' synoptic parable, with different shades of emphasis in Luke and Matthew. It expresses in Jesus two main characteristics among others:

- the "greater love" for those in greater need: the poorest ones, the outcasts, the sinners; it is not only the pastoral love called "*agápe*"; it is a more intimate kind of love: "*filía*", which implies lovingly bearing the lost sheep on one's shoulders, once it has been found;

³³ G. VON RAD, *Sermones*, Salamanca, Sígueme, p. 26.

- the “overturning” of the quantitative criteria because of the qualitative criterion of the situation of the one who is ‘lost’: “I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance” (*Lk* 15,7); in Don Bosco such predilection is so well known that many examples could be quoted.

He gives life to his sheep and gives his own life for them. This may seem a simple play on words, but it expresses a twofold reality that is much deeper. Jesus came “that they may have life and have it more abundantly” (*Jn* 10, 10). But this fullness of life is inseparable from the *giving* of one’s own life: “For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life” (*Jn* 10, 17). This is the absolute antithesis of the hired shepherd, who does not seek the good of his sheep, and still less intends to sacrifice himself for them. These words of Jesus find a *twofold implementation* in the Paschal Mystery, in which Jesus *gives us the fullness of life by fully giving his own life for us*.

Very aptly have been applied to Don Bosco those words of St Paul: “I will most gladly spend and be spent for your souls” (2 *Cor* 12, 15). Don Rua’s words, already quoted (C 21) imply the same idea: “he took no step, he said no word, he took up no task...”. As he said himself: “For you I study, for you I work, for you I live, for you I am ready even to give my life” (quoted in C 14).

3.5. The desire to gather the disciples into the unity of brotherly communion

In all the Gospels, before or immediately after the proclamation of the Good News, Jesus “called to him those he desired (...) to be with him and to be sent out to preach the Gospel” (*Mk* 3, 13-14; quoted in C 96).

Interminable discussions concerning the meaning of the founding of the Church on the part of Jesus during his public life may lead us to forget the essential point, i.e. that the proclamation of salvation implies, in the words and practice of Jesus,

the *community* dimension. In this sense many of Jesus' miracles have also the function of *reintegrating persons* in the human, family, social and religious *community*, as in the case of demoniacs or lepers.

But it is especially in his relationships with his disciples, and in particular with "the Twelve," that this trait of Jesus appears most vividly, culminating in John's account of the Last Supper. "Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends (...) No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide" (*Jn* 15,13-16a).

And subsequently, in the *Priestly Prayer*, Jesus asks: "Father, I desire that they also whom you have given me may be with me where I am" (*Jn* 17, 24a); it would be hard to imagine a simpler or deeper expression of love than that of *being with* the one who is loved.

One of the biblical paradigms that best expresses salvation is precisely brotherly communion. In connection with Caiphas' "prediction", the evangelist says: "he prophesied that Jesus should die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad" (*Jn* 11, 51b-52). Unfortunately an individualistic vision of salvation has obscured this perspective and has also reduced the ecclesial dimension to a juridical attachment, that can sometimes become exclusive, as happens at times in interpreting the aphorism "*extra ecclesiam nulla salus*".

In Don Bosco all this is so evident that we cannot even imagine him on his own, except when he was praying; even though this was in reality precisely the time when he was least alone. By analogy, we can apply to our Father what Urs von Balthasar

says about the prayer of Jesus, thanks to which “he can become ‘the man for all men’ [...] If Jesus had not withdrawn into so profound a solitude with God he would never have become so deeply in communion with men.”³⁴

From this comes Don Bosco’s dedication to the young, so complete and extraordinary that he was made to say, in a hymn in his honour, that he could not stay in heaven without his youngsters, because it just would not be heaven. Although an exaggeration, this phrase emphasizes his passion for living in the midst of his boys and evidently for community fellowship with his salesian sons. If we refer back to Don Bosco’s comments about the “five defects to be avoided”, we find that the majority of them refer precisely to community life.³⁵

As we conclude the presentation of these salient traits of the figure of Jesus, present in the life of Don Bosco and in us, we must point out that they are shining examples of a radiant expression of the core issue: *pastoral charity* (cf. C 10). In their essential unity they can also be considered – following the lines of the GC25 – as *five schemes* for an outline of a “*salesian christology*”. From such a Christology emerges our religious life, a spiritual experience and a pastoral practice, centred on Christ and having a clear charismatic identity: “Jesus Christ is the living and personal law”.³⁶ He is “our living rule” (C 196).

4. Jesus Christ “our Living Rule”

“When the Church approves a form of consecrated life or an Institute, she confirms that in its spiritual and apostolic charism are found all the objective requisites for achieving personal and

³⁴ H. U. BALTHASAR, *Relación inmediata del hombre con Dios*, Concilium 29 (1967) p. 418.

³⁵ DON BOSCO, *To the Salesians*, in *Constitutions and Regulations*, p. 244-245. English edition

³⁶ *Veritatis splendor*, n. 15.

communal perfection according to the Gospel".³⁷ Since no evangelical perfection exists other than "*being conformed to the image of Christ*" (Rom 8, 29), which implies the *following and imitation* of the Lord Jesus, an Institute's Rule of Life must presuppose, at least implicitly, a *charismatic* christology. For us Salesians this has been specified in its essentials by Don Bosco in art.1 of the Constitutions of 1858, which we have already quoted. It is stated explicitly in the current text and is present in fact as a dimension running all through the Constitutions.

As far as the *following* of Christ is concerned, it must be remembered that "at the origin of religious consecration there is a call from God which can be explained only by the love he has for the one whom he calls. This love is entirely gratuitous, personal and unique. (...) Christ's call, the expression of a redemptive love, embraces the entire person, soul and body, whether man or woman, in its unique and unrepeatable personality".³⁸ And our Constitutions, in fact – referring back to Jn. 10, 3.14 – speak of the "predilection of the Lord Jesus who has called us by name" (C 196). This vocation is not given solely in view of the carrying out of a mission or of a task to be undertaken, but is mainly a calling to intimacy and community of life with Jesus: "he called his Apostles individually to *be with him* and to be sent forth to preach the Gospel" (C 96, quoting Mk 3, 14).

This *call*, given us by the Lord to respond to the "needs of his people" (C 28), and especially of young people in most need, and the *response* of the disciple who accepts the invitation find their highest expression in **religious profession**, the sign of a loving encounter between the Lord who calls and the disciple who responds" (C 23).

In the formula of profession, which – let us never forget – is found in a context of *prayer*, it says: "In response to the love of the Lord Jesus... who calls me to follow him more closely" (C 24;

³⁷ VC 93.

³⁸ CIVCSVA, *Potissimum Institutioni*, nn. 8-9, quoting *Redemptionis donum*, n. 3.

cf. C 3); in this way is clearly expressed the call and response nature of the vocation, not as a particular event in the life of the Salesian but as a permanent situation that characterizes it. Our response is made concrete by following Jesus Christ "our living rule" and by practising the Salesian Constructions (C 196), which are our evangelical plan of life.

This call and response style is much better expressed in the formula for perpetual profession when, by the use of an expression with a wealth of biblical overtones, it is presented as a *Covenant*: which makes of our *fidelity* "a response we continually renew to the special Covenant that the Lord has made with us" (C 195).

As far as *imitation* of the Lord Jesus is concerned, in the context of our missionary work we find a very rich biblical reference which emphasizes the meaning of the way of the incarnation: "Following the example of the Son of God, who made himself in all things like his fellow men..." (C 30) seems to echo two paradigmatic passages on the self-abasement of Christ and his extreme solidarity with mankind (*Phil* 2, 7; *Heb* 2, 14-18; 4, 15).

The following and the imitation of Jesus Christ are put in practical terms in the different aspects of salesian life, as is seen in the current text of the Constitutions: *mission, community life, evangelical counsels, prayer and formation*.

■ In the first place we are involved in the fulfilment of the **mission** entrusted to us by Jesus himself, by collaborating with him in his plan of salvation. "The salesian spirit finds its model and source in *the very heart of Christ, apostle of the Father*" (C 11); pastoral charity is its centre and sums it up (cf. C 10).

We work with him in *building the Kingdom* (C 3), which was the main objective of the life of Jesus and of his words and actions. In the first chapter of the Constitutions, where our identity is defined, we read in fact that we direct our pastoral activ-

ity to the coming of a more just and fraternal world in Christ, trying to respond to the needs of the young and of working-class areas, "with the desire to work with the Church and in her name" (C 7), contributing to the building of the Church itself as the Body of Christ, so that also through us she may really appear as the "universal sacrament of salvation" (C 6).

Herein lies the *mystical* dimension of salesian work: we know that by this work we are "participating in the creative action of God and cooperating with Christ in building the Kingdom" (C 18). This building of the kingdom of God is evident in the multiplicity of activities aimed at the total advancement of poor youngsters and working-class areas, in cooperation with those who are creating a society more worthy of man (cf. C 33), I like to emphasize that in this task the salesian Brother plays his own irreplaceable part, which should be esteemed and developed. His position as a consecrated layman, in fact, "makes him in a particular way a witness to God's kingdom in the world, close as he is to the young and to the realities of the workplace" (C 45).

The content of the mission is very clear: *to bear witness to the love of Christ*. While not forgetting that we are signs of a Triune God (cf. C 2) we are invited in practice to continue the mission of Jesus. After Mary's example and under her protection we are "witnesses to the young of her Son's boundless love" (C 8), a love which is authentic to the extent that it is manifested and is the more effective the more it is perceived as an expression of love by those to whom our mission is directed.

Salvation is not only a transcendent consequence of liberation, as though in this world we did not need to be deeply concerned about bringing relief to those suffering the consequences of sin, selfishness and injustice; neither is liberation merely immanent salvation, as though it were possible to work only to create a paradise here on earth. Our Constitutions make a splen-

did synthesis of these two elements when they say that the love of Christ is *liberating and salvific*. It is made concrete in the total well-being of our charges (cf. C 33), and so “we give effect to the redeeming love of Christ by organizing activities and works of an educational and pastoral nature” (C 41), centred on evangelization and catechesis, because “our highest knowledge is to know Jesus Christ, and our greatest delight is to reveal to all people the unfathomable riches of his mystery. We walk side by side with the young so as to lead them to the risen Lord, and so discover in him and in his Gospel the deepest meaning of their own existence, and thus grow into new men” (C 34).

This is both a *personal* and a *community* task: the community must as such be “a sign revealing Christ and his saving presence” (C 57), which frees us from selfishness and makes us brothers and leaven giving rise to the new humanity. The evangelical counsels too are at the service of the mission: by obedience “each one places his abilities and talents at the service of the common mission” (C 69); poverty “leads us to be one with the poor and to love them in Christ” (C 79), and chastity makes us “witnesses to the predilection of Christ for the young” (C 81).

Our mission is addressed to the young, especially those among them who are poor, abandoned and in danger (cf. C 2 and C 26). It was one and the same Jesus who, in the dream at the age of nine, showed young John Bosco his field of work: “The Lord made clear to him that he was to direct his mission principally to the young, especially the very poor” (C 26); and the same Lord Jesus “has given us Don Bosco as father and teacher” (C 21).

Finally the Constitutions urge us to keep always in mind that whatever activity we undertake, “we educate and evangelize according to a plan for the total well-being of man directed to Christ, the perfect Man” (C 31). This means that evangelization is a very special form of the humanization of the person,

precisely because education aims at the building up of the person through the development of all aspects of his personality, and is attained by the communication of values, feelings, convictions and ideals, as well as knowledge, attitudes and ability. On the other hand, evangelization implies the entire contribution of education as methodology, in the sense that what we are trying to help the young to absorb interiorly becomes part of them by way of their willingness, joyful experience, enlightenment of the mind, and predisposition of the will, until finally it becomes a natural way of thinking, Christian practice, membership of the community of believers and commitment in history. This is what is meant by Don Bosco's expression: "Education is a matter of the heart".

■ The central position of Jesus Christ is manifested also in **community life**. In the first place the community experience *as such* is based on Christ: the confrere loves his community, imperfect though it may be, because he "knows that in it he finds the presence of Christ" (C 52); Christ identifies himself with the weakest and most needy among us (cf. *Mt* 25, 31-46); as long as there is one among us in need, Christ will have need of us. The practice of the evangelical counsels also helps us to live in the community "as in a family which enjoys the presence of the Lord" (C 61, cf. *Mt* 18, 20). This experience of the community united in Christ (cf. C 89) finds its greatest expression in community prayer, because this makes visibly evident that it "is not born of any human will but is the fruit of the Lord's death and resurrection" (C 85; cf. *Jn.* 1, 13).

The very life of the community becomes *formative*, to the extent that it is "united in Christ and open to the needs of the times" (C 99). All the more can this be said of the formation communities, in which "our spirit is lived in a more intense manner; together the members form a family founded on faith and enthusiasm for Christ" (C 103).

Within the community, the one who exercises the charism of animation and government does so “In imitation of Christ and in his name, as a service to brothers” (C 121): “he represents Christ who unites his followers in the service of the Father” (C 55). To give life therefore to *authority* in the salesian community is to live as an icon or image of Christ.

This christological concentration in the articles of the Constitutions regarding the community is naturally insufficient to ensure its “Christian” identity. The latter always needs verification with respect to the central position really occupied by Christ within it, in its way of thinking, judging, evaluating, pardoning and loving, until it becomes truly the “body” of Christ.

■ There is no doubt also that the *evangelical counsels* present an explicit character of *conformity to Christ*. Indeed, without this christological reference they would have no meaning: “We follow Jesus Christ, who ‘virginal and poor, redeemed and sanctified mankind by his obedience’, and share more closely in his paschal mystery, in his self-emptying and his life in the Spirit” (C 60).

Speaking of *Obedience*, one article in two passages presents Jesus as a model: “Our Saviour assured us that he came on earth to do not his own will but that of his Father in heaven; (...) by carrying out the mission entrusted to us we relive in the Church and in the Congregation Christ’s own obedience” (C 64). And all this is summed up once again in the following paragraph: “We take the Gospel as our supreme rule of life” (C 64), which means, according to the letter to the Galatians, that it is important for us to “obey the law of Christ” or better still “have Christ as our law” (cf. *Gal* 6,2).

Our *Poverty* too manifests a form of the practical following of Jesus who “though he was rich made himself poor, so that

through his poverty we might become rich...; he was born in poverty, lived deprived of everything and died stripped on the cross" (C 72; cf. 2 Cor 8,9). In this way we are invited to share in the happiness promised by the Lord to the "poor in spirit" (C 75; cf. Mt. 5, 3; Lk. 9, 57-58).

Finally, through *Chastity*, "we follow Jesus Christ closely" (C 80) and through its practice we are able to "bear witness to the predilection of Christ for the young; it allows us to love them in an open and uncomplicated way, so that they 'know they are loved'" (C 81).

The christological view of the evangelical counsels does not destroy their anthropological significance and their humanizing potentiality; indeed they are strengthened, as is stated explicitly in art. 62 of the Constitutions: "In a world beguiled by atheism and the idolatry of pleasure, possession and power, our way of life bears witness, especially to the young, that God exists, that his love can fill a life completely, and that the need to love and the urge to possess, and the freedom to control one's whole existence, find their fullest meaning in Christ the Saviour". It is stimulating to find that what is affirmed of God is not detrimental to man, but rather that Christ leads man to his own fullness.

■ Also in the life of both personal and community **prayer**, beautifully described as a *dialogue with the Lord*, we meet with the fullness of our relationship with the Lord Jesus, as being "*sons in the Son*". Each of us "nourishes his love for Christ at the table of the Word and the Eucharist" (C 84); explicit moments of prayer, in particular, manifest intimacy with the Lord: they "restore to our spirit a deep unity in the Lord Jesus" (C 91).

As a manifestation of friendship with Christ, the Salesian is "aware of the need to pray without ceasing in a simple heart-to-heart colloquy with the living Christ" (C 12). This need is expressed in frequent visits to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament,

from whom “we draw energy and endurance in our work for the young” (C 88). And ultimately, as the greatest expression of our pastoral activity with the young, we accompany them to their meeting with Christ, in listening to the Word, in prayer and in the sacraments (cf. C 36).

■ Finally **formation** is seen as the ongoing response to this love of predilection of the Lord who calls us; for this reason the text of the Constitutions states that, since formation is gaining “experience of the values of the salesian vocation”, we commit ourselves to a process that continues all through life, “enlightened by the person of Christ and by his Gospel” (C 98). This allows us “to conform ourselves more closely to Christ, and to renew our fidelity to Don Bosco, so that we can respond to the ever new demands arising from the situation of the young and the working classes” (C 118).

“To look on Christ as a model means to have in mind that the path to sanctification to which we are called means that we have to ‘*put on Christ*’ (Eph 4, 19)”.³⁹ And this is the function of formation which, for the same reason, cannot be reduced to its initial phases, but must continue for the whole life of the Salesian in a process that never ends until we are totally in Christ.

In particular, *borderline situations* in our life are the occasion of a decisive and definitive conforming to Christ. Although the articles relating to this theme in the GC22 were transferred from the context of formation to that of community life, thus bringing about a slight change of emphasis, they do not cease to be *occasions* for personal formation.

Similarly, conditions of old age and sickness allow us to be “united with the redeeming passion of the Lord” (C 53). Death is characterized as the moment in which consecrated life reaches its highest fulfillment with the full entry into Christ’s paschal

³⁹ *The Project of Life of the Salesians of Don Bosco*, p. 167.

mystery (cf. C 54). In this way, in both life and death (cf. C 94) we are signs of the power of Christ's Resurrection.

We can sum up this following and imitation of Christ, in which is rooted the *formative* character of our whole life, in the fine concluding article of the Constitutions, which says that they are for "us, the Lord's disciples *a way that leads to Love*" (C 196).

Our Constitutions help us, therefore, to carry out the following and imitation of Christ in every aspect of our vocation: mission, fraternal life, evangelical counsels, prayer and formation. With the certainty that comes from faith we can therefore profess that in our Constitutions we find that "the ultimate norm of the religious life is the following of Christ as proposed by the Gospel".⁴⁰ The same meaning attaches to the concluding programmatic article of our Rule of Life. This affirmation makes our life, which is essentially centred on Christ, more encouraging and binding. Nothing is more demanding than to profess that Jesus Christ is our "living rule". Nothing is more charismatic than the knowledge that "we find him present in Don Bosco who gave his life for the young". Nothing is more authentic than to "willingly accept the Constitutions as Don Bosco's will and testament, for us our book of life and for the poor and the little ones a pledge of hope" (C 196).

Conclusion

"Let us be imitators of Don Bosco, as he was of Christ!"

"The path which consecrated life is called to take up at the beginning of the new millennium is guided by the contemplation of Christ"⁴¹.

⁴⁰ CIVCSVA, *Potissimum Institutioni*, n. 8.

⁴¹ CIVCSVA, *Starting afresh from Christ*, n. 23.

We Salesians are invited to contemplate Christ through the eyes of Don Bosco, who had no other aim than the salvation of the young. His apostolic "Christology" is also ours. We are sensitive to certain characteristic traits of Jesus, which were for our dear Father a programme of life. He wrote no tract on Christology, but if the term implies also the story of the following of Christ, he inaugurated by his life a particular path, one that by our profession we have publicly determined to follow.

At the beginning of this letter I said that the contemplation of Christ embodies three inseparable elements: knowing him more deeply, loving him more intensely, following him more radically. Without in any way belittling the importance of theological knowledge, and of Christology in particular, I want to repeat that following him is the most secure and irreplaceable way of knowing and loving Christ: for us these are requirements that are based on salesian history, i.e. through the following of Don Bosco.

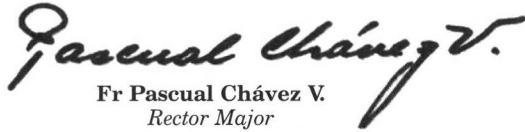
In 1986, the centenary of the historic photograph taken at Barcelona, Fr Viganò wrote the following dedication: "This is the best photograph of Don Bosco! One hundred years after his death, youngsters all over the world are waiting for the gift of the exciting salesian mission! *Let us be imitators of Don Bosco as he was of Christ!*".

Rightly do our Constitutions conclude with an article that provides a wonderful summary of this imitation of Christ through Don Bosco: "Our living Rule is Jesus Christ, the Saviour announced in the Gospel, who is alive today in the Church, and whom we find present in Don Bosco who devoted his life to the young" (C 196). It would be difficult to express in better terms our commitment and our reward.

To Mary I entrust each of you and the young people of the whole world. May she, who contemplated Christ through her

motherly eyes and heart, teach us to gaze on him until we are fully identified with him; may she help us to be like Don Bosco so that we may continue to be for the world's youngsters "signs and bearers of the love of God".

I wish you all a blessed Christmas and a Happy New Year for 2004!


Fr Pascual Chávez V.
Rector Major

SOME GUIDING CRITERIA FOR THE FORMULATION OF THE *SCRUTINIUM PAUPERTATIS* AT PERSONAL LEVEL AND AT COMMUNITY LEVEL

FR. GIOVANNI MAZZALI
Economer General

The first area of animation in the economy sector that is presented in the project of the Rector Major and his Council for the six year period 2002-2008, is that of **evangelical poverty**, made more precise with the further general objectives drawn from the reflections of the GC25:

1. *Promoting prophetic austerity in the personal style of life of the confreres and of the community.*
2. *Seeing to openness and accountability in the use of money and the application of the means put at our disposal by Providence.*

In reference to the achieving of the first objective, the programme indicates two specific interventions in particular:

- *Encourage the drawing up of the **scrutinium paupertatis** at provincial level, providing criteria and a method to follow, and then apply it at both community and individual level;*
- *Provide precise guidelines for the preparation, revision and verification of the **economic part of the Provincial Directory**, especially in reference to the use of goods and the accountability of the confreres and the communities.*

I wrote in AGC382 with regard to the second objective, providing an aid for the revision of the economic part of the Provincial Directory. It was decided, in fact, to anticipate the guidelines about the second objective in view of the celebration of the

Provincial Chapters, during which, among other things, the necessary revisions or the new versions of the Directory in the parts indicated could be attended to.

In this second contribution, in agreement with the Vicar of the Rector Major, I shall deal with the first objective which refers directly to the *scrutinium paupertatis*, to be put into practice at personal and community level.

It is interesting to note the spiritual background against which the two Rector Majors, Fr Viganò and Fr Vecchi, place the practice of the *scrutinium*. Fr Viganò in his letter “And Mary laid him in a manger” underlines in particular the need to constantly renew our response to God on the way that leads to love: «This verification not only ensures fidelity to a well defined religious profession we have freely made in a public and ecclesial manner, but enlightens and purifies a whole way of thinking, planning and working in trusting dependence on God and in joyful solidarity with those for whom we work » (AGC 345, page 37).

Fr Vecchi on his part underlines the spiritual value of the *scrutinium*: «*I encourage every single confrere, as well as communities and those who exercise the service of authority to live the “scrutinium” not so much as an examination of conscience as an experience of the Spirit, as an entrustment to his purifying fire and power of regeneration*» (AGC 367, page 31).

With two complementary points of view we are given the best way to live a vigilant attitude on which is based the practice of the *scrutinium* itself, understood as a readiness on the part of the individual and the community to allow itself to be shaped by the Spirit who purifies and renews the efforts towards fidelity.

1. At individual level

Individually the *scrutinium* can take various forms and be carried out in an informal way, but also in a more specific way on the occasion of the quarterly day of recollection and during

retreats. The Provincial might prepare and make available an appropriate formulation which would concentrate especially on those aspects of poverty which in a particular way concern the individual and deal with basic convictions and attitudes. I suggest several points that could be highlighted for a personal examination of conscience:

1.1. Basic ideas

- The basis frame of reference is poverty, in all its aspects, understood as an ***evangelical beatitude***. As far as bearing witness to the beatitudes is concerned it is important to reflect personally on worldly values, and the wisdom of the Gospel, understood as a liberation through the way of the cross;
- ***meeting Jesus and following him is the greatest possible good*** compared with temporal goods;
- ***detachment of the heart*** is the ascetical attitude which translates into every day life this reference to the greatest good;
- detachment of the heart is the basis for ***interior freedom*** with regard to the affections, to health, to power, to an awareness of one's own abilities and one's own culture, to the will;
- Don Bosco's famous expression "you need to have poverty in your heart" underlines the fact that living as a poor person means ***placing the mystery of life in the very heart of God***.

On the basis of these ideas one could formulate some questions to ask oneself in personal reflection. These questions are provided simply by way of example without wishing to impose them in any way.

1.2. Questions

1.2.1. Poverty as the following of Christ

- I ask myself whether Christ lived as the greatest good illuminates and shapes my daily decisions, especially with

regard to what I use for myself, my confreres and young people?

- Considering the poverty of Christ: what does it mean to me at this particular point in my life, with regard to my human and Christian development and to my identity as an educator and evangelizer?

1.2.2. Poverty as a beatitude and path of liberation

- In what practical ways has the beatitude of poverty entered into my attitudes, my daily choices and at the level of my style of life?
- Do I maintain a constant attitude of discernment in order to assess my daily progress in following the way of interior liberation in a serene acceptance of suffering and of the cross?
- In real terms which are the areas of my life in which I still need to become "free"?
- Where do I find the greatest difficulty in detaching myself from things, even necessary things?
- Do I succeed in freeing myself from excessive concerns about my health, my own well-being, the things I can use?
- By discerning, do I make a real effort to free myself from temptations regarding power, prestige, approval by others at all costs, an excessive attachment to my own ideas, self satisfaction with my gifts of intelligence and will?
- Have I the courage to identify clearly my more evident attitudes that are a counter-witness to moderation, sharing, recognising what is essential ?
- Am I quite content to depend on others, to give an honest account, considering these to be practical expressions of poverty as genuine steps towards freedom?

Obviously, other questions can be added referring directly to the particular situations in which one is living and to the specific sensitivities and expectations linked to the local culture and traditions.

2. At community level

From a community point of view it is important to identify both the **best time** in which to bring the community together and the **spiritual atmosphere**, in which to carry out the discernment which leads to deciding on the quality of life of the community and the choices which are then made to establish it. An indispensable point of reference for community discernment process is without doubt GC25 and its reflections, especially the second section on evangelical witness and within that n 35 which refers directly to “the concrete nature of poverty.”

2.1. Main Points

2.1.1. Poverty as communion in sharing and in solidarity

- Detachment of the heart has a fundamentally positive aspect as it **multiplies the resources of the community and therefore becomes a source of communion**;
- Being poor as a community means contributing to **solidarity** towards everyone especially the poorest, with the love of Christ and in Don Bosco’s way.
- A **sharing attitude at all levels**, both as regards the people with whom to share and the material goods to be shared helps to make solidarity something concrete.
- Evangelical poverty also means being **physically present** among the poor, **sharing their living conditions and the efforts made to improve them**.

2.1.2. Poverty and the salesian mission

- Poverty finds its practical expression in **service**, in giving oneself to the young.
- Detachment of the heart **sets free within the Salesian and within the community the most noble efforts** in the service of one’s neighbours.
- The community gives expression to its poverty **seeking resources** and making them available for the needs of the

youngsters and the poor, “collaborating with persons and organisations committed to social advancement and the struggle for justice” (GC25, 35).

- Salesian poverty implies great **trust in Providence**, but also that **enterprising spirit** that Don Bosco had in seeking funds in order to work. In living its poverty the salesian community **gives a witness to the young**, educating them in the right use of material goods and in the promotion of social justice.

2.1.3 Poverty as work

- The special expression of our poverty **is the work of the Salesian and of the community**, which in a variety of circumstances gives effect to our spirituality of apostolic activity.
- **Work**, in our spiritual tradition, is an expression of **human fulfilment**, offers a credible **life witness**, and provides a clear **educational message**.
- Work in “salesian terms” has an indispensable **community character**, in so far as it represents a commitment lived in obedience and shared with other confreres.
- Work for Don Bosco means **being involved in the most diverse activities** in carrying out the salesian mission; it means carrying out the highest responsibilities as well as ordinary work and “the most humble tasks” (GC25, 35).

2.1.4. Poverty as temperance

- Temperance is an expression of the **penitential dimension** of the salesian mission and helps to shape a community in which free and mature individuals live and work together.
- Temperance keeps the individual confrere and the communities **up to the mark, free** from ties and preoccupations that wear them down and undermine their dedication to the ones to whose service they are called.
- Temperance helps to overcome **activism** as an end in itself and often a sign of **individualism** and a **lack of equilibrium**;
- Temperance concerns both **interpersonal relationships** and one’s own personal **life style** and finds its concrete

expression in simplicity and concentration on the essentials.

2.1.5. Poverty as austerity and openness in the use of money

- Poverty is shown in a concrete **witness to austerity** through a style of community life that is simple, frugal, modest and sensitive to the social and economic conditions of the local neighbourhood.
- **The transparent use of money** and of the means that Providence puts at our disposal is an aspect of our poverty.

2.1.6. Poverty as prudent administration

- Poverty is directly concerned with the task of **administration** carried out with prudence, honesty and openness as regards the laws, both canon and civil.
- To administer with a spirit of genuine poverty means managing with skill and prudence, **directing the available resources towards the youth mission**.
- A fundamental criterion to govern salesian administration is **solidarity** understood in all senses of the word.

It seems to me that an attentive reading of the more recent official salesian documents, highlights a great convergence on these major points that I have tried to present in schematic form. I have also offered by way of example some questions to assist the Provincial and his Council in the drawing up of the *scrutinium paupertatis* for communities and for the individual confreres.

The path to follow would seem to be the following: a small commission could review and suggest improvements to a first draft drawn up by a confrere appointed to do this by the Provincial. The material produced by the commission would be examined by the Provincial Council, who would then give to the communities an official instrument with suggestions about how it might be used. May Mary Help of Christians help and guide us in the task of expressing to-day our fidelity to God according to the model of transparent poverty and intelligent enterprise that our Father Don Bosco has left us.

4. ACTIVITIES OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL

4.1 Chronicle of the Rector Major

– September 2003

The main events undertaken by the Rector Major are reported, while noting that during the days he was at home the Rector Major worked in his office and received visits from confreres, missionaries and Bishops.

Friday 5 September Fr Chávez left for Milan to take part in the Salesian Day for Schools and Technical Institutes which was attended by 750 people including teachers, Salesians and Daughters of Mary Help of Christians from the Lombardy Provinces. The Rector Major gave a conference on: *Salesian Schools and Technical Training: "a presence that welcomes and builds communion, educates and evangelises, accompanies and becomes a vocational proposal."* After the conference and a group photograph, the Rector Major presided at Mass. This was followed by lunch with the Salesian Rectors and confreres of the communities. Finally Fr Chávez said good bye to the Salesians, encouraging them to maintain high standards

in their charismatic identification and work for the young.

In the afternoon accompanied by the Provincial Fr Eugenio Riva, the Rector Major was driven to Vicenza, where Fr Claudio Filippin, Superior of the new Province of North-East Italy, was waiting for him and with whom he visited the community and the elderly and sick confreres in the "Mgr. Cognata" House in Castello di Godego. In his Good Night Fr Chávez encouraged the elderly and sick confreres to live their present condition fully, reminding them that they could feel themselves to be Salesians until the end making the salesian ideal: "*Da mihi animas*" their own. Zeal for the salvation of the young, he told them can be lived at every age, even though in different ways. After the moving encounter with this community, the Rector Major continued his journey to Venezia-Mestre.

The following day, 6 September, Fr Pascual Chávez presided over the events organised to mark the

unification of the Provinces of Verona and Venezia, which have been combined to create the *new Province of North-East Italy (INE)*, with the Provincial House in Venezia-Mestre, and having St Mark as its patron. The very full day marked by an atmosphere of prayer and family spirit began with a meeting with a spiritual character to set the scene more appropriately for this new phase in the history of the Salesian presence in Triveneto. In his talk the Rector Major invited the confreres to be open in faith and with enthusiasm to this time of grace, making their own the attitude of Moses in God's presence in the desert before the burning bush.

After lunch there was a meeting with the Salesian Family at which the Rector Major spoke about what it meant today to be the "Salesian Family." This was followed by Concelebrated Mass at which the Rector Major presided and during which after the Gospel, the decree officially erecting the INE Province was read and the new Provincial installed.

The day ended with a short visit of Venice and supper with the Salesians in the Venezia - Castello community. On Sunday morning 7 September, the Rector Major attended the Triveneto **SYM**

Meeting, with about 500 young people and in the afternoon said Mass at which there were the perpetual professions of eight SDB and one FMA. After supper with the confreres of the Mestre community, he left for Verona - San Zeno, where he spent the night, and then next morning continued his journey to Turin.

At midday on Monday 8 September, the feast of the Birthday of Mary, he presided at the concelebrated Mass to mark the erection of the new Province of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians covering the whole of Piedmont, followed by lunch at their Provincial House. In the afternoon he presided at Mass at which the novices from Pinerolo made their *first professions*.

After the Mass he left for Milan, where he caught a plane for *Brussels*. The Provincial Fr André van der Sloot was waiting for him there and took him to the Woluwé - Saint Lambert community, where he was welcomed by the confreres.

Between 9 and 11 September the Rector Major visited the South Belgium Province (BES), for the 40th anniversary of the "*Don Bosco*" College in Woluwé. The celebration of this event filled Tues-

day 9 September, during which the Rector Major met all the youngsters of the different classes, the teaching and the ancillary staff. The main item was an historical academy at which Salesians, the Heads of the school and two groups of youngsters were present. The day ended with Mass attended by all the Salesians who had come for the celebration. After Mass, by way of a Good Night the Rector Major thanked everyone for their vocation a gift of God for the young; he encouraged them to live it without fear, with hope, and since they had been celebrating the past, suggested that it might help them to look towards and plan for the future which is God's and in his hands.

On 10 September the Rector Major visited the communities of Farnières at Grand-Halleux, of Verviers and Liège, leaving with them a message of hope and encouraging them to be present among the young. In this last house he met those in charge of the Salesian Family.

The last day Thursday 10 September, he visited the Réseau Don Bosco, where he met the council of administration, and then met the Provincial Council. After lunch he left to visit the communities of Hornu and Tournai, where he had

supper with the Salesians and with the lay Head of the College and others responsible for the various sectors; before leaving he gave them a Good Night. The day finished with a visit to the community of Brussels-Centre and a walk round the historical central square of Brussels.

Returning to Rome on Friday 12 September, he presided at a meeting of a limited Council. Between 13 and 24 September Fr Chávez was in Mexico where he visited his family and dealt with some particular situations.

Once more in Rome, the Rector Major continued his ordinary activities until Saturday 27 September when he left for Turin. He went directly to *Viarigi* to celebrate Mass in the birth place of Blessed Luigi Variara. He was given honorary citizenship, which was also conferred *in memoriam* on Mother Rosa Inés Baldión, former Superior of the Daughters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, in the presence of the Vicar General of the diocese of Asti and a number of Mayors, Salesians and Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.

On Sunday 28 September, in the morning the Rector Major met the young people attending *Harambée*

2003, in the theatre of the Oratory at Valdocco, to whom he spoke about the importance of having a plan of life. Immediately afterwards he went to the Cottolengo Institute to greet a missionary from Mexico and another confrere being looked after there. In the afternoon Fr Chávez presided at a solemn concelebrated Mass for the *133rd Missionary Expedition* departure ceremony for 16 SDB, 6 FMA, 9 volunteers from Poland and 21 Italian volunteers including a couple and a young family with two small children.

Having returned to Rome he took up again his ordinary work. At the end of the month he attended a meeting at the Offices of the Union of Superiors General.

– **October 2003**

The Rector Major's main engagement during October was presiding at the *Intermediate Session of the General Council* between 6 and 15 October

As well as receiving Bishops and confreres who had come to visit him, other engagements included a meeting with the deacons from the "*San Tommaso*" community at the UPS, which took place on 1 October at the FAC house, where they were preparing the programme for the year.

On the afternoon of 2 October the Rector Major took part in the opening of a Seminar of the Canon Law Faculty of the UPS, held in the *Salesianum* between 2 and 4 October which was to update the curriculum.

On Monday 6 October Fr Chávez went to the UPS. After visiting the sick confreres being cared for in the infirmary, he was welcomed by Fr Mario Toso, Rector Magnificus of the University and by Fr Giuseppe Nicolussi, Superior of the Vice Province. He then presided at Mass in the parish church of Our Lady of Hope, and then in the Paul VI Hall at the solemn academic ceremony for the *inauguration of the year 2003-2004*. The Rector Major presented medals of the University to Prof. Fr Michele Pellerey, former Rector of the University, to some teachers *emeriti*, to some award winning students and then declared the Academic Year open. Mother Antonia Colombo was also present for the occasion.

Between the afternoon of Friday 10 and the morning of Monday 13, the Rector Major was in *Austria for the celebrations marking the centenary of the Salesians and the 75th anniversary of the Daughters of Mary Help of Chris-*

tians. On Saturday 11 he visited the community and the school at Unterwaltersdorf/Niederösterreich, where he met 700 students with their parents, the staff and the community, as well as the civil authorities present. Meeting the staff, Fr Chávez encouraged them in their not easy task as educators in a society that is materially well off and secularised, emphasising the importance of education to the faith according to the salesian charism. Afterwards he joined the Salesians from the community and others who had come from Vienna and nearby. He thanked each of them for their fidelity to their vocation and invited them to celebrate the centenary by giving thanks to the Lord for his goodness and fidelity, and by planning for the future. After lunch the Rector Major left for Linz, where he took part in the opening of the new premises of the Don Bosco parish, in the presence of the diocesan Bishop, Mgr. Maximilian Aichern, OSB, and the Mayor of Linz, Dr. Franz Dobusch, and many parishioners. In his talk he spoke about Don Bosco and his educational charism. The very full day ended with a meeting with the Salesian Family at Vöcklabruck, in the house of the FMA, before he finally went to the novi-

tiate at Oberthalheim to spend the night.

On Sunday 12 he went to Timelkam, where he was welcomed by the Salesian parish priest, by the local Mayor and all the members of the parish council and shown the new Treffpunkt Timelkam premises. The Rector Major in his reply thanked all those present and congratulated them on their work together for youth. He then presided at the Sunday Mass in the parish church, with the local people who were celebrating the *Erntedankfest*. He returned to Oberthalheim for lunch with the community and then left for Linz, the Brucknerhaus, where there was a solemn academic exercise, attended by the Regional and a number of Provincials from the North Europe Region, by the Salesian Archbishop of Salzburg, Mgr. Alois Kothgasser, by civil and religious authorities and a large number of SDB, FMA, Cooperators, Past Pupils, Friends of Don Bosco from throughout Austria. At the end the Bishop of Linz asked the Rector Major to give a blessing as Don Bosco used to do. Then after this solemn commemoration of the centenary, he greeted many of those present and then returned to Vienna.

On Monday 13, Fr Chávez presided at Mass with the community in the provincial house and the end of which Mgr Ludwig Schwarz, Auxiliary of Vienna, and his Eminence Card. Christoph von Schönborn, Archbishop of Vienna arrived and had breakfast with the Rector Major and the Salesians. Before leaving for the airport, the Rector Major had an interview with Card. Schönborn and then gave a press conference.

After returning to Rome, on Wednesday 15 Fr Chávez went to the Vatican, where he was received by Mgr. Leonardo Sandri, to whom he gave a letter with greetings to the Holy Father for the twenty fifth anniversary of his Pontificate.

On the evening of the following day the Rector Major left for Budapest to visit the *Hungarian Province* which was celebrating the *90th anniversary of the presence of the Salesians*. On Friday 17 he visited the house of Péliföldszentkereszt, which was the first salesian foundation in Hungary (1913), formerly a house of formation and now a Salesian youth spirituality centre. Afterwards he visited the Sixth Form College of Nyergesújfalu, a school that had been requisitioned and then re-

turned by the State two years ago. In his talk at the end of an academy offered in his honour, the Rector Major thanked all those who were present including the Mayor, the parish priest, the Provincial of Slovakia, Salesians, students and staff. He recalled the history of the place which by their efforts so soon after it was returned to them demonstrated the desire of the Salesians to accompany the young people and Hungarian society towards the new Europe. He then presided at a concelebrated Mass in the parish church a few metres away from the Salesian College. He returned for lunch to Péliföldszentkereszt, where he was welcomed by the salesian community, by cooperators, by collaborators and by the Mayor of Nyergessújfalu. After lunch he left for Budapest, and visited the Don Bosco Publishing House, where he was shown around, told about its recent history, its aims and achievements. Fr Chávez thanked them for the work they were doing, their involvement with the publication and distribution of the Hungarian Salesian Bulletin, and encouraged them to maintain the salesian spirit in the distribution of good literature so dear to Don Bosco.

On Saturday morning 18, the

Rector Major met the Provincial Council and afterwards about forty confreres. He told them he was happy to be with them and assured them that there was a place in his heart for each one of them. After recalling the Salesians he had known personally beginning with Fr Janos Antal, he spoke about the 90 years the Salesians had been in Hungary – most of them very difficult and painful. He therefore paid homage to all of them for their fidelity and thanked them for the witness they had given. Now, he continued, a new stage was beginning, that of reconstruction, which was not easy. Our work is God's work: we therefore need to be persevering and trusting: there are young Salesians who can continue Don Bosco's mission; the majority, the elderly ones, represent salesian history, the young ones ensure the future. Taking over our works again is a sign and proof of a new springtime; it is necessary therefore to work for the future as Don Bosco would have done: this means turning towards the young, consecrating oneself to their education, at a time when Hungary is about to enter the European Union and this is under threat of secularisation. The Salesians in Hungary are more necessary than ever! The

meeting concluded with the celebration of Mass in the public church, crowded with SDB, FMA, cooperators, collaborators, heads of schools and colleges, teachers and youngsters. After Mass the Rector Major gave an interview to a local television station. In the afternoon after the meal together, he went to a nearby theatre, which the Óbuda town council had made available, for the academic commemoration in which representatives of all the works of the Salesians and of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians took part.

On Sunday 19 Fr Chávez presided at Mass for young people in the public church of Óbuda, which was filled with people most of whom after the Mass took part in a meeting with the Rector Major in which he answered questions about salesian education in Hungary today. The Rector Major also gave another interview to a local television station. The visit concluded with an evening at the Opera Theatre, where he attended a performance of *Don Carlos*. He then returned to the provincial house where he had supper with the confreres and then blessed the chapel of the hostel for university students at Óbuda, to whom he spoke by way of a good night about Don Bosco and

his method of education and underlined the importance of education and of Christian education in building a new Hungary. The following day he returned to Rome.

On Tuesday 21 October Fr Chávez attended the celebration of the public *Consistory* in St Peter's Square for the creation of the new Cardinals, including Mgr. Tarcisio Bertone, Salesian Archbishop of Genoa.

Between Saturday 25 and Monday 27 October the Rector Major was in *Ethiopia*, for the *25th anniversary of the Vice Province*. The visit began with a meeting with the Provincials, Superiors of Delegations and Delegates members of the Provincial Conference of Africa and Madagascar, followed by the celebration of Mass with the members of the *CIVAM* and Salesians from the Ethiopia/Eritrea Vice Province. In the afternoon Fr Chávez met the Salesians from the Vice Province and spoke to them about the salesian model of community which the GC25 wanted to describe. In the evening, the Rector Major, in the presence of the Metropolitan Archbishop of Addis Ababa, Abune Berhaneyesus Souraphiel, of two other Bishops in the country, of the Prefect Apostolic of

Gambella, the Salesian Mgr. Angelo Moreschi, and of numerous male and female religious from the city and the country blessed the "Salesianum", the new residence of the provincial house and a hostel. The day ended with supper.

The following day Sunday 26, Fr Chávez went to the salesian house at Mekanissa to attend the consecration, in the Ethiopian rite, of the church of Mary Help of Christians. The solemn ceremony which lasted four hours was attended by Bishops, secular and regular priests, members of the Salesian Family and a considerable number of the faithful. After the celebration lunch was provided for all those taking part and this was followed by an academy in which representatives of all the Salesian works in Ethiopia appeared on the stage.

In the evening the Rector Major visited the Salesian and educative community of the "Don Bosco Children Centre", recently set up for street children. There he was entertained with songs and dancing by the children and he said a Hail Mary with them before speaking to them. He said how happy he was because they had found a place where people cared for them and where they could go whenever they wished. He en-

couraged them to make themselves at home with the Salesians and the volunteers who were working for them. Then the Rector Major had supper with the Salesians and the volunteers in the community. By way of a good night he thanked them for the work they had done and encouraged them to do even more to provide the very best for the children who so far in their lives had had few opportunities.

On Monday morning 27, Fr Chávez left with Fr Alfredo Roca, other confreres and a group of salesian Cooperators for the novitiate at Debre Zeit. There he met the formation personnel, the young Salesians and novices, to whom he spoke about formation in the Congregation at present. After he had finished speaking, the Rector Major answered questions from the Salesians, before going to greet the Cooperators gathered in the novitiate chapel. Here he said Mass during which three young Cooperators made their promise. The celebrations continued at lunch after which Fr Chávez returned to Addis Abeba and visited the FMA community. He was welcomed by songs from the little girls and the young students, and said a word of thanks. He stayed with the Sisters and

spoke to them about the challenges and the tasks which, as he saw it, were facing the Salesian Family in Africa and more especially in Ethiopia. Having returned to the provincial house he met the Superior and the Councillors of the Vice Province. The visit finished with supper and a performance of some local dancing, before he was taken to the airport.

On 29 October, the memorial of Blessed Michael Rua, the first successor of Don Bosco and the Patron of the Generalate, the Rector Major received Card. Rosalio Castillo, who wanted to visit and greet him before returning to Venezuela. He took part in the community celebrations and presided at the Mass.

The month of October concluded with the Rector Major taking part in the European Congress of Past Pupils (*Eurobosco*), at which he gave a conference about the role that was theirs at this historic moment for Europe. He had scarcely finished when the news was given him of the unexpected death of Fr Pasquale Liberatore, the Postulator of the Congregation. At once he went to his room to pray for him and entrust him to the merciful love of God.

– **November 2003**

Also during the month of November the Rector Major's programme alternated between office work, receiving many visitors, journey and visits to the provinces.

On Monday 3 he presided at the community Concelebrated requiem Mass for Fr Pasquale Liberatore, in the presence of two Salesian Bishops, two Provincials, the Superior of the Vice Province of the UPS, the Vicar of the Mother General of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, a considerable number of SDB, FMA, other members of the Salesian Family and other religious.

On Thursday 6 the Rector Major left for Istanbul, where he took part in the celebrations for the *centenary of the presence of the Salesians in Turkey*. On the following days he visited the communities at Fidar and El-Houssoun in Lebanon, and the house in Damascus, in Syria. Both in Lebanon and in Syria Fr Chávez had a series of celebrations and meetings with confreres, Bishops, the Salesian Family and young people.

On 10 November the Rector Major returned home. The following morning he presided at Mass for those taking part in the National Congress for Economers

and those in charge of Oratories in the CISI; in the evening he gave the good night and had supper with them.

On the evening of Friday 14, with all the community of the Generalate Fr Chávez entertained to supper a group of Bishops from Tamil Nadu (India), who were in Rome for their *ad limina* visit and wished to visit Don Bosco's Successor.

Between 15 and 17 the Rector Major took part in the concluding events marking the *125th anniversary of the Manfredini House in Este (Padua)*, founded by Don Bosco himself.

On 21 he presided at the funeral Mass for Fr Pietro Brocardo, master and model of salesian life, who, had worked so much for the Congregation, especially in the field of formation.

The month ended with his taking part in the meeting of the Union of Superiors General (USG), which had as its theme *Inter-religious dialogue*. In the course of the Assembly Fr. Pascual Chávez was elected a member of the *Executive Committee* of the USG and of the so-called "*Committee of 16*" which maintains contacts with the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life.

4.2 Chronicle of the General Councillors

The Vicar General

After the summer session of the Council Fr Luke Van Looy went to Bangkok, Thailand, for the World Assembly of the UMEC (World Union of Catholic Educators) of which he is the Ecclesiastical Assistant.

Returning to Italy, he went immediately to Turin to take part in the World Congress of ADMA (the Association of Clients of Mary Help of Christians).

8 - 10 August. He was at Jerusalem with Frs Mazzali and Cereda for meetings at ecclesiastical level.

14 - 15 August. At Manzini in Swaziland, he presided at a celebration for the 50 years of salesian work in that country, with a congress on the application of the preventive system in Africa.

On returning to Rome he took part in the Assembly of the DBV before leaving for Belgium for a visit of animation to the Southern Belgian Province.

23 - 28 August. He spent some time with members of the Salesian Family in Sicily, taking the opportunity to get a better knowl-

edge of the situation of the Sicilian Province.

29 August. He was present at the World Assembly of the Past-pupils of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.

30 August. He left for Argentina to give a retreat for the confreres of the Rosario Province, commenting on the Mysteries of the Rosary in the light of John's Gospel. After a day at Buenos Aires for the animation of the Salesian Family, he went on to Chile and later to Paraguay for meetings and animation purposes.

22 - 23 September. He was at Mainz in Germany for a study on the Salesian Family with the parish priests of the Province.

29 September. He directed a day of reflection on conversion and responsibility with the members of the General Chapter of the Premonstratensians.

2 - 3 October. Fr Van Looy presided at a meeting in the Generalate to study matters concerning the Canon Law Faculty of the UPS.

5 October. He celebrated the centenary of the work at *Sint Denijs Westrem e Zwijnaarde*, in the North Belgian Province, with the community, collaborators and young people. The high point of the event was the splendid eucharistic celebration, animated by

five choirs from various European countries.

6 - 15 October. He took part in the intermediate meeting of the General Council.

16 - 20 October. He presided at the celebrations for the 75 years of the salesian studentate in the Holy Land, now at Cremisan (Israel), with a eucharistic celebration at Bethlehem, and academic function and various meetings.

28 October. He began the annual *canonical visitation* of the "Blessed Michael Rua" community of the Generalate.

29 October - 1 November. He took part in *Eurobosco*, the congress of European past-pupils, and on the following day was at a meeting of the Presidency of the World Confederation of Past-pupils.

8 - 9 November. He was at Munich for the 16th annual meeting of the provinces of Germany and Austria on salesian youth spirituality. This year's theme dealt with reconciliation and holiness.

11 - 19 November. He was in Japan for a meeting with the Sisters of Charity of Miyazaki, and took the opportunity to make a brief visit of animation to Korea.

22 - 23 November. He joined a retreat with the community of the "*Don Bosco Mission*" (CMB) at Monghidoro, near Bologna, to

speak about the salesian approach to discernment.

26 - 29 November. He was present with the Rector Major at the six-monthly meeting of the Union of Superiors General (USG) on the theme of *interreligious dialogue*.

The Councillor for Formation

At the beginning of August Fr Cereda took part at *Fatima* in a formation meeting for Rectors of the Iberian Conference, and in the following week visited, with Frs Van Looy and Mazzali, the community of *Cremisan* and the Ratisbonne Study Centre at *Jerusalem*.

28 August - 13 September. He made the visitation of the *two Provinces of the Philippines* in the East Asia and Oceania Region, and of the *Vice-province of Indonesia - East Timor*. He held meetings with aspirants, pre-novices, novices, postnovices and students of theology in the various formation communities of the three countries, with their teachers and formation guides, and with the provincial formation teams and provincial councils. Special attention was given to the two novitiates at Fatumaca (East

Timor) and Tigaraksa (Indonesia).

8 - 10 September. He had a meeting at *Jakarta* with the *Provincials and delegates of the Region* to discuss formation communities and the challenges of the formation process at the present day. The question of interprovincial collaboration was examined for formation communities and for the specific formation of the salesian Brother, together with the establishing of a regional commission for formation.

13 - 14 September. He took part at Milan in a meeting of animators of the SYM on the theme of the personal life plan, and presided at the Eucharist for the perpetual profession of Salesians and of Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.

17 - 19 September. He held a meeting at *Caracas* with all the *provincial delegates of the Interamerican Region*, to discuss the formation communities and the challenges of the formation process; other themes examined were the promoting of the vocation of the salesian Brother, the community project and the personal life plan, and the function of the provincial delegate for formation and his team. Proposals emerged which were later presented (25-26 September) to the

Provincials of the Region, meeting at Montreal; they considered the setting up of a regional commission for formation, a new approach to the specific formation of the Brother, and new initiatives for interprovincial collaboration, for a deeper study of the prenovitiate phase, and for the self-assessment of formation communities.

20 September - 4 October. During this period the Councillor was able to visit in the *Venezuelan Province*: the prenovitiate and postnovitiate at Los Teques, the theologate at La Vega, the novitiate at San Antonio de los Altos and also the two salesian study centres IUSPO and ITER; of considerable interest was the meeting with all the formation guides of the province for the Eucharist, supper and a festive evening. Similarly in the *Peruvian Province* Fr Cereda was able to visit the prenovices and postnovices at Magdalena del Mar and the novices at Chosica. In the *Colombian Province of Bogotá* he met the prenovices at Mosquera, the students of philosophy and theology in the two communities of COB and COM at Bogotá; and in the *Colombian Province of Medellín* he met the postnovices at Medellín, the novices at La Ceja and the prenovices at Rionegro.

He was able to dialogue in a climate of openness and sharing with all those in formation and with their formation guides. In each province the visit concluded with a meeting with the provincial formation commission.

27 October - 19 November. Following on his first visit in the previous January and February, the Councillor for Formation returned to *India* to visit the four provinces of north-India and that of Mumbai. He began in the capital, *New Delhi*, with a meeting with the provincial formation commission, before going on to Ranchi, the aspirantate of Hatia, and then to the prenovices of Jharsuguda, the only formation house in this Province. After this he went on to the *Calcutta Province* where he first visited the aspirantate and Marian sanctuary at Bandel and then the postnovitiate for the Brothers of the whole of India at Kalyani. Next came visits to the novices of Siliguri and the postnovices of Sonada. Returning to Calcutta he met the prenovices and concluded the visit to the province with a meeting with the provincial formation commission and a concelebration of the Eucharist on the tomb of Blessed Mother Teresa.

The visit to the *Guwahati*

Province began at the prenovitiate of Tura. Fr Cereda then went on to Shillong, where he visited the novitiate at Sunnyside, the formation community and theology centre of Mawlai, the Mathias Institute for the specific formation of Brothers, and Savio Juniorate. Here he had a meeting with Abp. Dominic Jala SDB, and also visited the FMA and the Ferrando Sisters at St Anthony's College. Finally there was a meeting with the formation commission at the provincial house, where the visitor also met Abp Thomas Menampampil SDB.

Continuing his visits to the formation communities of north India, the Councillor then went on to the *Dimapur Province*, where he began with the aspirantate and prenovitiate of Jorhat. He was not able to get the necessary permission to enter Nagaland and in consequence was unable to visit the postnovitiate of Dimapur and the novitiate and aspirantate of Zubza. He remained in the state of Assam and went to Golaghat, where the Provincial and members of the provincial formation commission came to meet him. Finally he visited Dibrugarh, with its big school and aspirantate.

Next Fr Cereda moved on to the *Mumbai Province* and began with

a visit to the prenovices at Kudal. At Panjim he visited the headquarters of the provincial delegation of Goa, before going on to Nashik to meet the communities of the novitiate and postnovitiate; he also had a meeting with the university students and those studying for the Licentiate in Philosophy. From Nashik he went to Pune to meet the students of theology and visit the Theological Faculty where they go for lessons. On the way back to Mumbai he called at the aspirantate at Lonavla, and finally at the provincial house he had a meeting with the formation commission of the province.

21 - 22 November. The Councillor took part in a meeting at the postnovitiate of San Tarcisio, Rome, of those *responsible for the formation communities and prenovitiates of Italy*. The situation of each such community was presented, and various themes were put forward by the Department: formation communities and study centres; challenges of formation at the present day; and the personal life plan. The meeting examined some significant lines of future action, and drew attention to the need for the individual follow-up of candidates, the formation of the formation guides themselves, the set up of the

prenovitiate, the formation of the salesian Brother, and the study of salesianity.

The Councillor for Youth Ministry

1 - 3 August. Fr Domenech took part in the meeting at Fatima for the formation of new rectors of the provinces of Spain and Portugal. He then spent a few days with his own family before leaving for Melbourne (Australia) with one of the collaborators of his Department to animate a meeting of delegates and members of provincial commissions for youth ministry from the provinces of the *East Asia Region*. In this first meeting of its kind the participants shared information about the situation of youth ministry in the provinces and adopted some general criteria and lines of action for practical coordination and networking among the provincial delegates.

14 - 20 September. He made a visit of animation to various foundations in the Bolivia Province, followed by a three-day meeting at Cochabamba with the provincial delegates for youth ministry from all the *Interamerican Region*. This meeting served to as-

sess the progress already made in the provinces, and a plan for the pastoral animation of the Region was drawn up in collaboration with the Regional Formation Centre of Quito.

Next, the Councillor left for Toronto (Canada) for a meeting with the *Provincials* of the same Region to share with them the salient points of the model of salesian youth pastoral work and the conclusions of the meeting with the delegates.

29 September - 3 October. After returning to Rome he animated, with a member of his team, a session of pastoral formation for the Sisters of Mary Immaculate (RMI).

10 October. After the intermediate session of the General Council he left for Cachoeira do Campo (Belo Horizonte - Brazil) for a meeting with the SYM (*Articulação Juvenil Salesiana*) of the Brazilian Provinces.

13 - 15 October. He held a meeting with the Brazilian provincial delegates to study the situation of pastoral animation in the provinces and adopt some lines of action for the future.

17 - 20 October. He next went on to Quito (Ecuador) for a meeting with provincial delegates for the study of marginalization in the Interamerican Region, to

draw up a plan of regional animation for this sector.

24 - 27 October. He had a meeting with the Provincials and provincial delegates of *CIMEC* at Zelimlje (Slovenia).

2 November. Fr Domenech left for *Madagascar*, to animate some meetings on pastoral formation at Fianarantsoa for the students of the postnovitiate and of theology, and for the animators of youth pastoral work of the communities.

9 November. After returning to Rome on the previous day he left again for the *Middle East Province*, where he animated various meetings on pastoral formation for the rectors and animators of the communities.

10 - 13 November. He held a meeting with the communities of Lebanon and Syria at El Housoun (Lebanon).

17 - 22 November. He was able to visit the communities of Nazareth, Bethlehem and Cremisan.

24 - 27 November. He had a meeting with the Salesians of the Egyptian communities at Cairo.

The Councillor for Social Communication

In the chronicle of the Councillor for Social Communication for

the period August - November 2003 are listed also some other significant activities that have taken place alongside the work of the Department.

On 25 and 26 August the Councillor took part in meetings of the *provincial delegates for social communications* of the *Southern Asian Region (BOSCOM)*, at Madras, India. Subsequently, 29 August, he attended the meeting of the Provincials of the same Region in Sri Lanka. In each case social communication in the Region and the salesian system of social communication were on the agenda. After these meetings he took the opportunity to visit some salesian communities and works in the Madras Province and the Delegation of Sri Lanka, including the inauguration of the headquarters of the delegations of Sri Lanka, and that of Goa (in the Province of Mumbai).

In early October Fr Scaramussa visited the *Elle di Ci* Publishing House and the Centre of evangelization and Catechesis (CEC) at Turin-Leumann.

On October 18 and 19, he took part in the Salesian Movement of the Sardinian Vice-province.

21 - 22 October. The Councillor was in the *Africa-Madagascar Region* for a CIVAM meeting at Ad-

dis Ababa, to study with the Provincials and CS delegates, the situation of social communication in the Region and the salesian system of social communication. Following this he went on to visit communities and works at Lubumbashi, Madagascar, Johannesburg, Angola and Lagos.

During this period the Department concluded its studies on the *logo* of our Salesian Headquarters, and has set in motion the task of its registration and presentation to the Congregation. The reserved part of our web-site has been technically updated and can now be used by Council members, Provincials and delegates of the various sectors. A process has also been launched for an assessment of the "Radio Meridiano 12" (IRO).

The Councillor for the Missions

25 July. Fr Alencherry left Rome for *Madagascar*, where he spent two weeks in visiting all the salesian foundations, meeting the confreres, and becoming acquainted with the problems existing in the field of our missionary commitment.

10 August. He went on to *Mauritius* where Salesians have been working for only three years.

With the confreres there he drew up a project for the development of the work. He had a meeting also with the Bishop, who expressed his great appreciation for the work our confreres have done.

12 August. The Councillor returned to Rome.

17 - 25 August. He left Rome for the *Peruvian Province*, where he visited in particular the new mission of San Lorenzo and the other salesian missions in the Andes zone: Cusco, Calca, Lares, Quebrada Honda, Monte Salvado, Amparaes. Although the visit was a hurried one, the Councillor had sufficient time to speak with the individual missionaries and get to know the reality of the situation of the area, where all the missionaries are very dedicated to their work.

26 August - 8 September. From Peru he went on to *Ecuador*, where he visited the missions in the Andes, Amazonian and Afro-American areas of the Province. Ecuador has a variety of missionary commitments, because of the differences in the local cultures, and the missionaries are enthusiastic and creative in responding adequately to the practical needs that arise. Very impressive too is their commitment to the social advancement and development of the very poor.

9 - 12 September. Fr Alencher-ry spent this period in the Colombian *Province of Medellin*. The first two days were dedicated to a meeting at Copacabana with the provincial delegates for missionary animation of the provinces of the Interamerican Region, though only 8 of the 14 provinces of the Region were able to participate. It was a good opportunity for reflecting on our commitment to the mission *ad gentes* and to programme missionary animation in the Region. After the meeting the Councillor visited some of the houses of the Province, but lack of time prevented him from visiting the mission of the Choco area.

On his return to Rome, Fr Alencher-ry and his collaborators in the Missions Department were busy with the preparation of two programmes. The first was that of the *Consulting Body of Salesian Missionologists*, made up of representatives from different parts of the world, and held at the Generalate from 15 to 17 September. 17 missionologists took part in the meeting. And it was followed immediately by the *training course for new missionaries* from 18 to 28 September, which concluded with the ceremony of the presentation of the missionary crucifix to the new missionar-

ies by the Rector Major in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians at Turin on 28 September. This year there were 50 missionaries (17 SDB, 6 FMA, and 27 lay people).

In the first week of October Fr Alencherry made a visit to *Azerbaijan*, accompanied by Fr V. Fekete, Provincial of the SLK Province, to which Azerbaijan belongs. The visit was important for setting out the lines of growth and development of the mission from both ecclesial and salesian standpoints. Azerbaijan is still a very small foundation which is in need of strengthening.

6 - 15 October. The Councillor attended the *intermediate session of the General Council*.

17 - 18 October. He was at the *Missions Office of Madrid*, with Fr Maurice Vallence and other personnel of the Mission Offices and NGOs of the Congregation for their autumn meeting, during which was set up the *Don Bosco Network* to facilitate and coordinate the work of the NGOs.

19 October. He was back in Rome to take part in the beatification of Mother Teresa of Kolkata in St Peter's Square.

20 October. He left Rome once again for the first part of the *Extraordinary Visitation of Mumbai*,

India (IMB), which went on till 29 November. In this part of the visitation he visited all the houses in the Konkan Delegation and in the Gujarat area, except for the foundation of Sukhet in Rajashtan.

30 November. The Councillor returned to Rome for the winter session of the General Council.

The Economer General

27 July - 2 August. Fr Mazzali preached a retreat for a group of fifty French confreres at Coat an Doc'h in Brittany.

7 - 9 August. He took part in the meeting in Jerusalem for the transfer by the Holy See to the Middle East Province of the *Ratisbonne* property.

17 - 23 August. He was back in France again, to preach the retreat to a second group of French confreres at the Abbey of Bellefontaine.

27 August - 4 September. He directed a summer camp for boys and young men of the Don Bosco Oratory of Sangano, before spending a few days of rest with his family.

22 - 27 September. He preached a retreat to rectors, parish priests and head teachers at Szczyrk in the Krakow Province of Poland.

6 - 15 October. Fr Mazzali took part in the *intermediate session* of the General Council.

20 - 23 October. He had a meeting at Valencia with the provincial eonomers of Spain and Portugal.

28 October. He presided at a meeting of the Superior Council for the Administration of the UPS, which took place at the Generalate.

29 - 31 October. He was once again in Palestine to settle details about the *Ratisbonne* property.

Fr Mazzali had planned a visit to the Province of Tiruchy and to the Vice-province of Sri Lanka in November, but was compelled to remain in Rome to deal with some important business matters.

The Councillor for the Africa - Madagascar Region

In the period August - November 2003, Fr Valentín de Pablo was engaged in the following activities:

❑ *Extraordinary Visitation of the East Africa Province.*

Following a prearranged programme, between 6 August and 27 November he visited the salesian communities in Kenya, Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda; he

was able to meet all the confreres. The Province has 11 foundations in Kenya, 5 in Sudan, 10 in Tanzania and 2 in Uganda. The works include houses of formation, parishes, secondary and technical schools, centres for the reception and advancement of youngsters at risk, missions of first evangelization, and work among refugees. The variety of the works well expresses the rich values of the salesian charism in this part of Africa. The particularly difficult situation of the communities in Sudan (with the Islamic environment, Arabic language, civil war, and difficulty of getting entry visas) reflects the challenges which the Province and confreres face with generosity. The formation communities at Utume in Kenya for theology, and at Moshi in Tanzania for the novitiate and postnovitiate, offer a valuable service to various other Provinces of the Region. On 21 November the Regional was able to join the meeting of the Regional Commission for Youth Pastoral Work at Nairobi.

❑ *Consultation for the new Superior of the Ivory Coast Vice-province (AFO).*

In September the Regional went to various parts of West

Africa to launch the consultations for the appointment of new Superiors for the AFO, ATE and AFW circumscriptions. From the 4th to the 12th he was in the AFO Vice-province. The meeting with the confreres took place on the 6th in the Novitiate of Bodjomè (Togo), where a good number of confreres were gathered for the annual retreat and assembly. On the following day Fr Valentin presided at the first religious profession of 16 novices, of whom 9 belonged to ATE. Two days earlier he had visited the postnovitiate of Lomé where there were 30 young confreres from AFO and ATE; there he received the renewed temporary vows of the postnovices and had a meeting with the formation guides. From the 9th to the 12th he moved to Senegal for a visit of animation to the salesian foundations. In Dakar, the capital, he was able to visit and bless the building operations for the construction of the new work, which will include a youth centre and a central reception office for the service of the various salesian communities of the country.

□ *Consultation for the new Superior of AFW (Ghana).*

Subsequently the Regional went to the English-speaking part

of West Africa to set in motion the consultation for a Superior of the new Vice-province of AFW, still in process of erection. In Nigeria the confreres from the different communities gathered at Ondo on 13 and 14 September. On 15 and 16 Fr Valentin went to Sierra Leone to meet the confreres at Lungi, and finally to Ghana (17 - 20), to meet the confreres gathered at Ashaiman. These visits enabled the Regional to meet individual confreres, and get a more accurate knowledge of the real situation of confreres communities of Liberia, still suffering from the scourge of civil war.

□ *Consultation for the new Superior of ATE (Cameroon).*

From 21 to 23 September Fr Valentin was in Cameroon, and met at Yaoundé with confreres from the different communities in the country. From 24 to 26 he was in Congo-Brazzaville, where in the capital he received the promise of eight new Cooperators and visited the two communities of Brazzaville; on the final day he visited the community at Pointe-Noire. From 27 to 28 he was in Libreville with the confreres from Gabon who had come from the communities of Oyem and Port-Gentil. Their meeting was held in

the new professional training centre being built in the outskirts of the capital, Libreville.

□ Other visits (*Swaziland and Mozambique*)

• *Swaziland*. On 14 and 15 August the Regional Councillor took part in the celebrations for fifty years of salesian work in Swaziland. The various events were presided over by Fr Luc Van Looy, in the name of the Rector Major. On the first day there was an academic function, which brought together many teachers to discuss the theme of the preventive system and the Swazi culture. The second day was given over to celebration and festivities, with a solemn Eucharist, at which the Bishop presided, and an animated cultural session in which the pupils of the school took part.

• *Mozambique*. From 16 to 19 August Fr Valentin moved to neighbouring Mozambique for a brief visit of animation to the new foundation at *Inhambane* and to receive the perpetual profession of a confrere.

□ *The CIVAM Conference*

From 20 to 25 October the Regional was at Addis-Ababa (Ethiopia) to preside at the annual meeting of the Provincial Con-

ference of Africa and Madagascar (*CIVAM*). Following the previously prepared agenda, the central theme of reflection was on social communication in the Region. Fr Tarcisio Scaramussa, Councilor General for Social Communication, was present to guide the discussion and deliberations. Among the other themes also studied were: the formation of Salesians, youth pastoral work, professional formation, the Salesian Family, and the Economy.

□ *Visit of the Rector Major to Ethiopia*

The Regional Councillor accompanied the Rector Major on his visit to Ethiopia from 25 to 28 October. On the first day the Rector Major met with the members of *CIVAM*. The meeting was of special significance because this year marks the 25th anniversary of the launching of *Project Africa*. On the following days the Rector Major met the confreres of the various communities of the AET Vice-province, inaugurated the new Provincial House and took part in the consecration of the new Sanctuary of Mary Help of Christians at *Addis-Mekanissa*.

On 27 November the Regional returned to Rome for the winter session of the General Council.

The Councillor for the Latin America - Southern Cone Region

Extraordinary Visitation of the Recife Province, Brazil

Immediately after the summer session of the General Council, Fr Baruffi began the extraordinary visitation of Recife, Brazil. In addition to visiting all the works and speaking individually with the confreres, he was able to hold several meetings with the provincial council and with all the rectors. Also programmed were meetings with the different groups of the Salesian Family, the educative communities, pupils and past-pupils, and parish councils.

During the visitation there took place also the consultation for the appointment of the new Provincial who will assume office at the end of this year. For this purpose four 'discernment days' were organized, one in each of the four large areas of the province. In all of them great maturity was shown in evaluating the situation of the province.

The visitation ended on 22 September with a specific meeting with the provincial council for the presentation of a first assessment by the Visitor.

Joint meeting of the CISUR and CISBRASIL

Between 23 and 26 September Fr Baruffi took part in meetings of the Southern Provincial Conference (CISUR) and of the Provincial Conference of Brazil (CISBRASIL), and also a further joint meeting of both Conferences which took place in the provincial house of São Paulo.

The joint meeting provided an opportunity for getting to know the reality of the Church scene and the challenges of the religious life, a theme that was addressed by Fr Lisboa Moreira de Oliveira, a Vocationalist. The vocational reality of the Region and the work realized in each province is a matter of importance. It was also an opportunity to reflect with Fr Luiz Gonzaga Piccoli, who was present, on responsibility with respect to the Vice-province of Angola.

The results of the meeting were very positive in that the members acquired a better knowledge of each other, a greater awareness of the state of the Region and especially a greater appreciation of the vitality and richness of the Congregation in the different zones.

Earlier there had been a more restricted meeting of the members of CISUR to deal with spe-

cific matters. Fr Jerônimo Monteiro, World Delegate for the Don Bosco Past-Pupils, was present and presented a project for the animation of the World Association, together with an associated project for the animation of the Salesian Family for the period 2003-2008. Later he presented both projects also to the CIS-BRASIL in their own meeting to deal with specific matters.

Visit to the Province of São Paulo, Brazil.

After the meeting with the Provincial Conferences, Fr Baruffi stayed on for a further week in the São Paulo Province, visiting the aspirants in Piracicaba, the novices in São Carlos and the students of theology in the Pius XI Theological Institute in the city of São Paulo. The Province has a well organized pastoral programme for promoting vocations, with the prospect of a good number of novices in coming years.

Consultation in the Manaus Province

From 7 to 30 October the Regional was in the Manaus Province, for the main purpose of beginning the consultation before the appointment of the new

Provincial. To this end four discernment meetings were organized in the areas of Belém, Manaus, São Gabriel da Cachoeira (missions) and Porto Velho. Fr Baruffi was also able to meet the provincial council and the young people in formation. In the missions of the Rio Negro he was able to take part in an Assembly at which there was a high participation by the native people.

Regional meeting of Salesian Brothers

From 2 to 8 November in the Rosario Province of Argentina, the Regional was present at the regional meeting of salesian Brothers. The group studied the guidelines for the present six-year programme and recently published documents in the Acts of the General Council. The meeting was fraternal and serene, and boded well for the solution of problems.

After this meeting Fr Baruffi returned to the provincial house of Porto Alegre for a medical check-up, followed by a minor operation and the necessary recovery period. He returned to the Generalate on 28 November.

The Councillor for the Inter-american Region

After the summer session of the General Council, Fr Esteban Ortiz González, left Rome for the USA, where he took part in a retreat at Stony Point (NY) preached by Fr Francis Moloney.

From 11 August he began the *Extraordinary Visitation of the Mexican Province of "Our Lady of Guadalupe" (MEM)*: the following day he had a meeting with the provincial council, and on the 13th began the visits to the communities.

On 16 September he interrupted the Visitation to take part at Cochabamba (Bolivia) in the meeting of the provincial delegates for youth pastoral work, coordinated by Fr Antonio Domenech, Councillor General for the sector. The Regional was also able to take part in the celebrations for the 40 years of life and work of the Bolivian Province of "Our Lady of Copacabana" (BOL).

He followed this by a journey to Canada to coordinate the annual meeting of the Provincials of the Region from 21 to 28 November. The first part of the meeting was held in Toronto with a day of retreat as an opening, followed by the study of the theme of Youth Pastoral Work, animated by Fr

Domenech. The second part of the meeting took place at Montreal and dealt with formation, under the guidance of Fr Francis Cereida, Councillor General for Formation, accompanied by Fr Chrys Saldanha of his Department.

In addition to the two main topics, the Provincials assessed the situation of the Centres of Ongoing Formation in the Region: Berkeley (SUO), CRESCO (El Salvador, CAM) and CSRFP (Quito, ECU).

As regards the *Salesian Regional Centre for Ongoing Formation (CSRFP)* at Quito (Ecuador), the Provincials approved a broadening of its tasks concerning the mission, and for this purpose assigned an extra Salesian to the CSR.

On 28 September Fr Esteban Ortiz returned to Mexico to continue the Visitation. Between 12 October and 7 November he visited all the mission stations in the Mixes Prelature, and on 11 November had a meeting at Tehuacán with all the missionaries to present a report on the visits to the communities of the Prelature.

On 14 November the Regional Councillor finished the visits to the individual communities and in the following days had meetings with various provincial commissions and with representatives

of the Salesian Family. On 19 November he was present at the funeral of Mgr. Braulio Sánchez Fuentes, the first Bishop of the Mixes Prelature. The ceremonies were presided over by Card. Norberto Rivera Carrera, Archbishop of Mexico, in the presence of a numerous group of Salesians, members of the Salesian Family and relatives, the Apostolic Nuncio and several Auxiliary Bishops of Mexico City.

On 21 November Fr Esteban Ortiz closed the Extraordinary Visitation, presenting a final report to an assembly of about a hundred confreres, among whom were members of the provincial council and rectors of communities.

On 22 November, with Fr Luis Valerdi Sánchez, he celebrated in the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe a Mass of thanksgiving for the results of the Visitation, and place the life of the Province once again in the hands of its heavenly Patroness.

On 24 November the Regional Councillor left for *Lima* (Peru), for a meeting with the provincial council for an assessment of what is being done to implement the recommendations of the Extraordinary Visitation made earlier this year between March and May, especially as regards the

guidelines sent by the Rector Major on the basis of the Visit. He was also able to evaluate the implementations made by the majority of the local communities.

After visiting the formation houses of the Peruvian Province (prenovitiate, novitiate and post-novitiate) Fr Esteban Ortiz went on to *Quito* (Ecuador), where he had a meeting at the novitiate (Lumbisí, Cumbayá) with confreres of the *Quito* communities; he presented to them the pastoral plan of the Rector Major given to the Salesians in connection with the *Strenna* for the coming year. The following day he went on to *Cuenca* to visit the salesian communities and meet the confreres and the members of the educative and pastoral communities.

On 30 November he left for Rome for the winter session of the General Council.

The Regional Councillor for the East Asia - Oceania Region

After the summer session of the Council, the Regional spent ten days in the Czech Republic to visit his family and meet with some of the communities engaged in their summer apostolate.

He next went to Thailand where

he spent from 6 to 25 August, visiting all the communities in Thailand and Cambodia in connection with the consultation for the appointment of a new Provincial.

From Thailand he travelled to Australia for the Regional meeting on Youth Pastoral Work, and was able to meet, between 26 and 30 August, all the delegates and those in charge of schools and of pastoral work for vocations.

Profiting by a few free days before the Regional Meeting on Formation at Jakarta (ITM, from 7 to 11 September), Fr Klement made three short animation visits to the Provinces of FIN, FIS and VIE, holding meetings with provincial councils and rectors, and visiting some of the formation communities of the provinces concerned.

In keeping with his promise to the Provincials to be with them for animation at least once every year, the Regional went on to Tokyo (GIA), where he visited some communities he had not been able to see in 2002. He was present at the priestly ordination of two confreres and was able also to bring animation to the Salesian Family (12 - 19 September). He was present in the Korean Province from 20 to 29 September for the Spirituality Day of the Salesian Family and to visit

the formation communities.

Finally, from 30 September to 1 December he carried out the *Extraordinary Visitation of the Chinese Province*, which includes Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan, as well as mainland China.

The Councillor for the Southern Asian Region

Fr Joaquim D'Souza left Rome for *Hyderabad* on 28 July 2003, to begin the consultation for the new Provincial to succeed Fr Medabali-mi. By journeying through the Province and meeting the confreres in large groups in four centres, he was able to meet the majority of them personally and gain a knowledge of the problems and challenges facing the Hyderabad Province as it seeks a new Provincial.

With the consultation under way, Fr D'Souza moved on to Calcutta on 5 August, and on the following day began the *Extraordinary Visitation of the INC Province* with a meeting with the provincial council, rectors and parish priests. On 7 August he went to *Myanmar*, a provincial delegation of Calcutta) to begin the Visitation there. After meeting all the confreres and visiting all the houses, he concluded this part of

the Visitation on 19 August.

The following day the Regional flew to Colombo in *Sri Lanka*, with a brief stop at Bangkok to call at the provincial house. At Colombo he met with the Delegation Council and all the rectors and parish priests of the Sri Lanka Delegation, with a view to its possible elevation to the status of a Vice-province in the near future.

On 27 August Fr D'Souza moved to Chennai for a meeting of *BOSCOM-India*, the Association of the provincial delegates for social communication, at which Fr Scaramussa, Councillor General for Communication, presided with his team. The meeting lasted three days, after which the Regional accompanied Fr Scaramussa to Colombo for a meeting of the Regional Provincial Conference (28 - 30 August).

At the end of this further meeting he returned to Calcutta on 1 September to take up again the Visitation of the Province until 1 October, when he had to go to Mumbai for a seminar on youth pastoral work with the theme: "*Evangelizing in India Today: Prospects and Challenges*". The seminar brought together the provincial delegates for evangelization and catechesis for three days (2 - 4 October). On 5 Octo-

ber the Regional flew back to Rome for the intermediate session of the General Council.

Between 6 and 15 October he took part in the *intermediate session of the General Council*, which was concentrating on a deeper examination of the South Asian Region. He presented a dossier on the situation, challenges and future prospects of the Region. Following the outline given in the dossier, the Council adopted some tentative conclusions to be submitted for the approval of the full Council in the coming plenary session in respect of the renewal of life, consolidation of the houses and works, and relaunching of the mission throughout the Region. Before leaving Rome for Calcutta to take up the visitation once again, Fr D'Souza had the joy of being present at the solemn beatification of Mother Teresa of Calcutta by Pope John Paul II on 19 October.

The Regional remained in the Calcutta Province until the closing of the Visitation on 22 November. By then he had visited all 44 houses (including 6 in the Myanmar Delegation), met with 272 confreres (45 in the Delegation) and 14 Novices (8 in the Delegation). He had made courtesy visits to three salesian prelates:

Abp. Charles Bo of Yangon in Myanmar, Abp. Lucas Sirkar of Calcutta, and Bishop Joseph Gomes of Krishnagar. He also met the Mother General of the Catechetical Sisters of Mary Immaculate (SMI) of Krishnagar, Sr Marie Pothanmala, and other Sisters of the Salesian Family.

After leaving Calcutta on 23 November, Fr D'Souza spent a few days of rest with his own family before returning to Rome on 1 December for the winter session of the General Council.

The Regional Councillor for Northern Europe

After the summer session of the General Council, Fr Albert Van Hecke spent a short period of rest at Cogne, followed by a few days with his family.

15 August. At Ensldorf he installed the New Provincial of the Munich Province, Fr Josef Gr  ner, and was able to greet the confreres who had gathered for the occasion.

On the way back to Rome, he made a brief visit to the community of Fulpmes in Austria.

17 August. He left for Hungary to be present at an extraordinary provincial council meeting. This

also gave him the opportunity of meeting a group of Cooperators who were finishing a retreat at Pelif  dszenkerest. He returned to Rome on the 19th.

27 August. He left for Poland to begin the *Extraordinary Visitation of the Pila Province*, the north-eastern province bounded by Germany and the Baltic Sea. The Province is expanding with 310 confreres, 57 of them in initial formation, and 10 Novices. The mission is carried out in a mosaic of youth work in parishes, schools, and reception centres for young people with problems. The lively nature of the Salesian Youth Movement is quite striking, and is expressed through various oratories and ministering groups the *Salos*, the *Pustynia Miast*, *SPE*, *Oaza* and scout groups.

9 September. The Councillor received the first profession of 9 new confreres in the Novitiate of Swobnica and presided at the ceremony for the admission to the novitiate of 11 new candidates.

27 September. At the beginning of the Visitation of the studentate of Lad, he assisted at the opening of the academic year and gave the inaugural conference on the theme: "*The formation community; school of communion and prayer*".

4 - 6 October. He joined Fr Van Looy in Belgium for the celebrations of the centenary of the house of Sint-Denijs-Westrem.

11 - 13 October. He was at Linz for the celebrations for the centenary of the arrival of the Salesians in Austria.

18 - 21 October. The Regional was at Stockholm, Sweden, for the Visitation of the community of the Polish mission and for a meeting with the Polish provincial conference. On the invitation of the Rector of the house, the participants were able to visit the work at Södertälje,, belonging to the Cologne Province. In the same period Fr Van Hecke was able to attend the blessing and official opening of the new youth centre at Stockholm. in the presence of the Swedish Bishop, the Pastor of the Lutheran Church, the Polish Consul and many friends and young people. This is a very significant step for the salesian mission, which thus becomes ever more inserted among Swedish youth. The centre is open to youngsters of all nationalities. During the meeting of the provincial conference, the topics discussed included the "Federation of salesian schools in Poland", the "Don Bosco Youth-Net", the possible creation of a

national association to represent the National Youth Centre, and the "Comitato Hlonddanianum" to promote future beatification causes.

24 - 27 October. The Regional spent this time at Ljubljana for a meeting with the Provincials of the *CIMEC* zone (CEP, CRO, SLK, SLO, UNG), and their delegates for youth ministry. Guided by Fr Antonio Domenech, Councilor General, they reflected on the topic "Provincial animation of youth ministry and its incidence on the local community". The meeting was rich in content and exchange of ideas, and especially in sensitizing the participants to the essential role of the delegate in the province and for the local communities.

31 October - 2 November. Fr Van Hecke was once again in Belgium for a meeting of the Provincials of the "Atlantic Zone" of the Region (BEN, GBR, OLA, IRL + Malta), held at Groot-Bijgaarden. Here the topics dealt with were the Provincial Operational Plan, the coming provincial chapters, collaboration between the provinces of the group in the field of formation, social communication and information on the *Don Bosco Youth-Net*, and youth ministry in the individual provinces.

22 November. The Regional concluded the Extraordinary Visitation of the Pila Province, and on the following day returned to Rome to prepare for the winter session of the General Council.

The Councillor for the West European Region

After the Council's summer session, the Regional left immediately for Fatima, Portugal, for the course for new rectors of Spain and Portugal. It began on 28 July and ended on 4 August, and there were 40 participants. Taking part also, and giving addresses, were the Councillors General for Formation and for the Youth Apostolate. It was a very fraternal gathering in a climate of prayer against the background of the apparitions of Our Lady.

6 - 7 August. Fr Filiberto accompanied with his ministry the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians of the León Province who were meeting in Madrid (El Plantío).

8 - 22 August. He spent this period with his family, with interruptions on the 15th and 16th to go to Seville for the first profession of the novices from the whole of Spain, and on the 20th to be present at the meeting of the Sale-

sians of Salamanca belonging to the Seville Province.

23 August. Fr Filiberto left for Quito to begin the Extraordinary *Visitation of the Ecuador Province*, which continued without interruption till 15 November. Ecuador would not be the same without the Salesians. Their work, generous creativity, and desire to find solutions to the many and diverse needs of the young and the needy classes, make the Congregation deserving of gratitude. It is indeed a province that deserves to be visited.

16 - 22 November. Fr Filiberto made a simple visit of animation to the Mexican Province of Guadalajara, where he made contact with the different formation houses and took part in various meetings.

23 - 30 November. The Regional was back again in Madrid, where he had meetings with the salesian national delegates and, in particular, presided at one of the two ordinary sessions of the Iberian Conference at Madrid-Carabanchel.

1 December. Fr Filiberto returned to Rome for the winter session of the General Council.

The Regional Councillor for Italy and the Middle East

25 July - 1 August. Fr Bregolin preached the retreat to the Novices of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians at Chitignano, in the Arezzo province.

2 August. He went to Avigliana to visit the confreres engaged in a course of ongoing formation of the theme "*Lectio divina*".

6 August. At Missaglia he presided at the ceremony of the First Profession of the Novices of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.

18 - 19 August. Following a few days of rest the Regional was at Loreto with the confreres taking part in the course for young priests. He returned a few days later to accompany the Rector Major who wanted to meet the confreres of the same course.

25 August. He was at Riva del Garda to meet the participants in the "*Week of Education to a Worldwide Outlook*", organized by the VIS.

28 - 29 August. He had two meetings with the confreres preparing for perpetual profession at the house of San Tarcisio.

4 September. At Genzano he had a meeting with another group of young confreres who will make

their perpetual profession in 2004.

6 - 7 September. He was present with the Rector Major at Mestre, for the *launching of the new Province of St Mark*, formed by the unifying of the two former Venetian Provinces.

8 September. The Regional presided at the First Professions of the Novices in the Church of Genzano.

13 September. He represented the Rector Major at the ceremony for the unification of the Venetian Provinces of the FMA.

14 September. He presided at the perpetual profession of a group of Salesians and a Daughter of Mary Help of Christians. At this celebration were present a large group of young animators of the "Youth Summer" of the ICP circumscription.

16 September. Fr Adriano Bregolin began the official *Visitation of the Adriatic Province* (IAD). He had a meeting with the confreres assembled at Loreto, and preached the quarterly retreat to them. In the same afternoon he had a meeting with the provincial council.

16 - 22 September. He made the visitation of the house of Loreto (16-18) followed by the house of Ancona with its parish and oratory (19-22).

23 September. He had a meet-

ing with the Youth Pastoral Sector of the Italian Provincial Conference at Pacognano (Vico Equense).

26 - 27 September. He presided at a meeting of the CISI Presidency at the Generalate, Rome.

28 September - 5 October. Fr Bregolin preached the retreat at Mornese to the FMA Provincials of Italy and Spain.

7 - 29 October. He returned to the Extraordinary Visitation with visits to the communities of L'Aquila (7-10), Sulmona (10-13), Gualdo Tadino (14-17), Porto Recanati (18-20), Macerata (21-24), Perugia (24-27) and finally Civitanova - Villa Conti (28 - 29 October).

30 October. Returning to the Generalate, he was present at a meeting of the Past-pupils of *Eurobosco*. and stayed on for the funeral of Fr Pasquale Liberatore.

4 - 9 November. He returned once again to the Visitation and visited Ortona (4 November), fol-

lowed by Vasto (5 - 9), after which he went back once more to the Generalate to take part in the meeting of those responsible for the salesian oratories, and of economers.

13 - 30 November. Back again in the Adriatic Province, the Regional continued the Visitation at Civitanova Marche "San Marone" (13 - 16), Terni (17 - 20), Ortona (21 - 25) and finally the Provincial Centre of Ancona (26 - 28). These were interrupted for a meeting with the Rectors of the Province at Gualdo Tadino (17 November).

27 November. Fr Bregolin celebrated his 25th anniversary of ordination at Loreto with some companions.

30 November. The Visitation ended with a Meeting of Animators of the SYM, at which were present also the members of the provincial council, the rectors, and other confreres.

5.1 Greeting-Message of the Rector Major to those taking part in the IV European Seminar of the ISS-ACSSA.

The following is the text of the Greeting-Message that the Rector Major, Fr Pascual Chávez Villanueva, sent to those taking part in the IV European Seminar of the ISS-ACSSA (Salesian Historical Institute - Association of Lovers of Salesian History), which took place in Vienna, Austria, 30 October - 2 November 2003.

My Dear Salesians, Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, Students of Don Bosco,

It is with great joy that I join you with a special greeting - message in the work of this Fourth European Seminar organised by ISS-ACSSA, which is actually taking place in the city which I visited a short time ago for the official celebration of the centenary of salesian work in Austria. Those days in Vienna were marvellous, during which I was able to witness for myself the dynamism and relevance of Don Bosco's charism.

1. I presume that you have chosen this "noble" Austrian site with the intention not so much of "celebrating" an anniversary,

even one so special as a centenary, but of "honouring it in your own way," that is, through a journey of historical reflection which you will begin there today and then complete in my homeland, in Mexico, in November 2005.

2. The theme you have chosen and which I know was in some way suggested by my predecessor the late Fr Vecchi at the conclusion of your International Congress in 2000 - *Theological, spiritual and educational approaches of the Salesian Society and the Institute of the FMA in the period 1880-1922* - is certainly of great historical interest and also very relevant.

You are examining the times of the Rector Majors Don Rua and Don Albera and, making use of the available sources you will try to arrive at a picture of the reality of some of the ways in which the apostolic mission of Don Bosco took flesh in the forty years following his death. I think that, without stretching the point too much, one may apply to Don Rua and Don Albera as successors of Don Bosco and the chosen custodians of his charism what I wrote in my last circular letter to the Salesians in connection with our Founder:

« Don Bosco moulded his Sale-

sians by telling stories [...] Nowadays, as indeed has always been the case, we need to fulfil our vocational and pastoral work and mould Salesians by "telling stories", with frequent and explicit references to Don Bosco, after the manner of Don Barberis, one of his biographers, who in narrating events of the "old days" of the Valdocco Oratory gave us also the underlying reasons: these instruct us in matters which are specifically ours, in our methods, in our family spirit, and at the same time they increase our sense of belonging, of membership of the family; they make us protagonists.[...] Remaining with Don Bosco does not exclude a priori a study of the times that modelled or conditioned him, but it requires us to live with his commitment, his options, his dedication, his spirit of enterprise and pushing ahead.[...] We are well aware that the more the time separating us from our Founder increases, the more real is the risk of speaking of Don Bosco only on the basis of well known incidents and anecdotes without any real knowledge of our charism. Hence the need to know him through the medium of reading and study; to love him affectively and effectively as our father and teacher through the spiritual legacy he has left us;

to imitate him and try to reproduce him in ourselves, making of the Rule of life our personal life plan. This is what is meant by returning to Don Bosco, to which I have invited the whole Congregation – myself included – from my first "good night", by means of a process of study and love that tries to understand, the better to throw light on our life and present-day challenges. Together with the Gospel, Don Bosco is our criterion of discernment and our goal of identification.»

If this is true for Don Bosco, for whom we now possess a very rich bibliography in a popular style as well as in a more academic one, you may imagine how it is even more true for the times of his two immediate successors of whom we know little, too little. And yet we are dealing with a saint already arrived at the honours of the altars, Blessed Fr Michael Rua, and a great Salesian Fr Paul Albera, who worked in close cooperation with him as well as another saint who has already been raised to the altars Blessed Fr Philip Rinaldi.

3. Certainly as well as the historical aspects of the salesian charism bridging the XX century, you will also be carefully consider-

ing in a special way – according to your proposals – the theological, spiritual and pedagogical ones. It is already taken for granted that in our charism these aspects *simul stant et simul cadunt*. One supports another, one explains another, one is necessarily linked to another, one interacts with another. Indeed we may well have reached the time to attempt to produce a sort of salesian epistemology, which tries to draw up/develop a particular interpretation of our lived experience, taking into proper consideration all the elements contained in it including both those that have fallen by the wayside or become obsolete and those which are essential and not to be put aside. If the present wishes to be faithful to its charismatic past and remain in active harmony with it, an accurate overall interpretation of that past is needed; if the present wishes to be a fruitful mould/pattern for the future it cannot be without the essential points of reference that constantly guide it in a world like ours in rapid evolution.

4. As is obvious, it is not merely a matter of knowing about events, circumstances, people, documents – which are also integral parts of history if they are presented with-

out ideological screening, without blind spots, omissions, or deceptions – but of discovering their place and precisely their historical pedagogical spiritual relevance in the great story of our own family. I should like to refer to the “*memory theory*” which questions the ability of our memory to interpret “*intus et in cute*” moments from past experience and the models lived and shaped by those who have gone before us from which we can absorb the vital spirit that emerged from Don Bosco, incorporated and inculturated by his sons in so many different ways in different parts of the world until it reaches our own times and which once identified and clarified we have to hand on to future generations.

Our Congregation, our Salesian Family is our history; and on the way in which we construct that history our identity depends. History then is not so much an academic scientific discipline for a few enthusiasts, but it carries out a didactic function, that of the mystagogue, vital for those who wish to appreciate the lessons and are capable of doing so. We the Sons and Daughters of Don Bosco ought to be among these.

All this is no small task, as one recognises, and so right from the

beginning of my mandate as Rector Major I have tried to point to it and re-emphasise it on various occasions. Therefore I can only applaud your initiative and take this opportunity to offer you my very best wishes that your seminar might be a success and bear the hoped for fruits in the two years of work you have ahead of you.

May Mary Help of Christians see to it that in the Congregation and in the Salesian Family that charismatic inspiration that is essential in order to work in a genuine way in the service of young people may never fail.

Affectionately, in Don Bosco.

Fr Pascual Chávez V.
Rector Major

5.2 "Salesian Associations and Active Citizenship in Europe". Address of the Rector Major to those attending Euro- bosco 2003.

We publish the text of the Rector Major's address – on 28 October 2003 – to those attending the European Congress of Don Bosco's Past Pupils (Eurobosco), with the significant title: "The role of Salesian Associations and Active Citizenship in Europe". Although ad-

dressed explicitly to the European Past Pupils, it contains a message that is valid in many contexts, for the Past Pupils and also the Salesians themselves.

My dear Past Pupils, Friends of Don Bosco,

I begin my greetings with a word of welcome since you have decide to hold your Congress of the Don Bosco Past Pupils in the Salesian Generalate in the home of Don Bosco's successor. Just as our dear Father would have felt full of joy in seeing his dear Past Pupils coming to his home, which was their home, I can tell you that I too am very happy to see you coming from all those countries in Europe where we have a presence. Above all I hope that you feel at home and at the same time that you are able to achieve the aims you have set yourselves.

Your *Eurobosco* is very important, not only because together with the other continental meetings of the Past Pupils it serves as a preparation for the World Congress that you will be holding next year, but also because it coincides with an historical moment in the history of Europe.

The current situation in which the old continent is living is de-

scribed by John Paul II in his post-synodal Exhortation *Ecclesia in Europa*, as «marked by grave uncertainties at the levels of culture, anthropology, ethics and spirituality,»¹ but at the same time sustained by «a growing need for hope, a hope which will enable us to give meaning to life and history and to continue on our way together.»² To this challenge and need the Church wishes to respond «taking as their starting-point the mystery of Christ and the Trinity. The Synod wished to set forth once more the figure of Jesus, alive in his Church, who reveals God as Love, a communion of the three divine Persons.»³

With John Paul II it is not difficult to see this «loss of Europe's Christian memory and heritage, accompanied by a kind of practical gnosticism and religious indifference whereby many Europeans give the impression of living without spiritual roots and somewhat like heirs who have squandered a patrimony entrusted to them by history.»⁴ This situation,

however, is not an expression of history reaching maturity, as though it had entered a new era, but is the result of «an attempt to promote a vision of man apart from God and apart from Christ. This sort of thinking has led to man being considered as “the absolute centre of reality, a view which makes him occupy – falsely – the place of God and which forgets that it is not man who creates God, but rather God who creates man. Forgetfulness of God led to the abandonment of man”. It is therefore “no wonder that in this context a vast field has opened for the unrestrained development of nihilism in philosophy, of relativism in values and morality, and of pragmatism – and even a cynical hedonism – in daily life” (16). European culture gives the impression of “silent apostasy” on the part of people who have all that they need and who live as if God does not exist.»⁵

This then, dear Past Pupils of Don Bosco, is the world into which you are sent, to help it recover hope and a future. The Pope

¹ JOHN PAUL II, Post-synodal Exhortation *Ecclesia in Europa*, n. 3.

² Ibid, n. 4.

³ Ibid, n. 4.

⁴ Ibid, n. 7.

⁵ Ibid, n. 9.

wrote recently: «An old Europe, from West to East, is looking for a new identity. In this process, it must not forget its roots. Europe must remember that Christianity has been the lifeblood from which it has drawn the noblest inspirations of its spirit for two thousand years.»⁶ Someone might say: what has this to do with the Association of Don Bosco's Past Pupils? In reply I would ask what is the point of a Salesian Catholic Association if it does not maintain contact with the current situation, if it is not open to the questions that this raises and if it does not have an answer to contribute. Precisely because the problem is a cultural one, in other words because a new culture is being formulated, the solution will be found in the creation of a new culture which responds to the deepest needs of the human person. And you know that with culture Salesians are in their element!

We believe with the Pope that there are «encouraging signs of "a great springtime for Christianity" (Redemptoris Missio, 86), which can be seen also in the contexts of your Churches. The full blossom-

ing of this springtime, however, will depend on the indispensable contribution of the lay faithful, who are called to make Christ's Church present in the world by proclaiming and serving the Gospel of hope.»⁷

Perhaps in reading the post-synodal exhortation we may feel a little uneasy either because the view presented there seems to us excessively pessimistic or because the central argument used in considering and responding to the current situation appears exaggerated, rather apocalyptic, or because we perceive the great imbalance between the challenges which are so big and solutions which are so small.

I would not like to risk a guess that the situation could have been presented with more light and less shade. In any case the problem is not the overall impression but rather the 'absolute force of truth' in which we believe. As the Pope says: «beyond all appearances, and even if its effects are not yet seen, the victory of Christ has already taken place and is final. This in turn causes us to approach human situations and

⁶ JOHN PAUL II, message to the participants in the Congress of Catholic Laity, Kyev, 8-12 October 2003)

⁷ Ibid.

events with an attitude of fundamental trust, born of faith in the Risen One, present and at work in history.»⁸

« This is a time of hope and courage!” dear Past Pupils of Don Bosco, and I say it to you with the words of John Paul II. “The Church needs you and knows that she can entrust great responsibilities to you... do not be discouraged as you face the challenges of our day!... Make your families true domestic Churches and your parishes true schools of prayer and Christian life. ... Preserve your rich Christian traditions, resisting the insidious temptation to exclude God from your lives or to reduce faith to gestures and sporadic, superficial occurrences. You are “new” men and women.»⁹

This then, dear Past Pupils, is the task of your Association in Europe, called to make its own contribution at this time in the history of the Continent, especially living and putting into practice the education you received.

Salesian education is an education that helps you to become leaven in the world and to learn how to organise the world's af-

fairs in the light of the Gospel.

If all salesian education is aimed at forming “honest citizens and good Christians,” this means that in these two ideas are to be found the identity and the commitment of Don Bosco's Past Pupils.

As Christians you are called to be «salt of the earth and light of the world, and the yeast that ferments the mass». These are images used by Jesus to describe the nature and the mission of the disciples. The most profound identity of the Past Pupil is no different. It is simply enough “to be” to have meaning and relevance. On the presence of true believers depends the manifestation of God and of his love for the world: « Being witnesses of Christ today” – expresses well the meaning of this mission, which none of the Baptized can delegate to others or avoid »¹⁰. But if salt loses its flavour, or the light is put under a tub or if the yeast does not have the strength to ferment, they are of no use, They have lost the reason for their existence and deprived mankind of God's signs. This identity therefore is given to

⁸ *Ecclesia in Europa*, n. 5.

⁹ Message quoted above 8-12 October 2003.

¹⁰ *Ibid* pag. 6.

us by our faith in Jesus and in his Gospel, which above all else makes us credible witnesses. «Your vocation and mission will bear fruit provided that, in your actions, you are able always to make a return to Christ, to set out from Christ, to keep your gaze fixed firmly on Christ's face.»¹¹

As citizens you are called to be real citizens of your own world to cooperate in making it more human. You know very well how many people of good will, even non believers, are deeply committed to the defence of ecosystems, of human rights, in the struggle against sickness, poverty etc. The task of the Past Pupil is to take part in public activities, as a Christian, and as a citizen, bringing a new valid contribution to social justice, to solidarity, to development, to peace. But it is also that of supporting all those in the world who are involved in the struggle against poverty, creating with them a net work of good works. More in particular, as Don Bosco Past Pupils there is a special contribution to be made: to believe in youth, in education, in the Preventive System, convinced

that Don Bosco's decision in facing social problems is not only the right one but the most effective.

Dear Past Pupils we are living in exhilarating and challenging times! This isn't the time for nostalgia nor to be lost in "washing the nets", discouraged by the lack of success in our efforts. We have before us an open sea: our own families, our place of work, of communication, our social and political activities, young people, the Salesian Family itself, the world. You have the responsibility of taking into society Christian values and those of a salesian education. «Past Pupils are particularly prepared, precisely because of the education they have received, to assume a responsibility in collaborating for the attainment of the objectives inherent in the salesian plan.»¹² We know how much Don Bosco loved his pupils, but he told his past pupils «I love you even more, because you show me that your hearts are always for Don Bosco... /... you will be light that shines in the world and with your example you will teach others how we ought to do good and detest and fly from evil. I am sure that you will continue to be a

¹¹ Ibid pag. 6.

¹² *The Project of Life of the Salesians of Don Bosco*, page 126

consolation to Don Bosco.»¹³

Our Salesian presence in its many varied forms, is called, at this historic hour, to help people understand and in the words of the Holy Father to ensure the «priority of the spiritual over the material; the priority of people over things; the priority of moral values over technology; the priority of work over capitalism; the priority of the universal right to material goods over private property; the priority of forgiveness over justice; the priority of the common good over personal interests.»

Dear friends, I thank you for what you are and for what you represent. Your belonging to the Salesian Family in a spirit of responsibility and your own lives are the best monument to Don Bosco's educational system. Thank you and don't be afraid! Society and the Church in Europe need you as «honest citizens and good Christians.»

May Mary Help of Christians and Don Bosco bless you and help you to be untiring missionaries among the young, animated by the zeal of «Da Mihi Animas...».

5.3 Letter of congratulations from the Rector Major to the Supreme Pontiff John Paul II for the XXV years of his Pontificate - Reply from the Secretariate of State

On the occasion of the XXV years of the Pontificate of the Supreme Pontiff John Paul II, the Rector Major, in the name of all the Salesian Family, sent the Holy Father the following message of respect and congratulations.

Rome, 15 October 2003

Most Holy Father,

On the auspicious occasion of the 25th anniversary of the election to the Pontifical Throne of Your Holiness, in the name of the whole Salesian Family: the Salesians, the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, the Cooperators and Past Pupils, various other groups, and the "Friends of Don Bosco," the undersigned has the greatest honour and the immense joy of extending to Your Holiness our most heartfelt felicitations.

The expression of our sincere good wishes arises not only from the depth of our hearts as devoted sons and daughters of the Holy

¹³ MB XVII, pag. 173-174

Father, whom the Lord has willed to preserve for the guidance of His Church until the dawn of the third millennium, but also from our Salesian tradition which from its very beginnings has shared the Supreme Pontiff's joys and sorrows, burdens and hopes.

Allow me, Your Holiness, to repeat, while making them fully our own, the words that on a similar occasion Don Bosco wrote to Your Predecessor Blessed Pius IX: "In the midst of the universal enthusiasm and filial demonstrations of joy, of attachment and of devotion which from all parts are raised to your throne Holy Father, on this day, in which the Lord has brought you to Peter's years, also we, the Sons of St Francis of Sales and of Yourself, in union with the young people entrusted to our care, grateful for the many gifts Your Holiness has bestowed on us, and rejoicing with the greatest happiness, following the inspirations of our heart we feel we must offer at your feet an expression of our devotion and veneration and undying affection...United indissolubly to this Chair of truth and to your heart...we can do no less on this day than raise to God a hymn of thanksgiving for having preserved You for so many years in the love of Your affectionate sons.»

In these most solemn circumstances, Holy Father, please accept our most sincere thanks for the loving gaze that Your Holiness has always reserved and continues to reserve for the Salesian Congregation, also in calling some of her sons to share in the apostolic *magisterium* as members of the College of Bishops and of Cardinals.

Praying to God that He may bless with the fullness of His gifts the service that Your Holiness so generously offers to the glory of God and of His Church, we beg Your Apostolic Blessing on all of us and on the young people entrusted by Divine Providence to our care in more than 120 countries in the world.

In union of faith and love with the whole Church,

Fr Pascual Chávez V.
Rector Major

* * *

We print below the reply sent on behalf of the Holy Father by the Under Secretary in the Secretariate of State, Mgr. Leonardo Sandri.

From the Vatican, 25 October 2003

Very Reverend Father,

On the occasion of the XXV anniversary of the election of the

Supreme Pontiff, on behalf of the Salesian Family you sent him heartfelt greetings and prayers, while at the same time adding the sum of € 50,000 to be used for the benefit of the initiatives of his universal Pastoral solicitude.

The Holy Father thanks you with all his heart for this sign of devoted affection and for the generous witness of solidarity on behalf of those in need, and while he urges you to contemplate with Mary Most Holy the face of Christ, to remain in Him and to bear abundant fruits of fraternal communion and joyful hope, he invokes the heavenly intercession of Mary Help of Christians and St John Bosco, and willingly imparts to you and all who are united in this thoughtful gesture and to the young people they meet in their daily activities the Apostolic Blessing you ask for.

I take this opportunity to assure you Rev Father, that I respectfully remain

Yours devotedly in the Lord,
✠ L. Sandri, Under Secretary

5.4 New Salesian Cardinal

At the Public Consistory which Pope John Paul II held on 21 October 2003, in the XXVth year of

his Pontificate, the Salesian Bishop Mgr. **Tarcisio BERTONE** was made a member of the College of Cardinals.

Born at Romano Canavese, in the province of Turin, 2 December 1934, Tarcisio Bertone made his first profession as a Salesian at Pinerolo 3 December 1950. After his perpetual profession (15 August 1956), he carried out his theological studies at Bollengo, where he was ordained a priest 1 July 1960. Having obtained a license in Theology, he continued his studies and obtained a doctorate in Canon Law. He then taught in the Canon Law Faculty of the Salesian Atheneum in Turin-Crocetta and then at the UPS in Rome. In 1979 he was appointed by the Superiors Dean of the Canon Law Faculty at the UPS and in 1989 Rector Magnificus of the UPS. For a number of years he worked as a Consultant to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and the Pontifical Council for the Interpretation of legal texts.

On 4 June 1991 he was appointed by the Holy Father Archbishop of Vercelli, in the Region of Piedmont, where he was consecrated 1 August 1991. In 1995 he was called to Rome to become the Secretary of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. He carried out this

role until December 2002, when he appointed Archbishop of Genoa.

Now the Holy Father has made him a Cardinal of the Holy Roman Church, associating him more closely to the Petrine ministry.

5.5 New Salesian Bishop

*VARGAS BASTIDAS Héctor,
Bishop of Arica, Chile.*

The Osservatore Romano of 26 November 2003 announced the appointment by the Holy Father of the salesian priest **Héctor VARGAS BASTIDAS**, at present the Vice Provincial of the Province of Santiago in Chile, as **Bishop of the Diocese of ARI-CA, in Chile.**

Héctor Vargas Bastidas was born at Valdivia, Chile, on 29 December 1951 and has been a Salesian since 2 July 1972 when he made his first religious profession at Santiago-La Florida. He pursued his philosophical and theological studies at the Catholic Pontifical University in Santiago in Chile. He made his perpetual profession on 11 June 1978, and was ordained priest on 5 July 1980 in Santiago.

After priestly ordination between 1980 and 1984 he was pastoral coordinator in several sale-

sian schools in in Santiago, Talca and Punta Arenas; between 1982 and 1984, episcopal Vicar for Youth Ministry in the diocese of Punta Arenas.

In 1985 he was in Rome, at the Salesian Pontifical University where he obtained a Licence in Education.

After returning to Chile, he held a number of appointments: in 1987 and 1988 he was on the staff of the Postnovitiate house in Santiago; in 1989 and 1990, he was Rector of the Agricultural School in Linares and episcopal Vicar for Education in that diocese; between 1991 and 1993, Provincial Councillor and Provincial Delegate for Youth Ministry and Education; between 1994 and 1996, Provincial Councillor, Delegate for Education and Rector of «*Gratitud Nacional*» in Santiago; between 1997 and 1999, Director of the «*Salesianos de la Alameda*» Sixth Form College in Santiago; in 2000 and 2001, he was again Provincial Delegate for Youth Ministry and for Education and member of the Provincial Council. Since 1997 he has been President of the Federation of Special Educational Institutes in Chile. In October 2000 he was appointed Vice Provincial of the Salesian Province of Chile.

5.6 Postulator for the Causes of Saints

*On 10 December 2003 the Rector Major issued the following **official communication** regarding the Postulator General for the Causes of the Saints of our Salesian Family.*

Following the unexpected death of Fr Pasquale Liberatore, who had worked for 11 years with great enthusiasm and competence for the Causes of the Saints of our Salesian Family, it was necessary to proceed to the choice of a Postulator who could without delay resume the work in connection with the numerous Causes of holiness.

Therefore after suitable discernment I am officially announcing that on the basis of what our Constitutions prescribe (art. 145), with the consent of my Council, I have asked Fr **Enrico Dal Covolo** to undertake the service of **Postulator General**, for a fixed period with the task of taking for-

ward the Causes in progress and any other urgent matters in this area, while in the meantime remaining a member of the Vice Province of the Salesian University. Among other matters, very shortly, in fact on 20 December, the reading of the decree of the approval of the miracles attributed to the intercession respectively of the Venerable Augusto Czarторыski and the Venerable Alexandrina da Costa has been arranged.

Fr Enrico Dal Covolo – who was born 5 October 1950, made his first profession as a Salesian on 2 September 1973 and was ordained priest on 22 December 1979 – since 1986 has been a Lecturer in the Faculty of Christian and Classical Literature in the Salesian Pontifical University and during these years has given his services as a Consultant to the Congregation for Divine Worship and to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. Now he will be available to provide his experience to our Postulation Office.

5.7 Our dead confreres (4th list 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 ALFIERO Michelangelo	Castello di Godego (TV)	11.12.2003	94	INE
L ARENG Attilio	Shillong (India)	16.10.2003	72	ING
P ARTUSIO Pietro	Roma	07.11.2003	90	IRO
P BAIGUINI Emilio	Roma	31.10.2003	88	IRO
L BERNALES Hubert	Parañaque (Filippine)	01.10.2003	39	FIN
L BERTAGGIA Marino	Caselle - Torino	05.12.2003	82	ICP
P BRILLON Joseph	Caen	04.12.2003	83	FRA
P BROCARDIO Pietro	Roma	19.11.2003	90	RMG
P CABELLO MARAMBIO Guillermo	Santiago de Chile	30.09.2003	63	CIL
P CHANOUX Raimondo	Ivrea (Torino)	19.10.2003	88	ICP
P COALOVA Giovanni Battista	Torino	24.10.2003	98	ICP
L COAQUIRA RODRIGO Guillermo	La Paz	25.11.2003	73	BOL
P CORALLO Gino	Pedara (Catania)	12.12.2003	93	ISI
L COSATO Alfonso	Locri (Reggio Calabria)	03.10.2003	75	IME
P CUTRUFELLO Carmelo	Pedara (Catania)	01.11.2003	89	ISI
P DAWSON John	Farnborough	24.10.2003	87	GBR
P DERMEK Andrej	Pezinok (Slovacchia)	22.11.2003	89	SLK
P DIVIZIA John	Bronx, New York	08.10.2003	98	SUE
P DUBINSKAS Wenceslao	Medellín (Colombia)	18.11.2003	86	COM
P ELLIS DEL CASTILLO Héctor	Montevideo	29.09.2003	84	URU
P ERNSZT Antal	Szomód (Ungheria)	23.10.2003	65	UNG
P GASSEAU Bernard	Caen	25.10.2003	78	FRA
P GHIANDONI Giuseppe	Albano (Roma)	16.10.2003	84	IRO
P GIORGIO John	Dingli (Malta)	15.11.2003	82	IRL
P GÓRKA Marian	Kraków	17.10.2003	71	PLS
P GOULART Januário	Goiânia (Brasile)	16.07.2003	88	BBH
P GRIEB Bernhard <i>Fu Ispettore per 6 anni</i>	Wels/Oberösterreich (Austria)	30.10.2003	92	AUS
L HERRERO GARCIA José Santiago	Bobo Dioulasso (Burkina Faso)	15.10.2003	45	AFO
P HOPPE Tadeusz	Odesa (Ucraina)	10.11.2003	90	EST
L KARUVATTAL Thomas	Madras	27.11.2003	76	INM
P LANCELOTTI Domingo	Rosario (Argentina)	10.10.2003	71	ARO
P LIBERATORE Pasquale <i>Fu Ispettore per 12 anni e per 11 anni Postulatore generale per le Cause dei Santi</i>	Roma	30.10.2003	71	RMG
P LOBENHOFER Johannes	Cochabamba (Bolivia)	23.09.2003	96	BOL
L MAFFIOLETTI Giuseppe	Chiari (Brescia)	07.12.2003	81	ILE
P MAGNABOSCO Giovanni	Montevideo (Uruguay)	30.11.2003	83	URU

NAME	PLACE	DATE	AGE	PROV.
P MIRANDA Joseph	Baroda (India)	03.10.2003	65	INB
L MURA Giovanni	Roma	23.11.2003	99	IRO
P MURARO Honorino João	Guarapuava (Brasile)	11.10.2003	84	BPA
P NEUHÄUSLER Teodoro	Campo Grande (Brasile)	08.10.2003	69	BCG
L OTŁOWSKI Stanisław	Warszawa	23.10.2003	78	PLE
P PENZO Giampaolo	Chioggia (Venezia)	15.10.2003	72	INE
P PERTILE Bortolo	La Spezia	09.10.2003	92	ILT
P PETEK Franc	Punta Arenas (Cile)	20.11.2003	84	CIL
P ROSA Andrea	Neiva (Colombia)	10.11.2003	92	COB
P RUFELLI Ottavio	Roma	18.11.2003	77	IRO
E SANCHEZ FUENTES Braulio	México	18.11.2003	81	—
<i>Eletto Vescovo nel 1970, fu per 30 anni Vescovo Prelato di Mixes-Oaxaca in Messico.</i>				
L SANCHO LÁZARO Maximiano	Córdoba (Spagna)	19.10.2003	79	SCO
P SANTIAGO RODRÍGUEZ Fernando	Córdoba (Spagna)	30.11.2003	70	SCO
P TERRULI Quirico	Brindisi	10.12.2003	81	IME
P TRAN DINH Cuong Phung Michele	Xuan Hiep (Vietnam)	01.10.2003	57	VIE
P UNG Francisco Xavier (Wing Chiu)	Hong Kong	03.11.2003	73	CIN
P VAN ES Dolf	Nijmegen (Olanda)	03.10.2003	89	OLA
P VANNI DESIDERI Giorgio	Shillong (India)	10.11.2003	76	ING
L VELÁSQUEZ Rafael	Bogotá (Colombia)	02.12.2003	75	COB
P YAO Wai-li Matthias	Taipei - Taiwan	19.10.2003	84	CIN
L ZUCCHETTI Enrique Francisco	Rosario (Argentina)	30.11.2003	95	ARO



