



acts

of the general council

year LXXXV

april-june 2004

N. 385

official organ
of animation
and communication
for the
salesian congregation

Direzione Generale
Opere don Bosco
Roma

acts

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

OFFICIAL ORGAN OF ANIMATION AND COMMUNICATION FOR THE SALESIAN CONGREGATION

anno LXXXV
april-june 2004

N. 385

1. LETTER OF THE RECTOR MAJOR	1.1 Fr Pascual CHÁVEZ VILLANUEVA «YOU WILL BE MY WITNESSES... EVEN TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH» (<i>Acts 1,8b</i>) <i>Presentation of the Italy-Middle East Region</i>	3
2. GUIDELINES AND POLICIES	2.1 Fr Francesco CEREDA VOCATIONAL FRAGILITY. Initiating reflection and suggesting action	34
3. RULINGS AND DIRECTIVES	(None in this issue)	
4. ACTIVITIES OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL	4.1 Chronicle of the Rector Major	54
	4.2 Chronicle of the General Council	62
5. DOCUMENTS AND NEWS ITEMS	5.1 Message of the Rector Major to the young people of the Salesian Youth Movement	69
	5.2 "Educating young people to the faith. <i>Vocation and mission of the Salesians of Don Bosco</i> "	73
	5.3 Decree for the canonical erection of the Salesian Vice Province "Blessed Artemides Zatti" of English-speaking West Africa	90
	5.4 IV Volume of Don Bosco's Letters published	92
	5.5 Decree on the miracle for the Beatification of the Salesian priest August Czartoryski	93
	5.6 Decree on the miracle for the Beatification of Sr Eusebia Palomino	95
	5.7 Decree on the miracle for the Beatification of Alexandrina Maria da Costa, Salesian Cooperator	98
	5.8 New Vicar of the Rector Major and Regional Councillor for Italy- Middle East	100
	5.9 New Provincials	101
	5.10 New Salesian Bishop	107
	5.11 SDB Statistics at 31 December 2003	109
	5.12 Our dead confreres	111

Editrice S.D.B.
Edizione extra commerciale
Direzione Generale Opere Don Bosco
Via della Pisana, 1111
Casella Postale 18333
00163 Roma

Tip.: Istituto Salesiano Pio XI - Via Umbertide, 11 - 00181 Roma
Tel. 06.78.27.819 - Fax 06.78.48.333 - E-mail: tipolito@pcn.net
Finito di stampare: aprile 2004

1. LETTER OF THE RECTOR MAJOR

“YOU WILL BE MY WITNESSES... EVEN TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH” (Acts 1, 8b)

Presentation of the Italy–Middle East Region

Family News – Significance of this letter – Two important events – A mark of gratitude – The situation in Italy – The situation in the Middle East – The Region from a salesian standpoint. 1. *Personnel.* 2. *Salesian foundations.* 3. *Nature of our works.* 4. *Some points to be kept in mind.* 5. *Salesian communities: quantity and quality.* 6. *The Salesian Family.* 7. *Participation and formation of the laity: resources and problems.* – **The Region’s big challenges.** 1. *The vocational situation.* 2. *Reshaping and relocating.* 3. *Continuing formation.* 4. *Salesian work in the Middle East.* – **Future intentions.** 1. *Rethinking our pastoral and educational system.* 2. *Courageous re-definition of salesian work in Italy.* 3. *Making the formation process for our lay collaborators more effective.* 4. *Support for the Middle East Province.* 5. *Development of our historic salesian places.* – **I remain close to all of you – In conclusion**

Rome, 25 March 2004

Solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord

My dear confreres,

I send you as always my affectionate greetings, because you are ever close to my heart. Three months have gone by since my last letter, in which I urged you to contemplate Jesus with the eyes of Don Bosco, and since the publication of the *Strenna* for 2004 in which I appealed to the whole Salesian Family to “propose wholeheartedly to all young people joy in the call to holiness as the high standard of ordinary Christian living.”

Family News

Recent months have seen some events of great importance for our Congregation. The first was the appointment by the Holy Father of Fr Luc Van Looy as Bishop of the Diocese of Ghent in Belgium. We have seen it as a further expression of the

esteem felt by the Holy See for the Salesian Congregation, but at the same time it has deprived us of the person of Fr Luc who carried the responsibilities of the Rector Major's Vicar General. I want to renew through these pages my personal gratitude, and that of all of you, for the great service he gave to the Congregation, first as a missionary and Provincial Delegate in Korea, then as General Councillor for the Missions, then as General Councillor for Youth Ministry, and finally for eight years as Vicar General.

Following his appointment I consulted the members of the Council to obtain help in the discernment process, after which I appointed Fr Adriano Bregolin as the new Vicar General, and subsequently I went on to appoint Fr Pier Fausto Frisoli as the new Councillor for Italy and the Middle East. To them too go my thanks for accepting these offices, and the expression of my confidence in them for fruitful and effective salesian work. In this way, as the winter session ends, the General Council is once again complete as a sign of unity and full collaboration.

Another important fact which I want you to know about is the agreement concluded between the Vatican Secretariat of State and the Salesian Congregation for the direction of the "Ratisbon Institute" in Jerusalem. The premises of this Institute have housed for many years the "Centre for Jewish and Christian Studies." It has been entrusted to our Congregation for a period of fifty years which can be renewed. From next year it will become the new seat of the studentate of theology now at Cremisan. The proposal was put to us directly by the Holy See, and we have welcomed the possibility to upgrade our formation work for the benefit of student confreres from every salesian region in the world. The language of teaching will gradually pass from Italian to English, and its siting in Jerusalem should foster contact with other Centres of theological and biblical studies, while at the same time the house could become a significant point of reference for initiatives of further formation for confreres of various Provinces, even by means of short courses.

The significance of this letter

With this letter I want to begin the presentation of the eight Regions of the salesian world that I announced some months ago. I intend to continue the practice of alternating these letters on the Regions with others of deeper reflection on our spirituality. In this way you will all be able to have an up-to-date overview of the situation of our Congregation in the different continents and contexts, it will help you to grow in the sense of belonging and will make you ever more grateful for our vocation and share our common responsibility.

The first Region I want to present to you is that of **Italy and the Middle East**. I think it right to begin with this Region which includes the home land of Don Bosco and of the salesian charism. The quotation at the head of this letter is an eloquent one. It is an affirmation in the context of the Ascension of the Lord Jesus, who did not return to the Father without first announcing the coming of the Spirit, a gift which was to be a 'prolongation' of Christ himself, and without giving to his disciples the mission to be his witnesses throughout the world, beginning from Jerusalem and continuing "to the ends of the earth."

In an analogous manner Don Bosco's first disciples received his "spirit" and, prompted by a driving force learned from our beloved founder and father, without feelings of nostalgia and with the same educative ardour and enthusiasm, spread out all over the earth continuing in history his mission for the benefit of the young, especially "the poorest of them, those in need and those at risk." In this way the story of the father continues to live on in the life of his sons in every continent forming a single whole; and at the same time it has provided places and events which have become points of reference and criteria for authenticity. In this way the variety of contexts enriches the charism with ever new forms of expression which find unity in the charismatic identity.

Two important events

As I begin this letter I nevertheless feel obliged to refer to two items which I consider of great significance for all our Salesian Family.

The first is the **pilgrimage of the Relics of St Dominic Savio** through the various parts of Italy. Even as I write, the casket of the young Saint has already passed through the territories of Liguria and Tuscany in a great and deeply felt welcoming atmosphere. In these first stages thousands of people have attended the celebrations or have prayed beside the remains of this young but “great” Saint or, as Pius XII called him, this “little giant of the spirit”. The pilgrimage is now proceeding through the areas of the Marche and Abruzzo. It will then go on to Venice and in the coming weeks will pass through other regions, reaching Rome for Palm Sunday, which for many years now has been a significant focus for committed young people. This event is proving to be a real grace for the whole of Italy and a renewed message of holiness. From the information that reaches me I know that youngsters are impressed and encouraged by the figure of this boy of the Valdocco Oratory who, under Don Bosco’s guidance, while still a youth attained a “high degree of ordinary Christian life”. For many Salesians the celebration of this jubilee is becoming almost a rediscovery of the effectiveness of our system of education and evangelization.

The other important event is the **coming beatification of three members of the Salesian Family** : the Salesian – *Fr August Czartoryski*, the Daughter of Mary Help of Christians – *Sister Eusebia Palomino*, and the Salesian Cooperator – *Alexandrina M. da Costa*. Never before have beatifications put the Salesian Family before the faithful so effectively as to be considered – particularly by us and by all who have some knowledge of the salesian world – as a “Family of holiness.” We shall have a further confirmation of this in the coming autumn with the beatification of *Alberto Marvelli*, a salesian past-pupil. When

I speak to you of these events I am filled with joy and hope, and I would like to think that you all feel the same way.

In my closing address to the GC25, speaking of the beatification of Fr Luigi Variara, Bro. Artemides Zatti and Sister Maria Romero, I said: "These *Beati*, who are joined to the numerous array of holiness in our charismatic Family, are united by the joyful giving of themselves and their generous dedication to the very poor. There is nothing that attracts like the witness of total dedication without reserve, without limit, without condition; there is nothing so fascinating as service to the poorest, to the most humble, to those most in need. The lepers of Fr Variara, the sick of Brother Zatti, the abandoned girls of Sister Romero immediately recall the totally free offering of the lives of these three persons, who are proposed to us as models. Care for the poorest and the total gift of self link together the three new *Beati*, and in this way bear witness to their heroic charity."

These new beatifications, so close in time to the others, keep our attention fixed on the different expressions of salesian holiness. Three more *Beati* are now put before us; we could call them a **trilogy**, because they provide examples for us and for the young of the three fundamental ways of accepting and living the salesian vocation. It is important therefore to recognize the fundamental traits in the features of these persons, so as to see what is peculiar to each and common to all within the one experience of the salesian charism. In preparation for the beatification celebrations due to take place on 25 April, various useful materials are being prepared to give us a better knowledge of the exterior and interior lives of these members of our Family.

These two events taken together allow us to make a first observation regarding the contents of this letter. Holiness is a gift of God which has always been capable of coming to life in generous hearts open to God, like that of Don Bosco, and of shining out. Dominic Savio is the finest fruit of Don Bosco's educational and apostolic activity, but this message of holiness has become ever more insistent to the extent that we can rightly say that to-

day it has spread “even to the ends of the earth.” From the humble household of the Becchi to the City of Turin, from Turin to the whole of Italy, and from Italy to the whole world. One need only think of the album of holy salesian youngsters featured in the Salesian Bulletin Calendar for 2004, the majority of whom were striving to model their lives on that of Dominic Savio.

The second consideration is that every gift of God such as the beatification of members of the Salesian Family, is for us a “new call” to live our own salesian vocation deeply and joyfully. These signs of spiritual fruitfulness encourage us on our spiritual pilgrimage and give further force to our mission. The fact that the three belong to different branches of the Salesian Family, and indeed to those founded directly by Don Bosco himself, and represent the fundamental vocations within the Family, strengthen the conviction that we belong to a “holy Family”, and that in it consecrated and lay persons, men or women, adults or youngsters, can become holy by following the spiritual, educative and pastoral path of Don Bosco.

A mark of gratitude

In the light of what I have said, I want now to present to you the state of the Salesian Congregation in Italy as a token of gratitude to God for having raised up in this part of the world our Father Don Bosco, numerous other Saints of the Salesian Family and hosts of other generous confreres who through their faithful interpretation of the charism have spread salesian work to so many parts of the world.

You will surely recall something I have been saying from the time of my first “Good Night” as Rector Major. On that occasion I said: “I am the first non-Italian Rector Major (Fr. Vecchi was Argentinian but of Italian parentage)... I take this occasion to thank all of Salesian Italy which to the present day has known how to exercise its responsibility to faithfully hand on the

charism of Don Bosco. Thank you my dear Italian Salesians..." (cf. GC25, n. 179).

I think spontaneously at this point of how this miracle of expansion has been realized so rapidly, thanks to the availability of generous Salesians sent out first by Don Bosco and then by his successors as Rector Major. First there was France and Argentina (1875), then Uruguay (1876), Patagonia (1879), Spain (1881), England (1887)... and it has continued at an increasing rate! A succession of impressive foundations! Great faith, great enthusiasm and an extraordinary generosity evidenced by the sequence of ever larger missionary expeditions. By way of example: 72 missionaries went out in 1891 only three years after Don Bosco's death; the number grew to 92 in 1895, 126 in 1898 – from one country to another, from one continent to another.

It is right to recall here that the new foundations were to a very great extent the work of confreres coming from Italy. They were Salesians who had received a robust and genuine formation from Don Bosco himself, or at least from Salesians of the first generation, those who had personally known our Father and Founder. They had received a 100 percent genuine salesian spirit, passed on with great fidelity and, as the years went by, with ever greater attention to the new cultures to which they had gone to plant it.

This is how it has been at the beginning of every great enterprise undertaken by pioneers of the salesian spirit; from Cagliero, Costamagna, Fagnano in Latin America to Fr Branda and then Frs Rinaldi and Ricaldone in Spain, Fr Rabagliati in Colombia, Frs Piperni and Picconi in Mexico, Fr George Tomatis in India, Fr Versiglia in China, Fr Cimatti in Japan and so on. A formidable host of confreres who started up works, but above all who passed on to other young people the salesian vocation in a genuine and living form.

This missionary vocation of Italy and Italian confreres still continues today. Numbers may be different but the high quality

remains. And so, also in recent years, various foundations in Africa and Latin America have been made and are still maintained by a system of twinning, a new form of missionary outreach by the Italian Provinces which have often provided means and personnel to enable Don Bosco's charism to reach young people in foreign lands.

It seems to me that all this has been a real miracle of fruitfulness, but I think it also important to remember that in Italy itself the gift of the salesian vocation has always been cared for with attentive fidelity, providing to all the provinces of the world – to some extent – a significant point of reference regarding commitment and witness. I consider it a duty also to remember all the personnel dependent on the Rector Major, both in past years and at the present day. In this connection I cannot fail to mention the confreres dedicated to research in the fields of history, pedagogy and salesian spirituality, who have given a most valuable service to all the Congregation.

Thank you then, dear confreres of Italy, working in the various provinces and communities of the homeland, or missionaries in the world. Know that the Congregation and the Rector Major himself are grateful to you. The historical responsibility entrusted to you has been faithfully carried out and passed on to all, and we all feel called to incarnate Don Bosco in ourselves, wherever we may be or obedience may call us. (cf. GC25, n. 179).

The situation in Italy

To enable you to have a better idea of salesian work in Italy I think it best to give, especially to those who live a long way away from Italy and Europe, a brief overview of the general situation in the country. Today Italy has just under 60 million inhabitants. The birth rate, especially in northern parts of the country, is very low. Families choosing to have only one or two children are becoming ever more numerous, and in consequence

there is a widespread increase in the average age of the population. The 'work force' has fallen in numbers, especially in the more simple and humble categories, and – what is more – the prospect of a more decent life has attracted many immigrants from other countries, especially from the Maghreb and Balkan areas, from Eastern Europe and, to a lesser extent, from the Middle East, the Philippines and Latin America. This large scale immigration is a relatively recent phenomenon, and brings with it today the need for a process of adaptation and integration which is making only slow progress.

From an economic standpoint Italy is one of the more developed nations, but within the country itself there is disparity of various kinds between the strongly industrialized and socially organized north and the south with its high rates of unemployment and notable social problems. The result is that while absorbing thousands of immigrants from abroad, modern Italy still has the problem of its citizens emigrating internally or to other countries to find employment. For these and other reasons the political panorama is frequently disturbed by excessive conflict between political parties and between the industrial sector and trade unions.

On the religious level Italy is a traditionally Catholic country but, like everywhere else in western Europe, it has been assailed by a strong movement of secularization, and in any case the religious aspect is often lived in a rather superficial manner without any strong involvement at the level of Christian commitment. Some rather disturbing signs are appearing, such as the increase in civil marriages, a falling off in priestly and religious vocations, reduced participation in the church community, and the alienation of young people.

But despite all this, there is still in Italy "a hard core" a proportion of the population which lives the religious dimension in an intense manner and assiduously cultivates deep Christian values. One may note the very many groups of volunteer workers in the social, civil and religious fields, who demonstrate a

thousand and one different forms of solidarity. Worth mentioning also is the typically Christian sensitivity of so many individuals and families who contribute generously in various ways to the support of church institutions, missionary works, and welfare projects for the poor.

The situation in the Middle East

In the Middle East the situation is much more complex. We are all well aware of the sad realities of the present conflict between Israel and the Palestinians. To this must be added the state of war, still not resolved by peace treaties, between Israel and some Arab countries. The recent war against Iraq has further exacerbated relationships with the western world. The lack of a settlement in some difficulties linked with ethnic minorities, like the Kurds, poses further obstacles to these peoples living peacefully together.

From the economic aspect, the unstable political situation and the continual threat of war make real development of local economies impossible. The great source of riches provided by oil reserves is controlled by governments which, however, are unable to use them in any meaningful way to improve the social and economic condition of the people. There is a clamorous situation of poverty among Arab peoples. The young are clearly often discouraged by the lack of effective future prospects.

From a religious point of view, Christians represent a small minority of the population, and are themselves divided among various rites: Latin, Byzantine, Chaldean and Coptic. Christian communities, especially in Syria, live their faith as a group with intensity, and they manage to give rise to significant results in terms of vocations. The strong Islamic presence, which often dominates legislation and social behaviour, makes life difficult for Christians. In some countries there is neither respect nor tolerance for non-Muslims.

The Region from a salesian standpoint

The Region at present includes nine Provinces in Italy and one in the Middle East.

1. *Personnel*

There are now some 2,800 confreres in Italy, and a further 118 in the Middle East. The average age in the provinces is notably high, lying between 59 and 65 years of age. The number of novices has continued to fall; their average number has gone down from 30 to 20 (242 in the last seven years), with a bigger diminution this year (19 novices). However, there is a good level of perseverance, even in the period of temporary vows.

A notable factor in the decrease in overall numbers of confreres is the number of deaths; (in the six-year period 1998–2003 there were 488 in the Italian Provinces and 10 in the Middle East). In the last six years too, some 50 confreres have left for the missions, and it is evident that the present number of newly professed cannot compensate for such objective losses.

2. *Salesian foundations*

As far as the opening and closing of houses is concerned, there have been instances of both in the Region. From 1998 to 2003 there were 11 openings and 32 closures. Recent years have seen an upsurge in closures, due in part to procedures of closure begun earlier, not only through lack of personnel but as part of decisions for reshaping.

3. *Nature of our works*

The number of salesian communities has undergone a progressive change over the past six years. In Italy there were 276 communities in 1990, 260 in 1996, 243 in 2000. In 2003 there were 235, of which 228 were canonically erected.

For the **schools sector** it can be said that, despite the inevitable weakening due to the lack of economic equality, in Italy this remains one of the most effective and widely diffused services.

In Italy there are 53 Middle Schools, with some 8,000 pupils and more than 600 lay teachers. The Middle East has 3 Middle Schools with about 600 pupils. In Italy there are 51 High Schools, with some 12,000 pupils and 1,000 lay teachers. The Middle East Province has 6 High Schools.

In recent years, the reform of the scholastic system has led us to take on responsibility for some elementary schools as well.

The sector of **centres for professional training** is in a state of substantial development; it consists of 46 centres, with 13,400 pupils and about 1,000 lay teachers. Corresponding figures for the Middle East Province are 3 centres, with 2,550 pupils and 23 teachers. It should be noted that in addition to the courses at first level, designed for adolescents who have always been the group for which we work by preference, in all the provinces there are now higher level courses aimed at various kinds of adults, with widely differing contents.

The Region's parishes are at present 137 (of which 3 are in the Middle East), with some 1,020,000 parishioners. There are 177 oratories or youth centres (13 of them in the Middle East) with tens of thousands of members.

University hostels number 32 in Italy, with 1,340 resident students.

There are 18 **family homes** for juveniles in difficulties, with about 300 residents. There are also 15 foundations for youngsters on the fringe of society (immigrants, drug-addicts, the homeless, etc.) with 2,000 temporary residents reached in various ways. They represent an effective presence in the field of marginalization.

The missionary dimension has proved vital in recent years. Between 1978 and 2003 about 250 confreres left Italy for

the missions (50 of them in the last six years). The number is considerable in the light of the scarcity of personnel from which the entire Region is suffering.

4. Some points to be kept in mind

To give you statistics, dear confreres, may be interesting, but statistics alone do not tell the whole story about the riches Italy has been able to give and continues to give to the entire Salesian Congregation. I therefore want to add some further points which I think need to be understood if our information and gratitude is to be complete.

I have in mind in the first place the **great service rendered to the formation** of so many Salesians by houses and study centres that have for years been points of reference at international level. I refer in the first place to the International Institute of the Crocetta in Turin, which for so many years was the headquarters of our Athenaeum. From this experience there gradually developed what is now our University in Rome. I want to recall also the Roman Houses of San Tarcisio and Testaccio, which have hosted and continue to host students of theology coming from abroad. For a similar service I must also mention the student community of Gerini, and the now international novitiates of Pinerolo and Genzano.

In the same context I cannot fail to thank the numerous Italian confreres who have contributed so competently and with such foresight to the birth and growth of our Pontifical Salesian University. This too has been a great enterprise for the benefit, the specific salesian formation, the cultural and pastoral growth of large numbers of confreres who today animate the formation communities of the world.

A second point concerns the ***Works of technical formation***, with special reference to the work at Colle Don Bosco, Rebaudengo and Cumiana. In these environments very many of

our Brothers were professionally trained for a specially competent service to the young apprentices in our Technical Schools. In former times large salesian works were always structured in a symmetrical fashion. At the centre was the church with the students' section on one side of it and the artisans' section on the other. It was almost a declaration that the salesian mission had no limits and excluded no one. Any boy could be accepted and his natural talents developed either through classical studies or through a course that would train him as an artisan, a shopkeeper or simply a specialized workman. All the youngsters, both students and artisans, followed a course of educational and Christian development in a context of intense activity which accompanied their formation: the band and theatre, sodalities and group activities, prayer, retreats and spiritual exercises. It was a real experience of the fullness of life, and was a great school for life. The church, situated at the centre of it all, was a constant reminder to everyone of the true source of salesian animation and of the centre on which everything converged.

Truly great has been the good done by our great works, and they are doing it still. I have in mind the great Centres of Valdocco, of Sesto San Giovanni, of Verona San Zeno, of Mestre, of Genoa Quarto, of Bologna, of Rome, of Aquila, of Ortona, of Bari, of Catania, Palermo, Selargius and Lanusei. I also have joyful memories of my recent visit to the house of Este, where something like a miracle has been realized in its internal restructuring. This great and well known college was originally destined for young students, but times have changed and there was the risk of it having to close as a High School. But now it is flourishing again, thanks to the ingenuity and dedication of the confreres, and especially of the Brothers, who have been able to convert it into a technical school.

We do well therefore to recall this original and charismatic dimension of our youth apostolate. And it is right to repeat our thanks to so many of our Brother confreres who have worked with such commitment and dedication not only in Italy but

throughout the world, in founding everywhere schools for young apprentices.

A third point I want to make concerns the sector of ***Social Communication***. Here I want to refer in the first place to that extraordinary instrument for the animation and spreading of salesian spirituality that we know as the *Salesian Bulletin*. It originated in a brilliant idea of Don Bosco and now it has become a fine publication that reaches more than 300,000 families. Through it Italy is given news of the salesian world, becomes involved in the spiritual movement of our Salesian Family and participates actively in it through generous forms of charity. In its present form it is pleasing to the eye, easy to handle, attractive to young people and has become a point of reference for many editions of the Bulletin in other countries in no less than 32 languages.

I must mention also the LDC Publishing House, founded in the time of Fr Ricaldone, which for decades now has been engaged in a lively and creative activity, supported by the help of experts from the Catechetical Centre, which provides the Italian Church with sound reading matter in the field of catechetics and the youth apostolate. A similar meritorious service also continues to be provided by the *Società Editrice Internazionale*, especially in the production of scholastic textbooks.

And there are still two further points that deserve to be mentioned. The first concerns the work of the salesian community in the Vatican. The "Poliglotta", as it is called, has always provided a kind of window through which the Holy See sees and shows its esteem for the Congregation, and at the same time it provides a simple and natural means of access to the Holy Father and the Roman Congregations.

The second point refers to the generous welcome given to Italian missionaries who in old age or failing health return to their provinces of origin after spending their best energies and talents in the service of the mission in different provinces all over the world. The welcome they receive is an exquisite gesture of love and charity to these confreres.

5. Salesian communities – quantity and quality

As I have said already, the number of salesian communities has fallen progressively in the recent six year periods but the number of houses does not reflect the real situation, because within those communities the number of confreres and their quality have been significantly affected by the broader transformations taking place.

As far as religious life is concerned, it is right to take note of the spirit of fidelity of the confreres, of whom the vast majority live with loyalty and conviction – and also with proper gospel serenity – their religious vocation, their commitment to pastoral and educative service, fraternal life, fidelity to the vows, prayer life and ongoing formation.

As is only natural, the number of confreres present in the houses has fallen, and their average age has risen appreciably.

On the other hand greater attention is now given to formation: the ‘community day’, the programming of days of recollection, and of other significant occasions have provided a notable stimulus, especially when linked with the suggestions made by the GC25.

6. The Salesian Family

In Italy the Congregation is at present engaged in a project for the rediscovery of the Salesian Family and a better understanding of its value. For example, Provincial Councils of the Association of Salesian Cooperators and of the Confederation of Past-pupils are becoming much more mature. The local councils seem to be reflecting to some extent the frailty of the communities which find it difficult to assign a specific delegate to them. The Salesian Youth movement too seems to be assuming greater responsibility in the salesian apostolate. Never in the past has the Region felt such a need for the support of lay people who are prepared and motivated in the salesian sense.

7. *Participation and formation of the laity: resources and problems*

The practical requirements of our works and also the rediscovery of an ecclesiology of communion centred on the People of God, with emphasis on their shared responsibility, have prompted our communities towards an ever greater collaboration with lay people who have found a place to some extent at all levels and share more and more consciously in the salesian mission and spirituality.

Progress has been made, especially among those responsible for houses and provinces, in the awareness that the formation of such collaborators cannot be other than as indicated by the GC24, that is, a common salesian formation that is structured, continuous and aimed at the needs of the young and of the local area. It is a real 'in-service formation', accompanied by attitudes that lead to further growth.

Within the Regional framework there have been some interesting formative initiatives especially for teachers in schools. Everywhere to some degree courses for Oratory leaders have sprung up, and there have also been initiatives for the formation of lay people in managerial or administrative positions.

It is clear that the formation process must also be concerned about certain professional skills, but the key point is still the absorbing of the salesian spirit. Only in this way can the works of the Region keep their true identity.

The Region's big challenges

Being realistic requires us also to be aware of the present challenges that the Region has to face. I point out some of them that I consider to be fundamental.

1. *The vocational situation*

The situation in the Region regarding vocations, and more particularly in Italy itself, has remained more or less stationary. It must be kept in mind that whereas in 1985 the country had a million young men aged 19, in 2005 the number will have shrunk to 560,000. This means that the overall number of young adults has decreased by almost 50 per cent – a fact that is bound to have an influence in the field of vocations. Long ago this was pointed out by Fr Viganò: “if there are no children for families and society, neither will there be any for the Church and religious congregations”.

For the Middle East Province I have already spoken of the difficult situation of Christians, which makes many young people dream of emigration; and there is also the difficulty of providing any lengthy and personalized follow-up because of the scarcity of available personnel.

It would not be true to say that Italy is sterile as is the case in some other western countries, but there does seem to be a certain feeling of weariness. All the confreres are having to work harder to some extent, and vocational animation risks becoming less spoken of, especially at the level of local communities, or simply being left to the responsibility of the provincial animator.

We must never forget the Christian quality of our pastoral work. The atmosphere of secularization and consumerism, the vast array of options available, the limitation on the number of children in the family, the flimsy nature of fundamental pastoral work because of the falling numbers of diocesan clergy, etc. – all these are elements that require the reorganization of the pastoral plan for vocations, with special attention being given to an evangelization that is deep enough to lead to a real encounter with the Lord Jesus, and to foster a firm desire “to risk one’s life” for him.

2. Reshaping and relocating

The reduction in the number of salesian personnel must lead us to a wise revision of our works in the Region, and particularly in Italy. As my predecessor Fr Vecchi said in one of his letters: "Many of our works are good, but they do not all speak with the same eloquence, realism and truth. Many of the works can be useful in some way, but they do not all express the gospel and the love of God sown in the hearts of believers with the same immediate appeal and depth. Many activities seem acceptable and functional in our present-day society; some of them are strongly evangelizing and prophetic... After more than a hundred years of salesian life in Italy, fidelity to Don Bosco requires us to face up to an effort at reshaping and re-siting – albeit gradually and with due regard to the resources available" (cf. *Letter to the Provincials of Italy and the Middle East*, 1997).

Such a task of reshaping and relocating is obviously one to be taken up within each individual province, but must also be understood in terms of a new and more organic distribution of the various provinces within the country, which will permit the strengthening of weaker situations and a better overall animation. Some unifications, even though brought about through complex and laborious processes, have already led to good results.

In processes of this kind, whether at the level of individual provinces or the whole of the country, it is essential to maintain a positive attitude and be full of hope. To become stubbornly or nostalgically entrenched in last ditch efforts to defend works or circumscriptions is an attitude which cannot lead to true renewal but risks being wanting in realism, with the danger of being forced by circumstances to make decisions we would have preferred to approach more wisely. Here I want to exhort the Provincials of Italy to abandon a strict and sometimes too closed consideration of the problems of their own province and adopt a broader and more collaborative view, so as to seek what is best for the salesian work in Italy as a whole. For this purpose, even

a revision of the way the Italian Provincial Conference is structured and its activities organized may be very desirable just now, so as to adopt guidelines at national level with greater security and bring a unified coordination to the solution of problems that emerge. We must never forget that for Don Bosco what must decide the details of our works are the needs of the young, and structures have importance only to the extent that they contribute to that end.

3. Continuing formation

The complex nature of the present period of history makes the business of formation one of our biggest challenges, because of its extreme importance in enabling us to live and witness to our vocation and salesian mission in the most effective way.

This concerns not so much the structures relating to initial formation, which are in fact already present in the Region with rich possibilities already well consolidated by experience. It concerns all the Salesians already involved in the mission. It is ongoing formation that enables us to discern accurately the signs of the present times and to be faithful interpreters of Don Bosco's spirit in a modern context that needs great intellectual and pastoral flexibility if it is to make suggestions and offer methods and solutions, and especially an educative and Christian approach and follow-up more in tune with present circumstances. This obligation of continuing formation must involve all confreres from salesian, pastoral, educative and professional standpoints.

Another point we must keep in mind, as I have said already, will be the formation of lay people. They are present in large and ever increasing numbers in the works of the Region. The care we give these collaborators of ours to ensure that they be good interpreters of the salesian style and of our educative and pastoral methods is an essential condition for our works to preserve their true charismatic identity.

4. Salesian work in the Middle East

The Salesian Province of the Middle East, which recently celebrated its centenary, has undergone a serious weakening in recent decades. As regards personnel it has always been closely linked to Italy but for some time now the flow of missionaries has decreased. At present it has 120 confreres working in 16 communities scattered over 7 countries: Egypt has 3 communities, Palestine 2, Israel 3, Lebanon 2, Syria 4, Turkey 1 and Iran 1. 71 confreres are from Italy, 39 from nations of the Middle East, and the rest from a further 11 countries. For a few years now some confreres have been carrying on a summer activity for young people in Iraq, in the hope of eventually obtaining permission for a stable work there.

It is a wonderful mosaic, even though this very fact makes it difficult to assign the most suitable personnel to the different places. It is not difficult to imagine what language difficulties there are: Arabic, Hebrew, English, Persian and Turkish; and the problems involved in transfer from one country to another when necessary in distributing personnel. It must be remembered that between Israel – where the Provincial House is situated – and the countries of Lebanon, Syria, Iran and Iraq there are no diplomatic relations.

Our works are highly esteemed by the civil and ecclesiastical authorities, even though the Province has to maintain relations with at least 6 Patriarchates, the same number of Apostolic Nuncios or Delegates, and another 18 Archbishops. Here, as in the case of Ethiopia-Eritrea, the various rites are not a matter of indifference.

In circumstances like these, pastoral coordination and provincial planning are clearly very difficult, because everything has to be done within a high degree of decentralization. Nevertheless the confreres succeed in working in a typically salesian manner, trying to inculturate the charism and carry out the mission among Muslims and Christians of the various communities

and rites by practising ecumenism and inter-religious dialogue as much as is possible. At Cairo in Egypt we are taking care of refugees from Sudan. At Istanbul in Turkey we are doing the same for boys from both Iraq and the Kurd area. In Lebanon and Syria the main activities are oratories and youth centres. Last year we were able to inaugurate a Technical Training Centre at Al Fidar in Lebanon, and it is my hope that we may be able to establish similar centres in Syria, Iraq, Jordan and Egypt.

The biggest problem continues to be the state of war and the consequent emergency situation which has dragged on for 35 years, with the wars between Israel and Palestine, the Islamic Revolution, the Gulf War, civil war in Lebanon, the Intifada and finally the recent war in Iraq. As you can see, the Middle East Province is in a critical and tormented area where new conflicts begin before earlier ones have come to an end.

We do not know how long this situation will continue, but it is evident that the effects will be felt for many years and some of them will be irreversible, such as the Islamization of Lebanon and Palestine through the flight of Catholics.

How could we fail to be involved in such a situation? And how could we fail to be proud of our confreres who are already involved in it? It is my earnest hope that by reading this letter and by having a better knowledge of our confreres in the Middle East, the Provinces and individual confreres will be prompted to solidarity with them and to make themselves available for strengthening and ensuring the continuation of our work in this area. We have works that are of great significance because of their location, and we must safeguard them.

Future intentions

In the face of these challenges it is very important to adopt lines of action that will define our commitment in the near future.

With this in mind, I put forward some fundamental suggestions, addressed especially to members of the Region so that they can study them at greater depth.

1. Rethinking our pastoral and educational system

The purpose of this is to make the system more effective. It is a matter of overcoming the threshold of apostolic timidity with the risk of remaining enclosed in a pastoral approach of our usual activities and entertainments, and offer a pastoral approach that is truly missionary, able to involve young people, to make them grow into the fullness of life and direct them through an experience of faith to a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. This is our fundamental work, on which we have to build all that concerns vocational direction and guidance. It is a process that presupposes the involvement of Salesians as a direct presence among the young. Our preference for those for whom we work must direct us more decisively towards the rejects and the very poor. In Italy, to be practical, young immigrants must be the object of our special care, above all at the present time when attitudes and policies of exclusion and marginalization are common, sometimes prompted by racism. Italy has always been outstanding as a country with a great and generous heart, with a rich humanist culture, and a history of Roman law. Italy, moreover, has been a nation of great and numerous migratory movements; it cannot be unmindful of this experience it has had, as Deuteronomy reminds Israel: "Love the sojourner therefore; for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt" (Deut 10, 19).

What I am saying is to be considered as applying to every context in which Salesians of the Region are working, but I have in mind in particular our Schools, which must become true mediators of a culture that takes its inspiration from the great values of Christian humanism, and places of intense youthful activity where children and youngsters can find guidance and a

breadth of education that contains a wealth of incentives for their human and spiritual growth.

I am thinking too of our Technical Training Centres, which are often where the most vulnerable youngsters are to be found. Here they can start a new life through an educational experience in which manual work gives them a new dignity and security, and where at the same time they can find guidance in their Christian pilgrimage.

I am thinking also of our oratories and youth centres and of our parishes, which must manifest the "original gift" of Don Bosco's educational charism, and not be content to settle for the routine provision of a approach which does not bear the precious and distinctive hall mark of the preventive system.

I have in mind finally the numerous kinds of work with university students, that allow the confreres of the Region to befriend and guide young adults who are on the threshold of the fullness of life's experiences, and are very open to authentic recommendations on a cultural and Christian level.

There is every reason therefore, dear confreres, to undertake a serious revision, and rediscover the most genuine elements of our spirituality and mission, renewing our service to the young.

This process of re-aligning our educative and pastoral project, together with the initiatives I have specified, will certainly have a powerful impact from a vocational point of view.

2. Courageous redefinition of salesian work in Italy

Everything that can be done in this direction will certainly prove to be a good investment for the salesian mission in Italy and the Middle East for coming years.

In the process of reshaping and relocating I would point to the following criteria which must provide us with inspiration within the wise and well-considered discernment now taking place in the various Provincial Chapters:

- ❑ Attention to the human setting of the Region, and to the areas which are poorest from an ecclesial and civil aspect. If we are going to withdraw from some work (e.g. some parish) it would be well to begin with one in a richer social setting.
- ❑ The development of works and initiatives aimed at promoting a new faith proposal in areas of new evangelization.
- ❑ The maintenance of works and structures which better enable us to express the salesian charism, from the standpoint of both education and evangelization: works, therefore, which facilitate a more effective contact with young people, such as oratories, schools, technical training centres, university hostels, places for voluntary and social work. We must be careful not to let our charism become absorbed by routine parish work.
- ❑ Defence of the presence of those 'quality initiatives' presented by our study centres, publishing houses, catechetical centres, teams for ongoing formation, pedagogical or cultural centres, formation houses, etc. They represent opportunities for the expansion and spreading of our salesian spirituality and educational method.
- ❑ For works which have a rich hundred years of history behind them the ruling criterion remains that of providing a service to the young. Sometimes a reordering of the service (reshaping internal structures) can prove to be a fresh start. If even this is not possible, it is clear that God is calling us elsewhere.

Also at the level of the provinces a discernment process is necessary to bring to maturity options which will give to salesian Italy a juridical structure more in keeping with the present situation. It is well that all confreres be aware of the decisions that have to be made to keep our work strong and lively in this country. This should be a matter of interest to everyone. As I have said on other occasions, it is a matter of prophecy and not merely of survival!. The simple truth is that to go blindly ahead with-

out making decisions about this is to court a natural death. Change, even accompanied at times by a certain loss of 'security', is a sign of vitality and of the will to be guided by the Spirit, who "renews the face of the earth."

A final important aspect is the link between the different Provinces, which must take its inspiration from criteria of solidarity and collaboration. The idea must grow therefore of an overall view by improving everything that can promote unified and linked initiatives, with a generous exchange of personnel and resources.

3. Making more effective the formation process for our lay collaborators.

I have already mentioned above the importance we must give to the formation of our collaborators. They are very numerous in all the contexts of our salesian educative service. Their qualification is indispensable for preserving the identity of our works. Many relevant initiatives are already in progress, but perhaps greater attention should be given to what is specific to our salesian activity, essentially linked with a knowledge and deeper understanding of our preventive system.

In addition to theoretical knowledge, this deeper understanding is associated with a true sharing of life and ideals that we must foster with these "external Salesians". To this end specific initiatives must go hand in hand with the welcoming and sharing attitude we adopt towards our lay collaborators, frequently involving them in specific aspects of our life such as prayer and discussion.

4. Support for the Middle East Province

At the beginning of the present six-year period I asked specifically that this point be included in our planning for the Region

of Italy and the Middle East. It was my intention to suggest to Italy to promote a programme to help the MOR Province to overcome the difficulties linked with the social and political conditions they are now facing, and by helping also in the matter of personnel. Naturally, this is an invitation which today I address to all confreres and not just to those of Italy.

In practical terms, I have in mind that each Italian province gives at least one young confrere to the Middle East Province. I am sure that this will bring blessings on the vocational front in Italy itself.

Courage then, young confreres of Italy. I turn to you because these works need young men who can learn the local languages well and become inculturated in that environment, and give their own life to the salesian charism. With Don Bosco I continue to dream of new foundations in which the Salesians become the friends and educators of the young. I dream specifically of setting up soon a new foundation in Baghdad. The political and social situation in Iraq calls us to give some sign of our commitment to the poor and weak. And perhaps the Lord, by giving us the hoped for first novices from that country, will provide a clear sign that he is calling us to realize such a dream.

5. Development of our historic salesian places

There is a final important point that I want to put to you, dear confreres of Italy. It is the full exploitation of what we think of as the "salesian holy places" of our spirituality and charism. I am speaking directly of Colle Don Bosco, of the Valdocco complex, of the native places of Dominic Savio and our other salesian saints, but also of those other places which still provide a vital link with the memory of Don Bosco, such as Genoa Sampierdarena or the Sacred Heart in Rome.

These places must be carefully and lovingly preserved, not only from a material point of view, but also as centres of pil-

grimage, animation and formation. They are in fact a “school of spirituality and a centre of prayer”.

This is a legacy entrusted to Italy but of concern to the Congregation worldwide. It is a rich spiritual heritage which we have not yet fully appreciated. And it is linked with the movement of spiritual and pastoral renewal that we are pursuing more directly at the present time.

I remain close to all of you

As I conclude this letter, in which I know that I am speaking to all the confreres of the world, allow me to express my closeness particularly to the confreres of this Region of Italy and the Middle East. I have frequently repeated that the greatest treasure of the Congregation consists in the confreres, and I repeat it today with greater conviction than ever, after visiting more than fifty provinces across the salesian world.

At this time, I want to express in the first place my closeness to the confreres who are sick or ageing. They have given their lives for the benefit of the young and for the growth of salesian work; and now they provide quite extraordinary support through prayer and the daily offering of their situation of sickness and old age.

I send a particular greeting to our youngest members. I remember you every day and commend you to the Lord so that he may give you courage and enthusiasm, with a capacity for communion and apostolic endeavours, accompanied by perseverance. Preceding generations have entrusted to you a salesian Italy, rich in works and projects and more, especially rich in great fidelity to Don Bosco and to his spirit. Be their worthy successors, facing the challenges of the present day with calm and responsibility, but especially with your hearts filled with a great “passion for God” and “compassion for mankind” – for today’s youngsters to

whom God is sending you. If this pastoral charity burns within you, you will be true Salesians after the heart of Don Bosco and your life will certainly give rise to other vocations.

An affectionate greeting also to you, Salesians of mature age, who bear the daily burden of our works. Thank you for your fidelity, for the hard work you do, for your unfailing hope, for the faith that animates your lives, for the love you devote to the mission for the young. I want to tell you that in Don Bosco, I am close to you with my esteem and affection.

And I invite all of you, dear confreres, of whatever Region or Province, to join with me in praising God for the good he has done through the salesian charism in this Region of Italy and the Middle East. We can truly say that "the Lord has done great things and holy is his name". So it has been in Italy, and so it has also already been in many other countries "even to the ends of the earth".

In conclusion

I entrust each of you to the motherly care of Mary Help of Christians, Don Bosco's Madonna, who was his mother and teacher and will continue to be the same for all of us, the one who was his guide in every enterprise for the benefit of the youngsters entrusted to him by God; she will continue to guide us as well.

The feast of the Annunciation, the date I have given to this letter, reminds us of the attitude we must cultivate of being able to listen to God and respond to him, who never ceases to speak to and lead us along the path of history. It is an attitude we can sum up under three main headings:

- *Seeking God's plan for our own life*, in the knowledge that he has a plan for each of us, and he reveals it to us to the extent

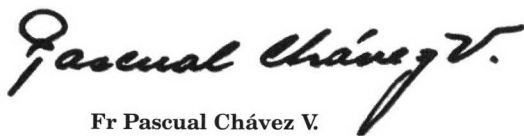
that we ask him what he wants us to do for others. God's word, his 'annunciation' to us, will reach us through events, other people and sacred Scripture. Hence the need for us to be converted to attentive listeners to the Word and believing readers of history. In this sense it seems to me very eloquent to see Mary represented in many pictures of the Annunciation with the Scriptures in hand, or on her knees meditating on them, as though wanting to take them to her heart. Mary teaches us in the first place to be attentive: "She considered in her mind what sort of greeting this might be", says the Gospel (Lk 1, 29).

- ❑ *Acceptance of God's will as our plan of life*, recognizing that his plan will always be better than ours. Opening ourselves to God means acknowledging our situation as creatures, with limitations and a propensity to make idols and gods to our own dimensions. To admit God into our lives implies the recognition of his sovereignty; it means refusing to be dependent on anyone else, to have no other priorities in our lives, to identify ourselves with his will in such a way as to make it our own. We cannot be true believers if we try to control God, wanting him to do what we want, to carry out our will. Secondly Mary teaches us to believe in God, to trust him, to make room for him in our lives as the One who is loved because he first loved us and thought of us. "I am the handmaid of the Lord. Let it be done to me as you have said" (cf. Lk 1, 38).
- ❑ *Docility to the Holy Spirit*, which makes possible in us what would otherwise be impossible. The gospel tells us that through the power of God's Holy Spirit Mary was able to be the Mother of God. It is docility to the Spirit that makes the Virgin Mary so fruitful. This is shown by the fact that when visiting Elizabeth the latter responded to Mary's greeting with the words: "Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb" (Lk 1, 42). The deep lived experi-

ence of this divine energy allows Mary to feel free to offer herself and become a slave of her God. This is the deep meaning of May's 'virginity' which, rather than being a statement about a physical condition, is her total availability to her God: "Nothing is impossible with God" (Lk 1, 36).

May Mary teach us to welcome God's designs and collaborate with him in fulfilling his work of salvation.

I wish you all a fruitful Lent and many blessings at Easter!

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Pascual Chávez V." in a cursive script.

Fr Pascual Chávez V.

Rector Major

2.1 VOCATIONAL FRAGILITY

Initiating reflection and suggesting action

Fr Francesco CEREDA

General Councillor for Formation

Examining the characteristics of vocations to the religious life in the present day, one often speaks about psychological fragility; however, it seems more correct to speak about vocational fragility. In fact, vocation refers to the whole of life; it is not just a matter of the psychological life and development of an individual, but also the human maturing process, the life of faith, the processes of formation, social and ecclesial relationships, the historical and cultural context. On the other hand, it is necessary to recognise that normally nowadays difficulties in living vocational values arise at a psychological level; it is important therefore to give particular attention to this kind of fragility. So, in the reflections which follow, various aspects will be considered; without losing sight of the variety of contexts in which they are found, and the situation regarding fragility will be analysed from the psychological, spiritual, moral and pedagogical perspectives in particular.

The reflections considered here refer to initial formation; but with the prolongation of adolescence and youth, in part they also concern the years that follow. In fact if the period of initial formation is marked by fragility, no less so is the period when for the first time one assumes real responsibility. There is then the particular phenomenon in our Congregation, and in religious life in general, which is often a sign of fragility: the many who *leave during temporary profession*; for us in the last six year period the number of these has increased to a notable extent (cf. "Report of the Vicar of the Rector Major to GC25" 103). However, this phenomenon is not found to the same degree in all Provinces; rather in some of them vocations are sound and there is good persever-

ance. The same can be said for some Congregations, which in spite of the same difficult situation, experience a good supply of vocations and a high level of perseverance. (AGC 382 p. 24).

This document is addressed first of all to Provincials and their Councils, to Provincial Formation Delegates and their Commissions, and to teams of formation guides so that they can examine the situation, take account of the difficulties and try to find ways to help the new vocations; it is also addressed to young confreres in initial formation and raises questions about the life of communities and provinces. Talking about fragility means considering only part of the vocational situation nowadays, which in fact has many positive elements; there is the danger of over-emphasising failings, weaknesses and lack of success. Concern for the salesian vocation requires that we have a special care for our young confreres, responding to their problems and developing their potential. Without a courageous and well-thought-out formation process even the most promising hopes can be dissipated; it is a question also nowadays of providing an approach to formation based on the dream at nine years of age: *"Make yourself humble, determined and strong."*

1 Roots of vocational fragility

Vocational fragility has its roots in the dominant culture of today. We are living in a time of *postmodernity*: this is characterised by its complexity, which makes life into a maze without any sign posts, and produces a confused situation in which to make decisions; in addition, it is marked by the characteristics of transition with rapid change, the abandonment of old ways of doing things and the lack of new terms of reference; finally it is caught up in the processes of globalisation, which lead to the acceptance of a confused mentality and give rise to a confused identity. In this situation the crucial issue is the evident split between a faith perspective and a culture in a state of continual

evolution, which produces a marked relativism with its consequent influence on clear thinking and vocational perseverance.

This weak culture brings with it some consequences related to *mentality and life styles*: consumerism, which shows itself in a constant search for novelty and especially involves the area of the emotions with attitudes of: "I feel" or "I want"; subjectivism, which presumes that one's own point of view is the only valid one; the focus on the immediate, which re-enforces the idea of "everything and now"; cultivation of the ephemeral and of the image, which glorifies appearance and efficiency; the exaltation of the anthropology of secularised man, which sidelines the model of the religious man.

Religious experience then becomes the search for the feel-good factor about oneself and for highly emotional experiences. In general religious formation makes little impact and does not involve the person in the depth of his being. Each one remains self-centred, convinced that everything can be easily achieved on the basis of personal prestige and possessions, and not with effort and perseverance. Then, as a result of ethical relativism, shared values do not exist.

This has a knock-on effect on civil, ecclesiastical and religious institutions, which, in addition to being weak and not very attractive because of changed times, are no longer popular nor appreciated, not trusted nor referred to. *Families* too, especially problem families and broken homes, are influenced by this cultural climate; they alternate between being anxiously over-protective of their children, and being noticeably absent from their education, creating a strong affective void and a lack of points of reference. Finally, people, especially young people, reflect a state of affairs that leads them to live in a way that is disjointed or conditioned by what is in fashion; this weakness then leads to even more inconsistency, incoherence, dissatisfaction, instability, superficiality.

Our Congregation operates in many different contexts. We find ourselves in situations which are secularised, pluri-cultural

and multi-religious, in which the Christian faith is seen as irrelevant, or where Christians are a minority and where new forms of religious expression are sometimes being sought. We also come across contexts in which globalisation is producing situations of great poverty and extreme marginalisation as well as fresh opportunities for cooperation and solidarity. Finally there are situations of complexity and fragmentation which result in disunity and escapism, as well as acceptance of diversity (cf. CG25 44). While we are living in a culture which tends towards homogeneity, in some contexts the roots of vocational fragility can appear with different features which then need to be studied in the various provinces.

2. Indications of vocational fragility

The characteristics of the current vocational fragility are to be seen particularly in certain attitudes, which tend to become more marked in an individual. Only some of the indications of fragility in young vocations are mentioned here: others can and should be identified according to the various different contexts.

2.1. *Inability to make definitive decisions*

A tendency can be observed of being tied to the present without any regard to future prospects or any certainties. People are living uneasily with a sense of emptiness, and an inevitable apathy and sense of insecurity. A life of faith does not provide the stimulus needed to look to the future, it is marginal, and does not influence the moral conscience. People are led to fill the emptiness with strong emotional experiences, giving ever more importance to matters of secondary concern. Quite significant in this regard is the anxious seeking for affirmation: affection and esteem are sought, then degrees, and professional qualifications, then high public marks of recognition in one's career. People feel themselves called for today, but are not so sure about to-

tomorrow. It seems impossible to provide the total definitive commitment to the vocation, and so one feels out of place and frequently confused. Vocation then comes to be seen ever more as a private matter that never goes beyond one's present frame of mind. One is afraid of the future and does not have the courage to look at the past; one is frightened of coherent and definitive choices; the capacity to plan one's life becomes weak.

2.2. Uncertainty as regards vocational identity

Another form of immaturity comes from a weak sense of identity, from insecurity and a lack of self acceptance. Even in consecrated life one does not know how to identify oneself and therefore focuses on "what you do" or "what you have" rather than "who you are." After years of consecrated life, there is uncertainty about one's identity. One's weakness and sense of alienation take over. One gives way to one's emotions. There is a great falling off in the ideals of one's consecration: the primacy of God, the gift of oneself for the young, the radical following of Christ, fraternal life in community, formation. In particular, the misconception that success in the apostolate will come easily and the subsequent disappointment have a profound unconscious effect on self-esteem and easily lead to a loss of interest, cutting oneself off and ambiguous compensatory behaviour often in the affective area. In addition to a lack of an authentic sense of belonging to the person of Jesus, to the Church and to the Congregation, there remain significant personal aspects of immaturity that have never been taken seriously, tacitly covered up in various ways and never faced up to.

2.3. A seeking for security

There is a tendency to try to find in community a safe haven, or enjoyable friendly relationships to fill a personal emptiness or insecurity, arising from experiences in the family or peer group. One can see a need for affirmation and approval. There are those

who relate to the institution in an observant and respectful manner, in order to be given affirmation which they cannot find in themselves. There is often a stifled struggle between autonomy and dependence, to which is added a touch of competitiveness, the need for esteem, the cultivation of appearances. Much is expected from the community and little thought given to generosity in giving oneself. In this way problems of interpersonal relationships arise and are made worse by the crisis experienced by the community which often shows little concern for the individual and great concern about the management of the work. The consequence is a lack of appreciation for fraternal life since it does not satisfy the need for affection, for achievement, for fulfilment. Harsh criticisms follow, being then extended to include all authority, one's own Institute, the Church, civil institutions.

These indications of fragility are a cry for help and an appeal. Behind them lies a *formation query*. Young confreres are living in a pluralist, neutral, relativist culture: on the one hand they are looking for authenticity, affection, wide horizons; on the other they are fundamentally lonely, attracted or wounded by affluence, confused by ethical uncertainty. One therefore has to take into account the fact that together with their availability and strengths, fragility is also a constant part of life for the young. The problem is not vocational fragility as a given reality among young consecrated persons today; the fact is rather that it is not seen as an opportunity for further maturing, and people do not know how to integrate it.

3. Causes of vocational fragility

The different and complex manifestations of vocational fragility have led to the identification of a phenomenology of fragility. It would be well to go further into this matter now, looking into the causes. Without an understanding of and then a radical attention to the causes it would not be possible to overcome the consequences of fragility. The four fundamental causes which

are presented here cannot be taken into consideration separately; as always a systematic approach is important to the understanding of the phenomenon and to the search for remedies.

3.1. *Lack of human maturity*

A first source of fragility is linked with superficiality, the neglect of and the inability to honestly deal with one's own life story, with the strengths and weaknesses it contains. There is lack of places and of formation guides who are capable of dealing with the complex reality of human maturity and helping young people to form a new conscience. Too many problems are put off and not seriously faced; the young confreres do not have the courage to seek help or they deceive themselves into thinking that they can successfully pursue a maturing process without guidance.

The areas that most often emerge are those of identity, affectivity and sexuality. Sometimes young people try the religious life because that are attracted by it, but they do not know what they are looking for. Often too, they have not received from their families the basic emotional maturity and affective education they need. They are incapable of recognising the unconscious motives behind their vocational response, either as a fundamental option or in everyday decision making. They lack sound terms of reference. Sometimes they have a history of negative experiences which need to be integrated in their life story.

They are lacking in the necessary forgiving attitude needed to accept their own weakness, entrust it to the Lord and accept the necessary laborious change of direction. Young confreres manifest a great thirst for authenticity which they are unable to find and to live out within themselves and which they project upon the community and upon the institution in an idealistic manner; consequently they experience great disappointment and frustration. Only a clear-eyed decision linked to a clear awareness of fragility and a sound motivation can give strength to the vocation.

3.2. *Lack of motivations based on faith*

Strictly connected with this is a weakness in faith, in prayer, in the interior life, in the spiritual combat, in charismatic motivation, in the ability to bear witness; in this case the young religious are unable in fact to sustain a sense of vocation. Sometimes the family or the culture do not have a Christian tradition. In some situations the religious choice is not based on real faith motives, but becomes an opportunity to escape from poverty to have social recognition, to achieve cultural advancement.

It is difficult to be aware of the real motivations; but if these are not clarified and unless the extent to which faith is the determining factor is verified, any kind of difficulty can lead to the abandoning of the vocational choice. We really have to ask ourselves whether our young men beginning from the first formation really have a profound life which implies a sense of interior freedom, respect for everyone, cultivating one's conscience, consistency between thoughts and emotions, authenticity in behaviour.

We also really have to ask ourselves whether the young confreres have a genuine experience of the primacy of God and the basic centrality of Christ or whether rather they are hiding a spiritual emptiness which, when times are hard, will come to the fore. We have to ask ourselves whether they have any experience of generosity and whether they have at times lived without any immediate reward. We have to ask ourselves whether they are on track for a serious process of internalisation, personalisation, maturation of motives. Without these initial experiences there will be no progress in maturation in the faith.

3.3. *Weakness of the formation process followed*

Initial formation processes in these years which have been very well developed help to outline the identity of the consecrated person but they do not help him to go into himself in depth and reach maturity. In this way the identity is forgotten or continually reconsidered or deviated by peripheral distracting experi-

ences. The formation procedures are discontinuous; some times they are too long and not very effective; it is therefore possible to speak about formation fragility.

The most serious formation weakness lies in the inability to make it sufficiently personalised to help the young confrere to make his own the values of human development, of the faith and of the charism. It must be recognised that often the formation we provide is weak, it does not change nor convert the person, nor reach his heart. Very often there is not sufficient time to do this, because more attention is given to the acquisition of knowledge, to academic degrees, to professional qualifications than to the process of personal maturity.

It must be acknowledged that in some parts of the Congregation, the aspirantate experience having been set aside, other experiences that achieve the same objectives have not always been found. During the teenage years the aspirantate created the educational atmosphere and relationships that provided a Christian way of life and created a certain attraction towards the values of consecrated life. In some places the aspirantate experience while continuing to be available has not been renewed in its methodology.

Sometimes the formation guides in the different phases do not use a common methodology; there are not always enough of them nor are they sufficiently prepared. Enough is not done to make the best use of the teams of formation guides nor to change those formation communities which are still lacking in the personalised approach. For all these reasons personal fragility is never put to the test.

3.4. *Malaise of the communities*

Another source of fragility is conditioned by the actual state of community life, which provides a implicit and underlying process for formation. The limited spiritual and vocational progress of the community creates a provincial culture that is not very encouraging and sometimes even inconsistent with the

atmosphere of the formation communities. The failings in ongoing formation provide poor vocational motivation. The way of thinking, the life styles, the poor examples of behaviour in the Province create for everyone not only for the young confreres a "weak religious life" against which it would be necessary to react by going against the current. The "liberal" model of religious life is in fact the source of many weaknesses. (cf. Letter of the Rector Major in AGC 382, p. 13-14).

The lack of real encouraging personal relationships in the community produces individualism and disaffection. The effects of belonging to communities that are too much directed towards the demands of activities and stressful timetables in an attempt to cope with all the commitments they have in spite of reduced forces, have a negative impact in that they create and sustain forms of fragility. This happens with the young but also with the not so young. Feeling themselves more like workers in a business than consecrated people with a mission, they live everyday in a confused state which produces a disorientation that becomes ever more serious.

Two symptoms particularly have emerged in these years: a sense of isolation in community and an inability to communicate at any real depth. People are afraid to talk about their lives; relationships are on a formal or functional level, especially because of a fear of appearing to others in a way that will not attract their esteem. Therefore close relationships, often the result of needing to be understood and supported emotionally, are sought outside. And since, in community one is often valued more according to what one does than for who one is, on the one hand one takes a limited part in the mission, and on the other one tends to be jealous in managing one's own patch.

4. First things to be done

Conscious that every vocation is a precious gift, the Congregation is pledged to take care of every young person that God

sends, helping him to overcome any inevitable frailties and to strengthen his fidelity. In order to do this some priorities are now proposed.

4.1. *Care of vocations to salesian religious life*

Above all it is a matter of taking care of the educational contexts in which we are working, so that they are healthy and constructive; from this good soil sound vocations can emerge. The family needs to be given support so that it can be a place where children grow in human maturity and Christian education. The parish community can help by providing meaningful faith experiences; while the school should offer serious and stimulating educational opportunities; free time can provide occasions for growing in generosity. For this reason one hopes that most vocations to salesian religious life will come from our own places, precisely because of the foundations of culture and faith which are laid down there, for the salesian spirit spontaneously assimilated, for the sense of belonging that results.

Today special care of vocations to salesian life requires that we look again and in new ways at the question of the aspirantate or of a special vocation community or at some other form of continuous and community-based vocational guidance; in fact it is clear that vocation groups are not enough for this. It is a question of having places that are open and available to young people during their time in secondary school or at university or college, with an atmosphere suitable for discernment of salesian religious vocations. In these places there could be a very good human experience, a serious cultural and linguistic preparation, a vigorous Christian life, a lively sharing of the salesian mission; in a particular way there could be a sound education in love, formation of consciences, personal guidance.

This sort of experience can be adapted to the educational situations in every country; one should not wait until candidates have finished their school or academic courses before following and guiding them. It is even more necessary for those young peo-

ple who have already completed their studies outside our own places; no one should begin the prenovitiate without having spent a suitable time as a candidate. Here there is room for all the flexibility and variety of experience desired, on condition that there are the necessary formation guides involved. One notes everywhere these days a growing interest in this idea of the aspirantate or vocation community, which needs to be studied jointly by those concerned with youth ministry and formation.

4.2. *Prenovitiate*

If the aspirantate or the vocation community serve as a preparation, the prenovitiate is the key occasion for the verification and deepening of the vocation, particularly in terms of human maturity. In this period the prenovice acquires a sufficient knowledge and acceptance of himself; he becomes aware of his own life; he integrates in his life past experiences including the less than happy ones; he builds up his affective and sexual life; he becomes aware of the educational impact of his family; evaluates the state of his physical and mental health. In this way he takes in hand his own personal history: he discovers his strengths and his weaknesses; adopts a positive self image; builds up a strong sense of his own identity.

The prenovitiate is also a time for a good foundation in the faith and in the Christian life, which implies a sound catechesis and initiation into sacramental life, Marian devotion, a life of prayer. In addition it is the time when the prenovices have an experience of spiritual direction and of community life, acquiring a good capacity for human relations and interpersonal communication. The work of the prenovitiate requires formation personnel who are prepared; it requires a structured programme that is not left to improvisation. Today, someone in charge of prenovices needs the same preparation and experience as a Director of Novices.

For this stage of formation nowadays we have a good programme even though its implementation still remains a little

vague and little defined. In some cases the organisation of the prenovitiate is more like an anticipated period of practical training without the required preparation; in others excessive weight is given to academic studies with little possibility of serious work being carried out on oneself; in others again there are no suitable programmes, or the prenovices are scattered in different communities. The prenovitiate needs to be preceded «by a serious pastoral work for vocations.» (FSDB 349); «it can take the form of an autonomous community ... or a group within the salesian community under the responsibility of one or more confreres» (FSDB 344); the candidate is admitted to the prenovitiate only when «he has made his option for the salesian life» (FSDB 330) and wishes to prepare to enter the novitiate.

Without wishing to minimise the effect of the subsequent phases on the development of the vocation, there is a growing awareness of the crucial role played by the preliminary stages: a serious vocational process and the prenovitiate. These two stages constitute the foundation of formation. In fact many instances of people leaving the religious life and the priesthood are linked to a weak faith, to a poor human maturity, to a lack of genuine discernment, to problems of affectivity and relationships and the use of freedom not resolved in the initial stages.

4.3. Methodology of formation

Not only in the preliminary stages but especially in the subsequent ones the main strategy to overcome vocational fragility is *personalisation*. It is a question of a real change in methodology that the *Ratio* treats in an excellent manner. Essential elements are: attention to motivation, emotions, feelings, sentiments; the process of identification with the salesian vocation; assuming responsibility for one's own formation and the personal plan of life; personal guidance, the practice of discernment, formation inculturation. In this way formation succeeds in reaching a person in the depth of his being. Certainly we

should not forget that we are in a area which touches the mystery of personal freedom and the grace of the Spirit.

The key factor in this work is *personal guidance* that combines spirituality and the human sciences, based on understanding and a challenging approach. This should not be considered as limited to initial formation. It should help to bridge the gap between the ideal and the real situation, encouraging a small daily step forward without undervaluing the ideal. It should not create dependence but the ability to make personal responsible decisions; it ought to foster self discipline, asceticism, a spirit of sacrifice, of self-denial. Accepting a spiritual guide is a decisive element in discernment and in vocational development. In fact, freedom and the ability to put oneself in the hands of a guide are very important elements in connection with a genuine vocation; whereas, being closed and afraid to open oneself up are often indications of a vocation that is not really genuine.

Guidance needs to be *continuous* from one stage of formation to another, which means that the appropriate information is communicated to those responsible for the next stage. It also needs to be expressed in different ways such as in fraternal correction given immediately before it becomes too late. The periodic opportunities for personal assessment, the "scrutinies" are important, in which the confrere is involved, and in which he is helped to evaluate the situation of his own personal formation, he is given practical guidance and encouragement in the process of his maturation and growth (cf. FSDB 261, 270, 296).

4.4. *Personalisation of the formation experience*

The formation experience is something unifying in relation to the life in the Spirit, apostolic dedication, intellectual activity, and human maturing. It is important to live this experience as a process of personalisation.

Life in the Spirit, taken up personally with an effective growth in maturity in the faith, a lively sense of belonging to

Christ, the imitation of his style of life are the basis of the formation experience. It is a matter of progressively moving from being servants fully committed to the work to being friends who are in the presence of the Lord Jesus, in listening to his Word and in the celebration of the Eucharist so as to become people so in love with him that they faithfully take up the cross every day. Christ becomes in a practical way the centre of gravity of life's experiences and its reference point. It is important to cultivate the process of interiorisation, by being able to find moments for silence, personal prayer, the practice of *lectio divina*, adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, meditation on the cross. It is necessary to prepare for an appreciation of the interior life, making the interior realm of each one more open, more profound and more alive, so as to leave room for the action of God in each one's heart. It is necessary to invest in a life of faith both at the intellectual and at the emotional level, especially in the prenovitiate, novitiate and postnovitiate. Along the same lines a formation in prayer is needed in all or almost all the stages of formation.

A joyful following of the Lord becomes a self sacrificing love in the service of the young, especially the poorest. It is important for the young Salesian to make his own discovery of the zeal of an *apostolic commitment*. When the sense of the apostolate is weak, and the mission among the young is not found to be attractive, problems of vocational identity can arise. When relationships with the young are only a matter of organising them, when the joy of meeting and of being with them is lacking, when one fails to see the apostolic aspect of what one is doing it is obvious that a void is being created in the heart. The candidates and the young Salesians need to be helped to grow in their love for the young, for Don Bosco, for the Church and its evangelising mission. To do this many pastoral activities are not necessary; rather what is needed is pastoral guidance. If the heart and the mind of the evangeliser are not formed through reflection on his apostolic work, through sharing and through prayer there is the risk of falling into activism and exaggeration.

A notable contribution to the consolidation of a vocation is provided by *intellectual exercise*: «It is only with the help of an intelligent approach to situations and an open outlook on culture, an outlook rooted in the Word of God, in the mind of the Church and in the guidelines of the Congregation, that the Salesian can arrive at a solidly motivated decision and experience concerning his own vocation, and be able to live his Salesian identity and its human and religious significance with understanding and maturity, without oversimplifications or complexes. Otherwise he runs the risk of being led astray by ways of thinking or taking refuge in models of behaviour and forms of expression that are outmoded or inconsistent with his vocation.» (FSDB 124). This means that in addition to a serious approach to study something else is needed. Often studies do not have a formative impact; they have an “academic” slant rather than being related to life; and so they do not help in the formation of a unified way of understanding and a reflective faith. We continue to use a model that is neutral: intellectual formation does not engage with the depth of the individual, it does not relate to the salesian religious plan of life nor his own personal plan of life, it does not become an affective understanding of reality; for this it is not just teachers that are needed but real masters. Studies need to be integrated with the whole of the formation process.

Human maturation in short is a process that happens when a person comes face to face with his inner self. There he reflects on his past experience, perceives the action of God in his own life, and in the light of God and of his own experience sets his course for the future. That is, he begins to take ever more responsibility for his own life; this means that he needs to be ready to work on himself. He learns to manage his own interior life, examining the motivation for his activity, conquering his fears and controlling his emotions. He develops a critical sense so as to be able to arrive at objective judgments about people and events. He becomes capable of resisting family and social pressures and of taking motivated decisions. He tries to train

himself in the responsible use of his freedom, realising that love always implies dedication and sacrifice. He discovers the way to growth in accepting others, in listening, in dialogue, in collaboration, in solidarity with those who are suffering. In short, human maturation makes the person a site under construction where, with the help of divine grace and its human mediations, he builds himself up according to God's plan.

4.5. Consistency in the teams of formation guides

It is obvious that a personalised formation requires the presence of teams of qualified formation personnel, who in dialogue and interaction with the young confrere know how to discuss with him his ideas and convictions and to succeed in helping him to come to an understanding of his own motivations and feelings. Unfortunately attention to the human sciences associated with guidance is still neglected and its value underestimated. There are complaints everywhere about the difficulty of finding spiritual directors, formation personnel and teachers who are well-prepared and available. The task of finding the time and the means for the formation of formation guides therefore becomes more compelling.

There is also the need for synergy in formation, also in order to make the best use of the confreres with experience and to have them qualified. The *Ratio* rightly insists on the need to ensure qualitative and quantitative consistency in the initial formation communities, and in the first place on the presence of teams that are well-prepared, sufficient in number and quality and stable, as a necessary condition for an adequate formation experience. It adds: "To avoid having formation communities of poor quality it will be necessary in some situations to make strong and courageous decisions for collaboration between Provinces." (FSDB 230).

The multiplication of formation communities and their weakness certainly do not contribute to a good formation. This is an area in which it is necessary to proceed with vision and decisive-

ness, both in regard to regions where vocations are flourishing and where one can be carried away by a rhythm of development that does not take account of the requirements of a formation of quality; and in those new regions where development is slow and where there is need in the first place to ensure the quality of the vocations; and also in those regions where historically vocations were numerous but now are few, where there is a process of re-organisation and collaboration in the area of formation (cf "Report of the Vicar of the Rector Major to GC25" 103).

4.6. A meaningful community life

For young Salesians the community is a decisive factor in the decision to embrace salesian life as it also is in the decision to leave it. The joyful witness of fraternity and a family spirit, pastoral zeal and work for the poorest, the spiritual life of the community constitute a strong attraction to consecrated salesian life and a stimulus to grow in it. In meaningful communities those in practical training will be encouraged to grow; young confreres will be helped to assume the primary responsibility themselves; everyone will find stimulus and joy in their vocation. This applies to both the local and the provincial communities; the ordinary life of the community strongly influences the processes of initial formation and fidelity to one's vocation. GC25 points out the way for us to grow as charismatic and prophetic communities.

It is therefore important to ensure communities easy to live in with regard to the rhythm of daily life, the atmosphere and especially relationships. It is necessary to overcome personal breakdown by building up peoples' maturity and identity; and it is equally important to check against community breakdown, providing an opportunity for and meaning to fraternal life, to the prayer and the pastoral commitment of the community. This is possible if the Rector of the community gives pride of place to devoting himself to meeting each of the confreres every day; if he creates a atmosphere of faith and of love for one's vocation; if

he animates community life with practical formation initiatives; if he links together the values of the Gospel and of the charism with the current challenges; if he knows how to create openness and links between the community and the world of the church and of society around them.

This is still possible if the group of confreres believes that it is important to build community, making space and time available to meet each other, to know each other, to listen to and to share with each other aspects of their lives, and to love the people and the young passionately. This is made easier if each year the community draws up its plan of life and its mission plan. Rectors and formation personnel will become more experienced in guidance; but over and above this, they will build up friendly relationships with each individual confrere, meeting him informally, showing an interest in him, in his studies, in his work, in his family.

* * *

The number of those leaving is a preoccupying fact. It is not enough to stop at the statistics; an understanding of the challenges that these figures present to vocational and formation praxis is important. The present form of documentation regarding dispensations from perpetual profession and even more so for dispensations from temporary profession, which are the highest number for a long time do not provide sufficient material for a worthwhile worldwide study. According to the *Ratio* each Province is asked to make a careful evaluation of those leaving and a periodical assessment of perseverance.

These written notes are offered as a starting point for reflection; therefore it is important to carry out a formation analysis of the roots, of the forms and of the causes of vocational fragility in the context of each single Province. Such a contribution will then indentify the priority procedures to overcome the fragility; it is necessary to continue the enquiry at provincial level in order to

provide more adequate instruments in the face of the urgent requests for help that come from many young confreres in worrying situations of fragility. Without a contextualised examination of the phenomenon of fragility and a local enquiry into its remedies, the work of the inculturation of formation, and therefore a real personalisation, will not be possible. For this reason the Provinces are asked to undertake the following work.

1. In each Province the Provincial Formation Commission and then the Provincial Council:

- studies the roots, the forms and the causes of vocational fragility in their own cultural context and in the history of their own Province;
- examines, from a formation perspective, those who have left during the period of temporary profession and also in subsequent stages, starting from 1990;
- seeks to find procedures to implement in formation activity and in the life of the Province in order to confront the fragility and to overcome the phenomenon of people leaving;
- examines, from a formation perspective, what would foster perseverance within the Province.

They should consider how to involve in this process the formation communities, teams of formation personnel and young confreres in formation but also the Rectors and the other communities.

2. Each Provincial Formation Delegate should send to the General Councillor for Formation a written report *by September 2005*. It should describe the process followed and be divided into four sections replying to the questions set out above. Annual statistics for the period should be provided as an appendix with the number of novices, the number of those leaving during temporary profession, the number leaving after perpetual profession and requests for dispensation from priestly celibacy.

3. In each Region it would be opportune for the Regional Formation Commission with its Coordinator to put all the results together. In addition it would be useful for the Provincials of the Region with the Regional Councillor to share their thoughts on the matter.

4.1 Chronicle of the Rector Major

– *December 2003*

During December 2003 the Rector Major was mainly in residence – involved for most of the time – in the plenary session of the General Council which began on the afternoon of Tuesday the 2nd.

On Wednesday the Rector Major went to the UPS to take part in a meeting of the Senate of the Salesian Pontifical University. In his address Fr Chávez stressed the importance and the urgency of the evaluation of the UPS begun the previous year, giving a report of the progress so far made. After the academic meeting he went to see the sick confreres in the infirmary.

The following day he received a group of missionaries who are following an updating course at the UPS. He gave the goodnight and had supper with them in the “Salesianum”.

Between 6 and 8 the Rector Major went to the island of **Malta**, on the occasion of the celebrations marking the *centenary of the Salesians being present there*. On the afternoon of Saturday 6, after blessing the new printing press in

the “St. Patrick’s School” print shop, he met the Salesian Family in the theatre of the Salesian Oratory. After his opening remarks Fr Chávez had a question and answer session with them and presented long service medals to some members and groups of the Salesian Family.

Immediately afterwards the Rector Major went to St. Patrick’s, the first salesian house in Malta, to unveil a commemorative plaque, in the presence of the Deputy Prime Minister, Dr. Lawrence Gonzi, members of the government and members of parliament, and the Mayor of Sliema, Mr. Albert Bonello De Puis. During the ceremony the “Pepprin Choir”, a children’s choir from the St. Patrick’s parish, sang several songs; Fr Alfred Sacco, rector of the School and of the salesian community, recalled the beginnings of the work and described what is being done at present on behalf of boys in need; the Deputy Prime Minister praised the work of the Salesians during their hundred year’s presence in Malta and Fr

Pascual Chávez, while expressing his gratitude for what had been said, in the name of the Salesians renewed their commitment to maintain and improve their contribution to the education of young Maltese. The occasion concluded was a visit to the new residence for the boys, Don Rua House.

On Sunday December 7 the Rector Major took the ferry at Cirkewwa to go to the island of Gozo. Invited by the FMA to visit Victoria, after a short stop at 'Pinu di Ta', National Sanctuary, and Gozo Cathedral dedicated to the Assumption of Our Blessed Lay, he arrived – on a jeep escorted by pupils from the "Laura Vicuña" School – at the Oratory in Victoria, where he was greeted with great enthusiasm. After words of welcome from the Rector of the Oratory, the Rector Major unveiled a commemorative plaque and said Mass in the theatre of the Oratory. The Rector Major felt so extremely welcome and seeing so much enthusiasm for Don Bosco wanted to express his hope that the Salesians would return to Gozo, and he asked the people to increase their prayers for vocations so as to realise his and their "dream."

After Mass Fr Chávez visited the Basilica of St. George and, after having laid some flowers at

Don Bosco's monument, went to the village of Masralforn, where the Past Pupils and Friends of Don Bosco gave him lunch.

Having returned to Malta, the Rector Major went to "Savio College", Cirkewwa, for celebrations in the recently constructed "Don Bosco Educational Complex". In the Good Night to conclude the evening the Rector Major spoke to the young people about the happiness that Don Bosco offered his boys, a happiness that comes from living one's life as a gift, seeing education as an opportunity to develop all one's human qualities and living one's faith in Jesus with courage.

On Monday 8 December, in the morning, the Rector Major went to Osanna Pia Hostel, a hostel for youngsters in difficulty, to have breakfast with the confrere in charge and with the youngsters. After looking round the house he spoke to the youngsters individually and was given a crucifix in terracotta. Then from the "Salesian Youth Hostel" he went to the St. Alphonsus Oratory where he chatted with a group of youngsters and Salesians and answered their questions about the values of youngsters today, the challenges facing them and their hopes. The conversation was conducted by a

well-known journalist. Among many other things Fr Chávez emphasised that the expansion of the European Union which will include Malta, brings with it the danger of concentrating on the economic issues at the cost of other aspects and values; and he encouraged the youngsters to become protagonists rather than consumers, since youth is not only a time to dream but to begin to realise one's dreams.

In the afternoon after a short tour of the fort in Valletta, and a visit to the co-cathedral, the Rector Major went to the modern church of St. Theresa, B'Kara, where he presided at the special Concelebrated Mass to conclude the Centenary celebrations for the Salesians' presence in Malta. Among those present were the President of the Republic, His Excellency Dr. Guido De Marco, the Archbishop of Malta, His Excellency Mgr. Giuseppe Mercieca, the Nuncio Apostolic, Mgr. Felix Blanco Prieto, the Italian Ambassador to Malta, Dr. Alvise Memmo, and various members of parliament. The church was crowded with religious, Salesians, Don Bosco Volunteers, Cooperators, Past Pupils and friends of the salesian works.

After the Mass, the Rector Major was taken to the Hilton Hotel

where there was a Gala Supper to bring his visit to Malta to an end. The evening concluded with the Rector Major's Good Night in which he thanked those present and especially all those who had been responsible for organising his visit. He then encouraged the Salesians to bring God to the young people of Malta and to have faith in them, and he finished by saying that the first centenary of the Salesians had come to an end but a second and others to come was just beginning.

On Tuesday 9 December, having returned to Rome he presided at a meeting of the Council and in the early afternoon met the *recently appointed Provincials* who had come for the usual course for new Provincials.

On Friday 12 December to celebrate the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe he spent the evening with the FMA Madre Ersilia Cantacommunity.

The morning of the following day, Saturday 13, the Rector Major went to the UPS where – after greeting the Salesians (SDB and FMA) from Africa who are studying in Rome – he presided, in his role as Grand Chancellor of the University, at the ceremony for the conferral of a Doctorate *honoris causa* in Social Moral Theolo-

gy on Dr. Antonio Fazio, Governor of the Bank of Italy.

On Sunday 14, the Rector Major visited the community in **Latina**, which is celebrating the 70th anniversary of a presence which has witnessed the development of both the city and the salesian house. In the Council Chamber, at a special session the Mayor conferred *honorary citizenship* on the Rector Major in recognition of the work carried out by the Salesians.

Before midday the Rector Major presided at a solemn Concelebration. At the end of the Mass the Bishop Mgr. Giuseppe Petrocchi came into the Cathedral, and in front of the whole congregation including the Mayor and many civil and religious authorities greeted the Rector Major, and sincerely thanked the Salesians for the service they have given to the local church in the last seventy years. Then in the square in front of the Cathedral, the Rector Major, assisted by the youngsters released a thousand balloons with their "dreams" attached to them.

After lunch, Fr Chávez went to the Modern Theatre of the Salesian Oratory with youngsters from the city and many representatives of the Salesian Family, to answer their questions interspersed with dances and songs.

When all was over the Rector Major returned home to Rome.

In the morning of Monday 15 December, he preached during a day of recollection for the new Provincials which concluded at midday with Concelebration. In the afternoon he returned to the UPS where, after a short visit to the sick in the infirmary, he met the salesian communities of the Vice Province, with whom in a form a Good Night he shared his impressions and reflections on his recent journeys to different Provinces in the Congregation and on the spiritual situation of today's Europe which challenges our mission among the young. He had supper with the Don Rua community, which marked his presence with a special celebration.

On Wednesday 17, before the meeting of the Council, he joined the new Provincials for the conclusion of their course.

The following day in the afternoon Fr Chávez had a meeting with Fr Joaquim D'Souza, Fr Jose Kuttianimattathil, Provincial of INK, and Fr Ivo Coelho, Provincial of INB. In the evening with the Councillors he went to Testaccio to celebrate the Christmas Novena – followed by supper with the community of student priests.

On Friday 19, at the end of the Council meeting, he announced through a press release the *appointment of Fr Luc Van Looy as Bishop of Ghent*.

On Saturday 20 December, the Rector Major celebrated his birthday. He presided at the community Mass, and at the end of the morning he met the National Council of the Past Pupils of Italy who had come to congratulate him.

In the afternoon of Sunday 21, Fr Chávez went to the Generalate of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians to greet the Mother General.

On Monday 22, the Rector Major, with all the Council had a Day of Recollection at Genzano, in the novitiate house. In the evening Fr Chávez and the Councillors went to meet the St Tarcisio formation community for the Christmas Novena and supper.

On Tuesday 23, he met the World Coordinator of the Salesian Cooperators' Association, accompanied by the Secretary and the Delegate, who had come to bring him Christmas greetings. Then he received the new Provincial of BMA.

On the night of 24, the Rector Major presided at Midnight Mass with the community of the Gener-

ate and spent the day at home.

On Saturday 27 December, with the consent of the General Council, he *appointed Fr Adriano Bregholin*, formerly Regional Councillor for Italy and the Middle East as *his Vicar*. During the other days of the month Fr Chávez was working in his office, receiving confreres, members of the Salesian Family, and friends of Don Bosco.

In the afternoon of 31, he visited the sick confreres in the infirmary at the UPS, and went to the Generalate of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians to whom he gave a specially prepared video presentation of his commentary on the Strenna for 2004. In the evening back home, after the community prayer of thanksgiving for the past year, he presented the Strenna to the SDB Generalate community.

– **January 2004**

The Rector Major began the New Year by celebrating Mass with the FMA Sr. Teresa Valsé community. At midday he left for Les Combes, to spend a few days break there. He stopped off at Châtillon, where he was welcomed by the Rector and confreres of the community, with whom he had lunch. Afterwards the Rector Ma-

for thanked them for their warm welcome and reminded them that the new year just beginning would be marked by the commemoration of youthful holiness, with the fiftieth anniversary of the canonisation of Dominic Savio and the centenary of the death of Laura Vicuña, and by the grace of the three new *beati* of the Salesian Family: all of which speaks to us of holiness as the high level of the Christian life for ourselves and to be presented to the young.

He stayed at Les Combes for only two days, going out for walks and working in the house. The news of the death of Fr Giovanni Fedrigotti led him to anticipate his return home.

On the morning of Monday 5 January, accompanied by those Councillors still present, Fr Pascual Chávez went to the UPS to preside at the funeral of Fr Giovanni Fedrigotti. In the afternoon he received the Provincial of the Middle East.

On the solemnity of the Epiphany, the Rector Major said Mass at the Auxilium.

The following day the sessions of the General Council resumed with the usual activities that go with them: meetings with Councillors and with confreres who came to see him.

On Friday 9 January, before the Council meeting, he met with the Provincials and Vice Provincials of the CISI, to whom he announced the *appointment of Fr Pier Fausto Frisoli as the new Regional for Italy and MOR.*

On the evening of the following day he visited the salesian *Poli-glotta* community in the Vatican.

On Monday 12 January Fr Chávez presided at the closing Mass for the CISI meeting.

On Tuesday 13, before the Council meeting he met the Rectors from the Roman Province to begin the consultation process for the new Provincial. In the afternoon in the Salesianum, the Rector Major and his Council met Mother Antonia Colombo and the FMA General Council. Among items they discussed was that of the approaching beatifications of Fr August Czartoryzki, Sr Eusebia Palomino and the Cooperator Alexandrina da Costa.

In the early afternoon of Thursday 15, Fr Chávez took part in a meeting of the Theological Commission of the USG, to which he belongs.

In the evening of Tuesday 20, as he usually does at the end of the plenary session of the Council, the Rector Major gave a Good Night to the confreres of the Generalate,

telling them about the work done and sharing some of his reflections.

In the evening of Wednesday 21, with all the community he took part in the thanksgiving Mass and supper for Mgr. Luc Van Looy, after his 20 years spent in Rome as a member of the General Council in which he held a number of offices.

On Thursday 22 January on the centenary of the death of Blessed Laura Vicuña, the Rector Major presided at Mass with the General Council and during the morning brought the winter session to an end. In the evening he gave a Good Night to those taking part in the Salesian Family Spirituality Days and then with some Councilors immediately went to the Pius XI hospital, to pray for Fr Antonio Parlanti, who had just died.

The following day he presided at Mass for those attending the Spirituality Days and after breakfast went to the airport to begin his journey to the **Antilles** Province, where he was to visit the houses in the three countries on the occasion of the *fiftieth anniversary of the Province*. The visit was due to start on the evening of 23, in **Cuba**, followed by the **Dominican Republic**, and would conclude in **Puerto Rico** on 30. In the three

islands the Rector Major met the confreres, the Salesian Family, young people, ecclesiastical and civil authorities and was presented with the "Christopher Columbus Medal" in the Dominican Republic, and in Puerto Rico was declared an "Honoured Guest."

Leaving the Antilles, he arrived in Madrid on 31 January, the solemnity of St John Bosco, and presided at Mass with the Provincial Council, Rectors, confreres from the three communities of Atocha, and representatives of all the Salesian Family. After Mass there was question time and dinner, followed by the journey back to Rome.

– February 2004

Fr Chávez began the month with a journey to Belgium to take part in the *episcopal ordination of Mgr. Luc Van Looy*, in the Cathedral of Ghent. In the North Belgium Provincial House he gave the Good Night to the confreres and next day presided at the community Mass.

Back home he worked in his office, received confreres and on the 3 went to the Vatican to see Mgr. Nesti, Secretary of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life. In the evening of Thursday

5, he celebrated Mass for the members of the World Council of the Cooperators gathered in Rome and had supper with them.

In the afternoon of 6 February, accompanied by Fr Valentín de Pablo, Fr Orlando Dalle Pezze and Fr Juan José Bartolomé, he left for **Rwanda** on the occasion of the *fiftieth anniversary of the presence of the Salesians*. After arriving at Kigali on Saturday 7, he took part in the jubilee celebrations, the most solemn of which was on Sunday 8 at Kimihurura with a magnificent Concelebration at which the Archbishop of Kigali presided in the presence of all the Bishops of the country and of representatives of all the Religious Congregations in Rwanda and Burundi. Among those present at the commemoration were the President of the Republic, Paolo Kagame, and many civic dignitaries. In the afternoon, the Rector Major, who at the end of Mass had given an address that was greatly appreciated, met the confreres of the Delegation and others who had come for the celebration from the Congo and other Provinces.

On Monday 9 February, after a visit to the novitiate, the celebration continued at Gatenga, where Fr Chávez met youngsters from all the houses and where some Co-

operators made their promise. In the afternoon he went first to Remera, where a big church to Mary Help of Christians is being built, and then to Kicukiro, where he met the parish council and a number of the parishioners. The day ended at the house of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.

On Tuesday 10 there was a celebration at Ruli (Gitarama), in the postnovitiate house. There he met the prenovices, the novices, the postnovices, and those on practical training, presided at Mass at which a young Brother from Burundi made his perpetual profession, and blessed and opened the new postnovitiate house. After returning to Kimihurura, in the evening he left for Rome.

Having returned home at midday 11 February, the Rector Major left again on 13 for **Lyons, France**, to be present – at the weekend – at the blessing and opening of the “Centre Jean Bosco”. During these days he met confreres from the French Province as well as those who had come for the celebration. With Mother Antonia Colombo he spoke to the Salesians, to the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians and to lay people representing the “Réseau Salésien”, officially opened the Centre and

presided at Mass in the Basilica of Notre Dame de Fourvière, during which there was the perpetual profession of two confreres and one FMA, and three Cooperators made their promise. The last day of his visit, Monday 16 February, concluded with a solemn Concelebration in the Basilica at which the Archbishop of Lyons, Card. Philippe Barbarin presided.

On his return to Rome, on 17 February the Rector Major took part in the *International Congress of the Institute of Catechetics* of the UPS, saying Mass for those taking part and then giving the closing address at the UPS (the text can be found in n. 5.2 of these AGC).

On the evening of Friday 20, he went to the Gerini institute to visit the students of theology community. He gave the Good Night and had supper with them.

On the morning of Monday 23 he met Card. Angelo Sodano, Secretary of State of the Vatican, to sign the agreement about the Ratisbonne Institute in Jerusalem.

On Tuesday 24 February Fr Chávez began his journey to **Ecuador**, where he had the following programme: a meeting with the Salesian Family at Guayaquil, on Wednesday 25; a meeting with

the Rectors and councils of salesian houses, the opening of the new Provincial House and the blessing of the chapel of the Salesian Regional Centre for Ongoing Formation at Quito, on Thursday 26; a meeting with missionaries and volunteers from the Vicariate of Méndez and the Andean Missions at Ambato, a meeting with formation personnel and students at Quito, on Friday 27; a meeting with young people of the SYM at Cuenca, on Saturday 29.

The Rector Major ended the month travelling to **Costa Rica** to preach a Retreat to the Provincials of both American Regions and visiting the Central American Province.

4.2 Chronicle of the General Council

On 2 December 2004 the **winter plenary session** of the General Council began and continued until 22 January 2004. To the plenary sessions, of which there were 30, were linked group or commission meetings to study various topics. During the session – between 9 and 17 December – there was also a *gathering of new Provincials* who met the Rector Major and his Council. The Coun-

cillors also made their contributions to meetings, especially those held at the Generalate. In addition, each Departmental Councillor gave a short report of the activities in his own sector.

As always while dealing with topics or questions connected with the animation or guidance of the Congregation, the necessary time was also devoted to ordinary business matters coming from the Provinces such as the appointment of members of Provincial Councils and the approval of the appointments of Rectors, the opening and canonical erection of houses and/or activities, matters concerning confreres and administrative and economic matters.

A brief account of the more important items on the agenda follows.

1. Appointment of the Vicar of the Rector Major and the Councillor for the Italy-Middle East Region.

Following the appointment of Fr. Luc Van Looy as Bishop of the diocese of Ghent, it was necessary to appoint a new Vicar of the Rector Major according to art. 142 of the Constitutions.

Consequently the Rector Major quickly began a process of dis-

cernment in the General Council, and on 27 December 2003 the Council expressed its agreement for the appointment of Fr **Adriano Bregolin** as the new Vicar of the Rector Major for the current six year period.

The appointment of Fr. Adriano Bregolin as Vicar immediately led to the process of discernment to choose a new Councillor for Italy and the Middle East, the position previously held by Fr. Bregolin. Following the discernment, on 9 January 2004 the General Council expressed its agreement for the appointment of Fr. **Pier Fausto Frisoli** as Councillor for the Italy-Middle East Region.

In n. 5.8 of the present issue of the AGC some biographical details of the two confreres appointed may be found.

2. Appointment of Provincials

During this session there were no less than eleven Provinces or Vice Provinces for which Superiors were appointed. After careful discernment and using the results of the consultations held in the Provinces or Vice Provinces as their basic point of reference, the General Council proceeded with their task. The list in alphabetical order of the Provincials (or Supe-

rriors of Vice Provinces) appointed during this session follows: Castellino Riccardo, for the Vice Province of West Africa; Jiménez Castro Manuel, for the Vice Province of French-speaking West Africa; Kaźmierczak Bolesław, for the Province of Wrocław, Poland; Łepko Zbigniew, for the Province of Piła, Poland; Maddichetty Noel, for the Province of Hyderabad, India; Medeiros Damásio, for the Province of Manaus, Brazil; Prathan Joseph, for the Province of Thailand; Pussino Gian Luigi, for the Province of Rome, Italy; Rodrigues Ribeiro João Carlos, for the Province of Recife, Brazil; Vega Díez José Antonio, for the Vice Province of Tropical Equatorial Africa; Winstanley Michael, for the Province of Great Britain.

In n. 5.9 of the present issue of AGC there are some details about the newly appointed Provincials.

3. Reports of Extraordinary Visitations

The examination of the reports of the Extraordinary Visitations of the Provinces, presented by the respective Visitors, represents one of the more important items on the agenda of the General Council for the animation of the Congregation, in its various local pres-

ences. The examination of the report provides an opportunity to reflect together on the progress of each Province, on the basis of the Visitor's observations, and to offer suggestions for action regarding its government. This results in recommendations useful for the Rector Major's concluding letter and in proposals for initiatives and guidance on the part of the General Council. During this session reports were considered from the following Provinces: East Africa; Recife, Brazil; China; Calcutta, India; Piła, Poland; Equador; Mexico-Mexico; Adriatic, Italy.

4. Erection of three new Vice Provinces in the South Asia Region

Among the acts of government can be mentioned in particular the decision taken by the Rector Major with his Council to erect three new Vice Provinces in the South Asia Region. These are the Vice Province of Myanmar, detached from the Calcutta Province (INC), the Vice Province of Sri Lanka, detached from the Madras Province (INM) and the Vice Province of Konkan, detached from the Bombay Province (INB). The decision to create the three Vice Provinces was reached after a careful study

of the reorganisation of the South Asia Region which had already begun during the intermediate session of the General Council, between 6 and 15 October 2003, and concluded during the recent plenary winter session. With this decision the total number of juridical circumscriptions of the Salesians in the South Asia Region rises to 12: 9 Provinces and 3 Vice Provinces.

5. Topics of study and decisions taken

In the course of the session, as well as matters concerning the Provinces and the Regions, the Council considered some issues connected more generally with the government and animation of the Congregation, paying particular attention to the Project of animation and government for the six year period and to the life and activity of the Council itself. Some practical decisions were made regarding matters discussed. The main topics considered were.

- Conclusion of the study of the South-Asia Region. As has already been mentioned, the General Council finished the study, begun in the previous intermediate session, on the current situation of the South Asia Region, identi-

fying the main challenges that emerge, and planning for the future – these being the points set by the Rector Major for examination in the Council. In his concluding letter the Rector Major wrote: *«There is much to be done to ensure that the salesian charisma, planted almost a hundred years ago by the first five Salesians who disembarked at Mumbai on 6 January 1906, puts down deep roots in the South Asia Region.»*

- Reflection on “vocational fragility” (physical, spiritual and existential). Taking up again the study that was begun in the intermediate Council, in the plenary session the General Council examined more deeply this problem which concerns both preparatory vocational procedures and the formation process, especially during the initial stages. It is a cause of concern to all Congregations and all Dioceses. It often happens that after scarcely two or three months of profession, some confreres no longer have the desire, the motivation or the strength to continue in their salesian life, in this way abandoning consecrated life. One hopes that the proposal of the Council produces in the Provinces some reflection on the causes of people leaving, and above all leads

them to improve their formation procedures.

- Approval of the budget for 2004. During the session the General Council – following its presentation by the Economist General – examined and approved, according to the norms of the Regulations, the budget for 2004 of the *Direzione Generale Opere Don Bosco*. This was happening for the first time, since previously only the approval of the consolidated account had been considered. It was necessary to make important decisions regarding some extraordinary works that have become urgent at Colle Don Bosco, at the UPS, in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians at Turin and at the Pisana.

- The way of holding the General Chapter. The General Council concluded its study– begun in the previous plenary session– of possible ways in which the General Chapter might be held, in response to the deliberation of the GC25 (n. 136), which asked the Rector Major and his Council to carry out “an assessment of the celebration of the recent General Chapters with a view to evaluating and proposing a manner of operation that is more streamlined and aimed at carrying out an examination of the situa-

tion of the Congregation and drawing up fundamental guidelines for the policy to be implemented during the following six year period, in addition to fulfilling the constitutional requirements.” In particular, it was seen how the theme and the work of the Chapter could already draw on the “team visits,” from which ought to emerge the challenges that are being faced in different situations, so that from the various different points of view it should be possible to have an overall view regarding the identity, the vitality and the forward planning of the Congregation in its different contexts. By means of the topic that is to be proposed for the team visits, it is intended to make an assessment of the life of the Congregation during the last 20 years, that is from GC22, in which the text of the Constitutions was renewed, until GC25 the last one. In the course of the session, being unable to go deeply into all the material, the Council concentrated on a study of GC25, examining how it had been communicated to the Provinces, how the five practical guidelines had been taken up, what difficulties had been encountered and above all what fruits had been derived from it. Some questions also emerged that

will help to define better the themes for GC26.

- Approval of the Statute for the Delegation of Holland. The General Council approved the Statute and the process for the creation of a future Delegation of Holland, which from 16 August 2005 will become an integral part of the North Belgium Province.

- Situation of the personnel dependent on the General Council. Examining the topic of personnel for the houses and works depending on the Rector Major and his Council – with reference to the Generalate, to the Catacombs and especially to the UPS – it became clear that it was necessary, through the Regional Councillors to involve the Provinces more effectively.

- Distribution of the “Missions Fund”. The General Council considered and approved the proposals of the commission for the distribution, n. 133 for December 2003, of assistance from the Missions Fund.

- “Institutional Marketing” Project, image of the Congregation. The project is the brainchild of a collaboration between *Missioni Don Bosco Media Centre* and *Telepace*. Over a period of ten

years *Missioni Don Bosco Media Centre* has produced a series of documentaries, of a high standard and translated into four languages, which have caught the attention of the television broadcaster. In this context, the possibility of widening this approach has been considered, focusing on a project of “communication, education and propaganda,” with the aim of providing information about the activities of the Congregation, highlighting some special aspects of salesian work, spreading salesian educational methods and salesian spirituality, educating for a missionary outreach and for solidarity.

Among the special occasions during this session the following in particular can be mentioned:

- A Day of Recollection at Genzano. On Monday 22 December, the General Council devoted a full day to a spiritual retreat which was held at our novitiate at Genzano, led by the Rector Major and dedicated to reflection on the *Strenna* for 2004.

- Meeting of the SDB and FMA General Councils (13 January 2004, at the Generalate, Via della Pisana, 1111). A meeting which – as the Rector Major said –

was meant to be a sign of the willingness to try to walk together, while deepening and giving fresh life to our shared charismatic roots and of fostering a greater synergy in the areas where we are working. On this occasion the topic on the agenda was "*the significance of the approaching beatifications*" for the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians with *Sr Eusebia Palomino*, for the Salesian Congregation with the priest *Fr August Czartoryski*, for the Cooperators and all the Salesian Family with the co-operator *Alexandrina da Costa*, and one should add with the past pupil *Alberto Marvelli*. Just that morning the official announcement arrived from the Secretariat

of State with the information that the beatification of the three members of the Salesian Family would be celebrated on Sunday 25 April in St Peter's Square, while that of Alberto Marvelli is expected to be in October. After a short introduction to the topic there was a very enriching discussion which concluded with the decision to set up a commission, already at work, for the preparation of the great event of the beatifications. The meeting of the two General Councils, FMA and SDB, also gave some time to speaking about initiatives and pastoral proposals linked with the 50th anniversary of the canonisation of St Dominic Savio and the centenary of the death of Laura Vicuña.

5. DOCUMENTS AND NEWS ITEMS

5.1 Message of the Rector Major to the young people of the Salesian Youth Movement

The following is the text of the Message that the Rector Major, Fr Pascual Chávez Villanueva sent to the young people of the Salesian Youth Movement (SYM) on the Feast of Don Bosco 31 January 2004. The Message which refers to the Strenna for 2004 will also encourage the Salesians in their task of leading young people to holiness.

My Dear Young People,

Once again I have the opportunity to address you on the occasion of the liturgical commemoration of our Father Don Bosco.

1. With the 50th anniversary of the canonisation of Dominic Savio and the centenary of the death of Laura Vicuña, proclaimed Blessed by John Paul II in the magnificent setting of Colle Don Bosco in 1988, 2004 becomes for us a kind of jubilee year, as mentioned and celebrated in the Bible: a festive, joyful year, a year in which to recall God's presence in our history, a year in which to commit ourselves with renewed enthusiasm on the path of love for God and for our neighbour.

This is the meaning of the Strenna I offered to the whole Salesian Family and which I now want to propose in a special way to you young people: ***“Live the joy and the call to holiness, as the high standard of ordinary Christian living.”***

Dominic and Laura tell us: *holiness is possible!* In a way similar to when you are in the mountains, the summit is high, the path sometimes difficult, you feel tired: but step by step the summit comes closer and, as you look back, gradually the horizon opens up and becomes wider and further away. Perseverance, the ability to make sacrifices and practice in doing so, faithfulness in taking the small but constant steps at every moment, a touch of real effort and stubbornness, and the encouragement of a good guide are the means needed to reach the goal.

At the conclusion of the celebrations for the centenary of the death of St Maria Goretti, on 6 July 2003, Pope John Paul II said: *«Marietta – as she was familiarly known – reminds young people of the third millennium that true happiness requires courage and a spirit of sacrifice, the refusal to compromise with evil of any sort, and the readiness to pay the price even with one's life, of fidelity to*

*God and to his commandments.
How this message is needed today!»*

2. If we extend our gaze beyond those who have already been declared and recognised as saints to others who have grown up at Don Bosco's school, we are amazed and almost surprised. We have a very rich and varied heritage: starting from those known best such as Dominic Savio, Laura Vicuña, Zefirino Namuncurá, passing on through the list of martyrs such as the five young Poles and arriving at those already crowned such as Blessed Teresa Bracco, Blessed Piergiorgio Frassati and soon Alberto Marvelli, or those without haloes but equally exemplary such as Salvo D'Acquisto, Giacomo Maffei, Sean Devereux, Sigmund Ocasión, Fernando Calò, Ninni Di Leo, Xavier Ribas, Paola Adamo, Flores Roderick, Domenico Zamberletti, Bartolomé Blanco, Petras Pérkumas, Willi De Koster, Cruz Atempa, Renato Scalandri...

And from each of them one could choose an example, a word, and an attitude.

- We could recall again Dominic Savio and his brave decision and determination when, impressed by Don Bosco's words about the possibility of becoming a saint

and the happiness that goes with it, he made the request: "*Tell me what to do to begin this work.*"

- We are quite bewildered by the decision and the strength of character of Laura Vicuña, a 12 year old girl, who offers her life for her mother's conversion.
- How impressive is the will to live of *Ninni Di Leo*, condemned to die from leukaemia, who charms his fellow patients in hospital with his smile.
- And we cannot but be moved by the simple approach of *Ferdinando Calò* who to the question: "And if you die?", replied: "I'm ready, they play football in heaven don't they?"
- The sun seems to shine a little brighter when we recall the gaze, the sensitivity, the love for beautiful things of *Paola Adamo*, who told her friends: "If God is the source of everything, only He can make us really happy, not money, power, pleasure."
- You cannot but be thrilled by the plan of life of *Xavier Ribas* who says: "My current task could be summed up like this: working in the various contexts in which I am living ... in accordance with my faith ... Freeing

myself from any kind of slavish habit is absolutely essential for doing this; a commitment to daily prayer which for me means reading the Word of God, praying for friends and relatives, and thinking about my life or some particular situation." And becoming more and more involved in his leader's role with his groups and among his companions in school and at home, encouraged and urged on by the training group in the Youth Centre who helped him to discover his call from Jesus, he remarked: "Looking at my life and without knowing why, since there is nothing special about it, it seems God has attracted me and called me; on my part I'm trying to follow his path in spite of the difficulties."

- How can one forget the fidelity of *Teresa Bracco* to daily mass at day break, her devotion to Our Blessed Lady in reciting the rosary during her every day work as a shepherd girl...?
- And again the heroism of the *five young Polish martyrs from the oratory*, involved as group leaders linked to one another by their shared interests and social and personal lives and who in times of trial live it with courage

and fidelity: "God has given us the cross, he is giving us the strength to carry it."

- And finally, we cannot forget the example of the volunteer *Sean Devereux*, a man with a smiling face, a man of courage, of commitment, of integrity, who gave his life working in Africa to improve the expectations and possibilities of the people, to restore their dignity and hope: "While my heart beats I have to do what I think I can do, that is to help those who are less fortunate than us."

3. In the company of these the word "holiness" should not frighten us as though it meant living in an impossibly heroic way, intended only for the few. In fact, holiness is not something we do, it is the freely given sharing in God's holiness, a grace therefore, a gift before being the result of our efforts. A saint is someone who lets God love him, who entrusts himself to Him in faith in hope and in love; this is done in an every day life lived with love, serenity, patience, gratuitous love, accepting the trials and the joys of every day certain that in the eyes of God everything makes sense, everything is worthwhile, everything is important to Him.

4. Precisely because it is a question of a journey, precisely because the peak is high, but not unreach-able, looking carefully at the life of Dominic Savio and of the other saints in our Family, you will discover a call to holiness that is capable of making you boys and girls who are “the light of the world and the salt of the earth” “honest citizens and good Christians”, “heralds of the dawn”, in fact “the saints of the third millennium.”

Here are the central points of this call:

a) Accept life as a gift, develop its best aspects with gratitude and live it with joy.

This means:

- attending to our own development, recognising the gifts and talents the Lord has given us, making them grow through trust and perseverance;
- getting on well with companions, joining in recreations, sharing the joys of friendship and celebrations;
- opening our hearts to an optimistic trust in life, which has been saved and redeemed by Jesus Christ and loved by God.

b) Experience God and his providential presence, friendship with Jesus and a way of life that becomes ever more in harmony with Him as the centre and backbone of one's own life.

This presupposes:

- wanting to live a life of personal friendship with Jesus and with Mary his Mother, through simple and regular prayer, frequent reception of the sacraments, especially the Eucharist and Penance;
- deepening one's knowledge of the faith and bringing the light of the Word of God to bear on situations and problems in life, being constant and generous in efforts to grow in the Christian life;
- living one's daily obligations of study, of one's job, of family life, with care and perseverance, as a loving response to God and as a service towards others.

c) Be open to society, to service, to solidarity, to charity and to preparing on a plan of life.

When the young people educated by Don Bosco become good they become enthusiastically holy, full

of zeal, in other words missionaries among their companions. Don Bosco encouraged them:

- to work on behalf of their companions helping them by good example, friendly support in overcoming difficulties, in their school work;
- to be open to the great apostolic horizons of the Church and to the needs of society (the missions, peace, solidarity, building a new society of love), doing something immediately practical in the places where they are living and working;
- to promote groups, associations and movements in which the young people themselves take the lead and grow in their faith by being concerned about and involved in human development and local improvements;
- to grow towards a better understanding of themselves and the drawing up of their own plan of life based on the gospel and a choice of vocation.

5. This is the path followed by Dominic Savio, Laura Vicuña and the many other young saints in our family that I mentioned above and many others that you know in your own places. I invite you to follow in their footsteps to make your own the programme of Chris-

tian life offered by Don Bosco and put into practice by them.

In the final message of the World Forum of the SYM you yourselves resolved: "To make everyday life the place to meet God in discovering his presence in the young, especially the poor ones, in order to be able with integrity to live faith and life together, open to choices for gospel holiness."

Have courage therefore, there is a great host of companions walking with you, especially Mary Help of Christians, our Mother and Teacher; each day entrust to her this decision to make your lives what God has in his dreams for you.

This is my wish and prayer for all of you.

Happy Feast of Don Bosco!

Fr Pascual CHÁVEZ V.

5.2 Educating young people to the faith. *Vocation and mission of the Salesians of Don Bosco*

*We print the address given by the Rector Major at the Academic Function held at the UPS on 17 February 2004 for the **Golden Jubilee of the Catechetics Insti-***

tute of the Faculty of Educational Sciences. The Academy concluded the Congress on Catechetics organized by the same Institute. The Rector Major's address – as the title indicates – is a clear message on the importance of catechesis in the vocation and mission of the Salesians of Don Bosco.

“Evangelizing is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity. She exists in order to evangelize, that is to say, in order to preach and teach, to be the channel of the gift of grace, to reconcile sinners with God, and to perpetuate Christ's sacrifice in the Mass, which is the memorial of His death and glorious resurrection”.¹ These are the words by which Pope Paul VI defined the identity, vocation and mission of the Church during the celebrations of the tenth anniversary of the conclusion of Vatican II, the Council that had the task of updating the Church's mission to the changed conditions of the modern world, and at the same time of responding to the enormous challenges thrown up by the Reformation and by the Enlightenment.

Recognizing these challenges with all seriousness and responsi-

bility, the Church could not fail to accept its fundamental vocation and mission. The Church was born to evangelize, and through the gospel to leaven cultures and transform the world in such a way as to make it more human, a place for all men and women to make their home.

I decided to use this quotation from Paul VI as the starting point for my address on the occasion of this 50th anniversary of the Catechetics Institute of the Faculty of Educational Sciences, specifically because in my opinion it is an excellent summary of the conviction and practice of Don Bosco, but also because it summarizes everything involved in the work of education to and in the faith: the vital communication of the faith in which we believe, its celebration in the liturgy, its practice in life, and the spirituality which gives it vitality and in which it is expressed.

To speak of God and bring him to young people at the present day is inseparable from the witness of evangelization and education to the faith; in the last analysis what exists is not faith but believers, who render credible the faith they profess and proclaim. In biblical

¹ Paul VI, Ap.Exhort. *Evangelii nuntiandi* (8 Dec. 1975), 14: AAS 68 (1976), p. 13.

terminology we could say that the faith needs mothers and fathers who bring forth children capable of making their own the great convictions and life options of the parents (cf. Is 51, 1b-2a: "*Look to the rock from which you were hewn and to the quarry from which you were dug. Look to Abraham your father and to Sarah who bore you*", says the prophet Isaiah, pointing out to an incredulous people looking for other gods a model to imitate).

1. THE OCCASION OF THIS ADDRESS

I am both glad and grateful for the present initiative to celebrate with a splendid academy 50 years of life of the Catechetical Institute of the Faculty of Educational Sciences. The significance of the occasion far exceeds the jubilee element, because it is linked with today's urgent need to *develop an adult faith* that is more enlightened and convinced (cf. *EiE*, 50), more personal and less dependent

on the environment, one that could become a second launching pad for the future of the Institute.

We must not forget, of course, that the life and history of the Catechetics Institute (ICA) are closely linked with those of the Higher Institute of Pedagogy of the Pontifical Salesian Athenaeum (PAS), which became the Faculty of Educational Sciences (FSE) of the Pontifical Salesian University (UPS). If grace needs a nature that is well disposed, faith and the formation of Christ's disciples (which are precisely the objectives of catechesis) need an education that is methodical but can also communicate values, feelings and ideals.²

The Catechetical Institute as such finds its identity and significance in the context of the *Congregation's pedagogical and catechetical vocation* and in the *pedagogical and catechetical mission of the UPS*. This was its cradle and continues to be its natural home, its proper environment and the horizon of its aims.

² The Statutes approved by the Holy See (12 June 1940) had already foreseen within the compass of the Faculty of Philosophy an Institute of Pedagogy, with a *special School of Catechetics* attached to it. But in reality the story of the ICA can be considered to have begun in 1953, because only then did the *School of Catechetics* acquire any formal identity. In the Calendar of Lectures for the year 1953-54 there is listed an *Institute of Theology of education and catechetics*, as the sixth of the 'schools' or Institutes of the Higher Institute of Pedagogy.

2. THE PEDAGOGICAL AND CATECHETICAL VOCATION OF THE CONGREGATION

In the context of and with reference to the educative mission of the Salesians, the tradition of the Congregation has given pride of place to the *catechetical* dimension as its task, in the awareness that, if it is true that in carrying out our mission we are called to start not from an ideal situation but from the actual circumstances of today's boys and girls, it is equally true that the objective to be reached is the same for all, i.e. the fullness of life in God, through a personal meeting with Christ, who is the only one who can respond to their fundamental questions and satisfy their deepest desires.

2.1. *The legacy left by Don Bosco*

At the origin of the Congregation and of the entire Salesian Family there stands Don Bosco, with his burning ardour for pedagogy and catechetics: "*This Society began with a simple catechism lesson*" (BM IX, 35). There you have the origins of our Congregation. There you have what makes it unique!

This expression, which is so full of meaning, refers not only to the

episode of Don Bosco's meeting with Bartholomew Garelli, nor even to the "catechism" and "doctrine" classes that would develop later in the Oratory. There is something more than that: there is the evident eagerness of the young John from his adolescent years, when he taught catechism to his companions. It was a zeal that accompanied him throughout his life, and found expression in many initiatives such as the Catholic Readings, history texts, and wholesome books – all of them steeped in pedagogical and educative concern. Don Bosco was a priest who was also an educator, and this identity becomes clear in the unique nature of his Oratory.

Here is a quotation from Don Bosco and a related comment, found in his letter of 13 March 1846 to Michael Cavour (Father of the better known Camillo Cavour): "*The purpose of this teaching of catechism is to gather together on Sundays and Feastdays those youngsters who are left to themselves, and so do not go to any church for instruction [...] The teaching can be summed as the following: 1. Love for work. 2. Frequenting the holy sacraments. 3. Respect for all authority. 4. Avoidance of bad companions*".³

³ G. Bosco, *Epistolario*, I, lett. 21 to Michele Cavour.

Objectives of this kind, civil and religious combined, transformed Don Bosco's Oratory into an all-embracing educative environment, a place of integrated formation in which the young person was approached as someone simultaneously human and Christian. "The salvation of the soul, as Don Bosco expressed it – today we could say "the systematic encounter with Christ" – is the ultimate aim of the first Oratory, but to it belongs not only catechism but also formal education and initiatives for free time, all bound together in a single mixture.

Nowadays the mission left by Jesus to his Apostles: "*Go therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you*" (Mt 28, 19-20), must certainly be understood and given effect in a different way, no longer as a "*compel them to come in,*" the result of a zealous but incorrect zeal for the salvation of the world, which in fact violates the freedom that is an essential characteristic of faith, but must be understood

for Catholics as a "religious proposition," as an "ecumenical dialogue" with other believers in Christ, and as "interreligious dialogue" with believers of other religions, accompanied always by a commitment to human advancement and to the creation of a culture rich in values.

2.2. Salesian tradition

In its history the Salesian Congregation has borne witness to its fidelity to its pedagogical and catechetical vocation in a wide variety of ways.

In his prolific work as Rector Major, Fr Peter Ricaldone always showed himself to be a fervent promoter of catechetical activity. As a faithful successor of Don Bosco he gave rise to a whole series of initiatives in this field, which he always had close at heart: the "*crusade*" on behalf of Christian doctrine and catechism;⁴ the opening of the *Salesian Central Catechetical Office* (UCCS, 1939, which became the Salesian Catechetical Centre in 1943); the "*Library of Christian Doctrine*" (1940), which later became the

⁴ Cf. *Il contributo della Congregazione Salesiana alla crociata catechistica nelle realizzazioni di Don Pietro Ricaldone, IV successore di San Giovanni Bosco (1939-1951)*, Colle Don Bosco, LDC 1952.

LDC Publishing House (1963); the presence in the Higher Institute of Pedagogy of a section for catechetical documentation with the best of the modern methods for teaching catechesis, and other similar achievements. In 1940 he launched a great campaign for sensitizing the entire salesian world to the need for a more serious catechetical commitment to young people, and wrote a lengthy circular on the *Festive Oratory, catechism and religious formation*.⁵ And then, as I have already said, he gave a clearly educative and catechetical stamp to the new institution he wanted, the *Pontifical Salesian Athenaeum* (1940).

2.3. *The turning point of Vatican II*

Conciliar renewal deeply committed the Congregation to the work of renewal, in the double sense of returning to the origins and updating in the light of the Council's directives. As regards the catechetical dimension, the various *General Chapters* that followed Vatican II, and the *new Constitutions* (1984), deserve special mention. The following are some of their principal observations:

■ The GC19 (1965), celebrated in the new premises of the UPS, produced an explicit reaffirmation of the central place of catechesis in the mission of the Congregation:

"The Congregation considers the catechesis of young people as the first activity of the salesian apostolate and therefore calls for a rethinking and reorganization of all our works so as to give priority to the formation of men of faith and promote all forms of the catechetical apostolate according to the needs and circumstances of individual countries" (ASC n. 244 [1966] p. 187).

■ The ***Special General Chapter*** (SGC - 1971), which occupies a central position among the General Chapters because of its specific objective to give effect to the renewal wanted by the Council, contains a significant and detailed document entitled *"Evangelization and catechesis"* (SGC pp. 189-226) where, after recalling the salesian catechetical tradition which has its origin in Don Bosco, strongly reaffirms the importance in the Congregation of everything connected with catechesis:

⁵ Cf. P. Ricaldone, *Oratorio festivo, catechismo, formazione religiosa*, Turin, Società Editrice Internazionale, 1940.

"At this particular period in the history of the Church, the Salesian Congregation must turn more decisively to catechetics, and therefore commits itself to catechesis at all levels, i.e. to education to the faith, and promotes the RENEWAL OF THE INDIVIDUAL COMMUNITIES so that they become 'authentic evangelizers' (SGC p. 223).

But the SGC did not stop at emphasizing the importance of this task; it gave very precise indications. At provincial level, in the first place, it called for a serious evaluation of the effect our evangelizing was having, a plan for catechetical qualification, the organization of a specialized service of catechetical animation, and the preparation of specialists in this field (SGC p. 224). At local level it asked the communities for a real change of mentality and to adopt a new community style so as to become authentic evangelizing bodies. Of this quality of the community it indicated the characteristic traits (SGC, p. 225). We might ask to what extent these urgent guidelines were given effect.

It is also interesting to recall that the SGC speaks of the foundation of the *Salesian University* in connection with the promoting

of catechetics:

"Don Bosco's Successors, in founding the SALESIAN CATECHETICAL CENTRE of Turin-Leumann and the PAS, have laid a valid foundation for an ever deeper study and a continual updating and renewal of catechetical activity, so that the work of the Salesians in this sector, inserted in the ecclesial current of catechetical renewal, has played a notable part in the pastoral work of the Church at both worldwide level and that of individual countries and dioceses" (SGC, p. 194).

To highlight the *salesian style* of the task of catechesis, the SGC "in line with salesian tradition emphasizes the educational context in which catechesis has always taken place in our Congregation" (p. 192), makes its own the "anthropological option in all its parts and establishes a continuous relationship between the individual, the Word of God, and the community" (p. 192). The Chapter took up again the well known expression of Pius XI: "*to evangelize is to civilize and to civilize is to evangelize*" (p. 194). This was later rephrased by Fr Viganò for salesian settings as "*Evangelize by educating and educate by evangelizing*",

a formula which was to appear also in the General Catechetical Directory (1997) at n. 147.

■ From the GC21 (1978) we may recall the statement of Fr Egidio Viganò: the salesian method is to “*evangelize through the preventive system, i.e. by means of a unified project that consists in a vital synthesis between education and catechesis, between evangelization and human development, between faith and culture*” (GC21, p. 302).

■ The *new Constitutions* (1984), which are our Rule of Life, endorse in art. 34 a fundamental conviction and draw the logical conclusion: “*The Society had its beginning in a simple catechism lesson*” [BM IX, 35]. For us too evangelization and catechizing are the fundamental dimensions of our mission”.

■ The **GC23** (1990) was dedicated specifically to the theme: “*Educating young people to the faith*”. It emphasized, in the words of Fr Viganò, the fact that the process of educating the young to the faith “*takes place in the sphere of the ‘new evangelization’*” (GC23, p. 12)“, and that for us Salesians, “*the new evangelization demands*

in practice a ‘new education’ to be thought out in fidelity to the origins” (GC23, p. 13).

This Chapter provided an outline of a “journey of faith” to be followed together by Salesians and youngsters, in such a way as to make of the community a sign, a school and an environment of faith. It said that the community is a *sign of the faith* we want to proclaim, and therefore must be made up of believers who preach it and bear witness to it. The community is also a *school of faith*, able to accompany the youngsters as they grow in their lives as Christians. And moreover it is an *environment of faith*, i.e. an atmosphere which helps in the experiencing of evangelical values and in developing them in purity.

All these observations from the General Chapters are unanimous in pointing to *catechesis* and *evangelization* of the young as belonging to the vocational identity of the Salesians, and at the same time they affirm the *pedagogical* dimension. The Salesians are called to be educators, evangelizers and catechizers of young people, in a situation of close union between education and evangelization: *evangelizing by educating and educating by evangelizing*.

3. THE PEDAGOGICAL AND CATECHETICAL MISSION OF THE UPS

Our University was set up specifically to be a centre of higher formation and research, with a preferential eye to the educative, pastoral and catechetical dimensions. And this is particularly true of the Faculty of Educational Sciences (FSE) and, within it, of the Catechetical Institute (ICA).

3.1. *Fr Peter Ricaldone's purpose at the founding*

I said earlier that at the origin of the ISP (the Higher Institute of Pedagogy, which later became the FSE) we find the *pedagogical and catechetical ardour* of Fr Ricaldone, the founder of our Athenaeum. And the Catechetical Institute (ICA), within the ISP, also finds its true origin in the deep salesian sensitivity of Fr Ricaldone.

As the Superior General of a congregation of educators, right from the birth of the Salesian Pontifical Athenaeum, Fr Ricaldone had always wanted the cre-

ation of a true Faculty of Pedagogy. As early as 11 October 1941, at the opening of the academic year, as Superior and Grand Chancellor of the new Athenaeum he announced the "good news" of the beginning of a '*species facultatis*' of Pedagogy, which he justified in these words:

"We need to erect this new Faculty: it is a necessity for the Salesian society, as a religious society of educators".⁶

For many years, in fact, and through a thousand and one difficulties, Fr Ricaldone and his close collaborators (among whom Fr Leôncio Da Silva was outstanding) worked to obtain from the Holy See the recognition of the new Faculty. It was to arrive only in 1956, four years after his death in 1952. But it is significant that from the beginning of the Athenaeum, Fr Ricaldone had wanted within the Higher Institute of Pedagogy a special school or Institute of Catechetics. We read, in fact, in the first Statutes (1940):

"To increase to the maximum certain philosophical disci-

⁶ J. M. Prellezo, «Facoltà di Scienze dell'Educazione: Origini e primi sviluppi (1941-1965)», in: G. Malizia - E. Alberich (Edd), *A servizio dell'educazione. La facoltà di scienze dell'educazione dell'UPS*, Rome, LAS, 1984, p. 13-14.

plines, there shall be set up in the Faculty of Philosophy other Seminars and Institutes in which are taught special free courses, decided annually by the Council of the Faculty. These Seminars and Institutes within the Faculty of Philosophy are the following: [...] the Institute and Seminar of pedagogy with a special 'School of Catechetics'".⁷

Study and interest in catechetical problems have therefore been present in the PAS from its very foundation, through the express will of its founder, Fr Peter Ricaldone:

"I think it superfluous to add that Catechetics will always have a place of absolute preference in both the Institute of Pedagogy of the Athenaeum and in the Formation Houses".⁸

It seems to me that at this point there are two novel aspects that merit particular attention: the fact of wanting a Higher Centre for the study of catechetics, and the inclusion of such a Centre in

the Faculty of Pedagogy then being set up.

I repeat that at the root of the project was certainly the remarkable sensitivity for catechesis of the fourth Successor of Don Bosco. And it is significant that he had in mind an institute of university level at the service of catechesis at a time (1940) in which as yet there were no real higher institutes of catechetics – they would be set up only after the second world war.⁹ We may think that Fr Ricaldone became aware that this constituent component of the salesian mission – the catechesis or evangelization of the young – could not be sustained on the basis of experience and good will alone, but called for an institutional solution, an organized effort to ensure the formation of salesian specialists in pedagogy and catechetics.

Novel too and of great significance was the placing of the "School of Catechetics" within the Faculty of *Pedagogy* for two reasons: 1. because the existence of such a Faculty was itself an inno-

⁷ *Facultas philosophiae*: p. 46, art. 91.

⁸ ASC n. 106 (1941) p. 142.

⁹ We may recall those best known: the already quoted *Institute Lumen Vitae* in Bruxelles; the «Canisianum» of the Jesuits in Nimegan (*Hoger Katechetisch Instituut*, 1945); the *Institut Supérieur Catéchétique* in Paris (1950, which later became ISPC, *Institut Supérieur de Pastorale Catéchétique*); Strasburgo (1958, founded by J. Colomb).

vation that gained recognition only after a great deal of effort, and 2. because the traditional place for the study of catechetics was in the area of theology.

3.2. *The pedagogical, pastoral and catechetical dimension at the heart of the UPS*

A real turning point was reached on 4 July 1956, with the arrival of the long awaited official recognition of the ISP. A Pedagogical Faculty was finally to be found among the Pontifical Universities, and it was a cause of pride and joy for the Salesians: "*The first Pedagogical Faculty has appeared in Italy in the name of Don Bosco*".¹⁰

As far as the catechetical aspect is concerned, among the various "Schools" of the ISP listed in the new Statutes, there no longer appears an "Institute of the Theology of Education and Catechetics", but simply a "Catechetical Institute".¹¹ Two years later, in 1958, an important decision was taken about the need to give to this Institute, in line with the new Statutes, a clear and renewed structure. In a meeting on 14 Jan-

uary 1958, the Council of the Faculty of the ISP met with the Rector Magnificus, Fr Eugene Valentini, to submit the decisions reached with regard to the Catechetical Institute. The minutes of this meeting express very clearly the importance and significance of catechetics for the Faculty of Pedagogy and for the Salesian Athenaeum as such. The need was endorsed of providing a clear and worthy place for the *Catechetical Institute* within the ISP, and of ensuring its university identity together with the professorships and teaching posts required by the Statutes. No better decision could have been made for the fostering of the central position and importance of catechetical research in the context of the Salesian Athenaeum.

The reply of the Rector needs particular emphasis; it referred to the fundamental significance of the catechetical dimension for the salesian Congregation: it "must be at the centre of all concern regarding the PAS. In fact, the founder and organizer of the PAS, Fr Peter Ricaldone of fond memory, had made this a charac-

¹⁰ This was the expression of Fr. Giammancheri in the «Scuola Italiana Moderna» (1957): cf. Prellezo, «Facoltà di Scienze dell'Educazione», p. 34.

¹¹ Prellezo, «Facoltà di Scienze dell'Educazione», p. 33-34.

teristic mark of the Athenaeum". And equally decisive seems the affirmation about placing catechetics within pedagogy, once again in accordance with the will of the founder Fr Ricaldone: "The Catechetical Institute is to form part of the ISP. Its natural place is precisely in the Faculty of Pedagogy".

The visit of the Pope (1981) – We may also recall another exceptional and highly significant event: the visit made to our University by Pope **John Paul II**, on the feast of Don Bosco, 31 January 1981. In the words of the Pope on that occasion to the professors and students of the UPS, we find an explicit encouragement to honour the catechetical dimension of the University's mission:

"It is clear that the Pontifical Salesian University [...] is called to expand its evangelizing function in a specifically 'catechetical' direction. You are living a typically salesian vocation for the benefit of modern man and in particular of today's youth. It could be summed up in a phrase which is also a programme [...] 'to know God in man and to know man in God'".¹²

Finally, a further testimony: the Rector Major *Fr Egidio Viganò*, on the occasion of the creation of the "Department of Youth Pastoral Work and Catechetics" (1979) reaffirmed the central place, within the UPS, of the *pastoral* and *catechetical* character of its mission. In fact, in a letter of 24 September 1979, which underlies the new departmental structure, Fr Viganò brings to an end a long process of renewal of the UPS by giving "guidelines and decisions" for completing the restructuring and updating of the University, emphasizing that "the first curriculum of studies at the UPS is that of *youth pastoral work and catechetics*, as an expression in the Church of the salesian mission for the evangelization of the young".

4. THE NEW CHALLENGES TO EDUCATION AND CATECHESIS

In continuity with its tradition, the Congregation is called upon today to renew its commitment to evangelization and catechesis, in fidelity to its origins and open to

¹² ASC n. 300 (1981), p. 60.

the new demands and conditions of the present world.

Nowadays, as we are well aware, it is a matter of responding to the *new challenges* that society and ongoing changes present to the Church's mission. At world level, if on the one hand there is a "revival" through new religious movements of widely different sources and inspiration, on the other – at least in many western countries – a transition is taking place from an officially believing culture to one that is existentially pagan, indifferent to religion or indeed completely atheist. This has a variety of implications or repercussions: agnosticism, which means adopting an inward looking stance, free from any religious concern: forms of a humanistic unbelief which exalts man at the expense of God; the primacy of science, the domination of nature by technology; economic progress which leads man to develop himself without limit, but without reaching any transcendence; lack of faith, the result of the desperation of those who have been deluded by many promises never fulfilled but always postponed; unbelief as a protest against evil, suffering, violence and injustice, which makes any talk about God so difficult; and finally narcissism,

which leads many people to live a life totally concentrated on themselves, with only one law – the satisfaction of their own desires.

In this new social and religious context, in which one can speak of the new evangelization or 're-evangelization' of countries living in the post-Christian era, society needs hope and the ability to look to a future which cannot come to them except from God. Now, more than ever before, there is an urgent need for the Church's mission, and within it that of the Congregation, for the benefit of the new generations: the formation of men and women willing to stake their lives for the fullness of life in God. We are talking nowadays to men who no longer have a "religious ear" – to use an expression of Max Weber – and our most eminent way of dialoguing with them can only be on the basis of Christ and his unsearchable riches offered to our contemporaries through a powerful and explicit experience of God, a life that is both attractive and constructive, a courageous and effective commitment in the social sphere in favour of those most in need. The only language about God that will be listened to at the present day is the personal life of the believer.

4.1. *The rediscovery of the urgent need for evangelization, and its central place.*

In the years that have followed Vatican II, the Church has strongly reaffirmed the primacy and urgency of evangelization, especially after the Bishops' Synod of 1974, dedicated to this theme, and in a significant and authoritative manner by means of the Apostolic Exhortation of Paul VI *Evangelii nuntiandi*, the 'magna carta' of evangelization.

This document marked an important watershed: evangelization, which for long had been considered a frontier activity of the Church, became recognized as an *essential mission of the whole Church*:

"It is with joy and consolation that at the end of the great Assembly of 1974 we heard these illuminating words: "We wish to confirm once more that the task of evangelizing all people constitutes the essential mission of the Church." It is a task and mission which the vast and profound changes of present-day society make all the more urgent. Evangelizing is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity" (EN 14).

The option for evangelization has subsequently been confirmed on many other occasions and in many ecclesial documents, as for example: at Puebla, in the encyclical *Redemptoris missio*, in the *General Catechetical Directory* (1997), etc.

4.2. *Catechesis, at the heart of evangelization*

Within the option of evangelization, the Church reaffirms the vital importance of catechesis. And it must be said that, if evangelization has been rediscovered as the "*essential mission of the Church*", "*the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity*" (EN 14), *catechesis enjoys the same dignity and importance* insofar as it is an essential aspect in the dynamism of evangelization.

It is interesting to recall that the greatest Bishops in the Church's history, men like St Ambrose and St Augustine, were exceptional catechists. Catechesis is in fact at the heart of the Church, because it is linked with the formation of Christ's disciples.

Hence the logical proclamation of the *priority of catechesis*, solemnly endorsed at various points in the Church's magisterium:

"As the 20th century draws to a close, the Church is bidden by God and by events – each of them a call from Him – to renew her trust in catechetical activity as a prime aspect of her mission. She is bidden to offer catechesis her best resources in people and energy, without sparing effort, toil or material means, in order to organize it better and to train qualified personnel. This is no mere human calculation; it is an attitude of faith.." (CT 15).

"In this new situation so much in need of evangelization, the missionary proclamation and catechesis, especially to adolescents and adults, constitutes a clear priority" (GCD 26).

5. THE MISSION

OF THE CONGREGATION TODAY

It is not a matter of indifference that the foundation of the Catechetical Institute of the Faculty of Educational Sciences coincides with the year of the canonization of St Dominic Savio, of which we are this year celebrating the jubilee.

Mention of the most successful result of Don Bosco's preventive system leads us to look with gratitude and responsibility on the

legacy left us by our beloved Founder. In St Dominic Savio, in fact, is reflected the close relationship between holiness and education. The happy coincidence of the two jubilees can only confirm the original option and make even more urgent the renewal of the fruitful charismatic relationship between education and catechesis, by deepening the characteristics and methodology of a process of education to the faith.

Faith is a gift, and it is purely as a gift that it appears through the words and deeds of Jesus. It is God's initiative that attracts us and puts us on course with Christ. Christ emerges from an encounter with persons and arouses their wonder and trust. Faith, therefore, is not something that we can dispose of like a scientific notion or develop like some physical quality. Rather must we beg for it as a grace.

And so it is not only interesting but even indispensable to see where our effort to educate to the faith is leading.

An authentic education to the faith must foster the encounter with Jesus Christ. The Synods of Bishops at continental level, celebrated in the final decade of the last century, always speak of an encounter with the living Christ as a

condition for a genuine faith. They emphasize that it is not enough to know the story of Jesus or be instructed in his teachings, the experience of a personal encounter is needed – one must be on friendly terms with him. It is not a matter of a superficial knowledge of Christ or a chance meeting. It is well known that in the religious field today there are various images of Jesus. Young and old are moved by a vague feeling for him. They would willingly wear a T-shirt with his image. But that is a long way from facing up to his teachings and taking the Gospel as the code of one's own life.

In the Gospel faith is always described as a personal encounter, meaningful and intense, and often somewhat problematical at the beginning. Education to the faith aims at preparing the person and deepening his understanding and the offering of himself so that he may progress from hearing the story of Jesus to really listening to it, and subsequently to entrustment to him.

An authentic encounter with Jesus Christ is almost impossible, or can be only fleeting, unless one makes real contact with him, gets to know him better, has an experience of the Church in her dimensions of mystery, communion and

mission, and unless it helps to develop one's membership of the Church. The memory, the words, the gestures of salvation, the disciples, Jesus' promptings are to be found in an authentic and organic – if also imperfect – way in the ecclesial community. The Church, understood as a community of persons, is the cradle, the home and the workshop of the faith. It is worth recalling that education to the faith calls for an intensification of interest in, attention to, and understanding and experience of the Church. That is something far from easy nowadays and it cannot be taken for granted. Opportunities for demonstrating membership are fleeting, functional and selective. Information about it generally stops at the institutional or the sensational aspects. Privatization of religion has obscured the indispensable character of the community.

Finally, the faith remains nothing more than a kind of fleeting or inward-looking piety, unless it takes its inspiration from a project of participation in its living history, and, in the first place, there in the society to which we belong. Education to belief, therefore, must help each one to discover the personal contribution he must make to the building of the King-

dom and to undertake it with joy and decisiveness. This is what is meant by vocational guidance. In salesian pedagogy we maintain that vocational choice is the mature result of education to and in the faith. *"We educate the young to develop their own human and baptismal vocation by a daily life progressively inspired and unified by the Gospel"* (C 37),

Mentality, Christian practice, presence in the community of believers, and sharing in its living history are the parameters for assessing the extent of the formation of the "good Christian" and "upright citizen". Each of these aspects presupposes dispositions to be created, signs to be given, experiences to be had, attitudes to foster, realities already lived to be consciously taken up again, convictions to be established, and practices to be begun.

To the extent that the young accept these elements and make them their own, they are prepared to demonstrate in today's world their quality as believers, by organizing their own lives around certain truths, value options and attitudes of faith: they begin to live a Christian spirituality. This is precisely what was brought about in Dominic Savio by Don Bosco's work.

6. SOME SUGGESTIONS IN CONCLUSION

As Salesians we are called upon to accept this invitation and, with courage, to take up again the pastoral, educative and catechetical task that the Church and the world ask of us, in fidelity to Don Bosco's spirit and charism.

Today the Congregation must resume its efforts to help young people, always beginning from the personal situation of each one, towards a personal meeting with Christ and the following of a programme of education to the faith, as set out by the GC23.

This was the explicit invitation I gave to the Congregation in the pastoral suggestions with which I accompanied the Strenna for the year 2004.

In many places specific programmes have been drawn up with a variety of plans for Christian formation. But everywhere is felt the lack of prepared personnel for the animation and guidance of such projects.

One important task you here could carry out, as an Institute and as Salesians specialized in catechetics, for the benefit of the Church and the Congregation, is that of encouraging and promoting the formation of both Sale-

sians and lay people, young and old, who are able to implement the process of education to the faith suggested by the Congregation and sustained and animated by Salesian Youth Spirituality.

Finally, another important task is that of helping provincial teams for Youth Ministry to reflect on the present situation of the evangelization and catechesis of young people, assisting them in guiding the processes of education to the faith they propose to groups and associations of the SYM, and in their collaboration in youth pastoral work, with a view to the inclusion, in the formation of young animators, of a specific preparation to become educators to the faith of their own companions.

This celebration of the Golden Jubilee of the Catechetical Institute of the Faculty of Educational Sciences is meant to be – and this is the reason for the presence of the Rector Major and Grand Chancellor at the event – a renewal of the commitment of the Congregation to make of this Institute an outstanding centre for the preparation of competent educators to the faith for the Church and the Congregation.

Fr Pascual CHÁVEZ V.
UPS, 17 February 2004

5.3 Decree for the canonical erection of the Salesian Vice Province of «Blessed Artemides Zatti» of English-speaking West Africa.

Prot. 213/03

The undersigned,

Fr. Pascual CHÁVEZ VILLANUEVA,
Rector Major of the Salesian Society of St John Bosco,

- considering the situation regarding the salesian foundations and works in the countries in English-speaking West Africa and especially in: Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone;
- having taken note that for a more effective animation of these same foundations a Delegate for the group of Provincials was appointed 5 January 1998;
- having heard the opinions of the Provincials concerned and their respective Councils and examined the results of a consultation among the confreres working in the aforementioned countries;
- with reference to article 156 of the Constitutions;
- with the consent of the General Council given in a meeting of 18

June 2003, in accordance with articles 132 §1,1 and 156 of the Constitutions:

CANONICALLY ERECTS

by this present Decree, the new **SALESIAN VICE PROVINCE of English-speaking West Africa, with the title of "BLESSED ARTEMIDES ZATTI", with headquarters in ASHAIMAN (Ghana)**, in the house of "St Francis of Sales", and including the following canonically erected houses, situated in the different countries:

- In *Ghana*:
ASHAIMAN "St Francis of Sales"
SUNYANI "St John Bosco"
- In *Liberia*:
MONROVIA "St Joseph"
- In *Nigeria*:
AKURE "Mary Help of Christians"
ONDO "St John Bosco"
ONITSHA "St John Bosco"
- In *Sierra Leone*:
LUNGI "Mary Help of Christians"

and in addition the salesian foundation, not yet canonically erected, in IBADAN, in *Nigeria*.

The following decisions have been made:

1. Members of the Vice Province are the confreres, who at the date of the canonical erection, are living and working in the salesian houses and foundation mentioned above.

2. Members also are confreres in formation coming from all the African countries included in the Vice Province, even though they may be in formation communities outside the Vice Province.

3. The relationships of the Vice Province with the Provinces of origin will be regulated by an appropriate Agreement approved by the Rector Major.

The present Decree will come into force on **5 January 2004**.

Rome, 18 December 2003.

Fr. Pascual CHÁVEZ VILLANUEVA
Rector Major

Fr. Marian STEMPEL
Secretary General

5.4 The IVth volume of Don Bosco's Collected Letters published

Four years after the publication of the IIIrd volume of the Collected Letter of Don Bosco (1999), the IVth volume has been available since December 2003 from the LAS (Libreria Ateneo Salesiano) Publishing House in Rome. Containing 529 of his letters, 179 of which are being published for the first time, it covers the three years 1873-1875. Following the same methodology with which the previous volumes were planned and executed, it is enriched in the final pages with the numerical correlation between the letters contained in the four volumes so far published by Fr Francesco Motto (1991-2003) from the Salesian Historical Institute and those in the two volumes edited by Fr Eugenio Ceria in the fifties of the last century. The 70 pages of the final *Indices*, especially, but not only, the analytical index, provide a helpful and ready means for a fruitful use of the volume.

It should be recalled here that the years 1873-1875 constitute crucial years in Don Bosco's life. It is the period of his obtaining definitive approval of the Salesian Constitutions, of the foundations in France and in Argentina, the beginning of what will subsequently

become the epic missionary activity in Patagonia, the extending of the circle of his benefactors and of vocations through the projects respectively of the Cooperators and the Sons of Mary, of his national celebrity on account of his work involving agreements between Church and State for the solution of some problems of ecclesiastical politics. However, they are also years of great disappointments: the failure on the part of the Holy See to concede the "privileges," the development of serious grounds for conflict with his own archbishop, the unhappy conclusion of a kind of lottery for which he had worked extremely hard, the repeated lack of success in attempts to establish a salesian house in Rome, the problems met in trying to obtain land and extra space for the work of St John the Evangelist in Turin, the deaths of people dear to him, the need to be constantly seeking funds which are always less than the growing demands of his innumerable activities.

The opportunity of having for this three year period one of Don Bosco's letters every two days makes it possible to follow in chronological order and without a break the unfolding of the daily life of an extremely busy man, a zealous priest, a well-known educator, the founder of two religious

societies, a greatly appreciated spiritual director, a prolific writer, the person responsible for a number of institutions, the promoter of innumerable wide-ranging initiatives. In other words: from a collection of letters such as this, there emerge Don Bosco's confidence and hesitation, enthusiasms and idiosyncrasies, strengths and weaknesses, hopes and disappointments, joys and sorrows. It is not by chance that his collected letters have been described as a «parallel biography».

5.5 Decree regarding the miracle for the Beatification of the Salesian Priest August Czartoryski

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

CONGREGATION FOR THE CAUSES OF SAINTS
DIOCESES OF ALBENGA AND OF PRZEMYŚL
OF THE LATINS

BEATIFICATION AND CANONISATION
OF THE VEN. SERVANT OF GOD

AUGUST CZARTORYSKI

PROFESSED PRIEST
OF THE SOCIETY OF SAINT FRANCIS OF SALES
(1858 - 1893)

DECREE REGARDING THE MIRACLE

The Venerable Servant of God August Czartoryski was born in Paris 12 August 1858 into a Polish princely family. His weak health did not prevent him from following the ways of the Lord and of reaching the heights of holiness. He had as a teacher St Joseph Kalinowski who then became a a priest and a Discalced Carmelite, taking the name Raphael of St Joseph. Subsequently a meeting with St John Bosco confirmed him in his desire to consecrate himself to God. He entered the Salesian Society and in 1888 made his religious profession and in 1892 he was ordained priest by Blessed Thomas Reggio. Struck down by an illness that he bore with admirable peace of mind he died at Alassio in the Diocese of Albenga on 9 April 1893.

On 1 December 1978 the Supreme Pontiff John Paul II declared that the Servant of God had to an heroic degree practised the theological, cardinal and other virtues connected with them.

In view of his Beatification, the Promoter of the Cause presented for the judgement of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints a supposed miraculous cure attributed to the intercession to God of

the Servant of God. The case refers to Władysław Dec, a priest of the Salesian Society who at the age of 82, during the night between 22 and 23 June 1989, was afflicted by acute abdominal pains. Having returned to his community in Przemyśl, he saw the doctor who advised him to go to hospital, advice which at the time he did not take. However, the following morning 24 June, having suffered an acute appendicitis attack he was taken to hospital, where the serious diagnosis was confirmed.

In the afternoon the operation disclosed a perforated duodenal ulcer and a diffused purulent appendicitis. A series of surgical procedures were carried out and three drainage tubes attached. However, further signs of suppuration elsewhere were evident so that the doctors having also made considerable use of antibiotics spoke of an unfavourable prognosis.

From the start of his illness Fr Władysław had prayed for Divine assistance through the intercession of the Servant of God August Czartoryski, to whom he had a great devotion. The salesian community of Przemyśl, and others added their own prayers, and their hopes were not in vain: in fact the sick man rapidly im-

proved so that on the 7th of the following month of July, he was fully recovered and able to leave hospital.

In the years 1999-2000, the diocesan process regarding this case was held in the Diocesan Offices of Przemyśl of the Latins, whose authority and juridical validity were recognised by the Congregation for the Causes of Saints with a decree dated 22 June 2001. The Medical Board of the Department, in their meeting on 23 January 2003, declared that the cure was rapid, complete and long-lasting and – as regards its manner – scientifically inexplicable. On 2 May of the same year the special assembly of the Theological Consultants took place and on the following 7 October the ordinary session of the Cardinals and Bishops, with the Presenter of the Cause Mgr. Lino Fumagalli, Bishop of Sabina – Poggio Mirteto. In both meetings, that of the Consultants and that of the Cardinals and Bishops, to the question whether it was clearly a matter of a miracle worked by God, the answer was in the affirmative.

After the undersigned Cardinal Prefect presented an accurate report of all this to the Supreme Pontiff John Paul II, His Holiness, accepting and ratifying the votes

of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, ordered that the decree on the aforementioned miraculous cure be prepared.

When all this had been done in the prescribed manner, after today calling together the undersigned Cardinal Prefect and the Presenter of the Cause, as well as myself the Secretary of the Congregation and the others it is customary to convoke on such occasions, in their presence the Holy Father declared that: *It is certain that the miracle took place worked by God through the intercession of the Ven. Servant of God August Czartoryski, professed priest of the Society of Saint Francis of Sales, that is the rapid, complete and long-lasting cure of the priest Władysław Dec from "purulent peritonitis, diffused by a perforated duodenal ulcer in a patient aged 82 with a heart condition."*

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

Given in Rome on 20 December 2003.

JOSÉ Card. SARAIVA MARTINS
Prefect

EDWARD NOWAK
Arciv. Tit. di Luni
Secretary

5.6 Decree regarding the miracle for the Beatification of Sr Eusebia Palomino, Daughter of Mary Help of Christians.

We print below, in an English translation, the Decree "regarding the miracle" promulgated by the Congregation for the Causes of Saints for the approval of the miracle attributed to the intercession of the Ven. Eusebia Palomino, in view of her Beatification.

CONGREGATION FOR THE CAUSES OF SAINTS

DIOCESE OF HUELVA

BEATIFICATION AND CANONISATION
OF THE VEN. SERVANT OF GOD

EUSEBIA PALOMINO YENES

PROFESSED RELIGIOUS

OF THE INSTITUTE OF THE DAUGHTERS
OF MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS
(1899 - 1935)

DECREE REGARDING THE MIRACLE

The Venerable Servant of God Eusebia Palomino Yenes was born on 15 December 1899 at Cantalpino, a small village in the province of Salamanca, in Spain. She passed her childhood in poverty and the light of faith. After having worked in service with some private families and with the Institute of Mary Help of Christians in Salamanca, where she felt the desire to consecrate herself to God, in 1922 she entered the In-

stitute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians and in 1924 made her religious profession.

She was sent to the community at *Valverde del Camino* in the diocese of Huelva, to work in the kitchen and in other humble domestic tasks. In addition she carried out a fruitful apostolate among the young and the local people, who all admired her fervour, piety and outstanding virtues.

In 1931, as the Spanish Civil War threatened, she offered her life to God for the salvation of her country. With courage, zeal and piety she faced up to the long illness that was to lead to her death on 10 February 1935.

On 17 December 1996 the Supreme Pontiff John Paul II declared that the Servant of God had to an heroic degree practised the theological, cardinal and other virtues connected with them.

In view of her Beatification, the Promoter of the Cause presented for the judgement of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints a supposed miraculous event that took place in the village of *Valverde del Camino* in 1983, when the diocesan process regarding the life and virtues of the Servant of God was set to finish, and the 14 April of that year had already been

arranged as the day for the translation of the mortal remains of Sister Eusebia to the chapel which had been suitably prepared in the College of Mary Help of Christians. At the same time the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians and the local people were concerned about having ready in time a painting of the Servant of God, hurriedly commissioned from the famous painter Manuel Parreño Rivera. In fact the painter, in spite of being constantly reminded by the Sisters, continued to put off beginning the work indefinitely. To overcome the problem the Sisters and the people prayed in honour of the Servant of God so that, with only two weeks remaining before the ceremony was due to take place, the painter might finally begin his work.

About ten in the morning of 31 March 1983 the painter, who because of his infirmity painted with his feet, began to work, so convinced that he would not be able to complete it in time that he said to the Servant of God: "Now I haven't the time necessary to finish the work. I should like to know if what they say about your miracles is true; you see to it that I can paint your portrait ...". In a remarkable way, after four and half hours the oil painting was fin-

ished. And what is even more surprising, something that cannot in any way be explained scientifically is that in the same space of time the paints he had used were dry. The painter himself was astonished because he knew well that for the paint to dry it should take many days.

The fact was at once attributed to the intercession of the Servant of God, insistantly invoked especially by the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians and by other zealous faithful.

The diocesan enquiry that took place in the Diocesan Offices of Huelva in 1998 was recognised as jurically valid by the Department in a decree of 5 February 1999. The Technical Commission, meeting on 22 November 2001, expressed its opinion in these words: «All the members of the Technical Commission, experts in this field, regard as extraordinary the extremely quick drying of the paints used without any drying agent being employed. It is clearly stated that according to the laws of nature it is not possible for a picture painted in oils to dry in the short space of time of four and a half hours after it is completed, also considering that the paints, although superimposed, have not become mixed together. The event

therefore is seen to be technically inexplicable.”

On 30 May 2003 the special assembly of the Theological Consultors took place. Subsequently on 16 December the ordinary session of the Cardinals and Bishops, with the Presenter of the Cause Mgr. Andrea Maria Erba, Bishop of Velletri-Segni was held. In both the meetings, that of the Consultors and that of the Cardinals and Bishops, to the question whether it was clearly a matter of a miracle worked by God, the answer was in the affirmative.

After the undersigned Cardinal Prefect presented an accurate report of all this to the Supreme Pontiff John Paul II, His Holiness, accepting and ratifying the votes of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, ordered that the decree on the aforementioned miraculous event be prepared.

When all this had been done in the prescribed manner, after calling together the undersigned Cardinal Prefect and the Presenter of the Cause, as well as myself the Secretary of the Congregation and the others it is customary to convoke on such occasions, in their presence the Holy Father declared that: *It is certain that the miracle took place worked by God through the intercession of the Ven. Servant*

of God Eusebia Palomino Yenes, professed religious of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, that is the extremely rapid drying in the space of four and a half hours of the paints used by the painter Manuel Parreño Rivera in producing a portrait of the Servant of God."

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

Given in Rome on 20 December 2003.

JOSÉ Card. SARAIVA MARTINS
Prefect

EDWARD NOWAK
Arciv. Tit. di Luni
Secretary

5.7 Decree regarding the miracle for the Beatification of Alexandrina Maria da Costa, Salesian Cooperator.

We print below, in an English translation, the Decree "regarding the miracle" promulgated by the Congregation for the Causes of Saints for the approval of the miracle attributed to the intercession of the Ven. Alexandrina Maria da Costa, in view of her Beatification.

CONGREGATION FOR THE CAUSES OF SAINTS

ARCHDIOCESE OF BRAGA

BEATIFICATION AND CANONISATION
OF THE VEN. SERVANT OF GOD

ALEXANDRINA MARIA DA COSTA

LAY PERSON
OF THE ASSOCIATION
OF SALESIAN COOPERATORS
(1904 - 1955)

DECREE REGARDING THE MIRACLE

The Venerable Servant of God Alexandrina Maria da Costa was born on 30 March 1904 at Balasar, in the Archdiocese of Braga, in Portugal. At 14 years of age, in defending her virginity she threw herself from a window, which resulted in injuries that as time passed increased until she totally lost the use of her limbs. Tormented by physical and mental ailments she submitted to God's will and under the impulse of love followed in the footsteps of the crucified Christ, sharing in his passion for the salvation of souls. She carried out a fruitful apostolate among the countless people who visited her attracted by her virtues and extraordinary gifts, which she exercised under obedience to ecclesiastical authority. Distinguished by her widespread reputation for holiness she fell asleep in the Lord on 13 October 1955.

On 21 December 1995 the Supreme Pontiff John Paul II declared that the Servant of God had to an heroic degree practised the theological, cardinal and other virtues connected with them.

In view of her Beatification, the Promoter of the Cause presented for the judgement of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints the supposed miraculous cure of Maria Maddalena Azevedo Fonseca who, in 1983, when she was 42 years of age, began to suffer from the effects of parkinsons disease in her right arm. In spite of the treatment she received, the symptoms of the disease gradually increased. In 1990 her health took a decided turn for the worse. She was therefore admitted to the Hospital of the University of Strasbourg, where she was diagnosed with extrapyramidal syndrome and other complications. During 1994-1995 she became much worse and her weight went down to 33 kilogrammes, so that she was unable to move on account of the rigidity of the muscles; she suffered from asthenia, always cold, amnesia. Various examinations discovered small but multiple cerebral lesions. Considering the seriousness of the degenerative pathology, and the powerlessness of medical science, the sick woman confidently

entrusted herself to divine help through the intercession of the Servant of God Alexandrina Maria da Costa. On 3 March 1995, while suffering from the difficulties associated with her muscular immobility, without warning the extrapyramidal symptoms disappeared, so that the sick woman was able to rise from her bed and walk. In a very short time the use of her muscles and her weight returned to normal.

In 2002 a diocesan enquiry was carried out into this event in the Diocesan Offices of Braga, whose authority and juridical validity were recognised by the Congregation for the Causes of Saints with a decree dated 22 November 2002. The Medical Board of the Department, in their meeting on 28 May 2003, declared that the cure was instantaneous, perfect, stable and scientifically inexplicable. On 15 of the following month of July the special assembly of the Theological Consultors took place, and on the following 21 October the ordinary session of the Cardinals and Bishops, with the Presenter of the Cause Mgr. Ottorino Pietro Alberti, Archbishop emeritus of Cagliari. In both the meetings, that of the Consultors and that of the Cardinals and Bishops, to the question whether it was clearly a

matter of a miracle worked by God, the answer was in the affirmative.

After the undersigned Cardinal Prefect presented an accurate report of all this to the Supreme Pontiff John Paul II, His Holiness, accepting and ratifying the votes of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, ordered that the decree on the aforementioned miraculous cure be prepared.

When all this had been done in the prescribed manner, after today calling together the undersigned Cardinal Prefect and the Presenter of the Cause, as well as myself the Secretary of the Congregation and the others it is customary to convoke on such occasions, in their presence the Holy Father declared that: *It is certain that the miracle took place worked by God through the intercession of the Ven. Servant of God Alexandrina Maria da Costa, lay person belonging to the Association of Salesian Cooperators, that is the instantaneous, perfect and long-lasting cure of Maria Maddalena Azevedo Gomes Fonseca from "parkinsons type degenerative extrapyramidal syndrome."*

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

Given in Rome on 20 December 2003.

JOSÉ Card. SARAIVA MARTINS
Prefect

EDWARD NOWAK
Arciv. Tit. di Luni
Secretary

5.8 New Vicar of the Rector Major and Regional Councillor for Italy-MOR

We provide the main biographical details of the Vicar of the Rector Major and of the Councillor for the Italy and Middle East Region, appointed during the winter plenary session (cf Chronicle of the General Council, n. 4.2).

1. D. BREGOLIN Adriano, Vicar of the Rector Major

Fr Adriano BREGOLIN, born at Cona, in the province of Venice, 16 October 1948, became a Salesian 16 August 1966 when he made his first profession in the novitiate at Albarè di Costermano (Verona). He did his philosophy at Cison di Valmarino (Treviso) and at Nave (Brescia), and then his practical training in the houses of Belluno

and Albarè, where he was assistant to the novices. On 16 August 1972 he made his perpetual profession. He did his theology at Verona and Trento, and was ordained priest 27 May 1978. Subsequently he took a degree in Modern Languages at the University of Padua. As priest he worked at Trento in the school and at Verona "San Zeno", in charge of vocations and looking after the young people in the technical training centre. In 1983 he was appointed Rector of the house in Trento and in 1988 Rector of the "Don Bosco" Institute in Verona; having completed his six years in 1994, for two years he was in charge of the Salesian University Hostel in Padua. In 1996 he was appointed Provincial of the "San Zeno" Province of Verona. He took part in the GC23 and the GC25. During this latter Chapter he was elected Councillor for the Region of Italy and the Middle East. Now the Rector Major has appointed him his Vicar.

2. *FRISOLI Pier Fausto, Regional Councillor for Italy and the Middle East.*

Born in Foggia 5 September 1955, Fr. Pier Fausto FRISOLI became a Salesian 12 September 1975, when he made his first pro-

fession at Lanuvio (Rome), where he had spent his year of Novitiate. Perpetually professed in 1981, he studied theology in Rome and was ordained priest 1 October 1983. He obtained civil degrees in Modern Languages and in Philosophy and qualified as a teacher of history and philosophy.

After several years teaching he was given roles of responsibility. In charge of vocation ministry from 1983, in 1986 he was appointed to the Provincial Council and in 1992 became Rector of "Don Bosco" in Rome. In 1994 he was transferred as Rector to Frascati "Villa Sora", where he then continued to teach. In August 2003 he became Provincial of the Roman Province.

On 9 January 2004 the Rector Major appointed him Councillor for the Region of Italy and the Middle East, taking the place of Fr. Adriano Bregolin.

5.9 New Provincials

We provide (in alphabetical order) some biographical details of the Provincials appointed by the Rector Major with his Council during the plenary session December 2003 – January 2004.

1. *CASTELLINO Riccardo, Superior of the Vice Province of English-speaking West Africa.*

Fr. *Riccardo CASTELLINO* is the first Superior of the "Blessed Artemides Zatti" Vice Province of English-speaking West Africa (AFW).

Born 23 July 1949 at Beinette (Cuneo), he became a Salesian 16 August 1966, when he made his first profession in the novitiate at Chieri – Villa Moglia. Perpetually professed in 1972, he did his theological studies at Turin-Crocetta and was ordained priest in his home town 26 June 1977.

After some years of teaching and pastoral work in Piedmont, in 1982 – accepting a missionary call – he left for Nigeria. Between 1982 and 1991 he worked in the house of Akure, then in that of Ondo as Director of Novices (1993-1999), and then again at Akure as Rector (1999-2004). In January 2001 he was appointed Delegate of the Provincials for English-speaking West Africa, of which after its erection as a Vice Province he has now become Superior.

2. *JIMÉNEZ CASTRO Manuel, Superior of the Vice Province of French-speaking West Africa.*

To succeed Fr. Lluís Maria Oliveras as Superior of the "Our Lady of Peace" Vice Province of French-speaking West Africa (AFO) Fr. *Manuel JIMÉNEZ CASTRO* has been appointed.

Born 23 October 1959 at Tarifa (Cádiz), Spain, he became a Salesian 28 September 1977, when he made his first profession at Cabezo de Torres, in the Seville Province. Perpetually professed 21 August 1983, he did his theological studies in Seville, where he was ordained priest 17 May 1986.

After some years working in his Province (in the houses of Seville – Community of Theologians, Cádiz-Aspirantate and Sanlúcar la Mayor, as Director of Novices), he left for the African missions, assigned to the house in Kara (Togo), where he was Rector between 1996 and 2002, then the house in Lomé, as Rector and Parish priest. Now the Rector Major and his Council are entrusting to him the guidance of the Vice Province.

3. *KAŻMIERCZAK Bolesław, Provincial of WROCŁAW, Poland.*

To guide the "St John Bosco" Province of WROCŁAW, Poland, Fr. *Bolesław KAŻMIERCZAK* has been appointed. He succeeds Fr. Franciszek Krasoń.

Bolesław Kaźmierczak was born 1 October 1958 at Wrocław and became a Salesian making his first profession 20 August 1978 in the novitiate at Kopiec. On 20 June 1984 he made his perpetual profession and on 19 June 1985 was ordained priest at Kraków, at the end of theological studies.

After ordination, he carried out his educational and pastoral ministry successively in the houses of Wrocław – St Michael (1985-1991), then Poznań – St John Bosco (1991-1993), then Wrocław – Christ the King (from 1994 until the present) where he was parish priest and from 2000 also Rector. Now he has been given responsibility for the Province.

4. *ŁEPKO Zbigniew, Provincial of PIŁA, Poland.*

Fr. Zbigniew ŁEPKO is the new Provincial of the “St Adelbert” Province of PIŁA, Poland, taking over from Fr. Jerzy Worek.

Born 27 September 1952 at Piła, Zbigniew Łepko became a Salesian 22 August 1973, when he made his first profession in the novitiate at Czerwińsk. Perpetually professed on 26 June 1979, he did his theological studies at Łąd, where he was ordained priest 10 June 1980.

After ordination, following some years of pastoral ministry in the house of Łomianki, he was involved in interprovincial vocational and formation work: in the aspirantate at Kutno-Woźniaków, in the postnovitiate at Łódź and in the theologate at Łąd as Rector. In 2001 he was given an obedience to go to Aleksandrów Kujawski. He has been a Provincial Councillor since 1995. Now he takes up the task of Provincial in his own Province.

5. *MADDHICHETTY Noel, Provincial of HYDERABAD, India.*

To succeed Fr. Balaswamy Medabalimi as Provincial of the “St Joseph” Province HYDERABAD Fr. Noel MADDHICHETTY has been appointed.

Noel Maddhichetty was born 25 December 1958 at Madras and made his first profession as a Salesian 24 May 1977, in the novitiate at Yercaud. Perpetually professed 24 May 1984, he did his theological studies in the Bangalore salesian theologate and was ordained priest at Madras 7 October 1989.

After ordination he began his ministry at Vijayawada-Gunadala, then between 1993 and 1995 he was in Rome to complete his studies at the Salesian Pontifical Un-

versity. Having returned to the Province he worked in various houses: Nuzvid (1995-1997) as Rector, Kondabada (1997-1998), Hyderabad-Birdy (1998-1999), Hyderabad-S. Teresa (1999-2000). From 2000 he was Vice Provincial and Rector of the Hyderabad Provincial House. Now he has been called to lead the Province.

6. *MEDEIROS SANTOS Dámasio Raimundo, Provincial of MANAUS, Brazil.*

Fr. *Dámasio Raimundo MEDEIROS* is the new Provincial of the "St Dominic Savio" Province of *MANAUS, Brazil*. He succeeds João Sucarrats Font, at the end of his mandate.

Born 11 December 1958 at Manaus, Brazil, Dámasio Raimundo Medeiros became a Salesian 31 January 1979, when he made his first profession at São Carlos, when he he done his novitiate. After philosophical studies and practical training he went to Italy for theological studies at the UPS. He made his perpetual profession at Turin 3 April 1985 and was ordained priest at Manaus 22 August 1987.

After ordination he began his ministry in the house of Manaus – Domingos Savio. In 1989 he re-

turned to Rome to complete his studies, obtaining a licence in Sacred Liturgy. Having returned to the Province he worked in various houses especially in the area of formation: Candeias di Jamari (1990-1992), Manaus – Domingos Savio (1992-1994), Ananindeua (1994-1996), Manaus – Centro de Formação (1996-1999), Manaus – Dom Bosco (1999-2001). In December 2001 obedience called him to Rome to form part of the formation and teaching staff at the U.P.S. Now he has been called to guide his Province of origin.

7. *PRATHAN Sridarunsil Joseph, Provincial of THAILAND.*

To lead the "St Paul" Province of *THAILAND* Fr. *Joseph PRATHAN Sridarunsil*, has been appointed. He was already Provincial for the six years 1992-1998. Now he succeeds Fr Philip Somchai Kitnichi, at the end of his mandate.

Joseph Prathan was born 9 February 1946 at Nam Deng, Vat Pheng, Thailand, and became a Salesian on 2 October 1965, when he made his first profession at Hua Hin, where he had done his novitiate. After philosophical studies and practical training in Thailand, he was sent to Cremisan, in the

Holy Land for theological studies. He was ordained priest in Rome 29 June 1975, by His Holiness Paul VI. In Rome at the U.P.S., he then followed a course of spirituality, obtaining the diploma.

Having returned to Thailand, he was soon entrusted with offices of responsibility: he was successively Rector at Haad Yai (1979-1980), Suratthani (1980-1983), Hua Hin (1983-1986). In 1986 he was appointed Vice Provincial and in 1992 Provincial. After he completed his mandate he was once again Rector in: Udonthani (1998-2001) and Sampran (from 2001 until the present), and has now been called again to the responsibilities of Provincial.

8. *PUSSINO Gian Luigi, Provincial of ROME, Italy.*

The new Provincial of the "St Peter" Province of Rome – to take the place of Fr Pier Fausto Frisoli, appointed Regional Councillor for Italy and the Middle East – is Fr. *Gian Luigi PUSSINO*. He was already Roman Provincial in the six years 1991-1997.

Born 24 June 1951 at Guspini, in the province of Cagliari, in Sardinia, Gian Luigi Pussino became a Salesian 16 August 1967, when he made his first profession in the

novitiate at Lanuvio. After philosophical studies and practical training, he did his theological studies at the U.P.S. in Rome. Perpetually professed in 1973, he was ordained priest at Cagliari 24 March 1979. At the U.P.S. he obtained a licence in Catechetical Theology.

He was soon given positions of responsibility. For several years he was responsible for Youth Ministry in the Province; in 1982 he was appointed Provincial Councillor and in 1986 Vice Provincial, a position he held until 1989, when he was called to be Rector of the Pius XI community in Rome. In 1991 he was appointed Provincial. At the end of the six year mandate in 1997, he was appointed secretary of the Conference of the Provincials of Italy (CISI) and director of CNOS – Pastoral Centre, based at the "Sacred Heart," in Rome.

9. *RODRIGUES Ribeiro João Carlos, Provincial of Recife, Brazil.*

To succeed Fr. Raimundo Ricardo Sobrinho da Costa as Provincial of the "San Aloysius Gonzaga" Province of *RECIFE, Brazil*, Fr. *João Carlos Ribeiro RODRIGUES* has been appointed.

João Carlos Ribeiro Rodrigues was born 8 June 1956 at Quipapá,

PE, Brazil, and became a Salesian 31 January 1976, when he made his first profession at Pindamonhangaba, where he had spent the year of his novitiate. Perpetually professed 31 January 1982, he completed his theological studies at Recife and was ordained priest 20 August 1983 in the salesian house of Carpina.

After ordination he was soon given posts of responsibility. In 1984 he was appointed delegate for pastoral work and in 1987 made responsible for vocational ministry and at the same time Provincial delegate for the Salesian Cooperators. During the years 1991-1995 he worked in the "CAETÉS" project in Olinda-Recife. In 1995 he was appointed to the Provincial Council and in 1998 appointed Vice Provincial, a role he has carried out until his appointment as Provincial. In addition, during 1998-2004, he was also successively Rector of the Provincial house and of Recife-Bongi Don Bosco.

10. *VEGA DÍEZ José Antonio, Superior of the Vice Province Equatorial Tropical Africa.*

Fr. José Antonio VEGA DÍEZ is the new Superior of the "Our Lady of Africa" Vice Province of

Equatorial Tropical Africa (ATE). He succeeds Fr. Miguel Angel Olaverri, at the end of his mandate.

Born 13 March 1945 at Loma de Castrejón (Palencia), Spain, José Antonio Vega became a Salesian 16 August 1961, when he made his first profession in the novitiate of Mohernando. Perpetually professed 3 August 1967, he studied theology at Salamanca, where he was ordained priest 14 February 1971.

After ordination he exercised his ministry in the houses of Puertollano (1971-1973), Salamanca – San José (1973-1977). In 1977-1978 he was in Rome for studies; and subsequently he was Provincial Delegate, resident in the Madrid Provincial House (1978-1980), then in Alcalá de Henares (1980-1982). Following a missionary vocation, he left for the missions in Equatorial Guinea (then dependent on the Madrid Province), working in the house of Bata, as Rector and then in Malabo, as parish priest and Rector. In 1998 he was appointed Councillor of the new ATE Vice Province. Since 2000 he has been resident in the headquarters of the Vice Province at Yaoundé, Cameroun (since 2002 he has been Secretary of the Vice Province).

11. WINSTANLEY *Michael*, *Provincial of GREAT BRITAIN*.

Nominated to lead the "St Thomas of Canterbury" Province of *GREAT BRITAIN* is Fr *Michael WINSTANLEY*, who was already Provincial during 1986-1992.

Born 25 February 1941 in Wigan (Lancashire), Michael Winstanley made his first profession 8 September 1959 in the novitiate at Burwash. Perpetually professed 15 August 1965, he did his theology at the Salesian Pontifical University in Rome, obtaining a licence in theology. He was ordained at Shrigley 15 December 1972.

After spending some years in the retreat centre at Ingersley, where he completed his theological studies, he was sent as professor of theology at Ushaw, where he was also Rector. In 1981 he became a member of the Provincial Council and in 1986 was appointed Provincial. At the end of his six years he continued with pastoral work at Bollington (centre of spirituality and youth ministry), first as Vice Rector and then since 1998 as Rector. Now he has been called once again to guide the Province.

5.10 New Salesian Bishop

VAN LOOY *Luc*, *Bishop of GHENT (Belgium)*

We provide some biographical details of Mgr. Luc VAN LOOY, recently Vicar of the Rector Major, appointed by the Holy Father Bishop of Ghent, in Belgium (cf Letter of the Rector Major, in the present issue of the A..G C.-Family News - p. 1)

Fr. *Luc VAN LOOY* was born 28 September 1941 at Tielen (Antwerp), Belgium, and became a Salesian 25 August 1962 when he made his first profession in the novitiate at Groot-Bijgaarden. After philosophical studies, following a missionary vocation in 1964 he left for Korea, where he did his practical training. Having returned to Belgium for theological studies which he did in Oud-Heverlee, he made his perpetual profession 6 April 1968 and was ordained priest 12 September 1970.

After ordination he returned to Korea, where he exercised his educational and pastoral ministry. In 1976 he was appointed a Provincial Councillor and in 1978 Delegate of the Provincial for the Delegation of Korea. In 1979 he be-

came also Rector of the community of Seoul – Dae Rim Dong.

In 1984 he took part in the 22nd General Chapter, and was elected General Councillor for the Missions. He exercised this office until 1990, when the GC23 elected him General Councillor for Youth Ministry. After six years, in 1996 the GC24 elected him Vicar of the Rector Major, the office to which

the GC25 in 2002 re-elected him. From 1995 he was also the Ecclesiastical Assistant of the World Union of Catholic Teachers (UMEC).

On 19 December 2003 the Holy Father appointed him Bishop of Ghent, Belgium, (the diocese in which he was born). He was ordained 1st February 2004 in Ghent Cathedral.

5.11 Salesian personnel at 31 December 2003

Prov.	Tot. 2002	Temp. Professed				Perp. Professed				Tot. Professed	Novices	Tot. 2003
		L	S	D	P	L	S	D	P			
AET	101	13	31	0	0	14	3	0	35	96	12	108
AFC	265	10	76	0	0	32	11	0	123	252	21	273
AFE	165	3	43	0	0	20	11	0	88	165	8	173
AFM	60	5	4	0	0	7	2	0	42	60	2	62
AFO	115	4	26	0	0	13	4	0	65	112	8	120
ANG	62	4	10	0	0	8	3	0	33	58	5	63
ATE	111	9	32	0	0	6	5	0	55	107	14	121
ANT	187	8	31	0	0	13	13	0	107	172	5	177
ABA	144	0	10	0	1	14	1	0	112	138	3	141
ABB	118	2	7	0	0	9	3	0	90	111	1	112
ACO	141	8	15	0	0	13	3	0	95	134	1	135
ALP	88	5	5	0	0	9	3	0	61	83	0	83
ARO	126	7	15	0	0	11	3	0	82	118	4	122
AUL	120	4	16	0	0	13	5	0	79	117	5	122
AUS	93	0	1	0	0	9	1	0	81	92	0	92
BEN	193	1	4	0	0	21	1	0	164	191	0	191
BES	78	0	0	0	0	11	0	0	61	72	0	72
BOL	148	5	27	0	0	18	10	0	84	144	9	153
BBH	176	7	25	0	0	23	7	0	103	165	3	168
BCG	149	3	17	0	0	20	7	0	89	136	7	143
BMA	112	1	16	0	0	15	0	0	72	104	3	107
BPA	102	1	10	0	0	8	1	0	80	100	2	102
BRE	101	2	29	0	0	13	2	0	53	99	5	104
BSP	170	3	18	0	0	21	4	0	111	157	11	168
CAM	208	5	15	0	1	28	3	0	154	206	4	210
CAN	37	0	0	0	0	5	0	1	29	35	0	35
CEP	185	3	10	0	0	11	3	1	154	182	2	184
CIL	216	1	24	0	0	16	7	0	152	200	7	207
CIN	128	1	6	0	0	31	1	1	88	128	0	128
COB	171	2	27	0	1	22	3	0	108	163	6	169
COM	174	4	30	0	0	16	3	0	106	159	13	172
CRO	79	0	1	0	0	4	4	0	67	76	2	78
ECU	227	3	21	0	0	24	10	0	159	217	4	221
EST	130	2	26	0	0	1	9	0	79	117	7	124
FIN	206	4	37	0	0	19	4	0	143	207	6	213
FIS	94	3	12	0	0	11	10	0	58	94	6	100
FRA	260	0	6	0	0	38	2	0	204	250	0	250
GBR	109	0	0	0	0	10	0	0	94	104	2	106
GEK	160	5	9	0	0	34	3	0	106	157	4	161
GEM	250	2	4	0	0	52	1	1	181	241	1	242
GIA	136	0	9	0	0	18	4	0	100	131	0	131
HAI	67	1	17	0	0	2	6	0	34	60	6	66
INB	299	2	69	0	1	20	12	0	184	288	4	292
INC	275	7	64	0	0	22	19	0	158	270	14	284
IND	232	3	64	0	0	6	12	0	135	220	15	235
ING	368	11	105	0	0	21	18	0	197	352	28	380
INH	168	4	47	0	0	7	9	0	94	161	19	180
INK	309	4	96	0	0	7	26	0	170	303	18	321
INM	384	10	91	0	0	16	29	0	232	378	10	388
INN	132	4	43	0	0	13	12	0	60	132	16	148
INT	173	6	71	0	0	3	9	0	75	164	18	182
IRL	103	0	3	0	0	8	3	0	85	99	2	101

Prov.	Tot. 2002	Temp. Professed				Perp. Professed				Tot. Professed	Novices	Tot. 2003
		L	S	D	P	L	S	D	P			
IAD	145	0	18	0	0	20	1	0	94	133	4	137
ICP	689	3	29	0	0	173	12	1	449	667	4	671
ILE	382	7	17	0	0	51	9	0	287	371	6	377
ILT	194	1	14	0	0	24	6	1	141	187	0	187
IME	288	0	30	0	0	33	5	0	217	285	6	291
INE	443	2	26	0	0	84	12	1	309	434	3	437
IRO	259	0	0	0	0	54	3	1	185	243	1	244
ISA	69	0	5	0	0	5	0	0	58	68	0	68
ISI	285	1	21	0	0	21	3	1	225	272	2	274
ITM	143	10	60	0	0	7	9	1	39	126	23	149
KOR	111	7	26	0	0	18	4	0	53	108	6	114
MDG	93	3	23	0	0	8	5	0	44	83	7	90
MEG	215	8	39	0	0	13	12	0	136	208	11	219
MEM	175	3	25	0	0	13	12	0	114	167	10	177
MOR	126	1	10	0	1	17	3	0	85	117	1	118
OLA	64	0	0	0	0	18	2	1	42	63	1	64
PAR	103	3	17	0	0	6	4	0	71	101	6	107
PER	162	9	35	0	0	11	11	0	92	158	3	161
PLE	330	5	39	0	0	15	28	0	233	320	4	324
PLN	308	3	55	0	0	12	7	0	227	304	10	314
PLO	234	1	28	0	0	2	11	0	185	227	6	233
PLS	238	1	22	0	1	8	5	0	191	228	6	234
POR	199	2	21	0	0	42	8	1	117	191	0	191
SLK	257	11	50	0	0	10	16	0	152	239	3	242
SLO	113	0	0	0	0	9	3	0	97	109	2	111
SBA	193	0	4	0	0	33	0	1	151	189	0	189
SBI	199	2	5	0	0	51	5	1	136	200	1	201
SCO	112	1	8	0	0	5	5	1	85	105	0	105
SLE	217	2	3	0	0	72	1	0	136	214	1	215
SMA	327	0	10	0	0	81	13	0	214	318	0	318
SSE	154	1	6	0	0	23	10	0	111	151	0	151
SVA	172	1	8	0	0	28	5	1	120	163	2	165
SUE	189	0	9	0	0	36	0	0	136	181	5	186
SUO	122	0	4	0	0	24	3	0	84	115	8	123
THA	87	0	8	0	0	14	6	0	58	86	3	89
UNG	47	0	2	0	0	5	1	0	35	43	0	43
URU	119	0	10	0	0	6	7	0	92	115	3	118
VEN	243	5	43	0	1	18	8	0	153	228	7	235
VIE	210	6	72	0	0	21	26	0	70	195	24	219
ZMB	63	3	7	0	0	5	5	0	43	63	1	64
UPS	134	0	0	0	0	10	0	0	119	129	0	129
RMG	79	0	0	0	0	15	0	0	64	79	0	79
T.	16697	294	2184	0	7	1927	611	16	11021	16060	523	16583
Ep.	115									109 (*)		109 (*)
Tot	16812	294	2184	0	7	1927	611	16	11021	16169	523	16692

Note (*): At 31 December 2003 there are 108 Bishops + 1 Prefect Apostolic

5.12 Our dead confreres (5th list 2003 and 1st list 2004)

"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*).

Deceased 2003 – 5th list

NOTE: We print a 5th list of those the news of whose death in 2003 arrived after the publication of AGC384.

SURNAME AND NAME	PLACE of death	DATE	AGE	PROV
P BAYARD Jeen-Paul	Lyon (Francia)	20-12-2003	65	FRA
P BEUCHET Louis	Caen (Francia)	12-12-2003	78	FRA
L CANAVERO Rodolfo	Torino	28-12-2003	84	ICP
P CARAËS Joseph	Caen (Francia)	30-12-2003	80	FRA
L COLETTI Alberto	West Covina, California (USA)	26-12-2003	70	SUO
P DELGADO HERNÁNDEZ Andrés	México, D.F.	16-12-2003	65	MEM
P GAMBIRASIO Giuseppe	Arese (MI)	12-08-2003	83	ILE
P HENDAK Ivan	Prvic Luca (Sibenik)	27-12-2003	71	CRO
L MAESTRO Giulio	Tokyo	27-12-2003	79	GIA
P MORENO CELDRÁN Juan Manuel	Bilbao (Spagna)	15-12-2003	72	ECU
P PRIETO FERNÁNDEZ Antonio	Málaga	31-12-2003	69	SSE
P PRIMI Luigi	Torino	06-09-2003	86	ICP
P PUERARI Pietro	Arese (MI)	03-12-2003	92	ILE
P PUIG AGUT Alejandro	Alicante	19-12-2003	64	SVA
P RODRÍGUEZ PÉREZ Agustín	Vigo	14-12-2003	70	SLE
P ROSSETTI Corrado	Eugenio Bustos (Mendoza)	11-12-2003	85	ACO
P ROSSI Paolo	Civitanova Marche (MC)	18-12-2003	80	IAD
P RUTTEN Henri	Bonheiden (Belgio)	31-12-2003	83	BEN
P STUGI Giovanni	Roma	29-07-2003	76	IRO
L TESIO Giuseppe	Torino	15-12-2003	92	ICP

* * *

Deceased 2004 – 1st list

SURNAME AND NAME	PLACE of death	DATE	AGE	PROV
L ARCE ARCE Higinio	Arévalo	25-02-2004	92	SMA
P ARULNATHAN Maria	Tirupattur	14-02-2004	87	INM
P AURIEMMA Aristide	Napoli	19-01-2004	82	IME
L BURATTIN Carlo	Castelfranco V. (TV)	05-03-2004	83	INE
P CARROLL Thomas	Bollington	15-01-2004	85	GBR
P CHMIELEWSKI Ireneusz Józef	Warszawa	05-03-2004	56	PLE
L CLIFTON Gerard	Moston (Gran Bretagna)	11-03-2004	83	GBR

SURNAME AND NAME	PLACE of death	DATE	AGE	PROV
P DARCEL Julien	Caen (Francia)	28-01-2004	87	FRA
P DARWELL John Eric	Cherstey	19-01-2004	68	GBR
P DE BORTOLI Giuseppe	Castelfranco V. (TV)	10-01-2004	89	INE
P DEL COL Giovanni	Torino	24-02-2004	75	ICP
P DI NANNI Natale	Lecce	06-02-2004	82	IME
P DOPP Reinhold	Hannover	31-01-2004	75	GEK
L EBERL Sebastián	Guatemala Ciudad	19-01-2004	96	CAM
P ELLENA Héctor Andrés	Colonia Vignaud	26-02-2004	73	ARO
P ESCOBAR MESA Juan	Bogotá	21-01-2004	81	COB
P EXPEDIT Joseph	Chennai	02-01-2004	57	INM
P FEDRIGOTTI Giovanni	Roma	02-01-2004	59	UPS
L FERRERO Bernardo	Torino	07-02-2004	84	ICP
P FLEIG Augustin	Furtwangen (Germania)	07-03-2004	89	GEM
P FRACASSI Ettore	Roma	18-02-2004	88	IRO
P FRANCHINI Tullio	Paute-Uzhupud (Cuenca)	31-01-2004	90	ECU
P FUCHS Franz	Vöcklabruck (Austria)	14-01-2004	90	AUS
P HANDLEY Dennis	Melbourne	04-03-2004	54	AUL
P KANDULNA Joachim	Dhulapadung (India)	25-02-2004	45	ING
P KINDS Jozef	Wilrijk (Belgio)	01-03-2004	89	BEN
P KOCHAMPAZHATHUMKAL George	Mannuthy (Trichur Dt.)	08-02-2004	81	INK
P KÖLES István	Balassagyarmat	02-01-2004	94	UNG
P LUTZ Edmund Johannes	München (Baviera)	18-01-2004	90	GEM
P MARTÍN CRIADO Santiago	Madrid	16-01-2004	71	SMA
P MAZÉ Yves	Caen (Francia)	23-02-2004	92	FRA
P NICOLINI Giulio	Macerata	15-01-2004	75	IAD
P PALETTA Domenico	San Isidro (Argentina)	04-02-2004	92	ABA
P PARLANTI Antonio	Roma	22-01-2004	71	RMG
P PEROLARI Andrea	Torino	01-01-2004	87	ICP
P PREIN Henny	Wijchen (Olanda)	24-02-2004	82	OLA
P RODRÍGUEZ ZAPATA Jorge	Granada (Nicaragua)	01-03-2004	83	CAM
P ROSSI Mario	Torino	17-01-2004	68	ICP
P SCHIRO Mario	Guatemala Ciudad	08-01-2004	87	CAM
P SCHÖNER Friedrich	Unterhaching (Germania)	09-03-2004	80	GEM
P SCHRÖDER Johannes	Köln	01-03-2004	68	GEK
L SCHULTE Jan	Wijchen (Olanda)	03-02-2004	86	OLA
P SCORTA Italo José	La Plata	25-02-2004	87	ALP
P SCOTTINI Augusto	Negrar (Verona)	04-01-2004	82	INE
P SPRATT Philip	Grayshott (Gran Bretagna)	27-02-2004	84	GBR
P TARDIVO Pietro	Caleta Olivia (Santa Cruz)	05-02-2004	93	ABA
P TONONE Armand	Bruxelles-Woluwe	01-03-2004	92	BES
P ULENAERS Jean	Lubumbashi (Congo R.D.)	04-02-2004	89	AFC
P VAN REENEN Hein	Amersfoort (Olanda)	12-01-2004	78	OLA
P VIGLIOCCO Giuseppe	Torino	01-01-2004	82	ICP
P WALTER Eugene	Stony Point, NY, USA	15-02-2004	51	SUE
P YEDDANAPALLI John	Chennai	08-03-2004	74	INM
P ZAGNOLI Remo	Arese (MI)	10-02-2004	87	ILE
P ZAMMIT Carmelo	Sliema (Malta)	17-01-2004	72	IRL

