



acts

of the general council

year LXXXVI

april-june 2005

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official organ
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Direzione Generale
Opere don Bosco
Roma

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of the Salesian Society
of St John Bosco

OFFICIAL ORGAN OF ANIMATION AND COMMUNICATION FOR THE SALESIAN CONGREGATION

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“COME OVER TO MACEDONIA AND HELP US” (Acts 16,9)

Presentation of the Northern European Region

1. “Come over to Macedonia and help us” (Acts 16,9) – 2. Beginnings of Salesian work in the Northern European Region. 2.1 Great Britain, Ireland-Malta, Holland and Northern Belgium. 2.2 Austria and Germany. 2.3 Poland. 2.4 Lithuania and countries of the former Soviet Union. 2.5 Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic, Slovenia and Croatia. 2.6 Two factors contributing to the first development. 2.6.1 The “Salesian Bulletin”. 2.6.2 The Salesian Cooperators. – **3. The present context of our mission.** 3.1 The new Europe. 3.2 The youth situation. 3.3 The present Salesian situation of the Region. 3.4 The situation in the different areas. 3.5 Interprovincial collaboration. – **4. Sectors of Salesian life and mission.** 4.1 Initial formation. 4.2 Salesian formation of lay people. 4.3 Youth ministry. 4.4 Vocational pastoral work. 4.5 Social communication. 4.6 The Missions. 4.7 The Salesian Family. – **5. Future prospects.** 5.1 For all the Provinces of the Region. 5.2 For the different parts of the Region. – **Conclusion.**

My dear confreres,

As I write to you I am already looking forward to Easter that we shall soon be celebrating, and so I want to send you my best wishes for a joyful and fruitful celebration of the mysteries of our salvation in the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. If we want to be Christians the first truth we must believe is precisely the confession of faith: “The Lord is truly risen and has appeared to Simon” (*Lk* 24,34). And the final truth to which we must hold on if we want to continue to be Christians, is exactly the same: “if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved” (*Rom* 10,9). To believe in the Lord’s death and resurrection and live as though already risen again is the foundation of the Christian life. “For Christ, our paschal lamb, has been sacrificed! Let us therefore celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (*1 Cor* 5,7b-8). Against this background of Easter, I take the opportunity to express my thanks for all the expressions of sympathy, condolence and prayers on the death of my father, who is now living with the Risen Lord.

Before taking up the topic I want to deal with in this letter I would like to pass on to you, albeit briefly, two items of family news that are of interest. In the first place on 24 April will take place the beatification of Fr *Bronisław Markiewicz*, founder of the Congregation of St Michael the Archangel (better known as "Michaelites"), who have been part of the Salesian Family since the year 2000. While we rejoice with the Superior General and all the members of the Congregation at this recognition by the Church of the holiness of their founder, we see in it a further confirmation of the validity of the charism of Don Bosco and of the Salesian Family as a way that leads to holiness.

The other item is of direct concern to our own Congregation. We have reached a point halfway through the six years following the last General Chapter, and have begun the *Team Visits*, a form of presence of the General Council in the different parts of the Congregation, which has become obligatory on the part of religious institutes in the present context of unity in decentralization and vice versa. These Visits enable the Regions to gain a more universal view of the Congregation, and they also make it possible for the Rector Major with his Council to keep a finger on the pulse of Salesian life and work in the various Regions. This time we have decided to give particular attention to two themes: the communication, assimilation and putting into practice of the GC25, and the more important activities, dramatic challenges, available resources and future prospects of each Region and of the individual Provinces concerned. At the time I write this letter, we have already carried out two such Visits, to the Regions of Southern Asia and of East Asia and Oceania. It is not difficult to see that when the Visits have been completed to all the Regions, we shall be in a position to define the objectives of the next General Chapter and set in motion its preparation.

The study of the Regions takes place of course in another forum as well, that of the General Council, which continues with its programme of studying them one by one. And I am pressing on with my intention of presenting them to you in my letters.

This time it is the turn of the Region of Northern Europe, which will conclude my presentation of Salesian Europe.

1. "Come over to Macedonia and help us" (Acts 16,9)

As the title of the letter, I have used this phrase from the well known and important dream of St Paul at Troas, during his second great missionary journey (Acts 15,41-18,22). After a brief reference to the apostolic activity of strengthening the communities, normally through evangelization, baptism, the Eucharist and ministry (cf. Acts 15,41; 16,5), the author of the Acts points to the true protagonist of the Church: the Holy Spirit. He it is who guides us in choosing what steps to take, what new frontiers to open up, what doors to fling wide. Twice the text recalls how the Holy Spirit intervened by preventing Paul and his companions from going ahead with their own missionary project and directing them instead towards Greece and Europe: "A vision appeared to Paul in the night; a man of Macedonia was standing beseeching him and saying: *"Come over to Macedonia and help us"* (Acts 16,9)

This is a text that tells us a great deal, in the first place it shows us – as I have said already – that it is the Holy Spirit who guides the Church and opens the world to the Gospel; but it also shows us the opening of Europe to Jesus and his Church, which has had a very great influence on the cultural configuration of Europe of the present day after two thousand years of Christianity; we may note that this man of Macedonia, who is a kind of symbol of Europeans, asks for help, which is a request for evangelization. In the following verse, in fact, we read: "And when he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go on into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them" (Acts 16,10).

This text, memorable and prophetic at the same time as it is, recalls the past and outlines the future. The past and future of Europe is the Gospel. With more than a hundred years of history

behind us, we Salesians will have a future in this Europe if we are able to dream by daylight, as did Don Bosco, contemplating the situation of the poverty, abandonment and bewilderment of young people; if we listen to their cry for help: "*Come over to Macedonia and help us*", and if in reply to that call we discover (as Paul did) the need they have of Christ and his Gospel to fulfil their deepest desires, while we try in the meantime to form in them through education in each of our works, the man, the citizen, the professional.

2. The beginnings of Salesian work in the North European Region

The Northern Region is remarkable for its extraordinary historical, cultural, religious, economic and linguistic diversity, which represents to some extent the richness and complexity of the new Europe. Let us try, within the limitations of this letter, to pick out some significant features of the beginnings of our foundations and activities in the different areas of the Region.

2.1 *Great Britain, Ireland-Malta, Holland and Northern Belgium*

In 1887 the Salesians came to Great Britain, a country with a Protestant culture, proud of its supremacy as the first industrial power, and with a small Catholic minority, made up mainly of immigrants from agricultural Ireland. When the Salesians reached **Ireland** in 1919, that country had just gained independence with an agonizing civil war and was in economic difficulties because of the loss of its traditional customers in England. Far different was the situation in **Belgium**, where the Salesians began work in 1890. There they found a recently industrialized country with great social imbalance and with a broadly liberal (and sometimes anticlerical) ruling class, but with the **Flemish** region strongly rooted in Catholic culture.

The arrival in Holland was in 1928, when the largely Protestant country had been converted into a highly developed commercial centre with an overseas empire and vast agricultural enterprises, where Catholics were an isolated minority, socially and politically marginalized.

In such varied contexts it is not surprising that the beginnings of Salesian work developed in different ways with different results in the various places it took root.

2.1.1 Great Britain

Many may be unaware that it was Dominic Savio, with his serious words in 1855, who ratified England's entry into Salesian history: *"How many souls are awaiting help in England; if I had enough strength I would go at once and bring the people to God"*. Through the influence of Archbishop Tobias Kirby, students of the Irish College used to frequent the Oratory near their hostel, and it was from these that Don Bosco was able to find the first group of young Irishmen who would all become pioneers of Salesian work not only in London but also in the Falkland Islands, Malta, Ireland itself and even as far as San Francisco.

Another Roman acquaintance, Countess Georgiana Stacpoole, offered to the Salesians the Mission and elementary school at Battersea in London, founded in 1874, where in 1887 Fr McKiernan and his first companions arrived, emerging from the fog.

The Salesian work developed strongly, including houses in England, Cape Town (1897) and Malta (1903), to such an extent that in 1902 the English Province was formally erected.

Immediately after the war of 1914-1918, Fr Francis Scaloni saw the need to give new life to the Province and in 1920 he opened the new novitiate and studentate at Cowley, Oxford.

From the outset a characteristic element of Salesian work in England has been direct involvement in parishes in very poor areas on the one hand, and on the other the development of primary and secondary schools strongly aimed at the finding of priestly vocations.

2.1.2 Ireland

In the same period the Salesians became established in *Ireland* (1919), at the inspiration of Fr Aloysius Sutherland and thanks to the invitation of Bishop Thomas Hallinan of Limerick, who had already been involved in Don Bosco's first project of 1874. They took over an abandoned property at Pallaskenry and transformed it into an aspirantate and agricultural school. Years later (1922) at Warrenstown in County Meath, another extensive property was left to the Salesians by legacy and in due course became a flourishing college of agriculture and horticulture. The pressure of the second world war led to the opening of a separate Irish novitiate and later an aspirantate at Ballinakill in 1941.

After Vatican II, with the decisions to erect a separate Ireland/South Africa Province in 1968 and to open the national seminary of Maynooth also to religious and so to University studies, new horizons were opened for Salesian Ireland.

2.1.3 Holland

Until 1928, if young Dutchmen wanted to become Salesians they had to go to Belgium, Germany or Italy. It was Mgr Poels, chaplain of the miners, who was responsible for Belgian Salesians going to Holland to begin a parish and oratory in the southern city of Lauradorp. In 1937, a house for aspirants was opened by the German Province at Leusden, near Amersfoort.

As soon as the war was over Holland became a separate Province, with Fr Hannibal Bortoluzzi chosen as its first Provincial. For sixteen years this jovial Salesian guided the growth of the Province. Boarding and day schools were opened and other youth works set up at Lauradorp; the Salesians committed themselves to various parishes and a considerable number left for the Missions in various parts of the Congregation.

2.1.4 Northern Belgium

The erection of the North Belgian Province dates only from 1959, but Mgr. Doutreloux, the famous social reformer, had al-

ready invited the Salesians of Liège (1890) in French-speaking southern Belgium to explore the rich vocational possibilities in the Flemish area of northern Belgium. And so a novitiate was established at Hechtel in Flanders, followed by the opening at Groot Bijgaarden in 1904 of one of the first centres of theological studies outside Italy, in what had become in 1902 the first Belgian Province with Fr Francis Scaloni as its inspiration and guide. In addition to their specific task of providing secondary and technical training for working-class youngsters in Belgium itself, the Flemish confreres offered themselves as pioneers for the inauguration of a Salesian mission in Central Africa, then known as the Belgian Congo (Congo, Burundi and Rwanda of the present day). This province too was very generous in sending out missionaries: the fact that there are still some 75 Belgian confreres scattered around the world speaks for itself.

After the subdivision of the Belgian Province in 1959 the Flemish Province, despite the falling off in vocations, expanded its own works for youngsters in difficulty, using rented accommodation and providing professional help for young ex-drug addicts.

2.2 Austria and Germany

The German-speaking part of the Region, comprising the countries of Austria and Germany, has a significant Salesian history.

2.1.1 Austria

In August of 1886 a group of Austrian citizens headed by a journalist, Joseph M. Schmidinger, had a meeting with Don Bosco at San Benigno Canavese, to ask for the foundation on Austrian soil of a Salesian work for the benefit of young people. Don Bosco did not say no, though he pointed out an obstacle in the lack of prepared German-speaking personnel, but he gave an assurance that sooner or later such a project would be realized.

Even though the Salesians had been in the then Hapsburg Austrian empire since 1887 (at Trento), they did not enter ethnic

Austrian territory until 1903 by decision of Don Rua, who had a great desire to enter the capital of the Danubian empire. Fr Luigi Terrone (1875-1968), of Italian origin was sent as organizer and religious superior. The house of Vienna, dedicated to Mary Help of Christians, which came into being as the result of an agreement between the Salesians and the "Kinderschutzzstationen Charitativer Verein für arme Kinder" Association did not last very long; at the root of the conflict was the strong Salesian conviction that they could not renounce their own preventive system, the sure guarantee of success in education.¹ The Salesians undertook the foundation of an autonomous work at Erdberg, one of the most densely populated but neglected districts of the Austrian capital, inhabited to a large extent by a working-class population already steeped in Marxist ideas. In the summer of 1909 a new Rector was appointed for the new Vienna foundation in the person of Fr August Hlond, who already had a good knowledge of the German language and culture. A year later the state's permission was given for the opening. With the first section of the oratory, the "*Knabenheim - Salesianum*", inaugurated in October 1910, the Salesian Society met an emergency deeply felt by the people of the area and, in general, of the whole capital: the provision of a sound educational project for the greater part of the children, who were deprived of any suitable means of recreation after school hours.

Even though it lasted only from 1916 to 1918, another work must be recalled. It was for the benefit of young students who were "refugees" from various countries: Italians, Poles, Slovenes, Croats, Jews and Romanians.² These youngsters were brought to the capital by the civil authorities and lodged in a house fitted out as a hostel, where they were entrusted to the Salesians. At the start there were 171 youngsters, who attended public schools in the city.

¹ Cf. S. ZIMNIAK, *I salesiani e il «zurück zum praktischen Christentum» de i cristiani di Vienna (1903-1921)*, in *L'Opera Salesiana dal 1880-1922. Significatività e portata sociale*. Vol. II: *Esperienze particolari in Europa, Africa, Asia*, ed. F. Motto (Istituto Storico Salesiano. Studi 17). Rome, LAS 2001, p. 267.

² ASC E 963, letter P. Tirone-P. Albera 11.12.1916.

2.1.2 Germany

The Salesians tried several times to enter Germany before the Great War, but permission was denied for political reasons and because no need was felt at the time for such an educational institute.

On 29 November 1916, three Salesians led by Fr F. Niedermayer arrived in Würzburg to begin the first Salesian house in Germany, a fact that attracted the attention of the local press. Initially they took charge of about 75 apprentices and 10 middle school pupils. Later the numbers grew to about 160 apprentices, organised in groups. Because of the social and political circumstances, work of this kind was given priority. The first superior wrote to the Rector Major, Fr Paul Albera: "It is a truly Salesian work, very reminiscent of the early days of Don Bosco. Because of the present conditions in Bavaria and in the whole of Germany this work for youngsters of the working classes is the most necessary and it is what the Bishops expect from us. The festive oratories too will form a very important sector of our field of work. On the other hand it will be very difficult, if not indeed impossible, to open institutes with elementary or middle schools properly so-called, because the new laws prohibit private persons from opening such schools and those already existing are destined to disappear. In general the Salesians and the work of Don Bosco are highly esteemed in Bavaria and they are expected to play a large part in the salvation of working-class youngsters".³

Among the new Salesian foundations of this period should be mentioned the house of *Benediktbeuern*: it was formerly a Benedictine monastery, some 60 km. from the Bavarian capital, and was acquired in 1930. The work became important in the history of the Salesians of Germany because it developed into an important centre of formation for the personnel of Austria and Germany. Today it is an institution open also to the needs of the local Church and provides, in addition to courses in philosophy and theology, facilities for the study of pedagogical and social sciences;

³ ASC E 963, letter F. Niedermayer-P. Albera 19.06.1919.

it is also a centre for the diffusion of Salesian spirituality, a successful youth centre, and finally an ecological and cultural centre, with a parish and youth hostel.

In 1935 the Salesian Society had 17 foundations in Germany, not counting the one at Stockholm in Sweden, founded in 1930: a progress that had taken less than 20 years! In view of the circumstances, in 1935 the Salesian superiors erected the German Province of St Boniface, with headquarters at Munich.⁴

With the outbreak of the second world war some of the houses were closed or impounded by the military. But the greater blow was the calling up of many young Salesians, of whom some 140 lost their lives on various warfronts. Some were also put in concentration camps like Theodor Hartz (1887-1942) who died at Dachau, and Karl Schmidt (1904-1968).⁵

In the seventies the need was felt for new forms of Salesian apostolate, and centres of spiritual formation for young people were opened at Benediktbeuern, Ensdorf, Jünkerath and Calhorn (Oldenburg). Mention must also be made of a work of extraordinary value, the *Missionary Office of Bonn*. It is through this Office that very many projects both in Europe and in the Salesian missions were and still are being financed.

In October 1990 came the reunification of East and West Germany, which was a challenge also for the Salesians. Despite the reduced numbers of German Salesian personnel, in 1992 it was decided to make new foundations in the former German Democratic Republic, and specifically at Heiligenstadt (Thuringia) with a daily oratory (Offene Tür), a pastoral and social welfare centre, with another for marginalized youngsters with a youth centre, and at Chemnitz in Saxony with an oratory and youth

⁴ Consultation of the annual catalogue of the Congregation reveals that from 1919 there first appeared a Province called "German-Hungarian" and later "Austro-Hungarian". From 1935 there is a decree setting up a separate German Province with St Boniface as its Patron and headquarters at Munich. In 1954 the single German Province was divided into two: one in the north (St Boniface) with headquarters initially at Endorf, and the other in the south (Mary Help of Christians) based on Munich.

⁵ Cf. Johannes Wielgoß, *P. Karl Schmidt SDB (1904-1968). Sechs Jahre priesterlicher Existenz in nationalsozialistischer Schutzhaft*, in «Archiv für mittelrheinische Kirchengeschichte» 49 (1996) 227-238.

and guidance centre: this latter work was carried out with the Cooperators playing a notable part. Nor can be omitted mention of another initiative launched in the same year (1992) when the Province of Cologne accepted responsibility for a mission in Ghana, within the context of Project Africa.

Today, at the request of the German Provinces, their reunification is being planned with a view to a more significant apostolate.

2.3 Poland

It seems that already about 1889 the study had begun of a project to send a first Salesian expedition into Poland. The Rector Major Don Rua had thought of choosing August Czartoryski as its leader, accompanied by Fr Bronisław Markiewicz and other Polish and Italian confreres, but Czartoryski's poor health ruled out such a project at the time. Meanwhile at the end of March 1892 the Superiors sent Fr Markiewicz to Galizia in Poland to take pastoral care of a small parish at a place called Miejsce, not far from the episcopal city of Przemyśl. Fr Markiewicz opened a house for the education of poor youngsters which he called "Don Bosco House", and in this way the first Salesian work on Polish soil began.

In 1897 Fr Markiewicz decided to separate himself from the Salesians of Turin, while the Polish Salesians who remained in the Congregation immediately accepted a proposal of the prince Bishop of Kracow, Cardinal Jan Puzyna, to found an institute in the little town of Oświęcim, a religious centre which in the opinion of the Bishop was capable of withstanding the spread of devastating socialist ideas among the young people of the working classes. In August 1898 Don Rua sent there the newly ordained Fr Franciszek Trawiński, and in the following autumn two clerics to help him.

In December 1899 the Superiors decided to send Fr Emanuele Manassero there as Rector. He was the true pioneer and organizer of the Salesian house of Oświęcim, which subsequently became known as the "Mother House" of the Polish Salesians.

He soon won back and consolidated the wavering confidence of the people in the Salesian Society.

1904 saw the foundation of the second Salesian work in southern Poland in the small town of Daszawa, in the Stryj district of the province of Lviv, which now forms part of the territory of Ukraine. This house was opened to meet the ever more pressing need for a house of formation. As its Rector and Master of novices was assigned Fr Peter Tirone, the future Catechist General of the Congregation.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the social question became ever more strongly felt, and some of the Bishops tried to provide a remedy through the setting up of educational institutions. One of these was the Latin rite Bishop of Przemyśl, Mgr Josef Sebastian Pelzer, canonised 18 May 2003. He wanted to have the Salesians in a densely populated area of his episcopal city, and there in fact they began their apostolate in 1907. As Rector Fr August Hlond, the future Cardinal Primate of Poland was chosen. The Polish Bishops were very keen on having a music school, and since no suitable building was available for the purpose, the Salesians offered their own institute for the purpose. The special higher institute for the formation of organists, founded 1 November 1916 under the direction of the young composer Fr Antoni Hlond, is something quite unique in the history of the Salesian Society. During his 47 years of activity he trained 570 qualified organists – a contribution and particular service by the Salesians to the Church in Poland as well as to civil society.

The period between the two wars witnessed a further flourishing of Salesian work. In 1933 32 houses were already in operation and the number of confreres had grown to more than 500. In consequence the Rector Major, Fr Peter Ricaldone, decided to take half the houses from the Province of St Stanislaus Kostka and set them up as the new Province of St Hyacinth with headquarters at Kracow.

The outbreak of the second world war was a sad blow for the Salesians in Poland. All the schools were closed, as well as nearly all the houses. The struggle for survival and the precarious

nature of the lives of the confreres, linked with their subsequent wanderings and emigration during the years that immediately followed, left deep traces.

In the concentration camps 67 Salesians were killed by the Nazis, among them Fr Józef Kowalski, beatified on 13 June 1999, together with the five young martyrs of the Poznań Oratory. By the end of 1945 the Salesians had succeeded in reactivating all their centres of education and training. As a consequence, in 1948 8 professional schools and 4 technical institutions were in operation, together with 6 High Schools and 4 minor seminaries.

In the scholastic year 1947-48 the Communist government changed its attitude to non-state schools. With inflexible severity it began the gradual closure of all schools run by religious. After 1963 the professional school at Oświęcim was the only Salesian private school recognized by the State and the only Salesian professional school in the whole of Soviet dominated territory!

The passage to pastoral work in parishes had become inevitable, and this had a considerable influence on the change in the nature of the Salesian apostolate. Nevertheless the Polish Salesians strove to preserve their own characteristics by finding space and outlets for their specific mission.

The progress of the Salesians in Poland is eloquently confirmed by the fact that in 1979, notwithstanding the Communist regime, two new Provinces were erected: the Province of St Adalbert of Piła, made up of houses taken from the north-western part of the Province of St Stanislaus Kostka of Warsaw, and the Province of St John Bosco of Wrocław comprising the houses detached from the Province of St Hyacinth in the south-west.

2.4 Lithuania and the countries of the former Soviet Union

In what is now called the Special Circumscription of the East were included various countries that belonged to the former Soviet Union, including Lithuania, but the latter merits a section to itself. It will be useful for us to be aware of the story of these Salesian foundations.

2.4.1 The countries of the former Soviet Union

The situation was unique, because in reality no activity of any religious Congregation could exist officially during the Communist regime. After 1940, despite everything, some Salesians decided to remain in the territories belonging to the Soviet Union so as to provide priestly ministry for the benefit of the Catholics who had to stay there.

It is our duty in particular to recall the courage of various Polish Salesians who remained in those territories at the risk of their lives. At least eleven of them, in fact, were slaughtered in the various republics of the Union. The few who survived the cruel persecution returned to Poland, but the others stayed at their posts, carrying out their priestly functions in very delicate circumstances until their death. An emblematic figure among them is the Polish Salesian Tadeusz Hoppe (1913-2003), who managed to carry out pastoral activity in various parts of Soviet territory, especially at Odessa in the Ukraine, from 1943 until his death in 2003.

Before the definitive falling apart of the USSR the Salesians were able to enter the former Soviet republics, take up again their former work in Ukraine and in Belarus and, indeed, start up activities in countries in which they had not yet been present: Russia, Georgia, and the Yakutia Republic. This enabled the Rector Major, Fr Egidio Viganò, in 1993 to erect the special Circumscription "Immaculate Heart of Mary" in Eastern Europe, with headquarters at Moscow and including the Salesian work scattered over the various states of the former Soviet Union. Most of the foundations are in Ukraine, Belarus and in Russia itself.

The Ukraine is deserving of special mention. There Salesian work within the present national boundaries goes back to 1904 (at Daszawa), but at that time it was a Polish Salesian work. Polish too were the foundations made between the two wars in the western part of what is now Ukraine, but was then an integral part of Poland.

All this activity was cut short by the changes in national boundaries that began in 1944 and came to an end finally in 1945: the eastern territory of Poland became part of the Ukraine, which in 1944 became annexed in turn to the USSR as a Soviet republic.

For the story of Salesian work in Ukraine it must be recalled that in 1930 the Sacred Congregation for Extraordinary Ecclesiastical Affairs had written a letter to the Rector Major Fr Philip Rinaldi, inviting him, in the name of the Holy Father, to undertake a work of promoting schools and institutes of arts and trades for the purpose of fostering Catholic instruction and education among the poorer classes, of seeking out some young people called to the religious state and training them in Italy with the preservation of their Greek-Catholic rite, and so prepare for the erection of a religious province of oriental rite. The proposal was repeated in 1932 to Fr Ricaldone.

That same year a first group of young Ukrainians were sent to Italy for their formation, with others joining them in the years that followed. In 1951 the Apostolic Visitor for the Ukrainians in Western Europe entrusted to Ukrainian Salesians the minor seminary for Ukrainian boys from all over the world.

In 1991 the proclamation of independence and religious freedom in the Ukraine allowed the Salesians of that country to return to their homeland after many years of waiting in hope. They began work with a parish and oratory at Lviv (Leopoli); in 1994 the house for the aspirantate and prenovitiate was opened at Obroshyno and in 2001 at Lviv the first Ecumenical Salesian Youth Centre. In the following year a Professional School was inaugurated, recognized by the State.

This development has now led the Rector Major with his Council to erect the first Delegation of the Ukrainian Byzantine Rite so as to foster a fruitful implanting of Don Bosco's charism in that country. Alongside the Salesians of the Byzantine rite there are others too of the Latin rite, who carry out an apostolate among the Catholics (mainly of Polish extraction) who belong to that rite.

2.4.2 Lithuania

The first Salesian work in Lithuania was begun in 1934 at Skirsnemunė, and for political reasons was incorporated into the "Sacred Heart" Central Province of Turin rather than one of the Polish Provinces. At Kaunas, Lithuania's capital at that time, was founded the second Salesian work in the country with a parish and festive oratory, and the teaching of catechism in the state schools. A year later another foundation was made at Saldutiškis, with a parish and the teaching of catechism in schools. In 1940 a Provincial delegate was appointed in the person of Fr Anthony Skeltys for Salesian work in Lithuania.

But in 1944 Lithuania became annexed to the USSR as a republic, and so began a harsh persecution of the Church, including all the religious institutes. As well as the sequestration of ecclesiastical property there was a direct attack on the clergy, as a result of which many priests ended up in Soviet gulags, including some Salesians. Only in 1989, with the fall of the "Berlin wall", was it possible to think of re-establishing the Salesian charism in the country. The relatively rapid decline of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) in 1994 made it possible for more official Salesian activity to begin, even though some difficulties remained. At present the Salesians are working at Vilnius (the capital of Lithuania) and at Kaunas.

2.5 Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic, Slovenia, Croatia

In the coordination of the Region, the Salesian provinces of some countries, because of their cultural affinity or for geographical reasons, have been linked together in a consulting group under the patronage of Sts. Cyril and Methodius (with the abbreviation CIMEC). Let us now look briefly at the Salesian history of these countries.

2.5.1 Hungary

Although on 23 May 1880 Antal Lonkay, a well known figure

in the mass media of Hungary at that time, the director and proprietor of the daily "Magyar Allam", was enrolled as a member of the Association of Salesian Cooperators, more than forty years were to pass before there was a first Salesian foundation in Magyar territory.

In 1913 the Primate of Hungary. Mgr John Czernocjh, through Canon Francis Robitsek, suggested that the Salesians take over the sanctuary of the Holy Cross (in Hungarian *Szen-tkereszt*), at Péliföld. The Superiors of Turin sent Fr Tirone to make contact with the Primate and assess the proposal. Fr Tirone went there and, despite some objections, recommended acceptance in view of future development. The Primate, by a rescript of 26 October 1913, gave to the Society of St Francis de Sales the Sanctuary of the Holy Cross at Péliföld. In autumn of the same year some Hungarian Sons of Mary were sent there. The Slovenc Fr Francis Walland was sent to guide the house and take pastoral care of souls.⁶

In the autumn of 1919 work was begun at Nyergesújfalu, with a college and hostel, grammar school and pastoral care. The same activities were inaugurated at the house of Rákospalota founded in 1924. And we may add that in the scholastic year 1925-1926 there were 23 clerics in the studentate of philosophy and 8 candidates in the novitiate – a state of affairs that promised well for the future and encouraged further openings.

And in fact in 1925 was inaugurated the house of Esztergom-Tábor, which shortly afterwards became the studentate of philosophy and theology, with other forms of educational activity. As the number of houses in Hungary began to rise – in 1927 foundations were made at Újpest and Visegrád and in 1929 at Szombathely – it was decided in 1929 to erect the Province of "St Stephen the King", with Fr Plywaczyk as Provincial.

The constant progress of Salesian work in Hungary is reflected in the number of Salesians; at 1 January 1940 the

⁶ Cf. S. ZIMNIAK, *Salesiani nella Mitteleuropa. Preistoria e storia della provincia Austro-Ungarica della Società di S. Francesco di Sales (1868 ca.-1919)*. (Istituto Storico Salesiano. Studi 10), LAS, Rome 1997, p. 205-206.

Province had 189 confreres, of whom 125 were in formation (novices and students of philosophy and theology), with 32 Salesian Brothers!

A promising future was opening up before the Hungarian Salesians, but unfortunately it was blocked by the outbreak of war. Nevertheless, in the years 1947-48 the Salesians were still able to make new foundations (at Miskolc, at Sajólád, at Tanakajd and elsewhere), but these were the last before the Church's period of struggle. The really hard time for the Church, and so also for the Salesians, began with the intervention of the Soviet Union after the revolution of October 1956, which began at Budapest. From the time of those tragic events until the year 1989 the Hungarian Salesians were no longer able to engage in activities inherent in their charism. Today, though with difficulties stemming from the past, the Hungarian Province is being rebuilt.

2.5.2 Slovenia

The knowledge of Don Bosco and his work in Slovene territory goes back to the 1860s; before the Salesians came there at all, there was a consistent number of Salesian Cooperators. Don Rua yielded to the insistent requests of these Cooperators, and especially to those of one of the most zealous pastors of the Slovene Church at that time (the Archbishop of Ljubljana, Mgr Anton B. Jeglič (1850-1937), who offered them a small castle at Rakovnik, not far from the Slovenian capital.⁷ The first group of Salesians arrived at Rakovnik on 23 November 1901, led by Fr Simon Visintainer, who had been chosen as the first Rector.

In 1907 the second Salesian work in Slovenia in the small town of Radna was opened: a novitiate of international character, even though the majority of the candidates were from Poland; it functioned later also as a studentate of philosophy. Even the

⁷ Cf. S. ZIMNIAK, *Salesiani nella Mitteleuropa. Preistoria e storia della provincia Austro-Ungarica della Società di S. Francesco di Sales (1868 ca.-1919)*. (Istituto Storico Salesiano. Studi 10), LAS, Rome 1997, p. 118ss.

third Salesian work “Marijanišee”, opened in 1912 in the village of Veržej, was not directed originally to Slovenes, but to German Sons of Mary who wanted to transfer from Penango (Piedmont-Italy) to somewhere nearer home.

In 1919 political freedom enabled the Salesians to take up again their full apostolate in the first house of Rakovnik and a period of new foundations followed in the whole of Slovenia. The prospects of continued development led to the erection in 1922 of the Province of Sts Cyril and Methodius with headquarters at Ljubljana; in it were incorporated the first Salesian houses of Croatia and Czechoslovakia. The first superior, with the role of Visitor, was the Italian Fr Peter Tirone, who was succeeded in 1926 by the Pole Fr Stanisław Pływaczyk and, from 1929, by the Slovene Fr Franc Walland.

The bright hopes for the future changed suddenly with the outbreak of war, especially when Yugoslavia entered in 1941. The war led to some deaths among Salesians, eliminated through the work of the Yugoslav Communist Party.

In the years of détente, around 1955, the Salesians chose fresh areas for new work for the benefit of the local Church; they offered themselves for missions among the people, and even prepared manuals suitable for this kind of apostolate (printed in the form of leaflets or in *SejaIec* (the review for preachers). After 1955 Fr Walter Dermota began an activity for the preparation of catechetical aids and in 1963 managed to set up the very successful Salesian Catechetical Centre.

1989 saw a historic turning-point. The Salesians were given back their boarding schools of Veržej, Celje and Rakovnik-Ljubljana, and as soon as 1991 were able to open the first Catholic high school in Slovenia (Želimlje). In the meantime other Slovene Salesians carried out an apostolate among their co-nationals living outside the homeland at Opicina-Italy, Klagenfurt-Austria and among the emigrants at Hamilton (Canada). Slovene Salesians have been working in Albania from the beginning of Salesian work in that country.

2.5.3 Slovakia and the Czech Republic

In this case too the arrival of the first Salesians was preceded by the springing up of a nucleus of Salesian Cooperators. The first young men from Bohemia, Moravia and Slovakia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries went to houses in Piedmont, where several of them chose to embrace the Salesian religious life. The superiors in Turin, seeing the continued influx of candidates from what was then Czechoslovakia, set aside for them in 1921 the Salesian house of Perosa Argentina.

The first Salesian house in Slovakia was opened near Šaštín in 1924. The Salesians were offered an ancient monastery, together with the national sanctuary of Our Lady of Sorrows. It was changed into a formation centre for future personnel, and in the same year the Slovaks from Perosa Argentina were transferred to it.

1927 saw the foundation of two more Salesian houses at Fryšták, the first house in Bohemia, and at Vráble (Slovakia). In the Slovak capital, Bratislava, the Salesians became established in 1933 when they opened a daily oratory, took over pastoral care of the parish and launched various forms of apostolate. At Moravská Ostrava a house was opened that was at first a studentate of philosophy and later became also the studentate of theology and the novitiate for Bohemian and Moravian candidates.

The surprising increase of foundations in Czechoslovakia led in 1935 to the decision to withdraw the houses from the Slovene Province and unite them in the new Province of St John Bosco, with headquarters at Moravská Ostrava.

In Prague, the capital of Bohemia, in 1936 the Salesians opened a daily oratory and boarding school and took up pastoral work. In the same year they also went to Trnava (Slovakia), where amongst other things they started up a hostel for students, a middle school, and a festive oratory. They also accepted a group of Sons of Mary. In the following year (1937) at Žilina they began a festive oratory, a hostel and catechetical work in the public schools.

The development was surprising. In 1939, only fifteen years after the opening of the first Salesian work, the Province of St John Bosco had 227 confreres! Striking also was the number of confreres in formation – 180 of them, of whom 48 were Brothers!

This unusual flourishing of foundations in Czechoslovakia, combined with the painful political situation caused by the Nazi occupation of Bohemia and Moravia, and then the setting up of an autonomous government in Slovakia, led in 1939 to the Slovak houses being erected into the new Province of Mary Help of Christians with headquarters at Bratislava.

The world war rendered Salesian life difficult, especially in the so-called German protectorate, but it did not paralyse it altogether. Some Salesians were sent to concentration camps, among them Fr Stefan Trochta, the future Cardinal. After the war the Salesians were able once again to take up their activities and even intensify them. The radical change took place in 1948, the year in which Czechoslovakia became a people's democracy. The Communists began an all-out onslaught against the Church, beginning with the suppression of all religious orders. In the spring of 1950 a concentration camp was set up for religious, to which 260 Salesians were taken! For the Salesians it was the beginning of a catacombs period that was to last until December 1989.

The Salesians of both Provinces took up their apostolate once again with great zeal, helped by confreres coming back from exile. The time of resumption of activities produced a missionary opening in various countries which offered some of their confreres for the missions. We may recall that there are now Slovak confreres working in countries of the former Soviet Union (at Baku - Azerbaijan), while the Salesians of the Czech Republic have gone, among other places, to Bulgaria where they have begun a work for youngsters in difficulty.

2.5.4 Croatia

The beginning of the work of Don Bosco in Croatia had a slower start than in neighbouring countries, partly because of a less direct knowledge of Salesian educational institutions.

The first Salesian house in Croatia was opened in 1922 in the capital Zagreb, where the Salesians accepted a boarding school offered by the Archdiocese and began a festive oratory – though in fact the first Salesian work on Croatian soil had already taken place at the town of Rijeka (Fiume) in 1918.

The second Salesian work began in 1929, also in the Croat capital at Zagreb-Knežija. This was followed in 1936 by a foundation in the ancient city of Split: this involved the running of an orphanage and boarding school and in addition of an oratory which was started up, together with teaching in the state schools.

The outbreak of the Second World War did not pose many obstacles to Salesian activity. Even after it became one of the six autonomous republics of the new State of Yugoslavia, the Salesians were able to carry out their apostolate, though naturally within the limits permitted. In fact in 1948 they were able to open a work at Zagreb-Rudeš and in the following year another at Zadar-Arbanasi. The progressive development of the work allowed the Superiors in 1972 to erect the Croatian Province of St John Bosco, with headquarters at Zagreb. In a manner similar to those of Slovenia, the Croatian Salesians had become strong in the catechetical field, recently opening a “Salesian Catechetical Centre” at Zagreb and, in addition, a publishing house “Katehetski salezijanski centar”.

2.6 Two factors that contributed to the early development

I do not want to end this account of the beginnings without some reference to two elements that played an effective part in preparing the way for the foundation of Salesian work in central and eastern Europe, especially in some of the countries of the Danubian empire; both were present before the arrival of the Salesians.

2.6.1 The “Salesian Bulletin”

In 1895 the Superiors authorized the publication of the German edition of the Bulletin, which took the name “*Salesianische*

Nachrichten" (Salesian News). Of the first number, twenty thousand copies were printed. The following year saw serious thought given to its publication in Polish, and the regular publication of the Polish edition "*Wiadomości Salezjańskie*" (Salesian News) began with fourteen thousand copies.

After the successful publication of the German and Polish editions, from 1903 the Salesians set about publishing also a monthly edition in Hungarian, with the title "*Szalézi értesítő*" (Salesian Bulletin). It should be noted that in Germany and Austria, as also in Hungary, there was at this time not a single Salesian house!

The publication of the Bulletin in the Slovene language began in January 1907 with the title "*Salezijanska Poročila. Glasilo salezijanskih sotrudnikov*" (The Salesian Word. Voice of the Salesian Cooperators), and was the last of the central and Eastern European language Bulletins to be published before the outbreak of the first world war.

One of the secrets that ensured the Bulletin's unchallenged success was its international dimension on which Don Bosco had insisted, and which saved it from having a regionalistic character, and it seems that this also led to its surprising welcome in the countries of central and eastern Europe, already so deeply wounded by continual struggles with nationalistic roots. It was seen as a magazine aimed primarily at the good of young people in need of education and instruction, without regard to their social or national origin. The space in it dedicated to the missions presented the Salesians as a religious society of universal range, and at the same time caused them to be looked on with favour. Moreover the monthly publication revealed dynamic progress through the continual information about the ever more numerous openings of houses in Italy and beyond its shores. After Don Bosco's death, he became a focus of attention through articles of every kind. He was presented as one of the greatest contemporary educators; he had not limited himself to a single country but had planned a work equally valid for Europe and other continents. In short, he was presented as a very attractive and inspiring figure.

2.6.2 The Salesian Cooperators

The Cooperators have played a decisive part in implanting the Salesian ethos in the different countries of Europe. They spread most rapidly in Slovenia, in Germany (with Austria and Switzerland), in Poland and in Hungary. In all these countries the Cooperators' Association was there before the Salesians! A careful analysis of the necrology of both Cooperators and benefactors at the back of the Bulletin also shows that they were spread over all social classes.

In Slovenia the Association took off in lively fashion while Don Bosco was still alive. Some of the members even met him personally. In 1896 there were two big gatherings of Slovene Cooperators, the first on 29 January and the second on 26 May, both of them at Ljubljana; the driving force behind them was the well remembered diocesan priest Fr J. Smrekar, helped by other priests and lay people. About the year 1900 there were more than 1,600 registered Slovene Cooperators.⁸ One of their aims was naturally to get the Salesians to come to Slovenia, and specifically to Ljubljana.

Among the Poles also, the "Cooperators' Union" came into existence in Don Bosco's lifetime. He used to recruit them among those still in occupied Poland and also among those living abroad. From the first Polish records it is clear that there were members in 1884, but the possibility of members even earlier than that cannot be excluded. According to the Polish Bulletin there were 16 thousand Cooperators in July 1897, and in December of the same year their number had risen to 25 thousand. Two years later they had reached 55 thousand. And also among Poles living outside the country they had reached a considerable number.

In Hungary a most enthusiastic member of the Association was Antal Lonkay, the director and proprietor of the daily "*Magyar Allam*". Don Bosco himself had enrolled him on 23 May 1880 at the Valdocco Oratory as the first Hungarian Cooperator.⁹

⁸ Cf. B. KOLAR, *Lo sviluppo dell'immagine salesiana...*, p. 155.

⁹ ASCA 187, at the bottom of a copy of the letter G. Bosco-A. Lonkay of 16.04.1884; cf also «L'Unità Cattolica», Torino, 25 maggio 1880, p. 490.

In his desire to make the Association known in Hungary, among other things Lonkay translated the Cooperators' Regulations and published them at Budapest in 1882. This led to Don Bosco becoming well known to the Hungarian public while he was still alive, and according to the Hungarian Bulletin there would have been 6,000 Hungarian Cooperators in 1902.

The Association also experienced dynamic growth in German-speaking countries, especially in Germany and Austria. In 1899 the German Cooperators were about 40 thousand in number.

It is not surprising therefore that in central and eastern Europe the Salesians found consistent material and moral support. It must be said that without the various activities and collaboration of the Cooperators with the Salesians, Don Bosco's work in those geographical areas could never have had the impact, foundation and development that it experienced.

3. The present context of our mission

The rather long and somewhat complex story of Salesian work in the Northern European Region serves to show us how Don Bosco's charism can be implanted everywhere, how it can grow strongly and also resist in the face of the kind of adverse circumstances we have described. How much we can learn from the Salesians of this Region! And I am convinced that they themselves can draw enlightenment and inspiration to face successfully the challenges of the present day, no longer characterized by war and persecution but by a creeping secularism, a reductive globalisation, and a dechristianisation of culture.

The Region is in the midst of a deep and rapid process of transformation of a Europe which for centuries has seen its people fighting against each other, with constantly changing frontiers between nations (Lithuania, Poland, Ukraine, Germany, Yugoslavia, Hungary, Russia, etc.); a Europe that has witnessed the "forced immigration" of entire peoples in Russia, the obligatory "transfer" of

Poles and German people in Silesia, the events of the Sudetans in the Czech Republic; a Europe that dreams of unity and has decided to turn over a new leaf in its history and give its backing to peace, to the freedom of countries and of all its citizens, to the development in solidarity of all the countries within it, and which has recently adopted a Constitution that can keep it united in diversity.

3.1 *The new Europe*

This is the new Europe, which in the past was able to create rich cultural expressions and is now decisively headed towards the development among all European citizens of a sense of belonging to one people, while committing itself to systems for social security and all individual freedoms. A Europe which, after the widening of its boundaries, knows nonetheless the gap between extreme riches on the one hand (a GDP of 32,000 US\$ in Switzerland and 1.9% unemployment) and extreme poverty on the other (a GDP of 1.90 US\$ in Bosnia-Herzegovina with 60% unemployment).

This is the new Europe, which is running the risk of losing its 'soul', the fruit of two thousand years of Christian history which made it all one as a continent. Today's Europe is in fact indebted to the valuable contributions of Augustine, of Thomas Aquinas, of Rembrandt, of Michelangelo, of Raffaele, of Leonardo, of Shakespeare, of Montesquieu, of Spinoza, of Bach, of Galileo, of Newton, of Kant, of Goethe, of Einstein and others.

This is the new Europe which has given to the world men and women of the highest stature: St Benedict, St Francis of Assisi, St Dominic Guzman, St Ignatius of Loyola, St Francis Xavier, St Boniface, St Willibrord, St Thomas of Canterbury, St Patrick, St Adalbert, St Hyacinth, Sts Cyril and Methodius, St Stephen King of Hungary, St Catherine of Siena, St Teresa of Avila, Fr Damian De Veuster, St Edith Stein, and a host of other saints.

This is the new Europe which is no longer at ease with its soul and is blotting out its history, or at least reducing it to the influence of Athens, Rome and Paris, and to a situation in which

the Church and the gospel message are struggling to find a place in this "home for everyone". It is the case of a Europe, at least as regards its western part, which in the words of John Paul II, "*gives the impression of 'silent apostasy' on the part of people who have all that they need and who live as if God does not exist*".¹⁰

The fact is that in some parts of Europe there is clearly a need for a first proclamation of the Gospel, because there is an increasing number of the non-baptised, either because of the notable presence of immigrants belonging to other religions, or because children of families with a Christian tradition behind them have not been baptised due perhaps to the Communist domination of the past or to a widespread religious indifference.

This is the Europe we must discover and to which we must open up the Gospel, a true mission territory for first evangelisation. And all this must be done with the zeal and enthusiasm of Paul who responded to the cry for help from the man from Macedonia, but also with the intelligence of one who is aware that what is at stake is the heart of the Gospel, God revealed in Jesus who died on the cross. We must proclaim a God who is compassionate, who has a predilection for the poor, the weak, the widow, the stranger – a God so human that He Himself became a man who suffered and by his passion gave us back the dignity we had lost, and filled us with hope.

It is true that this new evangelisation of Europe needs new evangelisers. For this reason the Salesians must get ready for this wonderful task of contributing to the restoration of Europe's soul, by putting Jesus Christ and his Gospel at the centre of personal and community life, by strengthening the love of (and faith in) our own charism, by acquiring an ever greater knowledge and esteem of the eastern "lung" of the Church and of the Congregation, concentrating on a love that will benefit the poor, the needy, the abandoned and those at risk, learning to dialogue and be tolerant in a context that becomes ever more multi-cultural and pluri-religious.

¹⁰ *Ecclesia in Europa* n. 9.

3.2 The youth situation

My earlier letters on the Western European Region and the Region of Italy and the Middle East have provided a picture of the youth situation in western Europe. Roughly speaking this description is true also of the youth situation in the western part of the Northern European Region. For this reason I want to dwell rather on the youth situation in the central and eastern part of Europe which is generally less well known.

Going by the Report of UNICEF's Innocenti Centre of Research at Florence, entitled "*Young People in Societies in Transformation*", which analyses the experiences of the "generations of transition" in 27 countries of central and eastern Europe, there exist in these countries 65 million young people between the ages of 15 and 24. Of these 26 million (41%) are students, 21 million (32%) are working, and 18 million (27%) are neither one nor the other. These figures are eloquent in themselves, but even more so from the standpoint of our mission.

The Report sees in the "transition generation" *an enormous resource* for the region (and not only for the region) in this era of rapid economic and social transformation. It recommends the development of policies for the benefit of the young which aim at supporting families, communities and society, as well as the young people themselves.

The Report also asserts that the success or failure of adolescents and young people often has its roots in infancy; it is fitting therefore to *invest in small children*. And a conclusion follows that is of great significance for us: happy and healthy youngsters do not spring up out of the blue. They are persons who have begun life as babies and have developed their potentiality through education. I cannot fail to recall at this point the appeal made by Cardinal Ratzinger during the meeting of European Provincials when, in reply to a question as to what he himself expected from the Salesians of Europe, he declared with clarity and conviction: "the prophecy of education".

Until 1989, that is before the fall of the Berlin wall, unem-

ployment was practically nonexistent in the greater part of the countries of the region. Now it has become an enormous problem with more than 40% of young people unemployed; many have been out of work for more than a year.

Between 1989 and 1998 the birth rate fell by a third or more in most of the countries, and indeed by a half in Armenia and Estonia. If the present trend is maintained, the number of young people between 15 and 24 in central Europe will drop by a third in the next twenty years.

The Report reveals also a generation whose health is threatened. About half a million of those who in 1989 were in the 5 to 14 age-group are no longer alive today. In 1998, in the whole area, 85,000 people died between the ages of 15 and 24. Many of these deaths were due to accidents, acts of violence, homicide, suicide, and natural causes like infectious diseases and complications in pregnancy.

Although in some of the countries in transition the suicide rate among youngsters between 15 and 24 has decreased, in 16 countries it has gone up and has more than doubled in Lithuania, in Belarus, in Russia and in Turkmenistan. The rate is particularly high, and is still rising, in Slovenia, in Estonia, in Latvia, in Ukraine and in Kazakhstan.

The Report asserts moreover that young people of poor families, from rural areas, of ethnic minorities and the disabled, form an unusually high percentage of those who abandon school at an early age or who never go to school at all.

All these indications describing the youth situation in the central and eastern part of Europe are certainly of great value to us for the fulfilment of our mission among the young.

3.3 The Salesian situation of the Region at the present day

The Northern European Region was set up by the GC24. At present it includes 16 Provinces, together with the Special Circumscription of the East with headquarters in Moscow, and one Provincial Delegation (Malta). In its recent plenary session the

General Council also approved the constitution of a Delegation of Ukraine-Byzantine rite in the Ukraine.

The Region covers 25 countries in 3 continents, and a total of 21 different languages are used.¹¹

Many Provinces, with great generosity, have accepted responsibility for the Salesian mission in other countries.¹² Other provinces maintain a close link with their foundations which have now become part of autonomous circumscriptions: the North Belgian Province with the Democratic Republic of the Congo and with Bangui in the Central African Republic; the three German-speaking Provinces with Ghana; the Province of Great Britain with Liberia.

3.3.1 Coordination

The Region does not function as a single Provincial Conference, because of the wide variety of contexts. For the purpose of fostering interprovincial collaboration, four areas have been created:

- The Provincial Conference of the four Polish Provinces (Pila-Kraków-Warsaw-Wrocław) and the Circumscription of the East with headquarters in Moscow.
- The Provincial Conference of the three German-speaking Provinces (Cologne-Munich-Vienna).
- The Sts. Cyril and Methodius Consulting Group (CIMEC), bringing together five Provinces (Czech Republic, Croatia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Hungary).

¹¹ (Europa, Asia, Africa): Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Belarus, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Georgia, Germany, Great Britain, Holland, Hungary, Ireland, Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro), Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Russian Federation (+ Jakutia Republic), Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, Tunisia, Ukraine.

¹² The Province of the Czech Republic in Bulgaria (Kazanlak e Jambol); the Croatian Province in Bosnia-Herzegovina (Žepče); the North German Province in Sweden (Södertälje); the South German Province in Switzerland; the Ireland-Malta Province in Tunisia (Manouba); the Warsaw Province in Russia (Kaliningrad) and shortly in Moldavia; the Pila Province in Sweden (Stockholm); the Slovak Province in Azerbaijan (Baku) and in Siberia (Jakutsk and Aldan); the Province of Slovenia in Montenegro (Podgorica) and in Serbia (Beograd e Tusla). It must also be kept in mind that the Eastern Circumscription developed the mission in Russia, Belarus, Lithuania, Ukraine, Georgia and the Jakutia Republic.

- The Consulting Group of the "Atlantic Area" which includes the four English and Dutch-speaking Provinces (North Belgium, Great Britain, Ireland-Malta, Holland).

3.3.2 *Salesians*

In September 2004 the Region had 2,751 professed confreres and 52 novices. As in the other Regions of Europe this represents a diminution. In fact since 1996 the number has fallen by 472 confreres.

The average age in the Region is 55 years, but it varies widely from one Province to another. The youngest is Poland-Kraków (42 years), the oldest is Holland (72 years).

The majority of the novices are to be found in Poland (30); the Provinces of the CIMEC (with the exception of Slovakia), which at the beginning of the '90s were still getting a good number of candidates, have seen a fall in the number of novices. A modest improvement is taking place in Slovenia and Croatia, and the development of Ukrainian confreres of Eastern Rite gives rise to hope.

More problematic are prospects in the Atlantic area of the Region and in that of the German-speaking Provinces, where very few candidates are entering (except in Great Britain which this year has three novices).

In 1996 the Region had 498 confreres in temporary vows. Now it has 240. Closer examination reveals the great differences that exist across the Region in this respect:

- 153 temporarily professed confreres belong to the four Polish Provinces and the Circumscription of the East; 71 are in the CIMEC area, of whom there are 51 in Slovakia alone; the Atlantic area has 16 and the German-speaking area 9.
- From 2002 a tendency towards stabilisation can be detected of vocations in the Provinces of Croatia, Poland-Piła, Poland-Wrocław, Poland-Kraków, Slovenia and in the Circumscription of the East. The only Province showing a slow decline is Slovakia.

- Malta, the Provincial Delegation of Ireland, appears to be somewhat different. The Delegation has 34 confreres (9 of them in initial formation). With an average of 48 years, it is showing signs of growth. This implies that Malta has a religious and ecclesial environment far different from that of Western Europe. At the request of the Bishops, the confreres have recently taken responsibility for the training of workers in Youth Ministry in the island.

3.3.3 Brothers

At present the Region has 249 Brothers, of whom 23 are in temporary vows; they represent 9% of the total number. In 1996 they were 237, with 42 temporarily professed. It should be noticed that 8 of those in temporary vows are in Slovakia.

3.4 The situation of the different areas

3.4.1 The Atlantic Area and that of the German-speaking Provinces (Austria, North Belgium, Germany-Cologne, Germany-Munich, Great Britain, Ireland-Malta, Holland)

These Provinces have an admirable Salesian history, written with great dedication, with attachment to Don Bosco and love for the Congregation. They have a great story behind them of missions "ad gentes" and have had many vocations in the post-war years up to 1975, Now they are experiencing a massive fall in vocations to the Salesian life and suffering a rapid ageing process. This means at the same time a lessening of the Salesian presence among young people, which in turn weakens the witness to Salesian life among the youngsters themselves.

The average age is 62 years, but there has been no diminution in the enthusiasm for our charism. But at the same time *an uncertainty* has arisen about the future, due primarily to the lack of vocations and the vocational frailty of young confreres.

These Provinces run and animate outstanding works of great significance and high educative quality: 18 Middle Schools, 15 Senior Schools, 11 Professional Schools, 11 social welfare centres,

38 youth centres, 34 oratories, 19 boarding establishments, 11 youth hostels, 97 parishes, 35 houses for young people in difficulties, 12 works for ethnic minorities, 7 houses of spirituality with appropriate animation teams, 5 festive oratories, 4 ecological centres (of which the one at Benediktbeuern is of particular importance at European level), a very significant commitment in free time with schools for animators, and the volunteer movement which is particularly well developed in Germany, Great Britain and Holland.

Many of the works are managed by lay people, well trained from a Salesian point of view, thanks to a long tradition among the lay people themselves. I would like to mention in particular the formation institute for laity in North Belgium and the work of the *Jugendpastoral Institut* at Benediktbeuern. Evident among our collaborators also is a growing number of non-believers, but they have a great empathy for Don Bosco and his style of education; this is a sign of hope for us, but at the same time a challenge for the future significance of Salesian works.

There is a growing conviction that we must make the best possible use of the energies of the available confreres, select some significant works, have the courage to define a new set-up in our works or entrust to the laity those we consider of less significance, and take up new ones, modest in structure, for and with young people, and above all bear witness with more conviction to our own faith in Jesus Christ.

3.4.2 *The Area of Poland and the Circumscription of the East.* (*Poland-Warsaw, Poland-Kraków, Poland-Piła, Poland-Wrocław, Circumscription of the East*)

This area provides a different kind of panorama. It has about 1,200 confreres, with an average age of 44 years.

The present situation, with its sensitivity and peculiar nature, are unintelligible without a knowledge of the story of the Catholic Church in these countries, of the forgetting of Poland by Europe after the second world war, of the story of the Church in Greek-Catholic Ukraine, of the Armenian Catholic Church and of

the Orthodox Church during the 80 years of Communist domination.

Our mission is carried out especially in parishes (155) and chapels-of-ease (160). Nearly every parish has an oratory (100) or youth centre (81). These provinces look after 9 sanctuaries. In Poland there has been a considerable development of the schools, so that in the past nine years the Provinces have taken up again or inaugurated 24 middle schools, 23 senior schools and 10 technical schools. Houses for young people in difficulties have been opened at Trzciniec, at Rumia and at Kielców. The new works are greatly esteemed by the youngsters, by their parents and by the civil authorities with whom we often work in collaboration. The great challenge is to make these schools and works meaningful from a Salesian standpoint because of the growing number of lay people involved. It makes all the more necessary the role of the SDB community as the animating nucleus of the work, the practice of the preventive system and the Salesian formation of the laity involved. A decisive element for the development of the charism, especially in Poland, is the commitment of numerous confreres to the teaching of religion in state schools. It can be said that nearly all the confreres working in parishes are involved in this in some way.

The years since 1993 have seen the birth and growth with great courage of the Eastern Circumscription comprising the countries of the Russian Federation, Lithuania, Belarus, Ukraine and Georgia. It has many bright prospects, even though there are factors holding back its development at present: vocational frailty, the difficult ecumenical dialogue between the Catholic and Orthodox Churches, the attitude of the State to the Catholic Church which is not yet officially recognised, and the lack of Salesian personnel to be able to develop the Salesian mission in all its fullness. Nonetheless the Circumscription has been able to open some works of great significance: a house for street-children in Moscow, the school of graphic arts at Gatchina, while not forgetting the 'frontier works' at Jacutsk, at Aldan in Siberia, the parishes at Smarhon and Minsk in Belarus, and the increase in number of the confreres of oriental rite at Lviv in the Ukraine.

When we speak of this area we can never forget the Polish and Ukrainian confreres who fell in the war, in concentration camps or in far-off Russia. We remember them, express our gratitude for the witness they gave, and keep them in our prayers.

3.4.3 *The CIMEC Area (Czech Republic, Croatia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Hungary)*

The Area has 649 confreres, with an average age of 53.6 years.

It has known a bitter persecution during the years of Communism. In the hearts of many older confreres remains the indelible memory of the death of so many confreres and friends, the closing of all the works in 1950, the years of labour in the factories – the catacomb years, in fact, especially in the Czech Republic, in Slovakia, Slovenia and Lithuania. What pages of Salesian holiness have still to come to light and be written! Despite all the difficulties and the lack of contact with the Centre of the Congregation, the charism still existed and remained very much alive. I cannot fail to recall the wonderful story of the ‘*Chalupki*’ in the Czech Republic, true schools of Salesian spirit during the clandestine period and of the involvement of lay cooperators in the Salesian mission which resulted in so many vocations to the Congregation and the Salesian Family.

The mission is carried out mainly in parishes (119) and chapels-of-ease (120), in the commitment of free time to oratories (45) and youth centres (41), and to 2 middle schools and 6 senior schools. One need think only of the school at Žepče (Bosnia-Herzegovina) on the frontier between Serbian, Moslem and Croat cultures; of the school for gypsies at Kazincbarcika (Hungary); of the technical school at Žilina and the commitment for the gypsies at Bardejov (Slovakia); of the Higher Institute of Social Pedagogy and Theology at Prague (JABOK) and the Theological Faculty at České Budějovice; of the senior school with a boarding section at Želimlje (Slovenia); and finally of the works for ethnic minorities in Slovenia, Hungary and the Czech Republic.

These Provinces are still investing much energy in refounding the Congregation. We can say that the process of recovering

the houses confiscated during the Communist regime is now over, but there remains a certain lack of "legal right of possession," and frequent changes in the laws make us still feel insecure when it comes to making decisions.

We now have to get down to redefining our own identity after years without freedom, and this naturally explains a great sensitivity about the particular history and culture.

The area is brimming with hope, especially if we succeed in a sound imposition of the charism, in forming communities centred on Christ and close to young people, and in having the courage to choose new foundations aimed at the education and evangelisation of poor youngsters.

3.5 Interprovincial collaboration

One aspect to be emphasized is the interprovincial collaboration achieved in recent years. Examples are:

In the area of initial formation the Higher Institute of Benediktbeuern in southern Germany is outstanding; it functions as a centre of formation for the three German-speaking Provinces and for some students from the Provinces of Central Europe. The Institute is called upon to play a notable part in the initial and ongoing formation of confreres and lay people of the Region and in dialogue between the two spiritual lungs of Europe.

In Poland the preparation for perpetual profession takes place in common for confreres of the four Provinces.

Some Provinces (Austria, North and South Germany, the Eastern Circumscription, Croatia and Slovenia) send candidates to houses of formation in some Italian Provinces: the novitiate at Pinerolo, the postnovitiate at Nave and for the study of theology at Turin-Crocetta. These Provinces are very grateful to those of Italy for this valuable service they provide for the formation of the young confreres.

The interchange of confreres in initial formation (much to the fore in the '90s) especially from Poland to Italy, Germany,

Great Britain and Ireland, has now practically ceased. The reduction in the number of candidates, and more especially certain questions about the style of community life and youth ministry, sometimes made it difficult for the students to return to their own Provinces.

In the area of ongoing or continued formation there is the annual formation week for Provincial Councillors and Rectors of the Provinces of Slovakia and the Czech Republic.

In Poland an updating course at international level is organized for confreres after seven years of priesthood. There is also the quinquennium, the annual meeting of Brothers, the course for new Rectors, the Federation of Salesian Schools, and the scientific Review '*Seminare*' under the direction of some professors.

Mention must also be made of the extensive programme of ongoing and continued formation for the three German-speaking Provinces, organized by the *PastoralJugendzentrum* in Benediktbeuern, which is the only Youth Ministry "workshop" at a higher level in the Region.

In the area of youth ministry there are many interprovincial initiatives: the annual or biennial meetings for young animators of the Region at Vienna (Austria), at Benediktbeuern (Southern Germany), at Groot-Bijgaarden (North Belgium: *Eurizon*) and at Prague.

In the area of the volunteer movement there is collaboration among the Provinces of the Atlantic Area and the German-speaking Provinces with those of Poland, of the CIMEC and with the Circumscription of the East.

From the year 2000 the "*Don Bosco Youth-net*" has been in operation; it brings together twelve Salesian associations from European Provinces for the animation and pastoral service of young people.

Finally must be noted the annual meeting of those responsible for youth ministry of the German-speaking Provinces and the National Centre for youth Ministry in Poland.

As far as the cultural aspect is concerned, the English-language schools in Ireland provide a fine service for confreres who want to study that language.

In the publishing field there is growing collaboration between the twelve publishing houses of the Region under the guidance of the *Don Bosco Verlag* in southern Germany.

Finally mention must be made of the *process of unification* between North Belgium and Holland, and between Germany-Cologne and Germany-Munich, which will conclude with the creation of the new Province of Germany (GER) and the setting up of the Provincial Delegation of Holland, both on 15 August 2005.

4. The sectors of Salesian life and mission

4.1 Initial formation

In the Region there are 18 prenovitiates, 10 novitiates, 12 postnovitiate houses, 11 studentates of theology and three houses for the formation of brothers.

In the Atlantic Area, the scarcity of new entrants has led to the progressive dismantling of the various structures of formation: the use of the Institute of Maynooth in Ireland, Oud-Heverlee in North Belgium, and almost all the novitiates. In some Provinces the lack of students and of formation guides has led to a policy of no longer preparing professors and formation personnel. It is obvious therefore that these Provinces must always look for interprovincial collaboration in this field.

The German-speaking Provinces have decided to send their novices to Pinerolo, where they have the experience of an international novitiate. For the subsequent stages they will continue to send the confreres to Benediktbeuern where, in a well structured environment rich in Salesian experience, a sound formation is ensured in philosophy, social pedagogy and theology.

Poland has 3 novitiates (Czerwińsk, Swobnica, Kopiec), 3 postnovitiates and 3 theologates (Łą, Łódź and Kraków). Here the formation is guaranteed by well qualified formation teams and by the number of confreres in initial formation. But the question is being raised as to whether a restructuring of the formation houses is needed to concentrate the resources and maintain the high standard.

The Circumscription of the East has closed the novitiate at Oktiabrskij and the studentate at Saint Petersburg as places for initial formation, and the whole structure of this stage of formation is being reviewed. The increase in number of Ukrainian confreres of oriental rite prompts us to prepare structures of formation 'in loco'. For the moment two prenovitiates are operating in the Ukraine, one for each of the two rites. For successive stages the confreres are sent elsewhere.

Croatia and Slovenia send their novices to Pinerolo with the option of continuing subsequent studies in Italy. They have set up a prenovitiate. Hungary will send its novices to Pinerolo but subsequent stages will take place in Hungary itself.

Slovakia has its own structures for prenovitiate, novitiate, postnovitiate and theology. The Czech Republic too has its own structures, but this year will send its single novice to Slovakia. It has its own well structured prenovitiate at Sebranice.

The desire for interprovincial collaboration is not lacking in the Region, but is strongly deterred by language difficulties. Any such collaboration requires on the part of the candidates the study of another language; this is always enriching but not always easy.

With regard to initial formation I repeat that Benediktbeuern offers a consistent structure with a strong team of well qualified teachers. It could become to a greater extent an international centre of formation in the Region.

4.2 Salesian formation of lay people

This is something else that takes place in many different ways. In the Atlantic and German-speaking Areas it is well or-

ganized. In Ireland it takes place through the group “*Ethos*” in collaboration with the FMA. In Great Britain it is done through “*The Governors*”, and in North Belgium by a structured two-year programme for all lay people involved in schools and in houses for young people at risk, and through the “Centre of Formation” (*Vormingscentrum*). In Germany they have a vast programme of formation for lay people together with Salesians; it is organised by the *JugendPastoralInstitut* from Benediktbeuern.

In Poland the formation of lay personnel in schools is usually left in the hands of head teachers. In this matter it may be possible to draw up a project at interprovincial level.

In the CIMEC too the situation varies from one Province to another. Hungary organises meetings at provincial level. Slovakia concentrates on the formation of lay animators. Croatia and Slovenia give their attention mainly to the formation of laity involved in parishes; in schools the formation is entrusted to the head teachers.

Some Provinces, with the expenditure of much energy, have set up higher Institutes where Salesians and laity can become qualified: Benediktbeuern (Austria, North and South Germany), the Faculty of Theology of České Budějovice (Czech Republic), the Salesian Higher Institute of Christian Education at Warsaw (Poland), the JABOK special school of social pedagogy and theology (Czech Republic), the Salesian Higher Institute of Economy and Commerce (Poland-Warsaw), Courses of Salesian formation (North Belgium).

In general the Region is outstanding for the notable number of qualified confreres who have not only a university degree but also a diploma in education.

4.3 Youth Ministry

In Europe there are two main challenges to pastoral work among young people: the dechristianization of a Europe closed in on itself, which has lost the thread of its Christian legacy and in which many young people are living with a great religious hunger

but are often unclear and confused, and the challenge of the new kinds of material and spiritual poverty and of immigration which afflicts youngsters in particular and gives rise to a growing social exclusion.

Facing these challenges, youth ministry finds itself called upon in the first place to live more radically the commitment to evangelisation, as a response to the intensive search of young people for meaning, as a means of fostering the values of personal dignity and zest for life, and as an explicit way of making contact with the Lord Jesus and with faith journeys; and at the same time it must be inclusive, overcoming the different forms of youthful marginalisation, seeking ways of integration, of interreligious dialogue and of intercultural experience, of giving help to the family, etc.

Youth ministry in the Region is looking for practical ways to give a decisive response to these challenges. While traditional structures of encounter and education (schools, parishes etc.) are becoming ever more difficult to manage and are losing their impact – especially in the western part of the Region – new possibilities are arising for making contact with the young, for prompting them to positive objectives: youth groups and movements, houses of spirituality, projects for the accommodation and education of the very poor and of young immigrants in particular, welcoming environments, opportunities for young people to take the lead etc.

And so, for example:

In the Flemish part of Belgium youth pilgrimages are being made to the places of the origin of our charism, and there are spirituality weekends and weekend retreats for young people organised by the team of the *Oasecentrum* of Groot-Bijgaarden; in Malta there are the activities of 'SPYS' and the 'Live-ins' at Dingli.

Prominent in Poland are the new and promising youth movements: '*Pustynia Miast*', '*Saruel*', '*Oasi*', '*Ministranti*', '*Silos*', with various pilgrimages and regular youth encounters such as '*Savonalia*' (Kraków), and '*Pielgrzymka ministrantów*' (Wrocław), Scouts, vocational camps etc.

In the CIMEC also there are interesting experiences: in Slovenia the Association 'Mladinski Ceh' and the 'Skala' project; in Croatia 'Don Boscofest', youth groups, and 'Campus ministry'; in Slovakia associations of altar-servers, spiritual and educative projects, youth festivals, *Lumen* and the 'Domka' activities. In the Czech Republic there is the Salesian Youth Movement and that of Salesian clubs for young people. In Hungary there are well attended meetings at Peliföldszenkereszt for workers and animators engaged in youth ministry.

In the German-speaking area there are the efforts of the "Don Bosco Haus" at Vienna together with 'Eurotreff' and 'Jupa - Tagung'. In Germany there is also the significant activity of 'Aktionszentrum' at Benediktbeuern and the houses of spirituality at Calhorn and Jünkerath.

At Regional level there is not yet a project of collaboration involving all the Provinces, but there are many initiatives for the young organised at regional or interprovincial level. In recent years the "Don Bosco Youth net" has come into being; it is a structure coordinating various Salesian youth organizations of the European Provinces.

The various pastoral projects involve many lay people, teachers, animators and members of the Salesian Family; they testify to a significant extent the way the young are taking the lead.

I think that in the Region we must encourage and strengthen this development of youth movements which are so evidently lively, creative and attractive. Still true are Fr Vecchi's words in a letter to the Provincials of the Western Area of the Northern European Region: "I think it is necessary in all the works to put the emphasis on the development of youth ministry with schemes of evangelisation for all, emphasising at the same time formational processes and a clear plan of Christian spirituality for those who show themselves willing and able to take up more decisively the task of seeking out and following up vocations".

This means creating the conviction that the SYM is a true Salesian work; it means drawing up a plan of pastoral action for

families; it means closer collaboration with initiatives of the local Church, often not known to us; it means giving more importance to pastoral work among university students, and gradually reaching a closer coordination at interprovincial and regional level.

4.4 Pastoral work for vocations

Within youth ministry, pastoral work for vocations merits special attention. The Plan of animation and government of the Rector Major with his Council for the six-year period 2002-2008 for the Northern European Region had foreseen among other things the creation of a new "vocational culture". This appeal has found an echo in every Province, and the method of implementing it has been studied by the Region's Provincials. Here are some points that have emerged.

In the Atlantic and German-speaking Areas we have to admit that our works and structures, though of the highest educative quality and guided with great dedication and competence by confreres and laity, are proving to be environments ever less suitable for prompting vocations to the consecrated life. The few candidates we have seem rather to come from the "movements" with a strong identity and spiritual dimension (prayer groups, pilgrimages, etc.) or from outside our environments altogether.

In the Circumscription of the East, in Poland and in the CIMEC on the other hand, schools and parishes remain the primary settings where youngsters find their vocation, even though ever greater importance must be given to the aspect of Salesian spirituality in the groups and movements.

Many Provinces now have prayer groups or organise periods of adoration for vocations. It is clear that prayer creates a mentality, leads to a conversion, gives us courage in making proposals and sustaining them, but above all it emphasises the grace and primacy of God in our lives. And this in fact is the proper frame of reference. I would like to recall some significant initiatives in this regard.

Salesian Poland has witnessed a great development of the "Salesian youth movements" marked by a powerful spirituality and mission among the young, such as 'Saruel', 'Pustynia Miast' e 'SPE', from which many vocations come. The animation of our young confreres in parishes during youth retreat days or "vocation weeks" must not be overlooked. The Warsaw Province has begun this year a process of twelve steps for young people open to Christ's call in their lives.

It is good also to see how in Slovakia pastoral work for vocations has become an integral part of pastoral work in movements and in youth centres.

The Czech Republic, one of the most secularised countries of Europe, and especially Bohemia, has had for years a suitable and well qualified model of aspirantate and prenovitiate at Sebranice.

Croatia successfully reopened two years ago the aspirantate at Podsused, near Zagreb. Slovenia too has reopened its prenovitiate.

In the Ukraine as a first step in vocational pastoral work in the territory, aspirantates have been opened for candidates of both Latin and Byzantine rites.

In Germany there are reception communities in operation at Benediktbeuern, Bamberg, Regensburg and Chemnitz.

In the light of these experiences I think it important to direct our attention to the following elements for an authentic pastoral work for vocations:

- *The presence and witness of the Salesian communities:*

- ensuring that the communities are visible, as regards their daily routine, their environment, and especially as regards brotherly relationships among the confreres;
- that they are able to bear witness to the "sequela Christi" in poverty, chastity and obedience;
- that they live the preventive system among the young, freeing themselves from other commitments that take them away from young people and obscure the significance of our life as consecrated people.

- *Programmes of spirituality and service that are decisive and of high quality:*
 - offering to youngsters who show willingness clear spiritual ways forward, and then setting up among them creative groups after the style of the old sodalities, which provide opportunities for the young to take the initiative in line with the principle “the first evangelisers of the young are the young people themselves”;
 - seeing to it that the youngsters are followed up personally.
- *Strengthening our work in the university field and collaborating more closely with the initiatives of the local Church.*

4.5 Social communication

This sector of the Region is in a state of growth. Most of the Provinces have a provincial newsletter, while in others the letter of the Provincial serves the same purpose of information.

The Region publishes the Salesian Bulletin in 15 different editions, including a Russian edition that began in January 2004. There are 14 publishing houses, 17 bookshops and 7 printing establishments. The big publishing houses, like “Don Bosco Verlag” in southern Germany and “Portal” in the Czech Republic, specialise in pedagogical and psychological publications. The other houses concentrate rather on books supporting our mission among young people and families. Collaboration is being consolidated between some of these publishing houses, led by that of the Munich Province of Bavaria. A first modest step in collaboration has been the publication in seven languages of a small book for children “Rosie goes to Church”; it was printed in the Czech Republic. More recently a book on the Saints for children has been published, and a third is in preparation with the title: “With you, children, through the liturgical year”.

Of particular significance is the work of the publishing house of Gatchina in Russia, which is gradually finding its place in Russian society and the local Church.

At the urging especially of young confreres, deeply sensitive to the new technologies, websites have been developed for parishes, youth centres, schools and Provinces; this calls for education to a well-balanced use of this form of communication through information technology.

It is my hope that our work in this field may increase, and that social communication may become an important dimension of our mission. I think it of primary importance for formation, for animation of the Salesian Family and promotion of our charism, especially in Eastern countries, that as soon as possible we have available the fundamental texts of the charism and of our Salesian literature in the different languages. Greater attention needs to be given to our Salesian history over the last fifty years, which reveals how the Congregation, almost without contact with the Centre, has developed and discovered models of pastoral work to meet the circumstances. It is a history of which we can be proud, which we must never forget, and which has so much to teach us!

4.6 The Missions

Commitment of the Region to the missions has a long and wonderful history. The Region still has 340 missionaries working in different continents, including the 70 confreres who have the pastoral care of the "Catholic missions" in Germany.

In the eastern part of the Region special mention is due to the noble dedication of Poland, especially in Africa, and at the time of the creation of the Circumscription of the East; to the courageous commitment of Slovakia in Siberia and Azerbaijan, to the generous presence of Slovenia in Serbia and Montenegro, of Croatia in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and of the Czech Republic in Bulgaria.

Naturally in recent years, because of the decline in vocations and the conviction that Europe itself is becoming ever more a mission territory – especially as regards its western part – the number of missionaries going to other continents has fallen dramatically; but the Provinces remain open to this ecclesial dimension of our charism and, with great generosity, allow those

confreres to depart who have asked to go to the missions. In this connection our thanks are due to all the Provinces of the Region and to the missionary confreres themselves.

It is also right to emphasise that all the Provinces take good care of missionary confreres returning home definitively to their Province of origin. A very valuable service is provided in this regard by the Mission Offices of the Region, by their missionary animation, the welcoming of confreres returning from the missions and the collecting of funds for the support and extension of the Salesian mission all over the world. And so in Austria we find the "Jugend Eine Welt"; in North Belgium "DMOS-COMIDE"; in Germany-Cologne the "Missionsprokur" and the "Jugend Dritte Welt" in Bonn; in Germany-Munich the "Missionprokur" at Beromünster in Switzerland; in Great Britain the "Missions Office"; in Ireland-Malta the "Missionary Office". In Poland there is a Missions Office in Warsaw, and in Holland the Missionary office.

While expressing, in the name of the whole Congregation and of the missionaries in particular, our gratitude to all these Offices for helping us to fulfil the Salesian mission in the world, I invite all of them to seek a greater synergy in harmony with Provincial projects so as to give rise to even greater promotion in the Provinces themselves and to ever more effective help for the Salesian missions. This is the way to create in the confreres a mentality which looks on missionary promotion as an essential part of a Province's mission, to make our confreres and lay collaborators aware of the fact that we are all called to be missionaries in our own countries, especially in the western world, and that we have to carry out an explicit evangelisation by trying to bring to maturity in young people the choice of a way of life, including the Salesian way.

4.7 The Salesian Family

The Salesian Family is well established in the Region and in some Provinces is undergoing a real revival. But for the future

there is need for greater collaboration between its various branches, based on the conviction that Don Bosco wanted to start up a great spiritual and apostolic movement at the service of young people, the Salesian Family, and which having the Rector Major as its centre of unity, today still bears his charism and continues his mission. It is because of this understanding that I am insisting everywhere on the need to create a greater synergy, while respecting the identity of each Group, so that we can work together wherever we may be in the world.

In some Provinces there is a "Consulting group" for the Salesian Family, which has been found to be a suitable instrument for the animation of the whole Family.

The *FMA* have a consistent and important presence in the Region, with 166 communities. Collaboration is in general very positive. It may be useful to note that in Poland the person responsible for Salesian schools at national level is an *FMA*; in Ireland another *FMA* is responsible for the formation of lay personnel in the work of the two Congregations through the "Ethos group", and in Northern Belgium the *FMA* take part in the government and animation of the Salesian schools. There are many fields too in the area of youth ministry and the use of spare time where there is excellent collaboration.

The *Cooperators Association* has a significant presence in the Region with 211 "Centres" and more than 5,500 members.¹³ We can never forget that in many Provinces of the Region the existence of our Congregation is due to the enthusiasm and intervention of the Cooperators with our father Don Bosco and his successors.

¹³ In the Czech Republic there are 24 groups with 505 members and 129 aspirants, and some groups carry on their own work. In Croatia the Cooperators are increasing in number: there are 11 centres with 650 members and they have some excellent formation material available. In Slovakia there are 25 centres with 700 members; half the groups are in towns where the SDB are not present and, as elsewhere, some groups conduct their own oratory. Slovenia has 6 groups with 85 members, and Hungary has 8 groups. Poland has 67 centres with 2,063 members; the Association has its own structure and formation and is recognized as a "juridical body".

I would like especially, as a sign of gratitude, to point to the significance of the Cooperators in the CIMEC Area and in Poland during the Communist regime. Without their active presence the Congregation would not have survived.

It can be said that the Cooperators are very much linked with the Salesians and Salesian work. With them we truly live the family spirit and collaboration in the mission. A field still to be cultivated as a vocational resource for the Association include the Volunteers and the numerous leaders, adults and young people involved in the Salesian Youth Movement.

The life of the *Past Pupils' Association* varies from one Province to another. In some it is well established with a well structured organisation (North Belgium, Great Britain, Germany-Munich, Malta), in others it is in process of starting up again (Poland, Croatia, Slovakia), and in still others (such as Austria, Germany-Cologne, Ireland, and the Czech Republic) there is animation but few links with the Federation.

Some *ADMA* groups exist in the Region (Great Britain, Poland-Piła, Slovakia, Slovenia, Czech Republic).

The *Don Bosco Volunteers (VDB)* are some 274 in number, with the majority of them in the Czech Republic which has 5 groups with 44 members, in Poland which has 50 members, and especially Slovakia with 15 groups and 150 members.

In Malta there is the *CDB* with 5 members.

A word needs to be said about the Michaelites, the "Congregation of St Michael the Archangel" (CSMA) founded, as I said when speaking about Salesian work in Poland, by Fr Bronisław Markiewicz who will be beatified on 24 April. The Congregation has 320 confreres, of whom 217 are in Poland and 103 in other countries. They include 17 Brothers and 36 confreres in initial formation.

5. Future prospects

5.1 For all the Provinces of the Region

After covering the history of the different Provinces that make up the Region of Northern Europe, so different in their context, kind of work and available human resources, I feel the need to say something about future prospects, keeping in mind on the one hand the great commitment of the confreres, who live their vocation with exemplary dedication, enthusiasm and competence, and who believe in the young, in the prophetic value of education in Europe at the present time, and in the unique value of Don Bosco's preventive system in evangelization. And remembering on the other hand the marked decline in number of vocations, at least in some areas, of vocational frailty, of the falling numbers of confreres working directly with young people, and consequently of our progressive separation from the world of youth.

With the GC25 we affirm that "in the midst of a pluralistic world, searching for new models for life and meaning, yet marked by dramatic situations of poverty and oppression, consecrated life today can be significant if, like the 'house built on the rock', it is founded on the unconditional commitment to Jesus Christ, anchored in the evangelical call to holiness, and placed on the frontiers of the Church's mission" (GC25, 2).

How then do we see the Congregation's future in this Region? What decisions must we take to continue to be this "Salesian European element" that has so much to offer to the Congregation?

I offer the Provincials, the members of Provincial Councils and all the confreres some practical guidelines to outline a present designed to have a future in the Region.

5.1.1 Live the zeal and enthusiasm of 'Da mihi animas, caetera tolle'

Since the future will depend on persons who are fired up, whose lives are inspired by the educative and evangelizing zeal of Don Bosco, we are called upon to rediscover the very roots of our

charism, the joy and confidence of those early days, even in our own Province; to make a priority of evangelisation in the oratorian sense, offering to young people paths of faith, personal follow-up and schools of prayer; fostering a structured and unified youth ministry at local and provincial level by ensuring the presence of the dimension of pastoral work for vocations; giving the Salesian Youth Movement its proper place; taking up again reflection on the content of the GC23 and the manual of Youth Ministry, so as to ensure the genuine identity of our environments and proposals; to enliven various projects with a clear vocational aim and process; to give a missionary animation to our pastoral initiatives and processes and stimulate the mission “ad gentes” among both confreres and volunteers; to establish model parishes with a clear Salesian ethos and gradually abolish parishes ‘ad personam’; to remain open to the launching of new works or flexible initiatives of reduced dimensions; to approach with courage new areas of poverty – youngsters at risk, ethnic minorities, those far away from the Church; to promote the Salesian charism in the neighbourhood with the help of the means of social communication; to renew attention to our identity and to the promotion of the vocation of the Salesian Brother.

5.1.2 Create communities that prompt “family life”

Youngsters have need of witnesses, of persons and groups whose lives manifest a new way of living, who clearly demonstrate in the ordinary circumstances of every day that living in love is worthwhile. For this reason we must accept the fact that the local community makes the primary contribution to ongoing formation. Hence the importance of properly appreciating the family moments foreseen by the Constitutions, for example, the house council, the assembly of the confreres, the community day, the monthly and quarterly retreats, the Good Night, the Rector’s conferences; taking particular care to follow up community Rectors; concentrating, in harmony with the Provincial Organisational Plan, on some works particularly significant from a Salesian standpoint and grouping together confreres available for the projects involved,

thus creating strong and visible communities which will serve as a driving force for the development of a Salesian approach in all our works; developing a strategy that will enable us to close or to hand over our other works to lay people or to official bodies; properly organising the Salesian formation of lay people, where this is still lacking; strengthening the conviction that we are the “animating nucleus” of a wide movement based on the Salesian Family and on all the collaborators who share in the Salesian mission.

5.1.3 Renew and deepen our spiritual life

Since the education and evangelization of young people in Europe at the present day calls for Salesians marked by an intense life of the spirit, who can speak of God to the young and bring Him to them, we must put at the centre of our personal and community life Christ, the life of prayer and sacramental life; we must organise community life against the background of the centrality of this fundamental aspect; we must make good use of the suggestions given us by the Constitutions in this regard, living tranquilly in obedience, chastity and poverty; consolidating or intensifying our moments of prayer for vocations in every community. A support for the Region can come from Benediktbeuern if we make of it a centre of formation and of Salesian spirituality, and as a “Forum” for dialogue between the two lungs of Christian Europe.

5.2 For the different parts of the Region

5.2.1 Atlantic, German-speaking and CIMEC areas

This group of Provinces faces the challenges of a serious promotion of Salesian vocations; of fostering greater interprovincial collaboration in the field of initial and ongoing formation, in the field of youth ministry, in that of social communication, and with regard to schools.

5.2.2 Area of the Polish Provincial Conference

This group of Provinces has the task of integrating the Congregation’s “Ratio Fundamentalis” into the curriculum of for-

mation of the confreres, so as to ensure the specific aspects of Salesian formation; of beginning a study on the possible restructuring of the formation houses; of continuing the strengthening of the structures of animation and government of the Conference of Polish Provinces; of building up the national centre of youth pastoral work; of promoting in the local communities the different groups forming part of the Salesian Youth Movement; of taking up again the initiative suggested by Fr Vecchi in 1999 to *"set up an interprovincial catechetical centre and a central national publishing centre open also to educative and cultural initiatives. This will enable you to dialogue with culture and to intervene in the world of youth with incentives for the confreres and lay people working with them"*; of ensuring that our schools are seedbeds of the Salesian spirit, equipping them with the means suitable for this purpose; of establishing for the schools consistent Salesian communities who will be the "animating nuclei of the work" by creating teams for pastoral work, ensuring the presence of the Rector of the community in the government of the school and of the animating presence of Salesians among the pupils; of being open to the poor in greatest need and following up the teaching of catechism; and of developing the "Salesian Scholastic Centre" and furnishing it with offices for animation and government.

5.2.3 *The Circumscription of the East*

With the aim of fostering the development of the work in the different countries of the Circumscription, the General Council – in the last plenary session – studied and approved proposals and the accompanying motivations put to them by the Provincial and his council after the recent Provincial Chapter.

As a result it was decided to detach the works and confreres of Lithuania from the Special Circumscription and assign them to the Milan Province.

In the Ukraine, on the other hand, a Delegation of the Byzantine-Ukrainian Rite has been set up within the main Circumscription; it is made up of confreres of oriental rite.

Conclusion

I cannot conclude the presentation of this Northern European Region without referring with joy to the Salesian holiness by which it is characterized. It is in fact a Region particularly rich in witnesses who have been able to testify to their hope, the majority of them in times of war and persecution; they have passed on their faith and the charism of Don Bosco, and rendered it fruitful by their blood.

Those *Beatified* include Fr Józef Kowalski and the five young oratorians of Poznań: Edward Klinik, Franciszek Kęsy, Jarogniew Wojciechowski, Czesław Józwiak, Edward Kazimierski, who were beatified at Warsaw on 13 June 1999; and Fr August Czarторыski, beatified at Rome on 25 April 2004.

Those declared *Venerable* include Fr Rudolf Komorek, of Polish origin and a missionary in Brazil who died there at the age of 59.

And among the *Servants of God*, we can list Sister Laura Meozzi (FMA), who worked in Poland from 1921 till her death thirty years later; Cardinal August Hlond, founder of the Congregation of Christ the King; Fr Ignazio Stuchly, of the Czech Republic; Fr Jan Świerc, Fr Ignacy Antoniowicz, Fr Ignacy Dobiasz, Fr Karol Golda, Fr Franciszek Harazim, Fr Ludwik Mroczek, Fr Włodzimierz Szembek, Fr Kazimierz Wojciechowski, all members of the Kraków Province martyred in the Oświęcim concentration camp (1941-42); Fr Franciszek Miśka (Poland-Piła), martyred in the concentration camp at Dachau, 30 May 1942; Fr Alois Mertens (North Belgium); Fr Jose Vandor (Hungary), sent to Cuba as a missionary in 1936 – he remained there until his death.

And then there is a whole array of *martyrs* who deserve to be remembered (even though no canonical process has yet been started for them): Cl. Ernest Anžel, Bro. Jože Brancelj, Bro. Jože Bregar, Bro. Anton Hočevár, Cl. Franc Hrustelj, Bro. Janez Jenko, Cl. Anton Kastelic, Bro. Anton Kovač, Cl. Janez Krainc,

Bro. Anton Lavrih, don Melhior Lilija, Bro. Franc Lindič, Cl. Stefan Lopert, Bro. Janez Lotrič, Cl. Franc Miklič, Cl. Jože Pasič, Cl. Stanko Pungeršek, Bro. Alojzij Rakar, Bro. Marja Rom, Bro. France Stopar, Cl. Anton Segula, Cl. Jože Serjak, Cl. Bernard Stuhec, Cl. Dominik Tiselj, Cl. Mirko Tratnik, Cl. Stanko Tratnik. All these were members of the Slovenian Province who, after the Nazi occupation during the second world war, were compelled to cease their practical training, study of theology and situation as Brothers and young priests to be enrolled in the armed forces. After the agreement with Tito had been made, the "*domobrance*", that is all those who had taken refuge with the Anglo-Americans were sent back to Yugoslavia, where nearly all of them were killed and buried in the karstic trenches of Kočevje or the coal mines of Hrastnik and Lasko.

A similar fate befell Fr Giovanni Matkowics, from Hungary, killed near Yan Fa in China 19 May 1945; Fr Jan Dolata, from Poland, killed by the Soviets in 1945; Fr Ludwik Cienčila, from Poland, killed 30 May 1945; Fr Vojtich Basovnik, from the Czech Republic, died 12 December 1955; Fr Juozapas Gustas, from Lithuania, assassinated in 1958 at Krasnojarsk (Siberia).

Among other heroic figures are Cardinal Stěpán Trochta of the Czech Republic, arrested by the Gestapo and deported to Mauthausen and Dachau. In 1947 he was appointed Bishop of Litoměřice by Pius XII and harshly persecuted by the Communist regime between 1948 and 1968. In 1969 he was named Cardinal "*in pectore*", an appointment made known only on 5 March 1973, one year before his death.

The Servant of God Jan Leopold Tyranowski, a Polish layman, was an animator and organiser of the religious life of youngsters in the Salesian parish of Kraków-Dębniki, especially after the Salesians had been arrested on 23 May 1941. His work was also of vocational significance, because from the "Living Rosary" Circle some future Salesians emerged, and his mother Apolonia Hrobak was a Salesian Cooperator. He can be considered the first spiritual director of a certain workman at Solvay, Karol Wojtyła, now Pope John Paul II.¹⁴

Finally Bl. Władysław Bądziński and Bl. Wojciech Nierychlewski were both members of the Congregation of St Michael the Archangel (Michaelites), Polish martyrs of the second world war and beatified at Warsaw on 13 June 1999.

To the intercession of all of these who have shared the passion, death and resurrection of Christ I entrust this Region, so rich in Salesian holiness, and all the Congregation. May they obtain for us the grace to be credible, eloquent and effective witnesses to the young people of today's Europe who, like the man from Macedonia to Paul, call to us: "*Come over to Macedonia and help us*".

With this letter I end the presentation of the three Regions of Salesian Europe. I think it opportune to conclude by renewing the great convictions I presented to the European Provincials at the end of the meeting we had from 1 to 5 December last year.

- Europe is the right place for Salesians because in it the young people, especially those most at risk, need the charisma of Don Bosco.
- The young are our *raison d'être*, because they were given us as our vocation and mission, and we have great need of them as they too have of us.
- Education is the most precious gift we can offer them for their integral development, even to the extent of fullness in God, and is our contribution to the leavening of European culture at the present day.
- Our task is to speak of God to the young and bring Him to them as He has been revealed in Christ Jesus, the supreme manifestation of the mystery of God and Man, through evangelisation.
- The Oratory is the homeland of the Salesian charism; more than a structure it is a kind of relationship between educators and youngsters.


¹⁴ Cf. JOHN PAUL II "Gift and mystery" p. 32.

We know the process will be a long one, but in what has been already achieved we can see the seeds of the future, and so we commit ourselves during the coming years to the giving of a new face to Salesian work in Europe.

We want to overcome our fears and resistance by renewing our zeal for God lived in enthusiasm for the young, and giving new life to Don Bosco, to his mind and heart, to his charism and apostolic creativity.

May Mary, Mother of the Church and of our faith, educate us in it and make us zealous and convinced witnesses.

With every best wish for a happy Easter,


Fr Pascual Chávez V.
Rector Major

4. ACTIVITIES OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL

4.1 Chronicle of the Rector Major

– December 2004

The Rector Major began the month of December 2004 with a ***meeting with the Provincials of Europe***, whom he called together to reflect on the present and the future of our Salesian presence in an economic, social, cultural, political and religious context in rapid and profound change. The Meeting was held in the *Salesianum* between 1st and 5th December, and was also attended by the Mother General of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, Mother Antonia Colombo and some of the Councillors as well as some Salesian Archbishops and Bishops.

On 6 December Fr Chávez received some Provincials and on the 7th the **winter session of the General Council** began. In the afternoon he travelled to Turin where he was welcomed by the Provincial and a group of Past Pupils who took him to San Benigno Canavese for the celebration of the Feast of the Immaculate Conception on the 125th anniversary of the foundation of this house.

Having returned on the evening of the 8th, the following day the Rector Major preached a day of recollection for the community of Testaccio, and the meetings of the General Council resumed. In the evening he gave the “Good Night” to the missionaries who were taking part in the Course of Ongoing Formation and had supper with them.

On the evening of Sunday the 12th, the ***Course for new Provincials*** began.

The following day, Monday 13th, he introduced the Course to the Provincials and in the afternoon he went to the UPS for the annual meeting with the Communities of the Vice Province, to whom he spoke, by way of a Good Night, about the World Congress of Consecrated Life and the Meeting with the Provincials of Europe, two events of concern to our University.

On Thursday 16 December, with all the Councillors, the Rector Major went to Testaccio for a pre-Christmas celebration, at the end of which he gave the Good Night, looking back on 2004, and looking

forward to 2005 and inviting everyone to live the mystery of the Incarnation at an ever deeper level.

On Friday 17, in the afternoon, Fr Chávez took part in a Round Table Discussion organised at the Augustinianum on the topic "Multiculturalism, Leadership and Community".

On Saturday 18 the Rector Major received the Presidential Committee of the Italian Confederation and the World Advisory Body of the Past Pupils of Don Bosco.

On Monday 20 December Fr Chávez celebrated his birthday. In the morning he led a day of recollection for the Provincials and throughout the day received visits from numerous confreres and people who came to offer him their best wishes. The community of the Generalate marked the occasion at lunch.

On Wednesday 22 the Rector Major joined the Provincials for the conclusion of the Course and afterwards chaired a meeting of the Council.

The following day, with all the members of the Council, he went to Genzano in the morning for a day of recollection and in the evening to the community of San Tarcisio for a pre-Christmas celebration.

On Friday 24, in the morning there was a meeting of the Council,

after which the Rector Major met Fr Flavio Peloso, Superior General of the Sons of Divine Providence (Orionini), and in the afternoon went to the Generalate of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians to offer his greetings to Mother Antonia Colombo and to her Council. Having returned home, Fr Chávez presided at the Christmas Midnight Mass. He spent the Solemnity of the Birth of Our Lord at the Generalate receiving the greetings of the confreres.

On Sunday 26 the Rector Major went to visit Fr Brenno Casali, who was in hospital, and in the evening presided at the opening Mass of the World Meeting of the Regional Representatives of the VDB.

On Monday 27, in the morning the Rector Major took part in the opening of an International Congress at the *Auxilium* and presided at Mass. In the afternoon he met with the Councillors who would be taking part in the Team Visits to the South Asia Region and the East Asia-Oceania Region, after which he chaired a meeting of the General Council.

On Tuesday 28 he held a meeting of the General Council in the early morning and then afterwards met the group of Novices from Great Britain and Canada who were visiting the two novitiates in Italy.

On Wednesday 29 Fr Chávez took part in a meeting on marginalisation, organised by the CISI, with the theme: "Giving more to those who have had less".

On Thursday 30 he made a flying visit to Bari to see Fr Antonio Martinelli, former General Councillor for the Salesian Family and Social Communication, who had suffered a heart attack and then had a successful operation.

On Friday 31, the last day of 2004, the Rector Major gave the official presentation of the ***Strenna for 2005***, first to the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians and afterwards at the Generalate of the Salesians.

– January 2005

The Rector Major began the year 2005 celebrating Mass with the Community of the *Auxilium*. Immediately afterwards he left for Turin, and having had lunch at Valdocco he visited the work in progress in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians, where he was able to appreciate the work already carried out and admire the restoration of all the cupola and the high altar, which has revealed all its artistic beauty. Afterwards he continued his journey to Les Combes, for a few days rest.

The following day, Sunday 2 January, he celebrated Mass for the staff of the hostel and in the afternoon went for a walk in the snow. He spent the rest of the day working at home.

On Monday 3, in the morning he went for an outing to Cogne, with another walk in the snow and then returned to Les Combes for lunch and in the afternoon he worked at home.

On Tuesday 4, after breakfast he went to Courmayer; returning again for lunch to which Fr Genesio Tarasco had been invited, and with whom he had a conversation.

On Wednesday 5, towards midday he left for Aosta, where he stopped off to meet the community of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, and then continued his journey to Châtillon, where he was welcomed by the Salesian community who gave him lunch; after which he continued his journey to Turin, where he took the plane to return to Rome.

On the Feast of the Epiphany Fr Chávez worked in his office, received some of the Councillors, and in the afternoon had a meeting with Fr Giuseppe Nicolussi, Superior of the UPS Vice Province.

The following day he resumed the meetings of the General Council. After lunch he went to see Fr

Brenno Casali in the Pius XI Nursing Home, and then received a number of people who came to see him.

On Saturday 8 January at the end of the meeting of the Council, the Rector Major was given the news of the death of Fr Brenno Casali. At midday he received Mgr. Francesco Brugnaro, and in the afternoon Fr John Horan, former Provincial of Ireland and Malta. In the evening he gave the Good Night to a group of FMA from the Southern Italy Province.

On Sunday 9, feast of the Baptism of the Lord, the Rector Major said Mass in the "Teresa Valsè" house of the FMA. Having returned home he received some confreres and guests and worked in his office.

The following day in the morning he presided at the Funeral Mass for Fr Brenno Casali, and in the course of the day received Fr Carlos Techera, former Regional Councillor, Br. Alberto Andretta, Fr Albert Van Hecke, and two VDB from India.

On Wednesday 12, in the morning he received Fr Renato Previtali, and then chaired a meeting of the Council; in the afternoon he went to the UPS for the International Congress on Emmanuel Mounier to give the opening address.

On Thursday 13, in the afternoon in the Salesian Generalate there was a *joint meeting of the two General Councils SDB-FMA*.

On Friday 14 January the Rector Major spent the whole day in the Vatican, taking part in a meeting of the "Group of 16" (an organisation of the Union of Superiors General) with the Congregation for Consecrated Life, and in the afternoon at a meeting of the two Executive Councils of the USG-UISG.

The following day he had meetings with several people including the Presidential Committee of the Salesian Biblical Association; in the evening he went to the "Ersilia Canta" House of the FMA.

On Monday 17 January at midday with the Economist General, he had a meeting with the Prefect of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches, Card. Ignace Mousa Daoud, and having returned home met Card. Oscar Rodríguez Madariaga. In the evening after supper he attended a meeting with Ludovico Gasparini and Flavio Insinna, Director and actor of the television film on Don Bosco.

On Tuesday 18 the Rector Major held a meeting of the Council and in the afternoon received Mgr. Franco della Valle.

On Wednesday 19 in the morning, Fr Chávez received Fr Agostino Sosio and the two confreres in the Generalate called Mario to wish them well on their name day. In the afternoon he had a meeting with the Dean of the Philosophy Faculty of the UPS, Fr Scaria Thuruhiyil.

From the afternoon of 20 January until midday on Sunday 23 at the Salesianum there were the *Days of Spirituality of the Salesian Family*. The Rector Major took part in the opening Round Table Discussion, presided at Mass on Sunday and gave a closing talk.

During these days the Rector Major continued to receive the Councillors, Confreres and members of various branches of the Salesian Family who had come for the Days.

On 24 January in the Generalate the Feast of St Francis of Sales was celebrated. Fr Chávez worked in his office and received three Provincials: Fr Camille Swertvagher (AFC), Fr Štefan Turanský (SLK) and Fr Savio Hon Tai-fai (CIN).

Between 25 and 28 January there was the last week of the winter session of the General Council, which ended with the usual Good Night to the community of the Generalate on 27, in which the

Rector Major spoke about the activities of the General Council in this period. During these days Fr Chávez also received some Councillors and Provincials.

During the following days the Rector Major worked in his office. On Sunday 30 January in the evening he left for Turin where he had a meeting with the community of the Crocetta and on the solemnity of Don Bosco he presided at two Masses during which he gave his message to the young people and the leaders of the SYM throughout the world. He also took part in other events that were scheduled for his visit.

– February 2005

Having returned from Turin, on 1st February the Rector Major worked in his office. In the evening he received news of the unexpected death of his father. The following day, the feast of the Presentation of the Lord, he presided at Mass at which in addition to the Councillors still in the house and the confreres of the Generalate, the Mother General, Antonia Colombo, and all the Councillors were present united in offering their condolences and in prayer. Afterwards Fr Pascual Chávez left for Mexico where he arrived a day later for his father's

funeral. Immediately after the burial he continued his journey to *Guadalajara*, where he began the programme of jubilee celebrations for the *centenary* of the arrival of the Salesians in that city, now the site of the Provincial House for Central and North Mexico. There was a thanksgiving supper for people who had made an outstanding contribution to the founding and the development of the works of the Province. On Saturday 5 February the Rector Major had a meeting with all the confreres from the formation houses, met the Cooperators and celebrated Mass at which all the confreres renewed their religious profession, and which was followed by a chat with all the confreres and lunch. In the evening he had a hour of prayer with representatives of the SYM.

On Sunday 6 Fr Chávez took a plane to León. He visited Boys Town which has now become a referral and coordination centre for street children, boys and girls, for teachers from Salesian institutions and others associated with us. Later he celebrated Mass at the National Sanctuary of Don Bosco.

In the evening having returned to Guadalajara, he then went to Amatitán, to the retreat house of the Guadalajara Province, where

he opened *the retreat* for the Provincial Councillors and Rectors of both the Mexican Provinces and some confreres Rectors from the United States. On the morning of Tuesday 8 he returned to Guadalajara for a medical check-up and to meet the Past Pupils. During the rest of the week the Rector Major preached the retreat and saw confreres who had asked to speak with him.

On Saturday 12 February, in the morning he went by air to *Monterrey*, where the jubilee celebrations for the *centenary of the presence of the FMA* in that city in the north of Mexico were being held. In the evening he travelled on to Saltillo to spend a few days with his family, though he also had some meetings there with confreres and the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.

On Thursday 17 February, in the evening he returned to Monterrey to greet the youngsters who had gathered there for the opening of the InterSalesian Games for Elementary Schools and to have supper with the Salesians. Afterwards he left for Guadalajara, where on Friday 18, in the context of the jubilee celebrations he met thousands of youngsters from our schools, presided at Mass, and afterwards had lunch.

On Saturday 19 he met the prenovices and novices for whom he said Mass in the novitiate community of Chapala. Afterwards he took the return flight to Rome, where he arrived on Sunday evening.

On Monday 21 February Fr Chávez worked in his office, received some confreres and in the evening gave the Good Night to a group of FMA Superiors from Italy.

The following day he continued his work of answering correspondence and preparing for his journey to India and Thailand. In the evening he gave the Good Night to the community of the Generalate.

On Wednesday 23 February at midday he left for India, where in rapid succession he visited the Provinces of Kolkata, Dimapur, Guwahati and finally New Delhi. Here on Monday 28 he presided at the opening of the *jubilee celebrations for the Centenary of the presence of the Salesians in India*.

4.2 Chronicle of the General Councillors

The 2004-2005 winter plenary session was preceded by the **Meeting of the Provincials of Europe**, which took place at the *Sale-*

sianum between 1st and 5th December attended by most of the Councillors. Those present in addition to the Rector Major were the Vicar, the Departmental Councillors and the three European Regional Councillors.

The session which began on 7 December 2004, kept the Councillors busy until 28 January 2005. To the plenary sessions 24 in all, were added group or commission meetings to study various topics. During the session there was also – on the days between 12 and 23 December – the **meeting of new Provincials**, who also had occasion to meet with the Rector Major and his Council. The Councillors also made their own contributions to various meetings especially those taking place at the Generalate.

As always, in addition to the more pressing topics or problems for the animation and guidance of the Congregation, sufficient time was given to the ordinary matters of business coming from the Provinces, such as: appointments of Provincial Councillors and the approval of the appointments of Rectors, the opening and canonical erection of houses and/or activities, matters regarding confreres and economic-administrative issues. The following is a summary of the more important items on the agenda

1. Appointment of Provincials

During this session there were fifteen Provinces or Vice Provinces for which the Superior was appointed. Following a careful process of discernment, and taking special account of the results of the consultation held in the Province or Vice Province the General Council made the necessary provision. This is the list in alphabetical order of the Provincials or Superiors of Vice Provinces appointed in the course of the session: Claes Jozef, for the North Belgium Province; Corral Prieto Luis, for the Central American Province; Czerwiński Józef, for the Vice Province of Zambia; Enger Joseph, for the French Province; Grünner Josef, for the German Province; Horan John, for the Irish Province; López Pedroza Joaquín, for the Province of Argentina Rosario; Sosio Agostino, for the Lombard-Emilian Italian Province; Susai Amalraj, for the Province of Tiruchy, India; Swamikannu Stanislaus, for the Province of Madras, India; Thepharat Pitisant John Bosco, for the Province of Thailand; Tshibangu Joachim, for the Province of Central Africa; Turanský Štefan, for the Province of Slovakia; Wong Andrew, for the North Philippines Province; Zabala Torres Juan Pablo, for the Province of Bolivia.

No 5.6 in this issue of the AGC provides some biographical details of those appointed.

2. Reports of Extraordinary Visitations

The examination of the reports of the Extraordinary Visitations to the Provinces presented by the respective Visitors is always one of the more important items on the agenda of the General Council for the animation of the Congregation in its various local presences. It provides the 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: the Province of Rosario, Argentina; the Province of Porto Alegre, Brazil; the Province of Japan; the Province of Guadalajara, Mexico; the Province of Holland; the Province of Valencia, Spain; the Province of Uruguay; the Vice Province of Zambia.

3. Topics studied and decisions made

In the course of the session, as well as matters concerning the Provinces and 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 taken regarding matters discussed. The main topics considered were as follows.

- **Conclusion of the study of the North Europe Region.** The General Council finished the study, begun in the previous intermediate session, of the current situation of the North Europe Region, identifying the main challenges that emerge and offering the Provincials, the members of the Provincial Councils and all the confreres some working guidelines, taking into account an overall view of the Region and of the four areas of which it is made up: Living the passion of "*Da mihi Animas, caetera tolle*"; Creating communities that encourage "family life"; Renewing and deepening our spiritual life.

- **Approval of Provincial Chapters.** A special feature of this particularly busy session with the appointment of many Superiors of Provinces and Vice Provinces has been the examination and the approval of the documents of a number of **Provincial Chapters**. 29 Provincial Chapters were studied. In this way the examination of the Provincial Chapters carried out in all the Provinces and Vice Provinces after the GC25 was completed. Even though not all the Provinces had succeeded in completing everything that had been asked of them, and especially not all Provinces had understood the PSP (Provincial Strategic Plan) in the same way, nevertheless, it has been a significant occasion for the Congregation which has undertaken in a responsible manner a process of Salesian discernment. For the General Council, this has provided an opportunity for contact with almost the whole of the Congregation, as seen through the Provincial Chapters, and also for ongoing formation, both with regard to greater precision in what was being sought, and in reference to the Constitutions and Regulations.

- **Setting up a Byzantine-Ukraine Rite Salesian Delegation.**

tion for Ukraine. Following a request from the Superior of the Special Circumscription of Eastern Europe, on the basis of a proposal presented at the Chapter of this Circumscription by Ukrainian Salesian Confreres of the Oriental Rite; in view of the positive opinion expressed by vote by the Council of the East Circumscription (which also took into account a straw vote taken earlier at the Chapter of the Circumscription), the General Council, after the appropriate discernment, gave its own consent to the setting up of a Salesian Delegation of the Ukraine of the Byzantine-Ukraine Rite comprising the Salesian houses in the Ukraine with their respective works and confreres, juridically dependent on the "Immaculate Conception of Mary" Circumscription of Eastern Europe with headquarters in Moscow (cf. the Decree of the Rector Major in n. 5.3 of this issue of the Acts.).

- Transfer of the Salesian houses in Lithuania to the Italian Lombard-Emilian Province. Following a request from the Superior of the Special Circumscription of Eastern Europe, on the basis of a proposal presented at the Chapter of this

Circumscription by the confreres who are living and working in the Salesian houses in Lithuania; in view of the positive opinion expressed by vote by the Council of the East Circumscription; and having heard the opinion of the Provincial of the Lombard-Emilian Province, the General Council, after appropriate discernment, gave its own consent so that the Salesian houses of Lithuania: Kaunas "Saint John Bosco"; Vilnius "Saint John Bosco", with their works and confreres, may be transferred from the "Immaculate Conception of Mary" Special Circumscription of Eastern Europe to the "Saint Charles Borromeo" Province with headquarters in Milan, Italy (Lombard-Emilian Province), to which they will juridically belong from 15 August 2005 (cf. the Decree of the Rector Major in no 5.4 of the present issue of the AGC).

- Transfer of the missions in the Solomon Islands to the North Philippines Province (FIN). Following the request of the Provincial of the Salesian Province of Japan with his Council and having heard the positive opinion of the Provincial of North Philippines, on whom Papua New Guinea depends, after a process of

discernment, the General Council gave its own consent that the Salesian house in Honiara, in the Solomon Islands, at present dependent on the Japanese Province, with its activities and confreres be transferred to the "Saint John Bosco" Province of North Philippines, in the Delegation of Papua New Guinea (cf. the Decree of the Rector Major in no 5.5 of the present issue of the Acts).

- **Approval of the Statute of the Delegation of Papua New Guinea-Solomon Islands.** The General Council approved the Statute of the Delegation of Papua New Guinea-Solomon Islands, in which are specified the make up and the purpose of the Delegation and the powers that the Provincial entrusts to his Delegate, assisted by a Council of the Delegation.

- **Approval of the Budget for 2005.** During this session, following its presentation by the Economist General, the General Council examined and approved according to the norms of the Regulations, the Budget for 2005 of the Direzione Generale Opere Don Bosco.

- **Distribution of "Mission**

Funds". The General Council considered and approved the proposals n. 135 December 2004, made by the commission for the distribution of assistance from the Mission Fund.

Among **significant moments** in the course of the session the following in particular should be mentioned:

• **The meeting of the SDB and FMA General Councils**, on 13 January 2005, at the SDB Generalate. A meeting which – as the Rector Major said – was meant to be a sign of their willingness to journey together, deepening and revitalising our common charismatic roots and fostering greater synergy in the places where we are working. On this occasion there were two items on the agenda: *The first:* Discussion on the Salesian future in the new Europe; forms of collaboration and the challenge of restructuring and relocation. A discussion that was conducted on the basis of the meeting of the European Provincials on the part of the Rector Major and his Council and on the basis of the process that has been followed for some time and has contributed to gradually forming a European mentality in a spirit of commu-

nion on the part of the Mother General and her Council and the European Provincials. *The second*: Sharing new missionary projects that intend to draw on and give life to Don Bosco's dream, and at the same time respond to the challenges facing the Church in the third millennium in evangelising Asia.

- **A day of recollection at Genzano.** On Monday 23 December, the General Council spent the whole day on a day of recollection which was held at our Novitiate in Genzano, led by the Rector Major and dedicated to reflection of the Congress on Consecrated Life held in Rome on 23-27 November 2004.

5. DOCUMENTS AND NEWS ITEMS

5.1 Message of the Rector Major to the young people of the Salesian Youth Movement "Making youthful the face of the Church - the Mother of our faith"

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 2005. The Message which refers to the Strenna for 2005, will also encourage the Salesians in their task of leading young people to feel themselves a living part of the Church.

My Dear Young People,

I still remember the enthusiasm that the memory of the young saints in our Family generated during last year, and also that aroused by the journey of the casket of Dominic Savio around the Italian Provinces. Like a flame that catches hold, holiness rekindled in you the joy and the commitment of a life under the guidance of the Spirit.

God's wonders are still to be found in today's world, and the Holy Spirit is the great master who is directing the formation of

the new man made according to the measure of the perfect man Jesus. His power enables us to be his convinced witnesses and to dedicate ourselves with enthusiasm and the fresh energy of the new-born Church to the mission of evangelisation, following the example of the first Christian communities who challenged a pagan society and culture not with the force of power or prestige but with the force of a life consistent with the Gospel they proclaimed and with the strength of the enthralling experience of having met the Risen Jesus.

Continuing therefore along this route, I offer you as your destination and your task for this year of 2005 **"Making youthful the face of the Church - the Mother of our faith"**.

When I speak about "making youthful" I'm not talking about simply giving her "a face-lift" or cosmetic surgery, about some external changes, about coming to terms with and adapting to today's habits and customs to make her more attractive and similar to other social institutions. It is rather a matter of returning to her origins, to her youth, so that she may acquire credibility and the capacity once again to listen. It is also a

matter of making her a home for the young. In fact, the Church will be young when the young are there, especially now when there is a growing sense of disaffection towards her, at least in some parts of the world.

Yes, my dear young people, you are the youthful face of the Church. Fruit of the new Pentecost you are a gift for the Church, and the Church is a gift for you. It is this exchange of gifts that is so exhilarating and calls on you to invest in her all your energies, to love her as "Christ loved her and gave himself up for her".

It is possible that some things in the human aspect of the Church disappoint you. Maybe you feel you are not understood. Or you are confused by the triumphalism, the formality, the bureaucracy, but also by the weakness, the fear, the silence sometimes to be found in the Pastors themselves. A certain face of the Church deeply disturbs you, because you feel she is yours: like the house where you live, like a Mother you love. For you she is the place where you meet the God of Jesus Christ, those who believe in Him, but also all those men and women you consider to be your brothers and sisters.

It is your task to see that, also through you, the Church continues to become ever more a community renewed by the breath of the Spirit who gives life and renews all things; a community that bears witness to and proclaims the Gospel of Jesus, without fear, with the consistency of a life lived according to the Gospel; a community that is open and welcoming especially towards the poor; a community that with joy and thanksgiving celebrates the presence of the salvation of Jesus in today's everyday world; a community that lives with a passion for life, for freedom, for justice, peace and solidarity; a community that is the haven of hope for a society worthy of mankind.

You, my dear young people, need to work so that she becomes a Church that lives in the homes of men and women. Indeed, as Don Bosco saw it she herself is a home where the young find a family. The home of those who believe in the Risen Christ and want to bear joyful witness to their faith in Him.

You yourselves set this as an objective in the plans for the future of the World Forum of the SYM in the year 2000: "To make involvement in the Church more obvious

and significant". This objective is as important as ever, precisely because here and there a growing tendency can be found to live a Christian life without the Church: Christians who have not given up their relationship with the Church but who do not form part of a community they identify with, like someone going round a supermarket and picking and choosing from what is on offer whatever is to their liking.

This is not an easy task; what is needed is a educational strategy that helps us to recognise Christ in his body the Church, and to recognise her as the place where and the means through which the action of Christ and of the Spirit becomes present, visible and active in our world of today.

- The first step to make the face of the Church youthful must be that of living in your own communities and groups a passion for God who brings the Church together in Christ by means of the Spirit, a sense of brotherhood among all the baptised, a missionary and evangelising zeal, a desire to be of service in society especially to the poorest. Following these great ideals, the Christian community is able to overcome the temptation, for-

getting the standards of the Gospel, to adopt the criteria, values, attitudes and behaviour of a society that has great powers of persuasion and which rather than being influenced by the Gospel has a tendency to erect itself into an idol which can even deceive believers; it can overcome the temptation to be fearful which often leads it to hide behind the Church doors and adopt an attitude of diffidence and even of self-centredness in the face of society; and the temptation to individualism and resignation, or that of an anxious seeking for recognition, a desire for money or a fear of being left outside with the outsiders.

- The tiny signs of the Church being lived in everyday life need to be cultivated: the sign of a cordial welcome that is also evangelising, demonstrating an attitude of generous openness, of unconditional acceptance, of a sincere desire to be of service; the sign of a human and Christian spirit in simple ways of providing assistance, of animating, of voluntary service; the sign of simple but joyful and shared celebrations reflecting the problems and the situations of society; the sign of a sincere and

creative openness towards companions at work, in the university, in the local area with a readiness to share their worries, expectations, hopes and difficulties in an atmosphere of trust and clear fidelity to the values of the beatitudes.

- Another important aspect is an effort to know our Church better, overcoming a partial view, received from the surroundings or from a superficial or limited Christian education. In the Vatican II documents "*Lumen Gentium*" e "*Gaudium et Spes*" you will find a positive and attractive view of the Church of Jesus: look them up and spend time reading them carefully.
- As well as a knowledge of the mystery of the Church you also need to know at first hand the practical life of the Church near you: your local churches, your parishes, youth movements and associations, the things they are doing, the people and the community. Take part in what they are doing with your youthful enthusiasm and creativity, bringing to them the specific contribution of the Salesian Youth Movement. Collaborate in giving to all these aspects of church life a face that is more welcom-

ing, closer to young peoples' lives, more committed to being of service to them.

Remember the efforts Don Bosco made, in times that were certainly not easy, to love the Church himself and to help his youngsters to do so. His sense of the Church was above all a personal matter of experience and attitude that led him to bring all his efforts and his resources to bear for the good of the Church and its building up, and which he expressed in a simple and very practical manner with the three ideas: *love for Jesus Christ*, present in the central action of the Church, the Eucharist; *devotion to Mary*, Mother and Model of the Church; and *fidelity to the Pope*, Successor of Peter. These are three inseparable elements, which throw light on each other and which, for Don Bosco, are translated into a responsible commitment to evangelisation and the transformation of society through the gospel according to one's own vocation from baptism.

This year the process of preparation for the celebration of World Youth Day gives you an excellent opportunity to collaborate in making the face of your Church youthful, sharing with young people

from all the continents in the effort to follow in imagination the journey of the Magi and with them to meet the Messiah of all the nations (Cfr. *Message of the Holy Father for the XX World Youth Day*). Let the Magi give you an example. Their whole lives, their whole search, converge on Christ and then return from Christ. On this journey they are accompanied by the star. They were very well acquainted with the stars and yet they understood that that star was not like the others that shed their light and seem very attractive: the light of success, of money, of efficiency, of appearances.

In your life too there is a star: the fatherly and loving presence of God. A discreet presence that respects your freedom and trains your gaze, your mind, your heart and your will. For this to happen the Church offers you the means necessary: the Word, meditated and kept within as Mary did; the personal and the communal meeting with Jesus in the sacraments, especially in the Eucharist; missionary zeal that makes you evangelisers of the young. Besides this, you need to entrust yourselves to a guide who will help you to interpret the very personal and individual aspects of your own life.

Take heart, my dear young people, in all this you are not alone. There is also the Community to show you the way, and there is the company of many brothers and sisters who in their friendship continue to point out the stars to you, even when the sky is covered with clouds. You will then discover to your great surprise that also with the "star" there is the One who has come looking for you.

Don't be afraid! Let Christ "take hold of you"! He looks each one of you in the eyes, gazes at you and loves you. It is a loving look from one who chooses you and calls you. A penetrating look that reaches into the depths of your heart where he says: "I have loved you with an everlasting love. Come and follow me".

Listen to this voice, take up your responsibility in the Church for the spreading of the Kingdom of God in the world. Don Bosco wanted his youngsters to be: well informed about the present situation; generous in their choices; dynamic in action; open to the needs of the city, of the Church, of the mission, of the world.

Entrust yourselves to Mary Help of Christians, mother of the Church and mother of our hopes.

With you I address my prayer to
Her:

*Youthful Lady, with tenderness be
always with the young.*

*In faithful toil and in days without
end.*

*In times of communion and in the
chill of loneliness.*

*In moments of joy and in hidden
tears.*

*In the sacramental liturgy and in
the unanswered questions.*

*You, mother of childless mothers,
and of children without a mother.*

*You, Mary, flowing stream of pure
water.*

*Gather together all the trickles of
love, scattered, misunderstood,
trodden underfoot.*

*Gather them in your Mother's
heart and offer them to Jesus,
your Son.*

Fr Pascual CHÁVEZ VILLANUEVA

Turin/Valdocco
31 January 2005

5.2 Decree on the heroicity of the virtues of the Servant of God Luigi Maria Olivares, SDB

*We print below in the original
Latin and in an English transla-
tion the text of the Decree on the
heroicity of the virtues of the
Servant of God Mgr. Luigi Maria*

*Olivares, SDB, read in the presence
of the Holy Father on 24 December
2004. In virtue of this Decree Mgr.
Luigi Maria Olivares is declared
Venerable.*

LATIN TEXT

CONGREGATIO DE CAUSIS SANCTORUM

ROMANA SEU NEPESINA ET SUTRINA

BEATIFICATIONIS et CANONIZATIONIS

SERVI DEI

ALOISII MARIAE OLIVARES

E SOCIETATE S. FRANCISCI SALESI

EPISCOPI NEPESINI ET SUTRINI

(1873-1943)

DECRETUM SUPER VIRTUTIBUS

«Uniuscuiusque Episcopi officium est mundo spem annuntiare incipiendo a praedicatione Evangelii Iesu Christi (...). Theologalis spei, simul ac fidei et caritatis prospectus, pastorale Episcopi ministerium omnino informare debet» (IOHANNES PAULUS II, Adhort. Apost. Post-synod. *Pastores gregis*, 3).

Fidei, spei et caritatis per totam vitam, praesertim in ministerio episcopali, Aloisius Maria Olivares testis fuit egregius.

Hic Servus Dei Corbettae in provincia Mediolanensi die 18

mensis Octobris anno 1873 ex Alberto Olivares et Iuditha Reina natus est et postridie baptizatus. Pater eius probus fuit vir et imo corde christianus; e matre, vero, quae prudens filiorum iuxta Christi praecepta fuit educatrix, spiritum diligentiae et voluntatis fortitudinis hausit. Magistrae eum puerum intentum, oboedientem, bonum cum omnibus esse dicebant. Die 9 mensis Maii anno 1881 sacramentum Confirmationis recepit et, paucis post mensibus, in Praeseminario Sancti Petri Martyris civitatis Sevesi adscriptus est, ut tertium et quartum cursum primariae institutionis audiret. Primam Communionem die 17 mensis Iunii anno 1883 accepit et die 21 octobris eiusdem anni Seminarium Minore Modiciae ingressus est, ut gymnasium iniret. Cum studio, pietate ac disciplina emereret, duobus aliis cum clericis Romam missus est, ut discipulos Seminarii Mediolanensis occasione Iubilaei presbyteralis Leonis Papae XIII insigniter effingeret. Cursu theologiae in Seminario Maiori Mediolanensi peracto, ubi primum praebyteros Societatis Sancti Francisci Salesii cognovit, presbyteratu die 4 mensis Aprilis anno 1896 auctus est et statim muneri vicis Rectoris Collegii Episcopalis Saronni addictus.

Vita eius sacerdotalis virtutum exercitio sanctitatisque sedulitate enituit. Vocatione ad vitam religiosam percepta, die 14 mensis Novembris anno 1904 novitiatum Salesianum in civitate vulgo dictae *Fogizzo Canadese* iniit et die 15 mensis Novembris anno 1905 primam et biennio post perpetuam professionem emisit. Quinque per annos scientiam rei moralis et socialis docuit. Anno 1910 ei parocchia Beatae Mariae Virginis Liberatoris apud Montem Testarum in Urbe commissa est, quam regionem, paucorum annorum spatio, benignitate sua erga pauperes aegrotosque et indefessa in operarios iuvenesque sedulitate, in fervidam mutavit Dei communitatem.

Die 15 mensis Iulii anno 1916, episcopus Nepesinus et Sutrinus nominatus est. Pastor sollers, praebyteros suos admodum dilexit, quos semper comprehendit ac defendit, sicut et pauperum amavit populum et ab eodem amatus est. A mense Novembre anni 1928 usque ad Martium anni 1931 Administrator quoque Apostolicus dioecesis Civitatis Castellanae, Hortanae et Gallesinae fuit. Die 19 mensis Maii anno 1943, Portu Naone, quo ad exercitia spiritualia iuvenibus discipulis Instituti Salesiani praedicanda se contulerat, in Domino quievit.

Vita ac scripta Aloisii Mariae Olivares fidem ostendunt vividam, profundam, firmam et operosam illius, qui assiduam cum Deo unionem habebat. Deus enim ad summum erat cogitationum eius, iam discipuli Seminarii, dein praesbyteri et religiosi, demum et animarum pastoris. Vir erat orationis et imae pietatis: nam, pars precipua fidei eius pietas fuit erga Eucharistiam et filialis teneraque in Beatam Virginem Maria devotio.

In eo heroicum spei exercitium ex adhaesione Deo, ex rerum contemptu et summae Providentiae fide elucebat: perquam, enim, per difficultates tribulationesque Domino confidebat.

Res, in super, peculiaris vitae eius exercitium heroicum fuit caritatis: ipsa die episcopalis ordinationis, nempe die 29 mensis Octobris anno 1916, inter quinque proposita, quibus ipse se adstrinxit, illud precipue perhibuit: «Tesseram vitae meae episcopalis volo caritatem esse sinceram, patientem, benignam, spiritualem et ad sacrificium promptam». Quae caritas, in primis, in dilectione erga Deum, necnon in oratione, in plena conformitate ad divinam voluntatem, in sedula exsecutione officiorum et in fideli mandatorum Dei observantia apparuit. Vere etiam heroica caritas erga proximum fuit,

amore Dei enutrita, contans, indefessa, in spiritu et rebus, erga omnes, praesertim aegrotos, infirmos et indigentes. Ad labores ac sacrificium omne pro bono animarum paratus erat.

Exstat quoque ipsum heroico modo exercitium aliarum virtutum, praesertim prudentiae, iustitiae, temperantiae, fortitudinis, necnon paupertatis, castitatis, oboedientiae et humilitatis coluisse. Haud temere et fortuito, enim, Aloisius illud episcopale insigne elegit: *Fortiter et suaviter*. Testes eum semper mitem ac placidum, admodum sui compotem, interiore fortitudine et constanti aequitate mire refertum tradunt.

Ob celebratam eius sanctitatis famam Processus Cognitionalis apud Vicariatum Urbis inter annum 1963 et 1967 celebratus est et Processus Rogatorialis apud dioecesim Nepesinam et Sutrinam inter annum 1964 et 1966, quorum auctoritas et vis giuridica ab hac Congregatione de Causis Sanctorum decreto diei 11 mensis Octobris anno 1991 probatae sunt. *Positio super virtutibus* confecta, die 23 mensis Martii anno 2004 Congressus Peculiaris Consultorum Theologorum factus est. Patres Cardinales porro et Episcopi, in Sessione Ordinaria congregati die

16 mensis Novembris subsecuti, Ponente Causae Exc.mo D. Ioanne Coppa, Archiepiscopo tit. Serten-si, agnoverunt Servum Dei theolo-gales, cardinales iisque adnexas virtutes heroico gradu excoluisse.

Facta demum de hisce omnibus rebus Summo Pontifici Ioanni Paulo II per subscriptum Cardi-nalem Praefectum accurata rela-tione, Sanctitas Sua vota Congre-gationis de Causis Sanctorum ex-cipiens rataque habens, mandavit ut super heroicis Servi Dei vir-tutibus decretum conscriberetur.

Quod cum rite esset factum, ac-citis ad Se hodierno die infrascripto Cardinale Praefecto necnon Causae Ponente meque Antistite a Secretis Congregationis ceterisque de more convocandis, eisque astan-tibus, Beatissimus Pater sollem-niter declaravit: *Constare de vir-tutibus theologalibus Fide, Spe et Caritate tum in Deum tum in proximum necnon de cardinalibus Prudentia, Iustitia, Temperantia et Fortitudine eisque adnexis in gradu heroico Servi Dei Aloisii Mariae Olivares, e Societate S. Francisci Salesii, Episcopi Nepesi-ni et Sutriini, in casu et ad effectum de quo agitur.*

Hoc autem decretum publici iuris fieri et in acta Congregationis de Causis Sanctorum Summus Pontifex referri mandavit.

Datum Romae,
die 20 mensis Decembris a. D. 2004

† IOSEPHUS Card. SARAIVA MARTINS
Praefectus

† EDUARDUS NOWAK
Archiepiscopus Tit. Lunensis
a Secretis

ENGLISH TEXT

« It is in fact the task of every Bishop to proclaim hope to the world, hope based on the procla-mation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ... A stance of theological hope, together with faith and love, must completely shape the Bish-op's pastoral ministry ». (IOHANNES PAULUS II, Post-synod Apostolic Exhortation. *Pastores gregis*, 3).

Throughout his life but especial-ly during his episcopal ministry, Luigi Maria Olivares was an ex-ceptional witness of faith, of hope and of charity.

He was born at Corbetta, in the province of Milan, son of Alberto Olivares and Giuditta Reina on 18 October 1873, and was baptised the following day. His father was an upright and deeply Christian man. From his mother a wise Christian educator of her children according to Christian principles he inherited a spirit of hard work and strength of will. His first teachers described

him as an attentive and obedient boy good towards everyone. On 9 May 1881 he received the sacrament of Confirmation and a few months later was enrolled in the Preparatory Seminary of St Peter the Martyr at Seveso to attend elementary school classes. He made his First Communion on 17 June 1883 and on 21 October of the same year entered the Minor Seminary of Monza for secondary studies. He distinguished himself among the boys for his studies, piety and discipline and with two other clerics was sent to Rome, representing the Milan seminarians for the priestly Jubilee of Leo XIII. Having completed his theological studies in the Milan Major Seminary, where for the first time he came to know the Salesians, he was ordained priest on 4 April 1896 and was then sent as Vice Rector to the diocesan college of Saronno.

His life as a priest was distinguished by his practice of the virtues and his commitment to holiness. His religious vocation having come to maturity on 14 November 1904 he entered the Salesian novitiate of Foglizzo Canavese. On 15 November 1905 he made his first profession and two years later his perpetual profession. For five years he taught moral theology and sociology. Then in 1910 he was en-

trusted with the Roman parish of Santa Maria Liberatrice in Testaccio. Such was his goodness towards the poor and the sick, his tireless zeal towards the workers and the young that in a few years he transformed the district into a fervent parish.

On 15 July he was appointed Bishop of Nepi and Sutri. A caring Pastor he had an extraordinary love for his priests, understanding and always supporting them, just as he loved and was loved in return by the poor people. From November 1928 until March 1931 he was also Administrator Apostolic of the diocese of Civita Castellana, Orte and Gallese. He died on 19 May 1943 at Pordenone, where he had gone to preach a retreat to the young sixth formers of the Salesian Institute.

The life and also the writings of Mgr. Olivares demonstrate a faith that is living, profound, unshakable and practical, that of someone who was always living in union with God. Even as a seminarian, then as a priest and religious and finally as a pastor of souls God was always foremost in his thoughts. He was a man of prayer and deep piety. A fundamental aspect of his life of faith was eucharistic piety and a filial and tender devotion to the Virgin Mary.

The heroic exercise of hope appeared in his total dedication to God, his detachment from earthly things, his complete abandonment to Providence. In trials and difficulties he had absolute trust in the Lord.

Another predominant feature of his life was his heroic practice of charity. On the day of his episcopal consecration, 29 October 1916, among the five resolutions he took the following stands out: «I want the hallmark of my episcopal life to be charity: sincere, patient, generous, spiritual, ready for sacrifice». This charity showed itself especially in love for God, in prayer, in perfect conformity to the Divine will, in the diligent fulfilment of his duties and in faithful observance of the law of God. Also heroic was his charity towards his neighbour, nourished by the love of God: charity that was constant, untiring, spiritual and practical towards all, particularly towards the sick, the suffering, the poor. He was ready to undertake any task or sacrifice for the good of souls.

On record is the heroic practice of the other virtues especially prudence, justice, temperance, fortitude, as well as poverty, chastity, obedience and humility. Not by chance Luigi chose as his episcopal motto: *Fortiter et suaviter*. Witness-

es recall that he was always calm and reflective, that he exercised total self-control, interior strength and a constant equilibrium.

On account of his reputation for holiness, the *Processus Cognitionalis* was carried out by the Vicariate of Rome between 1963 and 1967, while the *Processus Rogatorialis* was undertaken in the diocese of Nepi and Sutri between 1964 and 1966. Their authority and juridical value were approved by this Congregation for the Causes of Saints with a decree of 11 October 1991. After the preparation of the *Positio super virtutibus*, on 23 March 2004 the Special Meeting of the Theologian Consultors took place. Then with Mgr. Giovanni Coppa, Titular Archbishop of Sertta, presenting the Cause, the Ordinary Session of the Cardinals and Bishops held on the following 16 November, recognised that the Servant of God practised to an heroic degree the theological and cardinal virtues and others connected with them.

Finally, when all that had taken place had been reported to the Supreme Pontiff John Paul II by the undersigned Cardinal Prefect, His Holiness accepting and ratifying the voting of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, ordered that the decree on the heroic virtues

of the Servant of God be prepared.

When all this had been done in the prescribed manner, having today called together in his presence the undersigned Cardinal Prefect, the Presenter of the Cause and myself the Bishop Secretary of the Congregation and in the presence of the others it is customary to invite, the Holy Father solemnly declared that: *It is certain that the theological virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity towards God and one's neighbour, the cardinal virtues of Prudence, Justice, Temperance and Fortitude and the virtues connected with them, were practised to an heroic degree by the Servant of God Luigi Maria Olivares, professed member of the Society of Saint Francis de Sales, Bishop of Nepi e Sutri, "in casu et ad effectum de quo agitur" (in view of eventual canonisation).*

The Holy Father then ordered that this decree be published and preserved among the Acts of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints.

Given at Rome,
20 December 2004 A.D.

† IOSEPHUS Card. SARAIVA MARTINS
Prefect

† EDUARDUS NOWAK
Archiepiscopus tit. Lunensis
Secretary

5.3 Decree of the Rector Major by which the Delegation of the Byzantine-Ukraine Rite is set up in the Ukraine

Prot. n. 031/2005

THE RECTOR MAJOR OF THE SALESIAN SOCIETY OF ST. JOHN BOSCO

(*"Societas Sancti Francisci Salesii"*)

- having considered the request presented by the Superior of the Special Circumscription of Eastern Europe, on the basis of a proposal put forward at the Chapter of the Circumscription by the Ukrainian Salesian confreres of the eastern rite;
- having considered the reasons advanced linked especially to the need to preserve and to develop the Salesian charism within the Eastern Church, inculturating it there, both in liturgical celebrations with the Byzantine-Ukraine rite, and in appropriate structures;
- having seen the positive opinion expressed by the Council of the Eastern Circumscription (which also took into account the previous straw vote of the Chapter of the Circumscription);
- following the discernment carried out in the General Council

and having obtained the consent of the Council in its meeting of 12 January 2005, in accordance with the Constitutions;

DECREES

the setting up of a SALESIAN DELEGATION OF THE UKRAINE, of the Byzantine-Ukraine rite, comprising the Salesian houses in the Ukraine, with their respective works and confreres, juridically dependent on the "Immaculate Conception of Mary Circumscription" of Eastern Europe with headquarters in Moscow.

- The Delegation is set up according to the norms of art. 159 of the Constitutions, which also lays down the procedure for the appointment of the Delegate of the Provincial. Provision will be made to draw up the Statutes of the Delegation, to be submitted for approval to the Rector Major and his Council according to the norms of the Constitutions.
- The principal scope of the Delegation will be to animate the Salesian life and vocation in the Ukraine, inculturating the charism of Don Bosco in the Eastern Church of the Ukraine.
- The ordinary rite for the liturgical celebrations in the Delegation

will be the Byzantine-Ukraine rite, for the appropriate knowledge of which care will be taken. Nevertheless, since the Delegation belongs to the Salesian Congregation of Pontifical Right, for admission to the Novitiate permission will continue to be sought from the Apostolic See as required by can. 517 §2 of the CCEO (with permission for dual-rite status so as to be able to take part also in Latin rite liturgical celebrations).

- The Delegation will have its headquarters in the "Mary Help of Christians" house in Lviv and will officially come into existence on 15 August 2005.

In the hope of a fruitful development of the Salesian charism.

Rome, 24 January 2005.

Fr Pascual CHÁVEZ VILLANUEVA
Rector Major

sac. Marian STEMPEL
Secretary General

5.4 Decree of the Rector Major by which the Salesian houses in Lithuania are transferred to the Lombard-Emilian Province

Prot. n. 030/2005

THE RECTOR MAJOR OF THE SALESIAN SOCIETY OF ST. JOHN BOSCO

("Societas Sancti Francisci Salesii")

- having considered the request made by the Superior of the Special Circumscription of Eastern Europe, on the basis of a proposal put forward at the Chapter of the Circumscription by the confreres who are living and working in the Salesian houses in Lithuania, that these houses should depend on a Province in the European Union detaching them from the Circumscription of the East;
- having assessed the reasons given, linked to the recent entrance of Lithuania into the European Union, but also to the cultural, social and political differences between Lithuania and the other countries in the former Soviet Union, as well as the difficulties of communication with the other countries in the Circumscription;
- taking into account the fact that in the past Lithuania had been linked to an Italian Province

(the "Central Province" with headquarters in Turin);

- noting the positive vote expressed by the Council of the East Circumscription (which also bore in mind the straw vote taken earlier in the Chapter of the Circumscription);
- having also heard the opinion of the Provincial of the Lombard-Emilian Province, with headquarters in Milan;
- with the consent of the General Council at a meeting of 12 January 2005, in accordance with art. 132 of the Constitutions,

DECREES

that the Salesian houses in Lithuania:

- Kaunas "Saint John Bosco",
 - Vilnius "Saint John Bosco",
- with their works and confreres be transferred from the "Immaculate Conception of Mary" Special Circumscription of Eastern Europe to the "San Carlo Borromeo" Province, with headquarters in Milan, Italy (Lombard-Emilian Province), to which they will juridically belong from 15 August 2005.**

In the hope of a fruitful development of the Salesian charism.

Rome, 24 January 2005.

Fr Pascual CHÁVEZ VILLANUEVA
Rector Major

sac. Marian STEMPERL
Secretary General

5.5 Decree of the Rector Major by which the House of Honiara, in the Solomon Islands is transferred to the North Philippines Province, the Delegation of Papua New Guinea

Prot. n. 032/2005

**THE RECTOR MAJOR
OF THE SALESIAN SOCIETY
OF ST. JOHN BOSCO**

("Societas Sancti Francisci Salesii")

- having considered the request made by the Provincial of the "Saint Francis Xavier" Salesian Province with headquarters in Tokyo, Japan with his Council, on the basis of a proposal that emerged in the course of the Extraordinary Visitation, that the Salesian house in the Solomon Islands be united with the Papua New Guinea Mission;

- having assessed the reasons given, linked on the one hand to the geographical, psychological and cultural distance between the

situations of the Solomon Islands and those of Japan which makes contacts and animating activity difficult, and on the other hand the greater geographical and cultural closeness between the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea, that can facilitate collaboration;

- given the favourable opinion expressed by the Council of the Japan Province and having heard the opinion of the Provincial of North Philippines on whom Papua New Guinea depends;
- following a process of discernment carried out by the General Council and having the consent of the Council in its meeting on 19 January 2005, in accordance with art. 132 of the Constitutions,

DECREES

that the Salesian house of HONIARA, in the Solomon Islands, at present dependent on the Japan Province, with its activities and confreres, be transferred to the "Saint John Bosco" Province of North Philippines, in the Delegation of Papua New Guinea, from 1 April 2005.

In the hope of a fruitful development of the Salesian charism.

Rome, 24 January 2005.

Fr Pascual CHÁVEZ VILLANUEVA
Rector Major

sac. Marian STEMPEL
Secretary General

5.6 New Provincials

We provide (in alphabetical order) some biographical details of the Provincials appointed by the Rector Major and his Council in the course of the plenary session December 2004 - January 2005.

1. *CLAES Jozef, Provincial of the NORTH BELGIAN Province.*

To lead the Province of *Brussels, NORTH BELGIUM*, Fr Jozef CLAES has been chosen. He succeeds Fr Piet Palmans, at the end of his six years period in office.

Born on 11 September 1947 at Neerpelt, Limburg (Belgium), he became a Salesian on 8 September 1967, when he made his first profession at Oud-Heverlee. He made his perpetual profession on 29-04-1972, and was ordained priest on 1st March 1975.

After priestly ordination he carried out his educational and pas-

toral ministry in the houses of Kortrijk and Oud-Heverlee. Between 1991 and 1996 he was Rector of Kortrijk and between 1996 and 2001 Rector of Sint-Denijs-Westrem. Since 2002 he has been Rector of the house at Hechtel. In addition, since 1998, he has been a member of the Provincial Council. Now he has been called to be Provincial.

2. *CORRAL PRIETO Luis, Provincial of the CENTRAL AMERICAN Province.*

Fr Luis CORRAL PRIETO is the new Provincial of the "Divin Salvatore" Province of *CENTRAL AMERICA*. He succeeds Fr José Manuel Guijo.

Born on 9 June 1950 at Alba de Yeltes, Salamanca, Spain, he made his first Salesian profession at Godellela, Spain, on 16 August 1967. Having left for Central America, he made his perpetual profession at San Salvador on 16-08-1973 and was ordained priest in Guatemala on 14 August 1977.

After priestly ordination he exercised his ministry first in Nicaragua, in the houses of Granada and Masaya, of which he was Rector, and then after a period of six years as Rector of the Don Bosco College in San José (1986-

1992), he was first Vice Rector and then Rector of the Theologate in Guatemala (1998-2003). Since 2003 he has been Vice Provincial and now is appointed Provincial.

3. *CZERWIŃSKI Józef, Superior of the Vice Province of Zambia.*

Fr Józef CZERWIŃSKI succeeds *Fr Kazimierz Socha* as Superior of the Vice Province of **ZAMBIA - MALAWI - ZIMBABWE and NAMIBIA**.

He was born on 23 March 1962 at Gluchów, Poland, and has been a Salesian since 22 August 1983, when he made his first profession in the novitiate at Czerwińsk. After postnovitiate he left for the missions in Zambia. He made his perpetual profession on 21-08-1989, and was ordained priest at Łąd on 4 June 1992.

After priestly ordination he worked in various communities in Zambia and Malawi. Between 1994 and 1997 he was Rector of the house in Lusaka-Makeni, and at the same time Provincial Secretary. Between 1997 and 2000 he was Rector of Lilongwe (Malawi). In 2000 he was appointed Vice Superior of the Vice Province and again also Provincial Secretary. Now he has been called to lead the Vice Province.

4. *ENGER Joseph, Provincial of the FRENCH Province.*

Fr Joseph ENGER is the new Provincial of the "St Francis of Sales" Province of **FRANCE**. He succeeds *Fr Joseph Inisan*, at the end of his six years.

Born on 26 November 1939 at Batzendorf, Bas-Rhin, France, he has been a Salesian since 4 September 1959 when he made his first profession at La Crau-La Navarre, where he had spent his novitiate year. Perpetually professed on 30-06-1965, he did his theological studies in Rome, obtaining a Licence in Theology. He was ordained priest at Blatzendorf on 8 December 1968. He also obtained a Licence in Biology.

After priestly ordination he carried out his educational and pastoral ministry in the Lyons Province. For a long time (1980-1992) he was Rector of the house in Landser. In 1994 he was appointed Vice Provincial in the Lyons Province and continued in that office when in 1999 the single French Province was set up. He was also Delegate for Formation and for the Salesian Family.

5. *GRÜNNER Josef, Provincial of the GERMAN Province.*

To lead the new **GERMAN**

Province, in which the two Provinces of North and South Germany will be reunited, *Fr Josef GRÜNNER* has been appointed.

Born on 26 September 1949 at Mötzing-Dengling (Bavaria), Josef Grunner has been a Salesian since 15 August 1968 when he made his first religious profession in the novitiate at Jünkerath. He studied philosophy and theology at Benediktbeuern, obtaining baccalaureates in Philosophy and in Theology and a Diploma in Social Pedagogy. Perpetually professed on 8 December 1976, he was ordained priest at Benediktbeuern on 29 June 1979.

After priestly ordination for many years he was a member of the team at the Benediktbeuern Study Centre. In 1994 he became a member of the Provincial Council and in 1997 he was appointed Vice Provincial of the Munich Province. On 17 June 2003 he was appointed Provincial of the same Province. Now he will lead the united German Province.

6. *HORAN John, Provincial of the IRISH Province.*

Fr John HORAN has been called to lead the *Province of IRELAND*. He succeeds *Fr Michael Smyth*.

Fr John Horan was born on 18

September 1946 at Abbeyfeale, Limerick, Ireland and he made his first Salesian profession on 15 August 1966 in the novitiate in Warrenstown. He followed the normal Salesian course of formation and made his perpetual profession on 01-11-1973. He studied theology at the Maynooth studentate and was ordained priest on 19 June 1977.

After priestly ordination he worked in the houses of Maynooth (1977-1981) and then Ballinakill, where he was Rector between 1987 and 1990. In 1990 he was appointed Vice Provincial and two years later Provincial of Ireland, a role he held until 1999. Since 2001 he has been Rector of the house in Limerick. Now he has been once again called to lead the Province.

7. *LÓPEZ PERDROSA Joaquín, Provincial of ROSARIO, Argentina.*

Fr Joaquín LÓPEZ PEDROSA is the new Provincial of the *ROSARIO, Argentina Province*.

He succeeds *Fr P. Carlos Bosio*.

Born on 15 July 1942 at Guadix (Granada), Spain, Joaquín López Pedrosa became a Salesian on 16 August 1959, when he made his first profession at San José del Valle. While still a student he left for Argentina and completed his

studies and practical training in the Bahía Blanca Province. Perpetually professed on 31-01-1965, he studied theology in Rome, where he was ordained priest on 17 May 1970.

After priestly ordination he carried out his ministry in various houses in the Bahía Blanca Province with various positions of responsibility: as Rector of the house of Bahía Blanca – Don Zatti (1979-1982), Bahía Blanca – Don Bosco (1986-1989 and 2002-2004), Bahía Blanca – Provincial Infirmary (1990-1991). He was a Provincial Councillor for three years 1982-1985, and between 1987 and 1997 he was Vice Provincial. Between 1997 and 2002 he was Provincial of Bahía Blanca. Now he becomes Provincial of Rosario.

8. *SOSIO Agostino, Provincial of the LOMBARD-EMILIAN, Milan Province.*

The new Provincial of the LOMBARD-EMILIAN Province with headquarters in Milan is Fr Agostino SOSIO, who succeeds Fr Eugenio Riva.

Agostino Sosio was born on 27 January 1954 at Valdidentro (Sondrio), Italy, and made his first Salesian profession on 1 September 1974 in the novitiate at Albarè

di Costernano (VR). After philosophical studies at Nave (BS) and practical training he studied theology at Turin-Crocetta. Perpetually professed in 1981, he was ordained priest at Brescia on 2 October 1982.

After priestly ordination he spent some years in the house in Sondrio, where he was also Rector between 1995 and 2001. Since 2001 he has been Rector and parish priest in the house at Arese-Parrocchia, and member of the Lombard-Emilian Provincial Council. Now he called to be Provincial.

9. *SUSAI Amalraj, Provincial of the TIRUCHY, India Province.*

To succeed Fr James Theophilus leading the “N. S. di Vellankanny” Province with headquarters in TIRUCHY Fr SUSAI Amalraj has been appointed.

Born on 9 February 1957 at Iru-dayakovil-Madurai (Tamil Nadu, India), Amalraj Susai made his first Salesian profession on 24 May 1976 at Yercaud, in the Madras Province. He followed the normal formation programme with philosophical studies and practical training. Perpetually professed on 24 May 1982, he was sent to Rome for theological studies and ob-

tained a Licence in Theology. He was ordained priest on 9 May 1987. He continued studies in Rome and obtained a Doctorate in Philosophy.

After priestly ordination he exercised his ministry in various communities first in the Madras Province and then from 1999 in the Tiruchy Province in which he was incardinated. Among his posts of responsibility he was Rector: at Coimbatore – Vellakinar in 1995-1996, at Coimbatore – Manikandam between 2000 and 2002, at Yercaud between 1996 and 2000 and again from 2003. Between 1999 and 2002 he was also Vice Provincial of Tiruchy.

10. *SWAMIKANNU Stanislaus, Provincial of the MADRAS, India Province.*

Fr Stanislaus SWAMIKANNU is the new Provincial of “St Thomas the Apostle” Province of Chennai (Madras). He succeeds *Fr Bellarmine Fernando*.

Born on 18 April 1958 at Gudalore (Tamil Nadu, India), he became a Salesian on 24 May 1978, when he made his first religious profession in the novitiate at Yercaud. After philosophical studies and practical training he made his perpetual profession on 24 May

1984. For theological studies he was sent to Belgium to the theologate in Oud-Heverlee. On 18 August 1988 he was ordained priest in his home town. He then completed his studies, obtaining a Licence in Spiritual Theology and a Doctorate in Philosophy.

He carried out his educational and pastoral ministry in several houses of the Madras Province, in particular: at Yercaud, where he was a teacher and Vice Rector of the community, at Madras – Egmore, as Rector (1998-2002) and at Madras – Citadel, as Rector (2003-2005). Between 1999 and 2002 he was a Provincial Councillor and since 2003 Vice Provincial, until his present appointment as Provincial.

11. *THEPHARAT PITISANT John Bosco, Provincial of the THAILAND Province.*

To succeed *Mgr. Joseph Prathan*, appointed Bishop, as Provincial of the Province of Thailand *Fr THEPHARAT PITISANT John Bosco* has been appointed.

Born on 16 November 1951 in Bangkok, Thailand, he became a Salesian on 1 May 1971, when he made his first profession in the novitiate in Canlubang. He then followed the normal formation

programme. Perpetually professed on 22-03-1978, he was ordained priest at Bangkok on 6 June 1982.

After priestly ordination he carried out his ministry in several houses in Thailand: Hua Hin (1985-1991), Banpong - Sarasit (where he was first a councillor and then Rector between 1995 and 2001), Ban Saeng Arun (2001-2004). Between 1996 and 2001 he was a Provincial Councillor.

12. *TSHIBANGU Joaquim, Provincial of the CENTRAL AFRICAN Province.*

Fr Joaquim TSHIBANGU is the new Provincial of the "Maria Assunta" Province of *CENTRAL AFRICA* (D R. Congo, Rwanda, Burundi). He succeeds *Fr Camiel Swertvagher*, at the end of his six year period in office.

Joaquim Tshibangu, born on 5 October 1960 at Mwene-Ditu, Kasai Orientale (Dem.Rep.Congo) made his first Salesian profession on 24 August 1985, after the novitiate in Kansebula. After philosophical studies in the postnovitiate at Kansebula and practical training he studied theology at the Salesian Theologate in Lubumbashi. Perpetually professed on 7 July 1991, he was ordained a

priest at Lubumbashi on 17 June 1993.

After priestly ordination he carried out his ministry for two year at Kansebula (1993-1995), then at Lubumbashi, at the "Home Zanin" (1995-1996). Between 1996 and 1999 he was in Rome-UPS for further studies. He then worked in the house of Lubumbashi-Salama, where he was Principal and Rector (2000-2004). A Provincial Councillor since 2000, in 2004 he was appointed Vice Provincial and now Provincial.

13. *TURANSKY Stefan, Provincial of the SLOVACCHIA Province.*

To lead the *SLOVACCHIA Province* *Fr Stefan TURANSKY*, has been chosen to succeed *Fr Vladimir Fekete*.

He was born on 11 September 1956 at Selenca (in what was then Jugoslavia), and became a Salesian on 12 September 1976, when he made his first profession at Lanuvio (Roman Province), where he had spent his novitiate year. He continued his postnovitiate and theological studies in Italy. Perpetually professed on 18 September 1983, he was ordained priest on 27 July 1985 at Selenca, his birthplace.

After priestly ordination he spent a year at the UPS, where he obtained a Licence in Theology, and then from 1986 until 1990 he worked in the Slovak Salesian community in Rome. Returning to Slovakia he was Provincial Secretary (1990-1993) and from 1993 Provincial Councillor. He then worked in the Žilina community as Vice Rector and then Rector. Since 2002 he has been Rector of Bratislava - Dúbravka.

14. *WONG Andrew, Provincial of the NORTH PHILIPPINE Province.*

Fr Andrew WONG is the new Provincial of the NORTH PHILIPPINE Province. He succeeds *Fr Francis Gustilo*, at the end of his six year period in office.

Born on 30 November 1952 at Trinity (Rizal), in the Philippines, Andrew Wong made his first profession on 1st May 1972 at Canlubang, where he had made his novitiate and where he also did his postnovitiate studies. For practical training he was in the aspirantate in San Fernando, and then he studied theology at the Salesian studentate in Parañaque, Metro Manila. Perpetually professed on 22-03-1978, he was ordained priest in Manila on 7 December 1979.

On account of his gifts he was soon involved in formation. After a few years in the studentate of theology in Parañaque, he was appointed Director of Novices in Canlubang, a role he continued to exercise – as well as that of Rector – at Bacolod-Granada, in South Philippines, when the novitiate was transferred there (1991). In 1992 he also became Provincial Councillor in South Philippines.

In 1994 the Superiors sent him to Indonesia. After a year as Rector of the formation community in Jakarta, in 1995 he was appointed Rector and Director of Novices in the novitiate at Fatumaka, a post he held until 1998, when he was appointed Superior of the Vice Province of East Timor – Indonesia. Now at the end of his six year mandate he has been appointed Provincial of North Philippines.

15. *ZABALA TORRES Juan Pablo, Provincial of the BOLIVIA Province.*

To lead the Province of BOLIVIA *Fr Juan Pablo ZABALA TORRES* has been appointed to succeed *Fr Miguel Angel Herrero*.

Juan Pablo Zabala was born on 15 January 1965 at La Paz, Bolivia, and became a Salesian on 12 February 1985 when he made his first

profession, at the end of his novitiate year at Chosica. For philosophical and pedagogical studies he was in Rome, where he attended the UPS, while living in the San Tarcisio community. In Rome he also did his practical training. Perpetually professed on 31-01-1992, for theology he was sent to the Paul VI Theologate in Santiago Chile. He was ordained priest in La Paz on 24 September 1994.

After priestly ordination he worked for three years in the house of Cochabamba - Quintanilla (1995-1998), and then was Provincial Secretary (1997-1999). In 1999 he returned to Cochabamba - Quintanilla and was appointed to the Provincial Council. Since 2002 he has been Vice Provincial, and now becomes Provincial.

5.7 New Salesian Bishop

PINHEIRO da SILVA Eduardo,
Auxiliary Bishop
of Campo Grande (Brazil)

On 2 March 2005 the Vatican Press Office published the news of the appointment by the Holy Father of the Salesian priest *Eduardo PINHEIRO da SILVA* as *Auxiliary*

Bishop of CAMPO GRANDE (Brazil), with the titular see of Gisipa.

Eduardo Pinheiro da Silva, born on 20 January 1959 at Lins, in the State of São Paulo (Brazil), made his first Salesian religious profession on 16 January 1982 at São Carlos, where he had made his novitiate. He did his philosophical studies at the *Faculdade de Ciências e Letras* in Lorena, and after practical training (at Campinas), studied theology at the Pius XI Institute in São Paulo. Perpetually professed on 13-01-1985, he was ordained priest at Lins on 19 January 1991.

After priestly ordination he worked for several years in the "Paul VI" postnovitiate in Campo Grande where he was first Vice Rector and then Rector (between 1998 and 2001). He spent some time in Rome where he specialised in Pastoral Pedagogy and Youth Ministry at the UPS. Between 2000 and 2002 he was Provincial Councillor. He was also Provincial coordinator of Youth Ministry. Since 2003 he has been in the community in Araçatuba, as Vice Rector, Scholastic Coordinator and Pastoral animator.

5.8 Salesian personnel at 31 December 2004

Prov.	Tot. 2003	Temp. Professed				Perp. Professed				Tot. Professed	Novices	Tot. 2004
		L	S	D	P	L	S	D	P			
AET	108	15	33	0	0	16	5	0	34	103	8	111
AFC	273	9	77	0	0	32	16	0	120	254	23	277
AFE	173	3	38	0	0	20	14	0	89	164	15	179
AFM	62	3	7	0	0	7	1	0	41	59	0	59
AFO	120	1	33	0	0	15	5	0	63	117	6	123
AFW	0	9	33	0	0	11	5	0	34	92	12	104
ANG	63	4	15	0	0	7	2	0	32	60	6	66
ATE	121	13	39	0	0	9	4	0	55	120	6	126
ANT	177	5	29	0	0	12	10	0	112	168	12	180
ABA	141	1	11	0	1	14	2	0	103	132	0	132
ABB	112	2	5	0	0	9	4	0	86	106	0	106
ACO	135	4	15	0	0	15	3	0	93	130	5	135
ALP	83	4	5	0	0	10	3	0	54	76	2	78
ARO	122	7	16	0	0	11	2	0	81	117	4	121
AUL	122	3	12	0	0	14	11	0	76	116	2	118
AUS	92	0	1	0	0	9	0	0	77	87	1	88
BEN	191	0	2	0	0	20	2	0	161	185	0	185
BES	72	0	0	0	0	11	0	0	56	67	1	68
BOL	153	5	28	0	0	17	11	0	84	145	8	153
BBH	168	5	25	0	0	24	2	0	101	157	10	167
BCG	143	5	18	0	0	18	6	0	89	136	12	148
BMA	107	2	16	0	0	14	0	0	71	103	10	113
BPA	102	1	9	0	0	8	2	0	79	99	3	102
BRE	104	2	23	0	0	13	6	0	51	95	7	102
BSP	168	3	24	0	0	20	3	0	110	160	8	168
CAM	210	2	17	0	0	28	3	0	153	203	3	206
CAN	35	0	2	0	0	5	0	0	30	37	1	38
CEP	184	3	11	0	0	11	2	1	152	180	1	181
CIL	207	3	25	0	0	15	7	0	147	197	6	203
CIN	128	1	3	0	0	31	4	1	89	129	1	130
COB	169	3	27	0	1	21	1	0	110	163	11	174
COM	172	5	32	0	0	14	5	0	104	160	13	173
CRO	78	0	3	0	0	3	2	0	67	75	3	78
ECU	221	4	20	0	0	24	4	0	156	208	7	215
EST	124	1	21	0	0	2	8	0	83	115	4	119
FIN	213	7	31	0	0	18	9	0	143	208	8	216
FIS	100	1	20	0	0	11	5	0	66	103	0	103
FRA	250	0	3	0	0	36	3	0	193	235	0	235
GBR	106	0	0	0	0	9	0	0	84	93	3	96
GEK	161	0	2	0	0	32	1	0	96	131	1	132
GEM	242	1	5	0	0	51	1	1	177	236	1	237
GIA	131	0	6	0	0	18	6	0	98	128	1	129
HAI	66	2	14	0	0	2	9	0	32	59	3	62
INB	292	1	49	0	1	12	7	0	133	203	19	222
INC	284	5	42	0	0	21	13	0	143	224	14	238
IND	235	3	61	0	0	6	10	0	141	221	9	230
ING	380	12	115	0	0	21	19	0	206	373	13	386
INH	180	4	54	0	0	7	5	0	101	171	8	179
INK	321	3	84	0	0	9	36	0	173	305	18	323
INM	388	8	53	0	0	16	30	0	217	324	15	339
INN	148	5	45	0	0	13	12	0	66	141	13	154
INP	0	0	18	0	0	7	7	0	51	83	5	88

Prov.	Tot. 2003	Temp. Professed				Perp. Professed				Tot. Professed	Novices	Tot. 2004
		L	S	D	P	L	S	D	P			
INT	182	5	76	0	0	4	16	0	77	178	22	200
IRL	101	0	5	0	0	8	2	0	83	98	0	98
IAD	137	0	7	0	0	20	2	0	89	118	1	119
ICP	671	3	15	0	0	161	16	1	427	623	2	625
ILE	377	7	20	0	0	51	7	0	280	365	6	371
ILT	187	1	17	0	0	21	8	1	138	186	0	186
IME	291	1	27	0	0	33	8	0	211	280	4	284
INE	437	1	25	0	0	85	13	1	305	430	6	436
IRO	244	1	8	0	0	46	1	1	176	233	1	234
ISA	68	0	5	0	0	5	0	0	59	69	0	69
ISI	274	0	21	0	0	22	1	1	223	268	1	269
ITM	149	16	67	0	0	7	10	1	43	144	25	169
KOR	114	8	28	0	0	18	2	0	57	113	4	117
LKC	0	2	32	0	0	2	0	0	26	62	6	68
MDG	90	1	24	0	0	6	2	0	46	79	5	84
MEG	219	9	36	0	0	13	18	0	137	213	5	218
MEM	177	5	28	0	0	13	13	1	113	173	2	175
MOR	118	1	10	0	0	16	5	0	86	118	3	121
MYM	0	1	20	0	0	1	4	0	22	48	4	52
OLA	64	0	0	0	0	17	1	1	40	59	0	59
PAR	107	5	15	0	0	5	5	0	70	100	4	104
PER	161	8	29	0	0	11	10	0	90	148	7	155
PLE	324	5	27	0	0	16	26	0	237	311	6	317
PLN	314	2	48	0	0	12	11	0	221	294	13	307
PLO	233	1	26	0	0	2	10	0	185	224	6	230
PLS	234	2	20	0	1	9	7	0	189	228	5	233
POR	191	2	16	0	0	39	6	1	116	180	4	184
SLK	242	8	43	0	0	12	14	0	162	239	5	244
SLO	111	0	2	0	0	9	2	0	96	109	0	109
SBA	189	0	3	0	0	31	0	1	145	180	0	180
SBI	201	2	7	0	0	50	5	1	133	198	0	198
SCO	105	1	7	0	0	5	5	0	89	107	3	110
SLE	215	3	3	0	0	71	0	0	140	217	0	217
SMA	318	0	9	0	0	80	10	0	211	310	0	310
SSE	151	1	6	0	0	23	6	0	110	146	1	147
SVA	165	0	6	0	0	26	6	1	123	162	3	165
SUE	186	1	10	0	0	35	2	0	134	182	0	182
SUO	123	1	2	0	0	22	3	0	77	105	0	105
THA	89	0	10	0	0	14	7	0	57	88	0	88
UNG	43	0	1	0	0	4	1	0	32	38	0	38
URU	118	0	11	0	0	6	4	0	89	110	0	110
VEN	235	7	39	0	1	16	10	0	148	221	5	226
VIE	219	5	76	0	0	23	33	0	74	211	35	246
ZMB	64	4	6	0	0	5	3	0	42	60	8	68
UPS	129	0	0	0	0	11	0	0	120	131	0	131
RMG	79	0	0	0	0	16	0	0	67	83	0	83
T.	16583	300	2170	0	5	1901	643	15	10958	15992	544	16536
Ep.	109									109 (*)		109(*)
Tot.	16692	300	2170	0	5	1901	643	15	10958	16101	544	16645

Note (*): At 31 December 2004 there are 108 Bishops + 1 Prefect Apostolic

5.9 Our dead confreres (5th list 2004 and 1st list 2005)

"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 2004 – 5th list

NOTE: We print a 5th list of those the news of whose death in 2004 arrived after the publication of AGC388.

SURNAME AND NAME	PLACE of death	DATE	AGE	PROV
L CUCA Augusto	Cumiana	29/12/2004	84	ICP
P DELHAYE Arthur	Banneux (Belgio)	25/12/2004	87	BES
P DOMENICI Ariento	Araçatuba (Brasile)	25/12/2004	83	BCG
P GABRIELI Benito	Treviglio (BG)	16/12/2004	71	ILE
P GARCIA Francisco Manuel	Manique (Portogallo)	30/11/2004	85	POR
L GAŠPAREC Stanislav	Zagreb (Croazia)	01/12/2004	92	CRO
P GILSON Jules	Verviers (Belgio)	19/05/2004	96	BES
P JAKSE Josef	Wien (Austria)	31/12/2004	96	AUS
P MARTINO Luis Vicente	La Plata (Argentina)	30/08/2004	97	ALP
L PARONZINI Carlo	Caserta	28/12/2004	93	IME
P PASINO Pietro	Bahía Blanca (Argentina)	09/12/2004	89	ABB
P PIRES Moisés	Porto (Portogallo)	27/10/2004	83	POR
P PLANITA Josef	Vizovice (Rep. Ceca)	08/12/2004	77	CEP
P PROVINZANO Salvatore	Ibarra (Ecuador)	25/12/2004	65	ECU
L SERA Loreto	Roma	15/12/2004	80	IRO
P SOKOL Alfred	Ramsey (NJ, USA)	19/12/2004	93	SUE
P STEFANELLI Eugenio	Treviglio (BG)	16/12/2004	90	ILE
P TSHIFUFU MBAYA Boniface	Lubumbashi (Congo R.D.)	21/12/2004	41	AFC
L VALENTE Domingos	Porto (Portogallo)	30/09/2004	57	POR

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Deceased 2005 - 1st list

SURNAME AND NAME	PLACE of death	DATE	AGE	PROV
P ALIBRANDI Giovanni	Pedara (CT)	22/01/2005	71	ISI
P ARCONADA GONZÁLEZ Macario	León (Spagna)	24/02/2005	79	SLE
L ARISTU IRIARTE Bonifacio	Barcelona (Spagna)	26/01/2005	93	SBA
P AYALA GIL DE MONTES Rafael	Córdoba (Spagna)	02/01/2005	77	SCO
P BARTECKI Jan	Warszawa (Polonia)	19/01/2005	90	PLE
L BERTARINI Riccardo	Arese (MI)	10/02/2005	76	ILE
P BRUNETTO Francesco	Messina	19/02/2005	82	ISI
P CALIMAN Cleto	Vitória (Brasile)	06/02/2005	90	BBH
P CAÑIZARES Marcelo	Córdoba (Argentina)	08/01/2004	48	ACO
P CASALI Brenno	Roma	08/01/2005	84	RMG
P CASETTA Mario	Roma	05/02/2005	69	IRO
P CASSANO Giovanni	Torino	12/03/2005	73	ICP

P CASTALDI Giorgio	Portici (NA)	02/01/2005	84	IME
P CASTANO Luigi	Arese (MI)	26/01/2005	95	ILE
Fu per 18 anni Procuratore Generale				
P CAUWENBERGH Frans	Gent (Belgio)	04/02/2005	86	BEN
P CORCORAN Edward	Chennai (India)	27/01/2005	89	INM
P DÁVILA DELGADO José Albino	Caracas (Venezuela)	13/02/2005	86	VEN
P DEL TORO Antonio	Firenze	02/03/2005	77	ILT
P DI GUARDI Santi	Messina	27/01/2005	91	ISI
P FERRARI Ivo	San Donà di Piave (VE)	05/01/2005	90	INE
P FESTINO Giovanni Battista	Castellammare di Stabia (NA)	16/01/2005	81	IME
P FRANGI Gino	Roma	25/02/2005	76	UPS
P GALLO Giuseppe	Toulon (Francia)	13/02/2005	91	FRA
L GAMBA Adolfo	Negrar (Verona)	23/02/2005	83	INE
P GIANNOTTA Rosario	Pedara (CT)	24/02/2005	91	ISI
P GIORGI Vincenzo	Varazze (SV)	12/01/2005	89	ILT
P GLOGOWSKI Paul	Stockholm (Svezia)	13/01/2005	90	GEK
P GLUSTICH Marcello	Varazze (SV)	28/02/2005	85	ILT
E GOTTARDI Giuseppe	Montevideo (Uruguay)	07/03/2005	81	-
Fu per 7 anni Ispettore, per quattro mesi Consigliere Generale, per 3 anni Vescovo Ausiliare di Mercedes e per 10 anni Ausiliare di Montevideo, quindi per 13 anni Arcivescovo di Montevideo (Uruguay)				
P GRIGOLETTO Ferruccio	Savona	17/01/2005	83	ILT
P HANNAUER Paul	Mulhouse (Francia)	11/03/2005	87	FRA
P KONIECZNY Witold	Pila (Polonia)	04/02/2005	85	PLN
P KRUSE Karl	Torino	03/01/2005	84	ICP
P KULCZYCKI Kazimierz	Warszawa (Polonia)	18/01/2005	63	ZMB
P LACHAIZE Jean	Lyon (Francia)	31/01/2005	80	FRA
P MARRONE Antonio	Castellammare di Stabia (NA)	16/02/2005	90	IME
Fu Ispettore per 12 anni				
P MARTÍN MARTÍNEZ José	Arévalo (Spagna)	21/01/2005	87	SMA
P MASON Antonio	Torino	08/03/2005	82	ICP
L MASQUELIN Jef	Wilrijk (Antwerpen, Belgio)	10/01/2005	84	BEN
P MÍŠA Frantisek	Hradek Králové (Rep. Ceca)	03/03/2005	92	CEP
Fu Ispettore per 12 anni				
L NÉMETH Imre	Mezőnyárád	24/01/2005	92	UNG
P NEUMÜLLER Karl	Unterwaltersdorf (Austria)	14/03/2005	87	AUS
P PASTORBONI Ennio	Civitanova Marche (MC)	03/03/2005	88	IAD
P PAZHAYAMPALLIL Thomas	Bangalore (India)	20/02/2005	75	INK
L PENARD Jean-Marie	Toulon (Francia)	13/03/2005	88	FRA
E PEYROU Eugenio Santiago	Ushuaia (Argentina)	03/03/2005	91	-
Eletto Vescovo nel 1964, fu Vescovo di Comodoro Rivadavia (Argentina) per 10 anni				
P PINTO DUARTE Firmo	Cuiabá (MT, Brasile)	09/02/2005	77	BCG
P PIOT Marcel	Caen (Francia)	19/01/2005	86	FRA
P RODRIGUEZ JIMÉNEZ Víctor	La Orotava (Tenerife, Spagna)	04/03/2005	77	SCO
L RUSSO Sebastiano	Torino	26/02/2005	94	ICP
L SERAFIN Mario	Cagliari	19/02/2005	83	ISA
P SOLAR Stefan	Toulon (Francia)	16/02/2005	90	FRA
P SUCHAN Ludovit	Beppu (Giappone)	05/01/2005	83	GIA
P SZÉLIGA Thomasz	Montreal (Canada)	02/02/2005	89	CAN
P TESTA Giovanni	Torino	02/03/2005	80	ICP
P THOMSON John	Frimley Park (Gran Bretagna)	10/01/2005	90	GBR
P VAN DEN BERK Theo	Heusden (Limburg, Belgio)	18/01/2005	76	BEN
P ZANELLA Ludovico	Torino	04/02/2005	92	ICP
Fu Ispettore per sei anni				
P ZULIANI Atilio	Pilar (Bs. As.), Argentina	07/01/2005	91	ABA

