



acts

of the general council

year LXXXVII january-march 2006

N. 392

**official organ
of animation
and communication
for the
salesian congregation**

**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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**“AND JESUS INCREASED IN WISDOM AND IN YEARS
AND IN FAVOUR WITH GOD AND MAN” (Lk 2,52)**

An unforgettable experience. - THE STRENNA for 2006. - 1. Dangers and threats facing the family at the present day. - An environment unfavourable for the family. - An easy 'solution', divorce. - Privatisation of marriage. - False expectations about marriage. - Economic and consumer factors in family life. - 2. The family, the way by which the Son of God became man. - 3. Family life and the Salesian charism. - 3.1 "In the beginning the mother was there". - 3.1.1 A brief biographical sketch. - a) Before the move to Valdocco (from 1788 to 1846). - b) Ten years with Don Bosco (from 1846 to 1856). - 3.1.2 Spiritual profile of Mamma Margaret. - a) a strong woman. - b) a 'Salesian' educator. - an effective catechist. - d) the first cooperator. - 3.2 Valdocco, "a family that educates". - 4. The family as mission. - 4.1. "Family, make yourself what you should truly be". - The cell of society. - Sanctuary of life. - Proclaimer of the gospel of life. - School of social commitment. - 4.2. "Family, have faith in your true role". - 5. Pastoral and pedagogical applications. - So here are my suggestions. - Some practical proposals. - Conclusion: a legend flavoured with wisdom.

1 January 2006

Solemnity of Mary Mother of God

My dear Confreres,

I am writing to you at the beginning of the New Year on the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God, and I pray that it may be a time of grace that will enable us to grow "in wisdom and in years and in favour with God and man", as did Jesus.

For a proper understanding of the motherly role of Mary with regard to her son Jesus in all its depth and richness, we must begin from the central mystery of our faith: the incarnation of the Son of God who – in St Paul's words – "emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men" (*Phil 2,7*).

This radical humanity of the Emmanuel (*God-with-us*), Jesus Christ, implies an essential human trait: its historical nature, the fact that being human lies in being and becoming, in a developing self-realisation throughout life, that is never finished. This is a characteristic found also in Jesus who, according to Luke's gospel, "increased in wisdom and in years and in favour with God and man" (*Lk 2,52*). This is a perspective that throws a wonderful light on Mary who, together with Joseph, was given the mission of

“educating” Jesus, of helping him to develop the powers of his being human, in a way similar to that of every mother with her children. The case of Jesus is certainly unique because his defining centre, which constitutes his eternal being, is that he is the Son of the Heavenly Father. And so this divine sonship gradually developed in him in a human fashion thanks to the educative action of Mary, and without any doubt of Joseph too who was the father-figure in the Holy Family of Nazareth and who, together with the mother, played an indispensable part in the full maturing of the child into manhood.

And there, dear confreres, you have the priceless mission of the family: to help children to attain to full human stature, which is that of Christ. Nowadays, unfortunately, the family is beset by an enormous challenge, that of recovering its nature and its mission. This explains what lies behind the Strenna for 2006 which I shall now present to you. But first let me tell you about an unforgettable experience.

An unforgettable experience

Although in the last three months since my last letter there have been many events I could share with you, including the Symposium on Consecrated Life and the Plenary Session of the Congregation for Consecrated Life in which I took part, and the Synod on the Eucharist, I prefer to tell you of another event that moved me deeply.

On 12 November 2005 I lived through one of the most wonderful and meaningful experiences not only of my Salesian life but of my entire human life. I had gone to Valdocco, among other things, for the official recognition of the body of Don Bosco, and I must say that what happened far surpassed all my expectations.

I had asked the Provincial and the Rector of the Basilica that, before the official function took place in the presence of the competent authorities and representatives of the SDB and FMA, I could remain alone with Don Bosco, beside his body, to pray.

And so I went down to the Chapel of the Relics, and as soon as my eyes fell on the body of my beloved Father, no longer in the urn in which it is normally enclosed and exposed for the veneration of the faithful, I felt a deep emotion.

With great reverence I drew near and stood at his feet, so as to see him completely. The first thing that struck me was a special kind of feeling that I was not standing before the mortal remains of a loved one, but before a living person. That is how it seemed from his serene and smiling face, I seemed to hear him saying to his boys of the Valdocco Oratory: "Don Bosco will never really die as long as he lives in you".

I was thinking of so many people and situations in the Congregation, the Salesian Family, and the young people that I have at heart; and while I was speaking to Don Bosco about them and entrusting them to him, my prayer developed into a long expression of thanksgiving.

As I recalled that since 1929 Don Bosco's body had been there in that urn we know so well, without it ever being opened, it seemed that I had been called at that moment of grace to take the place of all the Salesians, the members of the Salesian Family, our young people, our lay collaborators, and in fact all those who identify in some way with Don Bosco, to thank him from the bottom of my heart for all that he has been, for all that he has done, for everything he has passed on to us.

We are in fact millions of persons who, in all five continents, have made our own his dreams and convictions, his apostolic activity and spiritual zeal.

As I looked at his serene and smiling face, I said to myself: "But how did you manage to do so much in life without being robbed of joy and peace and energy? I don't know how many things passed through your mind, but of one thing I am certain – it was always filled with concern for God and the young, as two inseparable poles around which your whole life turned, feeling yourself sent by Him to them and by them to Him".

The more I looked at him, the more I wanted to bring him to life again in myself and wanted all Salesians to do the same. I wanted to have his mind and heart, his hands and feet, to meet reality as he did, seeing it from the standpoint of God and the young, so as to decide with creativity and generosity what has to be done at the present day, the responses to be given to the needs and expectations of today's youngsters. I wanted to be able to work hard for the young with the enterprise that characterised his own life to his last breath. I wanted to be a missionary to young people and go and look for them in the streets of Turin and its surroundings as representing all the streets and districts of the world.

Suddenly I heard steps approaching and realised how much time had passed. I greeted the people who arrived, and with great devotion we began the official recognition, after which we made a decision for the better preservation of Don Bosco's body. I must bear witness to the extreme care that had been taken by the confreres who had made the necessary arrangements for the body in 1929. Everything had been beautifully prepared and decorated: from the embroidered couch to the amice and alb embellished by the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, and to the richly adorned chasuble with which he was vested; it had been a gift of Pope Benedict XV to Fr Paul Albera. When all was finished I was invited to take his head in my hands; I kissed it with reverence and gratitude in the name of all, and gave it to those present so that they could kiss it too.

THE STRENNA FOR 2006

Now that I have opened my heart to you, I want to provide a commentary on this year's Strenna.

"The challenge of life" – said Pope John Paul II of revered memory in his last address to the Diplomatic Corps in January 2005 – "has also emerged with regard to the very sanctuary of life: *the family*. Today the family is often threatened by social and cultural pressures which tend to undermine its stability; but in

some countries the family is also threatened by legislation which – at times directly – challenges its natural structure, which is and must necessarily be that of a union between a man and a woman founded on marriage. The family, as a fruitful source of life and a fundamental and irreplaceable condition for the happiness of the individual spouses, for the raising of children and for the well-being of society, and indeed for the material prosperity of the nation, must never be undermined by laws based on a narrow and unnatural vision of man. There needs to prevail a just, pure and elevated understanding of human love, which finds in the family its primordial and exemplary expression.¹

Accepting the Pope's invitation to defend life through the family, and prompted by the 150th anniversary of the death of Mamma Margaret, mother of the educative family created by Don Bosco at Valdocco, I have thought it well to invite the Salesian Family to renew the commitment to

**Ensuring that special attention be given to the family,
the cradle of life and love
and where one first learns how to become human.**

If it is through mankind that the Church fulfils its role, it is through the family that men and women pursue their destiny, the natural setting in which they open themselves to life and to their role in society. It is the place where their affective life flowers, the context in which they come to know themselves. The place where they learn to become human, the means by which their religious sensibilities develop, the family provides that stability necessary for the harmonious growth of the children and for the educational mission of the parents in their regard.

Believing in its crucial importance for the future of the human race and of the Church, John Paul II made the family one of the priorities of his pastoral programme for the Church in the third

¹ *Osservatore Romano*, 10-11 January 2005, p. 5.

millennium: “Special attention must also be given to *the pastoral care of the family*, particularly when this fundamental institution is experiencing a radical and widespread crisis... It is necessary to ensure that through an ever more complete Gospel formation Christian families show convincingly that it is possible to live marriage fully in keeping with God’s plan and with the true good of the human person — of the spouses, and of the children who are more fragile.”²

1. Dangers and threats facing the family at the present day

John Paul II’s thought has been taken up by Pope Benedict XVI who in his addresses has spoken of the family as: “a crucial issue that demands of us the maximum pastoral attention”; (...) “it is deeply rooted in the hearts of the young generations and bears the brunt of many problems, providing support and remedies to situations that would otherwise be desperate. Yet families in today’s cultural atmosphere are exposed to the many risks and threats with which we are all familiar. The inner frailty and instability of many conjugal unions is combined with the widespread social and cultural tendency to dispute the unique character and special mission of the family founded on marriage”.³

■ *An environment unfavourable for the family*

Nowadays we find put forward with a certain ease and superficiality so-called “alternatives” to the family, described as “traditional”. And so attention moves from the problem of divorce to that of ‘de facto’ couples, from the treatment of infertility in women to medically assisted procreation, from abortion to research and manipulation of stem-cells obtained from embryos, from the problem of the contraceptive pill to the morning-after

² *Novo millennio ineunte*, n. 47.

³ Audience for participants in the 53rd General Assembly of the Italian Bishop’s Conference, *Oss Rom* 30-31 May 2005, p. 5.

pill, which is simply abortive. The legalisation of abortion is almost a world-wide phenomenon. The granting of family rights and advantages to transitory couples who do not want to commit themselves formally even to civil marriage is now also taking place. This is the case with the official recognition of “‘de facto’ unions” including homosexual couples who sometimes even seek adoption rights, in this way giving rise to very serious psychological, social and legal problems.

The face – the real nature – of the family has therefore changed. To what has already been said above needs to be added a marked preference for a form of increasing “privatisation” and a tendency towards a reduction in the size of the family, moving from a model of the “multigenerational family” to the “nuclear family” which is then limited to father, mother and just one child. Even more serious is the fact that to a large extent public opinion no longer recognises in the family, founded on marriage, the basic cell of society and a benefit that one cannot do without.

■ *An easy ‘solution’. divorce*

In the light of this cultural climate, present especially in western society, I think it opportune to recall a passage of the Gospel in which Jesus speaks of marriage: “Some Pharisees came, and to test him they asked, ‘Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?’ He answered them, ‘What did Moses command you?’ They said, ‘Moses allowed a man to write a certificate of dismissal and to divorce her.’ But Jesus said to them, ‘Because of your hardness of heart he wrote this commandment for you. But from the beginning of creation, “*God made them male and female. For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh*”. So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.’ (Mk 10,2-9).

In my opinion this is a very enlightening text, because it refers to marriage as the origin and basis of the family, but especially

because it shows us Jesus' line of argument. He does not fall into the trap of legalism, about what is permitted and what is prohibited, but begins from the original plan of the Creator; no one knew God's original design better than he did, and it is in this design that we find the "Good News" of the family.

While we recognise that there are indeed many families living the value of a stable and faithful union, we must nevertheless accept the fact that the precarious nature of the marriage bond is one of the characteristics of the contemporary world. It spares no continent and can be found at every social level. It is a practice that often makes the family frail and compromises the educative mission of the parents. If such instability is not removed, and worse still if it is taken for granted, it frequently leads to separation or divorce, which are considered the only way out of crises that develop.

A mentality of this kind weakens a married couple and puts their personal frailty at greater risk. Giving up without a struggle happens all too frequently. A proper understanding of the value of marriage and a firm faith on the other hand could help in overcoming with courage and dignity even the most serious difficulties.

Of divorce, in fact, it must be said that it is not just a question of a juridical nature. It is not a "crisis" that passes away. It leaves a deep and lasting effect on human experience. It is a problem of a relationship, and a relationship destroyed. It leaves an indelible mark on every member of the family. It causes financial, affective and human impoverishment, the consequences of which are felt particularly by the wife and children. And to all this must be added the social costs which are always very high.

I would like to point out that the elements contributing to the present increase in the divorce rate are of different kinds, even after allowing for minor variations from one country to another. The cultural environment must be kept in mind first of all which is becoming ever more secularised, and from it flow as characteristic elements a false concept of freedom, fear of commitment, the practice of cohabitation, the "trivialisation of sex" (to use the expres-

sion of John Paul II), as well as the financial constraints that are sometimes a contributing cause of such separations. Lifestyles, fashions, spectacles, tv soaps, all cast doubt on the value of marriage, and by spreading the idea that the mutual self-giving of man and wife even until death is something impossible, weaken and make fragile the family institution, causing it to lose esteem and the point is reached of dismissing it in favour of other "models" of a pseudo-family.

■ *Privatisation of marriage*

Among the phenomena we are witnessing we must also emphasise the emergence of a radical individualism manifested in numerous spheres of human activity: in economic life, in cut-throat competition, in social rivalry, in disdain for the marginalised, and in many other fields. Individualism of this kind does nothing to promote generous, faithful and permanent self-giving. And it is certainly not a cultural frame of mind that can help in the solving of marriage crises.

The result is that state authorities, responsible for the common good and social cohesion, themselves foster this very individualism by allowing it full expression through relevant laws (e.g. in the case of "civil partnership contracts"), which are presented, at least implicitly, as an alternative to marriage. The matter becomes still worse when it is question of homosexual unions, in which even the right to adopt children is claimed. By so doing, such legislators and governments undermine the institution of marriage in public opinion, and moreover contribute to the creating of problems they cannot solve. In this way marriage is frequently no longer considered as good for society, and its "privatisation" contributes only to the reduction and even elimination of its public status.

This social ideology of pseudo-freedom prompts the individual to act primarily in his own interests, to his own advantage. The commitment undertaken towards a wife or husband is seen as a simple contract that can be revised indefinitely; the promise made

has only a limited time value, and one has responsibility for one's own actions only to oneself.

■ *False expectations about marriage*

We must also note that many young people form an idealistic and even erroneous concept of being a couple as a situation of unclouded happiness, with the fulfilment of one's desires and no price to pay. In this way a potential conflict can arise between the desire of becoming one with the other person and that of protecting their own freedom.

A growing misunderstanding of the beauty of the authentic human couple, of the rich values inherent in the differences and complementary nature in the man/woman relationship, leads to a growing confusion about sexual identity, a confusion which reaches its climax in the feminist ideology. This confusion complicates the taking up of roles and the division of tasks within the family home. It leads to a renegotiation of these roles which is as constant as it is exhausting. On the other hand the present situation regarding the professional activity of both man and wife reduces the time they can spend and share together in the family. And all this limits the ability for dialogue between husband and wife.

All too often when a crisis arises the couple have to solve it on their own. They have no one who can listen to them and enlighten them, something that might enable them to avoid making an irreversible decision. This lack of help keeps the couple enclosed in their problem, no longer seeing any solution to their difficulties other than separation or even divorce. And yet, surely is it not possible that many of these crises are only of a fleeting nature and could be easily overcome if the couple had the support of a human and ecclesial community?

■ *Economic and consumer factors in family life*

Economic factors, in all their complexity, exert a powerful influence on the shaping of the family model, on the establishment of its

values, on the organisation of its functioning, and on determining the life of the family itself. The income that needs to be ensured, the expenses considered indispensable for meeting the needs or the standard of living to be reached or maintained, the lack of resources or even the lack of work which afflict both parents and children, all condition and to some extent determine many aspects of family life.

Think of the so-called "common-law" couples, who are not really only cohabiting but are too poor to get married. Another worrying situation is that of emigrants, forced to leave their own family and country in search of work to support their families, a situation which on account of the prolonged absence involved or for other reasons frequently leads to the abandonment and break-up of the family they have left behind.

The mechanisms that create a climate of consumerism in which families find themselves immersed also have an economic origin. It is from this standpoint that what constitutes happiness is often defined, resulting in frustration and marginalisation. Economic too are the factors which determine something as important as family living space. i.e. the size of houses and the possibility of possessing one. And finally it is economic factors that condition the educational possibilities of the children and their future prospects.

In the light of all this we cannot fail to have a deep sense of compassion for what is, or should be, the cradle of life and love and the school where one learns to be human.

2. The family: the way by which the Son of God became man

The incarnation of the Son of God, born of a woman and subject to the law in order to redeem the subjects of the law so that they might receive adoption as sons of God (cf. *Gal* 4,4-5), was not an event linked only to the time of his birth but embraced the whole span of Jesus' human life until the death of the cross, as St Paul tells us (cf. *Phil* 2,8). Vatican II expressed this by saying that the

Son of God worked with human hands and loved with a human heart (cf. *GS* 22). His humanity therefore was not an obstacle to the revelation of his divinity, but rather the sacrament he used to manifest God and make him visible and attainable. It is wonderful to contemplate a God who loved man so much as to make him the way by which man could come to him. It is for this reason that the way of the Church is man whom she must love, serve and help to attain his fullness of life.

But because he wanted to become incarnate, God had first to seek a family, a mother (cf. *Lk* 1,26-38) and a father (cf. *Mt* 1,18-25). If God became man in the virginal womb of Mary, it was in the bosom of the family of Nazareth that the incarnate God learned to become man. To be born God needed a Mother; to grow up and become a man God needed a family. Mary was not only the one who bore Christ; as a true mother, alongside Joseph, she made the house of Nazareth a hearth where the Son of God "could become human" (cf. *Lk* 2,51-52).

Precisely because the incarnation of God's Son was a genuine event, his subsequent development followed in the natural manner for every human creature; there was need of a family to accept and welcome him, to accompany him, to love and collaborate with him in the development of all the human dimensions which made him a truly human "person", and all this within a plan of life that made possible the development of his own resources and the finding of meaning and success in life.

This necessary and unfailing educative function that every family must offer to its members, finds its witness in the case of the family of Nazareth in a page from the Gospel of Luke. It is the episode of the finding of Jesus in the Temple: *When his parents saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him, 'Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety.' He said to them, 'Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?' But they did not understand what he said to them. Then he*

went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them. His mother treasured all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favour (Lk 2,48-52).

In this extract we find three valuable pointers to what the family is called upon to do with regard to the children so that they become "upright citizens and good Christians". From this point of view it could be considered a well-chosen Salesian interpretation of the principle of the incarnation in an educative project.

In the first place it is not insignificant that Joseph and Mary had brought Jesus to the Temple at an age when a son must learn to fully take his place in the life of his people, following the traditions which had nourished and sustained the faith of his parents; the family of Jesus had brought him to the Temple in obedience to the law and to the practice of their faith, even though they knew that their son was the Son of God. Jesus' divine origin did not release him from the obligation, universal in Israel, to observe God's law; the Son of God learned to be man by learning to obey men.

Worthy of note too is the respectful attitude of the parents with regard to their son who, on his own account, seeks God's will for his own life. Jesus' reply suggests a sense of surprise, as though to say: "But how is it that after teaching me to call God Abba, Father, and seek always to do his will, that here and now when I am in his house for the Bar Mitzvah ceremony when I become a fully-fledged 'son of the law' to live now on in fulfilling the will of the Father, you ask me where I have been and why I have done this?" (cf. Lk 2,49). Though not yet fully adult, Jesus is reminding his parents that it was they who taught him that God and his affairs took precedence over the family and family matters.

And finally we may note that his parents' lack of understanding was no obstacle to the obedience of the son who returned with them to Nazareth; Jesus submitted to the authority of parents who could no longer understand him. And so, the evangelist concludes, that while Mary "treasured all these things in her heart" (Lk 2,51),

Jesus “increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favour” (*Lk* 2,52). And there you have the greatest eulogy of the educational ability of Joseph and Mary. This is what it means in practice to make of a family a home and school, “a cradle of life and love, and where one first learns how to become human”.

It was in a family that Jesus learned obedience to the law and became immersed in the culture of a people; it was in a family that Jesus showed his desire to give the first place to God and to be concerned primarily about the things of God; though aware that he was the Son of God, it was to family life that Jesus returned as a man among men, to grow “in age, grace and wisdom”. The Son of God could have begun to live by being born of a virgin mother without the need of a family, but without a family he could not grow and mature as a man! A virgin conceived the son of God; a family made him fully human.

What more could be said about the sacrosanct value of the family!

3. Family life and Salesian charism

For us who are sons of Don Bosco, the theme of the family can never appear as something extraneous to our life and mission. As educators we are well aware of the importance of creating a family atmosphere for the education of young and older children, of adults and young men and women. For this purpose the best environment is precisely one based on the family: an environment that makes one “feel at home”, where sentiments, attitudes, ideals and values can be communicated as something alive, often spontaneously and without words but none the less constantly and effectively on that account. Don Bosco’s well-known expression “education is a thing of the heart”⁴ becomes translated into practice by opening the

⁴ Circular letter of Don Bosco on punishments 1883, *Collected Letters* (ed. Ceria) SEI Turin, vol. IV, p. 209.

doors to the hearts of our young people, so that they can willingly take in and practise what we teach them through our methods of education.

For us, members of the Salesian Family, living as a family is not just a pastoral option so urgently needed nowadays, but a way of living our charism and an objective to be given preference in our apostolic mission. As a characteristic charismatic trait we Salesians and members of the Salesian Family live the family spirit; as a primary objective we share with the families who entrust their children to us the task of educating and evangelising them; as an educative and methodological option, we work to recreate in our environments the family spirit.

3.1 “In the beginning the mother was there”⁵

Margherita Occhiena was “the first educator and teacher of ‘pedagogy’ for Don Bosco”.⁶ “Everyone knows,” – said John Paul II to a meeting of school-teachers at Turin in 1988 – “what importance Mamma Margaret had in the life of Saint John Bosco. Not only did she give the Oratory at Valdocco that characteristic ‘family spirit’ that still exists today, but she was able to mould the heart of her young son John into that goodness and kindness which was to make him the friend and father of his poor boys”.⁷

3.1.1 A brief biographical sketch

Convinced as I am too about the decisive role played by Mamma Margaret in the human and Christian formation of Don Bosco, as also in the creation of the educative ‘family’ environment of Valdocco, I consider it a duty to recall here, albeit briefly, her life and an outline of her spiritual characteristics.

⁵ Opening words of Joergensen’s biography of Don Bosco (Italian edtn.) SEI Turin, 1929, p. 19.

⁶ P. Braidò, *Prevenire non reprimere*. Don Bosco’s educational system. LAS, Rome 1999, p. 139.

⁷ Address to workers in schools, quoted by Fr E. Viganò in *The Pope speaks to us of Don Bosco*, AGC 328, p. 20.

a) *Before the move to Valdocco (from 1788 to 1846).*

Born at Serra di Capriole, a village in the province of Asti on 1 April 1788 to Melchiorre Occhiena and Domenica Bassone, Margaret was baptized the same day; her parents were reasonably well-to-do peasants, who owned their own house and the neighbouring fields.

There was no school at Capriglio and so Margaret did not learn to read and write. But though illiterate she was not ignorant; she acquired an eminent wisdom by listening with an alert heart to sermons and catechism lessons in the parish church, and moreover lived out what she had heard in her own daily experience of life, which was not always smooth and happy. Fr Lemoyne, the author in 1886 of the first 'biography' to be written about Mamma Margaret, wrote: "She was endowed by nature with a strong will which, aided by great good sense and divine grace, enabled her to overcome all the material and spiritual obstacles she was to meet in life... Upright in conscience, in her thoughts and affections, and sound in her judgements about persons and things, self-possessed in her dealings and frank in speech, she was never hesitant... This candour and self-assurance was a safeguard for her virtue, because with it went a prudence that never allowed her to put a foot wrong".⁸

Two kilometres from Capriglio on the facing hill, at the 'Becchi', a section of Morialdo and of Castelnuovo d'Asti, lived Francis Bosco, a young peasant of 27 years of age who was a widower with a 3-year old son, Anthony. He asked her to marry him and the wedding duly took place on 6 June 1812, after which Margaret Bosco moved over to the Biglione farmstead. The small family soon increased in number; a first child, Joseph, was born on 8 April 1813, and two years later, on 16 August 1815, a second son who was called John Melchior, the future St John Bosco.

⁸ More than a biography, Lemoyne's work should be read as an edifying narrative. The author was aware of this when when he gave the work the title: *Edifying scenes in the life of Margaret Bosco*, Turin, 1886, 192 pp.

The untimely death of Francis at the early age of 33 meant that at 29 Margaret became head of the family, with three children and her mother-in-law to look after, as well as the management of the farm. Soon after becoming a widow she received a very favourable proposal of marriage, but the children would have been handed over to someone else to look after them. She flatly refused: "God gave me a husband and has taken him away again. On his deathbed he entrusted three children to me, and I should be a cruel mother were I to abandon them at a time when they have greater need of me".

At this point it was to the three children that she addressed her work of education. It was a task in which her exceptional gifts became demonstrated: her faith, her virtue, the many things she was good at, the wisdom of a Piedmontese peasant coupled with that of a true Christian full of the Holy Spirit.

She knew how to adapt herself to each of the boys. Anthony had lost his mother at the age of three and his father at the age of nine; as an adolescent he became crotchety and cantankerous like a bear with a sore head. By the time he was 18 he had become uncontrollable, often becoming violent. Sometimes he called Margaret a "cruel stepmother" although with infinite patience she always treated him as a son. But she could be strong and just as well, and for peace in the house and for the good of Joseph and John she made the sorrowful decisions that could no longer be avoided.

At the end of 1830 she proceeded to divide up their property, house and land. Anthony, now on his own, soon married and had seven children. Subsequently he became fully reconciled with the rest of the family, and turned out to be a good and well esteemed father to his children and a faithful Christian.

Joseph, five years younger, was gentle, peaceful and accommodating. He was inseparable from his brother John, whose ascendancy he accepted without any feelings of jealousy. He adored his mother, and during the long years when John was studying he would be the obedient and hard-working son on whom she could

depend for support. He too at the age of 20 married a local girl, Maria Colosso, by whom he had ten children.

John wanted to study. Mamma Margaret wanted to support him in this wish but found herself up against the unyielding opposition of Anthony. And so, with a broken heart, she sent him for a year and eight months to work as a stable-boy at the farm of the Moglia family (1828-1829). Only after Anthony had acquired his autonomy could Mamma Margaret send John to the local school at Castelnuovo (1831), and then to Chieri where he was to spend ten years (1831-1841), four at the local school and six in the major seminary. This was a period when Margaret could finally be happy, at peace and full of hope, years too in which she became the grandmother of the children of Anthony and Joseph.

When in his seventies, Don Bosco could still remember the peremptory reply he got from Mamma Margaret when in 1834 a decision had to be made about his future. "Listen, John", she had said, "I have nothing to say to you about your vocation, except that you should follow wherever God leads you. Don't worry about me. I don't expect anything from you. And keep this well in mind: I was born poor, I have lived in poverty, and in poverty I want to die. Indeed I want you to know that if by some misfortune you were to become a rich priest, I would never even come to visit you".⁹

On 26 October 1835, at the age of 20, John received the clerical habit in the parish church of Castelnuovo. From that day, Don Bosco tells us, "my mother always kept an eye on me... The evening before I left for the seminary she called me to her and spoke as follows, words I shall always remember: 'John, my son, you have received the priestly habit, and I feel all the consolation a mother can experience at her son's good fortune. But remember that what gives honour to your state is not the habit but the practice of virtue. If ever you begin to doubt about your vocation, I beg you not to dishonour this habit. Lay it aside immediately. I would rather

⁹ Cf. *MB* I, p. 296.

my son were a poor peasant than a priest who neglected his duties'." ¹⁰

John was ordained priest in Turin on Saturday 5 June 1841. On the following day, after celebrating a solemn Mass in the parish church of Castelnuovo, he went back to the Becchi. There on seeing once again the places of his first dream and so many other memories, the young priest was moved to tears. The same evening he found himself alone with his mother. "John", she said to him, "you are a priest now and you have begun to say Mass; from now on you are closer to Jesus Christ. But remember that to begin to say Mass is to begin to suffer. You will not be aware of this immediately, but little by little you will come to see that your mother was right. I'm sure that you will pray for me every day whether I am still alive or already dead, and that is enough for me. From now on think only of the salvation of souls, and do not worry at all about me". ¹¹

On 3 November 1841 the young priest said good-bye to his mother and relatives and left for Turin. Following the advice of Fr Joseph Cafasso he entered the Ecclesiastical College and immediately began his apostolate among street-boys and young prisoners. On 8 December he began the first catechism lesson with Bartholomew Garelli – the beginning of the great Salesian adventure.

The young priest began to gather together an ever growing crowd of youngsters at the College, then at the premises of the Marchioness Barolo, then in green open spaces in the neighbourhood, until finally, at Easter 1846 he took over the Pinardi shed in Valdocco. During this period Margaret was living peacefully at the Becchi, a happy grandmother among a group of grandchildren ranging in age from 13 to a few months.

In July 1846 John came near to death, exhausted by his apostolic work. When the crisis had passed he went back to the Becchi

¹⁰ *Memoirs of the Oratory*, LAS 1991.

¹¹ MB I, p. 522.

for a long period of convalescence, and mother and son were close together again. But the priestly heart of Don Bosco had remained in Turin, where so many youngsters were awaiting him! But there was a problem to be solved: as a young priest of 30 years of age John could not live alone in places like the Pinardi shed that he had recently rented; the area of Valdocco was one of ill repute. "Take your mother with you", advised the parish priest of Castelnuevo. Don Bosco recounts the generous reaction of his mother: "If you think it would please the Lord, I am ready to leave at once".¹² On 3 November 1846, mother and son left, on foot, for Turin.

b) Ten years with Don Bosco (from 1846 to 1856)

For Mamma Margaret the final period was now beginning in which her life became intertwined with that of her son in the actual foundation of Salesian work.

By helping Don Bosco, Margaret evidently intended to be of service to the youngsters to whom her son had dedicated his life. In the first place she would have to get used to the daily din and hubbub of the Oratory and the late hours of the evening classes, And then there were the first homeless orphans to be taken into the house. How many of these youngsters were there in Mamma Margaret's big family? The number increased from about 15 in 1848 to 30 in 1849, and to 50 in 1850. The building of a two-storey house enabled some 70 to be accommodated in 1853 and a hundred in 1854; two thirds of them were artisans and one third students or diocesan seminarians, who went out to work or to study in the city. Don Bosco had to provide for all the needs of at least thirty of them.

One evening in 1850 Margaret reached her Gethsemani. Four years of Valdocco life had worn her down and she had reached the end of her tether! She burst out to her son: "Listen, John. I can't put up with this any longer. Every day these boys pull another fast

¹² *Memoirs of the Oratory* [ed. quoted], pag. 174.

one on me... Let me pack it in and go back to the Becchi where I can spend the rest of my days in peace". Don Bosco looked at her and was upset, and then slowly raised his eyes to the crucifix hanging on the wall. Margaret followed his gaze, and then: "You are right", she said, "you are quite right". And she put on her apron once more. The Memoirs of the Oratory tell us that from that day no word of complaint ever crossed her lips.¹³ How can one ever measure the extent of her personal sacrifice in the development of the Salesian work?

Mamma Margherita was also actively present at the first "spiritual" development of the work: the first moments of the formation of the Salesian ethos and method, the presence and follow-up of the first disciples: Cagliero (1851), Rua (1852), Don Alasonatti and Dominic Savio (1854); the first sodalities, the first fruits of holiness, the first clerics and the preparation of the Salesian Society, which would be founded only three years after her death. This long feminine and motherly presence is a unique element in the history of the Founders of educational Congregations. "The Salesian Congregation", wrote one biographer, "was cradled on the lap of Mamma Margaret".¹⁴

But the finest trait of Margaret, the one that involved not only her arms but also her heart, was her natural talent as an educator. All those orphans used to call her "Mamma", and it was clear that she did not limit herself to cooking for them and looking after their clothes. They had complete trust in her, with the affection of orphans who felt that she loved them. She was always ready to chat with them in kind and gentle words correcting, exhorting or consoling them, or providing good advice for the formation of their character and their heart of believers, reminding them of the presence of God, urging them to go to confession to Don Bosco and to have devotion to Mary.

¹³ MB IV, p. 233.

¹⁴ Teresio BOSCO, *Una nuova biografia di Don Bosco*, Elle Di Ci, Leumann 1978.

She knew all those youngsters individually and could make a shrewd assessment of each of them. For two years she was able to observe an outstanding youngster who came from Mondonio: she was impressed by his behaviour. "You have many good boys", she said one day to Don Bosco, "but no one outshines Dominic Savio in heart and mind... I see him always praying, and in church he seems like an angel in paradise".¹⁵

The only periods of peace and rest for Mamma Margaret in those years were the few weeks of holiday at the Becchi in autumn. It was rest only in a relative sense, because Don Bosco took with him all the boys who had no relatives to whom they could go. After returning from the holiday of 1856, in mid-November she fell ill and took to her bed. The doctor diagnosed pneumonia, and she died at 3 o'clock in the morning of 25 November, after receiving the last sacraments from her confessor, Don Borel, the evening before. "God knows – she had said to Don Bosco – how much I have loved you; but from heaven it will be still better. I have done all I can. If I have sometimes seemed strict, it was for your good. Tell the boys that I have tried to be a mother to them. Ask them to pray and offer a holy communion for me".¹⁶

Mamma Margaret had lived in poverty, and in poverty she died: she was buried in a common grave with no tombstone to bear her name.

3.1.2 Spiritual profile of Mamma Margaret

Her death made "ever more evident the strong bond that existed between Don Bosco and his mother, that original relationship that had moulded the primary traits of his personality".¹⁷ Loved as she was by both Salesians and youngsters, there arose immediately after her death the common conviction: she was a saint!" But the cause for the Beatification and Canonisation of Mamma Margaret

¹⁵ MB V, p. 207.

¹⁶ MB V, p. 563.

¹⁷ P. Braido, *Don Bosco, prete dei giovani nel secolo delle libertà*. Vol. I. LAS, Rome 2003, p. 317.

was introduced only on 8 September 1994. After the Diocesan Process at Turin in 1996, the *Positio* (i.e. the documentation on her reputation for holiness and on the heroicity of her life and virtues) was officially consigned to the Congregation for the Causes of Saints on 25 January 2000.¹⁸

I cannot refrain from speaking here of her spiritual profile, as it appears from the *Positio*.

a) *A strong woman*

Throughout her life there were never moments when she gave way easily to natural inclinations. She showed herself extraordinarily well balanced in dealing with the far from easy tensions that arise in family life. Her attitude appears as one of constant vigilance motivated by a higher concern, that of discerning the best thing to do for the good of her children before God. She comes across as tender but firm, understanding but not easily swayed, patient but decisive.

Prompting Margaret towards the harmonisation of contradictory traits was the fact that she had had to be father as well as mother to her children. Though she had been offered the possibility of avoiding the problems of a widow by remarriage, she had been able to reach and preserve a proper balance between the two roles; a motherly approach sufficiently strong to compensate for the absence of a father, and a fatherliness sufficiently gentle to avoid compromising motherly warmth. No empty caresses therefore and no bad-tempered outbursts, but firmness and equanimity.

She always radiated calmness and serenity, self control and gentleness. She did not hit her children, but never gave way to them; she would threaten severe punishments, but forgive at the first sign of repentance. In a corner of the kitchen – recalled Don Bosco – there was a flexible cane. She never used it but she always

¹⁸ In this work great merit is due to the Historical Commission that studied the cause. Its members were Sr P. Cavaglià and Frs. F. Desramaut, R. Farina, G. Milone, F. Motto, G. Tuninetti.

left it there in the corner, As a mother she was very kind, but always strong and firm. She managed to harmonise two factors that are usually a source of difficulties in families: the presence of a sick mother-in-law and that of a particularly difficult stepson. As a wise educator she was able to transform a family scenario bristling with difficulties into an effective and successful educative environment.

By word and example she taught her children the great virtues of Piedmontese humanism of the period: the sense of duty and of work, the daily courage to face a hard life, honesty and sincerity, and good humour. They learned also to respect old people and offer willing service to others. On the other hand, though always strong and calm, she was not afraid to speak clearly to those whose words or actions gave scandal. Examples of this kind remained deeply embedded in the minds of the three boys.

Every lesson given to her children by this illiterate teacher acquired a wise and effective tone from the dimension of faith that was its background.

b) A "Salesian" educator

It was this educative skill that enabled Mamma Margaret to identify the particular potentialities hidden in her children, bring them to light, develop them, and return them almost visibly to their own hands. This was the case especially with John, her most outstanding offspring. How impressive it is to see in Mamma Margaret the clear sense and awareness of her "maternal responsibility" in the constant Christian guidance of her children, while always leaving them autonomous about their vocation in life, right up until her death!

If young John's dream at the age of nine revealed many things to him about his future, it did so primarily for Mamma Margaret; it was she who first hazarded the interpretation: "Perhaps you will become a priest!" And some years later, when she realised that their home environment was a negative one for John because of the hostility of his stepbrother Anthony, she made the sacrifice of

sending him to work as a farm-hand in the Moglia farm at Moncucco. A mother who deprives herself of her youngest son to send him to work at a place far from home makes a great sacrifice, but she did it not only to avoid a rift in the family but also to set John on the road revealed to both of them in the dream.

We can safely say that to Mamma Margaret is due the merit of having planted in Don Bosco the seeds of the famous expression: *reason, religion, loving kindness*, that she herself lived quite simply in her calm affability and authority. Divine Providence gave her the grace to be a *Salesian educator*, animated by an anticipating love that could understand, demand and correct, all with patience and a smile.

She watched over her children, controlling and guiding them, but without being oppressive. They had to obey and ask for permissions, but the mother willingly left them free to play and be happy. She never gave way to whims and gave correction in a loving manner. Fr Lemoyne testifies: "When correcting, she wanted to avoid at all costs that it should provoke petulance, distrust or resentment. Her method in this regard was quite precise: lead the children to do everything through affection or to please God, and this made her a much loved mother".¹⁹ Don Bosco would say much later that education was an affair of the heart: he had had the happy experience of this himself in the family home of the Becchi.

c) *an effective catechist*

Mamma Margaret had the rare ability to make of all life's happenings a starting point for catechesis. She held that hers was the primary responsibility for teaching the faith to her children, and was able to put across to them strong but simple values in the school of the family. The primary things she patiently passed on to them in their years of growth were her own sterling faith, the sense of an ever present God of love, and a tender devotion to Mary.

¹⁹ G.B. Lemoyne, *Scene morali di famiglia esposte nelle vita di Margherita Bosco*, Torino, Tip. Salesiano p. 39.

The way Mamma Margaret taught catechism has become famous. She could neither read nor write, but as a child she had learned by heart the necessary formulas of the truths of faith and she not only passed these on to her children but was also able to summarise and interpret them in accordance with her own infallible motherly instinct.

The great truths were transmitted in a simple and elementary manner in the briefest of formulas:

- *God sees you:* was the truth of every moment, not intended to arouse fear, but to assure the young children that God was taking care of them, and that his kindness towards them meant that they should respond by living a good life.
- *How good the Lord is!* She used to exclaim whenever something happened that struck the children's fantasy and roused their admiration.
- *You cannot deceive God!*, she would declare when it was a matter of inculcating the horror of sin and evil.
- *We have so little time for doing good!*, she used to exclaim when she wanted them to be more diligent and generous.
- *What does it matter being well dressed, if the soul is horrible underneath?* she would say when she wanted to educate them to a dignified poverty and to keep their souls clean and beautiful.

And there was also the *catechism of the sacraments*. We know from what Don Bosco himself has taught us how she applied this with John when he was young. When the time for his first communion was drawing near she used to give him every day some prayer to say or some particular reading to do; then she prepared him for the making of a good confession (and made him repeat it three times during Lent); and then when the great day came (Easter Sunday of 1826), she made sure that the child had a real experience of communion with God. "I am convinced", she said to her son on that day, "that God has taken possession of your heart. Now promise him that you will do all you can to keep yourself good all your life".²⁰

²⁰ *Memoirs of the Oratory*, [ediz. citata], pag. 43.

And finally, there was the *catechism of charity*: in times of both relative plenty and of hunger, Margaret's house was always open to the poor, to the wayfarer, the passer-by, the policeman on the beat who would drop in for a glass of wine, to girls in moral difficulties; and similarly hers was the first port of call for neighbours in misfortune, or when there was someone sick who needed help, or some dying person to accompany in the last moments of life.

d) The first cooperator

There are in the preventive system as practised by Don Bosco certain ways of doing things, certain emphases, certain touches that have something motherly about them, something gentle and reassuring, that enable us to see Margaret not only as a woman who exerted an influence from without but also inwardly as an *inspirer* and *model*, as a collaborator and certainly as the *first cooperator*.

The presence of Mamma Margaret at Valdocco during the last ten years of her life had a far more than marginal influence on the "family spirit" that we all now consider to be the heart of the Salesian charism. That was not any ordinary decade, but the first one, the one in which were laid down the foundations of the ambience that will go down in history as the Valdocco atmosphere. Don Bosco had been moved by necessity when he asked his mother to come with him, but in God's design her presence was in fact destined to do more than meet a passing need; it was to be part of a framework of providential collaboration in a charism still in its early stages.

Mamma Margaret was aware of this new vocation she had. She accepted it with humility, well knowing what it meant. This explains the courage she showed in the most difficult circumstances. Think, for instance, of the cholera epidemic. Think of the words and gestures that have something prophetic about them, such as using altar linens to make bandages for the sick. Especially, there is the example of the famous "Good Night", an original feature of Salesian tradition. It was something to which Don Bosco gave great

importance, but it was begun precisely by his mother with a few encouraging words addressed to their first orphan before he went to bed.²¹ Don Bosco then continued the practice, not after the fashion of a sermon in church, but in a fatherly and friendly manner in the playground, or the corridors or under the porticos.

The interior stature of this mother is such that the son, even after becoming an expert in education, will always have something to learn from her. The judgement of Don Lemoyne can serve to sum up all that has been said: "You could say that she personified the Oratory".²²

3.2 Valdocco, "a family that educates"²³

Even though Valdocco was the first – and only – institution for welfare and education founded and directed by Don Bosco in person, the typical features of the work and especially the preventive system of education used in it can be understood in connection not only with Don Bosco and his particular temperament and experience but also with those of his helpers. From the outset the Oratory was a community enterprise, put together and carried forward in interaction between founder and collaborators.²⁴

Among these there was an outstanding group of women. Mamma Margaret was not Don Bosco's only collaborator in the Oratory: "other mothers lived at Valdocco, always giving it a family aspect that was a necessary consequence of their nature and experience".

²¹ Don Bosco gives an account of this episode in *Memoirs of the Oratory* [ed. quoted, p. 181-182].

²² *MB*, III, p. 376.

²³ The formula is taken from Don Bosco's own testimony: "In 1841 this Congregation was only a catechism lesson, a playground on feastdays, to which was added in 1846 a Hospice for poor apprentices, by forming a private Institute in the manner of a big family" (*Brevi notizie sulla Congregazione di S. Francesco di Sales dall'anno 1841 al 1879*, in "Esposizione alla S. Sede sullo stato morale e materiale della Pia Società di S. Francesco di Sales", Tip. Salesiana, S. Pier d'Arena, 1879 (OE, vol. XXXI, p. 240).

²⁴ Cf. P. Braidò, *Prevenire non reprimere. Il sistema educativo di Don Bosco*. LAS, Rome 1999, p. 158.

After Margaret's death her elder sister, Marianna, remained at the Oratory for nearly a year before she too died. Then the mother of Don Rua took up residence at the Oratory, helped by the mother of the cleric Bellia, the mother of Canon Gastaldi and others. Also living at the Oratory was Marianna Magone, mother of Don Bosco's well-known pupil.²⁵ With her death in 1872 the presence and influence of these mothers in the Oratory came to an end.²⁶

But it must be emphasised that it was Don Bosco's mother who, during the decade 1846-1856, was his principal companion and cooperator, sharing with him "bread, work, fatigue, concerns and the mission to the young".²⁷ "Mamma Margaret" – the name has become definitive at Valdocco – will always be actively present as the first "external" development of the work takes place: first the Oratory, then the hostel alongside for the first students and artisans, the first schools and workshops, the little church dedicated to St Francis de Sales, the launching of the *Catholic Readings* in an atmosphere of revolution and threats against Don Bosco (1853).

In those days, family life at the Oratory was rather haphazard with few resources and plenty of dreams. Don Bosco frequently had to leave the house and go in search of funds to keep a hostel with an ever increasing number of residents going, even in a simple style, or to find a peaceful spot where he could do some writing in the library of the Ecclesiastical College or elsewhere. On such occasions Mamma Margaret took his place in assisting the boys, as well as seeing to the usual domestic work in the kitchen during the day, and repairing their clothing in the evenings. These are only small facts, "little details", but "they had a part to play in many

²⁵ Cf. P. Stella, *Don Bosco nella Storia della Religiosità Cattolica*. Vol I.: Vita e Opere, LAS, Rome 1997, p. 115.

²⁶ "It was a time when the College was already well organised and there was no further need for women in the house and Don Bosco was already thinking about the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians" (P. Stella, *op.cit.* p. 115).

²⁷ P. Braido, *Don Bosco, prete dei giovani nel secolo delle libertà*. Vol. I. LAS, Rome 2003, p. 213.

aspects of the life of Don Bosco and his boys and they help us to get a concrete idea of the family life of the Oratory".²⁸ It was always Don Bosco's intention, in fact, that the Oratory "should be a *house* (i.e. a family); he did not want it to be a *College*".²⁹

Some time ago Fr Egidio Viganò emphasised the consequences of the motherly presence of Mamma Margaret at Valdocco and the contribution she made to making the Oratory environment a family one: "Mamma Margaret's heroic move to Valdocco served to imbue the environment of those poor lads with the same family style of life that gave rise to the nature of the preventive system, and so many traditional methods akin to it. Don Bosco knew from experience that the formation of his own personality was radically linked with the extraordinary atmosphere of self-dedication and kindness in his own family at the Becchi, and he wanted to reproduce its most significant elements in the Valdocco Oratory among those poor and abandoned youngsters".³⁰

It is clear therefore that the components of the "educative family"³¹ Don Bosco wanted the Oratory to become were not taken entirely from pedagogical and theological theories but also from the daily rustic life of Piedmont.³² The feminine presence at Valdocco of the mothers, and first among them Mamma Margaret, made a particular contribution of faith and simplicity, of practical approach and educative wisdom.

²⁸ P. Stella, *op.cit.* p. 115. Cf. José M. Parello, "Don Bosco, fundador de comunidad. Aproximación a la comunidad de Valdocco": *Cuadernos de Formación Permanente* 7 (2001) 166.

²⁹ A. Caviglia, "Il 'Magone Michele'", in *Opere e scritti editi e inediti di Don Bosco*. Vol. V, SEI, Torino 1965, p. 141.

³⁰ E. Viganò, *In the year of the family*. AGC 349, June 1994, p. 29.

³¹ The expression is taken from P. Braidò, *Prevenire non reprimere*. Il sistema educativo di Don Bosco, LAS, Rome 1999, p. 305.

³² Cfr. P. Braidò, *Prevenire non reprimere*. Il sistema educativo di Don Bosco. For a treatment of the topic of a family approach in the educational method of Don Bosco see ch. 15 p. 305 etc. For an historical reconstruction in relation to Don Bosco's personality also of interest is ch. 8 p. 158 etc.

4. The family as mission

These reflections on Mamma Margaret and her family help us to understand that, as well as being indirectly a part of our mission, the family is primarily and of its nature a social institution whose members are united within it by interpersonal relationships of various kinds, but with all of them drawn together by links of affection, communication and discipline which give them a certain special spiritual quality. Our efforts are directed towards the young, and our field of work is their education and evangelisation. But both young people and education are concepts inseparable from the family.

This was recalled by Fr Egidio Viganò in his commentary on the Bishops' Synod of 1980 on the family, which was followed by the publication of the Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio* of John Paul II: "The thrust of our Salesian vocation", wrote Fr Viganò, "is naturally towards the poor and the lowly. They are the ones who above all have need of the family and it was for them Don Bosco conceived his characteristic ethos, as Peter Braido says: kindness that educates in a happy united family atmosphere".³³

4.1 *"Family, make yourself what you should truly be"*

"Family, make yourself what you should truly be": with this appeal John Paul II invited the families of all the world to discover in themselves their real nature and realise it in the midst of the world. Nowadays, in a world undermined by scepticism, the powerful exhortation of the Holy Father cannot but resound again encouraging families to rediscover this truth about themselves by adding: *"Family, believe in what you are!"*.

A result of God's architecture, in line with his inviolable plan, the family must be also the result of human architecture, through man's commitment to the realisation of God's design.

³³ E. Viganò, *Appeals of the Synod of 1980*. AGC 299, December 1980, p. 29.

□ *The cell of society*

The family is the foundation and support of society through its essential task of service to life: in the family citizens are born and in the family they find the first school of those virtues that are the soul of life and of the development of society itself.

Insofar as it is an interpersonal loving community, the family finds in self-giving the law that guides it and gives it growth. Self-giving informs the love of the parents for each other and becomes a model and norm for the relationship between brothers and sisters and among the different generations living together in the family. The communion and daily sharing lived in the home in times of both joy and difficulty represent for the children the most practical and effective pedagogy in the broadest horizons of society. Every newborn child is a gift to its brothers and sisters, to the parents and to the whole family. Its life becomes a gift for those who gave it life, who cannot fail to appreciate the presence of the new child, its sharing in their own existence, its contribution to the good of the family community and of the whole of society.

The same experience of communion and sharing that must characterise daily life in the family, represents its first and fundamental contribution to society. The relationships between the members of the family community are inspired and guided by the law of “freely giving” which, by respecting and fostering personal dignity in each and all as the only claim to worth, becomes welcome and cordial acceptance, encounter and dialogue, disinterested availability, generous service and deep solidarity.

In this way the fostering of an authentic and mature communion of persons in the family becomes the first and indispensable school of social relations. It represents an example and stimulus for the broadest interpersonal relationships that teach respect, justice, dialogue and love – the birthplace and efficacious instrument for the humanisation and personalisation of society.³⁴

³⁴ Francesco di Felice, *Radici umane e valori cristiani della famiglia*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2005, pp.138s.

And all of this is of greater importance today if we want to make an effective comparison with the two limited and narrow family models that result from today's consumer society: that of the self-centred family-fortress, and that of the family-hotel, without identity or relationships. Consequently, in the face of a society that risks becoming ever more depersonalised and standardised, and hence inhuman and self-perpetuating, with negative effects in so many forms of detachment, the family still possesses and makes available today tremendous powers that can draw man away from his obscurity, keep him aware of his personal dignity, enrich his deep humanity, and find him a place in society with all his uniqueness and individuality.

When it is of service to life, when it forms the citizens of tomorrow, when it inculcates in them the human values fundamental for the nation, when it introduces the children into society, the family is playing an essential role: it is the common patrimony of all humanity. Both natural reason and divine revelation contain this truth. As Vatican II put it, the family is "the first and vital cell of society".³⁵

□ *Sanctuary of life*

The first and fundamental task of the family is to be of service to life, which prolongs in history the original blessing of the Creator, and so transmits the divine image from one person to another (cf. *Gen* 5,1ff). This responsibility flows naturally from its being a community of life and love founded on marriage, and from its mission to preserve, reveal and communicate love. What is here at stake is the love of God himself, of whom parents are made collaborators and almost interpreters in the transmission of life and its education according to the Father's plan. In a family, love continues throughout time to pass on life: it does so freely, and willingly as a gift. In a family each member is recognised, respected and honoured as a person, as an individual, and if any member is

³⁵ *Apostolicam Actuositatem* n. 11.

in greater need, more intense and vigilant is the care given to him by the others.

The family is therefore involved in the entire span of existence of its members from birth to death. It is truly the sanctuary of life, the place in which God's gift of life can be adequately contained and protected against the multiple attacks to which it is exposed, and can be developed in line with the demands of authentic human growth.

As a domestic church, the family is called upon to proclaim, celebrate and serve the Gospel of life. In the procreation of a new life the parents are aware that the new offspring is not only the fruit of their mutual self-giving in love but is at the same time a gift for each of them, a gift that flows from the "Gift" itself.

□ *Announcer of the gospel of life*

It is especially through the education of the children that the family fulfils its mission to proclaim the Gospel of life. By word and example, by practical signs and gestures in everyday life, the parents introduce the children to an authentic freedom realised in sincere self-giving, and develop in them respect for others, a sense of justice, cordial acceptance, dialogue, generous service, solidarity and every other value that helps in understanding life as a vocation and as a mission of love.

And so, despite the difficulties inherent in all education, parents with trust and courage must form their children to the essential values of human life. And the children must grow in a proper freedom with regard to material goods, adopting a simple and modest lifestyle in the conviction that man is more important for what he is than for what he has.

The educational contribution of Christian parents therefore is a service to the faith of the children and a help to them to fulfil the vocation received from God. Part of their educational mission is to teach their children and bear witness to the true meaning of suf-

fering and death: they will be able to do this if they themselves are alert to any suffering around them, and if they can develop, in the first place, attitudes of closeness, help and sharing towards the young, the sick and the aged within the family circle.

We are all aware that both young and older children need a human and affective education to stimulate their personality, their responsibility and their sense of fidelity and initiative. They also need education in their sexuality which, if it is to be sound and fully human, must keep pace with the discovery of the ability to love instilled by God in the human heart. It is a question of a harmonious formation to responsible love, guided simultaneously by reason and by the Word of God.

□ *School of social commitment*

Another task of the family is that of forming the children to practise love in all interpersonal relationships, so that the whole family does not become closed in on itself but remains open to the community, and inspired by a sense of justice, solidarity and solicitude for others as well as by its responsibility to the whole of society.

In this way service to the Gospel becomes expressed in practical solidarity. The social duty of the family cannot be confined to the procreative role of biological generation and the education of children. Families with a Christian inspiration feel a continual call to be open to the needs of their neighbours. Individually or in association with others they can and must devote themselves to a variety of works of social service, especially for the benefit of the poor. Such work is of particular importance when it is a case of bringing help to people and situations not reached by charities and public welfare systems.

Animated and sustained by the new commandment of love, the Christian family welcomes, respects and offers its service to every individual, considered in their dignity as a person and child of God. Charity extends beyond our brethren in the faith, because "every man is my brother"; in each of them, and especially in those who

are poor or weak, suffering or unjustly treated, charity must be able to discern the countenance of Christ and a brother or sister to love and serve. The Christian family puts itself at the service of mankind and of the world by carrying out a true work of "human development".

We all know about the unjust distribution of goods between the developed world and developing countries, and between rich and poor in the same country; we know of the restriction of natural resources so that only a few people benefit from them. Mass illiteracy, the re-emergence of racism, the spreading of ethnic and armed conflicts, have always had a devastating effect on the family. And, on the other hand, we find instances where the family is the first and principal environment in which different values can flourish, inspired by love and communion.

By way of example I want to emphasise the ever-greater importance assumed in our society by *hospitality*, in all its forms: from opening the doors of our homes and still more of our hearts to the requests of our neighbours, to the concrete commitment of ensuring that every family has a dwelling-place which it preserves and improves. Especially is the Christian family called upon to heed and bear witness to the recommendation of the Apostle: "Contribute to the needs of the saints, practise hospitality" (*Rom* 12,13). The needy neighbour will thus be welcomed in imitation and sharing of the charity of Christ: "whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple – truly I tell you, none of these will lose their reward" (*Mt* 10,42).

Another particularly significant expression of solidarity for families is the willingness to adopt or foster children abandoned by their parents, or otherwise in situations of grave neglect. True parental love knows how to extend beyond ties of flesh and blood by taking in children of other families and providing them with everything needed for their life and full development.

The Fathers of the Church often spoke of the family as a "domestic church", or as a "small Church". "Being together" as a fam-

ily is translated into “each one being for the others”, and in the creation of a community space for the affirmation of every man and woman. Sometimes there is a question of persons who are physically or mentally handicapped, of whom our so-called “progressive” society would prefer to be freed. Sometimes you come across even a family that calls itself Christian with this kind of mentality. It is very sad when a family tries to get rid as soon as possible of an aging member or one who is sick or handicapped. It is done because faith is lost in the God for whom “all are alive” (Lk 20,38) and by whom all are called to the fullness of Life.

4.2 “Family, have faith in your true role!”

The family is not the product of a culture, the result of an evolution, a manner of community life linked with a certain social organisation; it is a natural institution, antecedent to any political or juridical organisation. It does not owe its foundation to any such organisation, but directly to the will of God. In a fidelity that is entirely without reservations a man and women give themselves to each other and love each other with a love that is open to life.

What I have said so far is expressed authoritatively in the four tasks assigned to the family by *Familiaris consortio*: the formation of a community of persons, service to life, participation in the development of society, and the evangelising mission.

But for these tasks to be fulfilled, and hence for the accomplishment of the appeal addressed to families by Pope John Paul II: “Family, have faith in your true role!”, it is necessary first of all that the family – parents, children and all family members – be firmly convinced of these tasks, which flow from the very nature and mission of the family institution, and form part of God’s design for the family and for each of its members.

It is a matter of a conviction which, for believers, is not only of the rational or social order, but is based on faith in God who created the family unit as a community of love and life, and through his

Son sanctified it by the grace of a sacrament, so that it would be for everyone a sign and instrument of communion.

5. Pastoral and pedagogical applications

As is customary, the Strenna – and in particular the Strenna for 2006 – provides an opportunity to offer to the whole Salesian Family some pastoral suggestions and pedagogical applications.

I have seen and value the successful efforts of some Provinces to express in the form of educational programmes the *Pastoral Plan* that I linked with this Strenna, as I did earlier with that of 2004. In addition the review *Notes on Youth Ministry* has produced a special issue which goes into the theme at greater depth and offers suggestions and valuable supporting material. I invite you to be aware of all this material, which can be of great use to you, while here I set out once again the main guidelines for the pastoral plan.

■ *Here then are my suggestions.*

To ensure that special attention be given to the family in our plan of education and evangelisation, the following necessary points among others are required:

- **The guarantee of a special commitment to education to love** within Salesian educational practice and in the journey of education to the faith proposed to our young people. The GC23 presented education to love as one of the crucial points manifesting either the incidence of faith on life or its lack of relevance in practice. The typical experience of Don Bosco and the educational and spiritual content of the preventive system prompts us:
 - to give special importance to the creation around the young of an educational ethos really conducive to affective communication,
 - to prize the authentic values of chastity,

- to foster relationships between boys and girls of respect for themselves and others, mutually enriching, and expressive of the joy of free self-giving,
 - to ensure the presence in the educational environment of clear and joyful witnesses to love, especially through self-donation in chastity.
- **The follow-up and support of parents in their educational responsibilities**, by fully involving them in the implementation of the Salesian pastoral and educational plan. The GC24, in connection with the involvement of the laity in the Salesian mission, acknowledged the duty of parents and the role of families in our works, but asked us to intensify our collaboration with the family as having the first educational role for sons and daughters (cf. *GC24*, 20. 177). For this reason it wanted us to esteem more highly the indispensable contribution of parents and families of the young, encouraging the setting up of committees and associations to ensure and enrich Don Bosco's educational mission by their participation (cf. *CG24*, 115).
- **The fostering and preparation of the Salesian style of the family**: in individual families, in the Salesian community, in the educative and pastoral community. The Salesian family spirit is a characteristic of our spirituality (cf. *GC24*, 91-93) and is expressed:
- in unfailingly listening to others,
 - in freely welcoming others,
 - in the animating presence of the educator among the young,
 - in dialogue and interpersonal and formal communication,
 - in shared responsibility for a common educational plan.
- **Growth in the spirit and in the experience of the Salesian Family** for the fostering of an educative and pastoral commitment in the service of the young.

The Salesian Family asks us especially for a combined commitment to provide every young person with an adequate and particular vocational plan (cf. *GC25*, 41 and 48). For this reason there needs to be growth in the Family through:

- the effective functioning of the consulting group of the Salesian Family,
- the presence in it of young people,
- initiatives and activities that lead the Salesian Family to work ever more in the manner of a spiritual apostolic movement.

■ ***Some practical proposals:***

- ❖ In the scheme for the formation of the young, prepare a *gradual and systematic programme for education to love*, that will help adolescents and young adults:
 - to grasp the human and Christian value of sexuality,
 - to develop a mature and positive open relationship between boys and girls,
 - in the light of the dignity of the human person, to face up to the values of life and the criteria of the Gospel, and the various questions arising at the present day about human life and sexuality,
 - to be open to God's plan as a practical way of living their own vocation to love.

Special importance will have to be given to this aspect in formation programmes in the groups and associations of the Salesian Youth Movement and in the personal guidance of the young.

- ❖ Promote among the young adults where we are involved (leaders, volunteers, young collaborators, etc.) *practical formation schemes for the discernment and follow-up of the vocation to Christian marriage*. This will require the effort to obtain the collaboration of Christian couples already belonging to the lay groups of the Salesian Family.

- ❖ Encourage in our works the setting up of *groups, movements and associations of couples and of families* that can help in the living and deepening of their own vocation to marriage and in actively taking on their educative responsibilities. In the Salesian Family there already exist groups of “Don Bosco Families”, “Hogares Don Bosco”, promoted and animated by the Salesian Cooperators, but there are also several other family associations, such as the “Christian Family Movement”, “Matrimonial Encounters”, etc.
- ❖ Support the parents of our youngsters in their educative responsibilities through the setting up of *parents’ associations, courses for parents*, etc. with a concrete and systematic plan for formation and sharing in educational matters.
- ❖ Strengthen in all our works and activities the educative and pastoral community, giving particular attention to personal relationships and a family atmosphere, to wide participation and to the sharing of Salesian values and the objectives of the educative and pastoral plan. In this way the Salesian work will become a place where the youngsters feel at home and will be at the same time a support for the families involved.
- ❖ *Involve the families in the process of education and evangelisation* that we propose and organise among the youngsters, through initiatives such as sharing sessions between parents and children, family catechesis, the involvement of parents in the organisation of groups of the SYM, joint meetings and celebrations, and Christian family groups as a point of reference for the journey of faith proposed to the young, etc.
- ❖ Encourage, prepare and accompany our lay people in *promoting and defending in society the rights of the family* in response of harmful laws and situations.
- ❖ Deepen the *sense of the Salesian Family* among the various groups present in the same locality, through the knowledge and sharing of the “Identity Card” and “Mission Statement”,

and the functioning of the “Consulting Group of the Salesian Family” at various levels.

Conclusion: a legend flavoured with wisdom

And now in conclusion, as I have done in the past when commenting on the Strenna, I offer you a legend that could sum up what I have said in this commentary.

A family

In the heart of a valley of fields, woods and meadows there lived a happy little family in a small two-storied house. There were three of them at the time: the mother and father, and a fair-haired six year old little boy. The father worked in a factory making water-taps, the mother cultivated the orchard behind the house and kept a stern eye on twelve fussy hens and a domineering rooster. The child was happy to be able to go to school, and proud that he could already write his name. He also new what “exuberant” meant.

Through the centre of the valley a bubbling stream wound its way. The house was in a rather isolated spot and so on Sundays the small family would squeeze itself into a tiny car and go to Mass in the parish church. Afterwards they consumed ice cream or drank hot chocolate, according to the season.

In the evening the little house was always in a mild state of turmoil, because when it was the child’s bedtime there was always something he wanted to do, like counting the stars or the glow-worms, or how many little squares there were on the tablecloth.

Before going to sleep they all prayed together, and every night an angel of the Lord collected their prayers and took them to heaven.

One autumn it rained for days on end and the stream became swollen with dirty water. Higher up, mud and tree-trunks combined

to form a dam, which led in turn to the formation of a muddy lake. As darkness fell, the dam gave way under the pressure of the water, and the valley began to be flooded.

The father awoke mother and child. They clung to each other in terror because the water had already invaded the ground floor of the little house and was steadily rising and getting darker.

"Up to the roof!", cried Father. He took the boy, clinging silently about his neck with eyes full of fear, and climbed up into the attic and then on to the roof. Mother followed them.

On the roof they felt as through they were shipwrecked on an island which was growing steadily smaller, because the water continued to rise relentlessly and soon reached the father's knees.

Father got his feet firmly fixed on the roof, embraced the mother and said: "Take the child in your arms and get up onto my shoulders"!

Mother and child climbed up onto the father's shoulders, as he said: "Put your feet on my shoulders and the boy's on your own. Don't be afraid. Whatever happens I will not leave you!"

The mother kissed the child and said: "Climb up onto my shoulders and don't be afraid. Whatever happens I will not leave you!"

The water went on rising. It covered the father, with his arms stretched out holding the mother, and then swallowed up the mother with her arms stretched out holding the child. But the father did not loosen his grip and neither did the mother, but the water went on rising. It reached the child's mouth, his eyes, his forehead.

The angel of the Lord, who had come to collect their evening prayers, saw only a mop of fair hair on the surface of the dark water.

He swiftly grasped the mop of hair and pulled. Behind the hair came up the child, and attached to the child came up the mother, and holding on to the mother came up the father. Neither had lost their grip.

The angel flew off and gently deposited the singular chain on a higher hill, where the water would never reach. Father, mother and child tumbled onto the grass and then hugged each other amid tears and laughter.

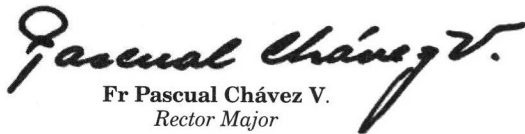
Instead of their prayers that evening, the angel took back to heaven their love. And all the choirs of heaven broke out into thunderous applause.

* * *

There, dear friends, you have a “parable” that is very Salesian, because the message is that by beginning with the children we “bring up” the rest of the family.

I end by renewing my good wishes for the New Year of 2006, which begins under the protection of Our Blessed Lady the Mother of God. May she teach us to contemplate the family she created at Nazareth, so as to understand its secrets and imitate it.

Affectionately in Don Bosco


Fr Pascual Chávez V.
Rector Major

SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR THE ANIMATION OF THE SALESIAN FAMILY AT PROVINCIAL AND LOCAL LEVEL

Fr. Adriano BREGOLIN
Vicar of the Rector Major

Following the assessment undertaken by the General Council last June of the planning for the six year period, as regards the Salesian Family it seems to me opportune to recall some aspects that at provincial and local level need to be looked at in order to provide a more effective animation of the Salesian Family.

1. The Salesian Family Provincial Advisory Body

This is a body envisaged in art. 37 of the Mission Statement (of 1998). It is called together with the purpose of cultivating the sense of belonging to the Salesian Family in a spirit of communion found in the Charism of Don Bosco in which all the groups share in order to strengthen their collaboration in view of the mission to youth.

This Body with its regular meetings and in the spirit of fraternity that should animate it, will be a powerful instrument in keeping alive the awareness of all the groups of the Salesian Family and their sense of the mission, to which all of us (in our own specific way) are called.

Recalling suggestions made by former General Councillors for the Salesian Family, I remind you that it can operate:

At the level of formation, according to the following points:

1. Studying the Founder Don Bosco in order to know and understand him and to take on board his original project and his criteria for pastoral action.
2. Being aware of the positive experiences of pastoral activity by the Salesian Family in the history of the Congregation and of the Salesian Family. Anniversaries and commemorations (centenaries, golden jubilees, etc) are suitable occasions to acquire and further develop this awareness.
3. To acquire direct practical knowledge of the groups of the SF and appreciation for their specific identity.
4. Experience the SF in practical ways through joint activities that are planned and then assessed for their explicit formation value.
5. Ensure that the SEPP (Salesian Educative and Pastoral Plan) really involves all the SF in view of the common Salesian mission and in the awareness of their reciprocal autonomy and complementarity.
6. Encourage the Salesians of Don Bosco to feel themselves part of the SF and not on a plane above it so as to acquire a sense of belonging and to develop a vision of mutual dependence (and not an hierarchical one).

At pastoral level:

1. To be well-informed about the pastoral challenges facing the local Church, of which the SF is a part: the general challenges and the particular ones for the specific Salesian mission.
2. Establish contacts based on mutual trust and collaboration with the Bishops and active forces in the Church, giving priority to those people, groups and others that are more in harmony with our own specific mission. The local Church should consider us part of the family and not just guests welcome or unwelcome.

3. Make contact and establish forms of collaboration with the forces in civil society directly or indirectly of concern to the mission of the SF. The city or the region ought to feel the benefit of what we do and also consider us part of the family.
4. With a lively sense of the local Church, the SF considers side by side the local pastoral and social challenges and the specific commitments of the Salesian mission in order to decide on the pastoral needs and to respond appropriately, establishing a Salesian Educative and Pastoral Plan (SEPP) common to the SF.

I invite all the Provincials to establish the Provincial Advisory Body and to lead the way in its activities in the spirit of art. 5 of our Constitutions. This requires study in the Provincial Council and a specific feasible plan to be gradually implemented. As already mentioned above, nowadays we are conscious that our confreres often feel themselves to be little involved and hardly concerned. The Salesian Family is not "an optional extra" in our apostolic work. It has been from the beginning a particular way of living the Salesian Charism, with the greatest involvement of religious and laity.

2. Provincial Delegate for the Salesian Family

Even though this is not an established or regular figure in all the Provinces, it would be good for each Province or Vice Province to have a confrere particularly concerned with the animation of the Salesian Family. Most often (reflecting the present arrangement in the General Council) this role is entrusted to the Vice Provincial. It will be his task to act as the coordinator of the various activities at provincial level. In the name of the Provincial he will maintain contacts with the various groups and see to it that the work of the Delegates and the Assistants at provincial and local level is carried out diligently and carefully so that the individual groups are constantly supported and strengthened.

Should your Provinces not yet have such a figure it would be appropriate to determine who would be responsible for carrying out this particular role, also indicating this in the provincial and general lists.

3. Delegates and Assistants

Some groups in the Salesian Family receive a special service of animation through Delegates (Cooperators and Past-Pupils) or ecclesiastical assistants (VDB - CDB), appointed according to agreements included in the text of the constitutions or according to other agreed arrangements.

In making such appointments I invite you to select and propose suitable Confreres with the necessary gifts for this task of animation, and if possible not too old. The animation of the Salesian Family ought not to be a makeshift obedience, but rather a field of apostolate through which the Salesian forces in a given area take on greater vitality and exert a positive influence on civil and ecclesiastical life. For all this people are required with great enthusiasm and ability.

In the appointment of these confreres I would ask you to follow the norms as provided in the individual statutes or agreements (with the necessary sharing of information and dialogue with those responsible for the various groups.).

In the Department for the Salesian Family the prior need has been identified for a process of formation for the Delegates and Assistants. For this reason thought has been given in these two years to the planning of special meetings at Regional level and where possible at Provincial level.

4. The Rector Major's Strenna as a unifying element for the animation of the Salesian Family

In recent years the Rector Major's Strenna has continued to become ever more appreciated by the individual Salesian Provinces as a means of formation for the Salesian communities and as the basis for the structuring of the pastoral programmes with the young.

In the same way the World Advisory Body of the Salesian Family has decided that the Strenna should be the focal point for reflection within the Salesian Family, all together, especially on the occasion of the Salesian Spirituality Days that are held in January at the "Salesianum" in Rome.

I invite the Provincials and the Rectors of the local communities to bear this in mind and to take advantage of the Rector Major's Strenna as a "unifying means" for the animation of the Salesian Family. This can take a practical form on the occasions of reflection in common, in the production of material related to the topic and in pastoral activities that are meant to put into practice whatever the Rector Major suggests as the priority in this annual message of his.

Giving particular attention to the Strenna will strengthen in everyone the awareness that the Rector Major, as the Successor of Don Bosco, is the Father and centre of unity of the Salesian Family. (Cf. *Con.* 126)

4. ACTIVITIES OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL

4.1 Chronicle of the Rector Major

– *September 2005*

The Rector Major began the month of September in Khartoum, in Sudan, the last stage of his visit to the East Africa Province (AFE), on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the presence of the Salesians in Kenya, Tanzania, Sudan and Uganda.

Returning to Rome at midday on Friday 2 he immediately began working in the office. In the evening after supper he chaired a short meeting with the Councillors present, to approve some appointments.

On Saturday 3 he presided at Mass for the installation of the new Rector of the Generalate Fr José Manuel Guijo; afterwards he received some confreres.

The following day in the early afternoon he set out for Turin for the *Team Visit* of the Provinces of Poland and the East Circumscription, held at Colle Don Bosco between 4 and 7 September.

The Rector Major returned to Rome on the evening of the 7 September. The following day he went to the Sacred Heart house in Rome where he met the Editors of the Salesian Bulletin, before going

to the airport to travel to Papua New Guinea, for the celebration of the 25th anniversary of the presence of the Salesians. In Papua he visited the house at Araimiri, cradle of Salesian presence in the country where the Jubilee celebrations took place, and the works at Boroko and Gabutu. During his visit the Rector Major saw the Nuncio Apostolic, some Bishops, the confreres, those in formation, the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians and other groups of the Salesian Family, lay collaborators, the young people, the Rectors and the Council of the Delegation, as well as making himself available for meetings with individuals. Fr Chávez arrived back in Rome on Friday 16 September at midday.

Between 16 and 24 he was at the Generalate busy with his usual work. On Sunday 18 he received the General Councillors who were present and two Salesian Bishops in Rome for the course for new Bishops and other confreres. The following day he went to see Fr Antonio Domenech in hospital. On Tuesday 20 he had a meeting of the Council and went to the UPS to see the missionaries who were

preparing for their departure. On Wednesday he received Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, and gave the Good Night to the confreres of the Generalate. On Thursday 22 he received Prof. Fr Biagio Amata, former Dean of the FLCC, and the Provincial of Paraguay, Fr Miguel Angel Cardozo, and the following day Mgr. Luis Felipe Gallardo, Bishop of the Mixepolitana Prelature.

In the evening of 24 the Rector Major left for Turin and the following morning Sunday 25, went on to Colle Don Bosco, where he spoke to those attending *Harambée 2005* and presided at Mass for the 135th missionary departure ceremony. In the evening he returned to Rome.

On 26-27 Fr Chávez was involved in the *Symposium of Consecrated Life* and between 28-30 until mid-day in the *plenary session* of the Congregation for Consecrated Life. On Friday evening 30 he went to the UPS, where he met the Rector Magnificus, the Vice Rectors and the Deans of the University.

– October 2005

On Saturday 1 and Sunday 2 of the new month the Rector Major was working in his office; he received some confreres and held a meeting with the Councillors present.

Between Monday 3 and Sunday evening 9, Fr Chávez was visiting the Salesian Delegation of Holland and the Province of North Belgium. In both places he spent most of his time meeting the Provincial Council, the Council of the Delegation, the Rectors the confreres, the lay collaborators, representatives of the Salesian Family and young people. He also visited some communities and works: Amsterdam, Soest, Apeldoorn, Deventer, and Assel in Holland; Groot Bijgaarden, Saint-Pieters-Woluwe, Oud-Heverle, Zwijnaarde and Saint-Denijs-Westrem, Eeklo and Hechtel, in Flanders. At Hechtel, cradle of the Salesian presence in the Low Countries on Saturday 8 October there was the Solemn Mass, the vote of thanks from the Mayor of Hechtel-Exel in the Town Hall, the exhibition by all the houses in this new Salesian structure the result of the unification of Holland and North Belgium, and the *musical* about Don Bosco. In the evening of the same day the Rector Major, accompanied by Fr Albert Van Hecke and the Provincial and by his secretary Fr Juan José Bartolomé, again went to visit the Helchteren community. His stay in Belgium ended on Sunday with a visit to the Mission Office at Boortmeerbeek, where he met a group of former

missionaries, celebrated Mass, at which there was a group of young people from the Emmaus community, and had lunch with the community. At 21.00 he arrived back home.

From Monday 10 until Tuesday 18 the Rector Major chaired the *Intermediate Session of the General Council* with meetings in the late morning and evening. As usual, during these days Fr Chávez received several confreres.

On Tuesday 11, in the morning he presided at Mass with the Councillors from the IAD, ILT, IRO Provinces and the ISA Vice Province, meeting together to work on a project for the restructuring and revitalisation of the Salesian presence in Central Italy. At lunch he had as guests Mgr. Gaston Ruvezi, Bishop of Kafubu-Kipushi, and the new Salesian Bishop of Kaga-Bandoro, Mgr. Albert Vanbuel. After lunch he received the Provincial of Vietnam with a group of confreres from the Province.

On Wednesday evening after supper he met a group of young volunteers and Salesian Cooperators.

The following day Thursday 13, in the evening he presided at Mass with the small group of Councillors during which Fr Antonio Domenech gave the homily sharing his

thoughts about his spiritual life at this time in his life.

On Saturday he received some benefactors from Sudan, representatives of a group that began and has developed within the Salesian Family, the Provincial of Croatia and his Council, and in the evening Mgr. Luc Van Looy.

On Sunday 16 he met the post-novices from the St Tarcisius community in Rome.

On Monday 17, after lunch accompanied by his Vicar, Fr Adriano Bregolin, and by Fr Enrico Dal Covo, he left for Bergamo for a meeting with the Directors of the Italcementi Foundation, in connection with a project for a Vocational Training Centre to be set up in Sri Lanka. They returned home in the evening.

On Tuesday 18 before lunch he received Mgr. Joseph Anthony Irudayaraj, Salesian Bishop of Dharmapuri, India; and in the early afternoon Mr. Michele Ferrero, President of the Ferrero Foundation. In the evening he had the last meeting of the Intermediate Council.

On Wednesday 19, accompanied by his secretary and by Fr Francesco Cereda, he went to the UPS for the opening of the Academic Year 2005-2006. There he presided at Mass while Cardinal Angelo

Sodano gave the inaugural address.

The following day he left for Colombia. When he arrived in the evening at Rionegro he was welcomed by the Provincial who took him to the Prenovitiate where on Friday 21 he had a meeting with the confreres in initial formation and with the aspirants. In the evening at Medellín, he had a meeting with the Salesian Family. On Saturday 22 he presided at the Provincial Community Feastday which took place in the Postnovitiate house in Copacabana. In the evening there was a Cultural Youth Meeting at the "Pedro Justo Berrío" Institute. On Sunday 23 he took part in the celebrations in which the Mayor of Medellín conferred a special Medal on the Work for Street Children at the "Don Bosco City". After lunch accompanied by his secretary and by the Provincial with his Council he left for Bogotá.

From the evening of Sunday 23 until Friday 28 Fr Chávez presided at the *Team Visit* for the Inter-america Region. During these days he spoke with the Provincials and some Provincial Councillors and with Fr Adriano Bregolín, Fr Francesco Cereda and the Provincials he visited the Generalate of the Daughters of the Sacred Hearts of

Jesus and Mary on the occasion of the centenary of their foundation.

On Saturday 29 and Sunday 30 the Rector Major visited the "San Pedro Claver" Bogotá Province. The first day in the Theologate, he presided at Mass with the perpetual professions of confreres from the two Provinces of Colombia and met the confreres from the COB Province. After lunch he went to the Don Bosco Centre to meet the young people from the SYM from all the SDB and FMA houses. In the evening in the Postnovitiate, he spoke to Rectors and gave the Good Night to them and to the postnovices. The following day in the Collegio León XIII, he had a meeting with the Councils of the two FMA Provinces, and of the Daughters of the Sacred Hearts after which he spoke to all the Salesian Family and presided at Mass. In the afternoon after having presided at another Mass for the funeral of a Salesian confrere, he had a meeting with the Youth Ministry Delegates of the SDB and FMA and with the coordinators of Provincial services and their teams. In the evening he left for Brazil.

The Rector Major ended the month of October, accepting a *Doctorate Honoris Causa* in Educational Science awarded him by the

Don Bosco Catholic University in Campo Grande.

– **November 2005**

On Tuesday 1 November Fr Chávez had a meeting with the Rector and those in formation from the Campo Grande Province at Lagoa da Cruz. There he celebrated Mass and afterwards visited the UCDB and the new Missionary Museum under construction. In the evening he left for São Paulo.

The following day he presided at Mass for the confreres and representatives of the Salesian Family, blessed a statue of Don Bosco and unveiled a plaque commemorating his visit. Afterwards following an informal gathering he met the confreres of the Province. In the evening he left for Rome where he arrived at midday on Thursday 3 November.

From Friday 4 until Sunday 6 the Rector Major stayed at home, received some confreres and visited Fr Antonio Domenech, in the infirmary at the UPS. From Sunday evening until Wednesday 9 he presided at the *Team Visit* for the CIMEC area of the North Europe Region held at the “Salesianum”.

On Thursday morning 10, he greeted the members of the Youth Ministry World Advisory Body and

in the afternoon went again to visit Fr Antonio Domenech.

The following day he left for Turin, where in the evening he took part in the filming of the video for the presentation of the Strenna for 2006 and gave the “Good night” to the confreres of the Valdocco community. On Saturday morning 12, he met with the Chancellor of the Diocesan Curia, a doctor and other experts together with the Provincial, the Rector and Vice Rector of the Community, the Rector of the Basilica, three other confreres and three FMA, for the official recognition of Don Bosco’s body. Immediately afterwards he visited the site of the work of restoration being carried out on Don Bosco’s altar and on the cupola. After lunch, accompanied by the Provincial Fr Pietro Migliasso, and by Fr Juan José Bartolomé, he left for Cuneo, for the celebrations for the 75th anniversary of the presence of the Salesians in that Piedmontese city. He had meetings about the family with young people, he attended a show at the Oratory, started the “*stracuni*” and presided at Mass. On Sunday evening he returned home.

On Monday morning 14 Fr Chávez spent time speaking with a number of Provincials and in the

evening met the staff of the Salesian Historical Institute.

At midday on Tuesday 15 he left for Sicily where he met the St Thomas community of Messina. In the morning the following day he met the Rectors and confreres of the Province and in the evening gave the inaugural address at the opening of the Academic Year 2005-2006.

On Thursday morning 17 he returned to Rome and took up again his office work. After lunch accompanied by Fr Adriano Bregolin and Fr Francesco Maraccani, he went to the St Andrew Hospital to visit Fr Antonio Domenech.

Between the evening of Friday 18 and the morning of Monday 21 the Rector Major visited the Province of Croatia. At Žepče, in Bosnia-Herzegovina, he met the confreres, received the promise of the first 18 Cooperators, greeted the young people and blessed the work. At Zagreb, on Sunday 20, he visited the aspirantate and prenovitiate, had a meeting with the young people from all the works of the Salesians and of the FMA, presided at Mass at which a further 18 Cooperators made their promise; in addition he gave an interview to the Catholic weekly "The voice of the Council," and visited the community of the Daugh-

ters of Mary Help of Christians. The following day, still at Zagreb, he had a meeting with a large number of confreres from the Province and presided at Mass. After lunch he returned to Italy.

On Tuesday 22 he worked in the office. Between Wednesday 23 and Friday 25 he took part in the Assembly of the Union of Superiors General held at the "Salesianum".

During the following days until 29 November Fr Chávez worked in his office; he went to the infirmary of the UPS to see Fr Domenech and received various people including the Provincial of China and His Eminence Cardinal Oscar Andrés Rodríguez Maradiaga.

On 6 December the *Winter Plenary Session* of the General Council began.

4.2 Chronicle of the General Councillors

The Vicar of the Rector Major

After the summer session of the Council, the Vicar General remained at headquarters until 4 August, when he went to Mornese to preside at Mass for the temporary professions of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians studying at the Auxilium, and the perpetual professions on the following day. He then went on to Missaglia to preside at the celebrations for the first professions of the FMA novices.

He was back at the Generalate from 7 to 15 August and spent the next two days at Verona to visit Fr Antonio Domenech, who was in hospital in that city. For the rest of the month he was able to enjoy a period of rest in the mountains.

Returning to Rome on 1 September, he left again on the 8th for Moscow and held a meeting on the same day with the confreres working there, and on the following day with the confreres of the Provincial Centre. On the 10th he visited the Salesian House of Moscow-Fili, which takes in street-children to prepare them for normal schooling.

The same afternoon he had a meeting with a group of Don Bosco Volunteers from Lithuania, Georgia and the Ukraine. In the evening he had a further meeting with the FMA communities of Moscow. On 11 September he presided at a solemn Mass in Moscow's Catholic Cathedral, at which were present a sizable group of Salesian Cooperators with whom afterwards he was able to have a conversation and discussion.

On the 12th, Fr Bregolin moved on to the Ukraine where, in the evening, he met the aspirants and prenovices of the Ukrainian Delegation, followed the next day by a meeting with all the confreres and a meeting with the Delegation Council. He took part in the Eucharist in the Byzantine rite, and received the promise of ten men and women Cooperators, the first of the Ukrainian Delegation.

On the 14th and 15th he took part in a meeting of the Rectors and parish priests of the whole of the Eastern Circumscription, to whom he offered some themes for reflection on the life of the Congregation and on the Salesian Family. On this occasion he was also able to visit the vocational training school that forms part of the Salesian work and meet Mgr. Sapelak, formerly Eparch of the Ukrainians in

Argentina, and now living in the eastern zone of the Ukraine. On 16 September Fr Bregolin returned to Rome.

He left again on 21 September for Los Angeles, USA, where on the following day he visited the Salesian School of Bellflower, the St Dominic Savio Salesian parish, and met the local community of the FMA and that of the Salesian High School. In the afternoon of the same day he had a meeting with the San Francisco Provincial Council at St Joseph's, Rosemead.

On 23 September he presided at the festivities for the golden jubilee of the "Don Bosco Technical Institute" of Los Angeles before leaving for Watsonville, where he was the guest of the FMA at Corralitos.

The following morning Fr Bregolin visited the Salesian School in Watsonville, met the local Bishop and later took part in the celebrations for the 150th anniversary of the Salesian parish.

On 25 September he travelled to San Francisco, to visit the "Sts Peter and Paul" community and subsequently the school and community of Richmond, on his way to the house of Berkeley where all the confreres of the San Francisco and the Bay area had gathered to meet him.

On 26 September he went by air to the Eastern Province of the USA (New Rochelle) for a brief visit. The same evening he met the Hispanic community of the Salesian parishes of Port Chester.

The following day he visited the New Rochelle High School and said Mass for the students. In the afternoon he held a meeting with the Provincial Council before going on to Orange to meet the young confreres in formation of both Provinces of the USA and of Canada.

28 September found him back at Port Chester to meet the pupils of the "Corpus Christi" elementary school, before going on to visit the High School at Ramsey where he was able to address an assembly of all the students. In the afternoon he made a brief visit to the Provincial House of the FMA and finished the day at the Marian Shrine of Stony Point, where all the Salesian confreres of the New York and New Jersey areas had assembled to meet him.

The 29th was dedicated to a meeting with the Papal Nuncio at the United Nations, and to a visit to the Salesian house of Mary Help of Christians on Manhattan Island. Later the same evening he left for Rome where he arrived the following day.

The first two days of October found him at Chioggia for the local festivity of the past-pupils and a formation meeting with the educative community of the Salesian oratory.

After returning to Rome, his travels began again on 5 October, when he left for Poland, with a first stop at Tarnowskie Góry. The following day, after visiting the school and addressing an assembly of the pupils, he left for Częstochowa where he visited the Salesian Centre for Education and Animation. After lunch he moved on to the Novitiate of Kopiec to meet the confreres and novices and celebrate the Eucharist with them.

On 7 October at the Pilgrims' House of the famous Sanctuary of Częstochowa, he had a meeting with all the Delegates of the Salesian Cooperators of the four SDB provinces and two FMA provinces of the country. The day ended with a solemn Mass in the Sanctuary of Jasna Góra, after which Fr Bregolin spent the night at the provincial house of Wrocław. The following morning he visited the Salesian House of St Michael in Wrocław and took part in the celebrations for the Silver Jubilee of the Province, which ended with a solemn concelebration with a

large number of confreres and young people.

In the afternoon, after spending a short time at the Festival of Youth, he visited the Salesian House for Orphans at Kielców.

On 9 October the visit continued with a Mass in the parish of Christ the King at Wrocław and a pilgrimage to the Marian Sanctuary of Twardogóra, organised by the local Salesian community. In the evening of the same day Fr Bregolin returned to Rome.

From 10 to 18 October he remained in Rome for the intermediate session of the General Council, and then on the 21st he left for Bogotá (Colombia) for the *Team Visit* to the Interamerica Region which took place from the 23rd to the 28th.

On the 29th he went on to Ecuador where he visited the Salesian Regional Centre for Ongoing Formation, before continuing to Guayaquil; there he had a meeting with the local Salesians, and another with the local Salesian Family. He spent the evening at the Don Bosco House in the city's outskirts, where a special programme had been prepared with the street-boys.

On 30 October he went back to Quito for a meeting with the Quito Salesian Family at the Kennedy

Technical Institute, and later a meeting with confreres in formation and the FMA novices in the Novitiate of Cumbayá.

31 October was dedicated to a visit to the "Don Bosco Audiovisuais Centre" in Quito and a meeting with the directive council of the "Salesian Polytechnic University", where Fr Bregolin was able to meet all the teaching staff and representatives of the students. The visit to this Province concluded with a meeting of all the Rectors and many other confreres of the Quito area at the Provincial House.

From Quito the Vicar General travelled to Caracas, where in the morning of 1 November he had a meeting with the Damas Salesianas (Salesian Ladies), followed by a meeting with all the personnel in formation at the Novitiate of Los Teques. The following day he visited the ITER (Institute of Theology for Religious) of Caracas. In the afternoon he had a meeting with Cardinal Castillo before going to the FMA Provincial Centre to take part in a meeting of the council of the Salesian Family, and to say Mass with a wide representation of members of the Family. On 3 November he visited the St Francis de Sales Institute at Caracas Sarriá and later the communi-

ty of the students of theology in the same city. Later the same day he left by air for Rome.

From 6 to 9 November Fr Bregolin took part at the Generalate in the *Team Visit* to the Provinces of the CIMEC Conference. On the 24th he went to spend a short time at Valdocco before preaching a retreat beginning on the 26th to the confreres of the International Institute of Don Bosco at the Crocetta. After this he returned once more to the Generalate for the plenary session of the General Council.

The Councillor for Formation

The Councillor took part in the *Team Visit* to the Western European Region at Fatima from 1 to 6 August and in that to the Conference of Poland and the Eastern Circumscription at Colle Don Bosco from 4 to 7 September.

On 20 August at Como he presided at a Mass for the installation of the new Provincial of the Milan Province, and on 30 August led a study day for the assembly of the confreres of the Seville Province on the theme of the International Congress of Consecrated Life: "*Zeal for Christ, zeal for humanity!*"

On 8 September at Colle Don Bosco he received the first professions of the 21 novices of Pinerolo. On 13 and 14 at Milan he had a meeting with the young confreres in initial formation of the Milan Province. Here too he presided at the Mass for the perpetual profession and jubilees of SDBs and FMAs. Finally he visited the post-novitiate community of Nave.

From 17 to 24 September Fr Cereda was at Campo Grande in Brazil, where he first had a meeting with the national formation commission and then with the Assembly of the CISBRASIL, at which were present also the Regional Councillor Fr Helvécio Baruffi, the Provincials and the provincial Delegates. Fr Cereda presented the "*Report on initial formation in the CISBRASIL Conference*". During his visit he also had a further meeting with all the formation communities in the Campo Grande Province. He also spent two days with the "Pius XI" formation community at the interprovincial study-centre of San Paolo, engaging in discussion and dialogue with a view to increasing collaboration between the provinces.

From 20 to 23 October he was at Bogotá, Colombia, for a meeting with the regional formation com-

mission of the Interamerica Region, and from 23 to 28 October at the *Team Visit* to the same Region. On 30 October he presented to the Provincials the "*Report on initial formation in the Interamerica Region*". On 31 October and 1 November he was in Cuba, where he visited the aspirantate and pre-novitiate communities of Santiago de Cuba and the two Salesian communities at Havana, with a final meeting with the formation commission of the Delegation.

From 4 to 9 November the Councillor visited the Salesian Institute of Theology of *Jerusalem*. Here he took part in several meetings with the students, formation personnel and the assembly of teachers. He presided over the "Curatorium" as it drew up the plan for the coming year, and finally took part with the Dean of the Faculty of Theology and the Secretary General of the UPS in the inauguration of the Academic Year and the presentation of medals to emeritus Professors Fr John Laconi, teacher of Canon Law, and Fr Luciano Nordera, teacher of Church History.

From 17 to 22 November the Councillor was in Argentina. At Buenos Aires he was present at the meeting of the interprovincial formation commission of the in-

terprovincial Conference of the CISUR. He then visited the studentate of theology at Devoto and the prenovitiate of San Justo, and was also able to see the new house for the students of theology of the five Provinces of Argentina. Finally he had a meeting with the Provincials of Argentina and then with all the Provincials of the CISUR, to whom he presented the *"Report on initial formation in the CISUR Conference"*.

From 23 to 25 November Fr Cereda took part at the Salesianum in Rome in the Assembly of Superiors General, which considered the topic of *"Vocational fidelity"*. He presented a paper on "A research into the signs and lines of vitality in a religious province".

On 27 and 28 November Fr Cereda took part in meetings with the formation commission and the Provincials of the Conference of Poland and the Eastern Circumscription, to whom he explained the *"Report on initial formation in the Conference of Poland and the Eastern Circumscription"*. From 29 November to 4 December he visited the formation communities and met with the provincial formation commissions of the Provinces of Croatia, Slovenia and Hungary. Afterwards he had a

meeting at Budapest with the Provincials and provincial delegates for formation of the CIMEC Conference, which took the first steps for the setting-up of the Commission of Delegates, and launched the process for the *"Self-assessment of the Formation Communities of the CIMEC"*.

The Councillor for Youth Ministry

After the plenary session of the Council Fr Antonio Domenech underwent a medical analysis as a result of which a surgical operation followed on 16 August. After a brief period of recovery his doctors prescribed a course of chemotherapy from mid-September to the end of February 2006.

The Councillor has had to cancel all his journeys and engagements scheduled for this period, but has been able to keep in close touch with the other members of his Department and follow up the programme foreseen for these months.

During October with his team he prepared the second meeting of the World Council for Youth Ministry (which brings together those responsible for the National Centres for Youth Ministry and the

coordinators of the interprovincial teams of provincial delegates). The meeting took place at the Gener-
alate from 6 to 12 November. Two
themes were studied that are fun-
damental for the pastoral work of
the Congregation at the present
day: evangelisation in a climate of
secularisation and religious plu-
ralism, and pastoral work for vo-
cations. The meeting continued a
reflection that had been already
begun among the members by e-
mail. The Councillor was present
at the meeting for short periods.

Meanwhile the departmental
team was preparing, in conjunc-
tion with the corresponding FMA
personnel and young people, the
First Assembly of the Salesian
Youth Movement, to be held in
Rome from 25 to 27 November. In
this same period a member of the
team was taking part in a meeting
on vocational pastoral work and
aspirantates of the Southern
Asian Region at Calcutta.

To conclude these notes of the
chronicle, Fr Domenech wishes to
express his gratitude: "Even
though it is not exactly in line with
the usual style of the chronicle, I
want to take this opportunity to
express my heartfelt thanks for
the prayers and brotherly affec-
tion with which you have accom-
panied me in recent months; I can

assure you that I have felt myself
to be a member of a great family.
And I have tried to live this time
of sickness and suffering as my
specific contribution to our youth
ministry, keeping all of you in my
prayers, and especially our young
people".

The Councillor for Social Communication

Fr Scaramussa took part in the
Team Visit to the Western Euro-
pean Region (at Fatima, 2-6 Au-
gust) and to the Northern Europe
– CIMEC Region (Salesianum, 6-9
November). From 4-10 September
he was present at the World Meet-
ing of Editors of the Salesian Bul-
letin, which took place at the Sa-
cred Heart in Rome. The remain-
der of the months of August and
September he spent at Stockport,
England, learning English. On 23
and 24 October he was at La
Spezia in the Genoa Province at a
meeting of young Salesians, for a
study and discussion of the Rector
Major's letter on social communi-
cation.

The Department took part in the
Convention of the World Catholic
Association for Communication
(SIGNIS) at Lyons, France, from 4
to 11 November and, in the person

of Fr Peter Gonsalves, accepted the presidency of the so-called "International SIGNIS Group". During the Convention the Congregation received a prize conferred by SIGNIS and by UCIP (Catholic International Press Union) "for the various initiatives started up around the world for the fostering of *Media Education* in schools and institutions, among youngsters and people in general".

In the overall period covered by this chronicle (August – November) the Department has revised its programme for the remainder of the present six-year period in the light of what has been already achieved. It has launched a new working system among the ANS team for a better information service and management of correspondents. It has introduced new elements into the website, making it more simple to navigate and more secure. It has completed, in conjunction with the Formation Department, the draft of a guide for the formation of Salesians in social communication, and revised the corresponding manual (The "Delegate's Book"). It has produced a CD with all the contributions made at the Meeting of Salesian Bulletin Editors. It has prepared a text for teaching English to large groups of young Salesians

who need it as a "second language". It has also supported other Departments with translation services, the teaching of English and the revision of texts. And finally it has studied and gained experience of the possibilities that the *Open Source* system can offer as an alternative computer technique, that respects criteria of quality, poverty and ethics.

The Councillor for the Missions

From 30 July to 4 August 2005 Fr Francis Alencherry visited all the Salesian foundations in Sri Lanka, for the purpose of animating the new Vice-province and seeing the progress made in providing help for the victims of the tsunami. He concluded his visit with a meeting with all the confreres of the Vice-province and with the Superior and his council. He noted with satisfaction the fine work done by the confreres for the tsunami victims.

On 5 and 5 August he was in Kerala for the ordination of a relative, and then went on to the Tiruchy Province (INT) in Tamil Nadu. Between 7 and 19 August he visited all 23 Salesian foundations in the province, beginning

with the parish of Vallavilai in the extreme south. He took special note of the areas struck by the tsunami and found that the confreres had done a great deal for children and young people through various projects of assistance and formation. In every community he met with the assembled confreres to reflect on missionary issues. He was particularly impressed by the Province's great commitment to the overall development of those on the margins of society. He concluded his visit with a meeting with Rectors and those in charge of smaller communities, and another with the Provincial and his council to share impressions and make recommendations. He took the opportunity also to make a pilgrimage to the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Vellankanni, which was also damaged by the tsunami.

From 19 to 28 August the Councillor was in the Province of Chennai (INM), to visit some outlying foundations and rural missions, where we do pastoral work for the very poor and for the Dalits. On 23 August he had a meeting with a group of confreres at Tirupattur to share some missionary news of the Congregation, and a further meeting for a similar purpose on the 26th for confreres working in the Chennai area. On 27 August he

made a flying visit to the single Salesian foundation in the Andamans, which forms part of the Chennai Province. At the conclusion of the visit he met with the Provincial and his council to reflect on some items of importance for the Province.

Returning to Rome on 29 August, Fr Alencherry went on immediately to Venice-Mestre where, on the following day, there was an assembly of the INE Province to encourage the missionary interest of the confreres in view of the imminent opening of the Province's new mission in Moldavia. He returned to Rome in the evening of the 30th.

From 4 to 7 September, the Councillor was at Colle Don Bosco to take part in the Team Visit to the Provinces of Poland and the Eastern Circumscription.

Returning once again to Rome, the Councillor remained at headquarters for some days to prepare the course for the new missionaries about to leave for their various destinations. On 19 September he went to the UPS to preside at the perpetual profession of three confreres of the Vice-province of Indonesia-Timor, who are studying theology in Italy.

The course for the preparation of the departing missionaries be-

gan at the UPS on 11 September and continued until 20 September, with the Councillor present most of the time. For the period 21-25 September he moved with the new missionaries to Colle Don Bosco, to accompany them in a pilgrimage to the Salesian holy places. The ceremony of the presentation of the missionary crucifix took place on Sunday, 25 September in the Don Bosco Church at Colle. The Rector Major gave the crucifix to 21 SDBs, 5 FMAs and 23 lay volunteers. In the evening of the 25th Fr Francis returned to Rome and on the following day left for Haiti. The fact that his flight was via New York enabled him to meet with the SUE Provincial at New Rochelle and also visit his brother who lives in New York.

From 27 September to 4 October the Councillor made a visit to the Vice-province of Haïti, visiting all the Salesian foundations and concluding with a meeting with a large number of the confreres and a further meeting with the Superior of the Vice-province and his council.

From Haïti Fr Francis travelled next to Bonn in Germany, where from 5 to 7 October he chaired the six-monthly meeting of Mission Office Directors and representatives of Salesian NGOs.

On 8 October he returned to Rome for the *intermediate session of the General Council*.

On 20 October he left once again, this time for Medellín, Colombia, and on the following day visited the Afro-American mission of Condoto in the COM Province, and spent the next two days taking part in various manifestations and meetings organised for the occasion of the Rector Major's visit to the province. Then, with the Rector Major, he reached Bogotá.

From 24 to 28 October the Councillor was present at the *Team Visit* for the Interamerica Region, which took place in the Conference Centre of the Colombian Bishops' Conference in Bogotá.

Subsequently, on 29 October, Fr Francis went to Caracas, Venezuela, and from 30 October to 6 November visited the various mission stations in the Vicariate of Puerto Ayacucho, where the Salesians are involved in the evangelisation of the Yanomami tribe and others of various ethnic origins. On 8 November at Caracas he took part in a meeting of the combined SDB and FMA Provincial Councils of Venezuela, with Mgr. José Ángel Divasson, Vicar Apostolic of Puerto Ayacucho, his Vicar General (Fr

Bortoli), and Sister Ciri Hernández, General Councillor of the FMA for the missions *ad gentes*, to consider future prospects of the pastoral role of the two Congregations in the Vicariate. Fr Francis also took the opportunity afforded by his presence in Caracas to visit between 7 and 9 November some of the Salesian foundations, and especially the houses of formation for missionary animation.

His return to Rome was delayed by a day by a technical fault on the aircraft, but in the evening of 11 November he was able to get to Gerini to meet the missionaries taking part in the course of ongoing formation at the UPS.

On 12 and 13 November he was at Sampierdarena, Genoa, for the commemoration of the 130th anniversary of the departure of the first group of Salesian missionaries from the port of Genoa. He presided at the solemn Mass on 13 November in the parish church.

From 14 to 16 November the Councillor remained at headquarters in Rome, before leaving for Ethiopia where, between 16 and 29 November he visited all the Salesian foundations in the Ethiopian part of the Ethiopia-Eritrea Vice-province (AET), giving particular attention to the new Prefecture

Apostolic of Gambella, entrusted to the care of the Salesians by the Holy See. It is an area of first evangelisation on the borders of Sudan. He noted the great progress made in the five years of its existence, under the guidance of the Prefect Apostolic Mgr. Angelo Moreschi SDB. In every community Fr Francis was able to speak with the confreres and provide some missionary input.

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

The Economist General

Before the conclusion of the plenary summer session of the General Council, Fr Gianni Mazzali had already made a brief visit of three days to Palestine for contacts with the Middle East Province and the ecclesiastical authorities in connection with the Beitgemal project.

From 2 to 6 August he took part in the Team Visit to the Western European Region at Fatima in Portugal. From the 8th to the 21st he visited some of the Salesian foundations in the Canadian Vice-province, and preached the annual retreat to a group of some thirty confreres.

Returning to Italy, he went to Muzzano Biellese to preach the retreat to the novices of Pinerolo-Monteoliveto and to a group of confreres of the Special Circumscription of Piedmont and the Valle d'Aosta.

Subsequently, from 27 August to 2 September he helped with the summer camp for young and older boys of the Don Bosco Oratory of the parish of St Martin of Sangano, Turin.

On 9 September the Economist General was present at the meeting of the Administrative Council of the SEI, before going on to spend a week's rest with his family. On his return to Rome he was engaged in matters of ordinary administration, taking part in various meetings with officials of his Department, of the Gerini Foundation and of the Polaris Society.

From 10 to 19 October he took part in the *intermediate session of the General Council*, and from 23 to 29 October in the meeting of the Conference of African Provinces (CIVAM) at Lubumbashi in the Congo.

From 30 October to 5 November at Sanlúcar la Mayor near Seville, he preached a retreat to Rectors of the Spanish Provinces of Cordoba and Seville. Returning to Rome once more he took part in the

work of the *Team Visit*, to the Provinces of the CIMEC Conference.

On 11 November at the headquarters of the Milan Bank Fr Mazzali was present at a meeting of the Ethics Committee and Council of Administration of the Real Estate Fund, and on the 14th at Turin in a committee meeting of the SEI he launched the process for the assessment of the publishing activity for the year 2005.

Finally from 2 to 4 December the Economist General returned once again to the Holy Land for further meetings concerning the question of the Salesian property at Beitgemal.

The Councillor for the Region Africa - Madagascar

The Regional Councillor for Africa-Madagascar, Fr Valentín de Pablo, had the following engagements during the period August-November 2005:

Between 18 and 26 August the Regional Councillor paid a visit to the *Prefecture Apostolic of Gambella*, in Ethiopia, entrusted to the Salesians. During his visit he had the privilege of the company of the Prefect Apostolic, the Salesian Mgr. Angelo Moreschi, and of the

Provincial of AET, Fr Alfredo Roca. The Regional Councillor was able to see the great work done in these first five years of the existence of the Prefecture, which is located in an area on the boundary with Sudan, with a complex ethnic and religious situation. In his work the Prefect Apostolic has concentrated on promoting local vocations and on the training of catechists, setting up a net-work of places of worship and development. On their part the Salesians have opened a centre in Gambella with the *Don Bosco Technical School*, which has become for the people and the local government a visible sign of the concern of the Catholic Church for the human and religious development of the region.

Between 27 August and 2 September the Regional Councillor accompanied the Rector Major on his visit to the four countries in the East Africa Province (AFE): *Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and Sudan*. It was the twenty-fifth anniversary of the arrival of the Salesians in these countries. From the original group of a score of Salesians, who arrived from India, Italy and Poland, now they have grown to 170 confreres of whom 85 are local, in 30 religious communities. During his visit the Rec-

tor Major installed the new Provincial Fr Joseph Pulikkal, visited the confreres in the various countries, especially in the difficult situation in Sudan, and at Dodoma, in Tanzania, he met about 700 youngsters in the Salesian Youth Movement.

The Extraordinary Visitation of the "Blessed Michael Rua" Vice Province of South Africa (AFM) with headquarters in Johannesburg (South Africa). In the name of the Rector Major, the Regional Councillor carried out the Extraordinary Visitation of AFM, which officially began on 6 September and ended on 15 November. This Vice Province includes three countries: South Africa, Swaziland and Lesotho. There are 58 confreres and 8 novices (7 belonging to ZMB and 1 to AFM). Eighteen of these confreres are local vocations of whom 9 are already perpetually professed. The confreres are working in 9 foundations: 6 in South Africa, 2 in Swaziland and 1 in Lesotho. The Salesian presence in the south of Africa goes back more than a hundred years: the first foundation was made in 1896 in Cape Town (South Africa); the presence in Swaziland goes back to 1952 and that in Lesotho to 1980. It was the Provinces of England and Ireland that began and sus-

tained their development. In 1988 AFM became an independent Vice Province. During all these years the Salesian presence grew together with the local society which underwent the effects of social and political changes in the three countries. Following the colonial years there came fifty years of "Apartheid", which affected the development of the Salesian foundations. Last year marked ten years of democracy in South Africa, but the people are still struggling against poverty, racial and social class distinctions which are all long-standing. The Extraordinary Visitation lasted a month and a half between September and November. Following a previously organised programme, the Regional Councillor was able to meet each confrere and visit all the communities. During the visit there was the joyful celebration for the 25 years of the Salesian presence in Lesotho.

Between 26 and 30 September the Regional Councillor went to Bangui, in the Central African Republic, to attend the *episcopal ordination* of Mgr. Albert Vanbuel SDB as Bishop of Kaga-Bandoro, in the north of the country. It is a missionary diocese, needed to further consolidate a country that has suffered greatly from political tur-

moil. On his way to Bangui, the Regional Councillor stopped at Yaoundé to visit the community of the theologians and to see how the building of the new formation house was progressing.

Between 10 and 19 October the Regional Councillor took part in the *Intermediate General Council Meeting*, in Rome. During this session the General Council examined the current situation and the prospects for the future in the *Africa-Madagascar Region*. The study of the report presented by the Regional Councillor gave the opportunity to be aware of the steps taken during this six year period, of the challenges that are emerging and to propose some working guidelines that can help the consolidation and the development of the Salesian charism in the Region. Some guidelines were given in regard to the juridical reorganisation of some foundations, in particular those in Ruanda - Burundi, Mozambique and the Sudan.

Between 24 and 30 October the Regional Councillor stayed in *Lubumbashi*, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, to preside at the annual meeting of the *Provincial Conference of Africa and Madagascar* (CIVAM). The main item for reflection this year was "Religious Poverty", led by

the Economer General Fr Gianni Mazzali. Other study topics were the revision of the "Regulations" of the CIVAM and the preparation for the "*Team Visit*" to the Region to be held shortly. Travel problems with flights to and from Lubumbashi gave the Regional Councillor the opportunity to stop at *Lusaka*, in Zambia, and at *Harare*, in Zimbabwe, and meet the confreres.

Visit to Mozambique. Between 17 and 22 November the Regional Councillor was in Mozambique, to meet the Council of the Delegation and together to study the steps to be taken in order to establish it as a Vice Province next July. The Regional visited the six communities in the south of the country leading the monthly day of recollection for the confreres. During these days he was also able to meet the Nuncio Apostolic and the Archbishop of the capital.

Visit to Ruanda. From Mozambique the Regional Councillor went to Ruanda, where he stayed between 23 and 27 November. He met the Council of the Delegation and studied together the way ahead for the setting up of a Vice Province next July. The Regional paid a visit to the novitiate community in *Butare*, where he was able to see the way the new building was functioning and to the

postnovitiate community in *Kabgayi*. In both formation houses the Regional led a monthly day of recollection for the confreres including those from neighbouring communities. On the way to Madagascar, the Regional stopped for some hours in *Nairobi* (Kenya) to offer condolences to the AFE Province for the death of a confrere the previous day.

Visit to Madagascar. Between 28 and 30 November the Regional Councillor was in Madagascar for a meeting of all the Rectors and of the Council of the Vice Province. He was also able to make a visit to the community of the Novitiate and to the Vocational School of Notre Dame de Clairveaux.

On 1st December, the Regional Councillor arrived in Rome for the beginning of the winter session of the General Council.

The Councillor for the Region Latin America - South Cone

When the summer session of the General Council finished, the Regional Councillor left for Brazil, to begin the *Extraordinary Visitation* of the "Mary Help of Christians" Province of São Paulo.

The official opening was on 10 August with a meeting with the

Provincial Council and all the Rectors. Then during the Visitation, the Regional met various groups of the Salesian Family, the pastoral working group and he also had the opportunity to speak at leisure with all the confreres. In addition on 19 August the Regional took part in the pilgrimage of the Salesian Family to the Basilica of *Nostra Signora Aparecida* and presided at Mass.

During the Visitation the consultation was held for the appointment of the new Provincial. Three discernment meetings took place in the three areas of the Province. The vast majority of the Salesians took part in the discernment meetings.

The Visitation ended with a further meeting with the Provincial Council and all the Rectors.

Afterwards between 1st and 11 November the Regional was in the Province of Recife, for a visit. He took part in a meeting of the Provincial Council and with the Provincial Formation Commission; in addition he visited the formation houses and some other houses in the Province. He also took part in the Youth Festival to celebrate the ten years of the Youth Movement and at which more than eight hundred young people were present.

Between 12 and 14 November Fr Helvécio Baruffi took part in the VI National Congress of Don Bosco Past Pupils held in the Pius XI Theological Institute in Lapa, São Paulo, with the title: "The challenge of being and acting as Past Pupils of Don Bosco in Brazil today," and the slogan was: "*Involvement, solidarity and mission*". At the Congress those in charge of the Past Pupils throughout Brazil took part, though of necessity only a reduced number of them.

Afterwards between 14 and 16 November the Regional paid a visit to the Province of Asunción, Paraguay. He was able to visit the formation houses and meet those in formation. He also had the chance to visit some of the houses in the capital.

On 21-22 November the Regional took part in a meeting of *CISUR*, which was held in the Bahía Blanca Province in the house in Fortín Mercedes. The whole of the first morning was spent reflecting on formation with Fr Francesco Cereda who was also present. In the meeting of the Argentine Provincials (JIAR) the main topic was the unification of the phase of Theology at San Justo, in the Buenos Aires Province: the theological studies will be un-

dertaken in ISET. This project will begin next year. Also considered were the criteria for the organisation and composition of the team of formation personnel, with Salesians from all the Provinces. The unification of the phase of the post-novitiate, which is also in hand, needs to be studied more calmly.

On 25 November in Brasilia the Regional took part in the blessing and the opening of the new headquarters of *CISBRAIL*, which has been extended in order to be able to respond better to the activities of the "União pela vida" and to the Salesian schools' network.

On 28 November the Regional returned to Rome for the winter plenary session of the General Council.

The Councillor for the Region Interamerica

After the summer session of the General Council closed, on 31 July the Councillor for the Interamerica Region set off for Canada, to follow a course in French for two weeks, visiting some of the communities and leading a day of reflection for all the confreres of the Vice Province about the future of the Salesian presence in the country.

On 17 August, Fr Esteban Ortiz travelled to New York to visit his family. On 26 August he had a meeting with the Provincial Council of the East United States Province (SUE). On 28 he arrived in the Dominican Republic to begin in the name of the Rector Major, the *Extraordinary Visitation*, of the "St John Bosco" Province of the Antilles (ANT), which has 27 communities and 169 confreres distributed in three countries: the Dominican Republic (16 communities), Cuba (5 communities) and Puerto Rico (6 communities). On 29 he met the Provincial Fr José Pastor Ramírez, and his Council and immediately the next day began visiting the communities.

On 6 October he travelled to Puerto Rico to visit the communities in this Delegation, which has 28 confreres. At the end of his trip around the Salesian houses on the island he gave a report to all the confreres on the situation of the Delegation and also had a meeting with the Delegate of the Provincial and his Council.

On 22 October the Regional Councillor arrived in Bogotá (Colombia) to take part in the *Team Visit* to the Interamerica Region, which was held between 24 and 28. After this on 29-30 Octo-

ber the Regional chaired a meeting of the Provincials.

Between 31 October and 4 November Fr Esteban Ortiz was in the Province of Ecuador (ECU) for a visit; he held a meeting of the Provincial Council, a meeting with the team of the Regional Centre for Ongoing Formation and took part in a meeting for Salesians in initial formation.

On 4 November he returned to the Antilles Province and began the visitation of the communities in the Delegation of Cuba, which contains 20 confreres. On 16 he concluded the visitation of the island and presented a report on the situation of the Delegation to all the confreres who met together in Havana, after which he had a meeting with the Delegate of the Provincial and his Council.

On 17 November the Regional Councillor returned to the Dominican Republic to finish his visits to the communities and to meet on various different occasions the Provincial Commissions. On 26 November, with Sr Teresa Curmi, Visitor of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, he took part in a meeting with the representatives of groups of the Salesian Family.

On 30 November Fr Esteban Ortiz gave his final report on the Ex-

traordinary Visitation to an Assembly of the Confreres, at which were present the Rectors of all the communities in the Province and some other Salesians from the Dominican Republic. In the afternoon he had a final meeting with the Provincial and his Council.

On 1st December the Regional left for Mexico, stopping for a day in Mexico City to greet the confreres in the Provincial House and to visit the novitiate at Coacalco. The following day he went to Guadalajara, where he greeted the Schools' Commission, took part in the patronal feast of the Theological Institute and the formation community in Tlaquepaque, and had a meeting with the Provincial and his Council for an assessment of the application of the recommendations of the Rector Major at the end of the Extraordinary Visitation carried out in 2004.

Finally on Sunday 4 December the Regional left for Rome to take part in the winter plenary session of the General Council.

The Councillor for the Region East Asia - Oceania

When the summer session of the Generale Council finished, Fr Klement left for the Provinces

of Indonesia - East Timor (ITM), South Philippines (FIS), North Philippines (FIN), and the Delegation of Papua New Guinea - Solomon Isles (PNG-SI), dependent on FIN, for a visit, meeting the Provincial Councils, the Rectors meeting together, and several groups of Salesian Brothers in view of the Regional Seminar planned for 2006; he also paid a short visit to almost all the communities.

In the ITM Vice Province (1-8 August) the Regional Councillor presided at the ceremony of the first profession of 7 Indonesian confreres, as well as making preparations for the Extraordinary Visitation in 2006. He visited some new formation structures that are developing: the postnovitiates for Brothers at Baucau (East Timor) and Jakarta -Wisma, as well as the new prenovitiate at Los Palos (East Timor).

In the FIS Province (Cebu) (9-18 August) Fr Klement was able to get to know very well the development of the Salesian Family, with a Salesian Formation Centre for lay people "Don Bosco Clay" at Cebu, as well as the progress of the project for vocational training centres in the countryside.

In the FIN Province (Manila) with the new Provincial Fr Andrew

Wong, Fr Klement visited all the communities on the island of Luzon (18-31 August), with a special emphasis on promoting the Salesian Brother, as well as setting up specific formation for the Salesian Brother in Manila-Parañaque.

Afterwards he went to the newly established Delegation of Papua New Guinea - Solomon Isles (PNG-SI), with new Statutes, visiting a promising foundation at Honiara-Tetere in the Solomon Isles (2-8 September). In this period he also accompanied the Rector Major during the celebrations of the 25th anniversary of the Salesian mission in Papua New Guinea (9-14 September).

The *Extraordinary Visitation* of the Vietnam Province took place in two stages: the first between 15 September and 9 October, and the second between 11 November and 5 December. The Regional Councillor was able to get to know and understand better the extraordinary vocational developments and also the missionary zeal of the young confreres.

In the period between the two stages of the visit to Vietnam, the Regional returned to Rome for the session of the Intermediate Council (10-19 October), after which he made a few short missionary visits: to Bulgaria (20-24 October) to

Poland (25-31 October) and finally to Pakistan (1-8 November).

Fr Klement returned to Rome on 5 December.

The Councillor for the Region South Asia

With the consultation for the new Provincial of the Province of Guwahati, at the beginning of August, the Regional Councillor for South Asia Fr Joaquim D'Souza, began his engagements for the period August-December 2005. The consultation was held in three different places (Guwahati, Shillong, Tura), where the confreres met together according to a previously agreed programme.

When the consultation was over on 10 August Fr D'Souza went to Bangalore to begin the following day the *Extraordinary Visitation* of the Bangalore Province (INK). Visits to all the communities kept him busy until 27 November, the day on which he closed the visitation in order to return to Rome. At present in the Bangalore Province there are 319 confreres and novices, distributed in 29 houses in 2 of the States of India, and in 4 parishes in Yemen in the Gulf (where the Visitor went between 4 and 11 November). In the course of the Extraor-

dinary Visitation Fr D'Souza met 11 Bishops in whose dioceses the Salesian houses in the Province are located. Among these is also the new Bishop of the Vicariate of Arabia, Mgr. Paul Hinder, OFM.Cap.

In the month of September (14-17), the Regional chaired the annual plenary session of the Provincial Conference of South Asia (SPCSA), at which, among other things there was an assessment of the *Team Visit* by the Rector Major and his Council held in New Delhi between 1 and 5 March, and a plan was drawn up for the implementation of the recommendations emerging from the conclusions of that *Team Visit*. The Visitor also took part in the Provincial Jubilee celebrations for the priestly ordination and religious professions of 15 confreres held in the novitiate at Padivayal on 19 October, and also the twenty-fifth anniversary of *Divyadaan*, the post-novitiate of Nashik in the Mumbai Province (INB) on 2 November.

When the Extraordinary Visitation of Bangalore was finished, the Regional went to Rome with a short stop at Kuwait, for a fact-finding visit to the community of three confreres who are looking after *The Indian English Academy*, an infant, junior and secondary school with 1200 boys and girls.

There he also had a meeting with a fine group of Don Bosco Past Pupils. He also met the new Bishop of Kuwait, Mgr. Camillo Ballin, M.C.C.I., and the former Nuncio Apostolic, Mgr. Giuseppe De Andrea. Having completed his various engagements and visits the Regional Councillor returned to Rome on 3 December for the winter session of the General Council.

The Councillor for the Region North Europe

At the end of the summer session of the General Council, Fr Albert Van Hecke went to Benediktbeuern, Germany for some days' rest (1-9 August).

On 12 August he left for Ireland to be present at the installation of the new Provincial Fr John Horan on 13 August. On 14 August he was in Soest, Holland for the setting up of the new Dutch Delegation. Afterwards on 15 August he went to Vremde in Belgium to take part with many confreres from North Belgium and Holland in the installation of the Provincial of the new Province Fr Jos Claes and of the Delegate, Fr Herman Spronck. The following day the Regional stayed with his family.

Following this Fr Van Hecke

spent the period 19 to 24 August at the Generalate.

On 25 August he went to Munich in Bavaria to be present at the installation of Fr Josef Gr  nner as the first Provincial of the new Province of Germany.

On 27 August he went to Poland to Warsaw to begin the *Extraordinary Visitation* of the Province which was to continue until 1 December 2005.

This visit was interrupted for the first time between 4 and 7 September so that he could take part at Colle Don Bosco in the *Team Visit* to the four Polish Provinces and the East Circumscription.

On 8 September the Regional resumed his Visitation in Poland.

The second interruption took place between 7 and 10 October while he accompanied the Rector Major during his visit to North Belgium on the occasion of the festivities marking the unification with Holland, which were attended by many members of the Salesian Family and friends of Don Bosco.

The high point of the celebrations was organised in the house at Hechtel (BEN) with Solemn Mass in the parish church of Hechtel, in the presence of 1500 people and five Bishops, four of them Salesians: Mgr. Luc Van Looy, Bishop of

Ghent (Belgium), Mgr. Adriaan Van Luyn, Bishop of Rotterdam (Holland), Mgr. Albert Vanbuel, Bishop of Kaga-Bandoro (Central African Republic) and Mgr. Gaston Ruvezi, Bishop of Sakania (Dem Rep. of the Congo). Also present was the Bishop of Hasselt, Mgr. Patrick Hoogmartens. The extraordinary fact should be pointed out that from the house of Hechtel there have been four Salesian Bishops. In the afternoon of the same day everyone attended an unforgettable Show on the life of Don Bosco, *'The touch of a Dreamer'* presented by 220 pupils from the Hechtel Salesian School.

On 10 October the Regional returned to Warsaw to continue the Extraordinary Visitation.

On 17 October he took part in the Solemn Mass in the Salesian Basilica in Warsaw to ask the Lord for the grace of the beatification of Cardinal Hlond.

Between 29 October and 1 November the Regional had to return to Belgium for family reasons.

He once again had to interrupt the visitation of Warsaw to take part in the *Team Visit* for the CIMEC area of the North Europe Region at the Salesianum (Rome) between 5 and 9 November. Afterwards he returned to Poland to conclude the Extraordinary Vista-

tion on 1 December.

The Visitation of the Warsaw Province had brought to light the growing diversification of the works especially the new initiatives in the area of education and evangelisation on behalf of youngsters in difficulties, new ways: through oratories-youth centres and freetime activities. It also, revealed the large number of well qualified confreres in various areas, our significant presence in the universities of Lublin and Warsaw-Cardinal Wyszyński, and the missionary generosity of this Province.

On 2 December the Regional returned to Rome for the winter session of the General Council.

The Councillor for the Region West Europe

When the summer session of the General Council finished the Regional Fr Filiberto Rodríguez left Rome and making a stop-over for a day in Madrid, on 1 August arrived in Fatima to take part in the *Team Visit* for the West Europe Region. The gathering between 2 and 6 August brought together 94 people, including secretaries and translators. The work went very well in a devout atmosphere suited to the places so blessed by the Madonna.

On Sunday 7 August, also in Fatima Fr Filiberto accompanied the Rector Major to a meeting with the young Salesians of the Iberian Conference and on 8 remained with him until his return to Rome. Afterwards on 9 August Fr Filiberto began a short period of rest with his family.

On 15 and 16 August he was in Granada to receive the first professions of the novices; on 18 he attended the meeting that traditionally some Salesians from Salamanca, with roots in Andalusia, celebrate each year on this day. This year the meeting was held in Cantalpino, the native place of Blessed Sr Eusebia Palomino.

Between 22 and 26 August Fr Filiberto visited the houses that the Iberian Conference have in Madrid and on 27-28 was in Paris to take part in the installation of the new SDB and FMA French Provincials. On 29 and 30 he was in Portugal for the first Council meeting of the new Provincial and to help launch the new project.

Between 1 and 4 September he took part in the annual meeting of the Iberian Formation Delegation in Madrid and on 5 officially began the *Extraordinary Visitation* of the Seville Province which would conclude on 24 November with the presentation of the final report to

the members of the Provincial Council and the Rectors.

The visitation was interrupted several times:

- between 23 and 25 September and between 29 October and 1 November for the Visitor's personal (family) commitments;
- on 15 October for a meeting of Provincial Economers of the Iberian Conference in Seville;
- on 5 November for a meeting with the Rectors of the Córdoba and Seville Provinces, to present the consultation for the appointment of a new Provincial, which will happen after the unification of the two Provinces;
- between 9 and 13 November for a meeting of the SDB/FMA French-speaking Conference of Belgium and France held in Bruxelles;
- for visits to the various communities in the Córdoba Province (between 14 and 20 November), in view of the forthcoming unification of the Provinces;
- for a visit to Tangiers (22-23 November) to see the launch of the ASSABIL project, carried forward by the NGO "Solidaridad Don Bosco", which is aimed, through a vocational training programme, at limiting the emigration of young Moroccans to Spain and Europe.

When the Extraordinary Visitation in Seville was finished the Regional went to Valencia (25-26 November) for the consultation for the appointment of the new Provincial. He did the same in León on 2 and 3 December.

Between 27 and 29 November he attended and chaired the LXIII Assembly of the Iberian Conference in Madrid - El Plantío.

On the morning of Sunday 4 December he returned to Rome to take part in the winter meeting of the General Council.

The Councillor for the Region Italy and the Middle East

After a period spent visiting his parents, Fr Frisoli took part between 22 and 25 August in a formation course for priest and brother confreres in the first five years of ordination or perpetual profession. On 26 August at the Madonnina he presided at the installation of the new Superior of the Vice Province of Sardinia; on 27 at Loreto for that of the new Provincial of the Adriatic Province; on 28 at Pacognano for the new Provincial of the Southern Province. Between 1 and 3 September he took part in the Assembly of the confreres of the

Province of Liguria-Tuscany, and spoke about the role of the laity and the identity of the Salesian community today. He then received the perpetual profession of two Vietnamese confreres.

On 9 September he met all the lay teachers in the Adriatic Province and on 10, at Ortona, he received the perpetual profession of a young confrere. On 11 he presided at Mass at Colle Don Bosco, during which five confreres from the Special Circumscription of Piedmont made their perpetual profession.

Between 15 and 17 September in Solanas (Sardinia) he took part in the formation meeting for Youth Ministry Provincial Delegates. On Sunday 18 he said Mass in the Cathedral Parish Church of St Mark in Latina for the blessing of a bust dedicated to the first parish priest of the city, Fr Carlo Torello.

After a week of preparation working in the office in Rome on 25 September he left for Albania and Kosovo, where he visited the confreres in Tirana, Scutari and Priština, and also met their lay collaborators.

Having returned on 1 October, on 2 October he began the *Extraordinary Visitation* of the "St Paul" Sicilian Province. He had a meeting with the Provincial Council on

3 October and then with the communities of Catania and the nearby area: Catania San Filippo Neri nuovo, Catania San Francesco di Sales, San Gregorio, Catania Salette, Pedara, Randazzo, Catania Barriera, Messina Giostra.

The visit to the Sicilian Province was interrupted by several other engagements: in the first place, a meeting with the Provincials of the Roman, Adriatic, Liguria-Tuscan Provinces and of the Sardinian Vice Province on 10 and 11 October, to work out a plan for the restructuring of the Salesian presence in central Italy. On 22 and 23 October he chaired the Assembly of CNOS Schools section, ten years after its foundation. Between 31 October and 4 November he went to Cairo in Egypt to meet the Rectors and Provincial Council of the Middle East Province, a year after the conclusion of the Extraordinary Vistation, for an assessment of the implementation of the guidelines of the Rector Major. Between 13 and 16 November he took part in the Congress organised by the economic section of the CISI, and gave the opening address on "Lay people in roles of responsibility."

He returned to Rome from Sicily on 29 November. Between 30 November and 6 December, with

the National Delegate for Formation he organised a Course for the new Rectors in the Region.

The Secretary General

In this period, implementing the itinerary set out in the programming for the six year period – in agreement with the Rector Major and the respective Regional Councillors – the Secretary General held *a meeting of Provincial Secretaries* at Guadalajara (Mexico), between 5 and 9 September, for the Secretaries of the Interamerica Region.

As was indicated in the letter convoking the meetings the purpose was to provide an opportunity for updating and a sharing of ideas. The topics on the Agenda were those specially relating to the Provincial Secretary and Secretariat, concerning documentation, statistics, juridical aspects, the archives and libraries. Special emphasis was given to the archives and to various juridical cases. Mention should be made of the active participation of the Secretaries and the friendly atmosphere of the meetings and the opportunity to learn about different situations.

At the end of the meeting in Guadalajara, the Secretary accom-

panied by the Provincial Secretary was able to visit the novitiate, the studentate of theology and a good number of the other communities in the Province.

On his journey home from Guadalajara, the Secretary stopped for three days in México D.F.

where, thanks to the kindness of the Vice Provincial, he was able to visit, in addition to the houses of the Province close to the capital admiring their great variety and the commitment of the confreres, some other places reflecting the rich culture and history of Mexico.

5. DOCUMENTS AND NEWS ITEMS

5.1 Homily of the Rector Major for the opening of the Academic Year 2005-2006 at the U.P.S.

Below is the text of the homily of the Rector Major given during the Mass at which he presided on the occasion of the opening of the Academic Year 2005-2006 at the Salesian Pontifical University, in Rome. The homily, referring to the readings of the Word of God, centred on the gift of the Spirit, drew attention to significant themes of our time, in particular that of communication and of communion, of respect for diversity, and of the mission of Christian life today called as it is to rediscover the "pentecostal, spiritual" dimension. In his homily the Rector Major also mentions the teaching of the late Pontiff John Paul II and the new Pope Benedict XVI.

*Dear members of the University community of the UPS
Rector, ViceRectors, Deans,
Professors, Students*

We are gathered together around the table of the Word and of the Eucharist to celebrate our faith in the paschal mystery, open ourselves and listen to God and invoke the gift of the Spirit on each and everyone of us at the beginning of

the new Academic Year 2005-2006, which I pray may be full of wisdom.

The opening of this university year coincides with the celebration of the Synod of Bishops on the Eucharist, "Source and Summit of the Life and Mission of the Church.", which becomes one incentive more to grow in the sense of the mystery in the adoration of God in the communion of his love in our personal transformation and in the commitment to transform/transfigure the world.

At this moment we cannot but recall dear Pope John Paul II, who had called for the Year of the Eucharist and convoked this Synod, and who having left us on the evening of Saturday 2 April of this year 2005 now shares in the heavenly banquet; and our dear Holy Father Benedict XVI, whom the Lord has given us a the Pastor of his Church and under whose authority the great Assembly of the Bishops is taking place. From the first moments of his Pontificate he has invited us to face up to the "dictatorship of relativism," and not to give in to the trend to make the faith something "ad usum privatum" without any consequences in public life, but to proclaim "the truth of the Gospel," and to present the beautiful and youthful face of the

Church and of Christianity the fruit of the joy of the redemption, with its cultural proposal as an alternative to that of the world, so that its relationship with the world should never be at the expense of its identity and mission, giving way to a worldly logic in which the triumph of positivism leads to growing disillusion and alienation. The only response that can free us from this social decay and the dictatorship of thought is the presentation of the Christian message with all its liberating force.

In the homily of the Mass to inaugurate his pontificate Pope Benedict XVI described his vision of the world in which Christ needs to be preached, a world that he saw as a "desert" in which to seek out men who are lost, and as a "salt sea" from which to pluck them out to bring them "to the land of life, into the light of God." According to the Holy Father, it is a question of "the desert of poverty, the desert of hunger and thirst, the desert of abandonment, of loneliness, of destroyed love. There is the desert of God's darkness, the emptiness of souls no longer aware of their dignity or the goal of human life. And "the salt waters of alienation." Obviously these images and this description are not meant to suggest

that everything is obscure and without light, but to underline the absolute need man has for God and for his salvation.

The scriptural texts of the liturgy speak to us precisely of the presence of God through his Spirit in the Church, as the origin of a shared apostolic life whose mission is the communion of the Gospel, as the source of diversity and the support of the unity of the believing community as the source of fraternal forgiveness and reconciliation, as the energy that nourishes the mission of the Church. Applied to our university situation, the Word of God invites us – in my view – to make our academic life the occasion to welcome the Spirit and his gifts, to seize hold of his wisdom, to allow ourselves to be guided by his power, and so become his collaborators, docile and effective, in transforming the world. But let us see what lessons there are in the Word of God.

The Spirit, life in common and communication

The second chapter of the Acts which is the chronicle of the "dies natalis" of the Church tells us that the effusion of the Spirit of Jesus on his disciples resulted in the first

evangelisation of all peoples, represented by the Jews who had come to Jerusalem from all parts of the world. Where the Spirit comes, there arises the Church; not just any kind of church however, not a mere juridical or social organisation even with a religious role, but the Church which comes to birth from the communication of the Spirit for the communication of the Gospel "in tongues."

However one may wish to interpret the phenomenon of the «tongues», in Luke's mind it is certainly meant to signify the «unifying» power of the Spirit that leads the disciples to communicate the one faith, the seed of the unity of the whole human family. The Spirit works simultaneously on two fronts: in the hearts and on the lips of the Apostles, who enebriated by his presence succeed in transmitting the Gospel of salvation in a manner that is convincing. In this way the Spirit is manifested in a form that is felt as power and effectiveness. And the first effect of the coming down of the Spirit, even before that of the public testimony in the preaching of the Gospel is the transformation of the Apostles: they become transformed from fearful disciples into courageous prophets, so that their faith has an effect on society.

This event is in contrast with the confusion of tongues that took place at Babel. The gift of the Holy Spirit creates unity in one language and in this way indicates the universal nature of the mission of the Apostles and of the Church, to the ends of the earth. At Babel all spoke the same language and at a certain point they could not understand one another, a confusion of language arose and the dispersion of the one people; at Pentecost, each one spoke a different language and everyone understood and they became a new single people. When efforts are being made to build a Europe without religion and without God, it is an attempt to manage without the Spirit, who is the one to create unity in diversity.

It is interesting to look at the world of today in the light of these two contrasting models. It is sufficient to notice what those building of the Tower of Babel were saying and what the Apostles at Pentecost were saying. The first said to themselves: «Come let us build ourselves a city, and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth » (*Gn* 11, 4). These men are motivated by the desire for power, they want to «make a name for

themselves », they are seeking their own glory, they anticipate and incarnate Prometheus. At Pentecost on the other hand the Apostles proclaim "the wonderful works of God". They are not thinking about making a name for themselves but for God; they are not seeking their own personal fulfilment but God's. On this account everyone can understand them. God is once more at the centre; in the place of power-seeking there is the willingness to serve, not the law of selfishness but that of love.

Babel and Pentecost are two building sites that are always open and in operation throughout history. Every human activity, civil or religious, private or public, is faced with a choice: either to be Babel, or to be Pentecost. Either self-fulfilment irrespective of others, that leads to the breakdown of society, or the affirmation of others that leads to unity. Either it is selfishness and the exploitation of others that prevails, or the primacy of love and respect for others.

The Spirit, life in common and respect for diversity

But the Spirit is not only active in history. Rather, he is acting first of all in believers and in the communi-

ty of believers, those who are called to offer an alternative model to the dominant culture. After having dealt with some of the questions arising from the life of the community in Corinth, Paul turns to the problem of the charismatic gifts. Since the Spirit is the source of individual gifts their possession can give rise to tensions in the community. This was the experience of the Corinthians and Paul helps them in their discernment: the gift granted does not free the recipient from responsibility but shows the liberality of the Donor; therefore, the one who does not become a better servant of Jesus cannot deceive himself into thinking that he is a spiritual person. On the other hand, all the gifts received imply corresponding responsibilities within the community: the diversity is to be found in the service to communion. «There are *varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit*; there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; there are varieties of working but it the same God who inspires then all in every one. *To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good*» (1 Cor 12,4-7).

Relying on the possession of the Spirit, visible in his gifts – whatever they may be –, to grow at the expense of others, would be to mistreat the community, to undervalue

the Spirit and to free oneself from Christ's authority. Christian salvation is achieved through service to the Christian community. Diversity should not encourage conflict nor competition, but unity and mutual understanding. Everything leads towards the same thing, the common good, which is the building of the Church, which in her turn is at the service of the world, as "the light of the nations".

We are therefore faced with a «multiplicity» of gifts and of services that God distributes to his Church: he is always acting in an original manner, he does not want to reduce believers to a single model. So it is that in the Church there is room for everyone; each one brings what is particularly their own; and it is clear that in order to produce what is specifically theirs they have to put everything into it! Living our faith "together" obliges us on the one hand to be generous and on the other to be constantly open to what is new. When it is not trying to construct the "whole," «multiplicity» becomes destructive of the organism. So it is in the Church which come to birth only in so far as the individual members rise above themselves in order to achieve a fundamental unity in faith, love and works. If it were not

for this, believers would be like wandering atoms incapable of finding their place in the work of salvation and of bearing witness to Christ as the «head» of his «body» which is the Church. And I ask myself whether the Church's loss of relevance in society here and there is not the consequence of this loss of its identity and mission.

Certainly the future of Christianity in Europe does not depend on its past, however glorious, nor on its claims to have collaborated so much in the building of the current structure, nor on the solid basis of its truths, nor on all its forms of worship, nor on the elevated quality of its moral teaching, but on the strength of its witness as a community of love that lives, celebrates and communicates its faith, on its ability to serve especially the poorest and the marginalised, on its credible experience of God, on its living out of an alternative cultural model.

How does one free men and women from the desert of moral confusion, of lies, of sadness, of selfishness, of the loss of the meaning to life, of despair, and lead them to the pastures and the sources of life? How does one draw them out of unhealthy waters? Only the joy of being believers, a coherent way of life and a commitment to others will

make us credible, convincing, attractive.

The Spirit, forgiveness as mission

The youthfulness and perennial newness of the Church and of humanity are the fruits of the New Man, the Risen Lord, as St John's text tells us, which places the coming of the Spirit on the same day as the Resurrection of Jesus. Breathing his Spirit, the New Man gave to his disciples the mission and the possibility of becoming new men and of making humanity new through forgiveness and reconciliation.

It was precisely the Holy Spirit that prevented the Church from remaining a synagogue, that is a closed place for the elect, for people who do not see themselves as sinners and who do not want to be forgiven. The Church, bursting out from the Upper Room, is always tempted to return there and shut itself in again, not to allow itself to be forgiven, not to have forgiveness as its task. Especially when, – as now – outside contrary winds are blowing. And then, the signs of fear begin to reappear: the little flock instead of venturing out cuts itself off and isolates itself, without even noticing,

that not all of those who are banging on the door are trying to knock it down but are also trying to come in. Only the Spirit can give fresh courage at each new phase of history and of society in order to lead the way towards new goals for the Kingdom of God and for mankind.

But the Spirit given by the Risen Jesus has another meaning for us: he is the principle of our identity that distinguishes from the world. Woe if we were to forget, to give in to the seductions of the world, to its logic! He ensures the fidelity of the Church to Christ. He sees to it that our cause with the world is and remains "the cause of Jesus" ("the truth") and does not become a different one.

A Christian life that has gone soft, become bourgeois, devoid of energy, runs the risk of becoming irrelevant, innocuous. It no longer has anything to say to anyone. People of today are distracted, disenchanted, indifferent, used to everything. Precisely on account of these characteristics, they need to be given a shake up by the witness which is particularly challenging to its habits.

We need to rediscover the «pentecostal, spiritual» dimension of the Christian life; we need to rediscover

the Spirit. The present crisis in the Church does not worry me. What I am afraid of is a Christian life that is *insignificant*; and a *Christian makes no sense*, has nothing to say, causes no one any trouble, *when he or she is not spiritual*.

There comes to my mind, in the setting of the Eucharist, the great discourse of Jesus in which he reveals himself as “the bread of eternal life,” immediately after the multiplication of the loaves, and the reaction of his disciples: «*This is a hard saying, who can listen to it?*». Here we have the “logos scleros”, which is so countercultural as to provoke an editorial note from the evangelist: “After this many of his disciples drew back and no longer went about with him” (*Jn 6,60.66*).

Christianity, our faith, cannot believe in easy solutions, in compromises, easygoing concessions, in dubious nods and winks, in balancing acts, to fill in the gaps. It cannot believe in large “discounts” generously made to the original price in order to entice customers and prevent them going to the competition. In other words it cannot give up its ideals and lower its own expectations (which in fact are those established by Christ), arrive at friendly settlements and offer generous terms in order to recover populari-

ty and bring the numbers back. Precisely because nowadays the relevance of the faith depends on its identity and not on the level of its social acceptability, we believe in the need for an ever greater commitment in the area. We need to *raise the stakes and dare to speak plainly*, in other words say openly who we are, what we want, what we are asking for without minimising the demands of the requirements.

I finish by making a heartfelt appeal to the whole university community of the UPS to be “spiritual”, therefore to welcome the Spirit, so as to combine knowledge and wisdom, making humility the path of truth and service.

To Mary, rich in experience of the Spirit, I entrust each and everyone of you. May she teach us to allow ourselves to be guided and made fruitful by the Spirit.

5.2 Proper Liturgical Calendar approved by the Congregation for Divine Worship

*The Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, on 30 June 2005, approved the **Proper Liturgical Calendar** for our Society of Saint Francis of Sales (Salesians of Don Bosco), as*

well as that for the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians and of the Volunteers of Don Bosco, inserting some memorials regarding Salesians and FMA recently beatified. Added afterwards was the memorial of Blessed Bronislaw Markiewicz. As was already mentioned in the previous number of the AGC (cfr. n. 391, 5.2), the celebration of the Martyr Saints Luigi Versiglia e Callisto Caravario has been raised to the rank of a feast and

transferred to 25 February the date of their martyrdom.

Below is the complete Proper Calendar which comes into force at the beginning of the liturgical year 2005-2006. As was mentioned in n. 391 of the AGC, since the small liturgical calendar "ad usum S.D.B." for 2006 had already been printed when the approval of the Proper Calendar was announced, some of the information there does not correspond to the official text.

PROPER CALENDAR

JANUARY

- | | |
|--|--|
| 15 Blessed Luigi Variara, priest | <i>Memorial</i> |
| | [for FMA and VDB: <i>Optional memorial</i>] |
| 22 Blessed Laura Vicuña, adolescent | <i>Optional memorial</i> |
| | [for the FMA: <i>Memorial</i>] |
| 24 Saint Francis of Sales, bishop and doctor of the Church | |
| Titular and Patron of the Society of Saint Francis of Sales | <i>Feast</i> |
| 30 Blessed Bronislaw Markiewicz | <i>Optional memorial</i> |
| (only for the S.D.B.) | |
| 31 Saint John Bosco, priest | |
| Founder of the Society of Saint Francis of Sales | |
| of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians | |
| and of the Salesian Cooperators | <i>Solemnity</i> |

FEBRUARY

- | | |
|---|---------------------------------|
| 1 Commemoration of all deceased Confreres | |
| 9 Blessed Eusebia Palomino Yenes, virgin | <i>Optional memorial</i> |
| | [for the FMA: <i>Memorial</i>] |

- 25 Saints Luigi Versiglia, bishop, and Callisto Caravario, priest
 Salesian Protomartyrs *Feast*
 [for the FMA and VDB: *Memorial*]

MARCH

- 12 Saint Luigi Orione, priest *Optional memorial*
 15 Blessed Artemides Zatti *Memorial*
 [for FMA and VDB: *Optional memorial*]

MAY

- 6 Saint Dominic Savio, adolescent *Feast*
 13 Saint Mary Domenica Mazzarello
 Co-foundress of the Institute
 of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians *Feast*
 [for the FMA: *Solemnity*]
 18 Saint Leonard Murialdo, priest *Optional memorial*
 24 Blessed Virgin Mary, Help of Christians
 Principal Patron of the S.D.B., the F.M.A. and the V.D.B. *Solemnity*

JUNE

- 12 Blessed Joseph Kowalski and companions, martyrs *Memorial*
 [for FMA and VDB: *Optional memorial*]
 23 Saint Joseph Cafasso, priest *Memorial*

JULY

- 7 Blessed Maria Romero, virgin *Optional memorial*
 [for the FMA: *Memorial*]

AUGUST

- 2 Blessed August Czarторыski, priest *Optional memorial*

SEPTEMBER

- 22 Blessed Joseph Calasanz and companions, martyrs *Memorial*
 [for the VDB: *Optional memorial*]

OCTOBER

- | | |
|--|--------------------------|
| 5 Blessed Albert Marvelli
(only for the S.D.B.) | <i>Optional memorial</i> |
| 13 Blessed Alexandrina da Costa | <i>Optional memorial</i> |
| 24 Blessed Luigi Guanella, priest | <i>Optional memorial</i> |
| 25 Anniversary of the dedication of one's own church
(when the date is not known) | <i>Solemnity</i> |
| 29 Blessed Michael Rua, priest | <i>Memorial</i> |

NOVEMBER

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 15 Blessed Maddalena Morano, virgin | <i>Optional memorial</i> |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|

DECEMBER

- | | |
|--|---|
| 5 Blessed Philip Rinaldi, priest
Founder of the Volunteers of Don Bosco | <i>Memorial</i>
[for the VDB: <i>Feast</i>] |
|--|---|

Notes:

1. In the celebrations for which there is nothing in parentheses, the rank indicated (*Solemnity, Feast, Memorial, Optional memorial*) applies to all three Institutes (SDB, FMA, VDB). In parentheses is what has special reference to the individual Institutes.
2. As a rule the Congregation for Divine Worship does not grant the rank of *Memorial (oblig.)* for the Blessed on whose days there are already Optional Memorials in the calendar of the Universal Church (cf. 2 August and 15 November). Nevertheless it is possible to celebrate the Blessed in the proper calendar as an *Optional memorial*.
3. Since in our proper calendar the celebration of Saint Mary Domenica Mazzarello occurs on 13 May, the Congregation for Divine Worship has agreed that the Optional memorial of *Our Lady of Fatima* (which in the Universal calendar occurs on 13 May) may be celebrated on 15 May.

5.3 New Provincial (*correction*)

Below are some biographical details concerning the Superior of the Vice Province of Sardinia (ISA) appointed by the Rector Major with his Council in the course of the June-July 2005 plenary session. By mistake in n. 391 of the AGC a wrong name was given. The following therefore should replace what was written in AGC 391, 5.3, n. 3.

1. COSSU Giovanni, Superior of the Vice Province of SARDINIA (Italy)

To lead the “Madonna di Bonaria” Vice Province of SARDINIA, with headquarters in Cagliari, the Rector Major has appointed Fr. *Giovanni COSSU*. He succeeds Fr Giovanni Lilliu.

Born on 2 November 1941 at Nule (Sassari), he made his first profession on 16 August 1959 in the novitiate at Lanuvio, as a member of the Adriatic Province where he had been an aspirant. He did his post-novitiate in Rome - S. Callisto (1959-1962) and Nave (1962-1963), followed by practical training in the houses in Loreto (1963-1965) and Macerata (1965-1966). Perpetually professed on 8 August 1965, he studied theology at the UPS in Rome and obtained a Licence in

Theology. He was ordained priest in Rome 17 May 1970. Afterwards he obtained a Doctorate in Philosophy and a qualification to teach literature in the middle school, and later a qualification to teach sixth form history and philosophy. After ordination, for many years he worked in the house in Macerata, first as a teacher then also as Principal of the Middle School, and between 1984 and 1990 as Rector as well.

In 1991 he was moved to Sardinia, his home land, where a few years later he was incardinated definitively. In Sardinia he worked for some years in the house in Nuoro (1991-2003) as a teacher in a state school and in the sixth form of the FMA and helped in the Salesian parish. In 2003 he was moved to Cagliari Don Bosco, as teacher and Principal of the Salesian Sixth Form College. In 2004 he was also appointed Regional Assistant of the VDB. Now he has been called to be Superior of the Vice Province.

5.4 New Salesian Bishops

1. ROMANIN Juan Carlos, Bishop of RÍO GALLEGOS (Argentina)

On 25 October 2005 the Vatican Press Office published the appoint-

ment by the Holy Father Benedict XVI of the Salesian priest *Juan Carlos ROMANIN, S.D.B.*, as *Bishop of the Diocese of RÍO GALLEGOS (Argentina)*. He succeeds Mgr. Alejandro Antonio Buccolini, also a Salesian, who has offered his resignation having reached the age limit, in conformity with can. 401 §1 of the C.I.C.

Juan Carlos Romanin was born on 4 November 1954 at Sarandí (in the diocese of Avellaneda and the province of Buenos Aires), Argentina, and became a Salesian on 31 January 1973, when he made his first religious profession, in the novitiate at Manucho. He made his perpetual profession on 21 December 1978, and studied theology in the studentate in Avellaneda, where he was ordained priest on 24 October 1981. He obtained a degree in Philosophy in Buenos Aires and subsequently pursued specialist studies in "Salesianity" in Quito, Ecuador.

For seven years (1985-1992) he was a member of the Avellaneda community and then of that in Ensenada, where he was also Rector (1993-1999) and for one year also parish priest. From 1999 he was Rector of the Mar del Plata community (and from 2002 also economer).

Now he has been called to the pastoral charge of the Diocese of Río Gallegos.

2. NGUYEN VAN DE Pierre, Auxiliary Bishop of BÙI CHU (Viêt Nam)

On 29 November 2005 the Press Office of the Holy See published the appointment by His Holiness Benedict XVI, of the Salesian priest *Pierre NGUYEN VAN DE, S.D.B.*, as *Auxiliary Bishop of the Diocese of BÙI CHU (Viêt Nam)*, with the titular see of Ammaedara. The Diocese of Bui Chu was recently erected by the Holy Father.

Peter Nguyen Van De was born on 15 January 1946 in Tri Buu, Quang Tri, in the Archdiocese of Hué, Vietnam. He made his first profession on 16 August 1965 in Hong Kong, where he also did his philosophical studies. Perpetually professed on 24 June 1971, he studied theology in the Pontifical Seminary of Dalat. He was ordained priest at Dalat on 17 December 1973.

After ordination he was Director of Novices at Ba Thon (1976-1979); then parish priest of Xuan Hiep, Thu Duc (1979-1991). A Provincial Councillor from 1980, in 1991 he was appointed Provincial, an office he held for six years until 1997. Afterwards, from 1997 until 2000 he was Rector of the formation community of Xuan Hiep. Since 2000 he has been a professor in the Major Seminary of Hà Noi (Hanoi).

**3. PALLIPARAMBIL George,
Bishop of MIAO
(India)**

On 7 December 2005 the Vatican Press Office published the news of the appointment by Pope Benedict XVI of Fr. *George PALLIPARAMBIL, S.D.B.* as *Bishop of the Diocese of MIAO (India)*. This is a new diocese in the eastern part of Arunachal Pradesh (India), erected by the Holy Father the same day 07-12-2005, detaching it from the Diocese of Dibrugarh.

Born on 15 May 1954 at Thodupuzha, Kerala (India), George Palliparambil became a Salesian on 24 May 1974 when he made his first religious profession at Shillong.

Perpetually professed on 24 May 1979, he did his theological studies in the Salesian theologate of Shillong-Mawlai. He was ordained priest on 19 December 1982 at Thodupuzha, his birthplace.

After ordination he carried out educational and pastoral work for 11 years in the house of Tinsukia - School, where he was also Rector for six years 1988-1994. Transferred to Borduria, he remained there until 2001 as parish priest. He then moved to Hanguathong as Rector for three years 2001-2003. From 2003 he has been Rector of Dibrugarh - Don Bosco. Here news of his appointment as Bishop reached him.

5.5 Our dead confreres (4th 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." (C. 94).

SURNAME AND NAME	PLACE of death	DATE	AGE	PROV
L ALEKSANDRAVICIUS Vincent Piotr	Roma	16-11-2005	94	IRO
P ALVES Eladino dos Anjos	Cascais (Portogallo)	08-11-2005	87	POR
L ARNEODO Massimo	Montevideo (Uruguay)	15-11-2005	82	URU
P ATTARD Carmel	Shillong (India)	19-11-2005	94	ING
L BALLIN Valentino	Torino	16-09-2005	83	ICP
P BERNARD Victor	Anisakan (Myanmar)	12-12-2005	59	MYM
P BERTOLDI Alfonso	Torino	20-10-2005	85	ICP
P BORGONOVO Mario <i>Fu Ispettore per 6 anni</i>	San Juan (Porto Rico)	25-09-2005	87	ANT
L BOSCARELLO Nicolò	Messina	01-06-2005	85	ISI
P BRECHEISEN August <i>Fu Ispettore per 12 anni</i>	München (Germania)	19-10-2005	78	GER
P CALONGHI Luigi	Torino	04-12-2005	84	UPS
P CASARAVILLA ESCALADA Julio	Montevideo (Uruguay)	17-09-2005	92	URU
P CLERITI Giovanni	Sassari	01-10-2005	90	ISA
P COMANDU Giuseppe	Chennai (India)	04-09-2005	88	INM
P DAL BROI Antonio	Civitanova Marche (MC)	24-11-2005	95	ILE
P DONNARUMMA Catello	Napoli	18-10-2005	85	IME
P FERNANDES Eleutherio	Matunga, Mumbai (India)	29-11-2005	70	INB
P FRANGI Eugenio	Arese (MI)	04-11-2005	83	ILE
L GAMERRO Giovanni Battista	Torino	23-10-2005	90	ICP
P GARDIN Angelo	Ivrea (To)	08-12-2005	85	ICP
P GELOSA Bruno	Giussano (MI)	12-12-2005	91	ILE
P GEOFFROY Henri	Liffol-Le-Grand (Francia)	22-11-2005	84	FRA
P GIAMPAOLETTI Antonio Maria	Pescara	26-09-2005	64	IAD
P HLADK Antonin	Stará Boleslav (Rep. Ceca)	01-11-2005	79	CEP
P HURLEY Clive	Chennai (India)	01-10-2005	67	INM
P KERKLAAN Gerardus Majella	Schiedam (Olanda)	11-10-2005	83	OLA
P KIELAR Franciszek	Rydułtowy (Polonia)	14-11-2005	80	PLS
L KIM Moyes Seong Cheon	Seoul (Korea)	23-09-2005	76	KOR
P KOKKAPALLIL Philip	Dimapur (India)	06-09-2005	92	IND
P LABUDA Stanisław	Stupsk (Polonia)	27-10-2005	55	PLN
P LAVERY Terence	Bonnyrigg (Gran Bretagna)	07-11-2005	81	GBR
P MAGNANI Agostino	Livorno	12-12-2005	94	ILT
P MARTIN HEREDERO Juan Cruz	Caracas (Venezuela)	23-10-2005	67	VEN
P McMAHON Christopher	Johannesburg (Sud Africa)	26-11-2005	63	AFM
P MENESTRINA Juan	Stefenelli (Argentina)	23-11-2005	87	ABB
P MÖHRLEIN Georg	Burgebrach (Germania)	25-11-2005	89	GER
L MÜLLER José	Bahía Blanca (Argentina)	29-08-2005	77	ABB

SURNAME AND NAME	PLACE of death	DATE	AGE	PROV
L ORTIZ QUEVEDO Pablo Gerardo	Bogotá (Colombia)	03-11-2005	93	COB
P O'TOOLE DONELON Augustín	Lima (Perù)	04-12-2005	86	PER
L PALOMEQUE Antonio	Cuenca-Yanuncay (Ecuador)	01-12-2005	84	ECU
P PASTWA Józef	Köln (Germania)	21-09-2005	68	GER
L PEÑA ANDRÉS José María	Guadalajara (Spagna)	11-11-2005	65	SMA
P PORPORATO Norberto	Corrientes (Argentina)	13-11-2005	76	ARO
E PRATA Gennaro Maria	Sessa Aurunca (Caserta)	29-09-2005	82	—
<i>Fu per 20 anni Vescovo Ausiliare di La Paz (Bolivia), per 6 anni Arcivescovo di Cochabamba (Bolivia) e per 18 anni Vescovo emerito</i>				
L REGATTIERI Giuseppe	Cumiana (TO)	04-10-2005	66	ICP
P RIESCO PEDRAZ Ricardo	Santander (Spagna)	09-11-2005	79	SBI
L RIGOTTI Vito	Torino	22-09-2005	81	ICP
P RODRÍGUEZ BUSTILLO Pablo	El Campello (Spagna)	08-11-2005	94	SVA
P ROSSI Giuseppe	Castellammare di Stabia (NA)	25-11-2005	97	IME
L SANTIDRIÁN MORAL A. Crescencio	Madrid (Spagna)	15-09-2005	66	SMA
P SANTUCCI Italo	Roma	02-11-2005	93	IRO
P SECCHI Cesare	Beppu (Giappone)	07-12-2005	90	GIA
P SERTL Joseph	Ensdorf (Germania)	16-11-2005	78	GER
P SOLDEVILLA HIDALGO Rafael	Granada (Spagna)	10-12-2005	80	SCO
P SUÁREZ CABRA Julio Ítalo	Bogotá (Colombia)	28-10-2005	72	COB
P SULARZ Józef	Żywiec (Polonia)	14-12-2005	65	PLS
L SURIN Francis Caleb	Ranchi (India)	26-11-2005	79	INN
P SZAK Kálmán	Székesfehérvár (Ungheria)	28-11-2005	89	UNG
P SZELIGA Edmund	Lima (Perù)	03-09-2005	93	PER
L TANAKA Jun Francesco	Tokyo (Giappone)	16-09-2005	79	GIA
P TIBERI Luis Reinaldo	Formosa (Argentina)	02-10-2005	89	ARO
P URIBE Abel	Bahía Blanca (Argentina)	26-08-2005	75	ABB
P VALSECCHI Ezechiele	Torino	12-12-2005	100	ICP
P VIRILLI Arturo	Torino	18-10-2005	85	ICP
L VULPINARI Remo	Gualdo Tadino (PG)	17-11-2005	68	IAD
P WAIDEMANN Bernard	Rosenheim (Germania)	20-11-2005	77	PLS
P ZIENIEWICZ Henryk	Debrzno (Polonia)	25-10-2005	75	PLN
P ZOCCO Emanuele	Ragusa	28-11-2005	76	ISI



