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**Direzione Generale
Opere don Bosco
Roma**

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

OFFICIAL ORGAN OF ANIMATION AND COMMUNICATION FOR THE SALESIAN CONGREGATION

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**«YOU WHO SEEK THE LORD;
LOOK TO THE ROCK FROM WHICH YOU WERE HEWN»
(Is 51,1)**

Presentation of the Interamerica Region

INTRODUCTION. 1. **STRUCTURE AND HISTORY OF THE REGION.** Andean Zone. *Ecuador - Colombia: Provinces of Bogotá and Medellín - Peru - Bolivia.* Zone of Central America. *Provinces of Mexico-Mexico and Guadalajara (MEM-MEG) - Venezuela - Central America - Antilles - Haiti.* North American Zone. *United States: Provinces of San Francisco and New Rochelle (SUO-SUE) - Canada.* 2. **THE SOCIAL AND CULTURAL SITUATION.** 3. **SALESIAN WORK.** 3.1 **Community life.** 3.2 **Formation.** 3.3 **Youth Ministry.** *Salesian foundations. Schools - Parishes - Oratories and Youth Centres - Starting up work - Care for young people at risk - Works for social advancement - Care of migrants - Universities.* **Pastoral activities.** *Youth group activity. The Salesian Youth Movement - Pastoral work for Vocations. The Volunteer Movement - Formation of lay people.* 3.4 **The Salesian Family.** 3.5 **Social Communication.** 3.6 **The Missions and missionary promotion.** 4. **CHALLENGES AND FUTURE PROSPECTS.** 4.1 *Witnessing to the primacy of God among young people in today's world.* 4.2 *Giving new life to Don Bosco and his zeal for "Da mihi animas".* 4.3 *Giving new meaning to our work in the Region, prompted by the option for those we work for by preference.* 4.4 *Creating synergy by uniting efforts, means and commitments for the realisation of experiences through collaboration.* **CONCLUSION.**

Rome, 1 March 2006

My Dear Confreres,

I am writing at the end of an intense month of visits and meetings with confreres. First I was in Sri Lanka for the celebration of the golden jubilee of Salesian work in that country. From there I went on to India, to Thanjavur, where I presided at the conclusion of the celebrations for the centenary of the arrival of the first Salesians. Subsequently I made rapid visits to the Provinces of Chennai, Tiruchy, Bangalore and Hyderabad before moving on to China to celebrate, once again, the hundred years of Salesian work: Don Bosco's missionary dream that still awaits its full realisation. And finally I went to Johannesburg in South Africa for the Team Visit to the Africa-Madagascar Region.

I recall so many impressions, all of them wonderful and exciting and at the same time so diversified. Perhaps I shall be able to tell you about them at greater length on some future occasion. For the present it is sufficient to say that we must be grateful to God who has loved us so much and blessed us so copiously. No one will be unaware that the future of the Congregation as regards vocations lies in Asia and in Africa. It is our responsibility to inculcate faithfully Don Bosco's charism, which consists in the expansion of the work, vocational fruitfulness, the growth of the Salesian Family, the quality of our educative and pastoral mission and, above all, in our personal holiness.

Taking up again my presentation of the different Regions, I want to speak to you this time about the Interamerica Region, to which I feel myself linked in a particular way because it includes the country of the origin of my vocation, and also because I was its Regional Councillor in the previous six-year period. It is a Region I know better than any other. I remember all its houses and confreres. To them I send my cordial affectionate greetings accompanied by my greatest desire to see them totally committed to the living out of their Salesian vocation with joy, generosity and fidelity. In this context I recall the words of the prophet Isaiah who, writing to the exiled people of Israel, reminded them of their election by God and to seek him always by remembering the firm nature of their origins: "*seek the Lord...*" (Is 51,1). With two eloquent images, the prophet makes a pressing appeal to them to renew their trust in God and imitate faithfully those who had given them birth in the Faith and in the Spirit: "*...look to the rock from which you were hewn, to the pit from which you were quarried*" (Is 51,1). It is a fine text, both constructive and encouraging. And it is with these words that I sum up what Don Bosco would want from the Salesians of this Region at the present day.

INTRODUCTION

The circumstances that, according to Fr Ceria, favour Salesian work in the Americas can be applied to nearly all the 18 countries that make up the Interamerican Region:

"In his missionary dreams Don Bosco saw Salesians at work throughout South America; but he could not himself send them everywhere during his own lifetime. He had sent them to Argentina, Uruguay and Brazil; then in his last years he received requests from five other Republics that he had seen in his dreams; to only two of these was he able himself to send evangelical workers, leaving the other three to be provided for by his successor. They are the five that stretch without interruption from the Caribbean Sea to the Pacific Ocean, from Sucre to Santiago: Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Chile. The great interest shown by the Salesians for Latin America eventually reached the ears of Leo XIII through information sent by the Governments of the countries concerned, and made such an impression on the Pontiff that on the basis of it he began to appreciate the contribution and efficiency of the Salesian Congregation.

(...) In 1888 South America already had some 304,000 immigrants from Italy, and the number would soon become much greater. Those were times when the Mother Land cared little or nothing for those of her citizens compelled to emigrate to foreign lands to keep body and soul together. For them it was a great good fortune to find at their destination priests who could understand them and help them. As is well known, assistance to migrants was a part of Don Bosco's missionary programme from the outset".¹

Probably other reasons could be added: the effect produced by the biography of Don Bosco written by Charles D'Espiney while the Saint was still alive, the reading of the Salesian Bulletin in Spanish, the fame of Don Bosco transmitted to America by Bishops returning from visits to Rome and by seminarians studying

¹ E. CERIA, *Annali della Società Salesiana*, SEI 1941, vol. I, pag. 600-601.

in the Roman Colleges, especially the Latin-American College; by diplomats who had known Don Bosco and his work in Rome and prompted their governments to invite the foundation of Salesian work in the various countries of America.

1. STRUCTURE AND HISTORY OF THE REGION

Because of the great variety in the geographical, political and social situation found in the different countries, the Inter-american Region has been organised in three zones. Such an arrangement seems useful also for a presentation of the history and development of the Congregation in this continent.

Andean Zone

The Andean zone is made up of Ecuador, Colombia, Peru and Bolivia.

Ecuador

The Salesians reached Quito on 28 January 1888, at a time when the country was undergoing profound changes of an economic, political, social and religious nature. It was the last expedition personally sent by Don Bosco.

After two and a half months of unending sacrifices, on 15 April the "Talleres Salesianos del Sagrado Corazón" (workshops of arts and trades) were inaugurated in the former "Protectorado Católico". Fr Luigi Calcagno, who had been put in charge of the expedition, was appointed Rector of the new work. The foundation soon proved to be a quite exceptional educative and pedagogical experience: a centre was built to house an installation providing electricity for the Ecuadorian capital, contact was made with the Meteorological Society of Italy for the installation of a new observatory at Quito, and experiments were made to find new primary materials for the leather industry. All with excellent results.

The work of the Salesians in Quito gradually expanded. First they took care of the young apprentices of the School of Arts and Trades, and then of the prisoners in the "Panóptico" (high security prison). The Salesian Cooperators were promoted, and this led to the creation on 15 April 1894 of the Catholic Workers' Circle for the care of the working classes. In 1893 the houses of Ecuador, which had been a Vice-province, were erected into a Province, even though the canonical decree was published only on 20 January 1902.

The government of Ecuador, in the desire to extend to other provinces in the country the great benefits the Salesians had brought about in Quito, had on 8 August 1888 issued a decree establishing two new foundations, at Riobamba and at Cuenca. The Saint Thomas the Apostle Institute was founded at Riobamba in 1891 followed, two years later, by the School of Arts and Trades at Cuenca. After these, in 1896 came the houses of Tola at Quito, and the novitiate at Sangolquí, a village close to the capital. As missionaries, the Salesians did not delay in entering the eastern part of Ecuador, the Amazon region: Sígsig was the point of departure for those who eventually reached the Vicariate of Méndez and Gualaquiza. On 17 August 1903 the foundation stone was laid of the church of Mary Help of Christians at Gualaquiza.

During the liberal revolution, with its anticlerical tendency, Salesian work suffered considerably. Only in 1903, after a most difficult and violent period, could the interrupted work be taken up again; it began with a return to the country of the confreres who had been expelled; the houses of Quito, Riobamba and Cuenca were reopened, and a year later at Guayaquil the "Domingo Santistevan" Institute, which thus became the first Salesian educational and pastoral centre in the coastal area, was founded. During the revolutionary period the Province was in the trustworthy hands of three outstanding superiors: Fr Luigi Calcagno, the first Provincial, who was later expelled from the country in 1896; Fr Antonio Fusarini, the second Provincial, whose name

will always be linked with the story of Salesian work at Riobamba; and especially Mgr. Domenico Comin, the third Provincial, who governed the Salesian houses for two periods (1909 to 1912, and 1916 to 1921) and was consecrated Bishop in October 1920 as Vicar Apostolic of Méndez and Gualaquiza.

After the First World War and the weakening of the liberal regime, a new period in the country's history began. The Congregation became consolidated, especially from the thirties onwards, with a decisive move towards the education of the young in the 'Sierra' (the high plateau of the Andes) and in the 'Costa' (the coastal plain), and to development and evangelisation in the Amazonian missions. Educative work in the towns became well established because of the great demands from the youth sectors of the population, to which the Congregation directed its preferential care. Similarly it became possible to organise new missionary expeditions which enabled the long-desired work of the evangelisation of the Shuar people to be started. By means of an agreement with the government, official recognition was even obtained for the protection and safeguarding of the territory by the Salesians and, by means of an official subsidy, important economic support for the Salesian educational institutes in the Amazon area.

Following World War II (1939-1945), which prevented the Salesians from communicating with the centre of the Congregation in Italy, and reduced in consequence the sending of new personnel, Salesian activity in Ecuador had to be organised in a more autonomous manner, by the opening of houses for the formation of young confreres. After Vatican II and the General Chapters of the Congregation that gave effect to the new requirements, the Province underwent profound changes. The Salesian missions were the first to be affected by the great transformations: a pastoral activity was organised that aimed at the formation of ministers who were natives of the territory, and a liturgy was developed with religious celebrations that were in harmony with native cultural values. The organisation of the Federation of Shuar Centres provides an important example.

In 1961 the Province was divided into two, with headquarters at Quito and at Cuenca respectively. The division lasted only twelve years, until 29 August 1973, and served among other things for the definitive establishment of the Vicariate of Méndez, with the acquisition of new personnel and energy. At the end of the seventies and the beginning of the eighties work on new fronts was opened up: the Andean missions of Zumbagua, Salinas and Cayambe, and the work with street children in Quito and Guayaquil. To these must be added, in the nineties, the beginning of the Salesian Polytechnical University with campuses at Cuenca, Quito and Guayaquil.

Colombia: Provinces of Bogotá and Medellín

The Salesian presence in Colombia is the result of a *dream of Don Bosco*, who in 1883 during the night preceding the feast of St Rose of Lima, saw a map in which "the diocese of Cartagena was highlighted. It was the point of departure".² Don Bosco was already well known in Colombia as a wonderworker, and he would soon become known as the great educator of the young. And so it was, that through the mediation of General Joaquín F. Vélez, their representative with the Holy See, the Colombian government invited the Salesians to Colombia to provide religious, scientific and artistic education for the young.

Sent by Don Rua and led by Fr Evasio Rabagliati, the first Salesians arrived on Colombian soil on 31 January 1890, disembarking at Barranquilla. A few days later they reached Bogotá, where on 1 September they opened the first school in the country for technical education, the *Colegio Salesiano León XIII de Artes y Oficios*, which became a focal point for cultural expansion in Colombia.

Little by little Salesian works began to grow and multiply. In 1896 the Province was erected with St Peter Claver as its patron.

² MB XVI, p. 389.

And 1895 saw the first branch of the fertile tree of the Salesian Family, the *Institute of the Daughters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary*, founded at Agua de Dios by Fr Luigi Variara, who had continued the heroic work of Fr Michael Unia for the benefit of the lepers.

With 31 houses scattered all over Colombia, in 1957 a division brought into being the new Province of Medellín.

In Colombia the Salesian Congregation has charismatic works which have become benchmarks, such as the work for lepers at Agua de Dios and at Contratación, or the work for the Ariari, which continues to be a challenge for the Church because it is one of the country's regions most afflicted by violence. Thanks to the work done by the Salesians over the last forty years, the Vicariate has become a Diocese and has a group of local secular priests. For this reason the Salesians are gradually withdrawing and handing over parishes to the diocesan clergy, though there are still some places that require the apostolic generosity of the sons of Don Bosco.

For several years now, the Salesians of Bogotá (COB) have been opening works of great significance, taking care of street children (known locally as "gamines"), youngsters highly at risk because of violence (Tibú, San Vicente del Caguán) or the marginalised who gather in large numbers on the outskirts of towns (Ciudad Bolívar); and youngsters who because of the poverty of their families could have no access to a good education (in the 'colegios concesionados'). Deserving of special mention is the movement for the benefit of street children, now widespread in so many provinces throughout the world, which had its origin at Bogotá through the work of Fr Xavier De Nicolò who, after observing this tragic social phenomenon, was able to devise an effective educational project to meet it, which has become an example for others.

The Salesians of Medellín (COM) have also strengthened social works directed preferentially to young people who are poorer. I would like to recall especially the "Ciudad Don Bosco",

and also, in the Afro-Colombian contexts of Buenaventura and of Condoto, the care of youngsters at risk in the "Centro de Capacitación Don Bosco" at Cali, the project for the re-education of former participants in armed conflict in the "Hogar San Juan Bosco" of Armenia, and the training for employment offered in many of our works.

Peru

In 1886 the President of the Republic of Peru visited Valdocco and, in a meeting with Don Bosco, asked him for Salesians for his country. A similar request reached Don Bosco from a group of Salesian Cooperators, to whom he replied in 1887 asking them to discuss the matter with Fr James Costamagna who would be visiting Lima in 1888.

In 1890 Fr Angelo Savio arrived in the Peruvian capital to assess the suitability for the desired foundation and held a meeting with members of an Institution called the '*Sociedad de Beneficencia*', who had the intention of setting up in the city an Institute for girls to be directed by the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, and a School of Arts and Trades to be entrusted to the Salesians. Meanwhile Don Rua had received two letters, one from Mgr Macchi, Apostolic Delegate in Peru, and the second from Cardinal Rampolla, in the name of the Holy Father, insisting on the presence of Salesians in Peru. In the face of these requests, on 6 June 1890 the Superior Council approved, with some modifications, the project presented by the '*Sociedad Benéfica*', even though the definitive response of Don Rua could not be given until he obtained the approval of the Archbishop of Lima, which arrived in May 1891.

The founding group of Salesians and Daughters of Mary Help of Christians left Turin on 16 August and reached Lima on 27 September 1891. The Salesians, two priests (Fr Antonio Riccardi and Fr Carlo Pane) and a Brother (Bro. John Sciolli) started by assisting the nine Daughters of Mary Help of Christians who

began their work on 15 October. They were able to open their own oratory only on 8 December 1891. Nearly a year later they began a boarding establishment. Salesian work, thus begun in the Rimac district of Lima with an Oratory and Workshops of Arts and Trades, soon spread to Arequipa in the southern part of the country (1896); then later to Brena, another part of Lima (1897), and about the same time to the port of Callao, not far from Lima.

In the light of the rapid expansion of the work, Don Rua had erected the Province of St Gabriel the Archangel, with headquarters at Santiago in Chile, to include the houses of Chile and Peru, but because of the impossibility of any real animation and government, and to maintain the rhythm of development, in 1902 the Province of Saint Rose was erected with headquarters at Lima-Brena for the houses of Peru and Bolivia.

The opening of the missions in the “Valle Sagrado de los Incas”, after the closing of the works at Puno and Yucay so as to take on a work more directly benefiting native youngsters of the Peruvian high plateau, was an important step towards giving the Peruvian Province a more integral Salesian appearance; a similar objective was achieved by the organisation of the training centres for employment starting in the seventies and the initiative of the Don Bosco reception houses. In addition, the “Bosconia” foundation at Piura, the reopening of the Oratory of Rimac, the strengthening of the SYM, the opening of the mission at San Lorenzo (2000) in the Amazon region of the country, are also contributing to the presentation of a more complete image of what the Salesians are trying to do in Peru.

Bolivia

Fr James Costamagna visited Bolivia in 1889 and aroused the enthusiasm of the authorities to such an extent that they asked for the foundation of Salesian work in their country. But several years were to pass before Don Rua, in 1895, signed an agreement in Turin to open two boarding schools for arts and trades. Fr

Costamagna, who by then had become a bishop, travelled to Sucre and La Paz to establish in both cities the "Colegio Don Bosco", a boarding establishment organised for students and artisans and with a festive oratory; at Sucre there was also the care of a church. The two houses experienced a wonderful development from the outset and the Salesians gained the good will of the people; they were made part of the Peruvian Province. The distance from the provincial headquarters did not favour repeated attempts to make new foundations in Bolivia, and it was only in 1943 that were opened the agricultural school at Chulumani and two diocesan seminaries, those of "San Jerónimo" at La Paz and of "San Luis" at Cochabamba. In 1955 we withdrew from the two seminaries and opened an aspirantate of our own at Calacoto to foster local vocations. The following year the Fatima agricultural school was opened at Cochabamba. In 1960 the agricultural school of Muyurina was inaugurated at Montero (Santa Cruz), and in 1963 the "Colegio Don Bosco" of Cochabamba.

Because of the small number of foundations and of personnel, Bolivia was slow in becoming a Province; the erection took place only on 9 January 1963, with "Our Lady of Copacabana" as its Patron and Fr Peter Garnero as its first Provincial. Unfortunately Fr Garnero had to leave Bolivia a year and a half later on being appointed Provincial of San Paolo in Brazil. Fr José Gotardi was appointed as his successor, but he too was unable to consolidate the work, because after eighteen months he was sent as Provincial to Uruguay. Salesian work in Bolivia achieved a certain stability under Fr Jorge Casanova, from Argentina, who was able to complete successfully his six years as Provincial. Under his successor, Fr Rinaldo Vallino, who came from Guadalajara (Mexico), new foundations were made: the mission of Kami and Independencia on the high plateau, and those of "Sagrado Corazón" and of "San Carlos" in the eastern part of the country.

After Fr Vallino's six years as Provincial, the Province began to be governed by Provincials coming from its own communities. The first of these was Fr Tito Solari who had come to Bolivia

through a twinning arrangement between the Provinces of Venice and Bolivia. At the end of his mandate Fr Solari became Auxiliary Bishop of Santa Cruz and, a few years later, Archbishop of Cochabamba. During the subsequent periods of office of Fr Carlo Longo, of Fr José Ramón Iriarte and of Fr Miguel Angel Herrero the Province continued its growth in foundations and number of confreres. Since January 2005 the Province has been headed by Fr Juan Pablo Zabala Torres, the first Provincial of Bolivian origin.

Central America Zone

It includes Mexico, Venezuela, Central America, Antilles, Haiti.

Mexico: Provinces of Mexico-Mexico and Guadalajara (MEM-MEG)

The first Salesians reached Mexico on 2 December 1892. They were three priests: Fr Angelo Piccono, leader of the expedition, Fr Raphael Piperni and Fr Simon Visintainer, with a Brother Peter Tagliaferro and a cleric Augustine Osella.

They had been invited through the enterprise of a Salesian Cooperator, Fr Angel Lascuráin who from 1890 had been running a small college in Mexico City. Soon afterwards in the following year the Salesians moved to the "Santa Julia" district on the outskirts, where they built a big College for students and artisans. In 1894 Fr Piperni moved on to the city of Puebla where he made the second Salesian foundation. The third was made in 1901 in the city of Morelia and the fourth in 1905 in that of Guadalajara. These four houses formed the Province of "Our Lady of Guadalupe". But during the next fifty years Salesian work in Mexico could not be developed at all: first because of the revolution (1910-1920), and then subsequently because of persecution (1926-1929) and the period of anticlerical legislation (1930-1940). In fact in 1937 only 13 Salesians remained in the whole Republic. Salesian work began again only from 1941, and it de-

veloped with unexpected vitality, to such an extent that in only 22 years (1941-1963) it had reached 35 houses and 400 Salesians.

Such prodigious expansion led in 1963 to a division into two Provinces: that of "Our Lady of Guadalupe" (MEM) in the south with headquarters at Mexico City, and that of "Christ the King and Mary Help of Christians" (MEG) in the north with headquarters at Guadalajara.

Salesian work in the Mexico-Mexico Province (MEM) is of particular importance because of the missionary activity in the southern part of the country (Oaxaca), where we work among the Mixes, the Chinantecos and some Zapoteca communities. The first Salesians arrived in this area in 1962, and in 1966 the Mixopolitana Prelature was erected, thus beginning the process of inculturation of the Gospel and the development of a Church with native features, in line with Vatican II and the Church's magisterium. Though it was under the jurisdiction of MEM, this missionary work was entrusted to both Provinces. In the Prelature at the present time the Guadalajara Province has a community (San Antonio de Las Palmas) under its direct responsibility.

In 1979 the MEM Province began a work at San Cristóbal de Las Casas (Chiapas), with a festive oratory and the care of some native communities of the area, and during the nineties an Oratory was begun at Mérida.

From its beginning the Guadalajara Province has been very sensitive to the formation of young confreres, with the building of training houses and the preparation of formation personnel.

Half way through the eighties the desires of various Salesians began to take shape in the opening of daily Oratories in the frontier areas with the United States, so as to follow up young people at risk coming from within the country and in fact from all over Latin America; in this way the work at Tijuana, Mexicali, Los Mochis, Ciudad Juárez, Nogales began and recently that at Chihuahua, Acuña and Laredo.

For some years now the Mexican Provinces have been growing progressively in their identity and sense of belonging, through initiatives of various kinds: Provincial Community Assembly, Weeks of Ongoing Formation, the Provincial Christmas Celebration, Provincial Retreats. Moreover in each of the two Provinces there are activities that take care of youngsters who are at risk, such as Nazareth House (MEM) and Boys' Town (MEG).

Venezuela

In February 1894 Mgr Giulio Tonti, Apostolic Delegate in Venezuela, and as an envoy of the government, asked Don Rua for the foundation of Salesian work at Caracas and Valencia. Already some time earlier Mgr Uzcátegui, Fr Arteaga and the Venezuelan Salesian Cooperators had asked Don Bosco to send his sons to their country.

The first seven Salesians reached Venezuela on 29 November 1894. The beginnings of the work at Caracas were difficult because of disagreements with the government. The Salesians, led by Fr Enrico Riva, began a small work which grew with time and eventually became the great College of St Francis de Sales at Sarriá. Later the Don Bosco Free Schools were built alongside the College. In the early part of 1900 the building of the Sanctuary of Mary Help of Christians was begun. In 1894 at Valencia the "Don Bosco College", begun earlier under the direction of Fr Bergeretti, was opened. In 1902 work was started at San Rafael (Zulia State), which at the request of Don Albera was later transferred to Maracaibo. 1914 saw the birth of Salesian work at Táriba (Tachira State) with the "St Joseph College" and a chapel in honour of Mary Help of Christians. In 1927 the various stages of formation were established at La Vega and in 1938 the novitiate was transferred to Los Teques.

Salesian work in the present State of Amazonia dates from 1933, when the Province was entrusted with the Prefecture Apostolic of Puerto Ayacucho. The greatest growth-rate, in both

works and personnel, took place in the fifties and sixties. Houses were opened at Mérida, Coro, Judibana, Puerto La Cruz, and Los Teques. Large educational establishments were built. The Puerto Ayacucho Vicariate was developed with new works in the Upper Orinoco: Isla del Ratón, Manapiare, La Esmeralda. In 1953 the Prefecture became a Vicariate. The FMA, who had been working in Venezuela since 1927, became integrated into the missionary work of the Vicariate from 1940 and at present have six communities there. The Church, especially through the activity of the Salesian Congregation and of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, has made a great contribution to the formation of the State of Amazonia, through educational centres and works of evangelisation among the various ethnic groups, abandoned since the XVIII century after the expulsion of the Jesuits. In the fifties the Salesians began an evangelisation project among the Yanomami.

The new guidelines of the Special General Chapter in 1972 introduced considerable changes in the configuration of the Province and in the pastoral service it provided. New works were begun to create a presence in densely populated areas: the "Primero de Noviembre" community at Petare and the parish of "San Félix" in Bolivar State. Most of the schools were aimed at poor youngsters, and were subsidised by the AVEC (Venezuelan Association for Catholic Education) in the State of Bolívar. From that period all those in formation were Venezuelans, and the presence of Venezuelan confreres has been very much strengthened in the Province as a whole.

In 1976 the ISSFE (Salesian Higher Institute of Philosophy and Education), for the formation of young Salesians, was founded and affiliated to the Salesian Pontifical University of Rome. In 1991 the process was begun for the creation of the "Father Ojeda Salesian University Institute", and it was subsequently approved by the National University Council on 7 February 1996.

In 1994 Salesian work in Venezuela reached its centenary and this was the occasion for the launching of two projects aimed at

providing a response to new challenges in the service to youngsters most in need: the “Red de Casas Don Bosco” for the care of children at risk, which already has seven houses, and the “Asociación para la Capacitación Juventud y Trabajo” which offers training for employment to youngsters and adults who have dropped out of school; across the nation there are now 60 such training centres, including works of other religious congregations.

Central America

This is a Province that includes six countries: Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panama.

The first Salesians landed at the port of La Libertad (El Salvador) on 2 December 1897. They had been sent by Don Rua at the request of General Rafael Gutiérrez, President of the Republic. The request was based on an explicit desire of Leo XIII. Members of this first Salesian expedition to Central America were Fr Luigi Calcagno (leader), Frs Joseph Misieri and Joseph Menichinelli, Bros Stephen Tosini and Basil Rocca, and the young clerics Peter Martin, Constantine Kopsik and Luigi Salmón.

At first the Salesians took charge of the “Finca Modelo” in the capital San Salvador, an agricultural school belonging to the government with about 120 students, all of them boarders. Salesian work continued there for two years, after which political instability put at end to the enterprise. The Salesians then took charge of an institute for 20 orphan children in the neighbouring town of Santa Tecla.

On 4 January 1903 the fourth group of missionary Salesians arrived in San Salvador. In that same year the Central America Province of the Most Holy Saviour was erected, which included the five Republics of Central America and the territory of Panama, which in the same year became detached from Colombia as an independent State. Setting out from Santa Tecla successive groups of confreres founded Salesian houses and works in Honduras (Co-

mayagua, 1905), Costa Rica (Orphanage of Cartago, 1907), Panama (1907), Nicaragua (1912) and Guatemala (1929). In the Republic of El Salvador itself in 1903 the Salesians inaugurated the "St Joseph College" in the town of Santa Ana and in 1904 the "Don Bosco College" at Avenida Peralta (San Salvador). On 29 May 1912 El Salvador received a visit from the first Salesian Bishop and future Cardinal, Mgr John Cagliero, as Apostolic Delegate.

Made up as it is of six countries (Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panama), the Province presents a picture of great complexity. International frontiers are an obstacle to the free flow of personnel and materials; well marked social and political divisions foster cultural differences and an accentuated national feeling; six educational systems; six sets of legislation for workers; six monetary systems, six frontiers, six episcopal conferences. The Province has 24 communities: 6 in Guatemala, 7 in Salvador, 2 in Honduras, 3 in Nicaragua, 4 in Costa Rica and 2 in Panama; their activities involve houses of formation (including a regional centre for Brothers), missions, academic centres, technical institutes, parishes, oratories, youth centres and two universities.

Antilles

After a brief and unsuccessful attempt at Curaçao and in Jamaica, Salesian work in the Antilles became established in Cuba and depended originally on the Tarragonese Province of Spain. Subsequently in 1924 it became part of the Mexican Province and three years later, because of the religious persecution going on in Mexico, the Provincial moved his headquarters to Havana. The canonical erection of the Antilles Province took place on 15 September 1953, with Don Bosco as its patron and the provincial house at La Víbora (Havana, Cuba), when Fr Ziggìotti was Rector Major. Later, following the Castro revolution, the headquarters was transferred to the "Don Bosco College" in the Dominican Republic; there it remained until 1993, when it moved into its own premises.

Cuba

The first Salesians, led by Blessed Joseph Calasanz landed at Camagüey on 4 April 1917 to take charge of the parish of Our Lady of Charity. They had been preceded two years earlier by Mgr Felix Guerra who, after being appointed Administrator Apostolic of Santiago di Cuba and later Bishop of the same city, was actually the first Salesian to set foot in Cuba.

The foundation at Camagüey was followed by those at Havana (“Institución Inclán”) and at Santiago di Cuba (1921). In 1929 a house of formation for aspirants and novices was opened at Guanabacoa. In 1931 the church of the former Carmelite convent was acquired at Havana and immediately converted into the Church of Mary Help of Christians. Guines was founded in 1936, and in 1939 the great Institute of Arts and Crafts at Camagüey was completed. 1943 saw the blessing of the foundation stone of the Church of St John Bosco at La Vibora; it was completed in 1947 and the provincial house was set up next to it. In 1943 a novitiate was opened at Matanzas. In 1955 Salesian work began at Arroyo Naranjo (Havana), and in 1956 the technical school was opened at Santa Clara.

After the success of the Castro revolution in 1961, all the Salesian schools were nationalised and the confreres were obliged to emigrate or be compelled to live in the church and parish premises in great difficulties. In some places a single Salesian remained alone; at Camagüey the parish had to be abandoned; it would be taken back again only in 1988. In recent years Salesian work has become more consolidated in parish settings with the arrival of new Salesians and with the appearance of local vocations – an element of great hope for the future.

Another source of encouragement for Salesian work in Cuba is that among the outstanding confreres who have worked there is the figure of Fr Joseph Vándor, a native of Hungary and an extraordinary missionary; the cause for his beatification is in progress.

Dominican Republic

The coming of the Salesians to Santo Domingo is linked with the figure of Fr Richard Pittini who in 1933, when Provincial in the United States was sent by Fr Peter Ricaldone to assess the possibilities for opening a school of arts and trades in Santo Domingo. Following the favourable report he gave to the Rector Major, Salesian work became a reality on 26 August 1935 when Salesians began to take care of the city's poor youngsters. Fr Pittini was appointed by the Holy See Archbishop of Santo Domingo; at that time the diocese included all the territory of the Dominican Republic.

As archbishop, Mgr Pittini set up the parish of St John Bosco, which soon after gave rise to the Salesian houses of Christ the King and of the Sacred Heart of Jesus (Villa Juana). In that same year the Salesians accepted the agricultural colony at Moca, which the government handed over to the Congregation; a few years later, and once again at Moca, they accepted the parish of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, which would be transformed into a National Sanctuary by Fr Antonio Flores. In 1947 the aspirantate was opened at Jarabacoa. The oratory of Mary Help of Christians was begun in 1944, and in 1952 Archbishop Pittini created the new parish of Mary Help of Christians. The "Hogar Escuela Domingo Savio" in Santo Domingo was opened in 1955.

In 1956 the "Colegio de Artes y Oficios" which formed part of the "Don Bosco" was transferred to become the present "Professional Salesian Technical Institute" (ITESA) and in its place a secondary school was opened. The Salesian work at Mao began in 1960 and in 1968 the Salesian community of the "Heart of Jesus" was erected. 1974 saw the beginning of the community of La Vega and of the parish of "Dominic Savio". In 1978 Salesian work began in the city of Barahona. In 1982 the studentate of philosophy, which had already been transferred from Aibonito (Puerto Rico) to Havana (Cuba) and then to Villa Mella, was provisionally housed in the house of Calle Galván. In 1984 the

“Sacred Heart of Jesus” novitiate was erected at Jarabacoa, together with the “Christ the King” Salesian community. In 1987 the Polytechnical Institute of Santiago de los Caballeros (IPISA) was taken over.

In the nineties in the Dominican Republic the Antilles Province launched a large-scale work for the benefit of street children which is now being consolidated and extended.

Puerto Rico

A Salesian presence in Puerto Rico was already being requested in 1933, but it was only in 1947 that Fr Peter Savani could take over the parish of “St John Bosco” at Santurce. From there he began to look after an oratory in the present territory of Cantera where, in 1949, the building was begun of a small chapel that was destined to become the present parish church and Sanctuary of Mary Help of Christians. Later the college was opened to provide for the poor youngsters of the area.

At present Puerto Rico has six houses: the parish, oratory and youth centre at Aguadilla (1996); the retreat house and former seminary at Aibonito (1961); the parish of “St Francis de Sales” and the oratory and youth centre at Cataño (1968); the parish of “St John the Baptist” and the youth centre at Orocovis (1978); the parish of “St John Bosco” with the school and social work at Palmera, San Juan, Calle Lutz (1947); and the “Mary Help of Christians” parish with the college and youth centre at San Juan, Cantera (1952).

Haiti

The history of Salesian work in Haiti is linked from the outset with an institute, the “National School of Arts and Trades” at Port-au-Prince, better known by the generic name “St John Bosco”. In October 1934 President Vincent, who had seen the work done by the Salesians in a neighbouring country, invited Mgr Pittini, Archbishop of Santo Domingo, to found at Port-au-

Prince a work similar to that carried out in the Dominican capital. The following year the Rector Major sent to Port-au-Prince an Extraordinary Visitor, Fr. Anthony Candela who, with Mgr Pittini and the Haitian authorities drew up a basic agreement for the new foundation. The Rector Major delegated Fr Marie Gimbert, of French and Breton origin and a former Provincial of Lyons, to implant the Salesian charism in Haiti. He arrived in the country on 27 May 1936, accompanied by an Italian Brother Adrian Massa. Later other confreres came to complete the community.

The workshops, under the direction of young and dynamic Italian Salesians, gave the school a sound start until it soon became the best professional school in the country. The addition of extra personnel from Belgium prompted an effort to promote local vocations. The first Haitian Salesian, Fr Serges Lamaute, was professed in 1946, and in the following year the first Haitian Brother, Hubert Sanon, made his first profession in Cuba. In 1948 a group of five candidates were sent to France for their novitiate and the study of philosophy.

It was only in 1951 that the Salesians were able to begin a work at Petionville and in 1955 that they could go to Cap-Haïtien to found the first parish in Haiti dedicated to St John Bosco.

From its foundation Haiti became successively a part of the Mexican-Antilles Province with headquarters at Havana, then part of the Antilles Province (together with Cuba, the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico) with the provincial house in Santo Domingo. From January 1992, Haiti became a Vice-province with headquarters at Port-au-Prince. At present there are ten foundations, including three houses of formation: the prenovitiate, novitiate and postnovitiate.

Thanks to the witness of the pioneers, Salesian work is well implanted, with significant activity in very poor areas of great need. Today Don Bosco and his charism are at home in Haiti.

North-American Zone

It includes the Provinces of the United States (SUE-SUO) and Canada.

United States: Provinces of San Francisco and New Rochelle (SUO-SUE)

Western United States (SUO)

The first Salesian community was established at San Francisco on 11 March 1897, with the invitation of the Archbishop Patrick W. Riordan to take care of Italian immigrants and their families in the parish of Sts Peter and Paul. There were four Salesians in the group: Fr Raphael Piperni, Rector, Fr Valentine Cassini, Brother Nicholas Imielinski and a cleric Joseph Oreni. They were enthusiastically received, and under the dynamic guidance of Fr Piperni the Church of Sts Peter and Paul began its steady rise to significance and leadership in the North Beach area. After the great earthquake that devastated the city on 18 April 1906, the church had to be rebuilt, an operation completed only in 1924.

Alongside the church is the equally well known Salesian Boys' and Girls' Club, founded in 1921. It rapidly became a centre for the many young people of the area through sport, music and activities of a cultural, religious and social character. Five years later parish schools and a High School were opened. Only 15 months after their arrival the Salesians saw the need to provide another parish for the benefit of Italians working in the southern area of the city. In this way in 1898 the church of Corpus Christi came into being, once again for the service of the Italian community. Later a school and youth centre were built.

In 1902 the Salesians took over the Portuguese parish of St Joseph at Oakland, and their work met with such success that in 1915 the need was felt to build another church at Oakland, dedicated to Mary Help of Christians.

In 1902 the Province of the United States was erected with Headquarters in San Francisco and Fr Michael Borghino as its first Provincial. At the beginning the Province included only five houses: the parishes of Sts Peter and Paul and of Corpus Christi in San Francisco, the parish of St Joseph in Oakland, and the parishes of Mary Help of Christians and of the Transfiguration in New York.

In 1905 the provincial headquarters were transferred to Troy, N.Y., and subsequently to Hawthorne in 1908 and to New Rochelle in 1916. The change of site may have contributed to the fact that there were no further foundations in the West until 1921, when the Salesians took over the college at Watsonville in California. In 1923 they reached Los Angeles, where they took on the care of the church of St Peter. In the following year a second parish was begun, dedicated to Mary Help of Christians. On 28 May 1926 the Province of San Francisco was erected, under the patronage of St Andrew the Apostle.

The work at Richmond dates from 1927, The Salesians bought a property which became a studentate for future Salesians. In 1960 the young Salesians were transferred to Watsonville and the school was opened to students of the county of the West Coast.

The work at Bellflower began in 1938, the year in which the St John Bosco High School was built. In 1954 the adjoining parish church of St Dominic Savio was built and a parish school added.

In 1952, at the request of Cardinal James McIntyre and with the collaboration of Fr Felix Penna, the Don Bosco Technical School was opened at Rosemead. It is now a centre for professional training and a Junior College with a five-year programme leading to an 'Associate of Science Degree'.

The formation house of St Joseph at Rosemead, founded in 1958, was dedicated to the formation of Brothers. In 1989 the

Novitiate was established there, but later, in an effort to provide a response to the changed signs of the times, the house broadened its services for the formation of youth leaders.

In 1965 in the eastern part of Los Angeles, the Salesians took charge of the Church of Saint Mary, built in 1898, and used for the service of Irish immigrants living in that area of the city. Nowadays the immigrants they care for are Mexicans. There are also two other significant works: the Salesian Boys and Girls Club (an extension of the Salesian school), and the Salesian Family Youth Centre, founded in 1998. In addition, in 1978, at the request of Bishop Joseph Drury, our confreres took over the parish of San Louis Re in Laredo.

To this Province also belongs the Don Bosco Hall of Berkeley, once the theologate but since 1986 transformed into a centre of ongoing formation, with a programme of studies and formation in Salesianity. The courses are normally of a year's duration.

In the framework of missionary commitment promoted by Project Africa, Sierra Leone was entrusted to the two Provinces of the United States, who made a foundation at Lungi (Parish of Holy Cross) with an agricultural technical centre at San Agustín. These now form part of the new Vice-province of West Africa.

Eastern United States (SUE)

While Salesian work was beginning in San Francisco in 1897, in the East the Archbishop of New York was trying to persuade the Salesians to come to his own diocese. Cardinal Joseph McCloskey had twice made the request to Don Bosco through his coadjutor Bishop Michael Augustine Corrigan. On the death of the Cardinal in 1885, Bishop Corrigan succeeded him and set about inviting religious Congregations to take care of the immigrants in his diocese. He approached Don Bosco, but the Saint was to die and a further ten years were to pass with numerous letters to Don Rua before the Salesians could give a positive response to his invitation to become established in New York.

Finally, on 28 November 1898, Frs Ernest Coppo and Marcellino Scagliola, with Bro. Faustino Squassoni and an unidentified layman arrived. Their first house was a building on 12th East Street. The beginnings were slow and difficult, but those first Salesians did not lose heart; they continued their work of looking after immigrants, visiting their homes, attending to the sick and organising missions.

About 1920 the Salesians were already working in other parishes for Italian immigrants: that of St Michael at Paterson (NJ), of Holy Rosary at Port Chester (NY) and St. Anthony at Elizabeth (NJ). The original work undertaken in the eastern part of the country, as had been the case in the West, was for the benefit of Italian immigrants to whom they gave every kind of attention.

The first school, founded at Troy (NY) in 1903, was intended for students who showed some inclination for the priesthood. Subsequently another site was sought and found at Hawthorne (NY), where a new building was erected, nearer to other works and with plenty of space. The school was named "Columbus Institute". It succeeded so well that a first year of High School was soon added, with the intention of adding a new course every year. In 1912 the number of Poles and Italians had increased so much that the school had to be divided into two. In 1915 the Polish section moved to Ramsey (NJ), and was originally known as the Don Bosco Polish School; now the title is Don Bosco Prep. From a vocational standpoint, Ramsey is one of the most fruitful schools in all the Congregation, numbering among its past-pupils more than 160 priestly and religious vocations.

A great tragedy befell the Columbus Institute on the morning of 11 December 1917, when the building was destroyed by fire. A new school was built at New Rochelle (NY), on land purchased in 1919. The students of philosophy and theology had no fixed place of residence until the arrival of Fr Richard Pittini as Provincial; he bought a property in the county of Sussex (NJ), and realised

his dream by building there a house of formation for the Province. The building was inaugurated on 12 June 1931, and for the next 50 years "Newton," as it was known, became the heart of the Province.

Meanwhile some of the first parishes were multiplying. At Paterson the parish of St Michael gave rise to that of St Anthony. In the county of Westchester (NY) from the parish of Holy Rosary that of Corpus Christi was established. Other parishes were accepted at Tampa (FL), Mahwah (NJ), Birmingham (AL) and one in the Bahamas.

After repeated requests from Bishop Neve, a new Salesian house was opened at Tampa in Florida in 1928 with the title "Mary Help of Christians". In the meantime a new Middle School opened at Goshen (NY) in 1925, and the Hope Haven orphanage was begun in the thirties in the Archdiocese of New Orleans. Two professional training centres, the Don Bosco Tech of Paterson and the Don Bosco Tech of Boston, became ideal structures for the work of Salesian Brothers. A youth centre in East Boston brought a knowledge of Don Bosco to that ethnic area.

Many of the above-mentioned houses are still functioning, and in the meantime the Province has opened new schools and youth centres: the Archbishop Shaw High School at Marrero (LA), a parish in Harlem (NY), the Salesian Boys' and Girls' Club at Columbus (Ohio), and the Marian Sanctuary at West Haverstraw (NJ).

In March 1997 a group of Salesian past-pupils from Mexico living in Chicago had a meeting with the Provincial and asked him to open a Salesian house in their area. The Rector Major, Fr Juan Vecchi, approved the proposal, and on 31 January 1998 the Salesians took on the pastoral care of the St John Bosco parish, which had been established and dedicated to Don Bosco at the time of his canonisation in 1934. In July 1998 two more works were entrusted to the Province in the diocese of St. Petersburg (FL): the St. Petersburg Catholic High School and the Good

Shepherd parish in Tampa. Finally, in 2003 a house was opened in Washington.

Canada

The Salesians entered Canada from the United States: from San Francisco along the Pacific coast and from New York along the Atlantic coast. The fame of Don Bosco had preceded them. After his canonisation the two models of priestly holiness proposed to seminarians were the Curé of Ars and Don Bosco. Even during his lifetime the saintly educator of Turin was known, especially in French-speaking Canada, thanks to the French Salesian Bulletin which dated back to 1881. The well known biography of Fr Auffray also made a great contribution to making the Saint known to the French-speaking clergy. In September 1893 there were already more than a hundred Cooperators in Canada, and Canadian bishops on their way to Rome used to pass through Valdocco to ask for the opening of Salesian work in their dioceses.

As in the United States, to meet the needs of Italian immigrants, in 1924 the Archbishop of Toronto entrusted to the Salesians the parish of St Agnes. Unfortunately, despite the fact that the Salesians had been able to create a model parish for the diocese, in 1934 a number of parishes in the New Rochelle Province were handed back to their respective dioceses after it was considered they were not in line with the spirit of the Founder. The parish of St Agnes was included among them, a painful decision for both the diocese and the small Salesian community.

This episode helps us to understand why the true beginning of Salesian work in Canada is considered to be the opening of the Don Bosco Institute at Jacquet River (N.B.) in 1947. On the west coast the first foundation was the St Mary School at Edmonton in 1951, which was followed by the acceptance of the parish of the Sacred Heart in Vancouver in 1953. An aspirantate was opened at Boucheville, near Montreal, in 1959, and three years later was

transferred to Sherbrooke. Unfortunately this work was opened at a time when the crisis in vocations was beginning.

The two foundations on the Atlantic coast were subsequently abandoned because of profound changes in the country's school system. The Salesians returned to Toronto in 1977 and their work was so much appreciated that they were asked to take on a parish. The purpose of these two works in Ontario was to attract vocations from the English-speaking community.

Eastern Canada was a delegation of the New Rochelle Province from 1961 to 1988, when it was erected into a Vice-province under the patronage of St Joseph. Twelve years later the San Francisco Province handed over to the Vice-province the work at Edmonton and in 2002 that at Surrey (B.C.) In this way the Canadian Vice-province extended "*a mari usque ad mare*". It is certain, however, that Salesian Canada is greatly indebted for its development to the "mother provinces" of New York and San Francisco.

At the present time Salesian work in Canada is fundamentally parochial. But it should be noted that in the parishes preferential attention is given to the young, and the decision to withdraw from certain works was based on this criterion.

2. THE SOCIAL AND CULTURAL SITUATION

It is immediately clear that in the Region we find two very different situations: the *United States and Canada* in the north, countries among the richest on the entire planet, in which there is a significant distribution of wealth among the population, even though there are groups living in poverty, especially in the United States; and the *Latin-American countries* in the south with enormous social and economic inequalities.

Latin America is a continent rich in natural resources but where the majority of the people are poor, with 45% of them liv-

ing below the poverty line. The native minority (numbering 40 million and representing 11% of the total population) feel themselves excluded from social development and have to struggle to be recognised as autonomous peoples with their own culture, language and territory. Afro-americans (100 million) are much more numerous than the natives, but their condition is generally even worse, and they too have to fight for their identity and dignity. This inhuman poverty is precisely the reason for the continued migration towards the United States and Europe, and especially to Spain and Italy.

As has been said time and again by Latin-American Bishops' Conferences (Medellín, Puebla, Santo Domingo), the causes of this impoverishment are to be sought in social and economic structures that are not equally just to all citizens, and in corruption and foreign debt. To these must be added the inhuman features of globalisation which has deprived the State of its power to intervene and has allowed the economy to gain the ascendancy over all the factors that regulate social life. Moreover, the implementation of programmes and conditions imposed by the International Monetary Fund have served only to deepen the pre-existing mechanisms of social exclusion, to weaken the legitimacy of governments, and to sow conflict in relationships with large groups of people in the region.

It is true that there is macro-economic growth, but wealth is not equally distributed. Indeed the tendency is to concentrate wealth in the hands of a few to the detriment of the majority. The objectives agreed by the Presidents and Prime Ministers of the whole of America at Miami to reduce poverty, illiteracy and sickness by the year 2005 seem a long way off.

As far as democracy is concerned, nearly all the Latin-American countries have freely elected civil governments, but in several countries in the area the population is dissatisfied with the government because of slow economic growth, the increasing inequalities and the deterioration of the legal systems and social services.

The cultural situation of the Interamerica Region is very complex; there are various cultural 'matrices': the Anglo-Saxon, predominant especially in the USA and Canada, the Latin (French and Spanish), the native and the African. On the other hand the migratory movements have brought about a great inter-relationship between the different cultures, creating a true cultural mosaic rather than a 'melting pot' in the United States and Canada.

With a high juvenile population, young people form a group which is not only the most numerous but also the most exposed because of the rapidity and depth of cultural changes, and because of the lack of opportunities for the development of their own all-round potential. A sad and worrying example is presented by the spreading social phenomenon of gangs which are becoming more and more threatening, as witness the "Maras" of Central America. In the case of Colombia a considerable number of young men and women have joined armed groups.

From the standpoint of religion, in North America the majority are Protestant, while in Latin-America they are almost completely Catholic. In the United States more than half the Catholics are of Hispanic origin, the result of immigration. The American continent is home to more than half the Catholics of the whole world. A serious threat to the Church in America is the rapid growth of sects and evangelical groups to which many Catholics give their adherence every year.

The four General Conferences of the Bishops of Latin America and of the Caribbean and the Synod of Bishops from the whole of the American continent have been important points of reference for the life and mission of the Church, and in particular for the preferential option for the poor and for the young. It has already been announced that the Fifth Assembly of CELAM will take place in Brazil in May 2007.

3. SALESIAN WORK AND INFLUENCE

The Interamerica Region, which came into being in 1996 as a result of the reorganisation of the Regions made by the GC24, has tried to respond to the spirit of the Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in America*, which asked that the American continent be considered as a single whole, with its differences but at the same time with its inter-relationships.

In the Region there are 12 Provinces and 2 Vice-provinces in 18 countries. While two Provinces are pluri-national (ANT and CAM), six others are in three countries (Colombia, Mexico and the United States). According to the statistics for 2005 there were 2,174 Salesians, of whom 1,496 were priests; 229 perpetually professed Brothers; 102 perpetually professed clerics; 294 clerics in temporary vows and 52 Brothers in temporary vows. There were 79 novices. 525 confreres (including the novices) were in initial formation. At the end of 2005 there were 106 prenovices. The average age in the Region was about 51 years.

3.1 *Community life*

After the GC25 the Provinces of the Region showed a growing and effective concern for the strengthening of community life. Salesian communities are on the whole strong and healthy, with a fraternal spirit expressed in their Plan for Community Life. The sense of local communities belonging to the Province and of the Provinces to the Congregation has also increased.

But not withstanding this encouraging situation, some *challenges* remain:

- ❑ *A lack of balance between works and resources*, which implies a danger of activism which, in turn, leads to superficiality, to spiritual emptiness, to individualism, to the weakening of communities, to a lack of educative and pastoral quality that makes what is urgent prevail over what is of greater importance.

- ❑ Here and there one notes a *weakening of the evangelical witness* of the religious community, revealed in a tendency towards an easy life and a lack of spiritual harmony that is in sharp contrast to the lifestyle and level of the population and the typical religious experience of the majority.
- ❑ Also detectable is a *lack of the deeper interpersonal communication* that fosters growth in the spiritual life of the confreres and in fraternal correction; it has a negative effect on perseverance in vocations.
- ❑ *The difficulty in finding Rectors who are real animators of the spiritual and pastoral life* of the religious community and of the EPC. The situation of the Rector being also the Economist is becoming endemic, with negative consequences for a wise animation.

3.2 Formation

The Provinces show a real concern for initial formation. Every Province except Canada has a number of prenovices varying between 1 and 24. Some Provinces have a prenovitiate that lasts for two years, even though it is clear that the prenovitiate in itself is the immediate preparation for the first experience of Salesian life.

There are 11 novitiates (8 of them provincial and 3 inter-provincial) with a minimum of 2 and a maximum of 12 novices per novitiate.

The postnovitiates, of three years duration, are 12 in number, of which only one is interprovincial – that in Orange (SUE) which represents a collaboration between the two Provinces of the United States and the Vice-province of Canada. Of the 12 postnovitiates, 9 have their own Salesian study centre, while the others send the postnovices to non-Salesian Universities. Brother postnovices normally follow the same curriculum of philosophical and pedagogical studies as the Salesian clerics.

As is the case also in other Regions, so in the Interamerica the period of practical training is not always seen as a true formative phase. This results in little attention being given to the formative process of the young confrere, and in the choice of communities that are not always the best for the provision of spiritual and pastoral guidance.

With regard to the specific formation of Salesians preparing for the priesthood, the Region has two Salesian centres of studies, one in Central America and the other in Guadalajara (MEG), both of them affiliated to the UPS. In the Andean Zone a process of reflection is at present taking place concerning this phase of formation so as to ensure greater interprovincial collaboration and so lead to a greater sense of identity and quality. At Caracas the students attend an intercongregational study centre (ITER), linked with the UPS and with many Salesians on the staff. Finally, in other Provinces the confreres attend non-Salesian study centres. All these centres conclude the first cycle with a baccalaureate which has ecclesial recognition.

With regard to the specific formation of the Salesian Brother, the experience of the Regional Centre for the Brother (CRESCO) in San Salvador, which has functioned successfully in recent years, does not at present seem to satisfy sufficiently all the needs for the specific formation of the Brothers. For this reason a process of reflection is already taking place by the Regional Formation Commission and by the Provincials themselves to find the ideal solution, given the reduced number of young Brothers and the cultural and linguistic similarities and differences in the American continent.

There has been growing concern in the Provinces about offering a more systematic form of ongoing formation. Some Provinces have organised regular periodic courses for the confreres, adapted to different age groups. This is accompanied by a growing attention to the annual retreats as privileged moments in the spiritual life of every confrere (C 91). Already over the past

six years the Provinces have drawn up their Plan for the Qualification of the Confreres, but it has been only partially implemented on account of the difficulty of finding personnel for the various works.

In the Region there are two Centres of Ongoing Formation: the Institute of Salesian Studies (ISS) at Berkeley (SUO), and the Regional Centre of Ongoing Formation at Quito (ECU). The first falls under the responsibility of the San Francisco Province and is open to English-speaking confreres of any Region; the other depends on the Provinces of the Region for personnel and finance.

Among the problems found in the area of formation are the following:

- On the one hand, the *scarcity of vocations*, as compared with the great number of young people in these countries, and the religious 'fertile ground' present in society; and on the other the vocational frailty, which becomes evident in the fact that in some Provinces the number of confreres who have left is greater than those who have entered.
- To this must be added the already mentioned disproportion between works and Salesian personnel, which often leads to a reduction to the minimum in formation teams or to the unification of the phases of formation, or the lack of qualification of the confreres. All this makes more urgent the need for greater collaboration and a common search for solutions. In particular the study centres (especially those for theological formation) require a high academic standard and a big investment in qualified personnel. Another element demanding great attention on the part of all is the formation in Salesianity, which is rather weak.

3.3 Youth Ministry

The confreres of the Region, sorely tried by huge social, cultural and religious problems, are outstanding for their great pas-

toral activity. Salesian work frequently takes the place of that of the State where the latter cannot ensure social welfare (housing, employment, education, health). In other places, the State favours the Salesian mission through subsidies for schools, training centres for those entering employment, and care for young people at risk.

After the GC23 great efforts were made to draw up the Educative and Pastoral Plan which, once adopted, becomes a true guide for the realisation of the mission. But it often happens that the SEPP has no real impact, either through lack of a formative process or because in practice it is simply forgotten or never updated.

In recent years more attention has been given in thought and practice to "paying particular attention to those marginalised",³ which implies three things: preferential attention to young people at risk, the opening of all the works to deal with situations of youthful marginalisation, and the formation of a social sensitivity and a commitment to the transformation of situations of injustice. Nevertheless this effort must be intensified by increasing the number of works dealing on an ad hoc basis with those who are marginalised, by broadening the scope of our works so that they have a greater effect on the local area, and by the formation of truly active citizens committed to the building of a more just and fraternal society.

The GC24 was followed in our works by the setting up of the Educative and Pastoral Community (EPC) and its council, called to be a true animating nucleus with the active participation of lay people, even if in some cases it became reduced to a working group. For years the Region has witnessed a growth in certain pastoral procedures through the regional coordination of schools, of emarginalisation sectors and of Delegates for Youth Ministry.

³ Cf. ACG 380, Project of Animation and Government of the Rector Major and his Council, Third priority, and third area of animation in the Youth Ministry Section (PROMOTION OF SOLIDARITY AND OF JUSTICE).

Salesian works

- Schools

Salesian activity in schools takes first place in the framework of the Region's works. There are 172 scholastic institutions in all, between kindergarten, elementary, primary and secondary schools, with more than 200,000 pupils. There are 56 vocational training centres and agricultural schools, with about 25,000 pupils.

The schools operate on a zonal and regional basis of coordination, so as to implement the guidelines set out at the meeting of American schools at Cumbayá (Quito, Ecuador) in the year 2001, which sought to renew our educative and pastoral work.

The situation of schools with regard to their relationships and agreements with individual States varies widely. In some countries the State contributes financially to the running of schools. In others schools belonging to the State are entrusted to the Salesians for their administration. In these two cases it is easier to ensure that our efforts are directed to the poorer classes. An innovation becoming more accentuated in recent years is the presence of girls in our schools, which brings with it the further challenges of coeducation.

- Parishes

Without including the mission stations, the Salesian parishes in the Region number 168 with about 3 million parishioners. In some Provinces most of our works are of this kind. In general, parish work includes an Oratory or Youth Centre, a school, a training centre for those about to enter employment, a social and welfare centre (with a medical dispensary) and facilities for taking care of youngsters at risk. This means that in practice none are just parishes entirely on their own.

Almost all the parishes are in densely populated areas. Many of them have adopted a pastoral method aimed at ensuring a more solid and effective evangelisation, e.g. the "Proyecto de Renovación

Diocesana y Evangelización" (PRDE), known originally as the "New Parish Image" (NIP), or the Integral System of New Evangelization (SINE). All things considered, I think the Salesian identity of the parish is an element that could do with strengthening.

- *Oratories and Youth Centres*

Oratories and Youth Centres, especially those that are open daily, try to offer, in addition to catechesis and cultural and sporting activities, an integral response to the needs of youth, preparing them for work and for finding their place in society. Particular importance attaches to the Oratories opened along the frontier between the United States and Mexico.

In this pastoral area can be included the seasonal activities such as Summer Camps in the United States and Canada, which offer various ways of spending free time constructively, as well as providing an opportunity for the further formation of young people by giving them an opportunity for educative and pastoral activity on behalf of other youngsters.

- *Preparation for entering the work force*

The reference here is not to technical schools but to centres of formation for those about to begin work, such as the Centres for Occupational Education in Peru; the Preparation Centres in Colombia; the "John Bosco the Worker" centre in one of the most densely populated parts of Bogotá, which by agreement with the government helps some 4,000 boys and girls; the "Training Centres for Work" in Venezuela, which form a network embracing more than 60 institutions, of which only a few in fact belong to the Province.

In some cases the training for work is combined with production and marketing, as in the "Industrial Polygon" in San Salvador, where a group of micro-enterprises are productive while at the same time providing work-training. In Ecuador a network of productive cooperatives has developed very well in rural areas.

- *Care of youngsters at risk*

Care for youngsters at risk, which is one of the prides of the Region, has increased in all the Provinces, inspired by the work of Fr Xavier De Nicolò, creator of the "Bosconia" complex. Other new initiatives have begun along the same lines: the "Hogar Don Bosco" at Santa Cruz (Bolivia), the "Casitas Don Bosco" in Peru, the "Chicos de la Calle" project in Ecuador, the "Ciudad Don Bosco" at Medellín (Colombia), the "Casas Don Bosco" in Venezuela, the "Proyecto Inspectorial Muchachos y Muchachas con Don Bosco" in the Dominican Republic, the "Ciudad de los Niños" of Santa Ana in El Salvador, the "Hogar Nazaret" of Mexico City and the "Ciudad del Niño" of León (MEG).

At Port-au-Prince, in Haiti, the network of schools founded by the Dutch Salesian missionary Fr. Laurent Bohnen continues to provide a daily meal for more than 20,000 young children. In the Dominican Republic an effort is being made to get parents to accept more responsibility, by training mothers of families and enabling them to find work, and so avoid their children having to make a living on the streets.

A leading kind of work worthy of praise is carried out by the two Colombian Provinces at Armenia, Cali and Bogotá with young men and women who have left armed groups, to whom is offered an opportunity to recover the true meaning of life through training for honest work.

- *Works for Social Advancement*

Although every Salesian work for the benefit of boys and girls at risk is obviously a work of human and social advancement, there are certain works doing this in a particular way, because the activities are carried out with young and older children and even adults who need to recover an awareness of their dignity, potential and responsibilities. In some of our centres they are encouraged to develop community-based working practices and become organised so as to find the answers to their needs together.

They work together on the production and marketing of their products commercially. Everything takes place in a context of sharing and through a process in which the individuals feel themselves part of a community. Moreover, some of these initiatives operate within a network involving European organisations that encourage eco-solidarity in commerce.

Many Provinces have works of this kind. I want to mention especially those in Bolivia and Ecuador. Equally worth mentioning is the work in the missionary areas of Valle Sagrado in Peru, of the Amazonian and Andean missions, of the missions of the Upper Orinoco in Venezuela, of the missions of Upper Verapaz in Guatemala, of the Prelature of the Mixes and Chinantecos in Mexico, and of the work among the Afro-Ecuadorians at Esmeraldas (ECU) and at Condoto (COM).

- Care of migrants

The care of immigrants was one of the original characteristics of the Salesians in both Provinces of the United States and in Canada at the beginning when they began by working for Italian immigrants, and later through parishes for other ethnic groups: Chinese, Filipinos, Slovenes, Croats. Hungarians, Vietnamese and Koreans. Both the Province of New Rochelle and that of San Francisco have parishes for the Christian faithful from Spain, Portugal, Latin-America, and particularly Mexico.

This challenge, however, is not exclusive to North America. Migration has become an irresistible phenomenon which results in thousand of Haitians being in the Dominican Republic, of Dominicans in Puerto Rico, of Cubans in the United States. I think that the Provinces of Latin America must find some way of meeting the needs of emigrants from their areas to the United States, Canada and nowadays also to Europe.

- Universities

The university provides a new frontier for the Salesian mission. The Rector Major and his Council have outlined for the In-

stitute of Salesian Universities (IUS) the profile of the Salesian identity of our universities and the institutional plan they should develop to ensure fidelity to our charism.

Various Provinces of the Region have work of this kind in their territory. I recall the "Universidad Don Bosco" of El Salvador and the "Universidad Mesoamericana" in Guatemala, both of them in Central America; the "Universidad Salesiana" in Mexico; the "Universidad Politécnica Salesiana" in Ecuador; the "Universidad Salesiana" in Bolivia. Other Provinces have Institutes of higher education at university level: the "Istituto Universitario Salesiano Padre Ojeda" in Venezuela; the "Politecnico Salesiano" at Lima in Peru. Still others are examining the pros and cons of launching university centres. The challenge on the one hand is that of maintaining the quality of our cultural work, and on the other the availability of Salesians capable of working at such a level, and so ensure pastoral care and consequently the Salesian identity of the university. The Rector Major has appointed Fr Charles Garulo to coordinate matters in this sector; he will try to consolidate what has already been done and to promote and implement the policy of the Congregation in the IUS.

Pastoral activities

Group activity. The Salesian Youth Movement.

In all the Provinces there has been a great development of group activity among young people, even though it must be added that not all such groups develop a serious programme from an educational and pastoral standpoint. Unfortunately the frequent changes of Salesian personnel responsible produce highs and lows that detract from the quality of the work in this area.

Little by little the idea is growing and being implemented of gathering all such groups into the Salesian Youth Movement. In several Provinces there is coordination at provincial and even national level, and also with the FMA, with the organisation of meetings, congresses and activities for the planning and evalua-

tion of the progress of the SYM. Some Provinces have managed to draw up a scheme for the formation of youth leaders.

Pastoral work for vocations. The Volunteer Movement.

In the countries of North America pastoral work for vocations frequently meets with considerable difficulties because of the environment, so strongly imbued with consumerism and hedonism, and also on account of the scandals linked with the abuse of juveniles alleged against members of the Catholic Church. In the countries of Latin America the situation is much different. There is still a fruitful religious foundation, a firm Catholic background which combined with the great challenges in society make the idea of a vocation still very attractive. But it must be acknowledged that in candidates from these countries the human and Christian foundation is not always such as would lead to the building of a sound religious personality.

Nevertheless all the Provinces are concerned about vocational pastoral work, which is carried out in a variety of ways. In some cases a vocation promotion team has been organised, sometimes drawn from different groups of the Salesian Family, which tries to encourage communities to draw up their own pastoral plan and develop a programme for young people. I think that many vocations are lost at this stage through the lack of a real process for maturing in faith and of the personal guidance that helps the young person to make life choices directed to Jesus and the Kingdom of God.

The volunteer movement is present in every Province, with different degrees of intensity and quality; it has a threefold aspect: that of a social volunteer movement which is certainly the most widespread, that of the missionary volunteer movement, and that of the vocational volunteer movement. It is interesting and encouraging to see that some Provinces have succeeded in systematically organising the volunteer process, from preparation to continuing accompaniment and to subsequent follow-up.

Formation of lay people.

In line with the directives of the GC23 and GC24, lay people are taking on ever greater responsibility for the management of our works. They receive a formation which if it is to be effective needs to be more gradual and systematic. From this point of view, even though it may be true that formation of lay collaborators in our works needs to be done at local and provincial level, I consider very valuable the service offered by some specific formation centres.

3.4 The Salesian Family

The Salesian Family is well developed in the Region, where in fact 12 different branches can be found: Salesians (SDB), Daughters of Mary Help of Christians (FMA), Salesian Cooperators, Daughters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, Daughters of the Divine Saviour, Sisters of the Resurrection, Sisters of Charity of Miyazaki, Don Bosco Volunteers, Volunteers with Don Bosco, Past-pupils, Association of Mary Help of Christians, Association of Damas Salesianas (ADS).

Indeed, four of these branches were born in the Region, beginning with the Institute of the Daughters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, founded by Blessed Luigi Variara at Agua de Dios (Colombia); the Daughters of the Divine Saviour, founded by Mgr Pedro Arnaldo Aparicio at San Vicente (El Salvador); the Association of the Damas Salesianas, founded by Fr Miguel González at Caracas (Venezuela); and the Sisters of the Resurrection, founded by the Indian missionary Fr George Puthenpu-
ra at San Pedro Carchá (Guatemala). And there is also the group of Volunteers with Don Bosco (CDB), which received ecclesial recognition from the Archbishop of Caracas (Venezuela).

In most of the Provinces the Advisory Group of the Salesian Family has been set up and is functioning well; it has helped to promote a greater sense of unity, awareness of the spiritual and apostolic family of Don Bosco, and collaboration in working together in a given area, even though there is still a long way to go.

In this sector the two biggest challenges are, on the one hand the care and promotion of the Association of Salesian Past-pupils and, on the other the awareness among us Salesians of our responsibility for the animation of the Salesian Family (C 5).

3.5 Social Communication

In this Region the area of Social Communication finds one of its successful achievements, especially when one bears in mind all the different fields in this sector. Productive enterprises abound: there are 10 schools of printing, 9 printing establishments, 5 publishing houses for school books, 3 for catechetical works, 4 for general publishing, 10 bookshops, 4 audiovisual centres, 2 centres for the production of programmes, 12 radio stations, 6 television channels, 4 magazines and 3 centres for web projects. The "Catholic Biblical Apostolate" Publishing House of Bogotá distributes its books from the Sanctuary of the Infant Jesus with a production that for some titles reaches millions of copies.

A special influence on the cultural world is wielded by the publishing houses of Venezuela, Ecuador and Bolivia that publish school texts. The "Abya-Yala" Publishing House in Ecuador enjoys worldwide recognition for its publications on cultural and social issues. The two Mexican Provinces have set up a Society with the EDEBE of Barcelona (Spain) for the publication of school texts.

The Salesian Bulletin is published regularly in all the Provinces except the Vice-province of Haiti, The Mexican edition comes out monthly; the others at two-monthly or three-monthly intervals. The New Rochelle Province publishes editions of the Bulletin in both English and Spanish. Over the whole Region more than 700,000 copies of the Bulletin are printed: 204,000 in Mexico, 128,000 in the San Francisco Province and 100,000 in the New Rochelle Province of the United States, 76,440 in the Province of Central America and 63,000 in that of Canada.

Although there are in the Region so many focal points of Social Communication, and even though there is concern for the forma-

tion of Salesians for this sector, much more could still be done.

3.6 Missions and missionary promotion

Missionary work in the Interamerica Region is of great importance, both for the number of Provinces involved and for the high quality of the work carried out in some areas. Particularly significant is what is done among the natives at Kami in Bolivia, at Valle Sagrado and San Lorenzo in Peru, in the Andean missions and the Vicariate of Méndez (which is the oldest in the Congregation), in Ecuador, in the Vicariate of Puerto Ayacucho in Venezuela, in Alto Verapaz in Guatemala and in the Mixepolitana Prelature in Mexico. Of importance too is the apostolate among the Afro-Americans at Condoto and Buenaventura in the Province of Colombia-Medellín, at Esmeraldas in Ecuador and in a parish of the New Rochelle Province in Washington.

In the missions great efforts have been made in inculturating the Gospel, in developing processes of evangelisation, of catechesis and of the formation of animators for implanting the Church. Deserving of special mention is the work done among the Shuar (ECU), the Achuar (ECU and PER), the Yanomami (VEN), the Mayas (CAM), the Mixes and the Chinantecos (MEM).

The presence and work of Salesian missionaries has been decisive for the survival and progress of the native peoples. In mission territories the Salesians were for many years the only institution able to carry out a project of evangelisation from an ecclesial point of view and programmes of education and human advancement from a social standpoint. The presence of the Salesians, moreover, guaranteed respect for the fundamental rights of these people, one of which was the ownership of land.

Side by side with typical missionary work, research has been and still is being undertaken by specialists into the native culture of the people, their language and ideas of the world. In this connection numerous publications have been produced by the "Abya-Yala" publishing house, the leader in this field.

As is only natural, problems are not lacking, caused especially by tiredness of the missionaries often forced to lead a very hard life, by their advanced age and lack of replacements. It is urgently necessary that the Province should grow in the awareness that all its members are called to be and feel themselves missionaries.

The Provinces of the Interamerica Region, like all those of Europe and some of Asia, have been involved in Project Africa: those of the United States in Sierra Leone and the Latin-American Provinces in Guinea-Conakry. These two now form part of Vice-provinces in Western Africa.

In the Region there are also two Mission Offices which fulfil an important role for the development and support of missionary projects. They are those of Sherbrooke in Canada and of New Rochelle in the USA - the latter is well known; it was the first of the Salesian Missions Offices. In Quito in Ecuador there is an Office that raises funds for vocations, begun by Fr John Porter; it helps all the Provinces of Latin America, including those of the South Cone Region.

4. CHALLENGES AND FUTURE PROSPECTS

After presenting this Region I would like to point to what I consider to be the main challenges it must face, and consequently where its future prospects lie. As a starting point I take the words of the prophet Isaiah with which I headed this letter: *"You who seek the Lord; look to the rock from which you were hewn, to the pit from which you were quarried"* (Is 51,1). It is a reminder to go back to our origins, to our charismatic identity, to our vocational fidelity, to the apostolic thrust and zeal of the *"Da mihi animas"* of Don Bosco and of the founders of Salesian work in this part of the world.

In the first place, the Region is called upon to *strengthen the Salesian identity* of confreres and communities as *consecrated*

apostles, so that they can bear witness to the radical following of Christ and fulfil the mission with apostolic zeal.

John Paul II had begun to speak of the pressing need for a *new evangelisation* for the whole Church. This is an urgent task which, combined with that of *education to the faith*, must ensure that gospel values are assimilated and personally accepted, with the consequent passing from a natural goodness to a positive choice of faith, consciously made and interiorised. It is a commitment that leads to promoting the process for the transformation of Latin America (*cf. Documents of Medellin and Puebla*), to work for human advancement and contribute to the building of an alternative culture centred on persons and not on things (*Santo Domingo*), so that our peoples can find in Jesus Christ the way for conversion, communion and solidarity (*Ecclesia in America*).

All this has a great deal to do with the *formation of Salesians*, and must help the confreres to purify and deepen their motivation, to personally assume the values involved, to make conscious choices, and hence to organise their lives around the commitments involved in Salesian religious life. It must provide them with theological and cultural strength. Therefore interprovincial solutions must be found for the problems of formation communities and Salesian study centres. It does not seem that individual Provinces have either the capacity or the resources to fulfil their responsibilities in this field on their own. The specific formation and specialisation of Salesian Brothers are also matters requiring further study.

To face up to these challenges I propose to the confreres of the Region, and also to the whole Congregation, the following guidelines.

4.1 Witnessing to the primacy of God among young people in today's world

The complex nature of the present time calls for a continual return to the origin of our apostolic life, i.e. to God. This implies

the rediscovery of our own vocation as a lifeplan centred in Christ, and zeal for the mission so as to be “signs and bearers of the love of God for young people, especially those who are poor” (C 2).

To maintain this “high level of ordinary Christian life” we need to “programme our holiness” (E. Viganò) at both a personal and community level. And so it will be indispensable to attend to:

- ❑ *The spiritual life of the community*: the absolute primacy of God must find expression in a deep expression of faith shared and lived in daily life.
- ❑ *The animating role of the Rector*, whose first responsibility is precisely that of fostering vocational growth among the confreres, encouraging fidelity of the religious community and animating the Educative and Pastoral Community (cf. C 55).

4.2 Giving new life to Don Bosco and his zeal for “*Da mihi animas*”

Of great importance in every work is the drawing up and implementation of its own particular project, in which are defined and clarified the strategic priorities in evangelisation and education to the faith that best respond to the needs of the youth situation of the Region, and the practical steps for making them more effective in practice. This presupposes the study and practice of the Constitutions and the efficacious fulfilment of the mission with joy and conviction.

The proper criterion leading to such a discernment will be the rediscovery of Don Bosco, mystic and prophet, and the vital assumption of his great convictions: 1) the importance of taking care of poor and abandoned youngsters; 2) the value of education as a means for the effective transformation of society; 3) the need to involve as many people as possible in the plan for the salvation of the young.

4.3 Giving new meaning to our work in the Region, prompted by the option for those we work for by preference⁴

The option for young people who are poor, abandoned and at risk, has always been a matter of concern for Don Bosco and his spiritual and apostolic family right down to the present day. The young are at the centre of our mission; they are our *raison d'être*; their needs and aspirations must shape the kind of presence we offer them. In consequence what is important is not the maintenance of structures but their educative validity, social significance and evangelical effectiveness.

This conviction should lead us to restructure our existing activities so as to continue our work where we are already, but in a new form and, if necessary, create other forms of service and apostolate. A fundamental criterion for the improvement in the significance of our work is the constitution of communities that are consistent as regards both the number and quality of the confreres. To this must be added the need to bring about greater communion and participation with the Salesian Family and with our lay collaborators, so as to create new models for the management of the works.

In practical terms, our educative and pastoral plan for today must be so expressed as to ensure the following lines of action:

- *In all our works and foundations* we must be present in a new and welcoming way for everyone, with a new and integral service centred on the individual, the promoting of a culture of solidarity and a commitment to justice and the transformation of society.

And so, care for those who are poorer cannot be reduced to a sector of works of a social nature; it is rather an overall feature running through all our works. This will necessar-

⁴ In other Letters there are also guidelines for improving the effectiveness of our works (Cf. AGC 385, p. 26; AGC 387, p. 50-52).

ily lead us to ask ourselves questions about the kind of culture we are fostering in our schools and parishes, in our oratories and youth centres, and in our centres of social activity.

- ❑ *In specific works in the field of youthful marginalisation*, we must offer to young people in difficulty concrete suggestions within a process of integral growth.

These works or activities call for professional competence, specialised programmes, collaboration with other agencies and civil institutions, and the overcoming of an individualistic way of working. Here a greater integration of confreres and initiatives is needed in the Provincial Structural Plan.

4.4 Creating synergy by uniting efforts, means and commitment for the provision of opportunities through collaboration.

Nowadays more than ever before it is fundamental that we grow in solidarity and interprovincial collaboration in the different sectors at the service of life and of the Salesian mission. Society in general, and young people in particular, have the right to see us as a united group functioning in communion, working in a network, and carrying out a shared project.

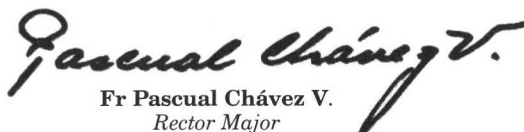
Paraphrasing the words of Jesus to his disciples at the Last Supper, I invite you to be “one in heart and soul” so that the young may believe that we have been sent to them by God (cf. Jn 17,21). This implies passing from a mentality of Province to a mentality of Region and of Congregation. We must never forget that what matters is Don Bosco and his presence in the locality, and that all the organisation and structures are at the service of the mission. Oh, how much I would like to feel and see such availability and unity!

CONCLUSION

I finish, dear confreres, by inviting all of you to live this period of reconciliation and conversion that we call Lent with openness of heart and generosity of commitment, so that nothing can prevent the explosion in our lives of the joy of the Lord's Resurrection, and that we can put to good use the newness of life made possible for us by the paschal mystery of Jesus Christ and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit into our hearts.

Our future is going to depend on our fidelity to our origins. Hence the validity of the appeal the prophet Isaiah makes to all of us today: *"You who seek the Lord; look to the rock from which you were hewn, to the pit from which you were quarried"*.

May Mary increase our ability to gaze with pure and limpid eyes on God's special plan for each of us and for the whole Congregation. May she obtain for us the grace to know ourselves to be, and to want to be, sons who seek only to do the will of the Father.


Fr Pascual Chávez V.
Rector Major

2. GUIDELINES AND POLICIES

2.1 SALESIAN PASTORAL FORMATION ATTITUDES AND SKILLS TO BE DEVELOPED

Fr Antonio DOMENECH
General Councillor for Youth Ministry

Many teachers with years of experience and after intensive work with young people, find it difficult to adapt to a new approach and formation role in pastoral ministry. They are certainly aware that their educational and pastoral methods are not as effective as they once were, but they believe that by continuing to try harder and to do more they will finally succeed in capturing the youngsters' interest and involve them in the educational process. But this attitude does not produce the desired results; indeed it runs the risk of discouraging even further these willing and generous-hearted teachers.

Nowadays slight adjustments or superficial changes to educational and pastoral methods are not sufficient. It is necessary to adopt a new style and approach to our pastoral activity capable of responding to the great challenges presented by the world of youth.

This change is only possible with a new kind of pastoral formation which helps us to re-discover with renewed enthusiasm our mission as educators and to carry it out with confidence and efficiency.

- This pastoral formation includes above all these two elements:
- *A renewed awareness of our mission*: re-discovering its greatness, reawakening the zeal for education and evangelisation, in order to overcome a tendency to adapt too easily to circumstances and to be content with immediate and superficial results without the courage to make real demands.

- The *reorganisation of the form and the style of educational and pastoral activities*. The worlds of culture and youth have changed substantially and demand from us, if we are to continue to be faithful to our mission, a change in our pastoral model, that is a new way of arranging and organising our way of being present among the young, the contents of what we offer, the way of thinking about and organising our educational work and our role. It is not usually a matter of doing new things, but of putting what we do within a unified framework capable of providing a systematic programme of education and not just activities leading nowhere.

Without a great passion for education and a conscious and profound personal and community renewal it will not be possible to overcome a tendency to fragmented and thoughtless activism and superficiality, in order to become instead a point of reference for the young, encouraging them to take up with confidence and determination a Christian and educational programme capable of responding adequately to all their expectations and needs.

Pastoral formation therefore is an essential requirement for every educator who wants to be faithful to his educational vocation and to respond effectively to the demands and the needs of the young today.

1. The Salesian educator-pastor (cf. *Ratio* 25-40)

As a first step in this pastoral formation process we need to re-discover a clear understanding of our vocation - mission as educators and pastors of the young in order to renew our enthusiasm and our confidence.

The Salesian Religious (SDB) is called to live in the Church *Don Bosco's apostolic plan*: "To be signs and bearers of the love of God for young people, especially those who are poor" (C. 2).

This vocation-mission determines the characteristic style of life and action lived by Don Bosco and handed on to us his disciples, as our specific vocational identity, which is at one and the same time religious, apostolic, communitarian and Salesian (cf. C. 3).

This vocational identity determines the character of the Salesian educator-pastor and gives a specific direction to his formation (cf. C. 97).

These are its fundamental aspects:

□ As the centre and the synthesis of the vocation of the Salesian educator-pastor is *pastoral charity* (cf. C. 10), that is a special communion of love with Christ, the Good Shepherd, which the Salesian finds present in the young especially the poor, and which urges him to give his life for their total salvation (*Da mihi animas coetera tolle*).

This pastoral charity becomes in him *educational charity* (appropriate for the young) and finds expression in a practical and personal love, which leads him to seek their total well-being, bringing them to a meeting with Christ the perfect man (cf. C. 31).

This charity is enlivened by a youthful dynamism that we call "*an oratorian heart*", which is expressed through the spiritual, pedagogical and pastoral experience that Don Bosco called the *Preventive System*: a love that becomes a sympathetic attitude and a willingness to be in contact with the young («Here with you I am happy, my life consists in being with you»), accompanies them with an active and friendly presence and leads them to gradually take on the responsibility for their human development and growth in the faith (cf. C. 38 and 39).

□ The Salesian educator-pastor is a *responsible member of a religious community* which is the real subject of the mission (cf. C. 44): "To live and work together is for us Salesians a fundamental requirement and a sure way of fulfilling our vocation" (C. 49). The building up of a fraternal community open to the young is the first pastoral service we offer them (cf. CG25, 7. 66).

□ The Salesian educator-pastor is also *a witness to the radical nature of the gospel*. Don Bosco wanted consecrated persons at the centre of his work, oriented to the salvation of youth and to their holiness, as a precise focal point for his charism (cf. GC24,150).

As a religious, the Salesian carries out his mission as educator and pastor in the EPC witnessing to the primacy of God, bringing to the world of education the radical witness to the Kingdom and its values, as a sign and centre of communion and participation, and as a point of reference for the charismatic identity (cf. GC24, 159).

□ The educator-pastor lives out his vocational identity in one of *its two complementary forms that of the Salesian priest or the Salesian brother* (cf. C. 45). The Salesian mission is an educational one, carried out in a multiplicity of fields of activity in the world in which young people are living, but is focused on evangelisation, that is putting the young people in a sacramental relationship with God, building up the Church, guiding the young according to their vocation. These two aspects of our mission (the secular and the ministerial-sacramental) are essential and need to complement and enrich each other.

The Salesian community, the subject of the mission, must safeguard this unity through the richness of the two kinds of vocation, the lay and the priestly.

To live according to these characteristics today requires:

- ***A strong apostolic spirituality.***

It is necessary to learn to live *spirituality as the motivation and incentive for educative-pastoral action* and *this action as the incentive and the inspiration of spirituality*; in this way overcoming both an “activism” that leads to superficiality and lack of focus and militates against a taste for and attention to a serious and deep spiritual life, and a “spiritualism” detached from life and from the tasks of education and used as a form of retreat and escape. This demands our ensuring:

- a solid personal relationship with Jesus Christ, lived out in daily life;
- an attitude and practice of pastoral discernment, which leads to a way of looking at life, people and events with the eyes of faith;
- a personal plan of life, as suggested by GC25, 14.

• ***A sound personal, human and Christian foundation.***

It is necessary to give special attention to one's own human and Christian formation, so as to be a real educator – a significant and credible witness for the young people of today. Above all there is need to pay attention:

- to the development of a *mental outlook* that is *sound and well-organised*, so that one has self confidence, is able to overcome any excessive dependence on circumstances, and at the same time to be open to and ready for dialogue and discussion with others;
- to the ability *to be always learning* from life and from the young (ongoing formation), avoiding hiding behind a pattern of life that is too phrenetic, superficial and based on routine;
- to a *continuous process of making one's own* the values, criteria, norms, etc. lived or experienced.

• ***A community experience that is well integrated***, which fosters:

- *the communication and sharing of life and activities*;
- a growth in the *sense of belonging* to the Congregation;
- collaboration and *team work*.

2. Attitudes and skills (cf. *Ratio* 188-192)

Living out the identity of a Salesian educator-pastor requires having and developing those *attitudes (values) and skills (practical abilities)*, which enable the Salesian to live the unity of his own vocation effectively and at the same time in a significant manner.

2.1 An ability to be present among the young, especially the poor (cf. GC25, 37ss.)

Being a Salesian means having at heart the young, especially those who are poor and at risk and those on the margins of the Church. Cultivating the gift of a special love for the young demands:

- *an openness to the young*: readiness to leave one's own world in order to go to theirs;
- *an ability to go out to them*, with a welcoming attitude, showing genuine interest in them, being open to the positive elements in their lives;
- *an ability to share* life with them, join in their plans and projects, be interested in them as individuals, talking with them in a friendly manner;
- an ability to offer them a *significant witness* of life and an *opportunity for education*, accompanying them closely and with respect.

Through pastoral formation the Salesian should:

- ***Ensure that he has a good knowledge of modern society and the world of youth, in a special way, the world of the poor:***

- developing the *capacity to observe and interpret* situations and behaviour; to do this it is important to find time in one's ordinary life for reading, reflection with others, comparing one's own experience with that of others;
- *from the standpoint of faith*, to discern God's ways and the action of the Spirit; to do this it is necessary in the communities to encourage the practice of pastoral discernment i.e. the ability to read situations and daily problems in the light of the Word of God;
- and with *Salesian pastoral sensitivity*.

In this way the educator will be helped to overcome some dangers that are quite frequently found today, such as hiding behind formal structures and relationships, concentrating on one's role or on the organisation and management of activities,

finding little time for or even being afraid of meeting and spending time with the youngsters, or else wanting to be like them, forgetting one's own role as an educator, wanting to be accepted at all costs, being with the young as an escape from the community, etc., with little ability to make a significant educational contribution.

- Directing personal and community activities less at maintaining and creating structures for the benefit of the young, and more at ***promoting "Salesian presences"***, that is networks of relationships, as well as projects and procedures at the service of the mission of education and evangelisation, of activities of pastoral charity carried out with young people, with lay people and the Salesian Family (cf. *CG25*, 42). This is the significant change in organisation and mentality: it is not the works, their continuity or their renewal on which we concentrate our efforts, but the creation and the development of the lively and dynamic Salesian presences which attract and co-involve many people around the Salesian educational-pastoral project at the service of the young.

- Giving ***special priority and determined attention to young people in difficulties and the poorest ones:***

- ensuring a relationship that is *educative and significant* between the educator and the young people, as the principal means of prevention and recovery; a relationship that begins from an unconditional acceptance that allows for a sharing with the young person in the particular experience of suffering he has had in his life, and at the same time accompanying him in his discovery of a new kind of relationship with daily life through living as part of a group, growing in personal responsibility and working together...;
- fostering a *culture of prevention*, which fosters the building up in the educators of a preventive mentality and leads them not only to assist and protect but above all to enable the young people to recognise and to take into their own lives, with a spirit of hope, the positive elements of their

- own lives and to open themselves with confidence and serenity to a loving sharing in relationships, to organise their own lives with responsibility and openness to others;
- developing a *specific formation process*; especially in this area, good will and theoretical knowledge acquired merely by osmosis from the world of education are not enough. What is needed is the constant effort of sharing the life of the young, reflection and discussions with other educators to find new criteria, to share vocational plans and motivation, linking together programmes and the institutions.

2.2 The ability to live in its totality the Salesian educative-pastoral project.

The Salesian is an educator who leads to Jesus Christ, through an all-round approach which points the way to a particular form of Christian life - Salesian Youth Spirituality. Therefore educational and evangelising activity are not two successive stages, or two parallel procedures, but two processes that are integrated and influence each other.

Living and implementing this synthesis (*educating by evangelising and evangelising by educating*) requires a formation which in a special way promotes:

- ***The synthesis faith - culture in one's own life:***
 - developing some human attitudes fundamental for a life of genuine faith, (for example, being able to nourish an interior life, a capacity for selfless relationships, responsible freedom, a confident and positive view of life, etc.)
 - fostering a demanding cultural life through reading, study, discussion with others..., all sustained by the responsible living out of one's own vocation.
- ***An educational process open to evangelisation,*** which includes:
 - the *centrality of individuals rather than* projects and structures;

- the organisation of an educational *process* with progressive objectives and stages, rather than the multiplication of activities;
 - a *formation to values* (an interior life, the ability to make responsible decisions, solidarity, involvement, the religious dimension...) rather than to conduct and habits;
 - a *methodology* that encourages participation, group work, focus on the individual.
- ***Evangelisation with an educational slant:***
 - with special attention being paid to the situations and expectations of *individuals*;
 - as a *gradual but demanding process* which from the first stages of human development leads on to the highest levels of ordinary Christian life, that is to holiness;
 - with special regard to some of the *elements of a pedagogy of the faith*, such as making one's own gospel values rather than practices and ways of behaving, a variety of approaches according to those which are available, an active participatory method...
 - ***A reflection on the culture that is being handed on*** through the daily educative-pastoral activity of the Salesian and educative community; without this systematic reflection and without the explicit desire to promote an alternative culture that is really inspired by the Gospel, it is very easy to allow ourselves to be carried along by the prevailing culture around us, and even more to limit ourselves to proposing alongside this just a few religious elements that will certainly not transform the way of thinking and the criteria for making judgements and behaviour of those we are educating.

Nowadays this synthesis is difficult because we are living in a secularised world and culture which puts religion to one side, confining it to the private sector. For this reason it is necessary to cultivate *certain attitudes that help*, such as, for example:

- reflection on ways to respond to “activism”;

- openness to personal relationships, overcoming any tendency to hide behind formal structures;
- continuous shared evaluation, to overcome improvisation and mediocrity;
- discernment and the constant search for new opportunities, overcoming any tendency to routine;
- the ability to successfully face conflict and stress, avoiding individualism and radical responses.

2.3 Sense of community

Salesian pastoral work is communitarian (cf. C. 49). On this account the Salesian needs to bring to maturity the idea of “working together” according to the different tasks and roles, aware of being part of an animating nucleus of the Educative-Pastoral Community, of the Salesian Family and of the Salesian Movement.

«The first educative service that the young need from us is the witness of a fraternal life that becomes a response to their profound need for communication, a proposal for a truly human life, a prophecy of the Kingdom, an invitation to welcome the gift of God » (GC25, 7).

This maturing of the communitarian sense of Salesian pastoral activity implies:

- ***Making one's own the value of community life in the Salesian mission***, overcoming the danger of making work with the young an obstacle or an escape from the community, or on the other hand making of community life a safe haven or an excuse to avoid undertaking a leading role among the young especially the poor;
- ***Progressing from an individual approach to a communitarian and group approach***, sharing the educative-pastoral project drawn up and implemented together, respecting the different tasks and roles, accepting the assessment carried out in the group and by the group, feeling oneself jointly responsible

for the whole project even though perhaps only be working in one sector;

- ***Learning to work with lay people***, sharing formation with them, respecting their place and their roles within the EPC, accompanying and collaborating with them;
- ***Learning how to be the animating nucleus of the EPC***, directing the efforts of the Salesian community not so much to the management and organisation of the work as to the accompaniment and formation of the educators and of the young, to animating the process of education and evangelisation, to involvement in a large movement of people around a Salesian educative and pastoral project (cf. GC24, 159; GC25, 78-81).

2.4 An ability to animate

Animating is not just managing and organising activities, institutions or projects, nor even promoting a family atmosphere that is dynamic, joyful and participatory. Animating is especially:

- *motivating*, that is guiding the educative and pastoral activity according to the values and the central criteria of Salesian spirituality and pedagogy;
- *creating unity and sharing* in the setting of the SEPPS, drawn up and implemented by all the members of the EPC, fostering convergence and collaboration among the different educators and coordination among the different sectors and activities;
- *developing the sense of identity and belonging* in a joint and shared work and mission, by means of a participation where greater attention is always being given to the implementation and management of the mission, to the building up of good human relationships and to procedures of information and communication...

Animating, therefore, implies a new way of being present and of acting in the educative role which needs to be learned and constantly updated. In ongoing formation this implies:

- ***ensuring the priority of being over doing***, that is the testimony of a life rather than efficiency and immediate results, the priority of vocational identification before that which is institutional, real influence rather than just juridical authority;
- ***putting the project at the centre*** and not the individual activities, the gradual process rather than an ever growing number of activities...;
- ***adopting a global vision*** of the educative-pastoral endeavour, overcoming a partial departmentalised view;
- moving from an individual to a ***communitarian or group led process***
- encouraging ***the direct involvement of young people***: giving them the opportunity, encouraging them to take part, accompanying and helping them...

2.5 Planning Mentality

Salesian youth ministry is a structured ministry: the different activities and procedures are directed towards the same end: the all-round development of the young; in the EPC the contributions of all are integrated in a complementary way in order to animate one and the same educational process.

This requires having a planning mentality (cf. GC25, 73), i.e.:

- a *way of thinking about* pastoral activity as a whole and not only as the sum of a multiplicity of activities one just following on the others;
- a *way of organising it*, as a process, i.e. a series of organised and linked activities, that lead in a gradual and progressive way to the achievement of the objectives set;
- a *way of acting* which encourages the linking together and the coordination of all the people and all the other factors so as to produce real change in people, in institutions and in situations.

Adopting this planning mentality requires that in the formation process there is the development of the ***ability to plan*** pastoral activity as a process in progressive stages:

- learning how to link together the different activities around the objectives of the project, in such a way that they mutually enrich and complement each other;
- adopting the dynamic of a continuous and shared process of assessment, with objectives and concrete criteria;
- fostering communication, coordination and team work.

3. Some elements to be fostered in Salesian pastoral formation

«The complexity of the current situation nowadays, the challenges of young people, the requirements of the new evangelisation, the task of inculturation require a formation that is capable of preparing the Salesian to live his vocation in a dynamic and sound way, to carry out the mission in a professional and competent manner and to personally assimilate the charismatic identity.» (Address of the RM at the closing of the *GC25*). This requires an attitude of ongoing formation in individuals and in communities to sustain a constant effort of renewal in vocational motivation, to learn from one's own experience and also from that of the community in order to become capable of responding to the cultural context and to a youth situation in constant flux.

In this process there are some methodological aspects which nowadays assume special importance and with which one needs to make a special effort at renewal.

• ***Making the daily life of the community a formative experience*** (cf. *GC25*, 58)

Community life should be organised in such a way that it becomes itself a formation experience. Planning and assessment meetings, shared study and reflection on the situation and the challenges presented by the educational and pastoral activity of each day, discussion with lay people and the efforts made to

develop the Educative and Pastoral Community ought to become a means of formation and development.

So that this may happen it is essential that within the community there be established a rhythm of life and work that provides:

- *times for reflection and communication both personal and communitarian*. Lack of reflection at all levels but especially by people who should be animating and guiding others, is one of the main obstacles to a renewal of pastoral practice;
- *times for reading and study* about the world of youth, about education and pedagogy, about pastoral work and about Salesianity. Without this study we very easily end up repeating formulae without clear content, and routine procedures which don't succeed in renewing educative-pastoral activity;
- *a concrete formation plan*, drawn up in community and implemented and assessed together, so as to avoid improvisation or routine.

• ***Promoting a process of making one's own values and attitudes***

Education and evangelisation are carried out more by the way one lives than by what one says or recommends. So it is important to ensure that educators have made their own the values they want to teach the young. Often educational projects present a series of values as objectives to be achieved, but there is the danger that there is little evidence of these values in everyday life, because they have not really been adopted and made their own by the teachers themselves.

This kind of process in which values taught have been assimilated personally requires:

- *being aware of the motives* behind actual pastoral practice, learning how to clarify and deepen them continuously according to vocational and charismatic criteria;
- *becoming accustomed to evaluate the attitudes* by which one ordinarily lives, so that they correspond to the values one wishes to teach.

• ***Ensure pastoral accompaniment***

In life one learns the important things with others; on this account in our educative-pastoral work it is essential to become accustomed to being accompanied and to accompany. Just as a doctor, a psychologist or a psychiatrist or other professionals need to constantly discuss things with others in order to maintain and improve the quality of their professional work so too the educator and the pastoral worker needs to learn to be monitored and accompanied by others, overcoming the temptation to self-sufficiency.

This pastoral accompaniment occurs at different levels which complement each other and include:

- the accompaniment of *one's own work team*, in which there is ongoing discussion about what is being done;
- occasions of *planning and assessment*, which demand facing up to the situation, to the values and criteria of Salesian educative and pastoral activity, with the declared objectives, etc.
- *community* accompaniment, which helps to link the educative-pastoral with the other vocational aspects and dimensions of one's own life (spirituality, the community, religious life, etc.);
- *personal* accompaniment which encourages the personal assimilation of values, a constant growth in educative and pastoral quality.

Perhaps the lack of accompaniment is one of the reasons for the failure of so many educational and pastoral efforts to bear fruit. Every educator needs to be ready to be trained in and to be familiar with these different kinds of accompaniment, convinced that considering things with others is the best way to improve effectiveness and quality.

• ***Promoting educative and pastoral experiences that are diversified and gradual***

More is learned from life than from courses and conferences. So in pastoral formation it is important to promote experiences

that are of significance, in which the confreres can live the different aspects of the Salesian pastoral model: experiences of an educative community, of a style of animation, of planning and of assessment, of new ways and means of meeting and of being among the young, etc. Through these experiences, especially when they are planned and then reflected on in the community, they will understand pastoral methods from personal experience and no longer be frightened off by new things and the renewal they demand.

«Nowadays Salesian religious life needs to be more Salesian, more religious and more life. It needs people full of passion, of spirituality, of identity and with a planning mentality, i.e. men whose most powerful motivation is love, who allow themselves to be led by the Holy Spirit, who take Don Bosco as their model and their norm of life, keeping him alive in the great variety of contexts in which they are living and carrying out the Salesian mission, and who know how to operate in a network at all levels, with their own Province, with other Provinces in the Region, with lay people, with the Salesian Family and with the young, and with other educational and pastoral agencies in the area where they are in order to create synergy. If Salesians know “why” they will be able to cope with all these “how”s”» (*Rector Major in his concluding words at the Team Visit to the West Europe Region*).

Pastoral formation is an attempt to achieve this ideal. One can therefore understand its importance and centrality in the process of the renewal of our educational and pastoral mission.

4. ACTIVITIES OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL

4.1 Chronicle of the Rector Major

– *December 2005*

The Rector Major began the month of December 2005 spending a couple of days at Monteortone (INE), from where on Saturday 3, after dinner, he went to Ferrara (ILE) for the celebrations on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the Parish of St Benedict being entrusted to the Salesians. He greeted the youngsters and the staff of the Oratory and took part in the signing of an agreement for the building of a hospital in Sri Lanka, financed by one of the Ferrara Banks, and to be managed by VIS. The following day he presided at Mass.

Having returned to Rome, on Monday 5 in the evening he received the Postulator General Fr. Enrico dal Covolo, who introduced to him Fr Reinaldo Barbosa de Oliveira, Vice-Postulator for the Cause of Beatification and Canonisation of Fr Rodolfo Komorek. Later he saw Fr Antonio Domenech and Mgr. Luc Van Looy.

On Tuesday 6 in the morning after having given a talk to the new Rectors in the Italy - MOR, Region, he began the *Winter Plenary Session* of the General Council.

In the afternoon of the 7 he went to the UPS. After calling in briefly at the Generalate of the FMA where he gave Mother Antonia Colombo and the General Council his greetings for the feast of the Immaculate Conception, and a visit to Fr Antonio Domenech, he met the Rector Magnus and took part in the meeting of the Academic Senate of the University.

In the evening of the same day he left for Florence, accompanied by Fr Filiberto Rodríguez. He visited the community of the Institute and of the Parish, and the following day went to Scandicci for the celebration of the Feast of the Immaculate Conception on the 25th anniversary of our presence there, for which the local authorities wished to publicly express their thanks to Don Bosco and to the Salesians.

During the morning of Saturday 10, after meeting Sr Bianca Torazza, former Principal of the Auxilium, and Sr Ausilia Chang, the present Principal, he had a meeting with the members of the Salesian Historical Institute. In the evening he went to the Vatican for a meeting with the Salesian Community.

On Sunday 11, at midday he presided at the closing Mass of a meeting of FMA and lay people on the Preventive System at the "Salesianum". In the evening he formally welcomed the Provincials who had come for the *course for new Provincials*.

The following day he had a first meeting with the new Provincials and then went to the UPS for the annual meeting with the Community of the Vice Province.

In the meantime, the regular meetings of the General Council were being held and personal meetings with the Provincials and other confreres. On Thursday 15, in the evening, with the Councillors and the Provincials he attended a pre-Christmas celebration in the Saint Tarcisius Community.

In the afternoon of Friday 16, with Fr Francesco Cereda, he took part in a meeting of the Theological Commission of the Union of Superiors General (USG), at the Union's headquarters.

On Saturday 17 in the morning he received the Italian National President of the Past Pupils' Association, then the Rector of the UPS and the Dean of the Faculty of Christian and Classical Literature; in the afternoon he met the World Advisory Body of the Association of Don Bosco Past Pupils.

On Monday 19 he led and preached a day of recollection for the new Provincials.

The following day, 20 December, the Rector Major celebrated his birthday in the community and during the day received greetings from many people.

On Wednesday 21 the course for new Provincials came to an end with a final meeting with them. Then he received the Superior of the Salesian Oblates and said good bye to Fr Valentín de Pablo, who had to leave for Spain for his father's funeral.

On Thursday 22 the Rector Major and the Councillors went to Genzano for a half-day of recollection, which ended with Mass and was followed by dinner with the community of the novitiate.

On Friday morning 23, before the session of the Council he went to the Vatican for a meeting at the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life.

On Saturday 24 he received many people who came to bring him Christmas greetings. At Midnight he presided at Christmas Mass with the Community. On 25 he celebrated Christmas Morning Mass at the FMA Generalate.

Immediately after Christmas on 27 the meetings of the General Council resumed until 30. On

Wednesday 28, in the evening he presided at the Opening Mass for the the General Assembly of the Volunteers with Don Bosco (CDB).

On 31 December in the afternoon, after a short visit to the confreres in the infirmary at the UPS, he went to the Generalate of the Daughters of Mary help of Christians for the presentation of the *2006 Strenna*. Immediately afterwards he returned to the Pisana to present the *Strenna* to the community of the Generalate of the Salesians.

– *January 2006*

The Rector Major began the new year 2006 celebrating Mass at the Auxilium. Then in the afternoon of 1st January he left for Les Combes, in the Val d'Aosta, for a few days rest. On the Epiphany he visited the Salesian community at Châtillon. After an inspection of the work in progress in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians in Turin, he returned home.

On Sunday 8 he gave a talk to a group of FMA holding an evaluation meeting in the "Salesianum". For dinner he invited Mother Antonia Colombo, a Councillor and a Provincial. He had another meeting with the FMA at the "Salesianum" on the evening of Tuesday

10, joining them for supper and then presenting the 2006 *Strenna*.

On Thursday 12, in the afternoon he went to visit Fr Raffaele Farina, in the Pius XI Clinic where he was recovering from an operation. The following day, Friday 13 January, he went to the Vatican in the first instance for a meeting of the "Council of 16", made up of the Executive Committees of the USG and the UISG, with the Congregation for Institutes Consecrated Life. Immediately afterwards he was received in private audience by the Holy Father Benedict XVI.

On Monday 16, in the morning, the Rector Major took part in a meeting of the Executive Committee of USG. Following this from Tuesday until Friday he was busy in meetings of the General Council as well as many visits (from confreres, Provincials, Bishops, various guests) in the time available.

On the evening of Friday 20 he gave the "Good Night" to those attending the Salesian Spirituality Days which concluded the following day – Saturday 21 – with his celebrating Mass and giving a word of farewell at the end of the morning. The same day he gave a television interview for "Canção Nova".

On Tuesday 24, the feast of Saint Francis of Sales, Fr Chávez took

part in a meeting of CISM, which was held at Sassone di Ciampino, giving a talk on the topic: *"Coming to the faith- Faith journeys for today's young people."* Between Wednesday 25 and Friday 27 he chaired the final meetings of the winter plenary session of the Council. On Thursday 26, as is his custom before the end of the plenary session he gave a "Good Night" to the community of the Generalate, informing them of the work undertaken during the two months of the Council meetings.

On Sunday 29, with his secretary and some of the Councillors he went to Civitavecchia for dinner with the Salesian community. He also called on the FMA community.

On Tuesday 31 Fr Chávez celebrated the feast of Don Bosco at the UPS, where he presided at Mass with the confreres of the Vice Province and at 10.00 greeted those attending a Round Table Discussion organised on the occasion of the official inauguration of the Library.

Immediately afterwards he returned home in order to go to the airport to travel to Sri Lanka.

– February 2006

Arriving in **Sri Lanka**, at Colombo, on 1st February, the Rector Major was welcomed by the Regional

Councillor Fr Joaquim D'Souza, by the Superior of the Vice Province Fr Anthony Humer Pinto, and by other confreres members of the Provincial Council and of the Vice Province. In the evening he had a meeting with the Provincial Council, after which he blessed the Library and attended a concert organised in his honour. During this event, as part of the reconstruction project the Salesians in Sri Lanka are running, he presented some boats and nets to fishermen who had lost everything in the tragedy of the tsunami in December 2004.

The following day in the morning the Rector Major met all the confreres of the Vice Province and after lunch left with them for "Don Bosco Pura" in Negombo, where he blessed the *"Tsunami housing"*, a housing project of 204 apartments, also for the victims of the tsunami. This is a fine and significant example of the solidarity shown by our confreres which was greatly appreciated by the civil and religious authorities present for the occasion, and naturally by the families who have benefitted from it. Afterwards at the "Don Bosco Tech", also in Negombo, he unveiled a statue of Fr. Remery, the first Salesian to arrive in Sri Lanka. Then he presided at Mass cele-

brating the Golden Jubilee of the presence of the Salesians in the country during which a group of Salesian Cooperators made their promise. He also spoke during the concert prepared for the occasion. The day ended with supper in the Provincial House attended by the confreres and the Bishops of Sri Lanka.

On Friday 3 February early in the morning, the Rector Major, with his secretary, Fr Juan José Bartolomé and the Regional left for **India**, where he visited four Provinces, beginning with that of *Chennai (Madras)*. Welcomed by the Provincial Fr Stanislaus Swamikannu, his Council, confreres and members of the Salesian Family, he went to the Provincial House, where he had a meeting with the confreres. Then he went to the "Salesian Institute of Graphic Arts" (SIGA) and had lunch with the confreres. In the afternoon he went to Broadway, where he blessed a new hall and had a meeting with the Salesian Family. Then together they went to "St. Bede's", where there was a concert with over 8,000 youngsters. The Rector Major ended the day with supper and a visit to the tomb of St Thomas the Apostle and a meeting with the Provincial Council.

The following day after Mass with the Confreres, members of the Salesian Family and representatives of the staff of SIGA, Fr Chávez left for *Tiruchy*. He was welcomed by the Provincial, Fr Amalraj Susai, his Councillors, members of the Salesian Family and some youngsters. In the afternoon he had a meeting with the Provincial Council and then left for the house in Amsam, where he blessed the Sanctuary of Mary Help of Christians. Afterwards in Tiruchy-Manikandam he met the perpetually professed Salesian confreres.

On Sunday 5 February, early in the morning he left for *Thanjavur*, for the celebration of the *closing of the Centenary of the presence of the Salesians in India*, a very busy day during which the Rector Major blessed the "Centenary Hall", met the Salesian Family and the young Salesian confreres, gave an interview to the media, visited "St Xavier I.T.I", which was the first Salesian foundation, blessed the renovated church in Madhakottai, and presided at a Solemn Mass at which all the Provincials and many confreres from the Provinces in the South Asia Region were present together with some Salesian bishops and 10,000 youngsters. One of the most important moments in the

celebration was certainly the commissioning of 24 missionaries. After the Mass there was a splendid concert during which Fr Chávez gave a message.

Having returned to Tiruchy at midnight, at four in the morning the Rector Major left for the airport in order to travel to *Bangalore*, where he arrived in the afternoon. Welcomed by the Provincial Fr Jose Kuttianimattathil, the Councillors, confreres and members of the Salesian Family, he blessed the house of the Salesians in the Don Bosco parish at Lingarajapuram, celebrated Mass with the confreres at the Provincial House, gave a conference followed by an open discussion, then had supper and a family get together. The following day, Tuesday 7, he left for Summanahalli, where he blessed the "Bosco Life Skill Training Centre" for young people at risk, and then went on to Avalahalli, the Provincial House of the FMA, and greeted the Sisters. Then he went to "Kristu Jyoti College", where he met the community of the theologate and after lunch the novices and young confreres. He had a meeting with the Salesian Family and presided at a solemn Mass, also here attended by many young people. The day ended with a concert.

On 8 February he left for *Hyderabad*, where he was welcomed by the Provincial Fr Noel Maddichetty, the Councillors, members of the Salesian Family and youngsters. Having arrived at the Provincial House, after lunch the Rector Major had a meeting with the Salesian Family, opened an Exhibition about Don Bosco and the Salesian mission, which was followed by Mass in the Sanctuary of Don Bosco and then a concert.

The following day he met the novices and the confreres in initial formation and later the Salesians in perpetual vows, presided at Mass and after lunch had a meeting with the Provincial Council. He then left for Ramanthapur, where he greeted those attending a National Meeting of YAR (Youth at Risk), after which he blessed the church in Bodabanda and concluded his visit to this Indian province with supper with the confreres on the lake in Hussain Nagar.

On 10th, at 04.00, Fr Chávez left Hyderabad for Hong Kong where he arrived at 22.00. He was welcomed by the Provincial, Fr Savio Hon Tai-Fai, the Councillors, confreres, members of the Salesian Family and youngsters.

The visit to the **Chinese Province** lasted a week, during which

the Rector Major held a meeting with the Provincial Council, met the confreres from Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan, and all the Provincials and Salesian Bishops from the East Asia-Oceania Region.

On 12 and 13 February he was in *Macao*. Here he visited the "Bishop Versiglia" School and the "Yao Hon Center". In the "Yuet Wah" Primary School he spoke to the members of the Salesian Family. In the afternoon in the "Yuet Wah Millenium Hall", he celebrated the Centenary Mass marking the arrival of the first Salesians, and in the evening had supper with the Salesian Family in the Macau Tower, where 1200 people had gathered. The following day he celebrated Mass in the Salesian Institute for the students and held a meeting with the Salesian Bishops and the Provincials of the Region. In the afternoon he went to visit the Bishop of Macao and took part in a meeting of young people in "Yuet Wah Millenium Hall".

On 14 and 15 the celebrations moved to *Hong Kong*. On the first day the Rector Major met the young confreres and the missionaries; he met Fr Bernard Tohill, former Councillor for the Missions; blessed the Centenary Museum; spoke to the students and staff of the "Tang King Po" School

in Kowloon. He attended two performances of the "Grand Musical Drama" in the Exhibition and Convention Centre, with 600 students from the schools of the Salesians, the FMA and the Sisters Announcers of the Lord on the stage, and an audience 5,000 including students, members of the Salesian Family and Friends of Don Bosco, at each of the performances. On the second day the Rector Major met the group "China Services" and afterwards visited "Youth Outreach", a work for young people at risk and in difficulties. In the afternoon there was the Mass to celebrate the Centenary at which Bishop Joseph Zen presided in the church of Saint Anthony, which was followed by a meeting with the leaders of the Salesian Youth Movement in the Hall of St Louis School and supper with the Salesian Family in City Hall, for 600 people.

The visit to the Chinese Province ended with a visit to *Taiwan*, where the Rector Major met Salesians and FMA, at the Salesian Technical School in Tainan, and spoke to the students and staff. The day ended with Holy Mass followed by supper.

On Saturday 18, in the morning, Fr Chávez returned to Hong Kong, where he gave an interview and

visited the city. In the evening he left for **South Africa**. Arriving in Johannesburg on Sunday 19 February, he was welcomed by the Provincial Fr Robert Gore, the Regional Fr Valentín de Pablo, the Provincials and a large number of Councillors from the Africa - Madagascar Region, gathered together to take part in the *Team Visit*.

This was held in the "Sizanani" Convention and Retreat Centre in Bronkhorstspuit, with two short excursions, the first to Ennerdale, to meet the novices, the Rectors and the FMA, and the second to Johannesburg, to visit the school and the "Don Bosco Centre".

At the end of the Team Visit the Rector Major stayed two further days in South Africa, during which he met confreres and the FMA, and visited the communities and works in Cape Town and Lansdowne.

Finally on Sunday 26, in the evening he left from Johannesburg for Rome, where he arrived on Monday 27 at midday.

In this way Fr Chávez concluded at home one of the busiest and most exciting months.

4.2 Chronicle of the General Councillors

On 6 December the *winter plenary session* of the General Council began and kept the Councillors busy until 27 January 2006. As well as the plenary meetings of which there were 24, there were also group or commission meetings to study various topics. During the session there was also – between 11 and 21 December – the gathering of new Provincials, who also had meetings with the Rector Major and with his Council. The Councillors also made their contribution to other meetings especially those held at the Generalate. As always, in addition to the more pressing issues or problems for the animation and guidance of the Congregation, sufficient time was given to the ordinary matters of business coming from the Provinces, such as: appointments of Provincial Councillors and the approval of the appointments of Rectors, the opening and canonical erection of houses and/or activities, matters regarding confreres and economic-administrative issues. The following is a summary of the more important items on the agenda.

1. Appointment of Provincials

During this session new Superiors were appointed for seven Provinces. Following a careful process of discernment, and taking special account of the results of the consultation held in the Province, the General Council made the necessary provision. This is the list in alphabetical order of the Provincials appointed in the course of the session: *Joseph Almeida*, for the Province of India - Guwahati; *Marcos Biaggi*, for the Province of Brazil - São Paulo; *Juan Bosco Sancho* for the Province of Spain - Valencia; *Ivan Marijanović*, for the Province of Croatia; *José Miguel Nuñez*, for the Province of Spain - Seville; *José Rodríguez Pacheco*, for the Province of Spain - León; *Alojzij Slavko Snoj*, for the Province of Slovenia.

No. 5.3 in this issue of the AGC provides some biographical details of those appointed.

2. Reports of Extraordinary Visitations

The examination of the reports of the Extraordinary Visitations to the Provinces presented by the respective Visitors is always one of

the more important items on the agenda of the General Council for the animation of the Congregation in its various local presences. It provides the opportunity to reflect together on the progress of each Province on the basis of the Visitor's observations and to offer suggestions for action regarding its government. This results in recommendations useful for the Rector Major's concluding letter and in proposals for initiatives and guidance on the part of the General Council.

During this session reports were considered from the following 7 Provinces or Vice Provinces: the Province of Brazil - São Paulo; the Province of Vietnam; the Province of the Antilles; the Province of Poland - Warsaw; the Province of India - Bangalore; the Province of Spain - Seville; the Vice Province of South Africa.

3. Topics studied and decisions made

In the course of the session, as well as matters concerning the Provinces and Regions, the Council considered some issues connected more generally with the government and animation of the Congregation, paying particular

attention to the Project of animation and government for the six year period and to the life and activity of the Council itself. Some practical decisions were taken regarding matters discussed. The main topics considered were as follows.

- **Updating on some of the topics dealt with by the *Meeting of the Intermediate Council***: analysis and study with subsequent decisions on the East Asia - Oceania Region and the Africa - Madagascar Region. The examination of the reports presented by the Regional Councillors enabled the Council to be aware of the progress made in this six year period, of the challenges that are emerging and of the development of the Salesian charism in these Regions.

As regards the **East Asia - Oceania Region**, the challenges identified could be summed up as the need for a Salesian spirituality that is truly missionary and inculturated, that helps to overcome the danger of a bourgeois mentality, of over-activity, the lack of a charismatic identity, a dichotomy between life and faith, between being and doing, between the evangelical counsels - mission - community life, and leads to a better incarnation of Don Bosco in East Asia -

Oceania. To respond to these challenges, the four guidelines indicated in the Team Visit to the Region in March 2005 were re-emphasised: the primacy of the spiritual life; a planning mentality; a commitment to formation; an increase in synergy for the mission.

With regard to the **Africa - Madagascar Region**, from an analysis of the situation and of the progress made in some areas, a juridical reorganisation of the Region was seen to be necessary with the creation of some new circumscriptions and the confirmation of the "status quo" in others, allowing more time to find a more appropriate structural solution. It was therefore proposed: to make the Delegation of *Ruanda - Burundi* a Vice Province, incorporating *Uganda*; to make the Delegation of *Mozambique* a Vice Province; by July 2006 to set up in *Sudan* a Delegation "with special status" dependent on the Rector Major although belonging juridically to AFE. As regards the houses in Morocco and Tunisia, they will continue, as at present, to depend on France and Malta. There remains the difficult situation of Ethiopia-Eritrea, especially the latter, and therefore of the AET Province, on account of the socio-political problems.

- **Erection of the Salesian Province of Spain - Seville.** Considering the situation of the Salesian foundations and works in southern Spain divided at present between the two Provinces of "St Dominic Savio" with headquarters in Córdoba and of "Mary Help of Christians" with headquarters in Seville, after having heard the opinion of the Provincials with their Councils, and taking in account the results of a consultation conducted among the confreres of the two Provinces, the General Council after deliberation and discernment, agreed to the erection of the Salesian Province of Spain - Seville, dedicated to "Mary Help of Christians," with headquarters in Seville, in the house of the "Most Holy Trinity," resulting from the unification of the two Provinces of Córdoba and Seville (cf. Decree of the Rector Major in n. 5.2 of these AGC).

- **The future of the Vice Province of Canada.** After the presentation by the Regional Councillor for the Interamerica Region of the results of a consultation undertaken to decide the future of the Vice Province of Canada, the General Council decided that the circumscription of Canada should continue as a Vice Province. It was therefore pro-

posed to begin the consultation for the appointment of a new Superior for the Vice Province of Canada.

- **Evaluation of and Guidelines for Initial Formation in the Regions.** These are the results of a visit by the General Councillor for Formation, undertaken to obtain a better knowledge of the formation communities; taking into account the Formation Section of the Provincial Directories, approved by the Rector Major and his Council; they refer to an assessment of the quantitative and qualitative consistency of the formation in the individual Regions. It is a task that the General Councillor was given by the Rector Major to prepare, over a period of three years, a map of the state of formation in the Congregation, with reference to: the situation of the houses of formation (the number of students, the strength of the formation teams); in the study centres to assess the quality of the intellectual formation; finally, to improve the aspect regarding Salesianity (organisation of the programme of formation and the plan of studies). The General Councillor took into consideration the assessment of the four Regions so far examined: South Asia, Africa and Madagascar, West Europe, Italy - Middle East.

- **Vocational fidelity.** The General Council carried out its own reflection on the subject considered by the Superiors General, in their usual six-monthly assembly (*Salesianum*, 23-25 November 2005), when they looked at the problem of those leaving consecrated life. Deliberately they tried to approach it in a positive manner, considering vocational fidelity. The basic aim was to elucidate the reasons that make it worth while to commit oneself to the consecrated life.

- **The involvement of the Salesian Congregation in Islamic countries, in particular those in the Gulf and the Middle East.** This was a study in which it was intended to draw up criteria and guidelines as a basic framework within which to respond to any requests for our presence in Muslim countries. There is no doubt that we should work in Islamic countries and be open to Muslims, employing our charism on behalf of the young. The Church, the signs of the times and above all the love of Christ, urge us in this direction. It was therefore proposed to set up a commission made up of some General Councillors and some of the confreres who are working in various Islamic countries, in

order to draw up policies regarding the sustainable development of our current works and of others in the future in the Muslim world.

- **A plan for the renewal of our pastoral service in the Catacombs of St Callistus.** Some time was devoted to a review of the pastoral service which the Salesians provide at the Catacombs of St Callistus, an important work entrusted to the Sons of Don Bosco by Pius XI, so as to make it a better experience from the point of view of education to the faith.

- **The Instruction of the Congregation for Catholic Education concerning** the criteria for the *discernment of vocations with regard to persons with homosexual tendencies in view of their admission to the Seminary and to Holy Orders*. The General Council studied the Instruction which appears to be opportune, in the first place because it directs and makes more effective the formation of priests, and in the second place because it sets out to deal with "a specific question, made more urgent by the current situation whether to admit to the seminary and to holy orders candidates who have deep-seated homosexual tendencies." (*Introduction*). All this should

make us more attentive in our processes of formation to "human formation as the foundation of all formation". A great effort needs to be made with those in charge of formation as regards information and updating on this subject, in a spirit of dialogue and with an ability to reflect on experiences gained and on the socio-cultural context in which we are living.

- **Approval of the Budget for 2006.** During this session, following its presentation by the Economist General, the General Council examined and approved according to the norms of the Regulations, the Budget for 2006 of the Direzione Generale Opere Don Bosco.

- **Distribution of "Mission Funds".** The General Council considered and approved the proposals for the n. 137, December 2005 distribution, made by the commission for the distribution of assistance from the Mission Fund. These are funds from the Mission Offices for the benefit of the many projects and activities of the Congregation.

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

- *A Day of Recollection at Genzano.* On Monday 22 December, the General Council had a day of recollection in our novitiate at Genzano, led by Fr José Luis Plascencia, Rector of the St. Thomas community at the UPS reflecting on the subject "*Christmas as the Manifestation of God - God showing his love for mankind.*"
- *The Spirituality Days of the Salesian Family* (19-22 January 2006). These were a fine experience of Salesian spirituality on the topic of the Strenna, with a very successful combination of illuminating material, good group work, friendly exchanges among those taking part and the groups of the SF, of celebration and of prayer: all aimed at developing the sense of personal charismatic identity and that of the various groups, communion and a commitment to a more effective collaboration.

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

The following is the text of the Message that the Rector Major, Fr. Pascual Chávez Villanueva, sent to the young people of the Salesian Youth Movement (SYM) on the Feast of Don Bosco 31 January 2006. The Message which refers to the Strenna for 2006, points out to the young people their vocation to love whether in marriage or in celibacy for the Kingdom, inviting them to educate their hearts, offering them some valuable advice in the process. The Message is also an encouragement for the Salesians in their task of educating young people in the light of the 2006 Strenna.

My dear young people,

As I speak to you, the many faces that I have met in different parts of the world come to my mind: young faces, full of joy, of enthusiasm, with a zest for life and an eagerness to be of service. You are the most important and most precious portion of my family, in which I constantly rediscover the joy of giving myself to God and the hope that sustains me in my service.

In this year 2006 the Salesian Family recalls the 150th anniversary

of the death of Mamma Margaret, mother of the educative family created by Don Bosco at Valdocco. I am convinced of the decisive role played by Mamma Margaret in the human and Christian formation of Don Bosco, and in the setting up of a “family style” of educative environment at Valdocco. Hence, this year I have invited the Salesian Family and you too, young people of the Salesian Youth Movement, 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”.**

All of you, dear young people, have a powerful *experience of what a family is like*. Your lives are marked and filled with well-known faces, the remembrance of which lights up your eyes at all times with gratitude and joy.

The face that presents itself with the greatest intensity and clarity is surely that of your mother. It was in her smile that, for the first time, you read the word “love”, a love fully gratuitous, protecting you with tenderness and delicacy, as one protects the precious germ of life itself. It was in her heart that

the gratuitousness of God's love mingled in a mysterious manner with that of human love.

Together with the face of your mother, you came to recognize the face of your father: a face that complements maternal love with its demands and bold projects. Later you also discovered the faces of your brothers and sisters, and all of you together experienced being accepted, acknowledged, and loved.

That atmosphere, rich in meaningful and affectionate exchanges, was for you "the cradle of life and love," an authentic school of communion and sharing.

It was in those faces, resplendent with love, that you read and listened to the good news of the Gospel; they taught you to recognize Jesus, to pronounce his name with respect, to love him, to make the sign of the cross.

What a great gift you have received!

Sadly, many youngsters today suffer from the cruel absence of father or mother. They don't have the experience of a serene and harmonious relationship with their parents, brothers and sisters. They bear in their lives deep wounds and scars difficult to heal; they are defenceless before the assaults of society. It is a tragic experience that

they carry within themselves; and it shows up in the various behavioural patterns, which are a provocation and a challenge for us and for you.

Is it not perhaps a family that they are in search of? Deep down, do they not long for brothers and sisters, a mother and a father, which accounts for those forms of expressions not easily understood by adults or by young people themselves? Is not theirs a sort of first appeal to the Church to be a family? Is it not a plea to you – as young people reaching out to other young people – to create fraternal bonds and to build up a family atmosphere?

The Word of God, which we encounter at every moment, enlightens and provides a deep foundation also to this human experience of family life and of the gift of love, which in the family we receive and breathe in.

Dear young people, we have received **a precious gift: the Love of God.** "See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are" (1 John 3,1). "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not per-

ish but may have eternal life" (John 3,16). A love that had us in mind even before we were born, a love that arranged every detail of our life's journey, a love that ever accompanies and welcomes us, even when we are not always faithful. We are completely wrapped around by God's love, which beckons us and spurs us on to bring out the best in us and to spread the same love to all the persons around us. "Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another" (1 John 4, 11).

Love is your vocation, dear young people. It is the deepest dimension of your person. It is the energy that makes life come alive. It is that which gives meaning to your existence, opening it to understanding and self-giving. You are, quite legitimately, anxious to live this gift of love. Often, however, due to a number of internal and external factors, you run the risk of using it in a consumerist way, or of stopping at aspects that are only partially important. For this, it is necessary to undertake an educative journey, which will help you to develop all your gifts and the joy of love, which you have received from God.

During the thirty years that he lived in his family at Nazareth, Je-

sus himself trod this long journey of maturing as a human being. To be born as a human being God needed a mother; to grow up and become a man, to learn to love as a human person, God needed a family. Mary is not only She who gave birth to Jesus; as a true mother, along with Joseph, she transformed the house of Nazareth into a home where the Son of God matured in his "humanity" (cfr. Lk. 2,51-52).

You too ought to make use of these years of your youth as a precious time to learn to love after the example of the love of God, manifested in Jesus. In this way you will be able to respond to the vocation to which you have been called: marriage or celibacy in the religious and priestly life.

To arrive at a definitive choice of marriage or celibacy for the Kingdom of God, you should already from now on **educate your hearts**. Love is always and only a gift; and one learns to give by giving without expecting response or thanks. Look around: discover urgent needs, even if they are not always striking; listen to the cry, often silent, of the needy, starting from your own family situation. Foster dialogue, heartfelt listening, daily expressions of service and help, of generous forgiving; will-

ingly set aside time to be "together". These are small gestures, which create an atmosphere of cordiality and familiarity, which open hearts and release a current of love and of solidarity.

If you want to make sure how to learn to love, open your hearts and your life to serve your neighbour with gestures, actions, attitudes in specific tasks. In other words, learn to love by placing yourselves at the service of the poorest. Service implies commitment and not just sporadic actions, constructive relationships and not only gratifying episodes. It, therefore, calls for a generous mentality, a capacity to go out of oneself to transform unjust and inhuman situations and structures.

If you are generous as young people today, tomorrow you will form families inspired by Christian values, open to the needs of your neighbour; or, you will learn to spend your whole life for others, consecrating yourselves to God. You will know how to insert yourselves into the healthy and wholesome life-flow of your community, in unceasing involvement on behalf of the poorest. Your participation ought to be creative, offering all the inner educative resources you have received from the great Salesian family.

The vocation to love, be it in Christian marriage or in a life of celibacy for the Kingdom, is a gift of God, for which we must implore, and to which we ought to dispose ourselves generously. Dear young people, we cannot build a serious and permanent commitment of love without placing at its centre a ***strong Christian spirituality***. For this, it is essential to give attention to prayer both personal and together; and along with it, to pay attention to the reception of the sacraments, especially the Eucharist, in which we unite ourselves to the supreme act of love of Jesus, his death and resurrection; and to the sacrament of reconciliation, which offers us God's forgiveness and teaches us to forgive one another, which is an essential element of true love.

It will be a great blessing for you to get to know a ***spiritual guide***, who will help you to gauge the proper value of feelings. At times, these feelings are so much more at hand as they are superficial. You run the risk of feeling yourselves very close to one another in gestures, while being, in fact, quite far, perhaps even strangers, on the level of deep communication. A good spiritual guide will help you recognise the difference between ges-

tures and relationships, to nourish the profound yearnings for freedom, to accompany with prayer the search for a fuller sense of life, to love reserve and modesty.

As a matter of fact, we know that love is a delicate and fragile thing. It is so fragile that it remains as love only when it is given; and the giving of oneself needs a formation to a personal interior life. This correct education later broadens out and finds concrete expression in commitment, in service, in different vocations.

It is a long process, which demands of us educators to follow you up personally, one by one; to give importance to groups of Christian experience of a high standard; to offer you spiritual guidance, because the reason behind all this is to help you become persons, who, in a reciprocal relationship with Christ, consider their life as a gift for others.

For this, as educators of the young, we want to offer you, while respecting your personal freedom, **concrete steps** of formation, of follow-up and of discernment of the vocation to Christian marriage or to celibacy in religious life or priesthood.

Groups, movements and associations of couples and families will be for you opportunities for reflecting

and taking stock of your human resources within the process of maturing. These will help you to live and to deepen your vocation to marriage or celibacy and to assume with a sense of commitment the educative responsibilities.

Valdocco continues to be for all of us an essential point of reference and a school of life. **At the school of Mamma Margaret**, that wise woman, full of the wisdom which comes from above, Johnny learned to love life as a precious and unique gift. The heart of his mother, like the heart of God from whom "every fatherhood in heaven and on earth assumes its name", was for him an inexhaustible source of fatherhood. For him to be a priest meant to be the father of a large family.

Don Bosco was a father who had a strong sense of dignity and of justice, who, at the same time, was a priest fully immersed in the concrete situation of the youngsters of his time. The family atmosphere that he created at Valdocco together with Mamma Margaret, was not a hothouse or a cosy nest where the timid and those out in the cold felt at ease. Don Bosco led his sons to full human and Christian maturity in keeping with the spirit of Gospel freedom. The strong personalities that grew up at Valdocco are a proof of the pudding.

We can safely assert that Don Bosco received love from the life and heart of his mother and transmitted the same with passionate zest to his youngsters. He accepted this vocation as an immense grace, as a permanent invitation to preserve before God the heart of a son.

Here, dear young people, is the supreme message of Don Bosco: there is nothing greater in this world than to respond with one's whole life to the love of God, through one's vocation to marriage or to a life of celibacy. This should not surprise you, because it is the mystery of God himself. If things are so, then there is nothing more catastrophic than the refusal or the degradation of love and of fatherhood, and nothing more ennobling than to learn to be a father or a mother, in the image of God the Father, and to learn to be a son, in the image of God the Son.

Each of you is called to unite in some way in his vocation these two attitudes: the heart of a son, simple before God the Father, and the heart of a father or mother, tender towards the children whom God sends and entrusts to you. In the measure in which you fulfill one and the other, you will progress in holiness and discover true joy.

I conclude with the invitation of Pope Benedict XVI to young people at the last World Youth Day: *"I know that you as young people have great aspirations, that you want to pledge yourselves to build a better world. Let others see this, let the world see it, since this is exactly the witness that the world expects from the disciples of Jesus Christ; in this way, and through your love above all, the world will be able to discover the star that we follow as believers"* (Cologne 2005, *Homily for the concluding Mass*).

Fr Pascual CHÁVEZ VILLANUEVA
Rome, 31 January 2006

5.2 Decree for the canonical erection of the "Mary Help of Christians" Province of Spain-Seville

Prot. n° 026/2006

DECREE FOR THE CANONICAL ERECTION OF THE "MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS" SALESIAN PROVINCE OF SPAIN-SEVILLE

The undersigned,
Fr. Pascual CHÁVEZ VILANUEVA,
*Rector Major of the Salesian Society
of Saint John Bosco,*

- considering the situation of the Salesian foundations and works in the South of Spain, divided at present between the two Provinces of "Saint Dominic Savio" with headquarters in Córdoba and "Mary Help of Christians" with headquarters in Seville;
- after having heard the opinion of the two Provincials and their respective Councils and taking into account the results of the consultation among the confreres of the two Provinces;
- with reference to article 156 of the Constitutions;
- having obtained the consent of the General Council in the meeting of **16 December 2005**, in accordance with articles 132 §1,1 and 156 of the Constitutions;

CANONICALLY ERECTS

by this present Decree, the **SALESIAN PROVINCE of Spain - Seville, with the title "MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS," with headquarters in SEVILLE, in the house of "The Most Holy Trinity," as a result of the unification of the two Provinces of Córdoba and Seville**, including therefore all the Communities that at present form part of the aforementioned Provinces with the confreres assigned to them.

The Houses of the new "Mary Help of Christians" Province *on Spanish soil which comprise the three Regions of Southern Spain: Andalucía, Canarias and Extremadura*, are the following:

ALCALÁ DE GUADAÍRA, "Nostra Signora del Aquila" - ALGECIRAS, "Maria Ausiliatrice" - ANTEQUERA, "Sacro Cuore di Gesù" - BADAJOZ, "San Giovanni Bosco" - CÁDIZ, "Sant'Ignazio" - CAMPANO, "San Giovanni Bosco" - CARMONA, "SS. Sacramento" - CÓRDOBA "San Giovanni Bosco" - CÓRDOBA *Colegio*, "San Francesco di Sales" - CÓRDOBA "San Raffaele" - GRANADA *Cartuja*, "Beata Vergine delle Nevi" - GRANADA *Colegio*, "San Giovanni Bosco" - HUELVA, "Cristo Sacerdote" - JAÉN, "San Giovanni Bosco" - JEREZ DE LA FRONTERA, "Immacolata Concezione" - JEREZ DE LA FRONTERA - *P. Torres Silva*, "San Domenico Savio" - LA CUESTA, "San Giovanni Bosco" - LA LÍNEA DE LA CONCEPCIÓN, "San Giovanni Bosco" - LA OROTAVA, "San Isidoro Agri-coltoire" - LA PALMA DEL CONDADO, "San Domenico Savio" - LAS PALMAS DE GRAN CANARIAS, "Sacro Cuore di Gesù" - LINARES, "San'Agostino" - MÁLAGA, "San Bartolomeo" - MÉRIDA, "Maria Ausiliatrice" - MONTILLA, "San Francesco Solano" - MORÓN DE LA

FRONTERA, "San Giovanni Bosco" - PALMA DEL RÍO, "San Ludovico Re" - POZOBLANCO, "San Giuseppe" - PUEBLA DE LA CALZADA, "Maria Immacolata" - RONDA, "Sacro Cuore di Gesù" - ROTA, "Nostra Signora del Rosario" - SAN JOSÉ DEL VALLE, "San Raffaele" - SANLÚCAR LA MAYOR, "Sacro Cuore di Gesù" - SEVILLA *Casa Ispettorale*, "SS. Trinità" - SEVILLA *Colegio Mayor*, "San Giovanni Bosco" - SEVILLA *Comunità Teologi*, "Sacro Cuore" - SEVILLA *Jesús Obrero*, "Maria Ausiliatrice" - SEVILLA *Triana*, "San Pietro" - SEVILLA *Trinidad D. Pietro Ricaldone*, "SS. Trinità" - SEVILLA *Trinidad Scuole*, "SS. Trinità" - UBEDA, "San Domenico Savio" - UTRERA, "Vergine del Carmine"

The following decisions have been made:

1° Members of the Province are all those who at the date of the canonical erection are living and working in the Salesian houses listed above. Nevertheless such attachment is temporary for those who, by agreement between Provincials, are temporarily providing a service of collaboration in the houses of these two Provinces.

2° Also members of the Province are confreres in formation in the two former Provinces "Saint Do-

minic Savio" of Córdoba and "Mary Help of Christians" of Seville and other confreres incardinated in the same Provinces who at the time of the canonical erection are outside the Province for reasons of study or health or other just cause.

As regards everything else the norms established by the Constitutions and the General Regulations prevail.

The present Decree will come into force on **6 May 2006**.

Rome, 31 January 2006.

Fr. Pascual CHÁVEZ VILLANUEVA
Rector Major

Fr. Marian STEMPEL
Secretary General

5.3 New Provincials

We provide (in alphabetical order) some biographical details of the Provincials appointed by the Rector Major and his Council in the course of the plenary session December 2005-January 2006.

1. *ALMEIDA Joseph, Provincial of the Province of INDIA-GUWAHATI.*

To lead the "Mary Help of Christians" Province with headquarters GUWAHATI, India, Fr. *Joseph*

ALMEIDA has been appointed. He succeeds Fr. Philip Barjo.

Joseph Almeida was born 7 March 1955 in Bombay, Maharashtra (India) and became a Salesian on 24 May 1976, when he made his first profession. After philosophical studies and practical training he studied theology at the theologate in Shillong. Perpetually professed 31-01-1982, he was ordained priest 19 December 1984.

After ordination his first pastoral role was in the novitiate at Shillong-Sunnyside, and then he continued his studies at the Salesian Pontifical University in Rome, where he obtained a Licence in Spiritual Theology and Missiology. Having returned to the Province he was for two years Provincial Secretary (1991-1993), then Director of Novices and Rector of the Shillong-Sunnyside novitiate between 1993 and 1999. After a year as Rector in Shillong - Salesian Training Centre, in 2000 he was appointed Vice Provincial the role he still held when he was appointed Provincial.

2. *BIAGGI Marcos, Provincial of the Province of BRAZIL-SÃO PAULO.*

Fr. *Marcos BIAGGI* is the new Provincial of the "Mary Help of Christians" Province of SÃO

PAULO, Brazil. He succeeds Fr. Luiz Pessinatti.

Born on 8 April 1956 at Santa Barbara do Oeste (São Paulo, Brazil), Marcos Biaggi made his first Salesian profession 31 January 1975. Perpetually professed 31-01-1981, he was ordained priest 10 December 1983 in his home town.

After ordination he exercised his educational and pastoral ministry for four years (1984-1988) in Piracicaba - Dom Bosco. He was then appointed Rector of the house of Cruzeiro, where he remained two years (1989-1990) before going as Rector to Pindamonhangaba (1990-1995). After three years as Rector in Lorena - S. Gioacchino, in 1998 he was appointed Provincial Economer, the office he was still exercising when he was appointed Provincial.

3. *MARIJANOVIĆ Ivan, Provincial of the Province of CROATIA.*

Fr. *Ivan MARIJANOVIĆ* is the new Provincial of the "St John Bosco" Province of CROATIA. He succeeds Fr Ambrozije Matušić.

Ivan Marijanović was born 14 February 1941 at Doljani, Mostar (Bosnia-Herzegovina) and became a Salesian on 16 August 1969, when he made his first profession. After the postnovitiate and practi-

cal training he studied theology in Zagreb. Perpetually professed 04-03-1978, he was ordained priest at Zagreb 25 June 1978.

After ordination he continued his studies in Rome at the Salesian Pontifical Atheneum (now UPS), obtaining the Licence in Education. Having returned to the Province, between 1983 and 1986 he exercised his ministry in the house of Podsused. In 1986 he moved to Zagreb - Knezija - Theologate. A Provincial Councillor since 1991, in 2000 he was appointed Vice Provincial. In recent years he also worked in Zagreb - Srebrnjak. From 2003 he was also Delegate for the Cooperators.

4. *NÚÑEZ MORENO José Miguel, Provincial of the new Province of SPAIN-SEVILLE.*

To lead the new "Mary Help of Christians" Province with headquarters in SEVILLE, Spain, the result of the unification of the two Provinces of Córdoba and Seville, Fr. *José Miguel NÚÑEZ MORENO* has been appointed.

Born 7 May 1963 at Arroyo de San Serván (Badajoz, Spain), José Miguel Núñez made his first Salesian profession 16 August 1983 in the novitiate at Sanlúcar la Mayor. After the postnovitiate and practi-

cal training he was sent to Rome to the Salesian Pontifical University, for theological studies. Perpetually professed 15-08-1989, he was ordained priest in Seville 21 June 1992.

After ordination he worked for two years in the house of Sanlúcar la Mayor (1993-1994), and then was moved to the community of Seville - Theologians as Rector for six years (1994-2000). In 2000 he became Rector of the Provincial house in Seville. Provincial Councillor from 1994, in 2003 he was appointed Vice Provincial and Delegate for Youth Ministry.

5. *RODRÍGUEZ PACHECO José, Provincial of the Province of SPAIN-LEÓN.*

Fr. *José RODRÍGUEZ PACHECO* is the new Provincial of the "St James the Great" Province with headquarters in LEÓN, Spain. He succeeds Fr. Ángel Fernández Artime.

Born 21 February 1943 at Torneiros-Allariz (Orense, Spain), José Rodríguez Pacheco became a Salesian on 16 August 1960, when he made his first profession in the novitiate in Astudillo. After postnovitiate and practical training he studied theology at Salamanca, obtaining a Licence in Theology. Per-

petually professed 17 July 1966, he was ordained priest 22 February 1970 in Salamanca.

After ordination he continued his studies at the University of Oviedo, obtaining a Licence in Chemistry. From 1975 he worked in the house of Vigo-Colegio. In 1980 he moved to the "Mary Help of Christians" parish in Vigo (the house was erected in 1979), where he worked until 1992. He was then transferred to La Coruña - San Juan Bosco, where he was Rector between 1994 and 2000. In 2000 he was appointed Vice Provincial. Recently he was also Provincial Delegate for Schools and for the Salesian Family.

6. *SANCHO GRAU Juan Bosco, Provincial of the Province of SPAIN-VALENCIA.*

Fr. *Juan Bosco SANCHO GRAU* succeeds Fr. Ángel Tomás García as Provincial of the "St Joseph" Province of VALENCIA, Spain.

Juan Bosco Sancho Grau was born 6 February 1954 at Alcoy (Alicante, Spain) and became a Salesian on 16 August 1972, the date of his first profession. After postnovitiate and practical training he made his perpetual profession 15-09-1978; he studied theology at Valencia. He was ordained priest at Alcoy 19 February 1984.

After ordination he exercised his educative-pastoral ministry successively in the houses of Albacete (1984-1985), La Almunia (1985-1989), Buriana-Colegio (1989-1991). In 1991 he went to study at the Salesian Pontifical University in Rome, obtaining a Licence in Education. Having returned to Spain he worked in the house of Valencia - San Juan Bosco between 1994 and 1998, when he was appointed Rector of the house of Buriana-Colegio. Provincial Councillor from 1998, in 2000 he was appointed Vice Provincial and later also Provincial Delegate for Formation. Now he has been entrusted with the task of being Provincial.

7. *SNOJ Alojzij Slavko, Provincial of the Province of SLOVENIA.*

To lead the "Sts. Cyril and Methodius" Province of SLOVENIA, with headquarters in Ljubljana, Fr. *Alojzij Slavko SNOJ* has been appointed to succeed Fr. Ljuzje Dobravec.

Born 19 August 1942 at Ljubljana, Slovenia, Alojzij Slavko Snoj became a Salesian 16 August 1959, the date of his first profession. After philosophical studies and practical training he was in Turin for theological studies. Perpetually professed 8 January 1966, he was

ordained priest at Ljubljana 21 March 1970.

After ordination he spent four years (1970-1974) in the house of Zelimlje. He then completed his studies in Germany, obtaining a degree in Theology and a diploma in Catechetics. He was the Rector of the community of Ljubljana-Kodeljevo until 1981. He then spent two years in Lubumbashi (D.R Congo). Having returned to Slovenia, he worked in the house of Ljubljana-Rudnik, and also taught Catechetics at the University of Ljubljana. In 1994 he was appointed Vice Provincial, holding the office until 2003. Since 2004 he has been Rector of the house of Zelimlje.

5.4 New Salesian Cardinal

At the General Audience on 22 February 2006, feast of the Chair of St Peter, the Holy Father Benedict XVI, announcing the convocation of a Concistory for 24 March, gave the names of those who would be appointed Cardinals. Among them is the Salesian Bishop of Hong Kong, Mgr. *JOSEPH ZEN ZE-KIUN*.

Born in Yang King-Pang (Shanghai), in China, 13 January 1932, sixth of ten children, Joseph Zen entered the Salesian aspirantate in

the place of his birth, where his vocation to stay with Don Bosco continued to mature. He made his Novitiate at Shauiwan, Hong Kong, at the end of which he made his first Salesian profession on 16 August 1949. After philosophical studies and practical training he was sent to the Salesian Pontifical Atheneum at the Crocetta, Turin for theological studies which he successfully completed with a Licence in Theology and ordination to the priesthood (Turin, 11 February 1961). Previously he had obtained a doctorate in Philosophy.

Having returned to Hong Kong, he taught in the Salesian House of Studies of which he was appointed Rector in 1972. In the same year he became a member of the Provincial Council. In 1978, at the end of his six year term of office as Rector he was called to lead the Chinese Hong Kong Province as Provincial. When his six year term of office ended, after a period in the Studentate he was again appointed Rector at Hong Kong - Aberdeen. In 1989 he returned to the "Salesian House of Studies". In these years, as well as working in the Studentate, with the mandate of the Superiors, he devoted himself to keeping in contact with the confreres and the Churches on mainland China. Particularly sig-

nificant was his teaching of philosophy and theology in various seminaries in the Peoples' Republic of China: Shangai, Wuhan, Xian, Shijiazhuang and Pekin.

In 1996 the Holy Father called him to assist, as Coadjutor, the Bishop of Hong Kong in the delicate period of transition of Hong Kong - from the civil point of view - to Chinese authority. He was consecrated Bishop on 9 December 1996. In September 2002 he became Bishop of Hong Kong.

Now the Holy Father has made him a member of the College of Cardinals.

5.5 New Salesian Bishops

1. VALENZUELA MELLID

*Edmundo Ponziano,
Vicar Apostolic
of Chaco Paraguayo.*

On 13 February 2006 the Vatican Press Office announced the appointment by Pope Benedict XVI, of the Salesian priest *Edmundo Ponziano VALENZUELA MELLID* as *Vicar Apostolic of Chaco Paraguayo*, assigning him the titular see of Uzali. When appointed he was working as a missionary in Angola, as parish priest and Rector of the Salesians in Luena.

Born on 19 November 1944 in Villarrica, Paraguay, Edmundo Valenzuela became a Salesian on 31 January 1962, the date of his first profession. After philosophical studies and practical training he was sent to the Salesian Pontifical Atheneum in Rome (now UPS) for theological studies. Perpetually professed on 29-01-1968, he was ordained priest in Rome 3 April 1971. Later, at the UPS in Rome between 2002 and 2005 he was to complete his studies with a Doctorate in Education.

On his return to Paraguay after ordination, he exercised his ministry and held various positions of responsibility: in charge of studies at the aspirantate in Ypacaraí (1971-1974), Rector of the postnovitiate in Asunción and Provincial Delegate for Youth Ministry (1975-1979), Rector of the Colegio "Salesianito" (1980-1984), Rector of the Colegio "Monseñor Lasagna" (1985-1991). Provincial Councillor from 1985, in 1988 he was appointed Vice Provincial. Between 1981 and 1991 he was Secretary of the Bishops' Commission for Education.

In 1992 he left as a missionary for Angola, where he was parish assistant, then Rector and parish priest of Luena, Councillor in the Vice Province of Angola and Delegate for Formation.

Now the Holy Father has entrusted him with the task of Vicar Apostolic of Chaco Paraguayo.

2. BASTRES FLORENCE

Bernardo,

Bishop of Punta Arenas (Chile)

On 4 March 2006 the Vatican Press Office announced the appointment by Pope Benedict XVI, of the Salesian priest *Bernardo BASTRES FLORENCE as Bishop of the Diocese of PUNTA ARENAS, in Chile*. He succeeds Mgr. Tomás Osvaldo González Morales S.D.B.

Born in Santiago, Chile on 21 February 1955, Bernardo Bastres made his first Salesian profession on 14 April 1974 in Santiago-La Florida, where he had made his novitiate.

After philosophical and pedagogical studies and practical training, he studied theology at the Pontifical Catholic University of Santiago in Chile. Perpetually professed on 31-01-1979, he was ordained priest in Santiago on 31 July 1982.

Following ordination, after some years exercising his educational and pastoral ministry – including some time in the community of Punta Arenas “San José” – he was sent to Rome, to the Salesian Pontifical University, to complete his studies and then to undertake for-

mation work. At the U.P.S. he obtained a Licence in Canon Law.

After returning to his Province and a year spent in Santiago-La Cisterna, in 1990 he was appointed Rector of the prenovitiate and at the end of 1992 Rector of the studentate of philosophy in Santiago - La Florida. In 1993 he was appointed a Provincial Councillor. At the end of the six year term as Rector of the postnovitiate, at the end of 1998 he was transferred – again as Rector – to the theologate in Santiago. In all these years he also continued to teach.

In the years 1995-1996 he was Vicar for Consecrated Life in the Archdiocese of Santiago. Since 2000 he has been Provincial of the “St Gabriel the Archangel” Province of Chile.

Now the Holy Father has called him to guide the Diocese of Punta Arenas, in southern Patagonia as its Bishop.

5.6 Admission of the Sisters of the Resurrection to the Salesian Family.

Below is the Decree of the Rector Major, by which the Sisters of the Resurrection (“Hermanas de la Resurrección”) are officially admitted to the Salesian Family. Their

admission was already approved by the General Council in July 2004. Now the official decree has been issued.

Prot. n. 06/0122

**THE RECTOR MAJOR
OF THE SOCIETY
OF ST FRANCIS OF SALES**

(Salesian Society of St. John Bosco)

- responding to the request of the Superior General of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Resurrection ("Hermanas de la Resurrección"), Sr. Candelaria Choc Choc, accompanied by the opinion of the Salesian Provincial of Central America;
- considering the history of this Congregation, founded by the Salesian priest Fr. Jorge Puthenpura, with the support of the Provincial Fr. Luis Ricardo Chin-chilla, through an experience of religious life inculturated among the young local native women, which has progressively spread in several dioceses in Guatemala, while remaining in communion with the Salesians of Don Bosco;
- noting that the mission of the Congregation, expressed in the Constitutions, specifically directed to the promotion of the "campesinos", especially the

women and the families through the education of youth, and carried out in the spirit and according to the educational-pastoral method of Don Bosco, responds to the criteria for belonging to the Salesian Family of Don Bosco;

- also taking account of the ecclesiastical recognition of the Congregation, at diocesan level, with the approval of the Constitutions;
- after having the consent of the Salesian General Council in the meeting of 16 July 2004;

DECIDES

the official admission of the Congregation of the "HERMANAS DE LA RESURRECCIÓN" to the Salesian Family of Don Bosco.

This Congregation, with its educative-pastoral and social assistance activity, especially among the "campesinos", carried out in a Salesian style, will bring its own specific contribution to the Salesian Family, enriching it with its own charism and with the wealth of its own native culture in the spirit of Don Bosco.

Rome, 31 January 2006

Fr. Pascual CHÁVEZ VILLANUEVA
Rector Major

5.7 Admission of the Sister Announcers of the Lord to the Salesian Family.

Below is the Decree of the Rector Major, by which the Sister Announcers of the Lord are officially admitted to the Salesian Family.

Prot. n. 06/0114

THE RECTOR MAJOR OF THE SOCIETY

OF ST FRANCIS OF SALES

(Salesian Society of St. John Bosco)

- responding to the request of the Superior General of the Congregation of the Sister Announcers of the Lord, Sr. Prisca TSANG, with her Council, accompanied by the opinion expressed by the Salesian Provincial of Hong Kong, Fr. Savio HON Tai Fai;
- considering the history of this Congregation, founded by the Saint Bishop Luigi Versiglia, which has spread in various dioceses and countries, remaining constantly in a spiritual and apostolic relationship with the Salesians of Don Bosco;
- noting that the charism of the Congregation and its mission, specifically educative and pastoral, expressed in the Constitutions, respond to the criteria for

belonging to the Salesian Family of Don Bosco;

- also taking account of the ecclesiastical recognition of the Congregation, with the approval of the Constitutions;
- after having the consent of the Salesian General Council in its meeting on 28 July 2005;

DECIDES

the official admission of the Congregation of the SISTER ANNOUNCERS OF THE LORD (SAL) to the Salesian Family of Don Bosco.

This Congregation, with its educational and pastoral work and its social assistance, carried out in the Salesian style, will bring a valid and original contribution to the Salesian Family, enriching it with its own charism, in the spirit of Don Bosco and faithful to the Founder St. Luigi Versiglia.

Rome, 31 January 2006

Fr. Pascual CHÁVEZ VILLANUEVA
Rector Major

5.8 Salesian personnel at 31 December 2005

Prov.	Tot. 2004	Temp. Professed				Perp. Professed				Tot. Professed	Novices	Tot. 2005
		L	S	D	P	L	S	D	P			
AET	111	12	34	0	0	19	8	0	37	110	8	118
AFC	277	8	83	0	0	32	10	0	124	257	29	286
AFE	179	2	49	0	1	19	13	0	87	171	8	179
AFM	59	3	7	0	0	7	1	0	37	55	1	56
AFO	123	2	30	0	0	15	10	0	66	123	12	135
AFW	104	9	39	0	0	9	4	0	36	97	12	109
ANG	66	5	12	0	0	6	4	0	32	59	5	64
ATE	126	9	37	0	0	8	5	0	57	116	7	123
ANT	180	6	23	0	0	13	13	0	116	171	11	182
ABA	132	1	8	0	0	13	3	0	98	123	0	123
ABB	106	2	6	0	0	8	4	0	82	102	3	105
ACO	135	4	14	0	0	14	6	0	89	127	5	132
ALP	78	3	5	0	0	11	2	0	52	73	1	74
ARO	121	7	16	0	0	11	4	0	77	115	3	118
AUL	118	3	9	0	0	14	9	0	80	115	0	115
AUS	88	0	2	0	0	8	0	0	75	85	0	85
BEN	244	0	2	0	0	35	1	1	194	233	0	233
BES	68	0	1	0	0	11	0	0	56	68	0	68
BOL	153	5	34	0	0	17	5	0	90	151	8	159
BBH	167	2	27	0	0	27	4	0	101	161	8	169
BCG	148	7	24	0	0	18	4	0	87	140	13	153
BMA	113	4	22	0	0	14	1	0	69	110	6	116
BPA	102	1	10	0	0	8	1	0	78	98	2	100
BRE	102	3	25	0	0	13	6	0	53	100	9	109
BSP	168	5	25	0	0	19	1	0	115	165	11	176
CAM	206	3	18	0	0	26	3	0	153	203	0	203
CAN	38	0	3	0	0	5	0	0	29	37	0	37
CEP	181	1	11	0	1	13	0	1	150	177	6	183
CIL	203	3	15	0	0	15	9	0	146	188	11	199
CIN	130	1	5	0	0	31	4	1	89	131	0	131
COB	174	2	28	0	1	19	8	0	107	165	9	174
COM	173	7	31	0	0	14	7	0	104	163	2	165
CRO	78	0	6	0	0	3	2	0	67	78	0	78
ECU	215	4	22	0	0	19	4	0	155	204	5	209
EST	119	1	18	0	0	1	8	0	72	100	6	106
FIN	216	6	37	0	0	19	4	0	154	220	7	227
FIS	103	2	15	0	0	12	4	0	65	98	2	100
FRA	235	0	2	0	0	35	3	0	187	227	1	228
GBR	96	0	2	0	0	9	0	0	77	88	0	88
GER	369	0	7	0	0	83	2	2	264	358	3	361
GIA	129	0	8	0	0	15	4	0	93	120	1	121
HAI	62	2	9	0	0	3	8	0	37	59	4	63
INB	222	2	51	0	1	13	9	0	128	204	9	213
INC	238	4	50	0	0	18	11	0	143	226	9	235
IND	230	4	51	0	0	6	9	0	146	216	8	224
ING	386	13	111	0	0	22	24	0	210	380	32	412
INH	179	1	55	0	0	7	8	0	97	168	17	185
INK	323	2	84	0	0	10	31	0	184	311	18	329
INM	339	8	62	0	0	16	22	0	226	334	16	350
INN	154	4	51	0	0	14	10	0	70	149	8	157
INP	88	0	19	0	0	7	7	0	53	86	5	91
INT	200	5	89	0	0	4	17	0	79	194	18	212

Prov.	Tot. 2004	Temp. Professed				Perp. Professed				Tot. Professed	Novices	Tot. 2005
		L	S	D	P	L	S	D	P			
IRL	98	0	4	0	0	7	2	0	84	97	0	97
IAD	119	0	8	0	0	16	3	0	79	106	0	106
ICP	625	2	13	0	0	155	12	1	424	607	2	609
ILE	371	6	23	0	0	50	7	0	289	375	3	378
ILT	186	0	18	0	0	18	7	1	135	179	2	181
IME	284	1	24	0	0	31	8	0	204	268	3	271
INE	436	1	28	0	0	83	5	1	315	433	1	434
IRO	234	2	6	0	1	41	1	1	170	222	3	225
ISA	69	0	4	0	0	4	1	0	55	64	0	64
ISI	269	0	18	0	0	21	2	1	218	260	2	262
ITM	169	20	67	0	0	7	14	1	45	154	20	174
KOR	117	4	28	0	0	21	2	0	59	114	6	120
LKC	68	2	33	0	0	1	2	0	25	63	7	70
MDG	84	3	23	0	0	5	3	0	48	82	5	87
MEG	218	3	31	0	0	13	13	0	144	204	6	210
MEM	175	3	23	0	0	14	12	1	114	167	10	177
MOR	121	1	11	0	0	15	3	0	87	117	2	119
MYM	52	1	21	0	0	1	2	0	23	48	9	57
PAR	104	5	18	0	0	5	5	0	63	96	6	102
PER	155	8	30	0	0	12	9	0	94	153	8	161
PLE	317	3	19	0	0	16	17	0	233	288	9	297
PLN	307	2	46	0	0	11	17	0	220	296	6	302
PLO	230	1	25	0	0	2	7	0	186	221	12	233
PLS	233	2	19	0	0	9	9	0	187	226	12	238
POR	184	2	17	0	0	39	8	1	113	180	5	185
SLK	244	8	27	0	0	13	25	0	163	236	5	241
SLO	109	0	2	0	0	9	0	0	95	106	1	107
SBA	180	0	2	0	0	29	0	1	145	177	0	177
SBI	198	1	8	0	0	52	5	1	133	200	1	201
SCO	110	2	6	0	0	5	6	0	90	109	1	110
SLE	217	3	3	0	0	70	0	0	138	214	0	214
SMA	310	0	7	0	0	76	10	0	204	297	0	297
SSE	147	1	3	0	0	24	4	0	111	143	4	147
SVA	165	0	7	0	0	26	5	1	123	162	0	162
SUE	182	1	11	0	0	36	2	0	128	178	2	180
SUO	105	2	2	0	0	22	3	0	74	103	2	105
THA	88	0	10	0	0	14	6	0	57	87	0	87
UNG	38	0	5	0	0	2	1	0	33	41	0	41
URU	110	2	8	0	0	5	1	0	88	104	1	105
VEN	226	6	29	0	0	16	15	0	150	216	12	228
VIE	246	11	78	0	0	23	22	0	85	219	25	244
ZMB	68	4	10	0	0	6	0	0	45	65	8	73
UPS	131	0	0	0	0	11	0	0	120	131	0	131
RMG	83	0	0	0	0	18	0	0	65	83	0	83
Tot.	16536	291	2179	0	5	1862	613	16	10934	15900	560	16460
Ep.	109									108 (*)		108 (*)
Tot.	16645	291	2179	0	5	1862	613	16	10934	16008	560	16568

Note (*): At 31 December 2005 there are 107 Bishops + 1 Prefect Apostolic

5.9 Our dead confreres (5th list 2005 and 1st list 2006)

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

Deceased 2005 – 5th list

NOTE: We print a 5th list of those the news of whose death in 2005 arrived after the publication of AGC392.

SURNAME AND NAME	PLACE of death	DATE	AGE	PROV
P ALMONTE Nemesio	Asunción (Paraguay)	03-10-2005	92	PAR
P BALESTIERI Claudio	Joinville (Brasile)	30-12-2005	79	BPA
P BOBADILLA Enrique	Vallarrica (Paraguay)	04-08-2005	77	PAR
P FERNÁNDEZ Norberto	Asunción (Paraguay)	11-07-2005	78	PAR
P HORNÍK Josef	Praga (Rep. Ceca)	27-12-2005	78	CEP
L MATESZ Károly	Budapest (Ungheria)	14-12-2005	91	UNG
L MIONE Renato	Torino	30-12-2005	77	ICP
P NARVARTE Luis María	La Plata (Argentina)	19-12-2005	58	ALP
P PINTO Tony	Machakos (Kenya)	26-11-2005	69	AFE
P RODRÍGUEZ Rómulo Mateo	Buenos Aires (Argentina)	15-12-2005	86	ABA
P ROJAS Orlando	Asunción (Paraguay)	29-09-2005	38	PAR
P TREJO JUÁREZ Hilario	México (Messico)	26-12-2005	76	MEM
P VALAYAM Philip	Uhura Camp, Nairobi (Kenya)	25-12-2005	46	AFE
P WAGNER Karl-Theodor	Waldkraiburg (Germania)	16-12-2005	84	GER

* * *

Deceased 2006 - 1st list

SURNAME AND NAME	PLACE of death	DATE	AGE	PROV
L ALICINO Emmanuel	Suffern, NY (U.S.A.)	09-02-2006	88	SUE
P BAERT Marcel	Heverlee (Belgio)	09-03-2006	88	BEN
P BAN Aloysio Mototake	Beppu (Giappone)	09-01-2006	74	GIA
P BARDECI José María	Funes (Argentina)	22-01-2006	89	ARO
P BERGER Jean-Jacques	Landser (Francia)	04-02-2006	89	FRA
L BUSATO Angelo	Castelfranco Veneto (TV)	16-02-2006	86	INE
P CALANDRI Valentín Carlos	La Plata (Argentina)	09-03-2006	68	ALP
P CARROLL Aloysius	Cape Town (Sud Africa)	27-01-2006	76	AFM
P CHIOCCETTI Bernardo	Castello di Godego (TV)	06-03-2006	91	INE
L CIORDIA ORDUÑA Fco. Javier	Pamplona (Spagna)	06-03-2006	75	SBI
P CLARYSSE Jozef	Gent (Belgio)	04-03-2006	77	BEN
P CORTÉS INSA José	Alcoy (Spagna)	21-01-2006	71	SVA

L DASCH Isidor	Ensdorf (Germania)	15-01-2006	92	GER
P DECOLLONGE Jacques	Lyon (Francia)	15-01-2006	74	FRA
P DÍAZ PAIS Jesús	El Campello (Spagna)	27-02-2006	82	SPA
P FABBIAN Mario Vito	La Spezia (Italia)	17-02-2006	75	ITA
P FEIJÓO SOTO Manuel	Sevilla (Spagna)	17-01-2006	77	SPA
P FERREIRA Olímpio Gabriel	Belo Horizonte (Brasile)	02-01-2006	78	BRB
P FLEISCH Alfred	Beromünster (Svizzera)	08-02-2006	81	GER
P FRANK Otto	Buxheim (Germania)	09-01-2006	77	GER
P FRYDRYSZAK Henry	Poznań (Polonia)	16-01-2006	73	PLO
P GALLO Ottavio	Toulon (Francia)	14-03-2006	89	FRA
P GAVINELLI Angelo	Torino	02-01-2006	81	ICP
P GOBBER Giovanni Battista	Châtillon (AO)	24-01-2006	96	ICP
P GREHAN Juan Fergus	San Isidro (Argentina)	24-01-2006	89	ABA
P JANIK Stanisław	Rumia (Polonia)	23-02-2006	96	PLN
P KEILER Josef	Hemau (Germania)	17-01-2006	83	GER
P KOSTA Jean Bosco	Roma	07-02-2006	55	AFC
L KWOK John Bosco Chi-cheuc	Hong Kong (Cina)	07-03-2006	82	CIN
P LE BRAS François	Marseille (Francia)	02-01-2006	74	FRA
L LESTAN Daniel	Roma	04-03-2006	81	IRO
P LOCHBRUNNER Johannes	Ensdorf (Germania)	01-02-2006	93	GER
P MACCIÓ Maximo	Tucumán (Argentina)	10-01-2006	90	ACO
P MARTIN Denis	Hong Kong (Cina)	04-01-2006	84	CIN
P MELIS Massimino	Civitanova Marche Alta (MC)	09-02-2006	75	IAD
P PERALTA RAMÍREZ L. Guillermo	San José (Costa Rica)	13-01-2006	82	CAM
P PIZZICHETTI Pietro	Roma	23-01-2006	94	IRO
P ROERO Prospero	Cremisan (Terra Santa)	04-01-2006	80	MOR
P ROGGIA Luigi	Cuneo	01-02-2006	85	ICP
L SALAZAR Antonio	Bogotá (Colombia)	07-01-2006	79	COB
P SANGLURA Varte Alexius	Haflong (India)	28-01-2006	73	ING
P SANTA CATARINA Fausto	São Paulo (Brasile)	13-02-2006	92	BSP
P SERSEN Leopold	Spišská Kapitula (Slovachia)	09-02-2006	89	SLK
P SPECHT Jacek	Ferré (Argentina)	07-02-2006	86	ARO
P STRIZOLI Domingo	Genova-Sampierdarena	27-02-2006	82	ILT
L TONINI Alfonso	Torino	06-01-2006	93	ICP
P TROISE Sabatino	Castellammare di Stabia (NA)	22-02-2006	85	IME
P VAES Jan	Sint-Pieters-Leeuw (Belgio)	16-02-2006	81	BEN
P VAN MEERBEECK Piet	Heverlee (Belgio)	05-02-2006	66	BEN
P ZARKOSKI Donald	St. Petersburg (U.S.A.)	04-02-2006	75	SUE

