

acts

of the general council

year LXXXVII july-september 2006

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official organ
of animation
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for the
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Direzione Generale
Opere don Bosco
Roma



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of the Salesian Society
of St John Bosco

OFFICIAL ORGAN OF ANIMATION AND COMMUNICATION FOR THE SALESIAN CONGREGATION

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1. LETTER OF THE RECTOR MAJOR

«DA MIHI ANIMAS, CETERA TOLLE» Charismatic identity and apostolic zeal

Starting again from Don Bosco to reawaken the heart of every Salesian

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Rome, 24 June 2006
Birth of St John the Baptist

My dear confreres,

As I write this letter my thoughts go back in faith and gratitude to Fr Valentín De Pablo, General Councillor for the Region of Africa and Madagascar. His sudden and unexpected passing took us by surprise and humanly speaking has left us dismayed. I am grateful to all those of you who sent me deeply felt expressions of sorrow and sympathy. Let us be grateful to God for the priestly and missionary Salesian vocation he gave to Fr Valentin, and keep him in our prayers. In the last days of his life he took part in the General Council's choice of the theme of the General Chapter. Now close to God he will be able to intercede for all of us, for the success of the coming Chapter and for the Region of Africa and Madagascar.

1. CONVOCATION OF THE GC26

On the nameday of Don Bosco, our beloved father and founder, who used to gather around him on that day all his boys, collaborators and benefactors at Valdocco, I am glad to be able to write this letter to you in his name. By it it is my intention **to convoke, in accordance with art.150 of our Constitutions, the XXVI General Chapter.** The Chapter is the “principal sign of the Congregation’s unity in diversity” (C. 146). We shall come together once again to reflect on how to be “faithful to the Gospel and to the Founder’s charism, and sensitive to the needs of time and place” (C. 146). Don Bosco will certainly be with us at such a time.

I invite you to look upon this event as a new Pentecost in the life of the Congregation which, through the General Chapter, by “opening itself to the Spirit of the Lord seeks to discern God’s will at a specific moment in history for the purpose of rendering the Church better service” (C. 146). The Spirit’s greatness is revealed in his power which is able to renew the face of the earth (cf. *Ps* 104,30) and make all things new. The Spirit of God, present at every moment of history, will make new our love for Don Bosco.

The Spirit hovered over the waters at the beginning of the world (cf. *Gen* 1,2), and was communicated to man when the breath of life was breathed into him (cf. *Gen* 2,7). It led Abraham to respond to God with the obedience of faith when he was called to leave his own land and kinsfolk in order to reach the promised land (cf. *Gen* 12,1-4). It was given to Moses on Sinai as the word of life in the gift of the law (cf. *Ex* 29,1-16). It made use of men and women of Israel to convert them into liberators of their own people and into prophets of the most high God (cf. *Acts* 2,17).

The Spirit overshadowed the Virgin Mary and made her the mother of God’s Son (cf. *Lk* 1,35). He anointed Jesus on the day of his baptism and prompted him to preach the gospel of the kingdom (cf. *Mk* 1,19-15). He was poured out on the apostles in the form of tongues of fire and they were transformed into convincing

witnesses of the Resurrection (cf. Acts 2,1-11).

The Spirit continues at the present day to inspire the advancement of the life and dignity of the human person; he opens the minds and hearts of men and women to God and to Christ; he is a gentle guest who works not by compelling but by convincing and asking for docility to his inspirations.

The coming General Chapter will be the 26th in the history of our Society. It will be in continuity with preceding Chapters in a sincere commitment of dynamic fidelity to God and to the young. It will take place at Rome in the "Salesianum" at the Generalate. It will begin on 24 February 2008 in Turin, the cradle of our charism, where we shall come together to visit the house of our father and discover the roots of his spirit. We shall inaugurate the Chapter with a concelebrated Mass in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians and a visit to our Salesian holy places, the source of our inspiration and dynamism. We shall then leave for Rome, the seat of the Chapter.

As Moderator of the Chapter I have appointed Fr Francesco Cereda, Councillor for Formation, who from now on has the responsibility for accompanying the work of preparation and the carrying out of the General Chapter.

"Da mihi animas, cetera tolle" (cf. C. 4) is the theme that, with the General Council, I have chosen for the GC26. It is a theme which has been frequently recalled in the Team Visits, and which I and the Council members have very much at heart. It represents Don Bosco's spiritual and pastoral programme, and in it is concentrated **the charismatic identity and apostolic zeal** of the Salesian.

The topic is huge, and for this reason we have decided to focus the attention of the Chapter on four specific areas: the urgent need for *evangelisation*, the need to *recruit* others to the consecrated Salesian life, the demand that we live in *evangelical poverty*, and the challenge of moving towards *new missionary frontiers*.

1.1 Reasons for choice of the theme

For some time now the conviction has been growing on me that today the Congregation needs to reawaken in the heart of every confrere the passionate zeal of “*Da mihi animas*”. In this way it can acquire the inspiration, motivation and energy to respond to what God expects of us and to the needs of the young, and to face up with courage and competence to today’s challenges.

By making our own the motto “*Da mihi animas, cetera tolle*”, we intend to take up Don Bosco’s spiritual and apostolic programme, resulting in his tireless work for the “glory of God and the salvation of souls”. In this way we can find once again the origin of our charism, the purpose of our mission, and the future of our Congregation.

The bicentenary of the birth of Don Bosco, of which the occurrence in 2015 seems not all that far away, is an invitation to call on Don Bosco to return among us and among young people: “*Don Bosco ritorna!*”. On the other hand, it is also a stimulus for every Salesian to return to Don Bosco and to the young: *Let us return to Don Bosco by returning to the young*. Don Bosco and youngsters are inseparable: he is our father and model; it is among young people that we “meet God” (C. 95) and find the “homeland of our mission”.¹ We cannot return to Don Bosco unless we return to the young.

The expression “*Da mihi animas, cetera tolle*” is a prayer addressed to God by one who, in the commitment and fatigue of an apostolic challenge taken up in God’s name, renounces all self-interest and wishes to take on the burdens of everyone. Precisely because it is a prayer, it enables us to understand that the mission does not consist only in pastoral initiatives and activity. The mission is a gift of God, rather than an apostolic task: its fulfilment is a prayer in action; this is the starting point for overcoming activism, and the risk of early ‘burnout’.

¹ E. VIGANÒ, *Consagración apostólica y novedad cultural*. Ed. CCS (Madrid 1987) p. 159.

I rather think that Don Bosco's programme re-echoes the expression "I thirst", pronounced by Jesus from the cross when he was giving up his own life in carrying out the Father's will (*Jn* 19,28). Whoever makes this prayer of Jesus his own, learns to share his apostolic passion to the very end. Christ's word becomes an appeal to each of us to revive our thirst for souls and renew the promise made by Don Bosco to his boys: "I will give myself to my last breath for you boys". For this reason the heart of the Salesian draws its inspiration from the pierced heart of Christ.²

Don Bosco's motto is a summary of Salesian spirituality and asceticism, as expressed in the "dream of the ten diamonds". Here two complementary perspectives are intertwined: that of the outward appearance of the Salesian, manifesting his daring, his courage, his faith and hope, his complete dedication to the mission, and that of the hidden heart of a consecrated person with an inner reality made up of deep convictions that lead him to follow Christ in his obedient, poor and chaste style of life.

1.2 Steps that led to the choosing of the theme.

In choosing the theme of the GC26 we wanted to start from the life of the Provinces. In preparation for the Team Visits the Provinces had been asked to carry out a verification of the extent to which the GC25 had been assimilated, and to present some future prospects, identifying what had been achieved in recent years, the more important challenges, the resources available for facing the future, and the difficulties being encountered.

The Team Visits thus became the first step in the preparation of the GC26, in the sense that they brought to light the state of the Congregation in its various contexts, its strengths and weaknesses, its prospects and challenges.

² Cf. BENEDICT XVI, *Deus Caritas est*, n. 12.

Repeatedly there emerged a deeply felt need to inflame with joy and enthusiasm the hearts of the confreres in living the Salesian life and in the fulfilment of the mission to young people. It recalled the zeal of "*Da mihi animas, cetera tolle*". And at the same time, with various degrees of emphasis, there appeared other common topics such as evangelisation, vocations, poverty and new frontiers.

At the end of the plenary session of the General Council of December 2005 – January 2006, each Councillor gave me his proposals in view of the GC26. Here again the theme most frequently indicated, with a variety of motivation and emphasis, was a return to Don Bosco's charism, to Salesian identity and to apostolic zeal. Specific arguments also emerged, among them evangelisation at the present day, vocations to Salesian consecrated life, poverty, the new horizons of the Salesian mission, formation and communication.

The process for choosing the theme concluded with a common reflection that took place in a special Council meeting from 3 to 12 April of this year. The result was the theme already stated.

1.3 Fundamental purpose of the theme.

The fundamental objective of the GC26 is that of strengthening our charismatic identity with a return to Don Bosco, by reawakening in the heart of every confrere the zeal and enthusiasm of "*Da mihi animas, cetera tolle*".

This objective requires us to deepen our knowledge of Don Bosco and to take in hand the Constitutions, and in particular the second chapter on the Salesian spirit, so as to renew our commitment to identify ourselves with him, our father and teacher, and to take our inspiration from his great convictions.

It also requires the kindling of a fire of spiritual and apostolic zeal in the heart of every confrere, by helping him to motivate and unify his life around the commitment to achieve the "glory of God and salvation of souls".

The approach of the year 2015, the bicentenary of the birth of Don Bosco, represents a grace for the Congregation, which is called to embody his charism in the various contexts, or in other words the spirit and mission of our founder and father. Such a celebration will constitute almost a goal for the GC26.

The attainment of the objective of the GC26 will require in the first place a better *knowledge of Don Bosco*: he must be studied, loved, imitated and invoked (C. 21). We must know him as a master of life, whose spirituality we absorb as sons and disciples; as the founder who shows us the path of vocational fidelity; as the educator who has left us the precious heritage of the preventive system; as the legislator, because the Constitutions, which have come to us directly from him and then through subsequent Salesian history, provide us with a charismatic reading of the gospel and of the following of Christ.³

With the passage of time the risk grows greater of breaking the living bonds that keep us united to Don Bosco. More than a hundred years have now gone by since his death. Dead are the generations of Salesians who were in contact with him and knew him close at hand. The chronological, geographic and cultural distance from the founder is increasing. The spiritual climate and psychological closeness which prompted spontaneous reference to Don Bosco and his spirit is beginning to disappear, as is even the simple display of his picture. What has been passed on to us can get lost. With increasing distance from the Founder, there comes a fading of the charismatic identity, a weakening of the bonds of his spirit; if we do not give new life to our roots we run the risk of having neither a future nor a right to citizenship.

More than a crisis of identity, I think that what we Salesians are experiencing today is a crisis of *credibility*. We are in a stalemate situation. We seem to be under the tyranny of the “status quo”; there is resistance to change, unconscious rather than

³ Cf. P. CHAVEZ, “*Looking at Christ through the eyes of Don Bosco*”, ACG 384 (2003).

deliberate. Even though we are convinced of the efficacy of evangelical values we find it difficult to reach the hearts of the young, for whom we should be signs of hope. We are shocked by the fact that faith is irrelevant to them in building their lives. We feel ourselves out of tune with their world and remote, if not completely excluded, from their plans and projects. We find that our signs, actions and language are no longer effective; we seem to make no impact on their lives.

Alongside the vital momentum that can lead to witness and self-sacrifice even to the extent of martyrdom, Salesian life is not immune to the "the insidiousness of mediocrity in the spiritual life, of the progressive taking on of middle class values and of a consumer mentality".⁴ In the documents known traditionally as his "spiritual testament" Don Bosco wrote: «When signs of an easy life appear among individuals, in rooms or houses, the decline of our Congregation will have also begun [...] When the desire for ease and comfort grows up amongst us, our pious Society will have run its course».⁵

The lack of vocations and vocational frailty make me think that many of us are perhaps not convinced of the social, educative and evangelising usefulness of our mission; others perhaps find that the degree of our commitment to work falls short of their aspirations because we fail in our efforts at renewal and the taking up of new work; some may feel themselves hemmed in by ever-growing emergency situations.

We must *get back among young people* with greater preparation. It is among them that Don Bosco developed his style of life, his pastoral and pedagogical legacy, his system and his spirituality. Don Bosco was single-minded in his mission. His only concern was with and for his boys, even when particular circumstances prevented him from being in immediate contact with them or

⁴ CIVCSVA, *Starting afresh from Christ*, n. 12.

⁵ P. BRAIDO (Ed.), *Don Bosco educatore, scritti e testimonianze*. Rome LAS 1997, pp. 409, 437.

involved some activity not directly at their service. For this reason he defended tenaciously his charism as a founder for the young people of the whole world, against the pressure from less farseeing ecclesiastics. The Salesian mission involves a *predilection* for the young. Initially such a predilection is a gift from God, but it is then up to us with our intelligence and heart to take it up, develop it, and make it effective.

The true Salesian never deserts the field of the young. To be a Salesian means to know all about young people; his heart beats in harmony with theirs. He lives for them; their problems are his problems. They give meaning to his life, to his work and study, to his inner feelings; his free time is for them. A Salesian has not only an practical knowledge of young people but a theoretical knowledge as well, which enables him to get to know their needs, and so engage in the kind of youth pastoral work best suited to the present times.

Nowadays a deeper understanding is needed of *Salesian pedagogy*. In other words we need to study and apply that updated preventive system desired by Fr Egidio Viganò. For those who study and apply it, it means developing its great implicit principles, modernising concepts, guidelines and interpretations so as to express the basic ideas in a modern manner: the greater glory of God and the salvation of souls; living faith, firm hope and pastoral charity; the good Christian and upright citizen; the threefold "cheerfulness, study and prayer"; the three "S" (in Italian): health, knowledge and holiness: piety, morality and culture; evangelisation and civilisation.

The same can be said of the great guidelines regarding attitudes: make yourself loved rather than feared; reason, religion, loving kindness; father, brother, friend; familiarity, especially in recreation; winning over the heart; the consecrated educator for the good of his pupils; freedom to run about, play and chatter. All that must be re-read for youngsters of today, who have to live in a vast and hitherto unknown range of situations and problems, in

vastly changed times when the human sciences are themselves undergoing critical examination.

We must have a deep knowledge of *Don Bosco's spirituality* and also live it. A knowledge of the external aspects of Don Bosco's life and activities and of his method of education is not enough. At the foundation of everything, as the source of the fruitful results of his actions and activities, there is something we may often overlook: his deep spiritual experience, what we might call his familiarity with God. Maybe this is precisely the best thing he has left us in which to invoke and imitate him, and set ourselves to follow him so as to make contact with Christ and bring Christ into contact with the young!

It is not easy to identify precisely Don Bosco's spiritual experience. Perhaps this is an aspect of our founder that has not been studied at sufficient depth. He is a man totally intent on work. We have no descriptions of his interior development, nor has he left us any explicit reflections on his spiritual life; he wrote no spiritual diaries, offered no specific interpretations. He preferred to pass on to us a spirit by describing the events of his life, or through the biographies he wrote of his boys. It is certainly not enough to say that his spirituality is that of one engaged not in contemplation but in active pastoral work, a pastoral work of mediation between theoretical spirituality and its popular expression.⁶

At the centre of his spirituality is God alone, to be known, loved and served through the living out of a clearly identifiable personal vocation, centred on religious and apostolic dedication to young people – and especially to the poorest and most abandoned of them with a view to their overall salvation – through education and pastoral work and bringing them together; Christ the Saviour was to be the model, and Mary the Mother and Teacher. It is significant, for example, that the noun occurring most frequently in his letters is

⁶ Cf. P. BRAIDO, *La liturgia della vita nel servizio della carità tra i giovani di un contemplativo nell'azione*, in E. CARR (edited by), *Spiritus spiritualia nobis dona potenter infundit. A proposito di tematiche liturgico-pneumatologiche. Studi in onore di Achille M. Triacca*, Rome 2005, pp. 143-157.

“God”, and the most frequent verb (after “make” or “do”) is “pray”.⁷

The roots of Don Bosco’s spiritual experience are summed up in the motto *Da mihi animas, cetera tolle*, i.e. desire for the salvation of souls to the exclusion of all else. The quotation from *Gen* 14,21 takes on particular characteristics in him, as he gives to the biblical expression an accommodated, allegorical and prayerful sense. The term *animas* indicates persons and concretely the boys with whom he is dealing, seen from the perspective of their final salvation. The words *cetera tolle* imply separation from everything not contributing to self-annihilation and union with God. For Don Bosco detachment is the state of mind required for the most complete freedom and availability for the demands of the apostolate.

1.4 Other tasks

As well as the examination of the theme proposed, the GC26 has also some other particular tasks to fulfil. First among these is the election of the Rector Major and members of the General Council for the period 2008-2014.

There is also the response to some requests made by the GC25 and verification of changes introduced by the same Chapter. In line with what is indicated at nn. 112 and 115 an important point is a rethinking from an organisational and structural standpoint of some departments of our Salesian mission: youth ministry, missions, social communication. The GC25 also asked for a study of the organisation of the three European Regions (cf. nn. 124, 126, 129). The need is also felt, after the constitutional change that was made, of assessing the results of entrusting the Salesian Family to the Vicar of the Rector Major (cf. GC25, 133).

Finally, it is thought necessary to reflect on the figure and duties of the local economer (C. 184) with a view to responding to some practical problems.

⁷ Cf. F. MOTTO, *Verso una storia di don Bosco più documentata e più sicura*, in “Ricerche Storiche Salesiane” 41 (July-December 2002) p. 250-251.

2. CONTEXT OF THE GC26

The historical element in life and the principle of incarnation mean that we cannot prescind from historical conditions, which are not only the background against which the Salesian life and mission are set, but also provide its challenges and possibilities. I want therefore to give a brief outline of the context in which the GC26 will take place, from the standpoint of charismatic identity and apostolic zeal.

2.1 Needs and expectations of the young

Soon after his ordination, while completing his pastoral formation in the Ecclesiastical College of Turin, Don Bosco, under the enlightened guidance of Don Cafasso, began to scour the city streets; he frequented shops, building sites, the markets and prisons; he got first hand knowledge of the situation of many youngsters, their destitution and their aspirations. It made him feel the urgent need for someone to take care of them, to help them and be concerned about their salvation. The idea of the Oratory was born, where Don Bosco was to fulfil his vocation.⁸ The cry of the young explains the unconditional zeal of his programme: "*Da mihi animas, cetera tolle*".

If today we want to return to Don Bosco to deepen and renew our vocational identity, we too must start again from the young, understand their expectations, and listen to what God is asking us to do on their behalf.

Even though young people live in a variety of circumstances, they have a common sensitivity to the great values of life, love and freedom, but they meet with great difficulties in living out such values. We cannot fail to be concerned about their needs and expectations, and at the same time be unaware of the threats and obstacles they encounter.

⁸ Cf. J. BOSCO, *Memoirs of the Oratory*, Second decade, chap. 11 and 12.

Life: needs and threats

The young are looking for *quality of life*: they want to live life to the full; they are seeking meaningful models; they want to build their lives on self-esteem and positive self-acceptance. They feel the demands of *new values*, such as the central place of the individual, human dignity, peace and justice, tolerance and solidarity. They are looking for *spirituality* and transcendence, so as to find balance and harmony in this frenetic and fragmented world; they want a subjective kind of religion that is sincere and non-institutional. In their search for meaning in life they want to be accompanied by adults who will listen to them, understand them and be able to give them guidance.

The situation of *poverty*, generated by a neoliberal system, reduces many young people to a struggle for survival. More than 200 million youngsters, 18% of the world's youth, live on less than 1 dollar a day, and about 515 million on less than 2 dollars. In 2002 it was estimated that there were 175 million migrants at world level, 26 million of them youngsters. Unemployment, exploitation and a precarious and selective educational system limit their future prospects: 88 million youngsters are unemployed; 130 million children are without any schooling.

The culture of *violence* becomes a reaction to hardship and privation; common phenomena are drugs, terrorism, wars, boy soldiers and genocide. Levels of delinquency have soared in developing countries. Juvenile delinquency is often linked with the abuse of drugs and alcohol; in Africa it is linked with hunger, poverty and unemployment.

Threats to life and dignity are caused by *abortion, suicide, euthanasia and torture*, which give rise to a culture of death and the loss of the sense and meaning of life. In a single year 5 million girls between the ages of 15 and 19 undergo abortion. Christian life itself risks being no longer valid for young people unless it can overcome the *dichotomy between faith and life*.

Love: needs and threats

The sensitivities of the young, their language, their way of communication and expression, their style of life, are becoming ever more different from those of adults. What are important for them are the central place of the body and image, the value of *sexuality* and the world of affective relationships, the *new languages* which give rise to new forms of communication and relationships made possible by the new technologies.

Young people are making strong demands for *new relationships* of friendship and affection to overcome the void which makes them insecure, with little self-confidence and incapable of making deep and stable contacts. The need for meaningful relationships between adults and young people is something we must recognise and address.

In particular, there are signs among the young of *new forms of commitment* and of participation in the social sphere through a great variety of open networks allowing for direct, limited membership or association which bridge the gap between private and public life, such as experiences of the volunteer movement or the various forms and styles of civil service, non-global, environmental or pacifist movements etc.

There is a threat constituted by a culture which promotes a *possessive love* – one that is merely superficial; one that seeks the pleasure of immediate satisfaction, which promotes the commercialisation of the body and sexual exploitation, the precocious pregnancy of more than 14 million adolescents, the instability of married couples. *AIDS* causes grave illness and inculcates fear: at least 50% of new HIV infections occur among young people; about 10 million youngsters are affected by *AIDS*, of whom 6.2 million are in Sub-Saharan Africa and 2.2 million in Asia. It is estimated that at the present time some 15 million children below the age of 18 are orphans because of *AIDS*; of these 12 million live in Sub-Saharan Africa and the number could rise to 18 million by 2010.⁹ The Church finds it dif-

⁹ The statistics are given in the *United Nations World Youth Report* (www.un.org/esa/socdev/ynyin/wyr05.htm)

ficult to present a meaningful moral programme to the young.

Freedom: needs and threats

Young people feel the need to build their *own identity*. They have plenty of knowledge and experience but live in a notably fragmented and disoriented manner, with few points of reference of any significance. This makes them uncertain and frail in seeking their identity and in shaping their future. They feel a great need for *happiness*: to be happy is the dream and greatest desire they foster in their hearts. They assert their *right to be different*, overcoming the tendency to a standardisation in a globalised society, and recognise *lived experience* as being of greater value than any doctrine or ideology. They have a need to be recognised and to be protagonists in social life, work and politics.

Cultural manipulation through the mass media fosters a culture that is merely superficial, consumerist and pleasure seeking. A considerable obstacle is presented by attitudes that severely limit the building of identity: *conformism* with its uncritical compromises, pragmatism with its seeking for immediate results, and a *relativist and individualist mentality* that seeks a freedom shorn of every value.

2.2 Social and cultural challenges

We must always keep in mind that at the present day the Congregation is living out its charismatic identity and its mission to the young within cultures and societies in widely differing contexts. Relationships with the culture and social relevance play a decisive role in the effectiveness of our work. Let us therefore try to identify some common features in all these different contexts.

Basic tendencies

We need to notice in the first place the existence of two *transverse tendencies* which characterise the times of extraordinary change through which we are living: on the one hand there is a

tendency to a cultural homogeneity which endeavours to reproduce the western model and eliminate any differences; and on the other there are some strong counter-cultures with religious roots which lead to greater contrasts, for example between Islam and the west, between a secularised society and Christianity.

Secondly we must recognise the phenomenon of *globalisation*, fostered by technological development, which permeates many aspects of society and culture. From an economic point of view the neoliberal model is spreading everywhere, based on the market system with its tendency to dominate other human values of individuals and peoples. From a cultural standpoint, a process of standardisation is imposed based on the western model, with the gradual elimination of the cultural and political differences between peoples. Finally, the impact of the mass media and the revolution in information technology lead to profound changes in behaviour, in the distribution of wealth and in the organisation of work through a culture and society dominated by the media.

Challenges at a social and cultural level

There is a clear and strong tendency to *human mobility* expressed by large numbers of people who, driven by poverty, hunger or underdevelopment, emigrate towards the rich and well-to-do countries. One aspect of this phenomenon is urbanisation or internal migration within countries. There is the enduring *challenge of poverty*, of hunger, of sickness and underdevelopment, together with challenges that arise from the exploitation of children and juveniles in the tragic circumstances of marginalisation, of child labour, of sexual tourism, of begging, of street children, of juvenile delinquency, of boy soldiers and of infant mortality. It is all summed up in a vision of society based on consumerism, and everywhere there is growing a *consumerist mentality*, in both rich and developing countries.

The paradoxical *culture of life and death* comes face to face with the development of biotechnology and eugenics. An *imbalance* has

occurred between human development and information technology and communication. The *culture of individualism*, which arises from a relativist view of the world and of man, is becoming more and more consolidated, and this anthropological view has given rise to a new formulation of human values, based on ethical relativism, which Pope Benedict XVI does not hesitate to brand as “tyranny”. A widespread psychological and motivational frailty can also be linked with these expressions of weak thought. There is a growing *educational problem* concerning the transmission of values, because of the continual transformation of customs, of the influence of the prevailing style, of models.

The diffusion of the phenomenon of *secularisation* extols the various forms of humanism without God, and relegates all expressions of religious faith to the private sector. Pluralism regarding such themes as the family, life, love, sex, a new sense of the sacred, the crisis of traditional institutions, and easy access to drugs are all provocative challenges. *Religious fundamentalism* is becoming more firmly rooted, with a consequent difficulty for real dialogue between different faiths. New *religious movements* are arising as a response to the need for spirituality and group worship, for example the phenomenon of the sects and the so-called “New Age” movement.

Cultural challenges of the Congregation

Naturally the challenges do not arise only from the external world; some of them come from within the Congregation itself, and are of various kinds: the advancing age of the confreres in some areas, the weakness of the functioning of government at different levels, the disparity between the living conditions of the Salesians and their environment of poverty and want.

Youth culture with its attitudes and life models makes different impacts on the personal and community life of the confreres: the difficulty of coping with a world of youth that can be very varied in its ideas and behaviour, the different degree of emphasis

on the relationship between education and evangelisation, different sensitivities regarding the social impact of our mission of human advancement. In some strongly secularised contexts it is even a problem to know what specific sense to give to evangelising activity and the explicit presentation of Christ as the Saviour of mankind.

There are still a few places where spirituality remains superficial, where pastoral work is not properly organised, where we are not really in touch with the world of youth, where problems remain concerning the inculturation of the charism, or where there is little knowledge of Don Bosco and his work.

2.3 Guidelines of the Church

In the spirit of Vatican II, the teachings of which have recently been described by Benedict XVI as “proving particularly relevant to the new situation of the Church and the current globalised society”,¹⁰ we have the great ecclesial guidelines in the Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consecrata* (1996), in the Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte* (2001), in the Instruction *Starting afresh from Christ* (2002) and in the Encyclical *Deus Caritas est* (2005).

Starting afresh from Christ: holiness as a pastoral programme

Starting afresh from Christ means proclaiming that consecrated life is especially following Him and “*the living memorial of Jesus’ way of living and acting*”.¹¹ “This implies a particular communion of love for Christ who has become the centre of their life and the continual source of every initiative”.¹² “Yes, one must start afresh from Christ because it was from him that the first disciples started in Galilee; from him, that throughout history men and women of every status and culture, consecrated by the Spirit in the strength of their call, have started out; for him they have left family and

¹⁰ BENEDICT XVI, *First Message* at the end of the concelebrated mass with the Cardinal electors in the Sistine Chapel, 20 April 2005, OR 21 April 2005, p. 9.

¹¹ JOHN PAUL II, *Vita Consecrata*, n. 22.

¹² CIVCSVA, *Starting afresh from Christ*, n. 22.

homeland, following him unconditionally, making themselves available for the announcement of the Kingdom and doing good for all (cf. *Acts* 10:38).¹³

Jesus Christ, “today, yesterday and always” (*Heb* 13,8), is the pastoral programme of the Church of the Third Millennium: “This is a programme which does not change with shifts of times and cultures, even though it takes account of time and culture for the sake of true dialogue and effective communication”.¹⁴ Also we Salesians, as any other community or group in the church, have to translate this programme into appropriate pastoral guidelines, «which will enable the proclamation of Christ to reach people, mould communities, and have a deep and incisive influence in bringing Gospel values to bear in society and culture». ¹⁵

«I have no hesitation in saying» with John Paul II, that «all pastoral initiatives must be set in relation to holiness»¹⁶; which is «the foundation of the pastoral planning».¹⁷ Our holiness comes first! I have said that to you from the beginning of my ministry as Rector Major and I wrote it in my first letter.¹⁸ I repeat it once again today with more conviction and urgency: holiness «is the most precious gift we can offer to the young» (*C.* 25); it is the highest goal that, with courage, we can set for all. Only in an atmosphere of holiness that is lived and experienced will the young people have the possibility of making courageous life choices, of discovering God’s plan for their future, of appreciating and welcoming the gift of a vocation of special consecration». ¹⁹

As well as presenting an attractive model of community holiness we need to evoke and sustain in young people “a true longing for holiness, a deep desire for conversion and personal renewal in a context of ever more intense prayer and of solidarity with one’s

¹³ CIVCSVA, *Starting afresh from Christ*, 21.

¹⁴ JOHN PAUL II, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, n. 29.

¹⁵ *Ib.*

¹⁶ JOHN PAUL II, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, n. 30.

¹⁷ JOHN PAUL II, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, n. 31.

¹⁸ Cf. P. CHAVEZ, *My Dear Salesians, be saints* ACG 379 (2002) pp. 3-39.

¹⁹ P. CHAVEZ, *Address at the closing of the GC25*, ACG 378 (2002), n. 196.

neighbour, especially the most needy».²⁰ As real educators we need to offer «a genuine “*training in holiness*”²¹ which is suitably adapted to people’s needs, which prepares them to become expert guides in the spiritual life and makes our communities “places for hearing and sharing the Word, for liturgical celebration, for the teaching of prayer, and for accompaniment through spiritual direction».²²

Bearing witness to Christ: evangelisation as the primary mission

«We cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard» (*Acts* 4,20), Peter and John repond when the authorities in Jerusalem immediately after the first Easter Day try to forbid them to evangelise. We Salesians are present in countries that have long been evangelised and where the sun seems to be setting on a “Christian society”, and also in countries which joyfully welcome a first evangelisation. «We must rekindle in ourselves the impetus of the beginnings and allow ourselves to be filled with the ardour of the apostolic preaching which followed Pentecost. We must revive in ourselves the burning conviction of Paul, who cried out: “Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel” (*1 Cor* 9:16)».²³

At the conclusion of World Youth Day in Cologne, Benedict XVI told the young people, “Anyone who has discovered Christ must lead others to him. A great joy cannot be kept to oneself. It has to be passed on. In vast areas of the world today there is a strange forgetfulness of God. It seems as if everything would be just the same even without him. But at the same time there is a feeling of frustration, a sense of dissatisfaction with everyone and everything».²⁴ And to religious in Rome: «May your first and supreme desire therefore be to witness to the fact that God should be listened to and loved with all your heart, with all your mind and with all your might, before any other person or thing... Do not be

²⁰ JOHN PAUL II, *Vita Consecrata*, n. 39.

²¹ JOHN PAUL II, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, n. 31.

²² CIVCSVA, *Starting afresh from Christ*, n. 9.

²³ JOHN PAUL II, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, n. 40.

²⁴ BENEDICT XVI, *Homily at the closing Mass of World Youth Day*, Cologne, 21 August 2005. *OR* 21-22 August 2005 pp. 11.

afraid to present yourselves as consecrated persons, also visibly, and do your utmost to show that you belong to Christ, the hidden treasure for which you have left everything... the Church needs your witness, she needs a consecrated life that confronts the challenges of our time courageously and creatively».²⁵

The great challenge facing us in this millennium scarcely begun is precisely “to make the Church *the home and the school of communion*».²⁶ The extremely important task in the new evangelisation entrusted to consecrated life,²⁷ is the witness of communion, «*sign for all the world and a compelling force that will lead persons to faith in Christ*»,²⁸ lived «first of all in their internal life and then in the ecclesial community, and even beyond its boundaries, by opening or continuing a dialogue in charity, especially where today’s world is torn apart by ethnic hatred or senseless violence».²⁹ In an era characterised by globalisation and the return of nationalism, our Congregation and its members, too, precisely because it is international, «are sent forth to proclaim, by the witness of their lives, the value of Christian fraternity and the transforming power of the Good News»³⁰ «to uphold and to bear witness to the sense of communion between peoples, races and cultures».³¹ Our communities are called to become «training grounds for integration and inculturation and at the same time a witness to the universality of the Christian message».³²

More than our houses, works and organisations, the Church needs the presence of our consecrated lives, of our radical following of Christ. Pope Benedict reminds us: «In the face of the advance of

²⁵ BENEDICT XVI, *Speech to Men and Women Religious, members of Secular Institutes and Societies of Apostolic Life of the Rome Diocese (December 10, 2005)*. OR 11 December 2005, p. 5.

²⁶ JOHN PAUL II, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, n. 43.

²⁷ «Consecrated persons are asked to be true experts of communion and to practise the spirituality of communion as “witnesses and architects of the plan for unity which is the crowning point of human history in God’s design» (*Vita Consecrata*, n.46; cf. also n. 51).

²⁸ JOHN PAUL II, *Christifideles Laici*, n. 31.

²⁹ JOHN PAUL II, *Vita Consecrata*, n. 51; cf. *Starting afresh from Christ*, n. 28.

³⁰ JOHN PAUL II *Vita Consecrata*, n. 51.

³¹ *Ib.*

³² CIVCSVA, *Starting afresh from Christ*, n. 29.

hedonism, the courageous witness of chastity is asked of you as the expression of a heart that knows the beauty and price of God's love. In the face of the thirst for money that widely prevails today, your sober life, ready to serve the neediest, is a reminder that God is the true treasure that does not perish. Before the individualism and relativism that induce people to be a rule unto themselves, your fraternal life, which can be coordinated and is thus capable of obedience, confirms that you place your fulfilment in God. How is it possible not to hope that the culture of the evangelical counsels, which is the culture of the Beatitudes, may grow in the Church to sustain the life and witness of the Christian people?»³³

Returning to the young: presence as a sign of Christ's love

The young are "for the Church a special gift of God's Spirit". We Salesians can only look on them as Jesus did: with compassion (cf Mk 6, 34); we should only give them what Jesus did, the good news of God (ibid); we have nothing else to do than as Jesus did, attend to their needs (Mk 6,37).

These «young people, whatever their possible ambiguities, have a profound longing for those genuine values which find their fulness in Christ... If Christ is presented to young people as he really is, they experience him as an answer that is convincing and they can accept his message, even when it is demanding and bears the mark of the Cross». ³⁴ Like John Paul, we too should not hesitate «to ask them to make a radical choice of faith and life and present them with a stupendous task: to become "morning watchmen" (cf. Is 21:11-12) at the dawn of the new millennium». ³⁵

The evangelisation of the young through a loving presence and suitable challenging projects demands that, with courage and deep faith, we give fresh impetus to our Youth Ministry which can run

³³ BENEDICT XVI, *Speech to Men and Women Religious, members of Secular Institutes and Societies of Apostolic Life of the Rome Diocese (December 10, 2005)*. OR 11 December 2005, p. 5.

³⁴ JOHN PAUL II, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, n. 9.

³⁵ *Ib.*

the risk of remaining on the level of entertainment or education that is limited to civil or cultural matters or to a generic approach to the transcendent. Being reminded of those to whom our mission is directed obliges us to reflect and to operate “starting from the young” and not from our problems, and to return to the young who are the special “territory” for our mission, the church where we encounter God.

To the young, in addition to the proclamation of the Word (*kerygma-martyria*) and the celebration of the Sacraments (*leiturgia*), we offer a service of charity (*diakonia*), which for us is education not “a kind of welfare activity that could equally be left to others but [a service that] is part of the nature of the Church an indispensable expression of her very being».³⁶

A very real challenge with which the whole Church is seriously being faced, is the problem of vocations. We want to encourage the young “to be aware of their active responsibility in the Church’s life. Together with the ordained ministry, other ministries, whether formally instituted or simply recognised, can flourish for the good of the whole community, sustaining it in all its many needs”.³⁷ “A primary responsibility of all consecrated men and women is therefore to propose with courage, by word and example, the ideal of the following of Christ and then to support the response to the Spirit’s action in the heart of those who are called».³⁸

2.4 Challenges and perspectives in Consecrated Life

Challenges of Consecrated Life

Nowadays consecrated life faces considerable challenges. Rather than delay on external elements such as secularism, relativism and globalisation, I think it will be more useful to concentrate on the internal challenges.

³⁶ BENEDICT XVI, *Deus Caritas est*, n. 25.

³⁷ JOHN PAUL II, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, n. 46.

³⁸ JOHN PAUL II, *Vita Consecrata*, n. 64.

Despite the authoritative reference in the Apostolic Exhortation on consecrated life, its *identity* is not always clear. Insistent proposals for its refoundation risk causing the awareness of its presence in the Church to become obscured. Moreover the lack of discernment about new forms of consecrated life lead to a confused image of it. And finally the weakness of the theology of Christian vocations makes such identity even more uncertain.

Consecrated life is not always successful in finding ways to express its *credibility* and its *prophetic quality*. The mission needs to be more boldly directed to the frontiers of poverty and evangelisation. The following of Christ requires us to find radical forms for authentic evangelisation. Fraternal life has difficulty in manifesting communion in face of the new demands of interculturality and globalisation. The spiritual life is still looking for ways to be lived and communicated.

A challenge, often felt as a threat, concerns the *uncertainty of the future* of consecrated life, especially with regard to the questions raised about its survival in certain parts of the world. The drop in numbers, lack of vocations and increasing age of the members create in the Congregations a lack of future prospects, the need for large-scale reshaping, and the search for a new cultural stability. To all this must sometimes be added a lack of vitality, vocational frailty, and painful desertions. It all leads to a lack of motivation, discouragement and paralysis. In such conditions it is difficult to discern a strategy of hope that will open up horizons, provide new paths to follow and ensure the necessary leadership.

Prospects for Consecrated Life.

Referring back especially to the International Congress of Consecrated Life in November 2004, entitled “Passion for Christ, passion for humanity”, it is possible to single out some possibilities for a course to follow today.

It is considered important in the first place to be able to *arouse a fascination* for consecrated life by making it something wonder-

ful and attractive. It is fascination that is capable of exciting intense interest, a pleasant freshness and a stimulating optimism. Consecrated life must continue to evoke grace and sympathy, fantasy and imagination; it must give rise to strength, enthusiasm and expectations. The appeal derives from the perception of its vitality, expressed in the primacy of God and in living intimately with him, with Christ and the evangelical counsels at centre stage, in availability to the Spirit and in the depths of a spiritual life, in the strength and boldness of the mission, in fraternal acceptance and communion, and in personal and community conversion.

It is important in consecrated life to *develop charismatic identity*. Without a charismatic project that is absorbing and engrossing, the process of vocational identification is difficult. A weak project leads to the development of identities that are confused and uncertain. A return to the Founder's charism is one of the decisive elements of identity. Today sociology makes it clear how the culture of excellence, the seeking for visibility and the sense of belonging help the development of the identity of religious groups. Our task is to be able to give proper theological and charismatic value to these sociological indicators by means of the evangelical excellence of consecrated life, the visible and attractive witness of our vocation and a strong sense of belonging to the community and the Congregation.

Consecrated life must be a *sign* that is *credible and prophetic*; in other words it must continue to look for forms of prophecy and credibility not only at a personal but also at an institutional level. It must return to a style of life that is poorer and simpler, frugal and basic. Structures need to be simplified; they frequently become far too heavy and, although they are useful, they do not always make clear the presence of God. Consecrated life must become a different way of living; it must inspire a new culture; it must adopt a critical approach and become a prophetic challenge to society and to the ecclesiastical world.

We need to *form people who are full of zeal and enthusiasm*. God has a passionate love for his people, and to this zealous God

consecrated life looks with eagerness. It must therefore form individuals equally zealous for God. But a passion for God and a passion for humanity are nevertheless a point of arrival rather than a point of departure. It is important to confirm confreres in their vocation, to revive the gift they received through their religious profession, to promote a generous response and sustain their vocational fidelity, Formation provides motivation, meaningful horizons, paths to be followed at all stages of life, opens the way to spiritual discernment and sustains vocation.

2.5 The process followed by the Congregation

The process being followed by the Congregation has its roots in the commitment to the renewal of consecrated life promoted by Vatican II. We may recall the valuable reflections and guidelines of the General Chapters that have led to an ever richer awareness of the identity and mission of the Salesian and the community at the present time.

The reflection began with the broad analysis and guidelines of the *Special General Chapter* (SGC), with a subsequent deeper examination in the light of various ecclesial documents. Here we find the basic foundations and broad horizons of the Salesian plan of life today, solidly rooted in the charismatic identity and in the specific mission to young people, given effect in a community approach and in solidarity with the Salesian Family and the laity.

A re-reading of the guidelines of the SGC gives us immediately an outline of the path the Congregation was to pursue in the General Chapters that followed. It will be worth our while to recall a summary of the rediscovery of our identity: the living sense of God's active presence, the mission to the young and the working classes, the building of community, the development in appreciation of the Salesian Family, and unity in decentralisation.

A first and close examination of some of these basic points was made in the GC21 and continued in increasing depth in the Chapters that followed.

GC 22: The Chapter of fidelity

The GC22 undertook the revision of the Constitutions in the light of Vatican II and the SGC. It can be rightly called the Chapter of the charismatic and missionary identity of the Congregation and consequently of the fidelity of the Salesians to their identity and mission.

The GC22 gave us the renewed text of the Constitutions, «an authoritative document» – Fr Viganò said in his concluding address – “which helps us to measure the truth and the relevance of our gospel choice of life and of our specific mission in history. Here then today is the new “identity card” of the Salesians of Don Bosco among the people of God!»³⁹

The approval of the renewed text of the Constitutions is a call to fidelity. Fr Viganò recalled Don Bosco’s words to the Salesians when the first Constitutions were approved: «What we really must do is strive to observe our rules and obey them faithfully. Now we have to abide by our rules, study them thoroughly understand them and observe them».⁴⁰ And in his spiritual testament Don Bosco had written: “If you have loved me in the past, continue to love me in the future by the exact observance of our Constitutions”.

All this is enlightening for the GC26, in which we want to take possession of Don Bosco once again and re-examine him in the light of present-day circumstances. Taking the Constitutions as the basis for the formation and life of the Salesian and the community is the way to know Don Bosco and bring him back to life; similarly the better we know Don Bosco the more fully are we able to live the Salesian Rule of life.

GC 23: The Chapter of the mission

The GC23 can be defined as the Chapter of the mission, that “mission to the young and the working classes” spoken of by the

³⁹ GC22, n. 59.

⁴⁰ *BM XII* p. 61. cf GC22, n. 91.

SGC, to which the GC23 returned in greater depth, taking up some elements of the GC21.

The Chapter document, *Educating young people to the faith*, highlights the traits of this mission: the decisive option for young people in their present situation and different contexts, with particular attention to those in most need; an authentic education to the faith with explicit evangelising activity that does not just stop at the threshold of the Gospel but provides a broad education that leads to social commitment, to the formation of conscience, to growth in love; an education to faith that leads to the choice of a vocation; the proposal of Salesian youth spirituality.

It all takes us back to Don Bosco's charism and original mission, to be given effect at the present day in the act of faith expressed at the end of the capitular document which speaks of "listening once again today to Don Bosco's voice". And as a condition for effective evangelisation the Chapter asked for the witness of the communities.

GC 24: The Chapter of sharing with lay people

The GC24, in a further study of the Salesian charism, recalled another element of the Oratory of Valdocco: Don Bosco's ability to involve many people in his mission for the young. The Chapter prompted us to renew the oratorian heart so as to share with lay people not only the mission but also the Salesian spirit. It was a new facet of the relationship between Salesians and laity called to share the same mission and spirituality.

Among the points to which it gave special emphasis were the elements of pedagogy and spirituality to be lived in common; competent training and formation; the essential role of consecrated persons as the "soul of the EPC"; the Salesian community as the guarantor and witness of the charism; and the Chapter made specific reference to works managed by lay people within Salesian projects, for which clear intentions and options were required so as to guarantee the charism.

Although the theme of the GC24 covered lay collaborators in general, it nevertheless referred in many places specifically to the Salesian Family, and to its commitment and to the involvement of the community in this regard. It leads to an emphasis on the importance of an examination by Salesians of this point also in view of the GC26.

GC 25: The Chapter of the Salesian community

The GC25 probed another essential element of the Salesian project: "*The Salesian community at the present day*". Starting from the fact that Don Bosco gathered around him a community of consecrated persons for the salvation of the young, the Chapter highlighted the fundamental elements in a Salesian community project for education and evangelisation: fraternal life, evangelical witness, and animating presence among the young.

We may note once again the close connection between clear references to the evangelical values of the primacy of God, the following of Christ and brotherly love, and the missionary trait of being with young people after the manner of Don Bosco. To this end there is also emphasis on the promoting of vocations. An essential role to which the GC25 points for the implementation of the community project as Don Bosco wanted it to be is that of the Rector.

From this rapid glance at the General Chapters of the period following Vatican II we can see the successive development and deeper study of the basic themes of our project of consecrated life, missionaries of the young according to the mind of Don Bosco. A Chapter like the GC26, centred on Don Bosco. on his charism and mission as they must be realised today, can serve as an evaluation of what we have done so far and as a relaunching for the future.

2.6 What the Provinces say

As I said earlier, the starting point for the choice of the theme for the GC26 was the situation of the Provinces, as it appeared especially from the Team Visits.

These revealed the importance of the processes launched regarding the *Salesian community*. The Provinces had been asked in fact to make an assessment of how the GC25 had been received, what difficulties had been met with in its application and what commitments had been made. The community was considered to be the centre of every renewal strategy. Its spiritual and fraternal life must continue to be fostered, its qualitative and quantitative consistency be maintained, its animation be assured, especially through the action of the Rector, and its ability for discernment and planning be increased.

The Team Visits also brought to light the needs and prospects most keenly felt by the Provinces. In the first place the need to rekindle the *apostolic zeal* of the individual confrere was expressed. Any renewal of the spiritual and pastoral life of the community was thought impossible without an effort by every individual member. Examples came to light once again of activism, dispersion, and spiritual and pastoral mediocrity. There is an awareness that the fire of pastoral love, apostolic zeal and the oratorian heart find their origin first of all in the spiritual life. The mission must not be identified only with the works, activities and initiatives; it is an expression of zeal for the salvation of souls.

There was an evident awareness of the urgent need for *evangelisation*. Every Region has its own particular challenges. Through the continental synods the Church has expressed its own new tasks in the post-synodal Apostolic Exhortations "Ecclesia in Africa", "Ecclesia in America", "Ecclesia in Asia", "Ecclesia in Europa", and "Ecclesia in Oceania". The Congregation too feels the urgent need to update its own evangelising options, which were expressed in the GC23. One need think only of the challenge posed by non-Christian religions and in particular Islam, of the phenomenon of the sects, of relativism and laicism, of poverty and social exclusion, of the opportunities arising from immigration, of frontiers of the mission "ad gentes". And the Provinces also expressed the need for more explicit evangelisation in the field of education.

Another keenly felt need concerns the fostering of *consecrated Salesian vocations*. Experiences of the Congregation since the GC24 make it clear that if Don Bosco's charism is to flourish, there is need for consecrated persons. Within a youth pastoral work of an explicitly vocational nature, still more specific attention needs to be given to the consecrated Salesian vocation. A notable commitment is also needed to a deeper knowledge and greater visibility of the identity of the Salesian brother, to fostering his formation and promoting his particular vocation.

In the Team Visits the call to *evangelical poverty* was also emphasised. There is an awareness in the Congregation that contexts of both poverty and well-being invite us, for different reasons, to live a life that is simple, basic and austere. Our witness risks losing all credibility if ways and means are not found for the visible manifestation of a poor life. Consumerism and the shift to middle-class values are giving rise to individualism and are undermining apostolic enthusiasm. The search for an easy life puts a brake on pastoral initiatives and apostolic dedication. Poverty needs to be expressed also institutionally; there is need for transparency in the making of decisions, the sharing of goods, and solidarity with those in need. We must get back to being a Congregation of poor people and a Congregation for the poor.

Finally the Provinces are asking themselves about new *forms of poverty among the young*. The need is felt to reflect on this and return to being with young people. So far we have not sufficiently analysed what it is that keeps us away from the young and sought out what would facilitate our remaining with them. In the Provinces there is a movement towards going to places where youngsters are in the greatest need and to starting work among them. The Congregation needs to mobilise its best forces, those most generous and most available, so as to be ready to go into the most arduous, risky and demanding situations of the mission.

The Team Visits also revealed specific problems in every Region, such as the situation regarding restructuring, the inculturation of

formation, and the formation of lay people. The theme of the GC26 will be able to provide visions and perspectives that can throw light on even these more particular situations.

3. THE THEME OF THE GC26

The theme of the GC26 is both strongly challenging and powerfully stimulating. The phrase "*Da mihi animas, cetera tolle*" takes both the confrere and the community to their roots as being consecrated, and in particular to the heart of the mission, which is none other than being taken over by God for the purpose of becoming his transfiguring presence among the young. The passion for God and the passion for humanity, which consecrated life nowadays feels itself called to uphold, finds in Don Bosco's programme of "*Da mihi animas*" a perfect Salesian translation.

3.1 Programme of life of Don Bosco and of the Salesian

In "*Da mihi animas, cetera tolle*" we, sons of Don Bosco, find the motive and method for meeting the present cultural challenge courageously and without ambiguity.

"*Da mihi animas*" puts at the centre of the life of the consecrated Salesian the meaning of the fatherliness of God, the riches of the death and resurrection of Christ and the power of the Spirit, which are given to every young person. At the same time it arouses in the confrere the burning desire to make these possibilities known to the youngsters, so that they may relish them, live a happy life enlightened by faith in this world, and be saved for all eternity. It will prompt the confrere to make every effort and use every means, even when there is at stake a single youngster, a single soul.

"*Cetera tolle*" motivates the consecrated Salesian to keep away from the "liberal model" of consecrated life depicted in the letter

"You are my God. My happiness lies in you alone".⁴¹ To attribute the crisis to the prevailing culture, that is to factors such as secularism, consumerism, hedonism, is not enough. Historically consecrated life was born as an alternative, a counter-cultural movement, a contestation and revival of the faith in a stalemate situation. What makes it fragile at the present day is a weakness of motivation and of identity in the face of today's world.

Don Bosco's motto and programme sums up our spirituality (cf. C. 4). It is valid for all Salesians at every time of life – not only those who because of age and good health are full of energy, but also for the sick and elderly. The zeal of *Da mihi animas* implies the fire of charity. It is expressed not only in tireless educational and pastoral work but is manifested also in patience and suffering, which take on a saving value in the cross of Christ.

3.2 Charismatic identity: the Salesian spirit

I would like at this point to quote a passage from 120 years ago which, apart from some obsolete terms, could have come from the present day. It is from a source outside Don Bosco, and shows us what others thought of his work by highlighting the identity of the charism of our holy founder.

It is something said by the Cardinal Vicar of Rome, Lucido Maria Parocchi who in 1884 was wondering what precisely was specific in the Salesian Society, and came up with the following reply: "I want to tell you what is the distinguishing mark of your Congregation, what it is that forms your character, just as the Franciscans are distinguished for poverty, the Dominicans for the defence of the faith, the Jesuits for culture. You have traits similar to those of the Franciscans, Dominicans and Jesuits, but they are differentiated by their manner and purpose... What therefore is special in the Salesian Congregation? What gives it its character and physiognomy? If I have properly understood it and unless I am

⁴¹ P. CHAVEZ *You are my God, my happiness lies in you alone*, AGC 382 (2003) pp. 3-28.

much mistaken, what gives it its specific character, its essential note and particular countenance, is charity practised in accordance with the world's needs at the present day".⁴²

The second chapter of the Constitutions gives a clear outline of the elements of the Salesian spirit, putting on the lips of Don Bosco almost from the outset the words of St Paul to the community at Philippi: "*What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, do, and the God of peace will be with you*" (Phil 4,9).

It seems to me that this was a happy choice of a text to introduce the identity of the Salesian spirit, because it is a "reminder, at once affectionate but deeply felt, of fidelity to Don Bosco as the primary and authentic source of the Salesian spirit, in so far as he himself, like Paul, was a first genuine imitator of the Gospel of Christ and hence our authoritative and indispensable model".⁴³

Much is said nowadays about the "*refounding of Consecrated Life*". The expression is well grounded if it expresses the desire to take it to its foundation which is no other than the Lord Jesus:

⁴² BS 8 - 1884 - n. 6, pp. 89-90.

The Cardinal continues as follows: "Today's world can only be attracted and drawn towards good by charitable works. Nowadays the world has no time for anything besides material things; it doesn't want to know anything about spiritual things. It ignores the beauty of the faith; it knows nothing of the greatness of religion, it rejects any hope in a future life, it denies God Himself. This world understands Charity only as a means, not as the end and the principle. It knows how to analyse this virtue but not how to make a synthesis of it. *Animalis homo non percipit quae sunt spiritus Dei*: as St Paul puts it. If you tell people of this world: "It is necessary to save the souls that are being lost, it is necessary to teach those who do not know the principles of religion, and to give alms for love of that God who one day will reward those who are generous", the men of this world will not understand.

It is necessary therefore to adapt oneself to this world, which is in full flight. God makes himself known to pagans through the natural law; he makes himself known to the Jews by means of the Bible; to the Greek schismatics through the great traditions of the Fathers; to protestants through the Gospel, to the world today through charity. Tell this world: "I am taking youngsters off the streets so that they don't fall under the trams, so they don't fall down a pit, I will put them in a hostel so that they don't waste the best years of their lives in vice and carousing, I bring them into schools to educate them so that they don't become a prey on society, don't end up in prison; I call them to me and I look after them so that they don't poke each others eyes out", then the men of this world understand and begin to believe".

⁴³ *The Project of Life of the Salesians of Don Bosco*. A guide to the Salesian Constitutions, Rome, 1986, p. 156.

“For no one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid; that foundation is Jesus Christ” (1 Cor 3,11). Moreover this process can be successful if the aim is to bring back consecrated life to the Founder of every charism: “Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you” (Phil 4,9). Any other interpretation given to attempts at refoundation are doomed to failure.

The Salesian spirit was defined in the SGC as “our own style of thought and feeling, of life and activity, in putting into operation the specific vocation and the mission which the Holy Spirit does not cease to give us”. (*SGC*, 86). The Salesian spirit is before all else the “spirit of Don Bosco” or, in other words, the vocation, life work and teaching of our father; it is realised concretely in the history and life of the Congregation and the Salesian Family, which means in the holiness of life of the Salesians (cf. *SGC*, 87). The definition was developed in a more structured manner in the GC21 and GC22.

The second chapter of the Constitutions presents the basic attitudes that animate the Salesian: pastoral charity, which is the centre and synthesis of the Salesian spirit and finds its source in the heart of Christ, apostle of the Father; union with God, the secret of growth of pastoral charity in the vision of faith, and in a permanent commitment of hope in daily life; the sense of Church; the love of predilection for the young, loving kindness as an expression of spiritual fatherhood, a family atmosphere, optimism and joy; work and temperance, creativity and flexibility, the preventive system as a synthesis of all this commitment; and finally Don Bosco as the practical model of the Salesian spirit.

3.3 Apostolic zeal: “the glory of God and the salvation of souls”

The glory of God and the salvation of souls were Don Bosco’s deepest interests. Working for God’s glory and the salvation of

souls amounts to conforming one's will to that of God, who communicates himself as Love, thus manifesting his glory and immense love for men, all of whom he wants to be saved.

There is a unique point in the "story of a soul" (1854), where Don Bosco reveals the secret of the purpose of all his activity: "When I dedicated myself to this part of the sacred ministry I intended to consecrate all my labours to the greater glory of God and the salvation of souls; to work to produce good citizens for this earth so that one day they might be worthy inhabitants of heaven. May God help me to be able to continue until my last breath. Amen".⁴⁴

Don Bosco's holiness shines out in his works, but the works are only an expression of his faith. It is not the works in themselves that make the apostle, as Paul tells us: "If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love... I am nothing" (1 Cor 13,1), but it is certainly faith given new life by works of charity that makes the apostle holy: "You will know them by their fruits" (cf. Mt 7,16.20).

To "life in God" and "union with God", in a real and not only psychological manner, all Christians are invited. Union with God means living one's own life in God; it means remaining in his presence; it is a sharing in the divine life that is in us. Don Bosco made God's revelation the reason for his own life, according to the logic of the theological virtues: with a faith that became a sign that attracted the young, with a hope that became for them an enlightening word, and with a charity that they saw as a gesture of love.

Don Bosco was always faithful to his mission of active charity. Where a spurious mysticism could have cut the link with reality, faith compelled him to persevere through fidelity to needy youngsters. When his work was threatened by tiredness or resignation

⁴⁴ Cf. G. BOSCO, *Piano di regolamento per l'Oratorio maschile di S. Francesco di Sales in Torino nella regione Valdocco. Introduzione*, in P. BRAIDO (Ed.), *Don Bosco Educatore. Scritti e Testimonianze*. Roma, LAS 1997, p. 111.

he was supported by the same means as Paul: *Caritas Christi urget nos* (2 Cor 5,14). His charity never quailed in the face of difficulties: *I have become all things to all people, so that I might by any means save some* (1 Cor 9,22). In matters of education he did not fear defeat, but only apathy and lack of commitment.

In Don Bosco we have an example of spiritual theology in action; his prodigious activity was prompted by the urgency of the needs he faced. His hard work was a consequence of his interpretation of a particular aspect of asceticism: it was an apostolic activity from start to finish. If in St Alphonsus asceticism is an element particularly internal to man, in Don Bosco it took on meaning in connection with work; it consisted in wholehearted commitment to the tasks God gave him to carry out.

In Don Bosco we discover the meaning of relativity between one thing and another, and at the same time the need to use them for the purpose he has at heart. He preferred not to hold rigidly to certain schemes – he found a practical pastoral and spiritual approach better than one that was theological and speculative. His apostolic zeal had a particular tone to it: salvation is to be achieved by methods of loving kindness, gentleness, joy, humility, eucharistic and Marian piety, and charity towards God and men.

3.4 *Da mihi animas*

For Don Bosco therefore the first part of the motto, “*Da mihi animas*”, expresses zeal for the salvation of souls, made concrete in the urgency of evangelisation and the need to promote vocations to the consecrated Salesian life.

3.4.1 *Urgent need for evangelisation.*

Evangelisation must be motivated and encouraged. We recall Don Bosco’s own example, who always felt the salvation of the young as a pressing obligation: “he said no word, he took up no

task that was not directed to the salvation of the young" (C. 21), And we remember the need for all peoples to know the gospel, which is the source of humanisation and the advancement of the human race.

The main priority of the Congregation is to take on the task of evangelisation in the field of education. Conversely, when we take on direct tasks of evangelisation we cannot fail to educate; for us Salesians any kind of catechesis without education is impossible.

Nowadays evangelisation presents new and different tasks according to different regional areas. It is important therefore that every Region study its own frontiers of evangelisation so as to move to the places where the mission is calling.

3.4.2 Need for recruitment

Here again we return in the first place to Don Bosco. He became aware that he could not confront the numerous needs of the young on his own. And so he appealed to the availability and expertise of many other people. He knew also that for continuity and strength his charism would need consecrated persons; in particular he understood the need for Salesian priests and Salesian brothers.

Especially after the GC24, we too became aware of the need to involve lay people, but also that the charism will make no progress unless there is a strong and visible nucleus of consecrated persons. Moreover we realised that the Congregation would put its identity at risk if it lost its consecrated lay component. It is particularly necessary that the vocation of the Salesian brother be kept alive in the Congregation.

We must therefore acquire the skill and ability to involve and recruit others, to suggest to young people the charismatic experience of Don Bosco, to invite them to stay with him for ever. And we must also have a systematic plan for following up vocations to Salesian consecrated life in both its lay and priestly forms.

3.5 *Cetera tolle*

For Don Bosco the second part of the motto, "*cetera tolle*", means detachment from whatever can keep us away from God and from the young. For us at the present day this becomes concrete in evangelical poverty, and in deliberately choosing to work for youngsters who are "poor, abandoned and in danger", by being sensitive to the new forms of poverty and working on the new frontiers where they are in most need.

3.5.1 *Evangelical poverty*

Consecrated life in future years will be realised in its concentration on the radical following of the obedient, poor and chaste Christ. If all three of the evangelical counsels speak to us of our total offering of ourselves to God and dedication to the young, it is poverty that leads us to give ourselves without reserve or hesitation even to our last breath, as did Don Bosco. The practice of the evangelical counsels lets us give free rein to the utmost limits of our availability.

There is nothing more contradictory and inconsistent than to make profession of the total donation of ourselves through the evangelical counsels, and then live with reservations attached to our energies and availability, giving way to temptations to an easy life, spending old age in a kind of vocational rest-home, indifferent to the drama of poverty involving millions of people in the world.

We Salesians bear witness to poverty by tireless work and temperance, but also by the essentials of an austere and simple life, by sharing and solidarity, and by the responsible use of resources. Our poverty calls us to carry out an institutional reorganisation of our work in a way that will avoid the risk of seeming to be in the educational business rather than being apostles through education. Anyone who has chosen to follow Jesus has also chosen to make his own Christ's style of life, to shun riches, to live the beatitude of poverty and of simplicity of heart, and to be on easy familiar terms with the poor.

3.5.2 *New frontiers*

The image of Don Bosco roaming the streets of Turin in search of needy children is not just a figment of the imagination. For us it is an imperative, a natural course of action. The ascesis of the preventive system requires us to go to young people most in need and take up our work where they are to be found. As individuals and as an institution we must identify what it is that blinds us to their situation or, if we do see, what it is that prevents us from reacting with the mind and heart of Don Bosco. Availability means we have to be ready to go into mission situations that may be risky, demanding and fraught with difficulties.

The existence of the new forms of poverty means that we have to keep in mind that nowadays all young people are in need, but especially is this the case for those in whom material poverty is combined with affective, spiritual and cultural forms. And when we speak of new frontiers of the Salesian mission, referring to the different contexts in which it is carried out, it means we must address problems in the fields of immigration, social exclusion, discrimination,⁴⁵ sexual exploitation, child labour and the lack of a religious sense.

Our option for the most needy of poor youngsters and for the new frontiers where they are waiting for us has its source and deepest motivation in the love of God that prompts us to perform works of charity. This frees us from any ideological or sociologising tendency.⁴⁵ Such a choice has also an evangelising purpose, as Jesus pointed out in the synagogue of Nazareth at the beginning of his ministry: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor" (*Lk* 4,18). It is not a matter therefore of reducing our option for the poor to mere human advancement, but of bringing to them the treasures of Jesus and his Gospel.

⁴⁵ Cf. BENEDICT XVI, *Deus caritas est*, n. 31b.

3.6 Requirements for bringing the theme down to earth

To give the theme concrete expression some requirements must first be established: the taking of certain steps, the conversion of mentalities, and the changing of structures.

Steps to be taken

Keeping in mind the objective of the GC26, which consists in the strengthening of our charismatic identity by starting again from Don Bosco and reawakening in the heart of every confrere the zeal of "*Da mihi animas, cetera tolle*", we must accept the fact that achieving this goal will require the following out of certain processes.

The charismatic identity asks us for a *mature knowledge of Don Bosco*, of his motivations, his great spiritual and apostolic options, and a *knowledge of the Constitutions*, which enshrine Don Bosco at the present day.

Apostolic zeal demands the resurgence of an explicit *evangelisation* in all our works and foundations, the courage to invite others to *consider a vocation* to the Salesian consecrated life, the renewal of a *poor and austere lifestyle*, the finding of fields of work that will allow us to concentrate on educative priorities and evangelisation in our mission rather than on the management of works, the identification of new forms of poverty and the frontiers where they are to be found, and the making of a reappraisal of our works and activities from a charismatic standpoint.

The first step in this process will be taken *through the involvement of the communities and through the Provincial Chapters*, in which what God is calling for must be identified with regard to the above-mentioned aspects, the reading of the situation of communities in this regard together with the challenges presented, and proposals of what must be done for renewal.

The second step will be the *celebration of the GC26* and the guidelines it will give to the whole Congregation.

Mentalities to be changed

There is need to start up a process of personal conversion regarding our Salesian charismatic identity, through a responsible reviving on the part of every confrere of fervour and vocational fidelity, a change of heart, and a life of apostolic zeal. It is first and foremost a matter of a change of mentality.

This means launching initiatives that will make a powerful impact on motivation in the confreres from a spiritual and psychological point of view, by improving their charismatic identification and their self-esteem.

This in turn will require a dynamic re-enforcing of the fact of being consecrated Salesians; of adopting a poor and simple lifestyle and shunning any "liberal model" of consecrated life; it will mean committing ourselves with apostolic dedication to the mission of evangelising the young; it will mean being available for activities of updating and renewal; it will mean supporting the plan of the community.

Structures to be changed

The process of structural change must be consistent with the conviction that "the mission is not the same thing as initiatives and pastoral activity".

It means taking effective action to change the structures of community life and the way we carry out our mission: alternative kinds of work, revision of the roles of Salesians in the mission, the management of complex works.

These changes must be inspired and guided by courageous decisions of government which make our convictions credible.

4. PRAYER FOR THE GC26

I end this letter with an appeal to Provinces, Vice-Provinces and Delegations, to communities and individual confreres to place

themselves in the atmosphere of the General Chapter, gathered around Mary who was so attentive to the voice of the Spirit.

The General Chapter cannot be reduced to the Assembly of Provincials and Delegates, but includes the whole process from its convocation to the approval of the guidelines it gives at its conclusion: it involves every community and every individual confrere.

The General Chapter is important especially for the processes it launches. Such processes cannot be completed in a period of six years, but start up a dynamic transformation that extends beyond the following Chapter.

The General Chapter is a time of intense ongoing formation that fosters a change of mentality. It makes us look at ourselves in the light of God's call expressed in the Constitutions, not to discourage us by examining the reality of our present situation but to help us to seek together the ways that will enable us to give a fuller response.

The General Chapter inculcates in us an attitude of discernment of God's will for the Congregation at the present moment in history, so that we can better respond to his designs and the expectations of the young. This requires a strong climate of prayer and of listening to God's word.

To Mary, who collaborated by her motherly intervention when the Holy Spirit raised up St John Bosco (cf. C. 1) and showed him "his field of labour among the young and was the constant guide and support of his work, especially in the foundation of our Society" (C. 8), we entrust this Salesian Pentecost that will be the GC26. With her help we shall be able faithfully to continue our mission among young people as "witnesses to the young of her Son's boundless love" (C. 8).

I offer you now a prayer to our Father Don Bosco, that could be recited in communities and by individual confreres to obtain from God the reawakening in our hearts of the zeal of "*Da mihi animas*,

cetera tolle" and his assistance in the preparation and celebration of the GC26, from which we hope to receive abundant fruits for our Congregation and our young people.

PRAYER TO DON BOSCO

DON BOSCO,

*You were raised up by the Holy Spirit,
through Mary's motherly intercession,
to play a part in the salvation of the young.*

*You have been given to us by God as a father and teacher,
and have left us an attractive programme of life
in the motto "Da mihi animas, cetera tolle".*

*You have passed on to us, through God's inspiration,
an original spirit of life and action,
centred and summarised in pastoral charity.*

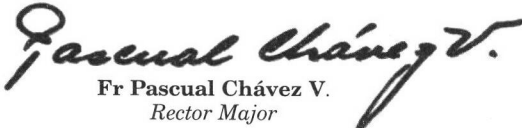
*Obtain for us that our hearts may be inflamed
with a burning zeal for evangelisation,
that we may be credible signs of God's love for the young.*

*Help us to accept with joyful serenity
the daily demands and renunciations of the apostolic life
for the glory of God and the salvation of souls.*

*Obtain for us that the General Chapter may help us
to strengthen our charismatic identity
and reawaken our apostolic zeal.*

AMEN

With all best wishes,


Fr Pascual Chávez V.
Rector Major

2. GUIDELINES AND POLICIES

2.1. CALENDAR OF PREPARATION FOR THE 26th GENERAL CHAPTER

In preparation for the GC26 the following calendar indicates the main events.

April - May 2006

Between 3 and 12 April the Rector Major and the General Council studied the theme of the 26th General Chapter, its various aspects and the calendar. On 12 April the Rector Major appointed Fr Francesco Cereda Moderator of the GC26, according to the norms of article 112 of the General Regulations.

On 15 April the Rector Major, according to the norms of art. 112 of the Regulations, appointed the Technical Commission for the GC26, composed of the following confreres: Fr Tarcisio Scaramussa, Fr Marek Chmielewski, Bro. Claudio Marangio, Fr Juan Carlos Pérez Godoy, Fr Gian Luigi Pussino.

The Commission, chaired by the Moderator, met together in Rome between 15 and 17 May and in various sessions studied and formulated the following items:

- Calendar of preparations for the GC26, starting from the opening date decided by the General Council.
- Outline for reflection and work on the theme of the GC26, offered as a help to the Provinces.
- Suggestions for the preparation and carrying out of the Provincial Chapters.
- Juridical norms useful for the elections.

The contributions drawn up by the Technical Commission were passed to the Rector Major by the Moderator and have become part of this number 394 of the Acts of the General Council.

June 2006

The Rector Major convokes the 26th General Chapter, in accordance

with articles 150 of the Constitutions and 111 of the General Regulations. He thereby specifies its principal purpose, place and opening date.

With the Acts of the General Council n. 394 the letter of convocation, the theme for the GC26, the outline for reflection for the local and Provincial communities and the instructions for the carrying out of the Provincial Chapters are being sent.

July 2006

The Moderator sends to the Provincials the forms for the minutes and the model sheets for the contributions of the Provincial Chapters and of the confreres to the GC26. They are also placed on the site of the Direzione Generale.

The Rector Major appoints the Commission for the review of the minutes of the elections of the Provincial Delegates to the GC26 (cf. Reg. 115). Under the direction of the Moderator of the GC26, this verifies the calculation of the number and the lists of the confreres belonging to the Province or Vice Province in view of the PC.

September 2006 - July 2007

Starting from September 2006, and as soon as possible the Provinces send to the Moderator of the GC26 the "General list of confreres belonging to the Province in view of the PC" (cf. AGC 394 n. 2.4.3.1).

During this time in the Provinces the preparations for and the carrying out of the Province Chapter take place (C. 171-172), the date of which should be fixed according to the following dead line.

15 July 2007

Not later than this date the following documents should have reached the *Moderator of the GC26*:

- The minutes of the Provincial Chapters.
- The minutes of the election of the Delegates to the GC26 and their substitutes.

- The contributions of the Provincial Chapters.
- The contributions of individual confreres.

Proposals which arrive later than 15 July 2007 cannot be taken into consideration.

Provincial Chapters which study themes concerning their own province and make deliberations which need to be approved by the Rector Major with his Council in accordance with C. 170, must send the deliberations concerned to the *Secretary General*.

August 2007

The contributions received will be put in order and classified by a group set up for the purpose. In the meantime the Rector Major appoints the precapitular Commission for the preparation of the working documents to be sent to those taking part in the GC26 (cf. Reg. 113).

September 2007

The precapitular Commission is at work.

November 2007

The working documents prepared by the precapitular Commission are sent to the Provincials and the Provincial Delegates to the GC26.

December 2007 - February 2008

The members of the GC26 study the working documents in their own communities.

24 February 2008

The 26th General Chapter begins.

Conclusion of the Chapter

The duration of the GC26 is expected to be about two months; 18 April 2008 is expected to be its final day.

2.2. OUTLINE FOR REFLECTION AND WORK ON THE THEME OF THE GC26

In this outline several suggestions and proposals are made which might be useful to focus the attention of individual confreres, local communities and the Provincial Chapter on the theme on which the GC26 wants to reflect and the aims it intends to achieve.

2.2.1 Letter convoking the GC26

The starting point will be the study of the letter convoking the GC26. In this the Rector Major recalls the presence of the Holy Spirit and of Mary to whom he entrusts this important moment, “a new Pentecost” in the life of the Congregation. He then calls on Don Bosco, in whose name he convokes the GC26 and to whom he addresses a final prayer.

In addition to indicating the theme and the aims, the letter also presents the methodology for the GC26. What is required is a study of the theme not so much from a doctrinal point of view, as from a planning point of view, so as to encourage “steps to be taken”, “mentalities to be changed”, “structures to be changed”, (*ACG 394*, n. 3.6) and so our becoming more credible in our life and mission.

The letter has four parts: the convocation, the context, the theme, the prayer of the GC26. The first and the third contain the presentation of the theme and the aims, with the reasons, structure and further reflections. The second part offers a wide-ranging view of the current context. The final part proposes an atmosphere of prayer to accompany the process.

2.2.2 Process of preparation for the GC26

The Provincial Chapter is not limited to its actual celebration, but is a process which the Holy Spirit begins in the heart of each confrere and which helps to awaken a sense of responsibility, avail-

ability and potential, especially if certain considerations are taken into account.

■ *The Provincial Chapter as a spiritual event*

As is the case with the General Chapter, the Provincial Chapter cannot be effective if it is not seen as a spiritual event and as a new Pentecost (cf. ACG 394, n. 1). Therefore the first thing to do is to accompany the process with prayer: «gathered around Mary, in a common prayer, attentive to the voice of the Spirit» (ACG 394, n. 4).

This applies particularly to the GC26 and to the Provincial Chapters that prepare for it, in which we are called to make of *da mihi animas, cetera tolle* «a prayer addressed to God by one who, in the commitment and fatigue of an apostolic challenge taken up in God's name, renounces all self-interest and wishes to take on the burdens of everyone» (ACG 394, n. 1.1) and so carry out the mission as prayer in action.

Only by our being open to the Spirit will there be a new vitality, which will help us to overcome situations of staleness, to strengthen the charismatic identity, to reawaken the heart. This demands that the whole process be accompanied by prayer, both personal and in community, and with the involvement of the Salesian Family, lay people and the young. The celebration of the PC should also include times for prayer and a climate of listening.

■ *The Provincial Chapter as personal conversion*

The GC26 requires a process of personal conversion. The main technique to be employed therefore is that of listening to the Word, to life, to others, to the young. The contents are to be accepted as the basis for meditation, which is meant above all to foster a change of heart and of mentality. Therefore with the PC we enter upon a state, a process, a season of more intense ongoing formation.

Personal discernment is a state of purification of the heart and a process of conformity to the will of God. The *da mihi animas* is an invocation of the gift of the mission; it is seeking souls; it is apos-

tolic zeal. The *cetera tolle* demands an assessment of one's purity of intention, the ability to be detached, total availability. Through such discernment evangelical choices can be made.

This process requires the daily practice of personal *lectio divina*, day by day fidelity to the examination of conscience, the celebration of the sacrament of reconciliation. No less important can be discussion with and listening to members of the Salesian Family, lay people, and the young who can tell us of their expectations and offer us their suggestions.

■ *The Provincial Chapter as a continuing living out of the charism*

The theme of the GC26 encourages every confrere in the context of his personal vocational fidelity, to go to the roots of Don Bosco's apostolic zeal. It is a theme that, rather than being just added to others, is meant to go deep and reawaken hearts to take up Don Bosco's plan of life, to make Don Bosco present today in every Salesian confrere.

At the present time following the Chapters on fidelity, on the mission, on sharing with lay people, on the Salesian community, we now come with GC26 to a Chapter on the Salesian's plan of life, on his identity, on his heart, on his charism, on the example of Don Bosco. It cannot but be another vital stage in the charismatic progress of our ongoing history.

The path already followed by the Congregation therefore needs to be kept in mind. For example, the role of the Salesian community in the EPC, attention to faith journeys, the planning mentality, community day, the personal plan of life, the community plan, commitments responding to new forms of poverty will all help to reinvigorate the charismatic identity and apostolic zeal.

■ *The Provincial Chapter as a planning process*

GC26 began when the Rector Major communicated the theme and each confrere felt himself at once challenged and offered his first response of being open to conversion. Therefore the GC26 puts down

its roots first of all in the heart of each confrere and then in the successive stages that will evolve in the local communities and in the Provincial community.

It is an oversimplification to limit the PC to the drawing up of contributions to be sent to the GC26. The process of the PC is the first step in the Province of taking up Don Bosco's plan of life. Then there will be the GC26. When it is then time for the next PC the Province will resume the path begun in the PC in preparation for the GC26 and, in the light of the guidelines of the GC26 itself, it will try to assess and improve on it, developing what has already been set in motion.

It is a matter therefore of living this time of the PC not only as anticipation and preparation, but already as the beginning of its implementation. It is necessary to create continuity between the present PC, the celebration of the GC26 and the later PC. The PC in preparation for the GC26 does not have a doctrinal but rather a planning character, with a view to the application to the life of the Province of the theme *da mihi animas, cetera tolle*.

2.2.3 Structure of the theme the GC26 key topics

Studying the letter convoking the GC26, five key central topics can be identified, which could be considered as modules for reflection and planning. It would be appropriate for the confreres, the local communities and the Provincial Chapter to focus their attention on them.

■ *Return to Don Bosco*

Each confrere represents Don Bosco today; through each one of us Don Bosco returns to be among the young. This requires on the part of each one a greater knowledge of him and of the Constitutions and the taking up of his plan of life, expressed in the motto *da mihi animas, cetera tolle*. This will help us to rediscovery our charismatic identity, especially as regards Salesian pedagogy and

Salesian spirituality, fan the flames of our apostolic zeal, encourage us to be present among the young, increase our sense of belonging and make our lives more credible.

■ *Urgent need for evangelisation*

Following Don Bosco's example, every confrere and community makes an explicit commitment to evangelisation. This commitment demands that we give a fresh impetus, courage and the depth of faith to our youth ministry which runs the risk of being merely recreational activity or social development. We need to reawaken the awareness that the Gospel is the source of true human growth and that for us evangelisation is carried out mainly in the field of education. We need to be able to move with greater flexibility to where the mission is calling us and to know how to identify and respond to the challenges evangelisation poses in our local and provincial contexts.

■ *Need for recruitment*

Every Salesian, if he identifies with Don Bosco and has apostolic zeal, if he recognises the needs for evangelisation, cannot fail to invite others to consecrated Salesian life. We are convinced that for the fruitfulness of the charism there is the need for a nucleus of identifiable consecrated persons. It is therefore important to learn how to suggest to young men that they should remain with Don Bosco always. Then it is important that every Province has an organised form of accompaniment for candidates to Salesian life in its two main forms, priestly and lay. Special attention needs to be given to the vocation of the Salesian Brother in his identity, visibility, formation and promotion.

■ *Evangelical Poverty*

Every Salesian, like Don Bosco, devotes his life to the young without reserve and therefore is ready for *cetera tolle*. There is great need today for a credible witness to evangelical poverty. The con-

sumer society approach and the search for comfort leads to individualism and a weakening of pastoral effort. Our asceticism is in view of apostolic action. In our spirit poverty is expressed in work and temperance, but also in an austere, simple and basic style of life. There needs to be a prophetic poverty practised by individuals but also by the institute, as well as an openness to fraternal sharing, to solidarity with the poor, to the responsible management of resources.

■ *New frontiers*

Following Don Bosco's example, every Salesian is concerned about the needs of the young. We need to be free to be able to go to the young and be where they are. We have not yet sufficiently analysed what is keeping us away from them and managed to discover what will facilitate our being with them. Structural changes are needed that will help us to concentrate more on the priorities of the mission rather than on managing works, on significant presences rather than operating on all fronts. It is necessary to identify the new forms of poverty around us. It is necessary to think about alternative models of works and of managing complex works; looking again at the roles of Salesians in carrying out the mission; making courageous management decisions that will give credence to our convictions.

2.2.4 The technique of community discernment

The letter convoking the GC26 proposes that the local communities and the PC should make use of the technique of community discernment. It is the same technique of working guidelines used in the GC25 (cf. *GC25* n. 184). For each of the five key central topics, the local communities and the PC are invited to carry out a process of discernment which unfolds in the three stages already familiar from various projects: God's call, the situation, courses of action (cf. *AGC* 394, n. 3.6).

God's call expresses those appeals from God that come to us from the Gospel and from the charism, from the current situation and from the context; it requires an interpretation that is theological, spiritual and pastoral, of what, in the main, it is demanding of us. Starting from personal, community and provincial experience, this call will be further clarified by what the Rector Major suggests to us in his letter.

The situation opens up a reflection on how the confreres, the communities and the province stand regarding these appeals. It is not a matter of analysing the context but just of seeing how we stand faced with God's call. The situation is considered from the point of view of its strengths and potential as well as of its weaknesses and difficulties. This stage prepares for the decisions to be taken in the next.

Courses of action need to be linked to the two previous stages, since they are a response to the appeals and to the situation. They need to be made practical in steps to be taken, mentalities to be changed and structures to be changed (cf. ACG 394 n. 3.6). They can be expressed at personal, community or provincial level. In some cases they can provide suggestions and recommendations for the whole Congregation.

The process of discernment in its three stages will be described in a *written document*, which should proceed from a *planning and not a doctrinal* point of view. As well as expressing the clear and open commitment of the Province regarding the theme of the Chapter, this can be its contribution to the GC26.

For each of the key central topics it would be best that the written document to be sent as the contribution of the PC to the GC26 should not be longer than two or at most three pages. By way of example, in order to facilitate the process of discernment in its three stages some questions referring to each of the key topics are now suggested.

2.2.5 Example of questions for the discernment process of the key topics

The proposed questions are only indicative; therefore a reply to each one is not necessary. They are open questions; others could be added. For each topic, however, the three stages of the discernment process should be followed: God's call, the situation, courses of action.

■ *Return to Don Bosco*

God's call - Drawing inspiration from the Gospel, from the charism, from the experience of the confreres, the communities and of the Province, in our own setting and in the light of the letter convoking the GC26, to what is God calling us in order to be Don Bosco today and to live our charismatic identity and apostolic zeal in a credible manner?

Situation - Bearing in mind what God is calling us to do, what positive elements are there in favour of our identification with Don Bosco's charism and what are the obstacles that get in the way?

Courses of action - What courses of action, i.e. what procedures to adopt, ways of thinking to modify, structures to change, are to be encouraged so as to acquire the spiritual and apostolic approach of Don Bosco, in order to bring to fruition a new way of identifying with him and with his charism, to live according to the Constitutions?

■ *Urgent need for evangelisation*

God's call - Drawing inspiration from the Gospel, from the charism, from the experience of the confreres, the communities and of the Province, in our own setting and in the light of the letter convoking the GC26, to what is God calling us in the face of the urgent needs of evangelisation in order to respond to the challenges this presents us with?

Situation - Bearing in mind what God is calling us to do, what positive elements are there in favour of our response to the urgent

needs of evangelisation and what are the obstacles that get in the way?

Courses of action - What courses of action, i.e. what procedures to adopt, ways of thinking to modify, structures to change, are to be encouraged so as to be open to the new needs of evangelisation, to make explicit and credible the evangelising approach in all our works so as to overcome the danger of a pastoral activity limited to recreational activities or only social development?

■ *Need for recruitment*

God's call - Drawing inspiration from the Gospel, from the charism, from the experience of the confreres, the communities and the Province, in our own context and in the light of the letter convoking the GC26, what is God calling us to do with regard to proposing Salesian life to the young, to providing accompaniment for candidates and to the vocation of the Salesian Brother?

Situation - Bearing in mind what God is calling us to do, what positive elements are there in favour of the proposal of Salesian life and the accompaniment of candidates, and what are the obstacles that get in the way?

Courses of action - What courses of action, i.e. what procedures to adopt, ways of thinking to modify, structures to change, are to be encouraged so as to make the proposal of consecrated Salesian life, lay or priestly, credible, to ensure the accompaniment of candidates to consecrated Salesian life, to encourage the identity, visibility, formation and the proposal of the vocation of the Salesian Brother?

■ *Evangelical Poverty*

God's call - Drawing inspiration from the Gospel, from the charism, from the experience of the confreres, the communities and the Province, in our own context and in the light of the letter convoking the GC26, what is God calling us to do with regard to living in a simple and basic manner and giving a prophetic and credible witness to evangelical poverty?

Situation - Bearing in mind what God is calling us to do, what positive elements are there in favour of the credibility of our poverty and our openness to *cetera tolle* and what are the obstacles that get in the way?

Courses of action- What courses of action, i.e. what procedures to adopt, ways of thinking to modify, structures to change, are to be encouraged so as to remain available for the mission, to make our witness of poverty more visible and credible, to live a simple, basic and austere life, and to ensure that resources are managed in a responsible and generous manner?

■ *New frontiers*

God's call - Drawing inspiration from the Gospel, from the charism, from the experience of the confreres, the communities and the Province, in our own context and in the light of the letter convoking the GC26, what is God calling us to do in the area of the new frontiers of the Salesian mission and of our presence among poor young people?

Situation - Bearing in mind what God is calling us to do, what positive elements are there in favour of our openness to new frontiers and to our presence among poor young people and what are the obstacles that get in the way?

Courses of action - What courses of action, i.e. what procedures to adopt, ways of thinking to modify, structures to change, are to be encouraged so as to be able to put on one side what could prevent our responding to the needs of poor young people and to the new requirements of the mission, in order to avoid the risk of a management of the works that is merely administrative and bureaucratic, in order to bring about really effective changes to the structures of community life and the carrying out of the mission?

2.2.6 Contributions to be sent to the Moderator of the GC26

The various contributions, which can be of three different kinds,

must reach the GC26 Moderator **by 15 July 2007**:

- *Contributions from the PC on the theme of the GC26 “Da mihi animas, cetera tolle”*; these contributions will refer to the five key topics; each of these has its own pro forma which will be made available by the Moderator of the GC26;
- *Contributons from individual confreres or from groups of confreres on the theme of the GC26 “Da mihi animas, cetera tolle”*; these contributions too will refer to the five key topics and will be written on an appropriate pro forma;
- *Other possible contributions from the PC, individual confreres or groups of confreres on issues regarding the life of the Congregation, the Constitutions or Regulations*; these contributions also will be written on an appropriate pro forma.

2.3. THE PROVINCIAL CHAPTERS

Some suggestions are offered to the Provinces and Vice Provinces which may be useful for the preparation and carrying out of the Provincial Chapter.

2.3.1 Tasks of the Provincial Chapter

“The provincial chapter”, declares art.170 of the Constitutions, “is the fraternal gathering in which the local communities strengthen their sense of belonging to the provincial community, through their common concern for its general problems. It is also the representative assembly of all the confreres and local communities”.

The tasks of the provincial chapter are indicated in art.170 of the Constitutions and art.169 of the General Regulations.

In the present case the provincial chapter is convoked primarily and specifically for the preparation of the GC26. In consequence:

- *Primarily and principally it will study the theme of the GC26: «Da mihi animas, cetera tolle».*
- *It will elect the Delegate (or Delegates) to the General Chapter and their substitutes (C 171,5).*

In addition to fulfilling these primary requirements, the chapter *can deal with other matters of more immediate concern to the province* and considered of particular importance, as provided for by C 171,1-2.

2.3.2 The preparation of the Provincial Chapter

After receiving the Rector Major’s letter convoking the GC26, it is desirable that the Provincial **call his council together**:

- to appoint the *Moderator of the Provincial Chapter* (R 168)

- to analyze more deeply the purpose of the GC26, and to clarify the objectives of the PC which is to prepare it;
- to take notice of the study outline on the theme assigned to the GC26;
- to study the norms governing the preparation and carrying out of the provincial chapter;
- to invite possible experts and observers to the chapter (R 168).

If it is considered opportune, the Provincial with his council may appoint a *preparatory commission*, to help the Moderator in preparing the provincial chapter. A provincial preparatory commission is not prescribed by the General Regulations. It has nevertheless proved useful in many provinces for the preparation of the provincial chapter. It is for the Provincial and his council to decide how it should be made up.

The provincial chapter should be convoked by a letter from the Provincial encouraging the confreres and the communities to reflect on the theme and to participate in the chapter's work. In it he will announce:

- the name of the Moderator of the provincial chapter;
- the members of the preparatory commission (if there is one);
- the date for the opening and place of the chapter, which could be spread over more than one session;
- the manner of grouping of communities which have less than six confreres, for the purpose of electing the delegate to the provincial chapter and his substitute (cf. R 163).

After the election of the delegates of the local communities, the Provincial in a second letter will

- communicate to the confreres the names of those elected,
- and present the list of perpetually professed confreres eligible for election to the chapter as delegates of the confreres of the province (cf. R 165,1-2).

2.3.3 The Moderator of the Provincial Chapter

The Moderator of the Provincial Chapter

- will decide and inform the communities of the dates by which must take place the election of:
 - the delegates of the communities and their substitutes;
 - the delegates of the confreres (from the provincial list);
 - eventual new substitutes for community delegates if a substitute is subsequently elected from the provincial list as a delegate of the confreres;
- will send to the communities the norms governing the election of the delegates of local communities and the forms for recording the minutes of their elections;
- will also announce the method to be used for the election of delegates of the confreres of the province.

2.3.4 The provincial preparatory commission.

It will be the task of the **provincial preparatory commission** (if there is one) to study, suggest to the Provincial, and foster all the initiatives it may consider useful for:

- sensitizing the confreres to chapter perspectives (by conferences, study days, group and community meetings, etc.)
- helping the confreres to prepare themselves spiritually for the work and obligations associated with the chapter (through retreats, days of prayer, celebrations, etc.)
- clarifying the chapter theme and helping the confreres in their study of it: every confrere could well be given a copy of the letter convoking the GC26, of the study outline found elsewhere in this edition of the Acts.

The preparatory commission can also suggest to Provincials ways of involving members of the Salesian Family (FMA, DBV, Cooperators, Past-pupils)...lay collaborators, friends of our works, (religious,

competent members of the clergy - including our Bishops and Prelates etc.) requesting their collaboration in the form and areas allowed by our norms and local situations.

In this provincial chapter dealing with “Da mihi animas, cetera tolle” and in which special attention is being given to our “return to the young”, it is important to find some special way of *involving young people* both at local community level and at that of the celebration of the PC.

The Moderator, in conjunction with the preparatory commission,

- will send out forms to the communities, for collecting the contributions and reflections of the confreres and/or communities;
- will lay down a date by which the forms must be returned to the Moderator of the provincial chapter;
- will study the contributions and proposals sent in by the communities and confreres, and arrange them in a manner which will facilitate their use for the provincial chapter’s reflection and decisions.

2.3.5 The carrying out of the Provincial Chapter itself

Every effort should be made to ensure that the provincial chapter is celebrated in a *fraternal atmosphere of reflection and prayer*, and that it is seeking God’s will as we try to bring an ever better response to the expectations of the Church and of youth. This will be helped by an appropriate preparation of the liturgy as regards content, method, aids, etc.

Every provincial chapter will have its own brief *collection of regulations*, containing norms for work, discussions, and the organization of the capitulars into study groups or commissions. For these regulations the norms indicated by the Constitutions and General Regulations should be kept in mind (C 153, R 161, 164, 169) together with any indications found in the provincial directory.

For the *communication of proposals and contributions to the GC26*, the indications given by the Moderator of the GC26 must be scrupulously observed. In particular, proposals and contributions must be written on the appropriate forms. Proposals from provincial chapters will carry the details of the voting. They can be written in *Italian, French, Spanish, English or Portuguese*.

2.3.6 Participation of the communities and confreres

It will be convenient at the end of these suggestions to list some duties of the communities and individual confreres.

The communities

- Accompany the whole of the capitular process by their daily prayer.
- Elect their delegate to the provincial chapter and his substitute. They compile the minutes of the election, following the model supplied by the Moderator of the PC.
- Receive and study the motives and material sent them by the Moderator of the PC.
- Deepen their knowledge of the theme proposed in view of the GC26, and submit contributions and proposals to the Moderator of the PC.

The individual confreres

- Follow, through information and prayer, the preparation, realization and conclusions of their provincial chapter.
- Place themselves in an atmosphere of personal conversion to make their own Don Bosco's spiritual and apostolic programme.
- Vote in the election of the delegate of their own community and his substitute.
- Take part in the election of the delegates of the confreres of the province.

- Make a personal study of the theme, availing themselves of aids and of the exchange of ideas in their own community.
- Submit personal contributions and proposals to the Moderator of the provincial chapter and collaborate in the drawing up and discussion of proposals and contributions from their own community.
- Send, if they so wish, personal proposals and contributions directly to the Moderator of the GC26.

2.4 NORMS FOR THE ELECTIONS

2.4.0 Introduction: lawfulness and validity of acts

The provincial chapter is a community act, whose value and consequences transcend the provincial community and the time at which it takes place.

The provincial chapter in fact elects delegates for the General Chapter and draws up proposals for the latter. In addition it can make decisions which, after the approval of the Rector Major with the consent of his council (cf. C. 170), have binding force for all the confreres of the province, including those who have not taken a direct part in the decision-making.

Its realisation therefore is governed by norms which guarantee that its acts are valid and lawful. These norms are listed in the universal law and in our own proper law (Constitutions and General Regulations), from which the provincial chapter derives its authority.

The observance of the laws concerning validity and lawfulness, and precision in compiling official documents, ensure clarity and expedition at successive stages of the work and eliminate delays, reference back, explanations and sanctions.

As a service to provincials and moderators of provincial chapters the following list of norms and juridical indications is provided. These norms refer to:

- *Canonical erection of houses*
- *Appointments*
- *Calculation of number of confreres and the various lists needed*
- *Minutes of the elections*
- *Special cases*
- *Formal indications*

2.4.1 Canonical erection of houses

The canonical erection of the house is indispensable (cf. can. 608, 665 §1) before the confreres can meet in an assembly which has the power of validly electing the delegate to the provincial chapter, and before the president of such an assembly of the confreres, who is the Rector according to C 186, can take part by right in the chapter (C 173,5). The document of erection should be in the house archives or those of the province.

For individual houses which existed before 1926 as communities in their own right (and not “filiali” i.e. dependent on another community) it is sufficient that there be evidence of its existence before that date in which houses were canonically erected without individual documentation. The same form of erection was made for the houses of Poland existing before 1930.

It is necessary therefore:

- a) to verify in good time the canonical erection of each house;
- b) to verify that in houses recently canonically erected a Rector has been appointed;

It should be remembered that “the one in charge” of a canonically erected house, if he has not been appointed Rector, cannot take part by right in the PC and cannot organise the election of the Delegate of the community to the PC.

- c) to put in hand the necessary procedure for the canonical erection of those houses not yet erected, before the election of the delegates.

For the canonical erection of a house the Provincial must ensure that it has at least three confreres (cf. can.115 §2); after consulting his council and obtaining the written consent of the diocesan bishop or the equivalent (can. 609 §1), the Provincial must make formal application to the Rector Major (cf. can. 608-610); and finally have received from the Rector Major himself the decree of the canonical erection (cf. C 132 §1,2).

- d) to indicate the way that canonically erected houses that do not have six confreres should meet together so as to elect the

delegate to the PC and his substitute (cf. R 163).

In the case of *canonically erected* houses with *less than six confreres* the norms of R 163 apply: if possible the provincial should arrange that they meet together so as to form the number of at least six members under the presidency of the rector who is senior by first profession. Thus united they will elect the delegate for the provincial chapter and his substitute. If however because of special circumstances the members of a house with less than six professed members cannot join with another in like condition the provincial will join the community with less than six professed members to a larger one (with six or more professed) and together the members of the two communities with equal rights (both active and passive) will proceed to the election of the delegate and his substitute for the provincial chapter. It should be remembered too that the rector even of a community with less than six professed members (provided it be canonically erected) takes part in the provincial chapter by right.

- e) to assign to a canonically erected house those confreres who belong to a house not yet canonically erected.

In the case of houses *not canonically erected* the provincial will assign the group of confreres concerned to a house already canonically erected in which they can fulfil their duties and exercise their rights as electors together with the confreres of that house. It should be remembered that the “one in charge” of a house not canonically erected does not take part by right in the PC.

2.4.2 Appointments

A verification must be made to see that the appointments of those who take part by right in the provincial chapter are in order and have not lapsed. This is especially important in places where the provincial chapter takes place at a time when there is normally a change of personnel and new assignments.

An appointment is in order when:

- a) it was made in accordance with the Constitutions;

- b) the person appointed has taken possession of his office in the manner prescribed;
- c) his term of office has not expired.

The Superior Council, on 23.6.1978, made the following decisions concerning entry into office and its cessation:

- the appointment of confreres to various offices, at either local or provincial level, becomes effective from the moment that the confrere formally takes over the office;
- such confreres remain in office until their successors formally take over the same office; this must happen not more than three months after the expiry of their mandate.

What has been said above is to be applied, case by case:

- to provincials and superiors of vice-provinces or special circumscriptions (cf. C 162, 168);
- to members of provincial councils (cf. C 167);
- to superiors of provincial delegations (cf. C 159);
- to rectors (cf. C 177);
- to directors of novices (cf. C 112).

For a vice-rector, given that with the approval of the provincial he can take the place of the rector if the latter is seriously impeded (cf. C 173,5), there must be a formal document regarding his appointment as vice-rector. Sufficient for this purpose is the letter of obedience given to the confrere. There must also be a formal document indicating that the provincial has recognized the serious impediment preventing the participation of the rector in the provincial chapter and approves his substitution by the vice-rector.

2.4.3 Calculation of number of confreres and the various lists needed

The calculation of the number of confreres who belong to a province (or a vice-province) for purposes of the provincial chapter is very important. It determines:

- a) the number of delegates of the province (or vice-province) who take part in the provincial chapter (cf. C 173,7; R 161-166);

b) the number of delegates which the province (or vice-province) sends to the General Chapter (cf. C 151,8; R 114-115, 118)

For *circumscriptions with a special statute* both the composition of the provincial chapter and the number of delegates to the General Chapter are laid down in the decree of erection of the circumscription concerned.

On this account it is very important to have the following **lists of confreres:**

- A general list of confreres belonging to the province made for purposes of the PC.
- A list of those who take part in the chapter “by right”;
- A list of confreres having “active voice”;
- A list of confreres having “passive voice”.

The norms governing the compiling of each of these lists are as follows:

2.4.3.1 A general list of confreres belonging to the province (or vice-province) for purposes of the PC.

It should be noted that this list of confreres belonging to the province “for purposes of the provincial chapter” does not coincide with the list that is asked for each year for statistical purposes; the latter includes also confreres in “irregular” situations.

The following are to be considered *as belonging to the province (or vice-province) for the purpose of the PC:*

A) confreres who made their first profession in the province (or vice-province) and are still resident in it at the time the list is compiled (C 160);

B) confreres who came from another province (or vice-province) as a result of a *definitive transfer* and who still reside in the province at the time the list is compiled (cf. R 151);

The *making of definitive transfers* belongs to the Rector Major (cf. R 151). *Definitive transfer* is considered to have taken place in the following cases:

- confreres who in the act of erection of a new province or vice-province are assigned to it (cf. ASC 284, p. 68, 3.2);
- missionaries who return definitively to their home country and are assigned by the Rector Major to the province he considers most suitable for their condition
- all those for whom the Rector Major (or the Vicar General) has issued a decree of definitive transfer.

C) confreres who at the time the list is compiled reside in the province (or vice-province), though coming from another province (or vice-province) on *temporary transfer*, in accordance with the norm of art. 151 of the Regulations;

Temporary transfer is brought about:

- either by a mandate of obedience (e.g. when a confrere is sent by obedience to exercise an office (rector, director of novices, teacher, etc. in another province), as long as the mandate lasts;
- or by agreement between two provincials, when a confrere is sent to help in another province (cf. R 151).

The confreres who have been transferred, even if only temporarily, are to be included and vote only in the province where they are actually working.

D) confreres who belong to the province (or vice-province) by one of the above-mentioned titles: (A, B, C), but who are *temporarily absent for lawful reasons*.

In accordance with R 166 the following are to be considered as “*lawfully absent*” (and hence to be included in the list):

a. confreres of the province (or vice-province) who at the time the list is made are living temporarily and by express mandate of their own provincial of origin in a salesian house of another province (or vice-province) for specific reasons of *study, health or work received from their own provincial*;

The confreres referred to here, those temporarily absent for reasons of study, health, or for work given them by their own provincial, are not “transferred”, even temporarily, to another province. They

- vote in the house where they are resident (outside their own province) for the election of the delegate of the community;
- but for the election of the delegate of the provincial community they are included in the provincial list of their own province.

It should be noted that the work given them by their own provincial, which is referred to here must be effectively a work for their own province of origin. This is evidently not the case of a confrere who resides and works in an interprovincial house: in a formation community or an interprovincial study centre, for instance, the formation or teaching personnel belong in all respects to the province of the territory in which the house is situated, and are counted only in that province. Here it is a matter of "temporary transfer" as long as their assignment lasts.

b. confreres who have received from their own provincial permission for "*absentia a domo*" (cf. can.665, §1) or who have received from the Rector Major (or from the Apostolic See) the indult of "*exclaustration*" (cf. can.686). Confreres who are "exclaustrated" (can.686) or "*absentes a domo*" (can.665), and whose permission to be absent has not expired, are Salesian religious and therefore to be included in the general list. Nevertheless:

- those exclaustrated in accordance with common law (can.687) are deprived of the right of active and passive voice;
- those "*absentes a domo*" can be deprived of the right of active and passive voice in the judgement of the provincial especially when leave of absence is granted for vocational reasons, at the time the concession is granted; cf. the letter of the Vicar General of 20.01.1985.

To be still more precise the following, although still belonging to the province (or vice-province), *must not be counted for purposes of the provincial chapter* and must therefore not be included in the above-mentioned general list:

- a) confreres who have made a formal request for dispensation from priestly or diaconal celibacy; or who have made a formal request for secularization or for dispensation from perpetual or temporary vows;

The practice is that for the purposes of the provincial chapter, confreres who have made a formal request to leave the Congregation are not counted, even though the request is still under consideration and has not reached a definitive conclusion.

- b) confreres who are *unlawfully outside community for any reason i.e. confreres in "irregular" situations.*

It will be opportune to keep in mind the following norm, given by the Rector Major on the occasion of the SGC and to be considered still valid: Transfers from one province to another which took place without the prescribed formalities, and for which there are no clear facts or documents, are to be considered definitive and hence with the loss of all effects of the former membership after ten consecutive years of residence in the new province.

The “general list” of the confreres of the province is the one to be used for calculating

- both the number of delegates of the provincial community to the provincial chapter (one for every 25 or fraction of 25 members: R 165, 3),
- and the number of delegates to the General Chapter (one if the total number of confreres is less than 250, two if the number is 250 or more: R 114).

As soon as this general list has been compiled, a copy is to be sent to the Moderator of the GC26, according the norms he establishes. It is his duty to verify the calculations of the individual provinces (or vice-provinces), so as to ensure the validity of the election of delegates to the General Chapter.

2.4.3.2 List of those who take part in the provincial chapter “by right”

This is a list which the provincial or the moderator of the provincial chapter will communicate to the confreres, so that they know which members attend the chapter by right, in view of the elections at provincial level.

In accordance with C 173 the following are members “by right” of the provincial chapter:

- the provincial (or superior of a vice-province);
- the provincial councillors;
- the delegates of the individual provincial delegations;
- the moderator of the provincial chapter;

- the rectors of canonically erected houses, even if the number of confreres is less than six;
- the director of novices.

As was said earlier, the composition of the chapter of the circumscriptions with a special statute is laid down in the respective decree of erection.

2.4.3.3 Lists of confreres having “active voice” (electors)

They are of two kinds of lists:

A) *List for the election of the delegates of each community to the PC.*

This list is compiled in each community and includes all *perpetually and temporarily professed confreres who reside in the community concerned*, including those of other provinces (or vice-provinces) who are there temporarily for reasons of study, health, or for a mandate received from their own provincial of origin (cf. R 165,2).

B) *Provincial list for the election of delegates of the provincial community to the provincial chapter.*

To this list, which is important for the election at provincial level, belong *all the confreres, both perpetually and temporarily professed, included in the “general list” of the province, except those who are deprived of active and passive voice.*

Those deprived of active and passive voice, even though they be included in the general list of the confreres of the province, are:

- a) confreres who have an indult of exlaustration, in accordance with can. 687;
- b) confreres who have received permission for “absentia a domo”, and who in receiving such permission renounced their right to active and passive voice.

In the case of the “absentes a domo”, their renunciation of active and passive voice must be clear from the document by which the provincial (with the consent of his council) grants permission for absence; cf. the letter of the Vicar General of 20.01.1985.

2.4.3.4 Lists of confreres with passive voice (eligible for election).

They are of three kinds of Delegates: Delegates of the community for the PC, Delegates of the province for the PC, and Delegates of the province for GC26. For this reason there are three types of lists:

A) *List of confreres eligible for election to the provincial chapter as "delegates of a community".*

It includes *all the perpetually professed members of the community* (including those of other provinces residing there even if only for reasons of study and health),

- except for those who are already members by right of the provincial chapter (cf. *list 2.4.3.2*)
- and those deprived of active and passive voice.

B) *List of confreres eligible for election to the provincial chapter as "delegates of the province".*

This list includes all the perpetually professed members on the "general list" of the province (*list 2.4.3.1*), with the exception of:

- those who are already members of the provincial chapter by right (*list 2.4.3.2*),
- the delegates already validly elected by the communities,
- confreres deprived of active and passive voice: those excommunicated and "absentes a domo" who have renounced their right to active and passive voice.

C) *List of confreres eligible for election to the GC*

For the election within the provincial chapter of the delegate or delegates of the province to the General Chapter, it should be kept in mind that *all the perpetually professed on the "general list" (list 2.4.3.1) are eligible for election, except:*

- the provincial, who is a member of the General Chapter by right;
- Rector Majors emeriti, present in the province, who are also members by right of the General Chapter;
- confreres deprived of active and passive voice.

2.4.4 Minutes of the elections

A) The rules for voting and scrutinies for the *Delegate of the local communities* are set out in arts. 161-163 of the General Regulations (cf. also C 153).

The corresponding minutes of the election of delegates of the local communities and their respective substitutes must be drawn up on the appropriate forms and be examined by the relevant provincial commission.

This provincial commission for the examination of the minutes of the election of the delegates of the communities will be appointed by the provincial in agreement with the Moderator of the provincial chapter.

B) The rules for voting and scrutinies in the voting for delegates of the province to the PC are set out in art. 165 of the Regulations.

The corresponding minutes of the election of the delegates of the province must contain the following details:

- the date of the scrutiny,
- the names of the scrutineers,
- an indication that the procedure required by the Regulations has been observed,
- results.

The minutes drawn up on the appropriate forms, must be endorsed by the signatures of the one presiding over the scrutiny and of the scrutineers.

C) The rules for voting and scrutinies in the voting for *the delegate(s) of the province to the GC26* are set out in art. 161-162 of the General Regulations (cf. also C. 153).

The minutes relating to the election of delegates to the GC26 and their substitutes must be drawn up only on the special forms provided for the purpose by the Moderator of the GC26 and in accordance with the instructions they carry.

These minutes must be sent without delay to the Moderator of the GC25, who will pass them to the appropriate juridical commission appointed by the Rector Major for the prescribed examination (cf. R 115).

2.4.5 Special cases

A) *Salesian Bishops*, even though retired from office and resident in a province, have neither active nor passive voice, and if they are invited to the provincial chapter they do not vote. The same norm applies to Bishops reinserted in Salesian communities (cf. AAS 1986, p. 1324).

B) *Rector Majors emeriti* have both active and passive voice in the local community in which they are inserted and in the election of delegates of the provincial community; but if they are elected as delegates to the provincial chapter either of the local community or the provincial community they have active voice in the provincial chapter but not passive voice, since they are already members by right of the General Chapter.

2.4.6 Formalities for compiling the lists of confreres

1. Names of the confreres are to be *numbered* progressively.
2. *Names are to be given in alphabetical order and spelled as in the Annuario for 2006.*
3. Use capital letters for the PATERNAL SURNAME and lower case for the Christian name.
4. Indicate by the appropriate *sign* whether the confrere is
 - a) Priest (P),
 - b) Deacon (D),
 - c) Lay Salesian (L),
 - d) “clerical” student, (candidate for the priesthood) (S).
5. Indicate by the letter ‘t’ if the confrere is in temporary vows.

6. If a member of the provincial chapter, indicate the title to participation:
 - a) by right
 - b) delegate of local community
 - c) delegate of provincial community.

4. ACTIVITIES OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL

4.1 Chronicle of the Rector Major

– *March 2006*

After the first two days of the month spent in Rome, the Rector Major went to Mexico to visit his family and to have an annual medical check-up. He stayed there between 3 and 11. During these days he met the Provincial Councils of the Salesian Family in Mexico, saying Mass for them on Sunday 5 March; on several occasions he visited the community of the Salesians and that of the FMA in Saltillo; in Guadalajara he said Mass for the two communities of theology students and had a meeting with the confreres of the MEG Province.

Having returned to Rome on Sunday 12, he immediately chaired the Team Visit for the Italy-Middle East Region held at the Salesianum between 12 and 17 March. During these days he spoke with some of the Provincials and other confreres taking part in the event, he received a representative of the UNO dealing with our request for a place in this world organisation, he received a Salesian Bishop, gave the “Good Night” at the end of an evening organised by confreres in

initial formation in the houses in Rome who belong to the Provinces of Italy and the Middle East.

After the Team Visit was over, Fr Chávez continued his ordinary work with various meetings. In particular, in the afternoon of Monday 20 he met the SDB-FMA who were taking part in the Course for Formation personnel organised by the UPS. He also had a meeting with the members of the General Council still in Rome.

On Wednesday 22 he received Mgr. Joseph Zen, who had come for the Consistory at which he would become a member of the College of Cardinals. In the afternoon of the following day he received the Superior General of the Michaelites, Fr Kazimierz Radzik, accompanied by their Economist General and Procurator General. In the evening he went to Gerini to meet the community of the students of theology.

In the morning of Friday 24 March the Rector Major attended the Consistory, after which he went for lunch with the Salesian community in the Vatican. In the evening he received Cardinal

Francisco Javier Errázuriz, Archbishop of Santiago, Chile.

The following day, in the morning he received Mgr. Edmundo Valenzuela, the new Bishop of the Vicariate of Chaco Paraguay. In the evening he welcomed Cardinal Zen and some members of his party, who then had supper with the Generalate Community.

In the afternoon of Wednesday 29 Fr Chávez received the prospective candidates for the post of Rector Magnificus of the UPS: Fr Mario Toso, Fr Ricardo Tonelli, Fr Guglielmo Malizia, Fr Carlo Nanni. In the evening he gave the "Good Night" to the Generalate Community.

– April 2006

On Saturday 1 April the Rector Major worked in his office, received some visitors and went to visit the FMA Provincial of Milan, who had been taken into hospital the previous evening. In the evening he gave the "Good Night" to the Sisters attending a meeting of the FMA Provincial Councils of Italy.

The following day he presided at Mass for them and the confreres of the Generalate community.

On Monday 3, at midday Fr Chávez presided at the community Mass on the occasion of the fourth anniversary of his election as Rec-

tor Major. In the evening the *Extraordinary Plenary Meeting* of the General Council began, in preparation for the choice of the theme for the next General Chapter and consideration of the aims and the way it will be held. The meetings of the Council continued until Wednesday 12 April. During these days the Rector Major held frequent meetings with the Councilors, some Provincials and confreres who came to see him.

On Sunday 9 April the Rector Major presided at the celebration of Palm Sunday in the Generalate.

On Wednesday 12, immediately after the final meeting of the Extraordinary Session of the General Council, Fr Chávez went to the Generalate of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians to wish the Mother General, Sr. Antonia Colombo, a happy birthday.

On Thursday 13 the Rector Major presided at the celebration of the Lord's Supper with the Generalate community. The following day after lunch he left for Gualdo Tadino, where the Rector and the confreres of the community were waiting for him. On Holy Saturday morning he went to the community in Terni, stopping at the Sanctuary of Our Lady of the Star, dedicated to Mary Help of Christians, and at Spoleto. After lunch

with the community, he returned to the Generalate, where in the evening he presided at the celebration of the Easter Vigil.

On Easter Sunday after lunch, the Rector Major received the news of the sudden death of Fr Valentín De Pablo, Councillor for the Africa-Madagascar Region, who had just returned to Mali to continue the Extraordinary Visitation of the AFO Vice Province, after the meeting of the General Council. Immediately the Rector Major called together the Councillors who were still at the Generalate and the Rector of the Generalate to coordinate the communication of the news and the organisation of the funerals at Bamako and Bilbao. After this he left for London where, between Monday 17 and Friday 21, he preached a retreat to the Rectors and confreres of the Great Britain Province. On Thursday 20 he interrupted this briefly to go to Madrid where he gave a conference on the Eucharistic Spirituality of Consecrated Life as part of the Week of the Theology of the Consecrated Life organised by the Claretianum. Returning to England he completed the retreat and then took part in two Salesian Family Days, the first in Farnborough, on Saturday 22, and the second in Bolton, on Sunday 23. That

same evening he left for Spain where on Monday 24, at Deusto, he presided at the Funeral Mass of Fr Valentín De Pablo. In the evening he returned to Rome.

On Tuesday 25 April Fr Chávez left for Bari, to take part in the celebrations for the Centenary of the house together with the Provincial Feastday for the Southern Province. The Rector Major met the young people taking part in the *Harambée*, presided at Mass, met the confreres of the Province and finally greeted all those who had come for the Province Feastday. The following day he took part in a Seminar on Don Bosco and his pedagogy at the Faculty of Education in the University of Bari, he met the young people from the various Salesian centres in Bari, and celebrated Mass with the Salesian Family during which 34 people from various centres made their promises as Salesian Cooperators.

Having returned to Rome, on 28 and 29 he worked in his office and received – among others – the Rector Magnificus of the UPS and His Eminence Cardinal Rosalio Castillo Lara.

On Sunday morning 30, he left for Barcellona, Spain, where he stayed until 6 May visiting the Province. The visit opened with

Mass on Sunday evening for the conclusion of the *Cors A Escena 2006*, an artistic event for the SYM of the whole of Salesian Spain. It continued with a meeting with the Past Pupils, and later at Badalona with the Salesian Family on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of that work.

– May 2006

On Monday 1 May, accompanied by the Provincial of Barcellona, the Vice Provincial and other confreres the Rector Major was taken to Montserrat, where they concelebrated Mass and had lunch with the Benedictine community. After lunch they visited Manresa before returning to the Provincial House and a meeting with the Provincial Council. Then they went to the community of Sant Adrià, a youth social work centre.

On Tuesday 2 Fr Chávez visited the communities and works in Monzón and Huesca, where he had a meeting with the Salesian Family and said Mass.

The following day after returning to Barcellona, he visited the Lleida community which is responsible for the CIJCA, a number of educational projects for young school drop-outs and youngsters at risk and a reception centre. In Barcellona he visited the Rocafort

community where he met the teachers from the various works in the Province, and then went to visit the FMA house of Santa Dorotea, at Sarrià, where he met the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians from several of their communities.

On Thursday 4 May he had a meeting with the Provincial Youth Ministry Team, he visited the University School and the Technical School in Sarrià and attended the opening of the “Illa Tecnologica”, at which there were representatives from the business, academic and political worlds. After lunch Fr Chávez visited the EDEBE Publishing House meeting the senior staff. He finished the day in the parish of St John Bosco where he had a meeting with members of the parish teams, with the ADMA, married couples, Past Pupils and friends of the Salesians.

On Friday 5 he celebrated Mass in the Don Bosco Chapel, the place where Don Bosco had his missionary dream, with all the SDB and FMA communities from Sarrià. He then went to Martí Codolar, where he had a meeting with the Rectors and visited the elderly and sick confreres. After lunch he went to call on the Archbishop of Barcellona, and then went to Tibidabo. He said evening prayer there and

gave Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. He returned to Martí Codolar for a meeting with young people of the SYM.

The visit ended on Saturday 6 May with the celebration of the Provincial Community Feastday at Mataró, which was celebrating its centenary. In the evening he left for Seville.

On Sunday 7 the Rector Major went to Utrera, the cradle of the Salesian presence in Spain. As well as celebrating the 125th anniversary of the arrival of the first Salesians he presided at the official act of the unification of the two Provinces in Andalucía, Córdoba and Seville. In the evening he was taken to the parish of Jesús Obrero, where he said Mass.

Fr Chávez returned to Rome on Monday 8 May. In addition to the usual office work he received several confreres, held a meeting of the Councillors who were present and presided at a meeting of the Theological Commission of the Union of Superiors General.

On Thursday 11 he went to Pius XI in Rome for the concluding celebration for the 75th anniversary of the house.

On Friday morning 12, he left for the Czech Republic to visit the Province. He had a meeting with the Archbishop of Prague,

Cardinal Miloslav Vlk. He met the VDB in Praga-Kobylysy, the FMA in Hadrec Kralove, the Youth Leaders and youngsters from the whole Province in Pardubice, the Salesian Cooperators in Praga-Kobylysy and paid a visit to the Portal Publishing House. His visit ended on Monday 15 with the Assembly of the Provincial Community in Brno-Zabrovresky, which was also attended by the Provincial and other confreres from the Slovakia Province and the novices from both Provinces.

On Tuesday 16, in Rome, the Rector Major had a meeting with the Technical Commission of the GC26 and another the following day. Wednesday 17, the name day of Fr Pascual, was a particularly busy day with people calling to offer their greetings; during the day he also had meetings with Provincials and Bishops.

On Saturday morning 20, he presided at Mass for the World Advisory Committee of the Salesian Family; then at midday he left for Benediktbeuern, in Germany, for the 75th anniversary of the Salesians being there and took part in a meeting of Provincial Formation Delegates from Europe, the Principals of the Study Centres and a group of young Salesians in formation. The evening of the following

day the Rector Major returned to Rome.

On Monday 22, with the Vicar, Fr Adriano Bregolin, he took part in an Audience of the Holy Father for Superiors General.

On Tuesday morning 23, Fr Chávez took part in a meeting of the Executive Committee of the USG, and in the afternoon left for Turin. From the aeroport he was taken directly to Novara, where he celebrated Mass and had a meeting with the Salesian Family. On 24 May, the Solemnity of Mary Help of Christians, he met the FMA community in Turin for the Feast, presided at the evening Mass and took part in the Procession.

On 25 and 26 he attended the six monthly Assembly of the USG, and on Saturday 27 with most of the Councillors he left for the Holy Land for the Retreat. In this way he finished a very busy three month period.

4.2 Chronicle of the General Councillors

The Vicar of the Rector Major

At the end of the winter session of the General Council, the Vicar of the Rector Major, Fr Adriano Bregolin, for the feast of Don Bosco, went to Turin to take the place of the Rector Major, who was in India for the celebrations marking the closing of the Centenary of the presence of the Salesians there. In the evening of 30 January he met the students and the Salesian Community at the Crocetta, in Turin.

On 5 February he was present at the Celebrations for the 90th anniversary of the presence of the Salesians in Messina-Giostra. Here he presented the Strenna of the Rector Major at an open meeting for the Salesian Family and all the people of the parish.

On 8 February he went to Turin where on 9 February as one of the official torchbearers representing the Salesians of Don Bosco, he carried the Olympic Flame (Turin Winter Olympics) from the Cottolego Institute to the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians.

On 13 and 14 February he was in Mainz and then Würzburg, for a

study session with all the Salesians who work on behalf of the Catholic Missions who provide pastoral care for foreign workers in Germany.

Having returned to Rome on 15, he left for Seville and Utrera in Spain. Here he stayed until 20 for the celebrations for the 125th anniversary of the arrival of the Salesians in Spain. In these circumstances, on 18, in Utrera he met the Salesian Family from the Seville Province. He also visited some communities in the Province including Mérida, Huelva and the parish of "Jesús Obrero" in Seville. On 20 he was also able to meet the young students of theology in the Sacred Heart community in Seville.

On 3 March he went to Pella to preach a retreat for the Superiors of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians from the IPI Province of Piedmont. Having returned to Rome on 11, between 13 and 18 March at the Salesianum, he took part in the Team Visit for the Italy and the Middle East Region.

On 23 March he left for Johannesburg to visit the South Africa Vice Province. During his visit he went to Manzini in Swaziland, on 24, where he met the confreres working in the Salesian house there and then to Maputsoe in Leshoto, on 25; here he visited the

Mission, the School, the Youth Centre and also met the FMA in their local community. Having returned to Johannesburg, he visited the communities of Walkerville and the Novitiate at Ennerdale. In Walkerville he met the FMA from their Provincial Community. On 28 he went to Capetown. Here he visited the Salesian Institute with its work for abandoned children and the Project Office. On 29, after a courtesy call on the Archbishop of the diocese, he went to see the Lansdowne community. On 30 March after returning to Johannesburg, he met the Salesians from the city at the Robertsham parish and finally before returning to Rome, he paid a short visit to the Provincial House in Booyens.

On his return to Rome the Vicar took part in the extraordinary plenary session of the General Council between 3 and 12 April.

Immediately afterwards on 13 April he left to make the *Extraordinary Visitation of Haïti*. In the first days corresponding to the Easter triduum he attended various youth events linked to the "Pâques des Jeunes" scheme. On Monday 17 and Tuesday 18 he met almost all the confreres of the Vice Province who had come together for an Extraordinary Assembly. He then began visiting the houses

on successive days as follows: Maison Provincial (19 April); Fort Liberté (20-22); Cap Haïtien (22-25); Cayes (26-28); Croix des Missions (30 April); Fleuriot (2-4 May); Pétion Ville (5-6 May); Port-au-Prince ENAM (9-10 May); Thorland (11 May). During his visit the Vicar also met the young leaders "Profajistes", in the course of their training scheme at Thorland (29 April), the Provincial Salesian Family at Pétion Ville-FMA, and the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians at their Provincial House in Pétion Ville, on the occasion of the Feast of St. Mary Domenica Mazzarello (13 May). Officially the Visitation ended on 12 May with a meeting of the Provincial Council and in the afternoon a meeting with the Rectors of the Salesian houses.

Having returned to Rome on 15, the Vicar organised the meeting of the World Advisory Committee of the Salesian Family, which was held at the Generalate between 19 and 21 May.

On 22, with the Rector Major he was present at the audience the Holy Father gave for all the Superiors of the religious Orders and Congregations with their Vicar Generals. Between 24 and 26 May he took part in the work of the Assembly of the USG (Union of

Superiors General), which was held at the Salesianum.

With the Rector Major and the other confreres of the General Council he took part in the Pilgrimage-Retreat in the Holy Land between 27 May and 4 June.

Finally he took part in the Team Visit to the UPS Vice Province between Friday 9 and Monday 12 June.

The Councillor for Formation

On 31 January, the General Councillor for Formation took part in the opening of the "Don Bosco" Library at the UPS. Between 3 and 13 February he preached a retreat for the Provincial Councillors and Rectors of the two Mexico Provinces MEG and MEM; in these days he also visited the novitiate at Coacalco, the prenovitiate and postnovitiates in Mexico City.

Between 16 and 19 February in Johannesburg he took part in a meeting of the Regional Formation Commission for the Africa and Madagascar Region, and afterwards also in Johannesburg between 20 and 24 February in the Team Visit to that Region.

Between 1 and 31 March, in the name of the Rector Major he car-

ried out the *Extraordinary Visitation* of the Vatican Community and of that of the Generalate in Rome. During this period, on 12 March, he went to Boretto, the birth place of Artemide Zatti, for the annual feast and for the inauguration of a square and a monument dedicated to the Blessed Artemide. He also took part in the Team Visit to the Italy and Middle East Region in Rome between 12 and 17 March and then the "Curatorium" of the postnovitiate in Rome-San Tarcisio.

On 25 April in Loreto he attended the Feast of the Salesian Family in the Adriatic Province and on 27-28 of the same month he attended the "Curatorium" of the Pinerolo novitiate and that of Turin-Crocetta. On 6-7 May he was in San Marino for the feast of St Dominic Savio and on 12-13 he went to Verona for the celebrations for the 40th anniversary of the "San Zeno" Vocational Training Centre.

Between 15-17 May in Rome he chaired the meeting of the Technical Commission for the 26th General Chapter. Afterwards between 19 and 21 May he went to Benediktbeuern for the celebrations for the 75th anniversary of this Salesian foundation, for a meeting of the Provincial Formation Delegates and the Principals of Salesian the-

ological study centres in the European Regions and for the meeting of the Rector Major with representatives of young Salesians in initial formation in these Regions.

Between 24 and 26 May in Rome he took part in the Assembly of the Union of Superiors General. Afterwards between 28 May and 4 June he was in the Holy Land with the General Council for their retreat. Finally, between 10 and 12 June in Rome he took part in the Team Visit to the UPS Vice Province.

The Councillor For Youth Ministry

On 13 February, in the name of the Rector Major the Councillor for Youth Ministry began the *Extraordinary Visitation of the UPS Vice Province*, which continued until 25 May.

During these months all the work of the Councillor was concentrated on the Visitation, while the collaborators in the Department undertook a number of activities according to the pre-arranged programme.

On 12 March until Friday 17, the Councillor returned to the Generalate to take part in the Team Visit to the Italy Middle East Region.

Immediately afterwards on Sunday 19 March he continued the Extraordinary Visitation which he again had to interrupt on 2 April in order to take part in the intermediate plenary meeting of the General Council.

After Holy Week and Easter, on 20 April he again returned to the UPS for the last stage of the Visitation which ended on 25 May with a conference for all the communities of the Vice Province.

He then took part in the retreat in the Holy Land with the members of the General Council.

The Councillor for Social Communication

During this period the Councillor for Social Communication paid visits to the Provinces of Recife (BRE), Manaus (BMA), Warsaw (PLE), Piła (PLN), Wrocław (PLO), Moscow (EST) and the UPS Vice Province. Other events in which he took part were: an International Meeting for the Video and Television Programme Production Centres, at Cachoeira do Campo (BBH); a meeting of Delegates for Social Communication in the North Europe Region, in Warsaw (PLE); a meeting of the Provincials of the North Europe Region in

St Petersburg (EST); meetings of Delegates for Social Communication and the editors of the Salesian Bulletins in the Africa-Madagascar Region, in Nairobi (AFE); a meeting of Delegates for Social Communication of Italy (Rome); the work of the Technical Commission for the GC26.

In addition to the ordinary work, the Department took part in a meeting of the General Council of SIGNIS, in Bruxelles. For the *web* portal of the Direzione Generale, after an online survey, further studies and analyse were undertaken with subsequent changes and updating. In progress at present is the creation of a collection of documents and archive material on the portal ("*fact file*"). With regard to ANS the collaboration of the video production centres in Quito, Belo Horizonte, Brno and Warsaw for the *ANSvideoinformation* section has been assured. The publication of *ANS-Photo* with captions in: English, Spanish, French and Portuguese has begun, and it has been given a new heading. The Polish-language version of ANS has also been introduced in this period. In addition, there have been joint contact and study with the Department for Youth Ministry and with the Education and the Social Communication Faculties of

the UPS in view of a new Salesian information and opinion product about youth and education aimed at the outside media.

The Councillor for the Missions

On 1-2 February Fr Francis Alencherry visited the Arab Emirates to meet the Bishop in the Vicariate Apostolic of Arabia, Mgr. Paul Hinder, and examine the Bishop's invitation to open an educational centre in Fujairah. From Dubai he then went to Tirchi, via Chennai. In Tirchi on 4-5 February with Fr Joseph Puthenpurakal, he conducted a preparatory day of recollection for 24 Indian missionaries before they left for their missions. On 5 February at Tanjavur, during the solemn conclusion of the celebrations marking the centenary of the Salesians' presence in India, the Rector Major, assisted by Fr Alencherry, gave the 24 missionaries their missionary cross.

Between 7 and 15 February Fr Francis visited the missions in Arunachal Pradesh, in the Dimapur Province (IND). The visit was organised in such a way that the Councillor was able to visit the centres in West Arunachal Pradesh, which currently forms part of the

diocese of Itanagar, and those in East Arunachal Pradesh, now belonging to the diocese of Miao. In both regions after visiting the centres Fr Francis brought the missionaries working in each of the two regions together to reflect on the challenges facing the mission and possible responses. In the whole of the state of Arunachal Pradesh there is need for a great commitment to evangelisation and catechesis to deepen the faith of the baptised.

On 16 February Fr Francis was in Dimapur. In the early morning he visited the post-novitiate in Dimapur to speak to the students and celebrate Mass for the community. Later he went to the Provincial House to speak about the Planning and Development Office to a group attending a meeting organised by AIDA, the Provincial Development Office. During the day he went to see some new initiatives in the city for youngsters in the poorest quarters and the other Salesian works in the city. He ended the day with a meeting with the Provincial Council to share some impressions about the missions in Arunachal Pradesh.

On 17 February Fr Francis visited the missions of Golaghat and Dergaon and went to the city of Tezpur to meet the Salesian

Bishop Robert Kerketta and to spend the night at the new Salesian centre in the city which forms part of the Guwahati Province (ING).

On 18 February on his return journey Fr Francis stopped in the city of Guwahati to see the Provincial and visit the 'Don Bosco Institute'. In the afternoon he left for Johannesburg, via Kolkata, Chennai and Dubai.

Between 19 and 24 February Fr Francis was at the "Sizanani Retreat Centre", near Johannesburg, and took part in the Team Visit to the Africa-Madagascar Region. During these days the Rector Major presented the volume commemorating the 25th anniversary of Project Africa, prepared by the Department in collaboration with the Salesian NGO VIS in Rome.

Between 25 February and 9 March Fr Alencherry visited the Salesian foundations in the ZMB Vice Province, comprising the four countries of Zambia, Zimbabwe, Malawi and Namibia. The visit began with the Salesian house in Lilongwe, Malawi. From there the Councillor went to Zambia where he visited the six foundations in that country. On 3 March in the Provincial House Fr Francis held a meeting with the Council to speak about the missions in the different

countries of the Vice Province. The following day he made the all-day-long journey by road to the Salesian mission of Shambyu in Namibia. The next day he went to the second foundation in the city of Rundu. On 7-8 March the Councillor was in Zimbabwe to visit the foundations in Hwange and Harare. In Hwange he also visited the Administrator of the diocese of Hwange. In Harare the Salesians are looking after three separate parishes. Fr Francis visited all three. On 10 March he left Harare for Johannesburg, and from there returned to Rome.

Between 11 and 30 March Fr Francis remained in Rome. A planned visit to Moscow and Siberia could not take place on account of difficulties obtaining the visa to enter Russia. On 31 March and 1st April Fr Francis was in Vienna to take part in the assembly of the 'Don Bosco Network'.

Between 2 and 12 April Fr Alencherry took part in the extraordinary plenary session of the General Council. On 13 April he left for México, and on the evening of the same day he went to a place called San Miguel de las Victorias for the Holy Thursday Mass. The following day he went on to the Salesian parish of San Antonio las Palmas, under the pastoral care of

the MEG Province. There he presided at the Good Friday liturgy. On Holy Saturday he met the confreres in the community; then he moved on to the part of the Mixes Prelature under the pastoral care of the Salesians of MEM, starting at Rio Manso. He celebrated Easter Vigil in the various villages of this mission. On 16 April, Easter Sunday, he presided at the parish Mass in Rio Manso. Afterwards he went on to the parish-mission of Mazatlán, visiting en route the missions of Arenal, Francisco Villa and Felipe Angeles.

On 17 April, once again in Mazatlán, he received the news of the death of Fr Valentín de Pablo. In the later part of the morning he went to the Marian sanctuary of Ixcuintepéc, under the pastoral care of the Salesians. From there he went to Ayutla, headquarters of the diocese, stopping on the way at Quetzaltepec, to meet the family of Fr Meliton, one of the two Salesian priests from the Mixe tribe. The following day he visited the missions of Totontopec and Tlahuitlopec and returned to Ayutla for the night.

On 19 April a good part of the day was spent at Auxilio House in the Prelature to meet the confreres who are working in the Prelature.

On 20 April he completed his visit to the Prelature, going to the mission in Juquila and the Salesian centre in Matagallinas. He then went to Oaxaca, where on the following day he went to see the ruins of Monte Alban, and in the afternoon met again with the Provincial Council to consider some issues regarding the missionary work of the Salesians in the Mixes Prelature. In the evening he returned to the Provincial House in the city of México.

On 22 April after celebrating Mass in the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe Fr Francis left for Guatemala. On Sunday 23 April he visited the old city of Guatemala and in the afternoon went to Carchá, to visit the Salesian centres. Between 24 and 28 April he visited the missions of Carchá, Camper, Chisec and Raxruhá, under the pastoral care of the same community. 24 April was spent visiting the Don Bosco Centre and 26 the Talita Kumi centre, managed by the Hermanas de la Resurrección. On two occasions he met with the confreres of the community to consider together some topics of missionary animation. On the evening of 28 he returned to the Provincial House.

On the morning of 29 April the Councillor met the Provincial

Council to reflect on the Provincial missions. In the afternoon he had a meeting with all those in formation from the various formation houses for a session of missionary animation and at the end presided at Mass and thus brought his visit to Guatemala to a conclusion.

On 30 April Fr Francis arrived at the Provincial House in Quito. Between 1 and 5 May there was a Panamerican seminar on "*The challenges of evangelisation among the indigenous peoples in Latin America*". 65 people took part in the seminar coming from the SDB and FMA Provinces in Latin America. When the seminar was over Fr Francis left for Belo Horizonte.

Arriving in Belo Horizonte, on 6 May he presided at Mass during the quarterly day of recollection for the communities of Belo Horizonte. Between 8 and 12 May at Cachoeira do Campo there was a seminar on "*The challenges of evangelisation nowadays from the Afro-american point of view*". 86 people took part from the Latin American Provinces of the FMA and the SDB.

On his return to Belo Horizonte, on the evening of 12 May Fr Francis had a meeting with the pre and post-novices of the BBH Province to speak about the Salesian missions.

Between 13 and 20 May the Councillor for the Missions visited the missions of the Bolivia Province. He began with the missions in the east: Muyurina, La Floresta, San Carlos with its various centres (San Germán, Yapacani, San Juan, Ayacucho, Buen Retiro), Portachuelo, Sagrado Corazón and Monteiro. On Monday 15 May late in the evening he flew to Cochabamba, where in the morning of the following day he met Mgr. Tito Solari, Archbishop of Cochabamba, and had various meetings with those in formation and the formation staff from the various formation houses. In the afternoon of the same day he left for the mission in Independencia.

On 17 May Fr Francis went to visit the mission of Kami and from there went to El Alto. On 18 May he visited the missions of Escoma and Puerto Acosta. On 19, after meeting the students at the university centre he left for La Paz, after having made a short visit to the parish centre in Carabuco, administered by the Salesians from Escoma. In the city of La Paz Fr Francis went to visit the Don Bosco community and the works they run, the Bolivian Salesian University and the community of Calacoto.

On 20 May Fr Francis celebrated Mass with members of the Provincial Council and held a meeting with them afterwards to share his impressions and recommendations about the Salesian missions in Bolivia. At midday he arrived in the city of Santa Cruz and went to visit the three Salesian works in the city, spending most time at the complex of works for street children.

On Sunday 21 May, after celebrating Mass in the parish church of Mary Help of Christians, Fr Francis left for Rome via Buenos Aires and Madrid, arriving late in the evening of 22 May.

Between 23 and 25 May the Councillor was in Rome. Then he left for a few days rest visiting his family in Kerala.

The Economist General

When the winter session of the General Council finished, Fr Mazzali took part in the feast of Don Bosco at Genova Sampierdarena, celebrating Mass for the youngsters in the Don Bosco school. In the evening of 31 January he also took part in the celebration for Don Bosco in the Holy Martyrs parish in Sangano (TO).

Between 9 and 15 February he took part in the Course for new

Provincial Economers held at the Generalate in Rome. On Thursday 9 March in the Italcementi Offices in Milan he had a meeting with the Italcementi Foundation in view of a possible project to build a new school in Sri Lanka. Between 13 and 17 March in Dungalpitiya, Sri Lanka, he took part in a meeting of the Provincial Economers from the South Asia Region, also taking the opportunity to visit some foundations in the new circumscription.

On 24 March he was present at the Administrative Committee Meeting of the SEI for the approval of the accounts for 2005.

Between 3 and 12 March he took part in the extraordinary intermediate session of the General Council. On 6 April he took part in the Administrative Committee Meeting of the UPS and then exercised his pastoral ministry during the Easter period in the Holy Martyrs parish in Sangano (TO). The unexpected death of Fr Valentín de Pablo meant a change of plans for Fr Mazzali, who had intended being at a meeting of Provincials and Provincial Economers in Brazil at Recife and then preaching the retreat for the Rectors of the Bolivia Province. Instead he went to Bamako in Mali for the funeral of Fr Valentín de Pablo and then accompanied the body to Spain.

Having returned to Rome he attended to some ordinary administrative work following up in particular some projects of the Gerini Foundation and the Polaris Society.

Between 12 and 22 May with Fr Walter VanWouwe he led a course on administration for the Economers and their assistants from the Vice Province of English-speaking West Africa (AFW) in the capital of Ghana, Accra.

On 28 May he was present at the 25th anniversary of the foundation of a Alpine group in Sangano. On 5 June Fr Mazzali attended a meeting with the Academic Authorities and the Economers of the UPS to discuss a plan for a new administrative structure.

The Councillor for the Region Latin America - South Cone

After the plenary session of the General Council, the Regional took part on 31 January in the celebration of the feast of Don Bosco at Turin, after which he spent a short period in the Province of Porto Alegre, Brazil, for a medical check-up and a visit to his family.

On 20 February he began the *Extraordinary Visitation of the Province of Paraguay*, which went on until 7 May. As well as a per-

sonal meeting with each confrere and acquiring a deeper knowledge of the activities of each of our foundations, the Visitor was able to meet with the different groups of the Salesian Family present in the Province, and was also able to carry out the consultation to be made in view of the appointment of the new Provincial.

In April the visitation was interrupted to enable Fr Baruffi to return to Rome to take part in the intermediate session of the General Council from 3 to 12 April. On his return he spent the period from 18 to 20 April in the Province of Recife for a meeting of the Brazilian Provincial Conference (CIS-BRASIL). The first two days of the meeting were occupied in a study of a document from the Economist General, Fr Giovanni Mazzali, concerning financial matters; then followed the normal programme of the Conference: a review of the meetings and assessment of the services offered by the Cisbrasil office in Brazil, courses of ongoing formation at national level, and the programming of activities to take place in common.

Back in Paraguay to continue the Visitation, the Regional took part in the episcopal ordination of Mgr. Edmundo Valenzuela, Vicar Apostolic of Chaco Paraguayo, and

at the ceremony at Fuerte Olimpo on 5 May for the beginning of his ministry. The Visitation ended with a meeting of the Rectors and members of the Provincial Council on 3 May.

On 7 May the Regional moved to the Chilean Province to begin the consultation for a successor to the Provincial Fr Bernardo Bastres, who before the end of his period of office had been appointed Bishop of the Diocese of Punta Arenas. In the course of the consultation nine meetings took place in this very extensive Province. The Regional also had a meeting with the Provincial Council and the Rectors, and visited the houses of formation.

On 21 May Fr Baruffi left Santiago for Rome to take part in the Retreat in the Holy Land followed by the summer session of the General Council.

The Councillor for the Region Interamerica

Fr Esteban Ortiz left Rome for New York on 29 January, and after a quick visit to his family, celebrated the feast of St John Bosco in the parish of Mary Help of Christians at Manhattan. On 1 February he went on to Bogotá (COB) for a visit. He had a meeting with the

Provincial Council to assess how far the guidelines of the Rector Major given at the conclusion of the Team Visit of October 2005 at Bogotá had been implemented.

On 3 February, the Regional was at Medellín (COM) to launch the consultation for the appointment of the new Provincial, and in the following days had meetings with the confreres at Bucaramanga, Cali, Pereira and Medellín. Finally he had a meeting with the Provincial and Council to assess the implementation of the conclusions of the Team Visit.

8 February found him at Quito (ECU) where he had a meeting with the staff of the Salesian Regional Centre for Ongoing Formation (CSRFP), followed by a meeting with the Provincial Council concerning the conclusions of the Team Visit. After a rapid visit to the houses at Guayaquil, he took part at Quito in the inauguration of the reconstructed postnovitiate community.

On 13 February the Regional reached Lima (PER), to pay a visit and to verify the results of the Team Visit; he was also able to go to the house of formation at Magdalena del Mar.

On 17 February he arrived at Cochabamba (BOL), a day later than planned because of aircraft

problems. But at least he was able to meet the Rectors who were finishing their meeting. He also had a meeting with the Provincial Council on the Team Visit, went to the postnovitiate community, and took part in the celebrations in thanksgiving for 110 years of Salesian work in Bolivia.

Fr Esteban arrived at La Plata on 20 February, once again a day later than planned because of more flight problems, to begin the *Extraordinary Visitation of the Province of Our Lady of Luján (ALP)*. On the 21st he had a meeting with the Provincial and his Council and on the same day began visits to the 15 communities of the Province which continued until the 25th.

In the following days he had meetings with various provincial groups and committees, including representatives of groups of the Salesian Family. On 31 March the Visitation concluded with the presentation of the Visitor's report to the confreres and with a meeting with the Provincial and his Council.

The Regional returned to Rome on 1 April for the Extraordinary Plenary Session of the Council which continued until 12 April. On the following day he left once again to begin the *Extraordinary Visita-*

tion of the Vice-province of Canada, after a brief stop in New York.

On 17 April he had a meeting with the Superior and Council of the Vice-province at Toronto and on the following day began visits to the communities accompanied by Fr Nestor Impelido (FIN) as translator.

He finished the visits to the five communities on 15 May. On the following days he had a meeting with the FMA Provincial, a discussion with the Superior of the Vice-province and a meeting with the Council, and in Montreal took part in the blessing of the new premises for the Missions Office.

On Saturday 20 May in Montreal he presented his closing report to the confreres and closed the Extraordinary Visitation.

Finally the Councillor returned to Rome on 22 May to take part with the other members of the Council in the retreat in the Holy Land and the Council's plenary summer session.

The Councillor for the Region East Asia - Oceania

After the winter session of the Council, Fr Klement made a brief visit to the formation houses in the Philippines (Jan 28-Feb 1), espe-

cially to ensure the consistency of the initial formation of brothers at Canlubang and Parañaque. This was followed (Feb. 2-4) by a follow-up with the organisers of the preparation of the coming seminar on the promoting and care of the vocation of the Salesian Brother at Phnom Penh (Cambodia-THA).

During Feb. 6-8 there was a regional meeting of Delegates for Youth Ministry, enthusiastically animated by Fr Dominic Sequeira, at Cheng Chau (Hong Kong-CIN), followed by the annual meeting of the Provincials of the Region (Feb. 8-10) on the theme of animation of youth ministry, initial formation and ongoing formation in the Region. The synergy between the nine circumscriptions, especially in the field of formation, created after the Team Visit of 2005 is beginning to produce results as regards Salesian studies, the creation of a regional coordinating office at Bangkok, and cooperation for the specific formation of the Salesian brother at Manila.

During the Rector Major's visit to Hong Kong (Feb. 11-18) for the celebration of the centenary of Salesian work in China, Fr Klement accompanied him at all the events. Of great significance was the presence around the Rector

Major of all the Salesian Bishops and Provincials of the Region.

The *Extraordinary Visitation of the Vice-province of Indonesia and East Timor (ITM)* took place in two parts (Feb 19-Apr 2, Apr 13-May 4). Fr Klement was able to visit all the foundations, and note especially the growth in initial formation, and in the Salesian Family (VDB, Cooperators, Past-pupils); he was able to receive the promise of the first six Cooperators at Dili (Apr 30). A highspot was the retreat preached at Dare (Apr 23-29) for the combined FMA and SDB provincial councils and local superiors.

The final three weeks of the period were dedicated to brief visits to the Provinces of Korea (May 5-10) and Australia (May 15-25), and particularly to the formation houses. At Kwangju (KOR) the Regional was able to take part in the golden jubilee celebrations of the first Salesian school, together with 55 priests who are past-pupils of the school.

The consultation preceding the appointment of the new Provincial for the Chinese Province (CIN) took place between 11 and 14 May, with meetings of the confreres in three central locations.

Fr Klement returned to Rome on May 26 to join the other members

of the Council for the retreat and the plenary summer session.

The Councillor for the Region South Asia

On 29 January 2006 Fr Joaquim D'Souza left Rome for Mumbai on his way to Colombo, Sri Lanka, where on 2 February he received the Rector Major for the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the beginnings of Salesian work in that country. He then accompanied the Rector Major in his visit to the southern India Provinces on the occasion of the centenary of Salesian work in India. The climax of the celebrations was at Tanjavur in the Tiruchy Province on 5 February, with the participation of all the Provincials of the Region, all the Bishops of Tamil Nadu, and large numbers of members of the Salesian Family and of young people. Similar celebrations took place in the individual Provinces when the Rector Major visited them: at Chennai (INM) on 4 February, at Bangalore (INK) on 6-7 February, and at Hyderabad (INH) on 7-8 February – in each case with many confreres, young people and members of the Salesian Family taking part.

On 11 February Fr D'Souza rejoined the Rector Major at Hong

Kong for the celebrations of the centenary of the Salesians in China, a country where the work began in 1906 as in India. After three days in Hong Kong and Macau, he returned to Mumbai and went on immediately to Dimapur (IND) in Northeast India to launch the consultation for the appointment of the new Provincial, with a meeting on 17 February with Rectors and confreres in the provincial house of Dimapur. He returned to Mumbai on the 18th, returning to Rome on the 19th and going on to New York on the 20th.

From 20 February to 25 May Fr D'Souza carried out the *Extraordinary Visitation of the New Rochelle Province of the United States (SUE)*, with an interruption from 2-12 April for the extraordinary session of the General Council in Rome. During the three months he spent in the Province the Visitor met personally with all the confreres and visited all 23 foundations and works in the States of Alabama, Florida, Illinois, Massachusetts, New Orleans, New York, Ohio and Washington D.C.

On 27 May he returned to Rome to join the other members of the Council for their retreat in the Holy Land, and for the plenary summer session of the Council.

The Councillor for the Region Northern Europe

During the Council's winter session Fr Albert Van Hecke had been in Budapest from 13-16 January, to verify the situation after the arrival there of confreres from Vietnam, India and the Province of Krakow.

On 1 February he left for Poland to make the *Extraordinary Visitation of the Krakow Province*, during which he also made the consultation for the appointment of the new Provincial. The Regional was able to note the considerable development of this Province. The new schools are impressive and provide the confreres with new fields for education and evangelisation. The provincial project embodies a clear programme which is a sure guide to the confreres and fosters a planning mentality and shared responsibility. The Province, moreover, has many well qualified and energetic confreres. Briefly, the Province has reached a good cruising speed.

During the Visitation there were two meetings. On 22 February and 26 April of the Provincial Conference of Poland and Eastern Europe, for the purpose of verifying the aftermath of the Team Visit, the development of the formation

houses, interprovincial cooperation, and the Federation of the Salesian schools.

On 9 March the Regional was present with the Provincials at the translation of the body of the Servant of God Card. August Hlond. For the occasion there was a solemn celebration in the Cathedral of Warsaw with the Primate of Poland Card. Józef Glemp presiding, in the presence of all the Bishops of Poland and many representatives of religious congregations of both men and women. The remains of the Servant of God are now to be found in one of the chapels of the upper part of the Cathedral, where they can be venerated by pilgrims.

On 3 April the Regional returned to Rome for the intermediate session of the General Council. On 12 April he was once again back in Krakow to continue the Visitation.

After a further brief return to Rome from 3-9 May, the Regional went to Saint Petersburg in Russia for a meeting with the Provincials of the Northern European Region. This was indeed a historic meeting. It was the first time the Provincials of the Region had been able to meet in Russia. The fact that the majority of the Provincials came from countries that had lived un-

der the communist yoke gave to the meeting a particular intensity. Under the guidance of the General Councillor Fr Tarcisio Scaramussa, the Provincials studied the topic of social communication, and drew up guidelines for its development and more intense collaboration and coordination in the Region. Very enlightening was the meeting with Archbishop Tadeusz Kondrusiewicz on the situation of the Catholic Church in Russia. The most significant visit was certainly that to our work at Gatchina, which enabled the Provincials to get the 'feeling' of Russia and to appreciate the courageous dedication of our confreres in the school of printing and commerce, and in the boarding establishment. The visit to the Catholic church, almost completely destroyed, brought us face to face with the consequences of a dour and atheistic regime. The meeting had also its cultural moments, including the visit to the 'Hermitage' museum and some Orthodox churches. The meeting certainly strengthened the relationships of fraternity among the Provincials and increased esteem for the work done in the various Provinces.

From 12 to 15 May the Regional was in Belgium for a visit to his family.

From 19-22 May he was at Benediktbeuern in Germany to accompany the Rector Major at a meeting with a hundred young European confreres in initial formation, on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the house. Present too were the Principals and those responsible for initial formation, and a programme of reflection and exchange of ideas had been drawn up under the guidance of Fr Francesco Cereda. In addition to highlighting the rich nature of formation in the house, these were moments of great Salesian fraternity and cultural exchange. Thanks are due to the confreres and collaborators of the house of Benediktbeuern for their great hospitality and flawless organisation of the meeting. Gratitude must also be extended to the Provinces who responded so generously to the invitation of the Benediktbeuern confreres.

From 27 May the Councillor joined the other members of the General Council for their retreat and for the plenary summer session.

The Councillor for the Region Western Europe

Fr Filiberto Rodríguez left Rome for Madrid on 27 January to begin

the Extraordinary Visitation of the Madrid Province, which was to continue until 13 May when he presented his concluding report to the Provincial Council and Rectors at La Cabrera.

The Visitation had to be interrupted several times for various reasons:

- On 16 February, to celebrate with the Vicar of the Rector Major and the Spanish Provincials the 125th anniversary of the arrival of the Salesians at Utrera (Seville), the first house of Don Bosco in Spain.
- From 16 to 19 March to take part in the Iberian Conference and the meeting of the Western European Region at Godelleta (Valencia-Spain).
- From 3 to 12 April for the extraordinary plenary session of the General Council at Rome.
- From 20 to 24 April for the funeral at Bamako (Mali) of Fr Valentín de Pablo, who had died at Touba in the early hours of Easter Sunday, 16 April. Later he accompanied the remains to Barakaldo, for the solemn funeral on the 24th at which the Rector Major presided.
- On 29 April for the meeting at Madrid of the ACSSA.
- From 30 April to 8 May to accompany the Rector Major in vis-

its to the Provinces of Barcelona and Seville, where on 7 May there was the canonical erection the new Province of Mary Help of Christians, with headquarters at Seville, resulting from the unification of the former province of Seville and that of Cordoba.

With the extraordinary visitation concluded, the Regional had a short meeting with the confreres of the Province in practical training. This was followed by a visit to the two postnovitiate houses at Burgos before taking part from 19 to 22 May in the meeting of those in formation and their guides celebrated at Benediktbeuern with the Rector Major, the Councillor for Formation and the Regional for Northern Europe.

After celebrating the feast of Mary Help of Christians at Guadalajara (Spain), he returned to Rome on 25 May for the retreat of the Council in the Holy Land and the plenary summer session.

The Councillor for the Region Italy and the Middle East

On 28 and 29 January Fr Frisoli was at Casale Monferrato to take part in a stimulating prayer vigil to close the celebrations for the centenary of the foundation. He had a

long dialogue with the young people of the parish, presided at the external festivities for the feast of St John Bosco, and was present for the official inauguration of the new Sports Arena.

On 30 January he took up once again the Extraordinary Visitation to Sicily (begun in October 2005), beginning with the Palermo "St Clare" community in one of the poorest parts of the city. Among other engagements he had meetings with the numerous immigrants from Sri Lanka and Ghana who have gathered around our works, and with those responsible for the various communities. He continued with the visitation of the Palermo communities of "Jesus Adolescent" and Ranchibile.

From 13 to 15 February he returned to Sassone (Rome) for the seminar on formation organized by the vocations sector of the CISI, at which some 50 confreres were present from various parts of Italy. He gave an address on past and present aspects of vocational pastoral work.

On 16 February he resumed the visitation in Sicily with the communities of Palermo Sampolo, Alcamo, Trapani, Camporeale, Marsala, Messina "San Tommaso" (the Theological Institute, with Faculties of Philosophy and Theol-

ogy, the two-year course for specialisation in catechetics, and school for specialisation in bioethics and sexology). This University had been visited by the Rector Major in November 2005 for the inauguration of the new Library and Aula Magna.

From 12-17 March Fr Frisoli was back in Rome for the Team Visit to the Region which took place at the Salesianum. On the 19th, once again in Sicily, he continued his visits to the communities of Messina San Luigi, Gela, Barcellona Pozzo di Gotto. On 1 April he had a meeting at Palermo with the provincial council of the Salesian Cooperators, before returning once again to Rome for the extraordinary intermediate session of the Council.

On 18 April he completed the visitation of the communities of Sant'Alfio, and Messina San Domenico Savio. On the 25th he went to Castello di Godego, to be with the confreres of the north-eastern part of the Province for the provincial feastday, and gave a conference on the conclusions of the Team Visit to the Region.

From 26 to 29 April he was in Romania to visit the confreres of the communities of Costanza and Bacau, before moving on 3 May to Moldavia to visit the two confreres

pioneering the new foundation in the capital at Chisinau.

On 4 May Fr Frisoli was back once again in Sicily to visit the communities of Caltanissetta, San Cataldo, Canicattì, Zafferana Etnea, Ragusa and Modica. From 8-10 May he presided at the Conference of Italian Provincials at Florence. From 29 to 31 he visited the provincial headquarters at Catania and presided at a meeting of the Provincial Council on 1 and 2 June. On 3 June he concluded the extraordinary visitation of the Sicilian Province with a meeting of Rectors and a Mass.

On 4 June he returned to the Generalate in Rome.

NOTE

This number of the AGC contains no report of the Chronicle of the Regional Councillor for Africa and Madagascar. After the conclu-

sion of the plenary winter session of the Council. Fr Valentin De Pablo had undertaken with his customary dedication the work of guiding and animating his Region according to the prearranged programme. From 3 to 12 April he came back to Rome for the extraordinary plenary session of the Council convoked by the Rector Major to reflect on the coming GC26. Immediately afterwards he left for Mali to continue the extraordinary visitation of the AFO Vice-province which he had begun earlier. He reached Touba on Good Friday, 14 April, in a state of distress. On Easter Sunday morning, 16 April, the confreres of Touba found that he had died during the night, and immediately informed the Rector Major. From heaven, where he now lives with the Risen Lord, Fr Valentin will continue to look with predilection on the Region of Africa and Madagascar which was so dear to him.

5.1 New Salesian Bishop

ŠTUMPF PETER

Auxiliary Bishop

***of the Archdiocese of Maribor
(Slovenia)***

On 24 May 2006 the Vatican Press Office published the news of the appointment by Pope Benedict XVI of the Salesian priest *Peter ŠTUMPF* as *Auxiliary Bishop of the Metropolitan Archdiocese of MARIBOR (Slovenia)*, assigning him the titular see of Musti di Numidia.

Born on 28 June 1962 at Beltinci (Slovenia), Peter Štumpf became a Salesian on 9 October 1980, when he made his first profession. After studies of philosophy and practical training he made his perpetual profession 29-09-1985 and studied theology at the Faculty of Theology at Turin-Crocetta. He was ordained priest on 29 June 1990 by Mgr. Franc Kramberger, the present Archbishop of Maribor.

In the first years after ordination, Fr Štumpf worked for some years at Rakovnik (Ljubljana),

while continuing studies of moral and pastoral theology, in 2002 obtaining a doctorate at the theological Faculty of Ljubljana. He then had several appointments in Salesian communities in the Slovenian Province: Sentrupert (first as head-teacher then as parish priest), Ig (rector and parish priest), Radenci (rector and parish priest). Since 2003 he has been parish priest at Rakovnik (Ljubljana); recently he had been appointed Dean of the southern section of the Slovenian capital and much appreciated by his Salesian confreres and by the diocesan clergy. In 2002 he was Provincial Delegate at the GC 25.

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It should also be noted that Mgr. **Luis Felipe GALLARDO MARTÍN DEL CAMPO**, previously Bishop Prelate of the Apostolic Prelature of Mixes, Mexico (to which he was appointed in December 2000: cf. AGC 374, n. 5.5), on 8 May 2006 was appointed – by Pope Benedict XVI – Diocesan Bishop of the diocese of **VERACRUZ**, Mexico.

5.2 Our dead confreres (2nd 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." (C. 94).

SURNAME AND NAME	PLACE of death	DATE	AGE	PROV
L AGOSTONI Luciano	Roma	13-04-2006	91	IRO
P ÁLVAREZ CANTON Felicísimo	Caracas (Venezuela)	06-05-2006	69	VEN
P AMAYA José Ángel	Bucaramanga (Colombia)	01-04-2006	70	COB
P BALDO Renzo	Bahía Blanca (Argentina)	24-04-2006	58	ABB
P BARTOS Béla	Jobbágyi (Ungheria)	24-06-2006	80	UNG
P BECHIS Pietro	Torino	09-06-2006	86	ICP
P BETZ Franz	Cham (Oberpfalz), Germania	31-03-2006	56	GER
P BIAVA Benvenuto Sperandio	Curno BG (Italia)	01-04-2006	86	ICP
P BIRKLBAUER Anton	Wien (Austria)	27-05-2006	77	AUS
P BORDIGNON Luiz Ignacio	Araras, SP (Brasile)	21-03-2006	84	BSP
P BROSEGHINI Silvio	Baselga di Piné TN (Italia)	11-04-2006	56	ECU
P CALANDRI Valentín Carlos	La Plata (Argentina)	09-03-2006	68	ALP
P CAMEROTA Leopoldo	Castellammare di Stabia (NA)	23-03-2006	89	IME
P CARPELLA Giuliano	Hong Kong	11-04-2006	83	CIN
P CARRANZA DURÁN Rodrigo José	Santiago de Chile	15-03-2006	39	CIL
L CETERA Józef	Łąd (Polonia)	13-05-2006	74	PLN
P COSTA Adilson	Joinville, SC (Brasile)	28-05-2006	37	BPA
P DE PABLO Valentín	Touba (Mali)	16-04-2006	60	RMG
<i>Fu per 6 anni Delegato ispettoriale per il Mozambico e per 4 anni Consigliere Generale per la Regione Africa e Madagascar</i>				
L ESCOBAR P. Bernardo de Jesús	Cali (Valle), Colombia	30-05-2006	88	COM
P FIORA Luigi	Torino	24-04-2006	91	ICP
<i>Fu per 6 anni Ispettore, per 12 anni Consigliere generale e per 14 anni Procuratore generale e Postulatore per le Cause dei Santi</i>				
P GALOPPO René Carlos	Concepción del Uruguay (Arg.)	11-06-2006	76	ARO
P GAROFALO Paolo	L'Aquila (Italia)	04-04-2006	86	IAD
P GIEROS Lucjan	Szczecin (Polonia)	22-04-2006	75	PLN
P GUEVARA Antonio	Quetzaltenango (Guatemala)	25-04-2006	81	CAM
P GUILLLOU Robert	Saint-Brieuc (Francia)	15-05-2006	84	FRA
P GUTIÉRREZ FERNÁNDEZ Ezequiel	León (Spagna)	02-05-2006	74	SLE
P HERRERA MORALES Remigio	Guayaquil (Ecuador)	21-05-2006	83	ECU
P JEFFCOAT James	Edmonton (Canada)	20-03-2006	74	CAN
L KIMCIUAN RIUNGAM Peter	Bangkok (Thailandia)	26-04-2006	69	THA
P KŁODA Michał	Szczecin (Polonia)	24-05-2006	77	EST
L LORENZONI Riccardo	Ananindeua (Brasile)	02-05-2006	90	BMA
P MADEJ Stanisław	Wrocław (Polonia)	23-03-2006	70	PLO
P MARTÍNEZ DE MARAÑÓN O. Elías	Santiago de Chile	15-05-2006	90	CIL
L MEDA Luigi	Verona (Italia)	05-04-2006	92	INE
P MEYERS Joseph	Bonheiden (Belgio)	19-03-2006	81	BEN
P MONDIN Rosario	Aviano PN (Italia)	07-04-2006	73	INE

SURNAME AND NAME	PLACE of death	DATE	AGE	PROV
P NEGRISOLO Carlo	Torino	04-06-2006	90	ICP
L NICHOLSON Maurice Ivan A.	Bandel (India)	26-03-2006	80	INC
P OSTERTAG Manuel	Rosario (Argentina)	24-05-2006	84	ARO
P PAZHEPARAMPIL Thomas	Coimbatore (India)	12-05-2006	72	INM
L PEREIRA José Lobato	Manique (Portogallo)	19-04-2006	84	POR
L POIRIER Gérard	Sherbrooke (Canada)	10-06-2006	83	CAN
P POLLONE Giuseppe	Torino	28-04-2006	81	ICP
L PRADEL Jean-Joseph	Toulon (Francia)	11-05-2005	85	FRA
P PUCZYŃSKI Kazimierz	Warszawa (Polonia)	29-03-2006	80	PLO
P ROBINAULT Eugène	Caen (Francia)	21-04-2006	87	FRA
P ROY BÓVEDA Esteban Lorenzo	Logroño (Spagna)	17-05-2006	78	SBI
E RUBIO GARCÍA Andrés María	Montevideo (Uruguay)	19-04-2006	81	—
<i>Eletto Vescovo nel 1968, fu per 7 anni Vescovo Ausiliare di Montevideo, per 20 anni Vescovo Ordinario di Mercedes e per 11 anni Vescovo emerito</i>				
P SCHNEIDER Wilhelm	Krailling (Germania)	30-03-2006	95	GER
L SCOLERI Armando	Cruzeiro, SP (Brasile)	14-05-2006	90	BSP
L SŁOWAKIEWICZ Józef	Łąd (Polonia)	02-06-2006	77	PLN
P SOUZA José Gerardo	São Paulo (Brasile)	09-06-2006	92	BSP
P TIRKEY Leo	Dibrugarh (India)	14-04-2006	64	IND
P TRAVERSI Giambattista	Arese MI (Italia)	04-06-2006	86	ILE
P VALPUESTA CORTES Luis	Sevilla (Spagna)	13-04-2006	84	SSE
L VAN RIJSSEL Michel	Boortmeerbeek (Belgio)	15-04-2006	78	AFC
P VOILLAT Vincent	Neuchâtel (Svizzera)	16-03-2006	84	FRA
P ZITZELSBERGER Johannes	Ensdorf (Germania)	29-03-2006	99	GER





