



acts

of the general council

year LXXXVII october-december 2006

N. 395

official organ
of animation
and communication
for the
salesian congregation

Direzione Generale
Opere don Bosco
Roma

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of the Salesian Society
of St John Bosco

OFFICIAL ORGAN OF ANIMATION AND COMMUNICATION FOR THE SALESIAN CONGREGATION

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1. LETTER OF THE RECTOR MAJOR

***“We’ve been waiting for you.
We’ve been waiting for you so long.
Now at last you’re here.
You’re among us and you won’t get away from us!”
(MB XVIII, 50)***

PRESENTATION OF THE REGION OF SOUTH ASIA

21 September 2006
Feast of St Matthew, Apostle

Introduction

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My dear confreres,

Three months have passed since I published the letter convoking the GC26. It met with a very positive reception everywhere, as witness the numerous e-mails and letters that I have received and continue to receive, expressing the joy and satisfaction of the

confreres with the theme chosen, their pride in being sons of Don Bosco, and their willingness to bring about the personal, community and institutional changes needed to keep us always faithful to God, to Don Bosco and to the young.

And now, in this present letter, I want to take up again the presentation of the Regions. And as I begin to write, my mind is still full to overflowing with living memories of my two visits to the Region of South Asia: the first, in February 2005, to the Provinces of Kolkata, Guwahati and Dimapur in north-east India, and to New Delhi, the Indian capital to inaugurate the centenary celebrations of Salesian work in India and subsequently preside at the Team Visit; and the second, in February 2006, to Sri Lanka for the celebration of fifty years of Salesian work in that island country, and to the Indian Provinces of Chennai, Bangalore and Hyderabad, and especially to Thanjavur, in the Tiruchy Province for the conclusion of the centenary celebrations.

I look forward to my next visit in February 2007, to the remaining Provinces of the Region: those of Bangalore (and specifically to Kerala for the golden jubilee of Salesian work in that State) and Mumbai, to the Vice-province of Panjim (for the diamond jubilee of Salesian work there), to the Vice-Province of Myanmar, and to Ranchi in the Province of New Delhi.

In my first visits to the Region I was deeply impressed by the extraordinarily fruitful growth of the Salesian charism as lived and manifested in the various Provinces. In my mind's eye I can still see the faces of the thousands of young people, full of life and enthusiasm that I met in the course of different events. Wherever I went I heard the shouts of children and young people ringing in my ears: "Long live Don Bosco!" How could I ever forget the meeting at Chennai, where more than 15,000 youngsters from our institutes gathered together for a peace rally? All the jubilation was an expression of their joy at having been educated by the Sons of Don Bosco, of belonging to the Salesian Family, and of being able to meet Don Bosco's successor.

This first centenary of Salesian activity in the Region has truly been a gift of God to the Church and the Congregation. For the Salesians it marks the conclusion of a century of learning, in which we have grown and fulfilled Don Bosco's dream for the benefit of the young, a century of abundant blessings. At this point I must express the gratitude of the Congregation to all those who have been the instruments of this wonderful development. The vibrant Salesian work in the Region at the present day is the fruit of the pioneering enterprise of missionaries from other countries who made of Don Bosco's "*Da mihi animas*" the reason and driving force of their life. They planted the Salesian charism which is now bearing such abundant fruit. To all these missionaries, of different tongues and nationalities, the vast majority of whom have already passed on to their Father's house to receive the reward of faithful servants, is due the gratitude of the Rector Major and of the entire Congregation!

As I said in the homily at the Mass inaugurating the centenary celebrations at New Delhi on 28 February 2005, "We cannot fail to be struck by the enormous expansion of Don Bosco's charism, of the flourishing of vocations, of the development of the Salesian Family to the point that enables us to declare that the Congregation now has an Indian countenance. It is true, and it is of this Indian and South-Asian countenance that I want to speak to you in the pages that follow.

1. A great dream fulfilled

The story of Salesian activity in the Region has roots that go back a long way. Already in 1875 Don Bosco had spoken of India as one of the possible countries to which he could send missionaries at some future time.¹ A year later he mentioned Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) among future mission fields.² In the same year Pius IX

¹ Cf. MB XI, p. 383.

² Cf. MB XII, p. 224.

offered Don Bosco a Vicariate in India, and the following year again we find Don Bosco writing to Don Cagliero: "*We are going to take on the Vicariate Apostolic of Mengador (Mangalore)*" and he thought of Don Cagliero as its possible Vicar Apostolic.³ Finally, during the night of 9-10 April 1886, Don Bosco had his missionary dream at Barcelona, which "he related to Don Rua and others in a voice at times choked by sobs".

Don Bosco "saw a vast crowd of boys who ran toward him crying: 'We've been waiting for you. We've been waiting for you so long. Now at last you're here. You're among us and you won't get away from us.' (...) While he was standing there, dazed in their midst, gazing at them, he saw an immense flock of lambs led by a shepherdess. After she had separated the boys from the sheep, she set one group to one side and the other to the opposite side. She stopped in front of Don Bosco to whom she said: 'Do you see what's before you?' 'Yes, I do', Don Bosco answered. 'Good, do you recall the dream you had when you were ten year's old?' Then she summoned the boys to Don Bosco's side telling him and them: 'Look into the distance as far as you can see. What is written there?' One boy read "*Valparaiso*", another "*Santiago*", others "*Peking*". Then the shepherdess, who seemed to be the boys' teacher, said: 'Now draw a line from one end to the other, from Peking to Santiago' and – speaking now to Don Bosco she went on: 'Here you see ten other centres between the middle of Africa and Peking. And these centres will provide missionaries for all the neighbouring countries. There is Hong Kong, there is Calcutta... These places, and later others too, will have houses, study centres and novitiates'."⁴

And so, when I look back on the huge numbers of youngsters I have met in various events in India, I remember the words of the boys addressed to Don Bosco in the dream: "*We've been waiting for you, we've been waiting for you so long. Now at last you're here. You're among us and you won't get away from us!*" And with

³ Cf. MB XIII, p. 19.

⁴ MB XVIII, pp. 50-52.

gratitude I have seen them fulfilled. And so our work in Asia, and especially in southern Asia, was foreseen by Don Bosco, plainly shown to him by the heavenly shepherdess as part of the Congregation's future; what we are seeing today is the fulfilment of that dream.

The bishops of the Patronage (Padroado) of Mylapore in southern India were the immediate instruments chosen by God to bring the Salesians to the Region. From 1896 Mgr. Antonio de Souza Barroso several times asked Don Rua to send Salesians to work in his diocese. His successor was Bishop Teotonio Manuel Ribeiro Vieira de Castro, a great admirer of Don Bosco. As a young priest he had met Don Bosco in Turin in 1885 and had received his blessing. Consequently, when he became Bishop of Mylapore he very much wanted to have Salesians in his diocese, and from 1901 wrote frequently to Don Rua asking for them. Finally Don Rua agreed to send them, provided that certain conditions could be met (concerned mainly with expenses, the place of residence, and maintenance). A formal agreement was drawn up and signed in Turin by Mgr. Manuel de Castro and Don Rua on 19 December 1904. It was agreed that Salesians would be sent to Thanjavur, which at that time formed part of the diocese of Mylapore, to take over an already existing orphanage, and a trade-school. And so it happened that on 5 January 1906 the first group of five Salesians led by Fr George Tomatis, arrived in India.

2. The Region of South Asia

Until the GC25 South Asia was part of the Asian Region, and later of that of Australasia. Because of the continued growth in the number of both Salesians and foundations, the CG25 divided the Region into two: East Asia-Oceania and South Asia. Today South Asia includes nine Provinces and the Vice-Province of Konkan in India, the Vice-Provinces of Myanmar and of Sri Lanka, and the communities and foundations in the Andaman Islands

(belonging to the Chennai Province) in Nepal (belonging to the Kolkata Province, in Yemen (belonging to the Bangalore Province) and Kuwait (which belongs to the Province of Mumbai).

At the beginning of the twentieth century at the time of the arrival of the Salesians, India, Burma (now Myanmar) and Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) were British Colonies, while Kuwait was a British Protectorate. India gained independence in August 1947, Myanmar in January 1948, Sri Lanka in February 1948 and Kuwait in September 1961. Nepal had been an independent country from the second part of the eighteenth century.

Political, social and religious situation

Because of the far-flung nature of the Region and of the diversity in cultures and languages of its component countries we shall consider each country separately.

India

Geographically India is situated between Myanmar and Pakistan, in the southern part of Asia with boundaries extending from the Arabian Sea to the Gulf of Bengal.

India's original inhabitants were the Dravidians, whose civilisation was one of the oldest in the world, going back at least 5,000 years. About the year 1500 BC, groups of Arians invaded the Indian subcontinent from the north-west, and their fusion with the original inhabitants gave rise to the classical Indian culture of the present day.

Later the Indian territory witnessed regular incursions by Arabs, Turks and European traders until finally, during the nineteenth century Great Britain assumed political control over almost the whole of Indian territory. Prolonged resistance to British colonialism eventually led to independence in 1947.

With independence, the subcontinent was divided into two: the secular State of India and the smaller Muslim State of Pakistan. A war between the two countries in 1971 resulted in East Pakistan becoming a separate nation, called Bangladesh.

Successive waves of foreign invaders left an indelible mark on the culture of the Indian subcontinent. Of the total population, some 72% is of Indo-Aryan origin with 25% of Dravidian. A considerable number of the inhabitants are identified as *Dalits*. These are placed under the heading of “*scheduled castes*” by the Indian government and are able to enjoy certain social benefits. And there are finally various tribes that are listed as “*scheduled tribes*”.

The Hindu religion (*dharma*) contemplates four castes in hierarchical order: the *Brahmins* (the priestly caste), the *Kshatriya* (the princely class), the *Vaishya* (the commercial class), and the *Sudra* (the working class). The members of these main castes oppressed different groups of the original inhabitants, and reduced them to a class without caste at all, the *Dalits*, the *Pariahs*. During and after the struggle for independence there was a strong reaction to this unjust situation, and today both government and Church do a great deal for the wellbeing of the “casteless” group. We have made specific mention of this group because some 70% of Indian Christians belong to the *Dalits* and in some of our Indian Provinces they constitute the main subjects and beneficiaries of our apostolate.

Today, India is the biggest democracy in the world and the country with the second highest population (1,095,351,995), of whom 80.5% are Hindus, 12.4% Muslims, and 2.3% Christians. Within the country can be found enormous differences between rich and poor. The literacy index is only 59.5%. The official language is Hindi, while English enjoys the position of a national language. In addition there are 14 other official languages, each with its own script, and 200 other non-official languages, to say nothing of thousands of dialects. The overall result is that India is a veritable mosaic of tongues, cultures and traditions, which all contribute to a disconcerting complexity and a unique richness.

After the parliamentary elections of May 2004, there was a change of government from an ultra-nationalist, exclusively Hindu ideology to a more moderate centre-left coalition with the external support of the communist party. Not infrequently inter-religious conflicts break out (mainly between Hindus and Muslims). Direct or indirect persecution of the Christians also continues with an occasional violent incident. Here must be mentioned the promulgation in some states of a law against conversions, which prohibits the so-called forced conversion from one religion to another. But the real underlying motive behind the law is to prevent those of lower caste and the above-mentioned tribes from becoming Christians. Many times Church spokesmen have clarified matters, i.e. that of its very nature conversion cannot be forced, and there are no forced conversions in the Church.

At a political level there has been a longstanding conflict between India and Pakistan over the question of Kashmir; three times it has erupted into war between the two countries, and even to the brink of a nuclear conflict. Recently, however, there seems to be less tension and a greater openness to dialogue, which leads to the impression that the situation is improving.

Over the last ten years, more or less, globalisation has reached India to a remarkable degree. The next ten years will see India becoming an economic superpower with all the associated evils such as consumerism, materialism and an ever widening gap between the 'haves' and the 'have nots'. The Indian population is still prevalently rural and agricultural, even though at the present time development is taking place in a vast range of modern industries and a multiplicity of services which foster economic growth. India is able to take advantage of the large number of well instructed people, all competent in the English language, which will enable it to become a leading exporter of services and high level technical software. The enormous and still increasing population is at the same time its main resource in terms of human capital, together with pressing social and economic problems, made still more difficult by the widespread caste system, especially in rural areas.

The origins of Christianity can be traced back to St Thomas the Apostle in 52 AD; the Syro-Malabaric Church claims descent from St Thomas himself. A great impulse was given by the arrival of St Francis Xavier in 1542 and by the missionary work of the Jesuits. After their suppression in 1776 the foreign missionaries of Paris (M.E.P.) took their place and did much work in evangelisation. A part of the Jacobites group (which centuries earlier had left the Catholic Church due to the excessive Latinizing policy of the Portuguese missionaries), returned to full communion with the Roman Catholic Church in 1930. Thus, besides the Latin Rite Church, there are two other Catholic Churches in full communion with Rome. The Syro-Malabar Church and the Syro-Malankara Churches are headed by their own Major Archbishops; the Major Archbishop of the Syro-Malabar Church is also a Cardinal. At present, in India there are three Cardinals in office, one of whom (Ivan Cardinal Dias of Mumbai) has been recently appointed Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples.

There are over 24 million Christians in India (2.3% of the total population), of which Catholics form 1.98 %. There are 21,931 priests (12,207 diocesan and 9,724 religious); consecrated religious number 102,102, of whom 12,802 are men and 89,300 women.⁵ 68% of the clergy and the religious come from the South of India, from the States of Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Mangalore and Goa. Some of the Syro-Malabar dioceses of Kerala have a high percentage of Catholics (Pala in Kerala has 50.64% of Catholics), while there are dioceses in North India, with less than 0.02% of Catholics.

The Catholic hierarchy was set up in India in 1886; in 1923 the hierarchy of the Syro-Malabar Church, and in 1932 that of the Syro-Malankara Church were established. In addition to the National Catholic Bishops' Conference (CBCI), from 1987 onwards there have been three other distinct Bishops' Conferences for the three Catholic Rites (Latin, Syro-Malabar and Syro-Malankara).

⁵ Cf. *Statistical Year Book of the Church 2004*, Secretaria Status, Rationarium Generale Ecclesiae, Città del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2006, pp. 174, 205, 212, 221.

The Christian community, and more specifically the Catholic community, is a powerful force in India. Despite being such a tiny minority, the Christians provide 20% of all the primary education in the country, 10% of the literacy and community health care programmes, 25% of the care of orphans and widows, and 30% of the care of the handicapped, lepers and AIDS patients.

The greatest challenge the Church has to face in India is working for the poorest and the oppressed with a clear evangelical vision and witness; and the fostering of ecumenical and inter-religious dialogue among the members of the various religions and sects.

Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka (formerly called Ceylon) is a tropical island-nation, some 31 km. south-east of India. It is in a strategic position in the Indian ocean on the main commercial sea-route between the Far East and Africa and Europe.

Sri Lanka has a history that goes back a very long way; scholars testify that there were human settlements in the island at least 130,000 years ago. A very high percentage of the more than 20 million population is of Indian origin. Among them, the majority (the Sinhalese group) traces its origin thousands of years back, and is considered to be the native people of the country; the Sinhalese form 73,8% of the population, while a smaller group of Tamils from Southern India forms the second biggest group (over 8,5%), living mainly in the northern part of the island.

The civil war between the Sinhalese and the Tamil people, (backed by the Revolutionary Group, LTTE), has caused more than 100,000 deaths in the last two decades; and displaced more than 200,000 Tamils, who sought refuge in the West. The island was very severely affected by the *tsunami* on 26 December 2004, which caused more than 10,000 deaths and enormous damage. Our confreres speedily mobilised resources to bring solace and

comfort to the bereaved, and provided food, shelter and other amenities for the people.

Of the total population, Buddhists account for 69.1%, Muslims 7.6%, Hindus 7.1%, Christians 8% and unspecified groups about 10%.

Already in 1505 Portuguese priests had arrived on the Island, but the real organised work of evangelisation in Sri Lanka began in 1543 and made great progress in the first half of the 17th century, with the arrival of various groups of missionaries. Among them was Bl. Joseph Vaz, a priest from Goa. But, during the second half of the same century, when the Island nation came under Dutch rule (1650-1795), evangelisation suffered a serious setback. Later, with the arrival of the British, the situation improved, though various factors continued to be an obstruction to Church activities till the independence of the country in 1948.

The Catholic hierarchy was established in 1886. In 1893 a Pontifical Seminary was opened in Kandy to provide for the priestly training of the clergy from India and Sri Lanka. Later, in 1955, the Pontifical Seminary of Kandy was transferred to Pune in India, and in its place the National Seminary of Our Lady of Sri Lanka was opened in Ampitiva to serve the dioceses of Sri Lanka. Today, the Catholic population stands at 1,365,000 (6.8% of the total); with 11 dioceses, 1,080 priests (683 diocesan and 397 religious) and a total number of 3,038 consecrated religious, 577 men and 2,461 women.⁶

The greatest challenges faced by the Sri Lankan Church are work for reconciliation between the Tamils and the Sinhalese, the resolution of the ethnic problem; and the achievement of greater dialogue with the Buddhists.

⁶ Ibid.

Myanmar

Myanmar (formerly Burma) lies in south-east Asia. Neighbouring countries are China, Laos, Bangladesh and Thailand, and it is bordered by the Andaman Sea and the Bay of Bengal. The population of Myanmar is about 48,000,000, of which Buddhists account for 89%, Christians 4%, and Muslims 4%.

Since 1988, a ruthless military government has ruled the country. It does not allow the citizens their human rights: freedom of political self-determination, freedom of the press and freedom of expression. The ethnic groups in the States of Shan, Mon, Karen and Karenni (on the borders of Thailand) are repressed by the Government for military reasons with a systematic plan of "ethnic purification", as it is called.

The origin of the Church in Myanmar can be placed at about the middle of the sixteenth century, and specifically in an attempt at evangelisation in 1544 by a French Franciscan. Almost a hundred years later the Capuchins came, followed by the Barnabites. During the first half of the 19th century, as an aftermath to the war between the British and the Burmese, the Church underwent almost total extermination, so much so that in 1866 there were only two Catholic priests remaining. But the situation gradually improved, and the Catholic hierarchy was established in 1995.

Today, Myanmar has a Catholic population of over 620,000 (1.16%); with 13 dioceses, 574 priests (540 diocesan and 34 religious), and 1,627 consecrated religious, of whom 139 are men and 1,488 women.⁷

In 1965/6 the Government nationalised all the ecclesiastical institutions. But despite these obstacles arising from the political situation, the Church is vibrant and dynamic. From 1995, the Myanmar Catholic Bishops' Conference has been pressing for freedom of religion on the basis of the National Constitution.

⁷ Ibid.

Nepal

Nepal, a landlocked country in southern Asia, lies in a strategic location between China and India; it is a mountainous country, rising from a height of 70 metres to Mount Everest at 8,850 metres; it has 8 of the world's 10 highest peaks.

Nepal is among the poorest and least developed countries in the world with almost one-third of its population living below the poverty line. Nepal's economic prospects are rather poor due to its technological backwardness, its landlocked situation and remote geographic location, its susceptibility to natural disasters, and above all its internal civil strife, fanned by Maoist guerrillas and a number of left-leaning and radical antimonarchist groups. The precarious situation has also reduced tourism, which in better times was a key source of foreign exchange.

Nepal has a population of 29 million, ruled by a king and a parliament of ministers. The political situation is volatile, if not quite anarchical. A typical example was the massacre of ten members of the royal family, including the king and the queen, in 2001 by the crown prince, who then took his own life. The majority of the Nepal population is Hindu. Conversion to another religion is forbidden by law.

In 1628 the Jesuit missionaries brought the Catholic faith to Nepal, but the work of evangelisation begun by them has greatly diminished. Today, the Catholics number about 8,000 (0,02%), with 50 priests (12 diocesan and 38 religious), 164 consecrated religious, (40 men and 124 women).⁸

Conversion from Hinduism, the national religion, is not only not allowed, but punishable with imprisonment. The Christian mission, in terms of an explicit proclamation of the Gospel, is forbidden.

⁸ Ibid.

Kuwait

Kuwait, a small, oil-rich country, lies in the Middle East, between Iraq and Saudi Arabia, bordering the Persian Gulf. Though rich in petroleum, it depends almost wholly on food imports, and 75% of the drinking water must be distilled or imported.

It has a population of about 2,650,000, including 1,300,000 non-nationals, 85% of whom are Muslim, while the remaining 15% consists of Christians, Hindus, Parsis, and others, almost all expatriates.

The origin of Christianity in the region can be traced back even to apostolic times. At present, of the total population about 158,500 are Catholics (5.98%), belonging to the various rites. There is a Catholic Bishop and a Cathedral in Kuwait City, and three other places of worship, with 12 priests, of whom 9 are religious. Consecrated religious are 22, of whom 13 Sisters.⁹

Yemen

Yemen is another country in the Middle East, with a population of almost 21,000,000, practically all of whom are Muslim, with a negligible number of Jews, Christians and Hindus. The northern part gained independence from the Ottoman Empire in 1918, while the British withdrew from the southern part only in 1967. When South Yemen adopted a Marxist stance, thousands of Yemenis from the South took refuge in the North, and the exodus brought the two regions into conflict with each other. Finally in 1990, both regions were merged into the Republic of Yemen. Now the country enjoys comparative harmony.

There are only about 4,000 Catholics in a total population of 21 million, and these too are mostly Filipino and Indian expatriates, with a smattering of Iraqis, Sudanese, Lebanese, Jordanians,

⁹ Ibid.

Americans and British. There are 5 Salesian priests as chaplains to the Missionaries of Charity of Mother Teresa, but they also provide for the spiritual needs of the small Catholic population. There are 4 communities of the Missionaries of Charity of Mother Teresa, with 24 Sisters, belonging to various nationalities. In 1998 three of these Sisters were gunned down by an Islamic fundamentalist; they were the first martyrs of the Missionaries of Charity to lay down their lives for the Faith in the service of the poor. In some of the centres where the Salesians work, formation programmes are conducted to enable the expatriates to withstand the inducements of the Islamic fundamentalists and the Protestant sects. At present the situation is improving after the President in 2000 ordered the Prime Minister to restore the Churches and adjoining lands in Yemen to the Catholic Church.

3. Salesian history of the Region

The first group of Salesians, led by Fr. George Tomatis, was made up of three priests, one cleric, one brother and an aspirant (four Italians, one Belgian and one Frenchman). On 17 December 1905 they set sail from Genoa, and reached Bombay on 5 January the following year. They spent brief periods as guests of the Bishop of Daman, and then of the Bishop of Mylapore, and reached their final missionary destination – Thanjavur – on 14 January 1906.

At once they took charge of the existing orphanage of St. Francis Xavier, and of the parish elementary school. Within three weeks of their arrival they started a group of Salesian Cooperators and a festive oratory, where in the evenings after recreation the boys had an hour of catechism conducted by the new Cooperators and a few of the bigger boys. In February of the same year they started two workshops.

Already by June of 1906 they had administered the first baptism. Right from the start the Salesians had been trying to foster indigenous vocations. In August 1907, a certain Ignatius Muthu,

28 years old, joined the Salesians at Thanjavur. In 1908, along with another aspirant, he was sent to Italy for his novitiate. After completing the novitiate and philosophy in Portugal, the two young Salesians returned to India, and Ignatius Muthu was ordained priest on 31 December 1916. He was the first Indian Salesian priest.

Within the first couple of years of Salesian work in Thanjavur, the untimely death on 19 November 1907 of Fr Ernest Vigneron, one of the first group, gave a rude shock to the Salesian community. God came to their rescue in a mysterious way. Another French missionary, Fr Eugene Mederlet, was on his way to China to join the Salesian missionaries in Macau. On the way, he stopped in India to visit his friend, Fr Vigneron. While he was still in India, his friend died, and Fr Rua telegraphed Fr Mederlet to stay on in India to take his place.

In 1909, Fr Tomatis, leaving Fr Mederlet in charge of the Thanjavur mission, moved to Mylapore (Chennai) to start the second foundation. Here too they began work with orphans in an already existing orphanage at Mylapore. Fr Tomatis died unexpectedly in 1925.

Meanwhile the Holy See was pressing the Salesians to take on the vast mission of Assam. Finally on 13 January 1922, the first group of 11 missionaries (6 priests and 5 brothers), with Fr Louis Mathias as leader, reached Shillong, then the capital of Assam. In December 1922, Fr Mathias was appointed Prefect Apostolic of Assam. and from then on there was no looking back. In 1923 the Salesians in India were grouped into a "Vice-Province" with Shillong as the headquarters, and Fr Mathias as the superior. On 28 May 1926 the Indian "Vice-Province" was elevated to a Province, with Fr Mathias as the first Provincial, Shillong still as the headquarters and St. Thomas the Apostle as the patron.

While the Salesian work was progressing very well in the north, the situation was not so encouraging in the south. There were problems with the local diocesan administration. The local Bishop was very friendly, fatherly and protective towards the

Salesians; not so his Vicar General, who governed the diocese in the long absence of the Bishop in Europe. Hence, the Extraordinary Visitor, Fr Peter Ricaldone, withdrew the Salesians from Thanjavur and Mylapore and sent them to Mumbai and Vellore. In 1928 the North Arcot Mission, which had its headquarters in Vellore, was attached to the Madras Archdiocese, which in its turn was entrusted to the Salesians, and Fr Eugene Mederlet was appointed the Archbishop.

In 1934, Fr Mathias and Fr Ferrando were ordained bishops of Shillong and Krishnagar respectively. In 1935 Archbishop Mederlet died unexpectedly; Bishop Mathias was transferred to the archdiocese of Madras, and Bishop Ferrando to Shillong. In 1939, the Salesians in the north went to Burma (Myanmar) and began the work at Mandalay, and in 1956 those of the south began the work at Negombo, in Sri Lanka.

3.1 *Missionary activity in the first half of the century*

From 1922 until the second world war there was a constant flow of Salesian missionaries from abroad, but after the declaration of independence in 1947 it became progressively more difficult for foreign missionaries to enter India and in 1966 the government put a stop to it altogether. And so it was that between 1906 and 1966, a period of 60 years, more than 450 Salesians from different countries came to India as missionaries – the majority of them from Europe and especially from Italy, but also some from Australia and the Americas. The great majority of them died in India, the missionary land of their adoption; a few returned to their native countries for reasons of health or similar motives. Today in India only 31 foreign missionaries remain.

From the very beginning, the missions were an outstanding expression of the Salesian charism among the young. Beginning from the education of the children to arrive at the evangelisation of the local people: this may be said to be the missionary strategy

adopted by the Salesians in all their missions. But the missionary work in India presents certain characteristics of its own that distinguish it from missionary work elsewhere in the Congregation.

In the first place, it must be emphasised that the missionaries were an international group drawn from different countries and so represented the reality of a universal Church. Helpful also was the fact that these missionaries maintained contact with their countries of origin for the financial and psychological support so necessary for the rapid development of the mission. Wherever a Salesian missionary work was begun, there was a transformation, a progressive growth in all the surrounding area.

The presence too of a sizeable number of Salesian brothers, working alongside the priests in every kind of skilled work, made a very favourable impression because it spoke of the fundamental equality of people in a country dominated by divisions of tribe and caste, and where every caste is linked with a specific kind of work. The role of the Salesian brother in the missions has been decisive because of the quality and depth of his lay witness.

In this way the proclamation of the Gospel and the celebration of the sacraments go hand in hand with education and professional work. The network of schools, of professional training centres, of boarding schools and hostels for boys and girls which everywhere sprang up rapidly in missionary territory, had a deep transforming effect on a society which had long been stagnant and isolated, and opened it up to the vast world all about it by giving credible witness to the power of the Gospel and its wide social implications.

A second characteristic of missionary work in India was that of the formation of missionaries on the spot. Mgr. Mathias insisted with the superiors that they send young candidates to India, where they could begin their novitiate and pass their formative years in the places of their future ministry, learning the language, customs and traditions of the local people they would have to serve. Their youthful zeal and energy enabled them to adapt very rapidly to the local conditions and later to be exceptional leaders and pio-

neers in the areas to which they were assigned. Combined with this option for young missionaries from abroad, there was also the effort from the outset to find indigenous vocations. This courageous option, which was in contrast to the custom prevailing elsewhere of counting exclusively on missionaries from abroad, proved to be wise and far-sighted, because it prepared Indian Salesians who grew and worked shoulder to shoulder with confreres from other countries to take over the reins of government and administration when foreign missionaries were interned in concentration camps during the war, or could no longer enter the country after the declaration of independence. Missionary work did not come to a halt when the influx of foreign missionaries dried up. It continued, but in different hands, long schooled by the spirit and zeal of the first pioneers.

The third significant characteristic of missionary strategy in India, we could say, was the foundation of missionary institutes of Sisters by Salesian bishops. The Missionary Sisters of Mary Help of Christians, the Catechist Sisters of Mary Immaculate, the Visitation Sisters of Don Bosco, and other institutes founded more recently, made available to the young churches of the north-east zealous groups of dedicated local Sisters, who went round villages and small communities catechising, attending to health needs, and in general taking care of the women and young children. In mission stations, in dispensaries, schools and hostels, these good Sisters integrated wonderfully with the work of the priests and brothers in far-flung corners of the missionary field.

Mention must also be made of the intrepid groups of lay catechists found all over the missions. Even in the most distant villages and those most difficult of access, which the priests and sisters could reach only once or twice a year, these humble catechists, though only poorly instructed and poorly paid, were the visible countenance of the Church, gathering the people together for prayer every Sunday, teaching them, visiting the sick, preparing the faithful for the reception of the sacraments, accompanying missionaries on the occasion of their visits, translating sermons

into local languages, and making first contacts in new areas. The missionary Churches owe a great deal to these poor and simple catechists, who are in the vanguard of the missionary outreach *ad gentes*.

From only 5,000 Catholics in Assam when our first missionaries arrived in the north-east of India and took over the Assam mission from the Salvatorian Fathers, the Catholic Church has grown to 1.3 million faithful today in the space of little more than 80 years.

And what I have said of missionary activity in the north-east could equally be said of the other parts of the Region in their own way.

3.2 *Two great missionaries*

Here I must digress from the historical narrative, to pay homage to two very important missionaries, to whose missionary zeal, enthusiasm, administrative skill and vision, the planting and development of the Salesian charism can be attributed. During my recent visits to the Region I heard them spoken of with great respect and esteem.

Archbishop Louis Mathias (1887-1965)

The first is Fr Louis Mathias, the leader of the first missionary expedition to North India, a French Salesian and a very dynamic individual. He is unquestionably the most prominent Salesian in India of the last century.

From the start he put into action what would later become the official motto of his episcopate, "*Aude et spera*", dare and hope. Daring and hoping against all odds, his stewardship as the first Provincial of India saw the number of Salesians and activities grow rapidly.¹⁰

¹⁰ Cfr Thekkedath, J. *A History of the Salesians of Don Bosco in India*, Vol. II, pp. 1368-1375.

Fr Mathias was not merely an enthusiastic leader, but also a person who was able to arouse the same enthusiasm in others. He showed great resourcefulness in overcoming the serious problems that the new mission of Assam faced because of the lack of sufficient means and personnel. One of his great achievements in Assam was the creation and maintenance of the "family spirit", especially in the formation houses. He was a great organizer: the brain behind all the planning in the mission; he was also in control of everything everywhere; but he left ample room for local initiative, so that the missionaries did not feel stifled, but sustained. Fr Ricaldone, the Extraordinary Visitor in 1927, described him as one who "possessed extraordinary qualities for his office. He was intelligent: he knew how to get the support of others. But above all, he was a man of piety and of exemplary religious observance". Thanks to his great love for Don Bosco, he took effective steps to plant the Congregation not only in Assam but also in Calcutta, Bombay, Madras, North Arcot and Krishnagar. The progress of the Assam Mission under his inspiring leadership was such that the Holy See made Shillong a diocese in 1934 and appointed him its first bishop.

In the same year, however, on the death of the Salesian Archbishop of Madras, he was transferred to Madras to take his place. Madras was a different world altogether, but he adapted himself to the new situation. When the Holy See combined the Archdiocese of Madras and the Diocese of Mylapore to form the new Archdiocese of Madras-Mylapore, he was appointed as its first Archbishop. During his thirty years in Madras he proved himself to be one of the most energetic of the bishops of India. Whenever the principles or interests of the Church were under attack from the government in any part of India, he raised his voice in protest and often with success. It is rightly said that the hierarchy, clergy and laity in India are deeply indebted to him for his enormous services to the Church. The work he did in the archdiocese of Madras-Mylapore is simply monumental.

He always remained a staunch son of Don Bosco. He was extremely generous towards the Congregation. Some of the best

Salesian parishes and schools of Madras city (now Chennai) are gifts of Archbishop Mathias to the Congregation.

Fr José Carreño (1905-1986)

The second very significant Salesian, who left a deep mark on South India, is Fr José Carreño, a Spaniard. If Mgr. Mathias was the most prominent Salesian in India during the last century, Fr Carreño was the most loved Salesian in South India during the same century.¹¹

After the Salesians were forced to leave Thanjavur, North Arcot became the field of our apostolate and Tirupattur in North Arcot was the heart of the Salesian world of South India. Fr Carreño made this heart throb with love of Jesus Christ. It is said that as a director of novices, to which post he was appointed when he was not even thirty years old, he made his novices fall in love with the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

I reproduce here two letters of his novices, as they give a clear picture of Fr Carreño. The first is from Hubert D’Rosario, who later became the Archbishop of Shillong-Guwahati. *“My Novice Master was Fr Carreño. He cared for us as a father ... We felt attracted to him and tried to imitate him. He inculcated in us lasting values ... He was a brilliant teacher, a convincing preacher ... We were always eager to listen to his lectures and conferences that he used to prepare so well. We were won over by his fatherly heart. Joy, love, peace and hope were the things one breathed in that house ... That house was like heaven”*.¹²

The second testimony is from Fr Aloysius Di Fiore, who later became the Provincial of Madras: *“Without a doubt the most precious legacy that Fr Carreño handed on to us was the Salesian spirit in its essential characteristics: thirst for souls, fraternal charity, family spirit built on prayer, work, cheerfulness, healthy optimism, hospitality”*.¹³

¹¹ Cf, *ibid.*, pp. 1375-1379

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 1375.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 1375-1376.

In 1944 Fr Carreño was appointed Provincial of the Southern Province, and in the first council meeting a decision was taken to consecrate the Province to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Many Salesians of South India attribute the extraordinary growth of the Southern Province to his love for the Sacred Heart and his consecration of the Province to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The most outstanding contribution of Fr Carreño to Salesian India was the effort that he made to increase the number of native candidates to Salesian life. Already in 1893, Pope Leo XIII had written, "*...the Christian cause in India could never have firm roots without the continuing dedication of a pious and zealous clergy native to India*".¹⁴ Fr Carreño would have heartily concurred with the Pope as regards native vocations to the Salesian life.

With the start of World War II, the flow of personnel from Europe stopped. To make matters worse, the Italian and German Salesians were interned in concentration camps, and the Province was left with very few Salesians. Fr Carreño opened an aspirantate at Tirupattur in 1943. First, he took in only youngsters who had finished high school, but realising that they were too few for the great work ahead, he began to take also younger boys. That policy has continued to the present day in India, and today, if the Indian Salesians are so numerous, it is due to the farsightedness and courage of Fr Carreño.

3.3 *Rapid development of the Congregation*

In 1923 the Indian "Vice Province" was set up, with Shillong as its headquarters; on 28 May 1926 it was elevated to a Province, with St. Thomas the Apostle as the Patron. On 24 January 1934 the Salesian Province of India was divided in two: the Province of North India, with St. John Bosco as the patron and Shillong as headquarters – later moved to Calcutta (Kolkata); and the Province of South India, with St. Thomas the Apostle as the pa-

¹⁴ Leo XIII, *Ad Extremas*, no. 4, 24 June 1893.

tron and Vellore as headquarters – later transferred to Madras (Chennai).

On 17 October 1959 the Province of Guwahati with Mary Help of Christians as the patroness was separated from Kolkata. On 31 January 1972 the “Vice Province” of Mumbai was erected into a Province with St. Francis Xavier as its patron. On 19 March 1979 Bangalore Province with the Sacred Heart of Jesus as its patron was separated from Chennai Province, while on 8 December 1981 Dimapur Province was separated from Guwahati with St. Francis de Sales as its patron. On 24 April 1992 Hyderabad, then part of Bangalore Province, was established as a separate Province, with St. Joseph as its patron, while the Delegation of New Delhi, which was part of Kolkata Province, was canonically erected as a Province in its own right on 24 January 1997, with Jesus the Good Shepherd as the patron. On 5 August 1999 the Chennai province was divided into two, and the southern part was formed into a Province with Our Lady of Good Health as the patron, and Tiruchy as the headquarters. In 2004 three existing Delegations were raised to the status of Vice-Provinces: that of Myanmar, separated from Chennai, with Mary Help of Christians as patroness on 6 August, that of Sri Lanka separated from Chennai, with St. Joseph as patron, on 15 August, and that of the Konkani Region, separated from Mumbai, with Blessed José Vaz as patron on 31 August.

Salesians in Myanmar

In 1894, a certain Fr J. L. Lafon had founded an orphanage for Chinese children in Mandalay, which he developed into a much larger one for orphans of all nationalities found in Burma, and later also added a school. With the continued growth of the school and the boarding provision, and his advancing age, Fr Lafon could not manage the work alone. Since 1928 he had been writing to Mgr Mathias, the Provincial, with the approval of Bishop Falière, asking for Salesians to take over the school. Finally, in 1939, a group of six Salesians, with Fr Anthony Alessi as the leader, came to Mandalay to take over the boarding school.

As often happens in beginnings, in Myanmar too the Salesians had a very difficult time – especially lack of funds. Soon afterwards Mandalay became a battle zone between the Japanese and the British. In the fighting, the Salesians lost practically all their belongings; but thanks be to God, no life was lost. They also gave shelter to many people - including 10 seminarians, orphans and refugee families. After the war, they slowly limped back to normal life, with the help of the British authorities. But soon again a civil war broke out within Myanmar itself, and this time, too, the Salesians had to suffer greatly.

In 1952 the Salesians accepted the parish of Thingangyung, about 5 km from Yangon. In 1957 the aspirantate was opened in Anisakan, and in 1964 the first group of three novices began their novitiate at Anisakan; after their profession they continued their post-novitiate formation in the same house. With the Socialist Revolution of 1965, all foreign missionaries were driven out and private schools were nationalised. Only Fr Fortunato Giacomini, an Italian missionary managed to stay on, and keep the newly professed together, acting as their superior, professor of philosophy and theology, all in one.

In 1975, the mission of Lashio was opened, thanks to the missionary zeal of Mgr. Jocelyn Madden, and continued to flourish well to the point that it became a diocese, with Mgr. Charles Bo as the first Salesian Bishop. In 1977 the formation house of Yangon was started for the students of theology who frequented the inter-diocesan Major Seminary. In 1988 the aspirantate of Hsipaw, and the mission of Wa States were begun.

All this while, Myanmar formed part of the Province of Kolkata. In 1964 it was made a Delegation with its own Delegate. Realising the importance of helping the Myanmar Delegation to grow, and seeing the steady though slow growth in the number of the confreres and the regular number of pre-novices and novices, the possibility of overall development of the region, the esteem and encouragement given to the Salesians by the bishops of the

region, and above all the unflagging fidelity and attachment of the confreres to Don Bosco, especially during the years of trials and difficulties, in 2002 the Rector Major decided to raise the Delegation of Myanmar to a Vice-Province, and officially erected it as such on 13 June 2004.

Salesians in Sri Lanka

Fr Henry Remery, a French Salesian of the Chennai province, began the Salesian work on the island in 1956 near the capital city of Colombo, and in 1962 an institution was opened at Ettukal-Negombo. Although the work progressed at a steady pace, Fr Remery was alone for many years because the Sri Lankan government would not allow Indians to enter the country.

For some time, young confreres from Sri Lanka were sent to India for their initial formation, but that too stopped due to political reasons. Consequently a centre of formation was started in 1976 at Kandy for the young confreres studying for the priesthood, and at present, there are several formation houses in Sri Lanka itself – an aspirantate, a pre-novitiate, a novitiate and a post-novitiate. For theological studies the candidates are sent to Salesian studentates of theology in India or elsewhere.

In 1993, Sri Lanka became a delegation of the Chennai Province. Within a decade the Delegation had an almost complete infra-structure for animation and administration, and for further development and growth. In 2003, the Provincial of Chennai, with the consent of his council and in consultation with the Delegate of Sri Lanka, made a request to the Rector Major that the Delegation be separated from the Chennai province and be erected into a Vice-Province. Thus, the Vice-Province of Sri Lanka was canonically erected on 13 June 2004.

Salesians in Nepal

Salesian activity in Nepal began in 1992. Fr Anthony Sharma, SJ., the Prefect Apostolic, bought a piece of land at Dharan and invited the Salesians to look after the mission, which consisted of

about 300 Catholics or 93 families of the locality and the 6 neighbouring centres. The Salesians began a school in 2000 in Kathmandu, the capital city. At present we have a community and a foundation in Nepal, belonging to the Kolkata province, with two confreres on loan from the Bangalore Province.

Salesians in Kuwait

Salesian work in Kuwait started in 2000 when the Rector Major, Fr Juan Vecchi, entrusted Kuwait to the Salesians of the Mumbai Province, to start a school for the children of mainly those engaged in building work, most of whom are of Indian or Filipino origin.

Salesians in Yemen

Mother Teresa of Kolkata was asked by the Yemenese Government to start a foundation in the country to look after the aged and the abandoned. She agreed to the proposal on the condition that her Sisters would have a chaplain to care for their spiritual needs. When the Government agreed to her request, she turned to the Rector Major, Fr Viganò for help, and Fr Viganò asked the Bangalore Province to send Salesians to be Chaplains to the Sisters of Mother Teresa in Yemen.

The first Salesian fondation was set up in 1987 in Sana'a, the capital of Yemen; similar chaplaincy work was started also in other places, in 1988 in Hodeidah, in 1989 in Taiz and in 1991 in Aden. In all the centres, besides being the official chaplains of the Sisters of Charity, the Salesians are also looking after sizeable groups of Catholics, mostly expatriate workers.

4. Salesian work at the present day

Today, the South Asian Region has 9 provinces and 3 Vice-Provinces; with about 2,400 Salesians and 170 novices in 359 cen-

tres; of these, 270 are canonically erected houses and 89 others approved foundations not yet canonically erected. The confreres in the Region include 5 Archbishops and 6 Bishops. The average age of the confreres is 40.3 years. Moreover many missionaries from India have gone out to various parts of the world to spread the Gospel and to plant the Salesian charism. The tiny seed sown on Indian soil a hundred years ago, has grown into a large tree, producing fruits of missionary activity and evangelisation the world over.

4.1 *Interprovincial coordination*

There is a well established inter-provincial Conference with its own Statutes; it meets twice a year – once for the plenary session, and the other for the executive meeting. The Salesian Provincial Conference of South Asia (SPCSA) has its centre in New Delhi, and acts as an instrument of inter-provincial communication and collaboration, and also of animation and public relations. The Secretary of the Conference is in charge of the centre and sees to the publication of the biennial bulletin (SPCSA Bulletin).

Under the responsibility of the Conference are four inter-provincial commissions, headed by their respective inter-provincial Delegates, who are appointed by the Conference and coordinate the four main sectors of our apostolate: formation, youth ministry, Salesian Family & social communication, and missionary animation. The Regional Conference draws up a plan for the six year period, based on the plan of government and animation of the Rector Major and his Council. So too, each of the four inter-provincial commissions makes its own programme based on the same model. There is adequate interaction among the commissions, and they meet regularly. Their activities are closely followed up by the Conference with annual evaluation and approval of programmes and budgets, and by providing for their financial expenses. The difficulty however lies in forging a common vision of the Region and in

committing adequate personnel and finance for achieving and sustaining significant regionwide works and activities.

4.2 *Formation*

Ongoing formation

At the inter-provincial level the Regional Conference has set up an on-going formation centre at Bangalore, *Don Bosco Yuva Prachodini*, and staffed it with qualified Salesians from different Provinces. Regular renewal programmes are conducted for leaders of communities, formation personnel and animators of youth pastoral ministry, both for Salesians and other religious. It runs a month-long course, culminating in a spiritual retreat, for deacons from all Provinces before ordination and also a course for confreres preparing for perpetual profession.

Initial formation

More than forty percent of the Salesians of the Region are in initial formation. This is a fact that we acknowledge with joy and with thanksgiving, but it is also a call for responsibility in assuring the high quality of formation fundamental for the Region's future.

There are two studentates of theology in the Region, both aggregated to the theological faculty of UPS. The one in the south (Kristu Jyoti College, Bangalore) offers a specialisation in catechetics and youth ministry (*Viswadeep*), conferring a baccalaureate in theology, and a licentiate in theology, youth ministry and faith education; since 1984 it publishes a quarterly journal entitled *Kristu Jyoti*. The second one is in the north (Sacred Heart Theological College, Shillong), with a specialisation in missiology. Since 1979 a missiological journal, dealing with theological issues connected with the Church's mission in contemporary Indian society, is published from here; in 2000 the journal was renamed *Mission*

Today. These studentates of theology and of specialisations are also open to men and women religious of other Congregations.

There are also four study centres, from where the Salesian students of theology frequent seminaries run by other religious or the diocese. This year we have altogether 206 students of theology. Last year there were 44 priestly ordinations. The Sacred Heart Theological College of Shillong also runs a centre for the specific formation of brothers; the course lasts two years with a diploma from the UPS, and is open to other men and women religious.

The Region has nine post-novitiate houses, one of which, run by the Kolkata province, is meant exclusively for brothers. The one in Nashik in the Mumbai Province is aggregated to the philosophical faculty of the UPS and publishes a quarterly journal, *Divyadaan*, of a scholarly nature. All the post-novitiate houses have adequate infra-structures, good libraries and dedicated formation staff, though in some there is a lack of sufficient qualified teachers; in this, they are helped by other Provinces that have qualified personnel. Four of the studentates are also affiliated to State universities for Bachelor degrees. The students in the post-novitiates total 295. After philosophical studies, the young Salesians do their practical training or continue with further academic or professional training. This year, 84 of them from the Region made their perpetual profession.

There are nine novitiate houses in the Region. 138 novices made their first profession on 24 May 2006, while 171 novices entered the novitiate on the same day. There are 10 pre-novitiate houses, which supply a well-prepared group of novices every year. We may note, besides, that in the Region there are only 163 Salesian brothers, compared with 2,247 priests and clerics. The ratio is 1 brother to 14 priests and clerics.

There are also some other aspects that seem to need strengthening as, for example, the formation of the formation personnel, which implies the setting up of a serious and specific programme of Salesian formation, with solid courses of Salesianity in the

various phases of formation with suitable texts and qualified teachers, and the "Curatorium" to ensure the sound functioning of formation houses open to students from different Provinces. One must start from the awareness that formation is first and foremost the responsibility of the whole Congregation as such, which has the prime responsibility for ensuring the charismatic identity of the Salesians.

4.3 *Youth ministry*

Pastoral ministry to young people is well organised. At Regional level there is a Delegate for youth animation appointed by the Provincial Conference. He is also the Delegate for education and culture for the Region. In addition, each Province has its own delegate assisted by commissions and sub-commissions for youth pastoral ministry in its five dimensions. Most of these commissions function effectively in organising programmes in schools, youth centres and parishes. Most Provinces have also drawn up an Educative and Pastoral Plan, which they try to implement. In general, there is tendency to emphasise activities and initiatives rather than formation and progressive animation. There is need for better planning and a more unified youth pastoral ministry.

Educational Institutions

The Salesian apostolate for the benefit of young people in the Region takes various forms. The most important one, with the largest number of beneficiaries is education. Speaking about the educational scenario in India, I had already pointed out that Christians are responsible for 20% of the institutes of primary education in India. We can also say that Salesians play a significant role in the educational endeavour of the country through their various educational institutions.

The early missionaries took their mission of evangelising though educating very seriously, and their missionary work was always

linked with education. The focus in all Provinces was on schools, primary and secondary, academic and professional, because basic education was the most fundamental need of young people. Soon, however, the Salesians also started university colleges. As a matter of fact, the first university college of the Congregation, St Anthony's College, was started in Shillong in the Province of Guwahati, in 1934. Now, there are colleges also in other parts of the Region, and these confer graduate and post-graduate degrees. With basic education becoming more widespread and accessible, there is currently a shift of emphasis from primary education to higher education, and hence, a greater need is felt in the various Provinces to open more university colleges.

In the major cities, our schools and colleges find it difficult to cope with the requests for admission. So great is the demand for good quality education that classes are conducted in two shifts. morning and afternoon in schools and with day and evening courses in colleges. In the Region there are in all 196 schools and university colleges, with a student body of 230,375 students. These educational institutions are known and respected for the good standard of discipline, an all-round education and excellent results. If Don Bosco is generally known and respected all over India, it is largely because of the network of solid educational institutions that we have in the country.

Many youngsters, however, cannot attend regular schools or colleges for various reasons: lack of finance, part-time jobs, over-age, lack of places in formal institutions, etc. To help these young people in difficulty, many Provinces conduct night schools, evening study centres, correspondence courses and open university coaching centres. These are greatly appreciated, well attended, and the results are very encouraging.

There is also the fact of unemployment, which is a serious problem. Although India is experiencing an economic boom, jobs are scarce and hard to find. Education alone is not sufficient preparation for a decent job in the future. Vocational training and

agricultural institutions are needed to equip young people with the required skills. The Salesians of the Region have taken the matter seriously to heart. There are 85 vocational training centres and 2 agricultural institutes in the Region, catering for 14,030 students. Among them, we have engineering colleges and institutes providing training in computer sciences, as well as those providing technical and vocational training for the skilled workforce. In both these categories, besides those institutions that provide formal education, there are also many which provide education of a non-formal kind to students who do not qualify for admission to formal institutions. This too is a great help in reducing unemployment.

Boarding Houses and Hostels

Along with the educational institutes, mention must be made of boarding houses and hostels as relevant means of youth apostolate. The boarding houses are for schoolchildren from various backgrounds: children from villages where there are no schools, children from homes without even the minimum facilities for study, and children who are orphaned or from broken families; this kind of boarding house, especially in mission and poverty-stricken areas, is a means of evangelising and inculcating Christian values to Christians and non-Christians alike, and of imparting a good education. Hostels are usually meant for college students and young working-men, both of which are considered to be a relevant means of apostolate and of imparting Christian values. There are 214 hostels and boarding houses in the region, catering for a total of 20,440 young people.

Youth Centres

In all the Provinces of the Region there are festive or daily oratories, which in the Region are generally known as youth centres. There are 168 such centres, frequented by almost 59,000 youngsters (more boys than girls), with varying regularity in their attendance. Most of them are attached to Salesian schools or

parishes. It is true that earlier there was a higher average attendance; but the number of the youth centres is still on the increase, and the methods of animation and programmes are also being updated. The oratories / youth centres of Shillong, Panaji, Chennai and Kochi have a long history and experience behind them and continue to make a profound impact on the neighbourhood, while the more recent centres in Guwahati, Ranchi, Hyderabad, Mumbai and Tiruchy offer a variety of services for young people, and perhaps have a wider outreach.

Groups and movements for young people have not had much success in the Region, even though *Friends* as a youth group continued for some time. Scouting, however, has drawn much attention in very many schools, and every three years a Scout Jamboree, called *Boscoree*, is conducted by Provinces in turn, and draws more than two thousand young scouts and guides from all over India. The event is meticulously prepared for a year with an *iter* and a theme, and celebrated in grand style with elements of India's multi-cultural folklore. The experience is both fun-filled and formative, a typical mix of Salesian youth spirituality in a pluralistic religious context.

The apostolate on behalf of Youth at Risk (YaR)

For the past few decades the confreres of the South Asian Region have gone a long way in their efforts on behalf of youth at risk (YaR). The youth at risk are youngsters very similar to the shoeshine boys, and the children of war victims of Italy in the aftermath of the Second World War. The confreres involved in this work are doing a typically Salesian apostolate; and deserve every support, appreciation and help.

The term "youth at risk" is used to include many groups of youngsters, both boys and girls. The first among them are the so-called *street children*. In the major cities of India there are thousands of boys and girls who literally live on the streets. Many of them do not have a home, or parents; others run away from home

and go around the city gathering recyclable stuff from dust bins (*rag pickers*). Some of them work as unlicensed porters in the railway stations and bus stands. Since they are under the control of gang-leaders, a good percentage of their daily earnings is compulsorily handed over to their bosses. The rag pickers are often harassed by the police and sometimes sexually abused by older persons, and the girls are forced into prostitution. They take shelter under bridges, in unused drain pipes or in abandoned sheds.

The work on behalf of these street children was begun by an enterprising group of students of theology in Bangalore, in the year 1980. Today it has fired Salesian hearts with enthusiasm in practically all the Provinces of India. These children are provided with a home, where they feel they belong and are cared for. The names given to these homes are revealing: *Sneha Bhavan*, *Valsalya Bhavan* and *Anbu Illam* (all meaning "Home of Love"), *Asha Alayam* (Dwelling of Hope), Shelter Don Bosco, Don Bosco *Veedu* (Don Bosco's House), etc. In many cities of India, in the railway stations and main bus terminals, with the help of the municipal authorities, the Salesians have set up a toll free telephone network called *Child Line*. Through this facility, any youngster in distress, or any one noticing a youngster in trouble, can call a specified number and contact the Salesians of the locality and seek help.

Another group of young people at risk are child labourers, both boys and girls. The Indian Constitution decrees compulsory education for all till the age of 14, and the employment of children under 14 years of age is punishable by law; yet, thousands of children are employed even as early as 5 years of age. Thus, we have a very large group of child labourers in the cities and towns. The Salesians intervene on behalf of these children, often with the help of the police, rescue them from the clutches of employers, bring them to rehabilitation centres, and with the help of the educational department, coach them in their studies and place them in the school system according to their age.

In some Provinces of the Region, Salesians are active on behalf of drug addicts, especially juvenile addicts, and help to de-toxify and rehabilitate them into social life. Some members of the Salesian Family help to rescue young girls from prostitution, and provide assistance for so-called "sex workers". Very significant in this area is the rehabilitation by the Salesians in Sri Lanka of young victims of sexual abuse arising from the sexual tourism of foreigners in that island.

At the SPCSA Centre in New Delhi a forum has been set up to address the needs of the young at risk, with a Salesian attached to it full time. Several Salesians and members of the Salesian Family are trained to work with young people at risk. In all, there are 207 centres in the region where the young at risk find shelter daily, or which serve as rehabilitation centres for them. About 34,000 youngsters of this category are helped every year in different ways.

Career Guidance Services

Practically in all the Provinces of the Region there are special youth services: career guidance services, and psychological counselling centres. These centres or services operate on the Provincial level, with qualified personnel.

There are 33 such centres assisting a sizeable number of youngsters, of which *Vazhikaatti* in Chennai and Tiruchy Provinces are notable for preparing young people for employment.

Vocational guidance

In general, each Province has a vocation promotion plan, and a vocation promoter. The overall selection process of the candidates through interviews and camps is quite sound, and as a result we usually get good vocations.

Nevertheless, since the recruitment of boys is done in their teens, there is also a good percentage of dropouts from Salesian life during the period of initial formation. It is also noticeable

that most of the vocations come from outside our parishes and schools. Although we are in daily contact with thousands of young people who frequent our institutions, we have not yet found the way to attract a good number of them to the Salesian way of life. What is lacking, perhaps, is a good vocation guidance plan at the local level, whereby each community and confrere feels the responsibility for the discernment and guidance of those youngsters who show signs of a vocation, and through prayer, the radiant witness of the consecrated life and an evangelising presence among the young, sow the seed of a Salesian vocation in their hearts.

By *apostolic schools and aspirantates* are meant those boarding houses attached to schools and junior colleges, where prospective candidates for the Salesian priesthood or religious life are looked after and prepared for the pre-novitiate. The Region is blessed with 26 such flourishing centres, true nurseries of Salesian life for hundreds of budding Salesian vocations every year.

Concluding this survey of the institutions for the benefit of the young, it must be said that if youth pastoral ministry in the Region is to be more effective and enduring, it must be more unified and centred to a greater extent on the primary objective of the education of young people to the faith; it must accompany the growth process of the youngsters and not merely multiply activities; it must be better planned and coordinated, so as to involve lay collaborators in a common vision and shared commitment. In any case the Salesian preferential option for poor youngsters has found outstanding and creative expressions throughout the Region, and of this it can be justly proud.

4.4 *The Salesian Family*

In speaking of the Salesian Family in the Region, pride of place must be given to the *Daughters of Mary Help of Christians (FMA)*, who have worked and continue to work with the Salesians for the

development of the Salesian charism and mission. Their presence in India goes back to 1922 when Fr Tomatis on his return to India after his holiday in Italy, brought back with him six Salesian Sisters. Originally they worked side by side with the Salesians practically everywhere, mainly looking after the girls and poor women. They had successive groups coming regularly from Europe, and they too began recruiting local vocations, with the result that gradually the Institute became stronger and enriched by Indian Sisters. They too had to face the same problems and privations as the Salesians during the Second World War, and later were subject to the same restrictions placed on the arrival of foreign missionaries. Today in the Region, there are 1,208 professed Sisters and 80 novices, not counting the 11 Sisters and 5 novices in Myanmar in 2 communities belonging to the Cambodia Province. The FMA Region is divided into 6 Provinces and has 150 centres.

Soon after their arrival in Thanjavur, the Salesians realised they needed lay collaborators for their missionary work. Within three weeks, Fr Tomatis started a group of the *Association of Salesian Cooperators* in Thanjavur. In this past century, wherever they went, both Salesians and Daughters of Mary Help of Christians were zealous in starting up a centre of the Cooperators. Especially after the impetus given by Vatican II towards the lay apostolate, and after "the rediscovery of the Salesian Family" by the Special General Chapter, the Salesian Cooperators have grown in number in the Region, with a clearer and better understanding of their Salesian vocation, their indispensable role in the Salesian mission and their rightful place in the Salesian Family and in the Church. As of today, there are 133 centres in the Region and 2,507 Cooperators who have made their promise. The local centres are animated by SDB/FMA delegates and at Provincial and Inter-provincial level by a joint council of the SDB/FMA centres and their delegates,

Practically everywhere in India *Don Bosco/FMA Past Pupils* are to be found. Many of them occupy important positions in society and in government offices. In a few States some influential Minis-

ters are Past Pupils. There are 102 active centres of Don Bosco Past Pupils and 26,025 enrolled members in the Association.

The number of *Don Bosco Volunteers* is very small; less than a dozen, and all of them in the Provinces of Chennai and Kolkata. The DBV Group in South Asia still needs to be given a fresh start.

In the Region there are some other groups of the Salesian Family, founded by Salesians:

- The *Missionary Sisters of Mary Help of Christians (MSMHC)*, founded by the Servant of God, Archbishop Stephen Ferrando of Shillong, in 1942, in Guwahati Province. What led him to found this group was the fact that during the Second World War foreign missionaries were interned in camps and the work of evangelisation had begun to slow down. While he was planning to involve women as evangelisers in the villages, he noted a group of FMA past pupils in Guwahati helping people in general and caring for the wounded soldiers. They wanted to become religious and dedicate their life to charitable works. Archbishop Ferrando founded the Institute on this group. Now numbering 931 Sisters in 156 communities, they work in 48 dioceses in India, Italy, Africa and Brazil. Most of them do evangelising work in the villages, and others run schools, oratories, orphanages, homes for the aged and free clinics.
- The *Catechist Sisters of Mary Immaculate Help of Christians (SMI)* were founded by Bishop Louis LaRavoire Morrow in 1948 in Krishnagar, in the Kolkata Province. Their spirituality is based on that of St. Thérèse of Lisieux and the preventive system of Don Bosco. Maintaining close contact with families is one of their chief apostolic activities, besides running oratories, primary schools, work centres, homes for the aged, etc. They number over 500, and have communities also outside India.

These two Congregations of religious women are officially members of the Salesian Family, while others are waiting to be recognised and accepted. Among the latter are:

- *The Disciples (Don Bosco Secular Institute)*, founded by Fr. Joe D'Souza of the New Delhi Province in 1973, are a group of men and women. The 313 Sisters and the 87 Brothers work in 194 centres in 46 dioceses (41 Indian and 5 Italian). Like the disciples who were sent out two by two by the Master, these too work in small groups, carrying the Gospel message to the people and living like the disciples of old, owning no property, neither land nor institutions, but living among the people and, like the people, accepting whatever food and lodging is offered them. In each diocese they are under the care of the local Bishop.
- *The Sisters of Maria Auxiliatrix (SMA)*, founded by the late Fr Anthony Muthamthoil in 1976; the members number 91, in 21 communities, working in 7 dioceses of India. Their apostolate ranges from direct evangelisation to caring for street children. In many places they help the Salesians in their apostolate.
- *The Visitation Sisters of Don Bosco (VSDB)*, founded by Archbishop Hubert D'Rosario of Shillong in 1983, in the Guwahati Province; today they number 81 professed religious and 17 novices, and work in 15 communities in 4 dioceses of North-East India. Their main apostolate is evangelisation through home visits, mainly in the villages and through social development programmes.
- *The Missionary Society of St. Paul*, founded by Archbishop Charles Bo of Yangon, in 1990. It has two branches: the male branch, known as *Missionary Brothers of St. Paul*, consists of 2 priests, other professed members and 2 novices working in 6 communities and in 3 dioceses; the female branch is known as *Missionary Sisters of St. Paul* and has 74 professed members and 12 novices, working in 22 communities and 5 dioceses.
- *The Adoration Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary*, founded by Archbishop Lucas Sirkar in 1991, when he was Bishop of Krishnagar. They number 60 professed Sisters and 11 Novices, and work in 6 communities and 2 dioceses. As their name suggests, their main apostolate is perpetual adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. They also engage in any apostolic activity the Bishop asks of them.

Practically all the Provinces have a Salesian as Delegate for the Salesian Family. In some Provinces the SDB and FMA Provincial Councils hold joint meetings to share ideas about the common mission, to plan combined initiatives and celebrate the “Salesian Family Day” once a year.

4.5 *Social communication*

Faced with the vast area of the Indian subcontinent, with its huge population, great variety of languages, and the utter strangeness of its cultures and customs, the first missionaries began the laborious task of learning several languages: English, the language spoken by the Government and the Indian elite, and also the local language of the common people they were meant to serve. But the more daunting task was understanding and inculturating themselves in a context so very different from Christian Europe.

The Salesians in the Region used all the means Don Bosco used to win souls and to spread Gospel values – lively classrooms with stories and quizzes on educational and catechetical subjects were combined with games, sport, music, drama and picnics. Barely seven years after their arrival, a full brass band was set up at Mylapore.¹⁵ In Mumbai, the band was found to be an “effective means of propaganda”.¹⁶ In Goa, a Portuguese colony, work began with football and an oratory.¹⁷ In Thanjavur more than 30,000 people, most of them Hindus, flocked to see the passion play.¹⁸ The new Salesian environment brought to India new signs and symbols that signified Christian joy and optimism.

In short, they created a “communicative environment” in which Gospel values could be transmitted, and the Salesian charism could be implanted. At the root of their communicative potential lay the

¹⁵ Thekkedath, p. 29.

¹⁶ Thekkedath, p. 271.

¹⁷ Thekkedath, p. 720.

¹⁸ Thekkedath, p. 65.

stirrings of pastoral zeal. It enabled them to reach beyond their own limitations. Some of the Salesians picked up the local languages so well that they became outstanding promoters of the local culture, producing grammars and books in the vernacular.¹⁹

Major communication initiatives soon began with the opening of printing presses as early as 1922 in Shillong (in the same year that the Salesians arrived in Assam), in 1924 in Tanjore, in 1925 in Calcutta and in 1948 in Tiruppattur. There are at least 8 of these in the Region, which, besides producing good literature, also aim at equipping young men with professional printing skills. The beginning of the Cultural Centre at Vaduthala in 1975 and the Catechetical Centre at Kolkata in 1977 gave an impulse to the production of catechetical and audio-visual aids. There are now about a dozen publishing houses, and cultural and communication centres in the Region with different names and in different languages, each with their respective goals: Mumbai province has two such centres, Kolkata has one, Guwahati three, Bangalore two, Chennai two and Tiruchy one. Besides publishing books, these centres also produce magazines, audio-video cassettes and audio-visual aids.

In 1930 the Salesians began a magazine called *Don Bosco in India*. From 1951, the *Salesian Bulletin* was printed in India, though from 1976 it was called *Don Bosco Salesian Bulletin*. Today, in addition to the English edition, the *Salesian Bulletin* is published in 6 local languages. There were about 20 publications in the Region when Mgr. Mathias began the publication of *The Clergy Monthly* in 1937, but most of them later ceased publication for various reasons. Today there is only one, in Tamil, called *Arumbu*, with a circulation of 20,000 copies.

From 1933 a Provincial newsletter was published for the whole of Salesian India. The creation of new Provinces gave rise to more newsletters, and today 11 of the 12 circumscriptions have their own

¹⁹ Cf, Sebastian Karotemprel (ed.), *The Catholic Church in Northeast India, 1890-1990*, Shillong, Vendrame Institute, 1993, p. 503.

newsletters. In addition, organisations and institutions in the Region also produce their own newsletters for their specific audiences. The Region is not lacking in the publication of scholarly works either, mainly by the two theologates of Bangalore and Shillong.

Catechetical aids and religious publications, audio and video productions, radio and TV programmes and films, have all been regularly produced. Worthy of mention are: *Catechetics India*, published quarterly, *Johnny*, a feature film in Malayalam on the early life of Don Bosco, released in 1994, and its sequel *Bosco* in 1999, both of which have been dubbed into English and some Indian languages.

The work of bringing young people to a critical use of the media through media education has gained ground. Some Salesians in rural ministry use folk-media to prompt the oppressed people in remote villages to fight for their dignity and rights. Here again, worthy of mention is the low budget film, *Mathia*, in the Kokborok language, which won an international award for its social value.

Graduate courses in the communication media at St Anthony's College Shillong (Province of Guwahati) and Don Bosco College, Angadikadavu (Province of Bangalore) were established to offer a wide range of professional training in the media and information technology. The contribution of the Salesians to social communication in the Church and society has been recognised in the fact that two Salesians were elected Presidents of SIGNIS-INDIA and the ICPA (Indian Catholic Press Association).

A decisive turning point in the communication field took place in March 1993, when the Salesian Provincial Conference set up BOSCOM-INDIA, a national executive body to coordinate communication initiatives in the Provinces. Most significant among these were two productions completed in view of the new millennium: an experimental formation plan for Salesians in social communication entitled, *Shepherds for an Information Age*, and *Don Bosco Multimedia India*, the first combined national catalogue of all Salesian production centres in India.

However encouraging this progress in social communication may seem, Salesian initiatives in South Asia are only a drop in the ocean of the vast and complex media scene.²⁰ The challenge is to make '*Da mihi animas*' the basis of every Provincial and Regional communication project, to search for relevance and efficiency in the local context, while at the same time to be open to sharing and synergy within the wider South Asian Region and indeed with the rest of the Salesian world. This will demand from the Salesians a closer collaboration with lay experts from different cultures and religious backgrounds in the South Asian world.

4.6 *Missionary activity*

Indian Salesians followed the same aims and options as the first missionaries who brought to India the Salesian charism. Because of the vocation recruitment strategy of the early missionaries (especially Fr Carreño) many young men from various parts of the country joined the ranks of the Salesians, and carried on from where the foreigners left off. The Government action that stopped the flow of foreign missionaries into India by no means diminished the missionary impetus and activities of earlier times. The Indian confreres kept up the pace with the same zeal, courage and optimism.

The superiors (ecclesiastical and Salesian) found them well-formed and ready to shoulder responsibilities of animation and leadership at the diocesan, provincial and local levels. Today, all the 10 Archbishops and Bishops and 12 Superiors of the juridical circumscriptions are of native origin; so too are practically all local superiors.

²⁰ The figures in India alone are staggering: 55,780 newspapers, a government-run radio network of 213 broadcasting centres that broadcasts in 24 languages and 146 dialects; a film industry that is the largest in the world, with an average of 880 feature films and 1200 short films released in a year.

Just as the earlier missionaries encouraged and fostered Indian vocations, the Indian confreres themselves have nurtured local vocations. Thus, even those States which did not have many local vocations during the first half of the century, like Karnataka in the South and the States of Central and Northeast India, are now reaping an abundant harvest of candidates, especially from the tribal and adivasi groups. Some of the Northern and North-eastern Provinces no longer depend on the Southern States for vocations, as once they did.

The story of evangelisation and the *missio ad gentes* still continues steadily and surely, without a lot of publication for fear of misunderstanding and obstacles from fundamentalist elements. Against the criticism that the Salesian missions have destroyed the rich tribal cultures of the area, leaving no trace, we have the magnificent *Don Bosco Centre for Indigenous Cultures* in Shillong where, in 13 galleries, are preserved and displayed various artefacts and traditional products from all the tribes of the Northeast. With a specialised library of about 10,000 volumes, the Centre offers facilities for research, seminars and symposia on the tribal cultures of the Northeast and the cultural development of the people.

Another very consoling aspect of the missionary activity of the Region is that after receiving overseas missionaries for about six decades, it is now paying back the debt that it owes to the Church and the Congregation. Since 1980 the Region has been sending missionaries to other parts of the world to plant the Gospel and to spread Don Bosco's charism. When Fr Viganò launched "Project Africa" 25 years ago, the Region responded very positively to his appeal. The East African Circumscription, first as a Delegation and later as a Province, has always been headed by Indian Salesians, and today 65 Indian Salesians work there as missionaries; some have returned to India for various reasons, and one was killed and another one died in East Africa itself. Another 16 work in other Provinces of Africa, 16 in the East Asian Region, 4 in the Region of Italy and the Middle East, and in other European countries, and 3 in South America. Thus, the total number of mission-

aries of the Region working abroad is 107,²¹ including the 24 who were given to me as a Centenary Gift.

The Arunachal Mission deserves special mention in the missionary activity of the Region. Arunachal Pradesh is one of the Indian States, on the north-eastern extremity of India, bordering on China. Its population is completely tribal, and the population has lived for centuries in virtual ignorance, superstition, extreme poverty, oblivion and isolation, oppressed by unhealthy social customs and cut off from the rest of the world. The Salesians of the North-east are the pioneers in bringing the Christian faith and education to this beautiful land and its people.

The Indian Government had passed a law that no missionary could enter Arunachal Pradesh, on the pretext that the culture of the tribes should be preserved uncontaminated. The education and eventual evangelisation of Arunachal began in 1978, when a certain Mr Wanglat Lowangcha, the young headman of one of the tribes, came to Shillong looking for a school to send their youngsters. There he met Fr Thomas Menamparampil (the present Archbishop of Guwahati), who received the young people very warmly and their friendship paved the way for a visit of Fr Thomas to Arunachal within a few months. That visit could have ended tragically, since the jeep in which he was travelling collided with that of a military convoy. Fr Thomas was injured, and as he was recovering in the house of Wanglat, the tribal chief asked Fr Thomas to baptise him and his family. That tragic night turned into a dawn of a very glorious era for the people of Arunachal.

The report of the encounter and the clandestine baptism of the tribal chief spread quickly in the province of Guwahati (at present

²¹ One of those working in South America, Fr George Puthenpura, has founded a Religious Congregation for women, called the "Sisters of the Resurrection". The official foundation was in 1987 and they were accepted into the Salesian Family in 2004. With their motto, "Christ is Risen, let us also rise with Him", they preach the Word, inculturate the Gospel and teach the faith to the poor through catechetics.

Dimapur and Guwahati) and the Salesians threw wide the doors of their schools to the tribal youth of Arunachal. When the students returned home for the holidays, their own people were surprised to see their children educated and well-instructed. This led them to send more of their children to Catholic schools; and finally they themselves embraced Catholicism and received baptism. Wanglat became an apostle to his own people. One year after his baptism he prepared 600 people of his village for baptism. The Government would not permit the Salesian Bishop, Mgr. Robert Kerketta, and others to enter the area, but the people stood firm and forced the authorities to permit the entry of the missionaries into their territory.

More and more youngsters came to study in our schools, and returned as apostles and evangelisers to their own people. The process has continued and finally today, after a quarter of a century, the Church is well established in Arunachal Pradesh with two dioceses, one of which has a Salesian as its bishop. Education was the powerful means for bringing this people into the light!

Parishes

Most of the missionary work carried out by the Salesians of the Region during the last century has been through parishes. To them were attached mission stations, some of which in the early days were at a distance of many days' journey on foot. In some mission areas of Assam the missionary took a full year to visit all the villages and mission stations. In the parish centre, there was generally a school and boarding hostel for boys, run by the Salesians, and another for girls looked after by Sisters. Thus through the parish and school the work of evangelisation and education of the people and of the children was given a certain systematic and consistent nature.

Gradually, these mission stations grew and became full-fledged parishes with a variety of services, and later developed into dioceses as the numbers of the faithful grew. Today we have a total

number of 207 parishes and mission centres, serving the spiritual needs of 705,530 faithful.

Social development programme as an integral part of missionary activity

In the pluri-religious social set up of India, direct evangelisation and missionary work are not always possible. Social development programmes are in some areas the only possible method of evangelisation.

Another reason why great importance is given to social development programmes in the Region is because the vast majority of the population of India live in underdeveloped conditions. Education, which is the beginning of development and growth (on the individual and collective levels), is often lacking, especially in rural areas. In addition, there are other pressing social issues that the missionary must address if he wishes to make his evangelising work meaningful and relevant for the people – issues such as economic poverty, the unjust distribution of wealth, the oppression of the poor by the rich and the powerful, etc.

The Salesians of the Region have taken up such issues with competence and evangelical vision; and are resolved to defend the oppressed, the down-trodden and the exploited, the ignorant and the uneducated. In every Province of the Region many Salesians and a team of qualified personnel conduct programmes and allocate money and manpower to the achievement of these aims. They are fully supported by the Province – with development offices well equipped and staffed by qualified personnel, both Salesian and lay; the projects are financed by local funds, and to a great extent by the Rector Major and foreign agencies which collect funds for peoples in need.

In the Region there are at least 138 social developmental works and those benefitting number about 800,000 individuals of various categories and with different needs. Significant among these initiatives for the social improvement of the poor are the *Bosco Reach*

Out network in the Northeast, the Bosco Gramin Vikas Kendra in Ahmednagar District in the Mumbai Province, the Peoples' Action for Rural Awakening in Andhra Pradesh, the Peoples' Movement in the Jawadhi Hills in Chennai Province, and the Fishermen Community Development Programme in Kollam in Bangalore Province. One cannot fail to mention the tremendous relief work done by the Salesians in Sri Lanka, and in the coastal areas of Chennai and Tiruchy Provinces in the immediate aftermath of the tsunami of December 2004, and the patient work of rehabilitating the fisherfolk and the orphans displaced by the disastrous tidal wave.

5. Holiness of the first missionaries

A real implanting of the charism implies the emergence of fruits of holiness. Here I want to recall two confreres who took seriously their vocation to be missionaries, and their calling to holiness; their names are among the Servants of God of our Society.

Archbishop Stephen Ferrando (1895-1978)

Stephen Ferrando was born on 28 September 1895, into a very religious family of Rossigliano, in the Province of Genoa. Later he would say, "From my family I received the rich heritage of a great love for God and the Madonna, a spirit of sacrifice and a jovial nature".²² Soon after his first profession in 1912, when asked by the superiors about his choice of a future apostolate, he unhesitatingly chose to be a missionary. After his military service in the war, having received medals and certificates for his courage and valour, he was ordained priest in 1923. His missionary dream was fulfilled when he was allowed to leave for India with eight young novices and a cleric. He reached Shillong on 22 December of that year.

Once he reached the land of his missionary dream, his missionary zeal knew no bounds. At first he was made *socius*, then director of novices and rector of the house of studies. During this time

he had also to stand in for the Prefect Apostolic, Mgr. Mathias, in his absence. Even while holding these responsibilities, he was a missionary at heart and did not miss a chance to visit villages and preach the Gospel.

In 1934 he was consecrated Bishop of Krishnagar, and in 1935 was transferred to Shillong. His episcopal motto was "Apostle of Christ". As an apostle of Christ, he toured the mission areas and villages widely on foot, as far as his health would permit. He used to tell his priests, "You cannot run about in vehicles to convert souls; to approach people and solve their problems you should go walking",²³ and walk he did even as a Bishop, for miles and miles in search of souls. After the example of the Apostle of the Gentiles, he made himself all things to all people, learned the languages of his people and picked up their customs and manners so as to understand their ethos and to preach Christ to them more effectively.

He was Bishop of Shillong for 35 long years, and developed the diocese well. Often he used to pray: "Lord, as the Shepherd of the flock, I offer my life as a sacrifice for the good of the sheep, the salvation of the souls entrusted to my care". The Lord indeed heard his prayer and blessed his diocese of Shillong. Today it has grown into 3 Archdioceses and 10 dioceses in the North East of India.

With the same apostolic zeal, he nurtured local vocations and founded the religious Congregation of the Missionary Sisters of Mary Help of Christians, about which we spoke earlier. He was known and appreciated for his simplicity, joviality and, above all, for his holiness. He died in 1978 and was originally buried in his family tomb in Rossiglione. Later, acceding to his desire that his bones be buried in the soil of the Khasi hills, they were re-interred in the Convent Chapel of the Mother House of the Sisters. In 1998 his cause for beatification and canonisation was introduced.

²² J.Puthenkalam & A.Mampra, *Sanctity in the Salesian Family*, p. 529.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 533.

Fr Francis Convertini (1898-1976)

Francis Convertini was born in 1898 in the mountain village of Papariello, in the Province of Brindisi in Italy. He lost his father when he was hardly two months old, and his mother, after remarriage, also died when Francis was only eleven. Orphaned, he was looked after by his step-father. He worked as a hired servant in two peasant families, who were kind to him. He learned to read and write, fell in love with a girl and agreed to marry her in due time. After military service during the war and dissatisfied with the work of a farmer, he found work as a clerk and was posted to Turin.

Turin was the turning point. On entering the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians for confession, he met Fr. Amadei, who bluntly asked him, "Would you like to become a missionary?" For a while he forgot the incident, but later he again met Fr. Amadei, and finally did decide to become a missionary. He plucked up courage and explained the situation to his girl friend.

He joined the Mgr. Cagliero Missionary Aspirantate of Ivrea, where he had to study along with classmates eleven years his junior. He was not clever, but the desire to be a missionary spurred him on. One of his teachers remarked "Francis learned more on his knees than sitting in the study hall",²⁴ such was his love for the Eucharistic Lord, in whose presence he spent long periods in prayer.

In 1927 he received the clerical habit from Fr. Philip Rinaldi, the Rector Major, who had earlier assigned him to the missions of Assam. Once in Assam, he made his novitiate, undertook studies for the priesthood and he was ordained in 1935. During his formation years, he had picked up a smattering of Khasi, the language spoken in Shillong. After ordination he was sent down to Krishnagar and, poor as he was in learning languages, he had to pick up a new one, Bengali. He never learned Bengali sufficiently to be

²⁴ Ibid., p. 551.

able to converse easily, and much less to preach eloquent Sunday homilies. But the people loved him for his simplicity and took to him very easily. They appreciated his sermons, given in broken Bengali, because they saw the conviction with which he spoke. They understood that the preacher was a messenger as well as a living example of the message he preached.

Fr Convertini won souls for Christ through prayer, preaching and sacrifice. Making himself one with the Indian people, he rejoiced when India won Independence in 1947, and mourned with them at the death of Mahatma Gandhi. Though Italian by birth, he was an Indian in heart, and applied for and obtained Indian citizenship. From the Bishop and priests to sisters and lay people - everyone sought him as a confessor, for all found in him an embodiment of God's mercy. His poverty was proverbial; born poor, poor by vocation and choice, he remained poor like his people, and often went about barefoot.

He was a friend to all, great and small, rich and poor. After coming in contact with the simplicity of Fr. Convertini, some important people in Bengal became Catholics; others were impressed by him and called him "a prophet and a saint"; others were "fascinated by the way he made the sign of the cross", while still others said, "the very presence of this holy priest was an inspiration".²⁵

Exhausted by work, and afflicted by many ailments, he breathed his last on 11 February 1976. Everyone who knew Fr. Convertini could testify that he was a living witness of the Gospel that he preached. The cause of his beatification was officially introduced in 1997.

²⁵ Ibid., pp. 558-559.

6. The major challenges of the Region

The Region of South Asia is pulsating with millions of youngsters who are trying to build a better future for themselves, and are at the same time endowed with rich human resources, talents, energy and creativity. It is a vast and promising field for the Salesian mission.

The first hundred years of Salesian work and activity in the Region have seen an abundant flourishing of initiatives and works which are well in tune with the various pressing needs of the young and the poor. The future presents a serious challenge and prospects are very encouraging, provided that the Salesians are faithful to their own Salesian charism and to those to whom their mission is directed: if evangelisation is the main challenge, the first step to meet it will be to live out the Gospel at both personal and community level.

6.1 *Giving God to the young, the absolute priority*

The cultural climate of the Region breathes of God. The soul of India, of Sri Lanka and of Myanmar is deeply religious. Even when apparently crushed beneath grinding poverty, the rigid divisions of the caste system and many other social contradictions, the millenary search for God is deep and tireless. Despite the many forms of suffering caused by the lack of material goods essential to life, there is a still more intense hunger for an experience of God. And when there appears upon the scene an authentically religious person the soul of the people responds at once. Think for instance of the impact made on the people of the Indian subcontinent by a Mahatma Gandhi or a Mother Teresa.

And so the most effective offering the Salesians of the Region can make to the young and the poor is to give them God, by disclosing to them his true name and countenance in the person of Jesus Christ through the witness of their own personal and com-

munity lives. Hence the need to give absolute priority to God and to keep alive the zeal for God and the young. “Like Don Bosco, we are all called to be educators to the faith at every opportunity. Our highest knowledge therefore is to know Jesus Christ, and our greatest delight is to reveal to all people the unfathomable riches of his mystery” (C 34).

This means that our every activity should be clearly aimed at the evangelisation of the young and their education to the faith. It is a matter of being clear about who we are, where we stand and what we want to do for young people. Our Constitutions express this in no uncertain terms: “We walk side by side with the young so as to lead them to the risen Lord, and so discover in him and in his Gospel the deepest meaning of their own existence, and thus grow into new men” (C 34).

6.2 *Zealous living of the mission “ad gentes”*

Mission does not mean simply activities, initiatives, works and structures. It is first of all zeal for the salvation of the young, a passion that has its source “in the very heart of Christ, apostle of the Father” (C 11). It is the passion that resounded in the heart of Don Bosco, the secret driving force in the depths of his very being which gave life and energy to all he said or did. He lived and breathed *Da mihi animas* with every fibre of his being. The motto summed up in a wonderful way the essence of his spirituality. The same zeal for the salvation of the young filled the hearts of the first missionaries, and prompted them to do incredible things which explain the amazing growth and variety of Salesian works in the Region.

As is natural in a multireligious context, this process is delicate and fraught with difficulties, especially in certain situations and areas where it could be easily misunderstood as proselytism. But that should not deter us, because it is the inalienable right of every person to know God and his Son Jesus Christ, but without detri-

ment to his own freedom. Nor can this be simply an improvised process. In a multireligious context like that of South Asia, evangelisation and education to the faith must be planned with care, and carried out diligently with firmness, specific objectives, strategies and courses of action appropriate to each situation and context. In this area – it must be admitted, dear confreres – we still have a lot of work to do and we need to be capable of imagination and creativity.

All this means that missionary zeal, which is the concrete expression of the apostolic passion inherent in *Da mihi animas*, must continue without pause. Far from allowing us to take it more easily with the passing of time, rather we must intensify our efforts and grow still further. We cannot simply rest on the laurels of a glorious past. Christ has still to be proclaimed, the Gospel to be preached and the Church and the Salesian charism to be planted in many more places and the hearts of young people who are awaiting the Good News. *The love of Christ drives us on* (2 Cor 5,14) to spread the Gospel.

In the past hundred years the Region has received a great deal through intrepid missionaries, men of great human calibre and undoubted holiness. Now it must do for the Salesian mission in the world what was done by Italian and European missionaries in the first hundred years of the Congregation in India, that is it must fill the world with young missionaries who are zealous and courageous, and who feel the *missio ad gentes* as an apostolic task they cannot but take up. South Asia then, open your eyes and your heart, widen your horizons and send personnel to the most distant mission fields of the Region and of the world itself. Salesian missions the world over feel this need today more than ever before! I feel deeply moved when I find missionaries from this Region already working in different parts of the world, particularly in Africa where they are writing golden pages in missionary annals. But in all sincerity I believe that more can be done, and I ask for it with urgency. South Asia can and must remain missionary! This is precisely its hour, because it is strong in spirit, rich in apostolic

enthusiasm and blessed with so many young vocations. In the name of the Congregation and of the young people of the world I say to you: "We are waiting for you; come among us. You cannot get away from us".

6.3 *Strengthening the common life*

The Salesian charism gives rise to a fraternal apostolic life that Don Bosco summed up in three elements: living and working *in unum locum, in unum spiritum, in unum agendi finem* (SGC 498). Our Constitutions have translated this idea into an obligation: "To live and work together is for us Salesians a fundamental requirement and a sure way of fulfilling our vocation" (C 49). Today the need is felt for help to be given to Salesian communities to realise to a deeper extent this style of common life and presence among the young in a way that will overcome individualism, activism and narrowness of outlook.

Keeping communities consistent in number and quality is a task that cannot be overlooked; in fact it guarantees our educative presence among the young and the evangelising effectiveness of the apostolic mission. This requires from the administration at Provincial level the achievement of a balance between the expansion and the consolidation of our works. Salesians cannot and must not feel themselves responsible for providing a response to all the needs of poor youngsters, even though they be urgent; effective ministry is not to be identified with multiplicity of efforts, but with the quality of the service provided. For this reason, the number of confreres in the individual communities must be geared to the complexity of the common apostolic mission.

In the multiethnic and pluricultural context that characterises the South Asia Region, the presence of apostolic communities, that bear clear testimony to fraternity and to sincere mutual acceptance and esteem, fosters the implanting of the Gospel and the social healing of society. The building of fraternal communities is

already an act of evangelisation, and a most effective means for spreading the Gospel today. Therefore a form of fraternal life must be ensured in the communities that avoids any kind of discrimination. Any inequality, be it deliberate or merely suffered in silence, would do harm to the force of our witness and put evangelisation at risk.

Communities therefore, whether they be provincial or local, in which there is a marked diversity of culture, ethnic origins or castes, should be encouraged to study and adopt procedures and initiatives to help the confreres to face, assess and overcome possible misunderstandings and unease. It may even be necessary to deal with these questions at Regional level for a better discernment and the reaching of common decisions accepted throughout the Region.

6.4 *Preserving the charismatic identity of the confreres*

With the growing numbers, formation is indispensable for maintaining and deepening the charismatic identity; it remains a crucial point for ensuring that growth is not only in numbers but above all in quality. Formation, both initial and ongoing, must keep alive the spirit, zeal and missionary driving force which is characteristic of the Region today. We have need of Salesians of quality, Salesians with a strong charismatic identity, Salesians inflamed with apostolic zeal.

Formation must be directed in the first place to firing up and keeping alive and effective the apostolic ardour of *Da mihi animas* in its two aspects: zeal for God and zeal for the young and the poor. Without this flame in the heart we are useless, without objective or driving force, at the mercy of every whim and caprice, with no clear idea of where we are going. This twofold zeal is in the first place a gift of God, given in embryo together with the Salesian vocation. But this initial gift carries with it a responsibility and a task: that of keeping the flame burning, of making it grow, of keep-

ing it always bright and shining. This is the main task of initial and ongoing formation: to see to it that the apostolic ardour of *Da mihi animas* becomes the centre, the synthesis, the focal point of our existence, the heart of our spirituality.

Formation of this kind, for it to be real, must be deeply inculturated, that is, rooted first of all in the Gospel, lived in the light of the Salesian charism, but rooted none the less in the culture, traditions and ethos of the people we are called to serve. Through the Salesians of South Asia Don Bosco must acquire a countenance that is Indian, Burmese, Nepalese and Singhalese. The Gospel and the Salesian charism must put down strong roots, so as to grow and flourish. That means learning the language, assimilating the culture, adopting the healthy traditions of the people, and especially of the young and the poor.

At the same time we must be aware, and act accordingly, that no culture is an absolute, ancient and noble though it may be. Like every human element it has its limitations and its defects, which may sometimes be serious. Every culture needs to be purified and perfected by the Gospel. It must be open to other cultures; if it remains closed in on itself, it becomes stagnant, withers away and dies. If on the other hand it opens itself up to other cultures and interacts with them, it acquires fresh vigour and flourishes.

A formation that lasts all life long, taken up as a personal project and lived in the community, helps us to keep our feet firmly on the ground and implanted in the social and cultural reality of the local people, but in such a way as to keep the mind open to all that is good and true, wherever it may be found, and leading us – as the saying goes nowadays – to think globally but act locally.

There is still much to be done! South Asia cannot just rest on its laurels, contemplating its glorious past. The centenary celebrations must prompt us to look further ahead, to advance the great mission of the Lord and the dream of Don Bosco in the Region.

May God, through the motherly assistance of Mary and the intercession of Don Bosco, bless this noble task and make it flourish for his glory and the salvation of the young!

With heartfelt good wishes,

Pascual Chávez V.
Fr Pascual Chávez V.
Rector Major

2. GUIDELINES AND POLICIES

2.1 THE MISSIONARY COMMITMENT OF THE SALESIANS OF DON BOSCO TODAY

***“Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to the whole creation”
(Mk 16:15)***

Fr Francis ALENCHERRY

General Councillor for the Missions

Time and again confreres have asked, “What is the missionary project of the Salesian Congregation today? In which areas of the world is there need for missionaries? Do we have priorities?”

Since the whole Congregation participates in the missionary project, it is of interest to all to know the current policies governing the movement of confreres as missionaries. In a particular way we are grateful to the provinces that make confreres available for the mission *ad gentes*.

For the information of all the confreres, particularly the Provincials and their Councils, and to help the discernment of all those who may be nurturing the desire to volunteer for the missions in countries other than their own, here are a few considerations that could shed some light on the missionary project of the Congregation today.

1. The Missionary Dimension

Art 30 of the Constitutions affirms that the missionary dimension is “an essential feature of our Congregation”. Today this is understood in a holistic and integral manner, and not merely as preaching the Gospel and establishing the Church in places where the Gospel has not yet reached, as it may have been thought in former times. When we think of the

- the vast number of those who in different countries are still to be reached by the Gospel,

- the de-Christianization of those countries which were traditionally considered Christian under the onslaught of pragmatic materialism and militant antichristian secularism,
- the need for a deeper evangelization in ambiances where the Gospel has already been preached and the institutional Church is present, but the majority of the people are still to pass from a ritual Christianity to the way of life more in conformity with the teachings of the Gospel, and
- the large sections of humanity, particularly of the youth, in all the continents who are living in abject material and moral poverty,

today hardly any country can be considered as not being a “mission land”.

In the light of this global reality, the movement of confreres from one country to another is truly a movement of “missionaries” according to the particular needs of evangelization found in each place. Accordingly it may at times seem that a reverse flow of missionaries has already begun: from the lands that once received missionaries to the lands that were sending them out in earlier years.

It is on the mission that we need to concentrate and not merely on the tradition or the economic status of a country. It should be clear that sending “missionaries” to different countries is not in order to merely uphold and maintain the structures we have inherited from the past, but to usher in new enthusiasm for an all-round evangelization in every context where Salesian presences are found. It could also be said that every confrere must be a “missionary” in action even in his own country.

2. Current Missionary Policy

In general, the current policy of the Congregation is not to launch out into new missions in countries where we are not yet present, unless there is some very urgent or significant reason for doing so (cfr. *Project of Animation and Governance of the Rector*

Major and his Council for the period 2002-2008: AGC 380, pp. 53-54). This policy is based also the verification made during the extraordinary visitations, the visits of the Rector Major and the other councillors to different provinces and the subsequent discernment done in the General Council.

More precisely, the reasons for this policy are the following:

1. There is urgent need to strengthen and consolidate the numerous new presences that were opened during last two decades.
2. Even though "Project Africa" is officially concluded, the African circumscriptions are still in need of qualified confreres to strengthen and develop the Salesian presence in them.
3. Many parts of Europe now resemble "mission lands", in as much as the Christian faith is no longer the rule of life of the majority of the population and there is a need to have fresh blood and new enthusiasm to proclaim the Christian message anew in Europe.

Since 2002 the only new country where a Salesian presence has been opened is Moldavia. However, this is seen as an extension of the Salesian presence in Romania.

3. Where Missionaries are needed

In keeping with the above policy, today the Congregation has the following priorities (not necessarily in the descending order) when moving confreres from one country or Province to another as missionaries.

1. To send as many confreres as possible to the Province of the **Middle East (MOR)**, to be of service in the different countries of which it is composed. The situation in the Province is quite complex and challenging, and we need confreres who are ready for sacrifice, spending energy and time to learn the different languages, especially Arabic, and the willingness to dialogue with Islam in all its forms. The Rector Major has made a special appeal for missionaries to MOR (See ACG 385, p. 29).

2. To strengthen the Salesian presences in countries, Delegations and Vice-Provinces that still find themselves in difficulties because of the lack or small number of local vocations. Among these following could be singled out:
 - a) **The Delegation of Papua New Guinea-Solomon Islands** (PNG-SI). For 26 and 10 years respectively Salesians have been working in PNG and SI. Much has been done for the institutional development of the Salesian charism, but much more needs to be done for its inculturation and rootedness in the local culture and the people. It is hoped that with the help of reinforcements PNG-SI will be able to become an autonomous Vice-Province without much delay.
 - b) **Mongolia, Pakistan and Cambodia** are relatively new presences. It will take quite some time before we can have local vocations, particularly in Mongolia and Cambodia where the Catholic community hardly exists. The challenges of evangelisation in these countries are indeed very great and we need valiant and zealous missionaries for the task. Pakistan has the added challenge of being a Muslim country.
 - c) **Albania and Lithuania** are in need of reinforcements in personnel in order to make the Salesian presences in these countries more significant and for the work of evangelisation.
 - d) **Sri Lanka** is a new Vice-Province in its infancy. It requires more qualified personnel to place its houses on more solid Salesian foundations.
3. To continue the work of consolidation of the African circumscriptions by sending confreres wherever needed to strengthen existing presences and to open new presences where necessary. In this respect the following priorities could be mentioned:
 - **Sudan** will become a Delegation with special Statutes in July-August 2006. We have already initiated a "Project Sudan" for the realization of which we need many confreres. The south of Sudan is in need of reconstruction in every

sense of the word and multifarious activities for the education and evangelization of the youth and the poor. Such an enterprise would need confreres full of enthusiasm who are ready to put up with difficult living and working conditions.

- The **Vice-Province of South Africa** needs fresh blood to give the Salesian presences a new spurt of energy to make them more significant and to promote vocations to the religious life and the priesthood.
 - **Mozambique** is a Delegation that will become a Vice-Province by July-August 2006. It is in need of personnel to give adequate numerical strength to some of its presences.
 - Other Vice-Provinces that would need new personnel are ATE for **Chad**, ZMB for the school apostolate, **Angola** for a new presence, Ethiopia for the Prefecture of **Gambella** and **Eritrea** for the formation house, **Madagascar** for youth centres and **AFW** for formation houses.
4. To inject fresh enthusiasm into select **Salesian Provinces in Europe** by sending “missionaries” from other countries to usher in a new evangelization as well as to promote vocations to the Salesian and the priestly life. For this we need *young Salesians who are well rooted in their religious, Salesian vocation, having the capacity to dialogue with today’s materialistic and secularised culture, and to resist its temptations.* For now we have in mind Provinces like **Hungary, France and the Delegation of Holland.**

The **EST** Vice-Province, is still quite fragile with regard to personnel and would need reinforcements.

5. **Cuba** and some other presences among the indigenous peoples in South America still require fresh personnel.
6. We are also studying how we could be more effectively present in countries with a majority Muslim population, opening new presences if necessary, with a view also to serving the needs of the minority Catholic and Christian population in them.

7. Last and most important of all, the **Chinese Province** deserves special attention. After 100 years of presence among the Chinese people it is our hope and prayer that the Salesian charism will flourish anew in the subcontinent of China without further delay.

4. Conclusion

It is difficult to speak of a list of priorities in assigning new missionary personnel. Taken by itself each of the above needs is an important priority. Every year we try to concentrate on one or other or a few according to the availability of new missionaries and their preferences and competences. Certainly as the years pass the situation will change, and a new policy will be needed.

“The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few; pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest” (Mt 9:37).

4.1 Chronicle of the Rector Major

– June 2006

The Rector Major, with most of the Councillors and the Provincial of the Middle East, Fr Gianmaria Gianazza, concluded the previous term and began the new one in the Holy Land, making a Retreat – in the places sanctified by the presence of the Lord – between 27 May and 4 June, under the guidance of Fr Guido Novella and Fr Juan José Bartolomé.

On Monday 5 June the *summer plenary session* of the General Council began and continued until 28 July. As usual it was a period of many meetings, appointments and visits from Bishops, confreres and members of the Salesian Family.

On the afternoon of Wednesday 7, Fr Chávez received Mgr. Maroun Lahham, Bishop of Tunis.

From Friday afternoon 9 until the afternoon of Monday 12 June, the Rector Major presided at the *Team Visit* to the UPS Vice Province. He was also able to speak to some confreres.

On Monday evening 12, the *course for new Provincials* began, and continued until Saturday 24 with the Feast of the Rector Major. As usual in addition to

speaking personally with each of the Provincials the Rector Major had three meetings with the whole group in which he presented a global vision of the ministry of the Provincial, gave them a day's recollection and answered the questions they had prepared throughout the course.

The weekend of 22-25 June was an especially busy one, firstly on account of the appointment of H. E. Tarcisio Cardinal Bertone as Secretary of State at the Vatican, then on account of the conclusion of the course for the new Provincials, to whom Fr Chávez presented the Letter convoking the 26th General Chapter, and subsequently the Feast of the Rector Major, for which the Mother General of the FMA, Sr Antonia Colombo, and some of her General Council were present at Mass and at dinner, while the Superior of the UPS Vice Province, Fr Giuseppe Nicolussi, the Roman Provincial Fr Gianluigi Pussino and the Vatican community were present in the evening.

On Monday 26 and the following day the Rector Major continued with his normal work, with visits

from Provincials, confreres and members of the Salesian Family who had come to see him.

On Wednesday 28 the work of the *plenum* of the General Council resumed, and was accompanied as usual by visits from Provincials, confreres and missionaries.

– July 2006

On Saturday morning 1 July, Fr Chávez received Fr Aldo Giraud.

On Sunday afternoon 2, he received the news of the sudden death of Fr Claudio Filippin, Provincial of the “San Marco” Venice-Mestre Province, who had died from a heart attack. Immediately he met with the Vicar, Fr Adriano Bregolin and the Councillor for the Italy - Middle East Region, Fr Pier Fausto Frisoli, to see what help they could give to the Province.

The following day was a particularly busy one with visits and meetings: Bishops and Provincials, which kept him occupied in the office.

On Tuesday 4 the Rector Major held the usual meeting with the General Council, and in the evening, accompanied by Fr Adriano Bregolin, Fr Francesco Cereda, Fr Tarcisio Scaramussa, Fr Francis Alencherry, Fr Pier Fausto

Frisoli and Fr Francesco Maracani, he left for Venice to preside at the funeral of Fr Claudio. This took place on Wednesday 5, at 11.00. In the evening Fr Chávez returned home with the Councillors and the Procurator.

On Thursday 6 and Friday 7 the normal meetings of the Council were held.

Between Saturday 8 and Wednesday 12, with most of the Councillors, the Rector Major took a break from the work of the plenary session going to Turin. The first day was spent mostly at Valdocco and the other Salesian places in Turin. They spent Sunday 9 at Colle Don Bosco, also visiting Castelnovo, Capriglio and Chieri. On Monday 10 they made a trip to Mont Blanc on the Chamonix side. On the return journey to Turin they called to see the community in Châtillon. On Tuesday they went to Les Combes to welcome the Holy Father, who once again paid us the honour of choosing our house for his period of rest.

On Wednesday 12 they returned to Rome. Fr Chávez received the new Provincial of the China Province Fr Simon Lam, and in the afternoon held a meeting with him together with Fr Carlo Socol and the Regional for the East Asia - Oceania Region.

On Thursday 13 the Rector Major took up the work of the Council again and his ordinary work in the office. On Friday 14 and Saturday 15 he had a very full agenda of meetings with Councillors, Provincials (Fr Vidal Niebles, the new Provincial of Colombia-Medellín, and Fr Joseph Czerwinski, Superior of the Zambia Vice Province), confreres and missionaries. In the evening of 15 with most of the Council he went to the Salesian Community in the Vatican for evening prayer and supper.

On Sunday 16, in the late morning, he received a group of confreres and leaders of the "Youth Summer" from Firenze-Scandicci and Colle Val D'Elsa (SI) and, in the evening, the Delegate for Youth Ministry in the Rome Province.

On Monday morning 17, the Rector Major received Fr Giuseppe Pellizzari, the new Superior of the EST Circumscription. The following day the work of the General Council was taken up again and in the evening, with the Councillor for Formation he took part in the half-yearly meeting with the Vicar and the Regionals, to talk about the General Chapter. Later he received a group of the Ferrandine Sisters (MSMHC) made up of the

Vicar General, the Councillor for Formation and two other Sisters.

On the evening of Wednesday 19, Fr Chávez met the Superior of the Vice Province of Haïti. And on Friday 21, before the meeting of the Council, he spoke with Fr Eugenio Riva, the new Provincial of North-East Italy, and at midday with Fr Marek Chrzan, the new Provincial of the Kraków Province in Poland.

On Sunday morning 23, he received a group of VDB from China, and in the evening he had supper with a group of SDB from Korea.

On Monday morning 24, he went to the Vatican with his Vicar Fr Adriano Bregolin, for a meeting with Cardinal Re, Prefect of the Congregation for Bishops and in the early afternoon for a further meeting with Cardinal Ivan Dias, Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples.

On Tuesday 25 the Rector Major took up the activities of the General Council again, beginning the final week of the plenary session. The session ended on Thursday 27 with a final meeting and Holy Mass, preceded by the blessing of a bronze bust of Don Bosco, placed in the chapel of the General Council. In the afternoon, he went to the infirmary at the UPS

to visit Fr Paolo Natali and the other bed-ridden confreres. In the evening he gave the Good Night to the community of the Generalate speaking about the main points of the plenary session.

On Friday 28 July he had a meeting with some of the Councillors and at the end of the morning received the new Salesian Bishop, Mgr. Antônio Carlos Altieri. In the early afternoon immediately after dinner he left for a visit to the EST Circumscription. Because of flight arrangements he landed at Warsaw, where he was welcomed by the Provincial Fr Jan Niewęglowski and the Superior of the EST Circumscription, Fr Henryk Boguszewski. The following day he continued towards the Ukraine.

On 29 and 30 July, in Lviv Fr Chávez held a meeting with the Council of the Delegation of the Ukraine, celebrated Mass for the confreres, then concelebrated a Eucharist in the Byzantine-Ukraine rite, at which Mgr. Sapełak presided, for the young people, the adult faithful and groups of the Salesian Family; afterwards he had meetings with the Salesian Family and with the young people and visited some Salesian houses (Vynnyky, Peremyshlany and Bibrka). On Monday 31 July he

had a meeting with the Rectors and confreres of the Ukraine.

– August 2006

On Wednesday 1 August, at Minsk, the Rector Major met young people, the Rectors and confreres who are working in Byelorussia, celebrated Mass and then held a meeting with the Salesian Family.

On 2 and 3 August Fr Chávez was in Moscow, where he met the Rectors and the confreres in the Russian Federation, and said Mass with them. Afterwards he met the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians and visited a house for street children. The visit ended with a meeting with the Provincial Council and a visit to the city. He returned to Rome in the evening of Thursday 3 August.

On the two following days, in addition to ordinary work in his office, he received some confreres and had a meeting with the Councillors still in Rome. On Friday evening with his secretary and Fr Adriano Bregolin, he went for supper with the confreres in the Salesian community in the Vatican.

On Sunday morning 6 August, accompanied by the Councillor for Youth Ministry, Fr Antonio Domenech, the Rector Major left

for Turin, where he was welcomed by the Provincial, Fr Pietro Migliasso, who took him to Les Combes for a few days' rest; on the way they stopped off at Châtillon, having dinner with the community.

At Les Combes, on Monday 7 he received a group of confreres from the New Rochelle Province, led by the Provincial Fr Jim Heuser, who had come on pilgrimage to the Salesian holy places. He said Mass with them, followed by a short conversation.

On Friday 11 he received Fr Adriano Bregolin, who arrived at midday; and in the evening all the community from Châtillon, who came to Les Combes for supper. The following day after lunch, with the Provincial Economist, Bro. Claudio Marangio, he went to look at the work in progress in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians, and then returned to Les Combes in the evening.

On Sunday 13, Fr Chávez had a visit from the FMA Provincial of Piedmont and the Val d'Aosta, Sr. Celestina Corna, and two other Sisters.

On the Solemnity of the Assumption, Fr Chávez went to Capriglio, where he was welcomed by the civil and religious authorities as well as a very large crowd

of people. At Capriglio he presided at Mass, after which he gave an interview on the Regional Television. Afterwards he took part in the dedication of a square to Fr Mario Caustico SDB, and of a road to Suor Vera Occhiena FMA, both from Capriglio. Then honorary citizenship was conferred on the Rector Major. After dinner at Colle Don Bosco, the Rector Major went to Pinerolo, where he met the novitiate community and then had supper. From there he went to Valdocco, where he spent the night.

On Wednesday 16 August Fr Chávez celebrated Don Bosco's birthday at Colle. During the Mass the Rector Major received the renewal of religious profession of five confreres, the request of the novices to make their first profession and at the end of the Mass he blessed a copy of the casket of Don Bosco which, after the GG26, will make a tour of the whole Congregation. In the evening he returned to Les Combes.

On 17 and 18 he received other guests. Finally on Sunday 20, after lunch he left Les Combes, and went to Valdocco, where he gave the Good Night to the confreres of the two communities and had supper with them. On Monday 21 he celebrated Mass in the Basilica

of Mary Help of Christians and at midday returned to Rome.

On Tuesday 22 Fr Chávez had lunch with the Mexican Ambassador to the Holy See, Luis Felipe Bravo Mena, and his family.

On Wednesday 23 and Thursday 24, as well as visits from confreres who came to greet or speak with him the Rector Major had meetings with the Economist General, Fr Gianni Mazzali, and with the Provincial of Central America, Fr Luis Corral, accompanied by his Vice Provincial. In the evening of 24 he had a meeting with the Councillors who were present. Also on the following days 25 and 26 he had a number of visits from confreres, as well as a further meeting with the Provincial and Vice Provincial of Central America.

On Sunday 27 he went to Genzano to meet the novices and this was followed by Mass and lunch.

Between Monday 28 and Thursday 31 he continued to work in his office, received some confreres and held a meeting with the Councillors in the house. This period ended with his departure on the evening of 31 August for a visit to the Vice Province of Angola, which is celebrating 25 years of Salesian presence in that country.

4.2 Chronicle of the General Council

On 5 June 2006 the *summer plenary session* of the General Council began and continued until 28 July 2006. In addition to the 27 plenary meetings there were other meetings of groups or commissions to study various topics. During the session – between 12 and 24 June – there was also *the meeting for new Provincials*, who met with the Rector Major and his Council. The Councillors also made their own contributions to various meetings especially those held at the Generalate.

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

1. Appointment of Provincials

In this session Superiors were appointed for twelve Provinces or Vice Provinces. The General Council undertook a careful process of discernment, taking as its foundation and reference point the results of the consultation held in the Province or Vice Province.

This is the list in alphabetical order of the Provincials (or Superiors of Vice Provinces) appointed in the course of the session: *Richard Authier*, for the Vice Province of Canada; *Marek Chrzan*, for the Province of Krakow, Poland; *François Dufour*, for the Vice Province of South Africa; *Manuel Leal Gomes*, for the Vice Province of Mozambique; *Walter Luis Jara*, for the Province of Paraguay; *Simone Lam Chung-Wai*, for the Province of China; *Gabriel Ngendakuriyo*, for the Vice Province of Africa the Great Lakes; *Vidal Niebles*, for the Province of Medellín, Colombia; *Giuseppe Pellizzari*, for the Special Circumscription of Eastern Europe; *James Poonthuruthil*, for the Province of Dimapur, India; *Eugenio Riva*, for the Province of North-East Italy; *Natale Vitali*, for the Province of Chile.

No. 5.5 in this issue of the AGC provides some biographical details of those appointed.

2. Reports of Extraordinary Visitations

The examination of the reports of the Extraordinary Visitations to the Provinces presented by the respective Visitors is always one of the more important items on the agenda of the General Council for the animation of the Congregation in its various local presences. It provides the opportunity to reflect together on the progress of each Province on the basis of the Visitor's observations and to offer suggestions for action regarding its government. This results in recommendations useful for the Rector Major's concluding letter and in proposals for initiatives and guidance on the part of the General Council.

During this session reports were considered from the following 11 Provinces or Vice Provinces: the Province of La Plata, Argentina; the Vice Province of Canada; the Community of the Generalate and the Vatican Community; the Vice Province of Haïti; the Vice Province of Indonesia-Timor; the Province of Sicily, Italy; the Province of Paraguay; the Province of Krakow, Poland; the Province of Madrid, Spain; the Province of East United States; the Vice Province of the UPS.

3. Topics studied and decisions made

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

– The **Strenna of the Rector Major for 2007**. In the Council there was some reflection on the theme presented by the Rector Major for the 2007 Strenna:

**«For a true culture
of human life»**

**Letting ourselves be guided
by God's love for life**

The strenna is intended to be “a *precise and vigorous reaffirmation of the value of human life and its inviolability*, and at the same time a pressing appeal addressed to each and every person, in the name of God: *respect, protect, love and serve life, every human life!*”

Only in this direction will you find justice, development, true freedom, peace and happiness!” (EV 5). To create a culture of life there is a need to make the newness of the Gospel of life shine forth. This means that all the members of the Salesian Family teach these truths from the very first proclamation of the Gospel, and thereafter, *in catechesis and in the various forms of preaching, in personal dialogue and in all educational activity*; that educators, teachers, catechists and pastoral workers emphasise the *anthropological reasons* upon which respect for every human life is based; that we all work *together* with all those who are committed to the establishment of a new culture of life. (Cfr. EV 82)

– **Erection of the Vice Province of Mozambique**. Considering the situation and the development of Salesian foundations and work in Africa; bearing in mind that for a more effective animation, the Provincial Delegation of “Mozambique”, with headquarters in Maputo-Residência (Mozambique) was set up; having seen the favourable opinion of the Provincial of Portugal with his Council and the results of the consultation carried out among the confreres

working in Mozambique, the General Council gave its own approval for the erection of the Salesian Vice Province of Mozambique, dedicated to "Mary Help of Christians", with headquarters in Maputo-Residência (Mozambique), in the "St John Bosco" house (cfr. Decree of the Rector Major in n. 5.3 of this issue of the AGC).

– Erection of the Vice Province of Africa the Great Lakes.

Considering the situation and the development of Salesian foundations and work in Africa, and specifically in the following countries: Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda; bearing in mind that for a more effective animation, the Provincial Delegation of "Rwanda-Burundi", with headquarters in Kimihurura (Rwanda) was set up; after having heard the opinion of the Provincials concerned with their Councils and see the results of the consultation carried out among the confreres working in these countries, the General Council gave its own approval for the erection of the Salesian Vice Province of Africa-the Great Lakes dedicated to "St Charles Lwanga", with headquarters in Kimihurura (Rwanda), in the "Mary Help of Christians" house

(cfr. Decree of the Rector Major in n. 5.4 of this issue of the AGC).

– Constitution of the Salesian Delegation in Sudan. After the Extraordinary Visitation of the East Africa Province (AFE) in 2003, the Rector Major gave the Provincial the mandate to appoint his personal delegate for Sudan, in order to respond appropriately to the particular needs of that country.

In the intermediate session of the General Council in October 2005, the problem of Sudan was examined in the context of the Provinces and juridical Circumscriptions of Africa. Following this examination, it was considered that in order to respond to the particular needs of Sudan, it would be necessary to set up a Delegation for the whole of Sudan. The conclusions of this examination were confirmed in the meeting of the plenary session of the General Council on 7 December 2005. It was considered necessary to set up for the whole of Sudan a Provincial Delegation *sui iuris*, juridically dependent on the AFE Province, but under the aegis of the Rector Major and his Council. The functioning of the Delegation would be specified in an appropriate Statute, approved by the Rec-

tor Major. Therefore, having received the consent of the General Council in the meeting on 14 June 2006, the Rector Major, Fr Pascual Chávez Villanueva, in accordance with articles 156 and 159 of the Constitutions, approved the setting up of this Salesian Delegation of Sudan, juridically dependent on the East Africa Province (AFE), but functioning according to the Statute approved by the Rector Major. On the same day 14 June 2006, the Rector Major approved the Statute of this Delegation of Sudan and appointed as Provincial Delegate Fr Jacob Thelekkadan, for the three-year period July 2006-June 2009.

– Evaluation of and Guidelines for initial Formation in the Regions.

These are the result of the visits by the General Councillor for Formation, undertaken in order to have a better knowledge of the formation communities; they take account of the Formation Section of the Provincial Directories approved by the Rector Major with his Council; they refer to the evaluation of the ‘quantitative and qualitative consistency’ of formation in the individual Regions. In this session the General Council examined

the evaluation undertaken in the three Regions: Interamerica, Latin America South Cone (the CISUR and CISBRASIL Conferences), East Asia - Oceania.

– Approval of the consolidated account for 2005. During this session, following its presentation by the Economist General, the General Council examined and approved, according to the norms of the Regulations, the consolidated account of the Direzione Generale Opere Don Bosco, at 31 December 2005.

– Distribution of “Mission Funds”. The General Council considered and approved the proposals presented by the commission for the n. 138, June 2006 distribution of assistance from the Mission Fund. These are funds coming from the Mission Offices for the benefit of the many projects and activities of the Congregation.

– Coordinator for the Region of Africa and Madagascar. Following the death of the General Councillor for the Region of Africa and Madagascar, Fr Valentín De Pablo, and in accordance with art. 142 of the Constitutions which says: «Should a member of the General Council die or be

permanently unable to attend to his duties, the Rector Major with the consent of his Council shall entrust his office to whomsoever he judges most suitable in the Lord, but only until the expiry of the six-year period» in the meeting of the General Council on Wednesday 7 June 2006, the Rector Major entrusted the coordination of the Region of Africa and Madagascar to *Fr Francis Alencherry*, General Councillor for the Missions. In making this decision the Rector Major listened to the opinion of the Provincials and Superiors of Vice Provinces in the Region of Africa and Madagascar, expressed on the occasion of the funeral of Fr Valentín De Pablo at Bamako. Taking into account the fact that the six year period was coming to an end, to the question as to their thinking on the matter of the gap left by Fr Valentín, they were inclined to ask the Rector Major to appoint someone who would continue to follow and coordinate the Region, without however specifying whether this ought to be a new Regional or a member of the present General Council.

– **Letter convoking the GC 26.** The Rector Major presented in the Council the *Letter convoking the GC 26*, published in number

394 of the Acts of the General Council.

– **Letter regarding Mamma Margaret.** The Rector Major, giving information about the canonical process for the cause of the beatification of Mamma Margaret which is going well, presented a letter which he has sent to Salesian Provincials, inviting them to a special process of animation, which also through suitable celebrations, should foster greater knowledge of Mamma Margaret, especially on 25 November, the date of her death (and the date by which we hope to have the decree declaring her Venerable). He asked each Provincial to let him know directly what he intended to plan and carry out in this regard in his own Province (cfr. n. 5.1 in this issue of the AGC).

Among the **significant events** in the course of the session, should be noted in particular:

- The Retreat of the Rector Major with his Council in the form of a pilgrimage to the Holy Land between 27 May and 4 June, guided and led by Fr Juan José Bartolomé, the Rector Major's secretary, and Fr Guido Novella, Vice Provincial of the North East Italy Province. It was also an op-

portunity to visit all the Salesian houses in Palestine and Israel, as well as some of those of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christian.

- The pilgrimage of the Rector Major with his Council to Turin on 8-12 July, which concluded with the significant occasion of welcoming the Holy Father Benedict and having a short meeting with him as on 11 July he began period of rest at Les Combes.

5.1 Cause of Beatification of Mamma Margaret *Letter of the Rector Major to the Provincials*

Below is the text of the Letter written by the Rector Major to the Provincials in which he announces the probably imminent declaration regarding the exercise of heroic virtues by Mamma Margaret, an important stage in her Cause of Beatification. For the occasion, considering also the recurrence of the 150 anniversary of the death of Don Bosco's mother, the Rector Major invites them to promote celebrative and study events among the confreres and within the Salesian Family.

My dear Provincials,

It is with great joy that I can tell you that the canonical process for the Cause of Beatification of **Mamma Margaret** is progressing very well. After the personal intervention of the Holy Father, the Commission of Theologians charged with examining the acts of her Cause (*Positio*), met together on 26 May and gave their unanimous favourable opinion. Now all that remains is the opinion of the Commission of Cardinals, which we believe will certainly be favourable, and so, probably towards the end of 2006, there

should be the decree for her being declared Venerable.

This will be a very great gift for us in the year in which we commemorate the 150th anniversary of the death of the Mamma of Don Bosco. It was precisely because of this that I wanted to take the occasion to present you with the Strenna for 2006, based on the theme of the Family as the “*cradle of life and love and where one first learns how to become human*”.

The reason for this present letter is to invite you **to take advantage of this decree declaring Mamma Margaret Venerable** for a special process of animation, also by holding suitable celebrations in your Provinces.

My particular suggestion is that **25 November 2006**, the day on which we commemorate the death of Mamma Margaret (and the date by which we hope to have the decree declaring her Venerable), **should be marked in a special way throughout the Province**. I leave you to decide what can best be done on that occasion. Just by way of example I mention the following possibilities:

- A study day with the Confreres and the Salesian Family on the spiritual characteristics of Mamma Margaret;

- ❑ A further examination of the connection between Mamma Margaret and the main elements of the Preventive System;
- ❑ A meeting with young people in which Mamma Margaret can be presented to them and family issues can be discussed;
- ❑ A celebration to which are invited the Parents of the Salesians and of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians in the Province;
- ❑ A special commemorative meeting for the lay people and helpers who are working in our houses;
- ❑ A Public Meeting at which the importance of the Mamma of Don Bosco and her influence in the vocation of her son are presented;
- ❑ Spreading an appreciation of Mamma Margaret, through appropriate articles in the local, diocesan and ordinary press;
- ❑ A special space on all the web sites of our Provinces and houses.

I hope that your love for Don Bosco will fire your pastoral imagination to do something practical and significant to place in her true light this person who made such a special contribution to the development of Salesian Work.

I would be happy if each Provincial were to let me know directly what he intends to plan and to carry out in this regard.

The decree declaring her Venerable will encourage us to look to Mamma Margaret as a person to whom we can address our prayers, asking her intercession for our houses, for ourselves, for the young people and for all those entrusted to us, and for families.

My dear Provincials and my dear confreres, we need to make this extraordinary Mamma known. Living a simple everyday holiness she cultivated, accompanied and made the great fruit of Don Bosco's holiness grow.

I am writing this letter to you on Don Bosco's name day the 24th of June, Feast of the Birth of St John the Baptist. It is also the day on which by tradition the Feast of the Rector Major is celebrated. **Let us give Don Bosco this present: making Mamma Margaret known.**

I thank you with all my heart for all that you will be able to promote and put into action. I am sure you will take up my invitation.

I assure you of my closeness to you and of my affection. You know that I am always near you in my prayers, that I appreciate and

bless your work, while I encourage you to an ever greater fidelity.

With affection and regards.

Rome, 24 June 2006

Fr Pascual CHÁVEZ VILLANUEVA
Rector Major

5.2 Decree concerning the Martyrdom of the Servants of God Enrique Saiz Aparicio and 62 Companions

Below is the text – in an English translation of the Latin original – of the Decree concerning the Martyrdom of the Servant of God Enrico Saiz Aparicio, Salesian priest and 55 other Confreres, together with three Cooperators, three aspirants and a domestic, killed “in odium fidei” in Spain, in the Provinces of Madrid and Seville, in 1936.

CONGREGATION FOR THE CAUSES OF SAINTS

DIOCESES OF MADRID AND OTHERS

BEATIFICATION OR DECLARATION
OF MARTYRDOM
OF THE SERVANTS OF GOD

ENRIQUE SAIZ APARICIO
and LXII COMPANIONS

OF THE SOCIETY OF SAINT FRANCIS OF SALES
(† 1936-1937)

DECREE CONCERNING MARTYRDOM

«I want to point out to everyone, so that it will never be forgotten, that great sign of hope represented by the many *witnesses to the Christian faith* who lived in the last century, in both East and West. They found suitable ways to proclaim the Gospel amid situations of hostility and persecution, often even making the supreme sacrifice by shedding their blood» (John Paul II, Apostolic Post-synodal Exhortation *Ecclesia in Europa*, n. 13: AAS 95 [2003], 658-659).

Among the witnesses to the faith who in the course of the twentieth Christian century followed the teachings of the Gospel to the supreme sacrifice of their blood, are certainly to be inscribed the Servants of God Enrico Saiz Aparicio and his 62 Companions from the Salesian Society founded by St John Bosco. In fact, while the Christian religion in Spain was being fiercely persecuted in the years 1936-1939, these did not fail to carry out the duties proper to their state, according to the situation of each one, preserving the ties of union and of obedience to the Holy Church, even to the extent of preferring to submit to death rather than deny the Catholic faith. All of them, even though they were killed in different times and cir-

cumstances generously gave their lives for Christ; some of them endured martyrdom in the Salesian Province of Madrid, others in that of Seville.

A. List of the Servants of God who suffered Martyrdom in the Salesian Province of Madrid.

1. ENRIQUE SAIZ APARICIO, professed priest. Born 1 December 1889. After his consecration to God by the religious vows in 1909, he was ordained priest in 1918. After directing several Salesian houses, he was assigned to the house of theological higher studies at *Carabanchel Alto*, where the persecution caught up with him. Priest of outstanding virtue, he prepared for martyrdom with his confreres whom he helped until the end: in fact the fate of his companions was close to his heart, for whom, so that they might be freed from prison, he offered his own life to the militia. He was shot on 2 October 1936.

2. FÉLIX GONZÁLEZ TEJEDOR, professed priest, was killed during the night of 24 August 1936.

3. GERMÁN MARTÍN MARTÍN, professed priest, died a martyr's death 30 August 1936.

4. JOSÉ VILLANOVA TORMO, professed priest, was shot 29 September 1936.

5. PIO CONDE CONDE, professed priest, killed by the revolutionaries 15 March 1937.

6. MIGUEL LASAGA CARAZO, professed priest, sacrificed his life 6 December 1936.

7. ANDRÉS JIMÉNEZ GALERA, professed priest, killed 27 July 1936.

8. LUIS MARTÍNEZ ALVARELLOS, professed, candidate for the priesthood, died a martyr 6 December 1936.

9. JUAN LARRAGUETA GARAY, professed, candidate for the priesthood, shot 6 December 1936.

10. PASCUAL DE CASTRO HERRERA, professed, candidate for the priesthood, killed 6 December 1936.

11. VIRGILIO EDREIRA MOSQUERA, professed, candidate for the priesthood, suffered martyrdom with his brother Francisco 29 September 1936.

12. FRANCISCO EDREIRA MOSQUERA, professed, candidate for the priesthood, killed with his brother Virgilio 29 September 1936.

13. PEDRO ARTOLOZAGA MELLIQUE, professed, candidate for the priesthood, killed 1 October 1936.

14. MANUEL BORRAJO MÍGUEZ, professed, candidate for the priesthood, imprisoned and shot 1 October 1936.

15. JUSTO JUANES SANTOS, professed, candidate for the priesthood, gave the supreme testimony of faith and charity 28 November 1936.

16. HELIODORO RAMOS GARCÍA, professed brother, shot 6 December 1936.

17. ESTEBAN VÁZQUEZ ALONSO, professed brother, killed 6 December 1936.

18. PABLO GRACIA SÁNCHEZ, professed brother, killed in the middle of December 1936.

19. VALENTÍN GIL ARRIBAS, professed brother, suffered martyrdom 27 November 1936.

20. ANASTASIO GARZÓN GONZÁLEZ, professed brother, imprisoned 6 September 1936, and subsequently shot.

21. FRANCISCO JOSÉ MARTÍN LÓPEZ DE ARROYAVE, professed brother, shot 9 November 1936.

22. RAMÓN EIRÍN MAYO, professed brother, killed 15 December 1936.

23. JUAN DE MATA DÍEZ, layman, domestic, killed during the night of 1 October 1936.

24. SALVADOR FERNÁNDEZ PÉREZ, professed priest, shot 18 September 1936.

25. SABINO HERNÁNDEZ LASO, professed priest, killed 28 July 1936.

26. ANDRÉS GÓMEZ SÁEZ, professed priest, was captured by the revolutionaries 1 January 1937 and then killed.

27. CARMELO JUAN PÉREZ RODRÍGUEZ, professed subdeacon, killed 1 October 1936.

28. ESTEBAN COBO SANZ, professed, candidate for the priesthood, suffered for Christ 22 September 1936.

29. MANUEL MARTÍN PÉREZ, candidate for the priesthood, died between 6 and 8 November 1936.

30. TEÓDULO GONZÁLEZ FERNÁNDEZ, candidate for the priesthood, killed 8 September 1936.

31. VICTORIANO FERNÁNDEZ REINOSO, candidate for the priest-

hood, gave his life in witness to God in the year 1936.

32. FLORENCIO RODRÍGUEZ GÜEMES, candidate for the priesthood, killed 6 December 1936.

33. DIONISIO ULLÍVARRI BARAJÚAN, professed brother, killed 30 August 1936.

34. MATEO GAROLERA MASFERRER, professed brother, confessed the faith shedding his blood 1 October 1936.

35. JOSÉ MARÍA CELAYA BADIOLA, professed brother, succumbed to ill-treatment suffered in Madrid prison 9 August 1936.

36. NICOLÁS DE LA TORRE MERINO, professed brother, shot at the beginning of August 1936.

37. EMILIO ARCE DíEZ, professed brother, was killed 23 July 1936.

38. ANTONIO CID RODRÍGUEZ, professed brother, was killed 25 September 1936.

39. JUAN CODERA MARQUÉS, professed brother, captured by the revolutionaries while visiting a sick person, he was taken and shot 25 Septiembre 1936.

40. TOMÁS GIL DE LA CAL, postulant, died a martyr 25 September 1936.

41. HIGINIO DE MATA DíEZ, postulant, was killed 1 October 1936.

42. FEDERICO COBO SANZ, Salesian aspirant, was shot 22 September 1936.

B. List of the Servants of God who died martyrs in the Province of Seville.

43. ANTONIO TORRERO LUQUE, professed priest, was killed for the love of God 24 July 1936.

44. ANTONIO FERNÁNDEZ CAMACHO, professed priest, received the palm of martyrdom 20 July 1936.

45. MANUEL FERNÁNDEZ FERRO, professed priest, gave his life 24 August 1936.

46. JUAN LUIS HERNÁNDEZ MEDINA, professed, candidate for the priesthood, was shot 28 July 1936.

47. ANTONIO RODRÍGUEZ BLANCO, priest, Salesian cooperator, suffered martyrdom 16 August 1936.

48. BARTOLOMÉ BLANCO MÁRQUEZ, Salesian cooperator, was killed 29 September 1936.

49. JOSÉ LIMÓN Y LIMÓN, professed priest, was killed 21 July 1936.

50. ENRIQUE CANUT ISÚS, professed priest, shed his blood for the Lord 24 July 1936.

51. MIGUEL MOLINA DE LA TORRE, professed priest, was shot 28 July 1936.

52. PABLO CABALLERO LÓPEZ, professed priest, was killed 28 July 1936.

53. ANTONIO MOHEDANO LARRIVA, professed priest, won the prize of eternal life by shedding his blood with great constancy, 2 August 1936.

54. FRANCISCO MÍGUEZ FERNÁNDEZ, professed priest, was killed 15 August 1936.

55. FÉLIX PACO ESCARTÍN, professed priest, gave his life in sacrifice 31 August 1936.

56. MANUEL GÓMEZ CONTIOSO, professed priest, suffered martyrdom 24 September 1936.

57. ANTONIO PANCORBO LÓPEZ, professed priest, was killed 24 September 1936.

58. HONORIO HERNÁNDEZ MARTÍN, professed subdeacon, received the crown of martyrdom 28 July 1936.

59. TOMÁS ALONSO SANJUÁN, professed brother, shed his blood 31 August 1936.

60. ESTEBAN GARCÍA GARCÍA, professed brother, was killed 24 September 1936.

61. RAFAEL RODRÍGUEZ MESA, professed brother, crowned with the crown of justice 24 September 1936.

62. JOSÉ BLANCO SALGADO, professed brother, received the reward of the kingdom 21 July 1936.

63. TERESA CEJUDO REDONDO, Salesian cooperator, wife of Giovanni Battista Caballero, with whom she had a daughter, was killed 16 September 1936.

All of these being considered by the people of God martyrs of the faith, and since with the passing of the years this conviction continued to grow the Archbishop of Seville decided to introduce the Cause of Beatification or the declaration of martyrdom with the Ordinary Process, which was concluded in 1956. Then in 1957 another Process was introduced in the Archdiocese of Madrid, regarding specifically those Servants of God who died in that circumscription. The Congregation for the Causes of Saints, after having given permission in 1985 for the two Causes to be made into one, recognised the juridical

value of the two Processes with two separate Decrees, that is that of the Diocese of Madrid 21 February 1992, and that of Seville 14 March. Subsequently, when the *Positio* was prepared, as is usual, there was an investigation into the presumed martyrdom of the aforementioned Servants of God. On 23 November 2004 the Particular Meeting of the Commission of the Theologian Consultors took place with a positive outcome. Afterwards in an Ordinary Session on 6 May 2006, the Cardinals and Bishops, having listened to the report of His Excell. Mgr. Javier Echevarría Rodríguez, Titular Bishop of Cilibia, Presenter of the Cause, recognised that Enrico Saiz Aparicio and his 62 Companions were killed because of their fidelity to Christ.

When all that had been done was reported by the undersigned Cardinal Prefect, the Supreme Pontiff Benedict XVI, accepting and approving the opinion of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, on today's date declared that: *there is certainty concerning the martyrdom and the cause of the Servants of God Enrico Saiz Aparicio and 62 Companions of the Society of Saint Francis of*

Sales, "in casu et ad effectum de quo agitur".

The Supreme Pontiff has directed that this Decree be published and preserved among the acts of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints.

Rome, 26 June 2006

† IOSEPHUS Card. SARAIVA MARTINS
Prefect

L. + S.

† EDUARDUS NOWAK
Arciv. Tit. di Luni
Secretary

5.3 Decree for the canonical erection of the Salesian Vice Province "Mary Help of Christians" of Mozambique

Prot. 166/2006

DECREE FOR THE CANONICAL ERECTION OF THE SALESIAN VICE PROVINCE "MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS" OF MOZAMBIQUE

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

- considering the situation and the development of Salesian foundations and works in Africa;

- bearing in mind that for a more effective animation, the Provincial Delegation of "Mozambique" with headquarters in Maputo-Residência (Mozambique) was set up;
- given the favourable opinion of the Provincial of Portugal with his Council and the results of the consultation carried out among the confreres working in Mozambique;
- having obtained the consent of the General Council in a meeting on **13 June 2006**, in accordance with articles 132 §1,1 and 156 of the Constitutions:

DETACHES from the "St Anthony" Salesian province of Portugal the following Houses:

1. INHARRIME, "St Dominic Savio"
 2. MAPUTO - St. José de Lhanguene, "St Joseph"
 3. MAPUTO - Residência, "St John Bosco"
 4. MATOLA, "St Dominic Savio"
 5. MATUNDO, "St John Bosco"
 6. MOAMBA, "St Joseph the Worker"
 7. MOATIZE, "St John the Baptist"
 8. NAMAACHA, "St John Bosco"
- and by means of the present

Decree,

CANONICALLY ERECTS

the new **SALESIAN VICE PROVINCE OF MOZAMBIQUE**, entitled "**MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS**", with headquarters in **MAPUTO-Residência (Mozambique)**, the house of "**St John Bosco**", with the Salesian houses mentioned above.

The following decisions have been made:

1. Members of the Vice Province are the confreres who at the time of the canonical erection, are living and working in the Salesian houses mentioned above or according to the choice previously made.
2. Also belonging to the Vice Province are the confreres in formation coming from Mozambique even though belonging to formation communities elsewhere.
3. The relationships between the Vice Province and the Province of origin will be regulated by a future Agreement, approved by the Rector Major.

The present Decree will come into force on **15 August 2006**.

Rome, 18 June 2006

Solemnity of Corpus Christi.

Fr Pascual CHÁVEZ VILLANUEVA
Rector Major

Fr. Marian STEMPEL
Secretary General

5.4 Decree for the canonical erection of the Salesian Vice Province “St Charles Lwanga” of Africa the Great Lakes

Prot. 167/2006

DECREE FOR THE CANONICAL ERECTION OF THE SALESIAN VICE PROVINCE “ST CHARLES LWANGA” OF AFRICA THE GREAT LAKES

The undersigned,

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

- considering the situation and the development of Salesian foundations and works in Africa and especially in the following countries: Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda;
- bearing in mind that for a more effective animation, the Provin-

cial Delegation of “Rwanda-Burundi”, with headquarters at Kimihurura (Rwanda) was set up;

- having heard the opinion of the Provincials concerned with their Councils and the results of the consultation carried out among the confreres working in the countries mentioned;
- having obtained the consent of the General Council in a meeting on **21 June 2006**, in accordance with articles 132 §1,1 and 156 of the Constitutions:

CANONICALLY ERECTS

By means of the present Decree, the new **SALESIAN VICE PROVINCE OF AFRICA THE GREAT LAKES**, with the title **“ST CHARLES LWANGA”**, with headquarters in **KIMIHURURA (Rwanda)**, in the house of **“Mary Help of Christians”**, containing the following houses, canonically erected, located in the three States:

- In *Burundi*:

1. BUJUMBURA, “St John Bosco”
2. NGOZI, “St John Bosco”
3. RUKAGO, “Mary Mother of God”

- In *Rwanda*:

1. BUTARE, "Sacred Heart of Jesus"
2. BUTARE - Novitiate, "St Luigi Versiglia"
3. GATENGA, "St Charles Lwanga"
4. KABGAYI, "Blessed Michael Rua"
5. KIMIHURURA, "Mary Help of Christians"

- In *Uganda*:

1. BOMBO - Namaliga, "St John Bosco"

and in addition the **Salesian foundation**, not yet canonically erected, at KAMULI, in *Uganda*.

The following decisions have been made:

1. Members of the Vice Province are the confreres who at the time of the canonical erection are living and working in the houses and foundations mentioned above.
2. Also belonging to the Vice Province are the confreres in formation coming from the African counties covered by the Vice Province, even though belonging to formation communities elsewhere.

3. The relationships between the Vice Province and the Provinces of origin will be regulated by a future Agreement, approved by the Rector Major.

The present Decree will come into force on **15 August 2006**.

Rome, 24 June 2006

Birth of St John the Baptist.

Fr Pascual CHÁVEZ VILLANUEVA
Rector Major

Fr. Marian STEMPEL
Secretary General

5.5 New Provincials

We provide (in alphabetical order) some biographical details of the Provincials appointed by the Rector Major with his Council in the course of the plenary session June-July 2006.

1. *AUTHIER Richard, Superior of the Vice Province of CANADA.*

To lead the "St Joseph" Vice Province of CANADA Fr. *Richard AUTHIER* has been appointed. He succeeds Fr. Luc Lantagne.

Richard Authier was born 21 January 1948 in Montreal (Canada) and has been a Salesian since 16 August 1966, when he made his

first profession in the novitiate at Newton (USA). After studies of philosophy and practical training he completed his studies of theology at Columbus (USA). Perpetually professed 12-08-1972, he was ordained priest at Sherbrooke (Canada) 5 June 1976. He obtained a Licence in Theology.

After priestly ordination, he taught and undertook pastoral work for several years in the house of Sherbrooke, and followed a formation course at Berkeley. In 1984 he was given the responsibility of being Director of Novices at Sherbrooke, as well as Rector. In 1988, when the Vice Province of Canada was set up he was chosen as the first Superior, a role he undertook until 2000. In 2001 he went to work in the community at Montreal - St. Claire and in 2004 at Montreal - Mary Help of Christians, as parish priest. From 2004 he was also economer of the Vice Province and delegate for the Cooperators. Now once again he has been called upon to assume the responsibility of being Superior of the Vice Province.

2. *CHYZAN Marek, Provincial of the Province of POLAND-KRAKÓW.*

P. Marek CHYZAN is the new Provincial of the "St Hyacinth"

Province of KRAKÓW, Poland. He succeeds Fr. Tadeusz Rozmus.

Born 1 April 1964 at Katowice (Poland), Marek Chyzan made his first Salesian profession 22 August 1985 in the novitiate in Kopiec. After the post-novitiate and practical training he was sent to Turin, to the theological faculty of the Crocetta, for the course of theology. Perpetually professed 20-08-1991, he was ordained priest in Kraków 3 July 1993. He continued his studies at the Salesian Pontifical University in Rome, obtaining the Licence in Theology.

Having returned to his Province he worked for several years (1994-2001) in the Salesian theologate in Kraków. In 2001 he was appointed Vice Provincial, a task he undertook for three years until 2004, when he returned to the U.P.S. in the "St John Bosco" community with a view to taking a doctorate. Now the Rector Major and his Council have called him to lead the Kraków Province.

3. *DUFOR Francis, Superior of the Vice Province of SOUTH AFRICA.*

Fr. Francis DUFOR was appointed the new Superior of the "Blessed Michael Rua" Vice Province of SOUTH AFRICA at the

conclusion of the mandate of Fr. Robert Gore.

Fr. Francis Dufour was born 1 August 1957 at Standerton, Transvaal (South Africa). He completed his novitiate and all his course of formation in Ireland (on which South Africa then depended). He made his first profession at Maynooth 1 September 1976. After studies of philosophy and practical training he took perpetual vows 29 June 1982. He was ordained priest in Caen 13 April 1985.

After priestly ordination he returned to South Africa and carried out educational and pastoral ministry for several years in the house of Walkerville - Don Bosco Daleside, where he was Rector for six years 1991-1997. In 1998 he was appointed Episcopal Vicar for Youth, a role he filled for three years, moving to reside in the community of Johannesburg - Booyens. In 2000 he was again entrusted with the direction of Walkerville -Don Bosco Daleside and in 2003 was appointed Vice Provincial. Now he has been called to lead the Vice Province.

4. *GOMES Manuel Leal, Superior of the Vice Province of MOZAMBIQUE.*

The Rector Major with his Council has appointed as the first Su-

perior of the new "Mary Help of Christians" Vice Province of MOZAMBIQUE Fr. *Manuel Leal GOMES*.

Born 19 February in Mata Mourisca-Pombal (Portugal), Manuel Leal Gomes became a Salesian 15 August 1969, when he made his first profession in the novitiate in Manique. After studies of philosophy and practical training he made his perpetual profession 15 August 1975, did his theological studies and was ordained priest 26 July 1980 in Lisbon. Later (1984-1986) he was in Rome - UPS, where he obtained the Licence in Spiritual Theology.

Having returned to Portugal, he carried out educational and pastoral ministry at Manique (1986-1991) and at Porto-Prenovitiato (1991-1996). In 1996 he was appointed Vice Provincial - the role he filled for three years until 1999, when he returned to Porto-Prenovitiato as Rector (1999-2001).

In 2001 he left for Mozambique where in 2002 he was appointed Delegate of the Provincial Delegation. Now he has been chosen to lead the new Vice Province.

5. *JARA Walter Luis, Provincial of the Province of PARAGUAY.*

The new Provincial of the "Mary Assumed into Heaven" Province of

PARAGUAY is Fr. *Walter Luis JARA*. He succeeds Fr. Miguel Ángel Cardozo.

Born 23 August 1956 at San Rafael, in the province of Mendoza (Argentina), he made his first profession at Manucho 31 January 1976, and then did his philosophy and practical training. Perpetually professed 24-01-1982, he studied at the Salesian theologate in Córdoba and was ordained priest 30 December 1984 at San Rafael. In the civil field he became a qualified teacher.

Assigned to the community of the "Dominic Savio" aspirantate in Córdoba, in 1987 he was appointed Rector and in 1989 became a member of the Provincial Council. In 1991 he became Vice Provincial and in 1997 was appointed Provincial of Córdoba, Argentina. At the end of his mandate in 2003 he became Rector of the San Ambrosio community. Now he has been entrusted with the responsibility of being Provincial of Paraguay.

6. *LAM CHUNG-WAI Simon*,
Provincial of the Province of CHINA.

To take the place of Fr. Savio Hon Tai-Fai as Provincial of the "Mary Help of Christians" Pro-

vince of CHINA Fr. *LAM CHUNG-WAI Simon* has been appointed.

Simon Lam Chung-Wai was born 7 November 1950 in Hong Kong and became a Salesian on 15 August 1969, when he made his first profession in the Hong Kong novitiate. After philosophy and practical training he made his perpetual profession 15-08-1975, and was sent to Rome for theological studies at the end of which he was ordained priest in Hong Kong 14 August 1981.

After priestly ordination he carried out his educational and pastoral ministry in the house of "St. Louis" in Hong Kong, where first he was Vice Rector and then Rector between 1994 and 2000. In 2000 he was appointed Provincial Economist and the following year, 2001, Vice Provincial and Rector of the Provincial House in Hong Kong. Now he has been called to lead the Province as Provincial.

7. *NGENDAKURIYO Gabriel*,
Superior of the Vice Province of AFRICA - GREAT LAKES.

The Rector Major with his Council has appointed as the first Superior of the new "St Charles Lwanga" Vice Province of AFRICA - THE GREAT LAKES (Burundi,

Rwanda, Uganda) Fr. *Gabriel NGENDAKURIYO*.

Born 3 July 1954 at Mugongo-Jene, Ngozi (Burundi), Gabriel Ngendakuriyo made his first Salesian profession 9 September 1979 in the novitiate in Butare (Rwanda), belonging to the Central Africa Province. Perpetually professed 22 July 1984, he was ordained priest at Lubumbashi 11 August 1987.

After priestly ordination he was assigned to the house of Rukago (Burundi), where he carried out his educative-pastoral ministry until 1991, when he was sent to Rome, to complete his studies. Having returned to the Province in 1994, he was assigned to the studentate in Lubumbashi, where he was Rector between 1999 and 2005. In 2005 he was appointed Vice Provincial and Rector of the Provincial House in Lubumbashi. Now he has been entrusted with leading and animating the new African Vice Province.

8. *NIEBLES Vidal, Provincial of the Province of MEDELLÍN - COLOMBIA.*

Fr. *Vidal NIEBLES* is the new Provincial of the "St Luis Beltrán" Province of MEDELLÍN, Colombia. He succeeds Fr. Armando Álvarez.

Vidal Niebles was born 14 July 1946 at Soledad, Barranquilla (Colombia) and became a Salesian 18 January 1967, when he made his first profession in the novitiate in Copacabana. After philosophy and practical training he studied theology in the Salesian studentate in Bogotá. Perpetually professed 01-12-1972, he was ordained priest at Barranquilla 24 August 1974.

After priestly ordination he undertook educational and pastoral work and in 1980 he was entrusted with the direction of the house in Tuluá. Later, between 1985 and 1988 he was in Rome to complete his studies at the Pontifical Gregorian University, obtaining a licence in philosophy.

Having returned to Colombia, he was Rector of Barranquilla - Don Bosco between 1988 and 1991, when he was appointed Vice Provincial and Rector of the Provincial House in Medellín. In 1994 the Rector Major chose him as Provincial of Medellín.

At the end of his mandate as Provincial in 2000 he was called to Rome as Rector of the formation community of Gerini - UPS Students. Now the Rector Major with his Council has again entrusted him with the responsibility of leading the Medellín Province.

9. *PELLIZZARI Giuseppe, Superior of the Circumscription of EAST EUROPE.*

Fr *Giuseppe PELLIZZARI* is the new Superior of the "Mary Immaculate" Special Circumscription of EAST EUROPE. He succeeds Fr. Henryk Boguszewski.

Born 8 September 1947 at Feletis, Ricinico (Udine, Italy), Giuseppe Pellizzari became a Salesian 16 August 1964, when he made his first profession in the novitiate at Albarè di Costermano (VR). After the postnovitiate and practical training, he studied theology in Ireland, in the studentate in Maynooth. Perpetually professed 07-09-1971, he was ordained priest 11 November 1978 in his home town.

After priestly ordination, for several years he carried out his educational and pastoral ministry in the house of Conegliano, then Santa Maria La Longa, where he was Rector in the period 1989-1991. After a year in charge of the work in Venezia - San Giorgio, in 1992 he left for Russia, in the East Circumscription. For a year he was in charge and then the Vice Rector of the Sankt Petersburg - Gatchina community. Between 1994 and 2003 he was a Provincial Councillor. Now he has been entrusted with animating and leading the Circumscription.

10. *POONTHURUTHIL James, Provincial of the Province of INDIA - DIMAPUR.*

To succeed Fr. Thomas Mulyayinkal as Provincial of the "St Francis of Sales" Province of DIMAPUR, India, Fr. *James POONTHURUTHIL* has been appointed.

He was born 27 January 1955 at Thodupuzha, Kerala (India) and made his first Salesian profession 24 May 1976 in Shillong. After the postnovitiate and practical training he studied theology in the Shillong-Mawlai studentate. Perpetually professed 31-01-1982, he was ordained priest at Manjuvayal 23 December 1984.

Assigned to the studentate in Shillong, in 1986 he went to Rome to complete his studies, obtaining a licence in Moral Theology. After having returned for a few years (1988-1992) to the theologate in Shillong, between 1992 and 1994 he was again in Rome, where he obtained a licence in Missiology. Again in his Province between 1994 and 2001 he was Rector of the studentate of philosophy in Dimapur. After two years in the community of Borduria, since 2003 he has been once again in the Shillong-theologate. Between 1997 and 2003 he was a Provincial Councillor. Now he

has been called to lead the Province as Provincial.

11. *RIVA Eugenio, Provincial of the Province of NORTH-EAST ITALY.*

To lead the “St Mark” Province of NORTH-EAST ITALY, after the unexpected death of Fr Claudio Filippin, the Rector Major with his Council has appointed Fr *Eugenio RIVA*.

He was born 29 December 1950 at Treviglio (BG), Italy, where the Salesians have a flourishing school and oratory. Attracted to the Salesian vocation, he entered the novitiate in Missaglia (CO), and there made his first profession 16 August 1968. After philosophical studies at Nave (BS) and practical training, he studied theology and obtained a licence in Theology. Perpetually professed 14-09-1974, he was ordained priest at Treviglio 27 May 1978. He completed his studies obtaining a degree and teaching qualification in philosophy.

The Superiors then assigned him to the teaching and formation personnel of the Philosophical-Pedagogical Institute (postnovitiate) of Nave (BS), where he was for some years Director of Studies. In 1994 he was appointed Rector of the house in Treviglio, and in 1997 a

Provincial Councillor. In 1999 the Rector Major with his Council appointed him Provincial of the Lombard-Emilian Province with headquarters in Milan. At the end of the six year period in 2005 he was again at Nave as Rector. Now the Rector Major has entrusted him with the animation and leadership of the North-East Italy Province.

12. *VITALI Natale, Provincial of the Province of CHILE.*

Fr *Natale VITALI* is the new Provincial of the “St Gabriel the Archangel” Province of CHILE. He succeeds Fr Bernardo Bastres, appointed Bishop of Punta Arenas in March 2006.

Born at Montappone, in the province of Ascoli Piceno, in Italy, 14 May 1955, Natale Vitali made his first Salesian profession 12 September 1972. After philosophical studies, during practical training he left for Chile, and joined the Chilean Province. Here he took his perpetual vows 11-06-1978. Then he studied theology at the studentate in Santiago-La Florida, where he was ordained priest 31 July 1982 by Cardinal Raúl Silva Henríquez.

After ordination he undertook educative-pastoral work. In 1986 he was appointed Rector of Talca -

El Salvador, then in 1991 Rector of Santiago - La Gratitude Nacional. In 1993 he was appointed Vice Provincial and Rector of the Provincial House. In 1994 the Rector Major with his Council appointed him Provincial, a role he filled from 1 January 1995 until August 2000. At the end of the six years he was assigned to the house of Puerto Montt, as Rector and parish priest. Now the Rector Major has once again entrusted him with the leadership of the Chilean Province.

5.6 His Eminence Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, SDB, Secretary of State

On 22 June 2006 the Vatican Press Office published the news that the Supreme Pontiff Benedict XVI, accepting the resignation presented by Card. Angelo Sodano, had nominated H.E. Card. **TARCISIO BERTONE, SDB**, Archbishop of Genoa, as the new **Secretary of State**, setting 15 September 2006 as the date for his taking office.

Born at Romano Canavese, in the province of Turin, 2 December 1934, Tarcisio Bertone made his first Salesian profession in the novitiate in Pinerolo 3 December 1950. After perpetual profession

(15 August 1956), he studied theology at Bollengo, where he was ordained priest 1 July 1960. Having obtained a licence in Theology at the Theological Faculty of Turin-Crocetta (P.A.S.), he continued his studies at the Salesian Pontifical University (UPS) in Rome, obtaining a doctorate in Canon Law with a thesis on "The government of the Church in the thinking of Benedict XIV - Pope Lambertini (1740-1758)". He taught in the Faculty of Canon Law at the Salesian Atheneum in Turin-Crocetta, and then from 1967 at Rome-UPS, where he held the chair of Special Moral Theology. In 1979 he was appointed by the Superiors Dean of the Faculty of Law of the UPS and in 1989 Rector Magnificus of the UPS. For several years he worked as a consultant at the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and at the Pontifical Council for the interpretation of legislative texts.

On 4 June 1991 he was appointed by Pope John Paul II Metropolitan Archbishop of Vercelli, in the Region of Piedmont, where he was ordained 1 August 1991. In June 1995 the Holy Father called him to Rome as Secretary of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. He filled this role until December 2002, when the Holy Fa-

ther appointed him Archbishop of Genoa, a post he officially took up on 2 February 2003.

In the Public Consistory held by Pope John Paul II on 21 October 2003, in the XXV year of his Pontificate, the Holy Father added him to the College of Cardinals, creating him a Cardinal of the Holy Roman Church with the title of "Mary Help of Christians" in via Tuscolana.

Now, Pope Benedict XVI has called him to collaborate more closely in the government of the Universal Church entrusting him with the responsibility of Secretary of State.

5.7 New Salesian Bishops

1. PERIYANAYAGAM

Soundaraj, Bishop of VELLORE (India)

In 11 July 2006 the Vatican Press Office published the appointment by Pope Benedict XVI, of the Salesian priest *Soundaraj PERIYANAYAGAM* as Bishop of the Diocese of *VELLORE*, in India.

Born 6 June 1949 at Kolappalur, North Arcot, Tamil Nadu (India), Soundaraj Perynayagam became a Salesian 24 May 1970, the date of

his first profession at the novitiate in Yercaud. He studied philosophy in the Yercaud studentate and after practical training he studied theology in England. Perpetually professed 10-06-1970, he was ordained priest at Bootle (Great Britain) 25 June 1983.

After priestly ordination he exercised his educational and pastoral ministry in various houses in the Madras Province: Yercaud (1985-1991); Tirupattur - Sacred Heart College (1991-2000), where he was also Vice-Rector; Madras - Perambur - Lourdes Shrine (2001-2004) as Rector and parish priest. From 2004 he was Rector of the community of Vellore - Don Bosco (where he had also been for the year 2000-2001). In 2002 he was made a member of the Provincial Council and from 2003 he was Provincial Delegate for Formation.

2. ALTIERI Antônio Carlos, Bishop of CARAGUATATUBA (Brazil).

On 26 July 2006 the appointment by His Holiness Benedict XVI of the Salesian priest *Antônio Carlos ALTIERI* as Bishop of the Diocese of *CARAGUATATUBA*, in Brazil was published by the Vatican Press Office.

Antônio Carlos Altieri was born 18 October 1951 in São Paulo, Brazil. Having completed his sixth-form studies in the Salesian College of "Coração de Jesus" in São Paulo, he passed the entrance examination to the Faculty of Medicine; but some months later, after a missionary experience with the Salesians, he embraced a Salesian vocation. He made his novitiate in Pindamonhangaba, and his first profession there 31 January 1971. He studied philosophy at the Salesian studentate in Lorena, and after practical training, theology in the Pius XI Theological Institute in São Paulo. Perpetually professed 29-06-1974, he was ordained priest 17 December 1978 in São Paulo. He later obtained a licence in education, specialising in teaching methodology at the Salesian Pontifical University in Rome.

After priestly ordination he exercised his educational and pas-

toral ministry in the house of Lorena - San Giuseppe (postnovitiate and Salesian Institute of Pedagogy and Philosophy), first as pastoral coordinator and then as Rector (1984-1988). A Provincial Councillor from 1982, in December 1988 he was appointed Rector of the Pius XI Theological Institute in São Paulo. He spent the year 1993 in Rome-UPS, completing his studies. In December of that year he was appointed Provincial of the "Mary Help of Christians" Province of São Paulo.

After completing his six years as Provincial, in September 2000 he was called to Rome to the "St John Bosco" community of the UPS, of which he was appointed Rector. In June of this year 2006 he had been appointed Director of Novices in São Carlos, Brazil, when he was informed of his appointment as Bishop.

5.8 Our dead confreres (3rd 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
P ALDAZÁBAL LARRAÑAGA José	Barcelona (Spagna)	11-08-2006	73	SBA
P BARRANCO GÓMEZ Rogelio	San Juan (Porto Rico)	12-07-2006	76	ANT
P BARRETO Ismael	Tunja (Colombia)	21-07-2006	80	COB
P BO Piero	Torino	19-06-2006	77	ICP
P BOWMAN Denis	Dublin (Irlanda)	02-08-2006	81	IRL
P BURAN Cyril	Galanta (Slovacchia)	08-09-2006	78	SLK
P CABALLERO GALLEGO Manuel	Cádiz (Spagna)	30-08-2006	79	SSE
L CABO GONZÁLEZ José	San Juan (Porto Rico)	01-09-2006	74	ANT
P CAUTERO Renato	Gerusalemme (Israele)	26-07-2006	80	MOR
P CAVAGNINO Giuseppe	Torino	15-09-2006	86	ICP
P CAVALLERI Antonio	Brescia (Italia)	03-07-2006	69	ILT
P COMBA Giulio	Lorena (Brasile)	18-07-2006	84	BSP
P CRAVOTTA Giovanni	Messina (Italia)	10-07-2006	64	ISI
P DE REGEL Denis	Toulon (Francia)	28-08-2006	77	FRA
P DEBSKI Antoni	London (Inghilterra)	30-07-2006	70	PLS
P DI MAURO Ignazio	Giarre CT (Italia)	02-07-2006	95	ISI
L DURANDO Francesco	Cumiana (Italia)	04-09-2006	81	ICP
P FAGGIONI Ernesto	Tampa FL (U.S.A.)	14-06-2006	88	SUE
P FILIPPIN Claudio	Dolo (Venezia, Italia)	02-07-2006	49	INE
<i>Fu Ispettore per sei anni</i>				
L GAITÁN Julio	Santa Tecla (El Salvador)	17-08-2006	86	CAM
P GHARGHOUR Abboud	Aleppo (Siria)	19-06-2006	59	MOR
L GHISELLI George	Roma	17-09-2006	78	RMG
P GIORDANO Teresio Giuseppe	Curuzú Cuatiá (Argentina)	08-08-2006	89	ARO
P GOMEZCOELLO AVILA Albino	Cuenca (Ecuador)	09-09-2006	93	ECU
L GONZÁLEZ GIL Francisco	Sevilla (Spagna)	21-08-2006	79	SSE
P GRILL André	Caen (Francia)	18-07-2006	82	FRA
S HABTAMU Awala	Adwa (Etiopia)	17-06-2006	25	AET
P JORDÁ CANTÓ Antonio	San Juan de Alicante (Spagna)	03-08-2006	83	SVA
P KIBWE KISIMBA Ildephonse	Kasumbalesa (R.D.Congo)	14-06-2006	33	AFC
P KOCHUPURACKAL Cyriac	Shillong (India)	17-06-2006	62	ING
P KÖNIG Martin	Mühldorf (Germania)	28-06-2006	61	GER
P LAGO José	Curuzú Cuatiá (Argentina)	06-08-2006	89	ARO
P LAUFERSKI Czesław	Warszawa (Polonia)	14-08-2006	91	PLE
P LIJOT Fabien	Libreville (Congo)	30-06-2006	55	ATE
P LÓPEZ DÍAZ Eliseo	México D.F. (Messico)	10-09-2006	77	MEM
P MARCELIN André	Paris (Francia)	14-06-2006	84	FRA
P MARIELLA Rosario	Pedara CT (Italia)	12-09-2006	71	ISI
P MARTIMBIANCO Rino	Torino	14-07-2006	78	ICP

SURNAME AND NAME	PLACE of death	DATE	AGE	PROV
P MAS i CAULES Miguel	Barcelona (Spagna)	04-09-2006	77	SBA
P MIRANDA MUÑOZ Manuel	Santiago de Chile	02-07-2006	87	CIL
L OH Taddeus Hyon Kyo	Seoul (Korea)	17-06-2006	68	KOR
P O'LOUGHLIN Sean	Cherstey (Inghilterra)	04-09-2006	80	GBR
P PACHECO José da Silva	Porto (Portogallo)	27-07-2006	75	POR
<i>Fu per 6 anni Ispettore e per 5 anni Procuratore Generale</i>				
P PADOVAN Francesco	Castello di Godego (TV)	22-08-2006	66	INE
P PALOMINO Juan	Guayaquil (Ecuador)	09-06-2006	69	ECU
P PELLATTIERO Mario	Campo Grande (Brasile)	09-07-2006	92	BCG
L PERILLA Abraham	Bogotá (Colombia)	13-06-2006	99	COB
P POUMAY Pascal	Liège (Belgio)	21-08-2006	80	BES
<i>Fu Ispettore per sei anni</i>				
P PREZZI Lino	Trento (Italia)	03-08-2006	88	INE
P PRIAROLLO Rino	Mezzano di Primiero (TN)	25-07-2006	92	INE
P ROGGERO Vincenzo	Bogotá (Colombia)	17-07-2006	88	COB
P SANDTNER Stefan	Bratislava (Slovacchia)	14-08-2006	90	SLK
L SCHIRO Flavio	Torino	02-08-2006	85	ICP
P SCHNEIDER Ernesto	Guatemala (Guatemala)	28-07-2006	86	CAM
P SCOSCINI Mario	Savona (Italia)	13-08-2006	86	ILT
L SERSEN Giuseppe	Torino	03-07-2006	93	ICP
L TIRELLO Maggiorino Giov. Battista	Santiago de Chile	28-08-2006	94	CIL
P VADAKKEKUZHIKATTIL V.U. John	Guwahati (India)	20-08-2006	52	ING
P VAN WIGGEN Antonius Hendrikus	Heinsberg (Germania)	11-08-2006	86	BEN
P VENCO Antonio	Castelfranco Veneto (TV)	26-08-2006	90	INE
P VENTURELLI Giacomo Angelo	Campo Grande (Brasile)	19-05-2006	90	BCG
P VERA FERNÁNDEZ Cándido	Montevideo (Uruguay)	14-08-2006	92	URU
P VILLEGAS Díez Baudillo	La Coruña (Spagna)	10-08-2006	69	SLE
P WEIMER Günther	Mülheim / Ruhr (Germania)	18-07-2006	70	GER
P ZAK Józef	Kamionka Wielka (Polonia)	31-07-2006	77	PLN







