



# acts

**of the general council**

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year LXXXVIII    july-september 2007

**N. 398**

official organ  
of animation  
and communication  
for the  
salesian congregation

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Direzione Generale  
Opere don Bosco  
Roma





# acts

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

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OFFICIAL ORGAN OF ANIMATION AND COMMUNICATION FOR THE SALESIAN CONGREGATION

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|   |   |                                    |
|---|---|------------------------------------|
| 1. LETTER<br>OF THE RECTOR MAJOR        | 1.1 Fr Pascual CHÁVEZ VILLANUEVA<br><i>«This is my body, which is given for you.<br/>Do this in remembrance of me»</i> (1Cor 11,24)<br><b>MAKING THE EUCHARIST IN ORDER TO BECOME EUCHARIST</b>   | 3                                  |
| 2. GUIDELINES<br>AND POLICIES           | (none in this issue)  |                                    |
| 3. RULINGS AND DIRECTIVES               | (none in this issue)  |                                    |
| 4. ACTIVITIES<br>OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL | 4.1 Chronicle of the Rector Major<br>4.2 Chronicle of the General Councillors   | 45<br>52                           |
| 5. DOCUMENTS                            | 5.1 «PASSION FOR GOD – PASSION FOR THE WORLD»<br>Message of the Rector Major to the Secular Institute,<br>the Volunteers of Don Bosco,<br>on the 90 <sup>th</sup> anniversary of their Foundation<br>5.2 "Report of the Superiors General" presented by<br>the Rector Major at the Assembly of the V Conference<br>of the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean<br>at Aparecida (Brazil)<br>5.3 Precapitular Commission and Juridical Commission<br>for the CG26<br>5.4 Salesian Bishops<br>5.5 Our dead confreres | 74<br><br>77<br><br>81<br>83<br>86 |

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**«This is my body, which is given for you.  
Do this in remembrance of me»**

**(1Cor 11,24)**

## **MAKING THE EUCHARIST IN ORDER TO BECOME EUCHARIST**

1. 'MAKING THE EUCHARIST' TODAY. 1.1 The Eucharist in the recent life of the Church. 1.2 The Eucharist in the present state of the Congregation. 1.3 The Eucharist in the life of the confreres. 2. RECALLING THE EXPERIENCE OF THE DISCIPLES. 2.1 The first defection of the disciples (*Jn 6,66-71*). 2.2 The abandonment by the Twelve (*Mk 14,17-31*). - 2.2.1 Following Jesus does not ensure that we don't betray him. - 2.2.2 Promising Jesus a great deal does not prevent us from denying him. - 2.2.3 The covenant broken almost as soon as it was made needs to be remembered. 2.3 The gesture in Jesus' hour: loving even to the end (*Jn 13,1-20*). 3. 'BECOMING EUCHARIST' TODAY. 3.1 Consecrated life, "eucharistic life". - 3.1.1 Consecrated life, "memorial" through obedience. - 3.1.2 Consecrated life, "sacrifice" through chastity. - 3.1.3 Consecrated life, "shared meal" through poverty. 3.2 The Salesian, man of the Eucharist. - 3.2.1 From celebration to conformity. - 3.2.2 From conformity to adoration. - 3.2.3 From adoration to mission. **Conclusion.**

7 June 2007

*Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ*

My Dear Confreres,

I send you my affectionate greetings on my return from Aparecida, Brazil, the site of the Vth Conference of the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean, which was attended by 13 Salesian Bishops and two FMA, in addition to the Rector Major. It was an extraordinary experience of Church that I shall speak about on another occasion. For the present I just express the hope that this great Assembly may be a source of hope and life to the peoples of that continent, through a Church – and us SDB within it – that becomes the loving and faithful disciple of Christ and a convinced and courageous missionary. Now I prefer to speak to you on a subject that is very much in my heart and on which I have been reflecting during the past year, the Eucharist.

I am well aware that some of you may think a new letter on the Eucharist repetitive if not superfluous. You will certainly not have forgotten what Fr Vecchi wrote on the subject in the Jubilee Year

of 2000 “to rediscover the eucharistic mystery and its significance in our life and pastoral work”.<sup>1</sup> I can tell you, however, that for some time I have felt the need to take up the question again and to tell you of my concerns. The reasons are indeed quite serious.

## 1. ‘MAKING THE EUCHARIST’ TODAY

Involved as we are in the “return to Don Bosco”, in the creative recovery of his inspired charismatic options, of his inspired pedagogical intuitions, how much I wish that in the Congregation we were to live the Eucharist – always better, always more – celebrated with regularity and gratitude, contemplated in personal and community adoration! How could we better proclaim the death of the Lord until He comes, than by eating this bread and drinking this chalice, and we ourselves becoming “bread broken” for the confreres and the young, and “wine poured out”, so that they may have life to the full? (cf. *1 Cor* 11,26). How can we more effectively bring our young people to know God who has loved them first, (cf. *1 Jn* 4,8-9.19) and to the end (cf. *Jn* 13,1)?

### 1.1 The Eucharist in the recent life of the Church

Fount and summit of the life and mission of the Church,<sup>2</sup> the gift of the Eucharist, “always devoutly guarded as her most precious treasure”,<sup>3</sup> has accompanied and encouraged the process of renewal that the Church has followed from Vatican II until our own days. It would have been very difficult for it to have been otherwise: “the celebration of the eucharist is at the centre of the process of the Church’s growth”;<sup>4</sup> “the Church”, in fact, “draws

<sup>1</sup> JUAN E. VECCHI, “This is my body, which is given for you”: AGC 371 (2000), p. 5.

<sup>2</sup> *Sacrosanctum Concilium*. Council Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy. 4 December 1963, 10.

<sup>3</sup> PAUL VI, *Mysterium fidei*. Encyclical Letter on the doctrine and the worship of the Holy Eucharist. 3 September 1965, 1.

<sup>4</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*. Encyclical Letter on the Eucharist and its relationship to the Church. 17 April 2003, 21.

her life from the Eucharist. This truth does not simply express a daily experience of faith, but recapitulates *the heart of the mystery of the Church*".<sup>5</sup>

The Council was not yet finished and already Paul VI had published the encyclical letter *Mysterium Fidei* (3 September 1965) on the doctrine and the worship of the Most Holy Eucharist: "the Council Fathers" – wrote the Pope – "regard it as a matter of highest importance to urge the faithful to participate actively, with undivided faith and the utmost devotion, in the celebration of this Most Holy Mystery".<sup>6</sup>

But it was in the long years of the magisterium of John Paul II during which there was "an extraordinary concentration on the sacrament of the Eucharist".<sup>7</sup> In the first years of his magisterium he wrote the Apostolic Letter *Dominicae Cenae* (24 February 1980), in which he indicated "certain aspects of the Eucharistic Mystery and its impact on the lives of those who are the ministers of It".<sup>8</sup> Later, "to emphasis the living and saving presence in the Church and in the world" John Paul II wanted, on the occasion of the great Jubilee, an *International Eucharistic Congress* to be held in Rome; "The Year 2000" he promised, "will be intensely Eucharistic".<sup>9</sup> Three years later, in 2003, in his Encyclical *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (17 April 2003) he reminded us that "the gaze of the Church is constantly turned to her Lord, present in the Sacrament of the Altar, in which she discovers the full manifestation of his boundless love".<sup>10</sup> The following year, with the Apostolic Letter

<sup>5</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*. Encyclical Letter on the Eucharist and its relationship to the Church 17 April 2003, 1.

<sup>6</sup> PAUL VI, *Mysterium fidei*. Encyclical Letter on the doctrine and the worship of the Holy Eucharist. 3 September 1965, 1.

<sup>7</sup> GIOVANNI MARCHESI, "L'Eucaristia: 'Sacramento della Carità'. L'Esortazione Apostolica postsinodale di Benedetto XVI": *La Civiltà Cattolica* 3764 (2007) p. 171.

<sup>8</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *Dominicae Cenae*. Apostolic Letter on the mystery and the worship of the Eucharist. 24 February 1980, 2.

<sup>9</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*. Letter on preparation for the Jubilee of the Year 2000. 10 November 1994, 55.

<sup>10</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*. Encyclical Letter on the Eucharist and its relationship to the Church 17 April 2003, 1.



*Mane nobiscum Domine* (7 October 2004), John Paul II proclaimed a whole year in which he wanted the Church to “be particularly engaged in living out the mystery of the Holy Eucharist... amid our questions and difficulties, and even our bitter disappointments”.<sup>11</sup> The International Eucharistic Congress, held between 10 and 17 October 2004 at Guadalajara (Mexico); the Ordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on the theme: «The Eucharist: Source and Summit of the Life and Mission of the Church», held in the Vatican between 2 and 23 October 2005; and the World Youth Day, celebrated in Cologne, Germany, between 16 and 21 August 2005, to make the Eucharist “the vital source” around which the young ought to recollect themselves “to nourish their faith and enthusiasm”,<sup>12</sup> were the events that marked this Year of the Eucharist, which brought to an end a clear process “in the wake of the Council and the Jubilee”.<sup>13</sup>

Two of these events, the “natural development of the pastoral impulse” that John Paul II wanted to give to the Church at the beginning of the Third Millennium,<sup>14</sup> were well taken up and brought to their conclusion by Benedict XVI.

On the Marienfeld esplanade, during the vigil on 20 August 2005, the Pope urged the young people to return to adoration of the mystery, before inviting them at the Mass the next day to take part in the mystery and to make themselves one with Christ: “bread and wine”, said the Pope, “become his Body and Blood. But it must not stop there; on the contrary, the process of trans-

<sup>11</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *Mane nobiscum Domine*. Apostolic Letter for the year of the Eucharist. 7 October 2004, 2

<sup>12</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *Mane nobiscum Domine*. Apostolic Letter for the year of the Eucharist. 7 October 2004, 4.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Mane nobiscum Domine*. Apostolic Letter for the year of the Eucharist. 7 October 2004, 6-10. To the teachings given by John Paul II should be added the valuable suggestions of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments: *Redemptionis Sacramentum* (25 March 2004): AAS 96 (2004) p. 549-601; *Anno dell'Eucaristia: suggerimenti e proposte* (15 October 2004): Osservatore Romano, 15 October 2004. Supplement.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Mane nobiscum Domine*. Apostolic Letter for the year of the Eucharist. 7 October 2004, 4.

formation must now gather momentum. The Body and Blood of Christ are given to us so that we ourselves will be transformed in our turn. We are to become the Body of Christ, his own Flesh and Blood... Adoration [...] becomes union. God no longer simply stands before us as the One who is totally Other. He is within us, and we are in him".<sup>15</sup>

Benedict XVI, who had personally presided at the key moments of the Synod Assembly, then published the Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum caritatis* (22 February 2007), "to take up the richness and variety of the reflections and proposals which emerged [...] and to offer some basic directions aimed at a renewed commitment to eucharistic enthusiasm and fervour in the Church".<sup>16</sup> In addition to accepting and expressly quoting many of the valuable contribution of the Synodal Fathers, the Pope wanted "to set the present Exhortation alongside my first Encyclical Letter, *Deus Caritas Est*, in which I frequently mentioned the sacrament of the Eucharist and stressed its relationship to Christian love, both of God and of neighbour: «God incarnate draws us all to himself. We can thus understand how *agape* also became a term for the Eucharist: there God's own *agape* comes to us bodily, in order to continue his work in us and through us»".<sup>17</sup>

The journey of the Church in recent years, in particular following the Jubilee Year, "clearly had a significant eucharistic dimension".<sup>18</sup> It could not have been otherwise: "The Eucharist is Christ who gives himself to us and continually builds us up as his body... The Eucharist is thus constitutive of the Church's being and activity";<sup>19</sup> if it is true that "*the Church draws her life from*

<sup>15</sup> BENEDICT XVI, Homily at Cologne, Marienfeld Sunday, 21 August 2005.

<sup>16</sup> BENEDICT XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis*. Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation. 22 February 2007, 5

<sup>17</sup> BENEDICT XVI, *Ibidem*.

<sup>18</sup> BENEDICT XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis*. Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation. 22 February 2007, 4.

<sup>19</sup> BENEDICT XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis*. Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation. 22 February 2007, 14-15.

*Christ in the Eucharist*; by him she is fed and by him she is enlightened”,<sup>20</sup> it is equally true that “thanks to the Eucharist, the Church is reborn ever anew!”<sup>21</sup> The Church cannot remain faithful to its origins, nor can it grow without the celebration of the Eucharist: “the more lively the eucharistic faith of the People of God, the deeper is its sharing in ecclesial life”. Further, “Every great reform has in some way been linked to the rediscovery of belief in the Lord’s eucharistic presence among his people”.<sup>22</sup>

## 1.2 The Eucharist in the present state of the Congregation

“And so for us too”, Fr Vecchi wrote to us those years ago, “the personal and communal renewal, which is also spiritual and apostolic [...] includes the convinced and joyful rediscovery of the riches the Eucharist offers us and of the responsibilities to which it calls us”.<sup>23</sup> I make my own his words and I propose them to you as an essential task to take up and implement Don Bosco’s spiritual and apostolic programme which, I hope will enable us to “find once again the origin of our charism, the purpose of our mission and the future of our Congregation”.<sup>24</sup>

In the letter convoking the next General Chapter I told you in fact that “the conviction has been growing on me that today the Congregation needs to reawaken in the heart of every confrere the passionate zeal of ‘Da mihi animas’ and so take up again “the inspiration, motivation and energy to respond to what God expects of us and to the needs of the young”.<sup>25</sup> Our hearts will real-

<sup>20</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*. Encyclical Letter on the Eucharist and its relationship to the Church 17 April 2003, 6.

<sup>21</sup> BENEDICT XVI, Homily on the occasion of the possession of the Chair of the Bishop of Rome (7 May 2005): AAS 97 (2005), p. 752.

<sup>22</sup> BENEDICT XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis*. Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation. 22 February 2007, 6.

<sup>23</sup> JUAN E. VECCHI, “This is my body, which is given for you”: AGC 371 (2000), p. 4.

<sup>24</sup> PASCUAL CHÁVEZ, “‘Da mihi animas, cetera tolle’. Charismatic identity and apostolic zeal. Starting again from Don Bosco to reawaken the heart of every Salesian”: AGC 394 (2006), p. 6.

<sup>25</sup> PASCUAL CHÁVEZ, *Ibidem*.

ly waken up, only if we somehow succeed in feeling the passion of God for his own, or rather feeling it with Him. And there is no pathway more direct and effective than the celebration of the eucharist; since “the Eucharist is thus the source and summit not only of the Church’s life, but also of her mission: ...We cannot approach the eucharistic table without being drawn into the mission which, beginning in the very heart of God, is meant to reach all people. Missionary outreach is thus an essential part of the eucharistic form of the Christian life”.<sup>26</sup>

Without eucharistic life therefore, there is no apostolic life. Don Bosco, “man of the eucharist”,<sup>27</sup> is for us the special model, the decisive proof: “he promised God that he would give of himself to his last breath for the young. And that is precisely what he did. Sacramental participation in the sacrifice of Christ leads us to make ourselves one with him in his apostolic sentiments and in his generous dedication for the demands of the kingdom”. So wrote Fr Vecchi, adding: “but the element which reveals more than any other the extent to which the eucharistic mystery marked the life of Don Bosco [...] is the relationship with pastoral charity which he expressed in his motto ‘Da mihi animas, cetera tolle’”. These words [...] are the plan and process of Don Bosco for modelling himself on Christ, who offers his own life to the Father for the salvation of mankind”.<sup>28</sup> Like him, the Salesian draws from the Eucharist “encouragement and strength to be a sign, in our own times too, of God’s gracious and fruitful love for humanity”.<sup>29</sup> “Therefore always keep your eyes fixed on Don Bosco” – the late John Paul II encouraged us. – “He lived his life entirely in God and recommended the unity of the communities around the Eucharist”.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>26</sup> BENEDICT XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis*. Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation. 22 February 2007, 84.

<sup>27</sup> JUAN E. VECCHI, “This is my body, which is given for you”: AGC 371 (2000), p. 33

<sup>28</sup> JUAN E. VECCHI, “This is my body, which is given for you”: AGC 371 (2000) p. 41.39.

<sup>29</sup> BENEDICT XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis*. Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation. 22 February 2007, 81.

<sup>30</sup> JOHN PAUL II, “Message for the beginning of the General Chapter XXV”. CG25, 144: ACG 378 (2002) p. 117.

If becoming missionaries of the young, full of zeal for their salvation, urges us to live in a eucharistic manner, being consecrated to God, being full of zeal for Him, obliges us to become men of the Eucharist for the sake of “*eucharistic consistency*, a quality which our lives are objectively called to embody”.<sup>31</sup> It is easy to understand: “*a living memorial of Jesus’ way of living and acting as the Incarnate Word in relation to the Father and in relation to the brethren*”,<sup>32</sup> consecrated persons live in order to make *a sacramental*, therefore efficacious, *memorial* of the sacrifice of Christ, and even better, to be a memorial of Christ who sacrifices himself and continues to give himself for us and for others through us. The sacramental effectiveness of the eucharistic memorial is not limited to remembering the giving *pro nobis* of Jesus; it also leads, and here its real effectiveness comes into play, to the giving of one’s own life on the part of those who commemorate Him. Like all the baptised, but in a special and demanding way, religious, “taking part in the eucharistic sacrifice, the fount and apex of the whole Christian life, they offer the divine Victim to God and offer themselves along with it”;<sup>33</sup> and it is by means of this offering of themselves that they become a *living* memorial of Christ: the giving of their lives repeats, and precisely in this way ‘recalls,’ the sacrifice of Christ. Consecrated persons live eucharistically, not so much because they often celebrate the Eucharist, but because they spend their life for others.

We Salesians, as consecrated persons who have chosen Christ as the only one to give meaning to our lives, cannot but desire to establish with Him a fuller living communion, one, in fact, that comes from giving one’s own life. The Eucharist, celebrated *in the sacrament* when we receive the gift of the Body of Jesus given for us and, above all, celebrated *with life* every time we give

<sup>31</sup> BENEDICT XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis*. Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation. 22 February 2007, 83.

<sup>32</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *Vita Consecrata*. Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation. 25 March 1996, 22.

<sup>33</sup> Ecumenical Council Vaticano II, *Lumen Gentium*. Dogmatic Constitution on the Church. 21 November 1964, 11.



ourselves body and soul to others, “is the daily viaticum and source of the spiritual life for the individual and for the Institute. By means of the Eucharist all consecrated persons are called to live Christ’s Paschal Mystery, uniting themselves to him by offering their own lives to the Father through the Holy Spirit”.<sup>34</sup>

Dear confreres, I cannot think of us as consecrated Salesians if we do not succeed in finding “in the celebration of the Eucharist and in eucharistic adoration the strength necessary for the radical following of Christ, obedient, poor and chaste”.<sup>35</sup> How can we respond to our vocation, personal and communitarian, if we do not live *by and for* the Eucharist?

### 1.3 The Eucharist in the life of the confreres

I have the impression, I must confess and feeling somewhat worried, that among us not all have succeeded in making the journey that the Church and the Congregation were expecting of us. From studying the reports of the extraordinary visitations to the Provinces, as also in my own visits, I have come to realise that in the Congregation there is a certain *deficit in eucharistic life*, a situation not altogether new; Fr Vecchi, in fact, had already identified and accurately described it;<sup>36</sup> even just looking at the quality of our community celebrations, and it is only one example, he mentioned “confusion, the extolling of spontaneity, haste, the giving of too little importance to actions and symbolic language, and the ‘secularisation of Sunday’”.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>34</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *Vita Consacrata*. Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation. 25 March 1996, 95.

<sup>35</sup> BENEDICT XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis*. Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation. 22 February 2007, 81.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. JUAN E. VECCHI, “This is my body, which is given for you”: AGC 371 (2000) p. 6-14. The 25th General Chapter complained of “a weakening in faith reflected in the abandonment of prayer, of the daily celebration of the eucharist..”. (GC25, 54: AGC 378 (2002) p. 57).

<sup>37</sup> Cf. LUC VAN LOOY, “The eucharistic celebration of our community. Examining its quality”: AGC 371 (2000) 55.

If this perception of mine were to be true, there would be well-founded grounds for concern. Certainly, this situation is not exclusive to us, it concerns the whole Christian community; with “profound sorrow” it was mentioned by John Paul II, who in fact wrote the ‘Encyclical *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*: to “effectively help to banish the dark clouds of unacceptable doctrine and practice so that the Eucharist will continue to shine forth in all its radiant mystery”.<sup>38</sup> But in our case, the lack of or an insufficient eucharistic life would strike at the heart of a fundamental element of the charism and of Salesian pedagogy; called as we all are “to be educators to the faith at every opportunity [...] We walk side by side with the young so as to lead them to the risen Christ” (C. 34).

We know very well that for Don Bosco “what was attractive and desirable about the Eucharist is the fact that [...] it is where it is possible to discover the radical nature of the faith and of charity, the taste for heavenly things, and consequently, the height of Christian perfection”. Jesus, especially Jesus in the eucharistic, “dominates the spiritual life of Don Bosco and of the place in which he is at the centre [...] It is this Jesus with whom Don Bosco himself converses in the daily visit he makes in the afternoon in church; the Jesus before whom he places his youngsters in prayer when he goes into the city to beg for them. Communing with him in his old age, when he is no longer able to keep full control of himself, Don Bosco reveals his deep affection and his Masses are bathed in tears”.<sup>39</sup>

As an educator, Don Bosco made into a “pedagogical principle”<sup>40</sup> what was his conviction of faith and his personal experience: “frequent confession, frequent communion, daily Mass are the columns that ought to sustain an educational establishment,

<sup>38</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*. Encyclical Letter on the Eucharist and its relationship to the Church. 17 April 2003, 10.

<sup>39</sup> PIETRO STELLA, *Don Bosco nella Storia della Religiosità Cattolica*. Vol II: Mentalità religiosa e Spiritualità. Roma: LAS 1981<sup>2</sup>, p. 105. 107.

<sup>40</sup> PIETRO BRAIDO, *L'esperienza pedagogica di Don Bosco*. Roma: LAS 1988, p. 125.

from which one wishes to keep far away threats and the lash". And with educational wisdom he used to add: "never oblige the boys to frequent the Sacraments, but just encourage them and make it easy for them to profit from them".<sup>41</sup> These principles of eucharistic pedagogy were applied at Valdocco "to the letter" and involved "as the general approach" the whole educational system.<sup>42</sup>

The deficit of eucharistic life that, in my view, can be hidden by and grow within a regular community life and an apostolate at times frenetic, shows itself, basically, in the first place, in the inability to make the celebration of the Eucharist "the central act of every Salesian community; it is a daily festive celebration" (C. 88) and, in the second place, in the lack of that "awe for the mystery of God",<sup>43</sup> that arises from the assiduous contemplation of his unlimited love revealed in Christ in the eucharist, whose presence "for us sons of Don Bosco [...] in our houses is a reason for frequent encounters" (C. 88). The mystery of the Eucharist, however, "*does not allow for reduction or exploitation*; it must be experienced and lived in its integrity, both in its celebration and in the intimate converse with Jesus which takes place after receiving communion or in a prayerful moment of Eucharistic adoration apart from Mass. These are times when the Church is firmly built up".<sup>44</sup>

To recognise the symptoms of the disease is not yet to identify its real cause. Personally I am convinced that the weaknesses that are to be found in our eucharistic practice are inherent, in a certain sense, in the very nature of the sacrament of the eucharist, but they increase and remain in the depth of our heart.

<sup>41</sup> PIETRO BRAIDO (ed.), *Don Bosco educatore. Scritti e testimonianze*. Roma: LAS 1997<sup>3</sup>, p. 262.

<sup>42</sup> PIETRO BRAIDO, *Prevenire non reprimere. Il sistema educativo di don Bosco*. Roma: LAS 1999, p. 259.

<sup>43</sup> BENEDICT XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis*. Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation. 22 February 2007, 41.

<sup>44</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*. Encyclical Letter on the Eucharist and its relationship to the Church. 17 April 2003, 61.

“The Church’s ability to “make” the Eucharist is completely rooted in Christ’s self-gift to her [...]. We too, at every celebration of the Eucharist, confess the primacy of Christ’s gift [...]. For all eternity he remains the one who loves us first”.<sup>45</sup> This “primacy”, not only chronological but also ontological”, of the love of God disturbs us. The Eucharist is a mystery because in it is revealed so much love (cf. *Jn* 15,13), a love so divine that, going far beyond our capabilities overwhelms us and leaves us astonished. Even though we are not always aware of it, usually we find it difficult to accept the gift of the Eucharist, the love of God manifested in the gift of the body of Christ (cf. *Jn* 3,16), which exceeds our capacity and challenges our freedom; God is always greater than our heart and reaches those places beyond our wildest desires.

And precisely because they consider such a desire to give oneself to God not possible, not reasonable, beyond measure, some people find plenty of excuses for not receiving him in the sacramental celebration and fail to contemplate him in the silence of adoration. A love so profound frightens us revealing the radical poverty of our being: the deep need to love does not leave us the time nor the energy to let ourselves be loved. And so we prefer to be busy, hiding ourselves behind doing so much for others and giving them so much of ourselves,<sup>46</sup> and we deprive ourselves of the wonder of knowing that we are so much loved by God. Becoming aware of it would oblige us to feel that we are and want to be always indebted to God, from whose love, adored in contemplation and received in eucharistic communion, we would never be free.

<sup>45</sup> BENEDICT XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis*. Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation. 22 February 2007, 14.

<sup>46</sup> “The essential contribution that the Church expects from consecrated persons is much more in the order of being than of doing” (BENEDICT XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis*. Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation. 22 February 2007 2005, 81).

## 2. RECALLING THE EXPERIENCE OF THE DISCIPLES

We shouldn't be surprised. This incapacity is not new; indeed, it is commonly found in those who follow Jesus closely. The one who experiences it – not the one who accepts it! – shows that he is a real disciple, since only the one who received Christ's body and blood, as a gift that is unexpected, undeserved and incomprehensible is aware of it. Who has ever said that receiving Christ, bread of life, is something of no significance, that we can take for granted that does not require preparation, that does not have consequences? In no way! This is not the testimony of the New Testament.

### 2.1 The first defection of the disciples (Jn 6,66-71)<sup>47</sup>

The fourth gospel reminds us about it. When Jesus in the synagogue at Cafarnaum identified himself as the bread from heaven and offered his flesh as real food and his blood as real drink (cf. *Jn* 6,55-59), "many of his disciples", for the first time publicly showed their inability to "listen to this hard saying" (*Jn* 6,60).

Let us not forget that in John's gospel, the disciples begin to follow a Jesus who was passing by, alerted by the Baptist and curious about where he lived (*Jn* 1,35-38); they were not called personally by Jesus (cf. *Mk* 1,16-20), they were the ones who wanted to stay with him (*Jn* 1,39). They begin to believe in him only when, as the wine runs out at a wedding at Cana in Galilee, Jesus intervenes and provides it for the guests in abundance (*Jn* 2,1-11). Nevertheless, that faith, born at a banquet, dies when another new and stupendous feast is announced, in which Jesus would no longer be master of the house or table companion but the food and drink at the table. Jesus reveals himself not so much as someone who provides the food to eat but rather as the one who gives himself to be eaten (*Jn* 6,55-56).

<sup>47</sup> For these reflections I am basing myself on JUAN J. BARTOLOMÉ, *Cuarto evangelio. Cartas de Juan*. Introducción y comentario. Madrid: CCS 2002, p. 226-227.



Jesus makes this surprising promise after having fed a huge crowd, "about five thousand men" (*Jn* 6,10), presenting himself the following day, as "the bread of life" (*Jn* 6,35), precisely because, whoever eats this bread will live for ever (*Jn* 6,58). To the unbelief of the people is added the scandal of the disciples, many of whom left him.<sup>48</sup> For the first time, unfortunately not the last, Jesus, the bread of heaven, provoked dissent among his own and the abandonment by many: the fidelity of his followers was put to the test when Jesus told them of the gift of his body as real food and his blood as real drink. The disciples who had seen Jesus multiply the bread (*Jn* 6,9.13) and walk on the sea (*Jn* 6,19), could not understand that one achieves eternal life by eating his flesh. And so, while Jesus told them of his giving of himself, the disciples murmured at it (*Jn* 6,61) and many drew back (*Jn* 6,66).

By chance? Absolutely not! This statement (*Jn* 6,60a), the offering of himself, was – and remains – a real obstacle, a stumbling block, for his closest associates. For the disciple it will always be easier to follow Jesus than to eat him; it will be more palatable to accompany him than to have him as food. It wasn't sufficient then, and it never will be, for the disciple to follow the Master; he must feed on him, on his word and on his body. That Jesus should offer his body as real nourishment for life is hard, unacceptable (*Jn* 6, 51-58), so as to put to the test our ability to listen.

The evangelist affirms that Jesus knew from the beginning the inability to believe on the part of *many of his disciples* (*Jn* 6,60.66). The personal disappointment of the disciple, shared by many, first by leaving him and then in betrayal, is explained by Jesus theologically. The enigma of the infidelity of the disciple is given a paradoxical reply: it is not the one who wants to who

<sup>48</sup> The lack of understanding on the part of the people (*Jn* 6,41-45) and of the disciples (*Jn* 6,60) becomes a cause of protest and scandal. This is understandable: Jesus repeats three times that he has to be *eaten* (*Jn* 6,54.56.58) and *his blood drunk* (*Jn* 6,53.54.55), this last declaration especially detestable to the Jews- blood is life that only God can dispose of (cf. Gen 9,4; Lev 3,17; 17,10-16; Dt 12,16.23-25).

believes, but the one to whom the gift to believe is given; faith and fidelity are the effects of the grace of God (*Jn* 6,64-65). It is even more shocking: merely spending time with Jesus, living with him is not enough; in fact, the evangelist tells us that among those who stay with Jesus there is also the traitor. And Jesus knew it (*Jn* 6,64; cf. 13,27): one who had not been given to him by the Father (*Jn* 6,65), he will hand him over (*Jn* 6,70-71). The personal choice by Jesus is still not a guarantee against defection.

But where defection has actually happened, fidelity can be restored. The disciples will be incapable of understanding and of remaining faithful if they continue to rely on their own senses, on superficial appearances; those on the other hand will believe to whom "it is granted by the Father" (*Jn* 6,65): those who have not been led to him by God will not feel themselves attracted by Jesus, nor become his table companions. Welcoming Jesus as bread that has been given is a gift of the Father; only the believer who knows that he is a gift of God to Christ will be able to eat the body of Christ and drink his blood without putting his life at risk.

The grace of fidelity was given to a few, the twelve,<sup>49</sup> who remain. Their spokesman, Simon Peter, acknowledges that they do not know where else to go; they remain because – and this is the genuine motive for faith – only Jesus has the words of life, only He promises life without end (*Jn* 6,68). "*We have believed and have come to know* (*Jn* 6,69), he says in the name of all; because knowing Jesus goes hand in hand with believing in him: one knows in believing, entrusting oneself to him; and only the one who trusts, remains faithful. Fidelity does not come from one's own good will, nor from the deepest desires; it comes from the will of God, who has loved us, always, first. Fidelity becomes possible only if it is received as a grace.

<sup>49</sup> It is the first time the evangelist refers to the Twelve (*Jn* 6,67.70.71; 20,24), whose selection he does not mention nor does he mention their names (cf. *Mk* 3,13-19; *Mt* 10,1-4; *Lk* 6,12-16).

## 2.2 The abandonment by the Twelve (*Mk 14,17-31*)<sup>50</sup>

A promise to be faithful is not the same thing as proven fidelity. At Cafarnaum the Twelve chose to stay with Jesus; but even though warned during the last supper, at Gethsemani “they all forsook him and fled” (*Mk 14,50*). They made the decision to stay with the one who offered himself to them as the bread of life; but when Jesus kept his promise (*Mk 14,22-25*), he had to foretell the betrayal by one of them (*Mk 14,17-21*), denial by a second (*Mk 14,29-30*) and the scandal and the flight of all the others (*Mk 14,26-27*).

It is really tragic, and in this all the four gospels are in agreement, that the infidelity of the disciples, its anticipation (*Mk 14, 17-21; Mt 26,20-25; Lk 22,14.21-23; Jn 13,21-30*) and its fulfilment (*Mk 14,26-42; Mt 26,30-46; Lk 22,33-34.40-46; Jn 13,37-38*), have as the setting a meal with Jesus, the last supper (*Mk 14,22-25; Mt 26,26-29; Lk 22,15-20*), when Jesus keeps his promise to give himself as bread and wine (*Mk 14,22.24*). The announcement of the betrayal in the same setting, in addition to uniting the death of Jesus and the Eucharist, the gift of life and the bread of life, means that the giving of himself on the cross is the last, and the most difficult, of the stumbling blocks that the disciples have to cope with. During the last supper, the first Eucharist, darkness was still in the heart of the disciples: only the hour of the cross will dissipate the night (*Jn 13,1.27*).

### 2.2.1 *Following Jesus does not ensure that we don't betray him*

Mark, the first chronicler of the passion and death of Jesus, narrates the betrayal of Judas in three separate scenes in the course of the account of Jesus' last day, before his death (*Mk 14,1-72*). With surprising objectivity, the narrator shows the determination of Judas to hand over Jesus to the authorities and the

<sup>50</sup> Cf. JUAN J. BARTOLOMÉ, *Jesús de Nazaret, formador de discípulos*. Motivo, meta y metodología de su pedagogía en el evangelio de Marcos. Madrid: CCS 2007, p. 219-263.

resolute commitment of Jesus to hand himself over. The plan is hatched by "Judas Iscariot, one of the Twelve", who approaches the High Priests "in order to betray Jesus to them ... and he sought an opportunity to betray him" (*Mk* 14,10). Jesus, "as they were at table eating" (*Mk* 14,18), before instituting the Eucharist (*Mk* 14,22-25), discloses the betrayal approaching and the traitor. Then in Gethsemane, in the depth of the night, Judas came with "a crowd with swords and clubs" and paradoxically betrays Jesus with a kiss, as though he were his friend (*Mk* 14,43-49).

The decision taken by Judas to betray Jesus does not prevent him taking his place at table with Jesus, nor being beside him as a table companion (*Mk* 14,18) and having dipped bread in the same dish (*Mt* 14,20), doesn't deter him from his intention (*Mk* 14,45-46). It is therefore astonishing that while Judas is preparing to betray Jesus, Jesus gives himself to his own in the bread broken and the wine poured out. If his presence at the first celebration of the eucharistic supper did not save Judas from the crime of betraying his Master, the presence of the traitor did not prevent Jesus from giving himself for all. And this means that, today as yesterday, it is possible to take part in the Eucharist and at the same time nurture in one's heart disloyalty and bad faith. Judas too had left everything one day to be with Jesus (cf. *Mk* 3,13); but afterwards he ended up leaving him in the hands of enemies for money (*Mk* 14,11).

But perhaps worse still, the betrayal on the part of one is the basis of the insecurity of all: the other disciples having got over their initial surprise are so uncertain of their fidelity as to ask Jesus one after the other if he were the traitor mentioned: "Is it I?" (*Mk* 14,19). At the last supper all receive the bread that is his body and the wine that is the blood of the new covenant (*Mk* 14, 22-23); one of them, however, continues to plan to betray Jesus and the others are not sure about remaining faithful to him.

This passage for St Mark's gospel is really disturbing, and not only because it tells us what happened between Jesus and his

friends, but above all because it is also relevant today. Being chosen personally as a companion of Jesus (*Mk* 3,13), becoming his companion at table where Jesus serves bread that is his body is no guarantee of fidelity. The Twelve, those who had remained with Jesus because he had the words of life (*Jn* 6,68), all collapse in that night of the last supper. We may ask ourselves: how can it happen that being with him was not sufficient to stay with him? How can it happen that eating with him was not enough for them to remain faithful?

### *2.2.2 Promising Jesus a great deal does not prevent us from denying him*

Even a promise expressed in a love that is enthusiastic, genuine but immature is not sufficient.. In fact, immediately after having finished eating, with the Eucharist already instituted, while walking towards the Mount of Olives, Jesus announces that Peter will betray him three times (*Mk* 14,26-31); Peter, however, denies it vehemently, and “they all said the same” (*Mk* 14,31). On the one hand Jesus wants to forewarn them, but on the other they persist in declaring their readiness even to die with the Master. The most dramatic thing is that the one who has promised the most, will deny him the most.

Peter, not speaking here as the spokesman of the Twelve, reaffirms his personal attachment to Jesus: “even though all..., I will not” (*Mk* 14,29). Confident in himself, he believes that he can promise to be faithful, changing his certainty into rashness; he loves his Lord so much as not to want to hear and to accept his predictions: “if I must die with you I will not deny you” (*Mk*14,31). He does not oppose the death that Jesus had already announced (*Mk* 8,32), rather, he says that he is ready to die beside him. It would be difficult to think of a greater love (cf. *Jn* 15,13) and fidelity; but it is precisely in this way that the distance that separates them is made clear. Jesus knows that Peter will deny him several times; Peter repeatedly refuses to accept this warning. The disciple who promises fidelity needs to remember Peter:



fidelity is the result not of promises but of grace, since it is the proof of a love to the bitter end.

With masterly skill, Mark contrasts the denials of Peter in the courtyard with the confession of Jesus before the Sanhedrin: in contrast with Jesus, who puts his own life at risk, Peter denies everything to save it (*Mk* 14,53-72). The one disciple who still followed Jesus was unable to face the questions of some servants. Peter, the one who denied that he would abandon Jesus, ends up denying that he was a follower of his. Peter personifies those disciples who deny their Lord so as not to deny themselves (cf. *Mk* 8,34): an attitude anything but eucharistic!

### *2.2.3 The covenant broken almost as soon as it was made needs to be remembered*

The body of Jesus given and his blood poured out seal the covenant and announce the kingdom of God (*Mk* 14,24-25). The covenant established at the supper is not limited to those who have just ratified it. The sacrifice of Jesus is for many (*Mk* 14,24; *Mt* 26,28). The Twelve were the first but they won't be the only ones.

In narrating the institution of the Eucharist, the gospel tradition for our benefit did not want to keep silent about the fact that all those who ate and drank at table with Jesus at the last supper, immediately afterwards left him (*Mk* 14,27.50). Being worthy to be the first to receive the body and blood of their Lord did not make them so very faithful.

The journey of Jesus to the cross begins not when his enemies capture him but when the disciples abandon him. The closeness of the cross disclosed the weakness of the disciples and the poverty of their motives in following Jesus. No one can follow Jesus and give their life for him if Jesus has not given his for them. The Twelve who ate with Jesus didn't know this when he gave himself to them in the bread and the wine; but they will be able to remember, when Jesus is dead and risen, that giving their life for Him is the task of whoever has received him at the table of the eucharist.

This precisely, is the “memorial” to be done (1 Cor 11,24), the remembrance of Jesus to be re-lived continuously until he comes again (1 Cor 11,26). And carrying out this memorial is not the question of a free choice; it was a precise command of Jesus, given, before handing himself over, to those who were eating with him. Although Jesus knew his disciples would not remain faithful, nevertheless he obliged them keep the memorial of him and his gesture. Quite curious the way Jesus behaves! He does not wait for the disciples to remain faithful in order to command them to carry out this memorial of him. But this too is grace: it is not necessary to be perfect in order to make the Eucharist, it is enough to feel ourselves loved by Jesus to the end.

### **2.3 The gesture in the hour of Jesus: loving even to the end (Jn 13,1-20)<sup>51</sup>**

Again it is the fourth gospel that offers us a reply. The fact, strange and not yet satisfactorily explained, is well known that John in his account of Jesus’ passion has not passed on the words of institution at the supper and has preferred to concentrate on the implementation of the hour of Jesus and his love to the end (Jn 13,1) “giving pre-eminence to the relationship to Jesus Christ of the individual believer”,<sup>52</sup> a relationship that is exemplified in the gesture carried out by the Master of washing the feet of his disciples “during supper” (Jn 13,2). In this way the evangelist reveals “the meaning of the institution of the Holy Eucharist [...] Jesus kneels down to wash the feet of his disciples as a sign of his love that goes to the very end. This prophetic gesture anticipates the stripping of himself even to death on the cross”.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>51</sup> Cf. JUAN J. BARTOLOMÉ, *Cuarto evangelio. Cartas de Juan*. Introducción y comentario. Madrid: CCS, 2002, 283-289.

<sup>52</sup> XAVIER LÉON-DUFOUR, *Condividere il pane eucaristico secondo il Nuovo Testamento*. Torino, Elledici 2005, p. 234.

<sup>53</sup> BENEDICT XVI, *Message to the XI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops*. “Eucaristia: Pane vivo per la pace del mondo”. 22 October 2005, 18.

Jesus' action, unexpected and surprising,<sup>54</sup> only he could explain (*Jn* 13,6-20); and he does so, even before the washing of the feet, in conversation with Peter (*Jn* 13,6-11) and then as the Master sitting once more at table, teaching all the disciples (*Jn* 13,12-20). According to Jesus, the gesture symbolises the total giving of himself, absolute love for his own,<sup>55</sup> since the hour had come for him to depart from this world to the Father (*Jn* 13,1). Love for his own brings his life to its end, since he hands it over; the life given proves his love without reserve. The washing of the feet is nothing less than the image and sign of this highest love (*Jn* 13,5). And in fact, even before it is described (*Jn* 13,4-5), the action of Jesus has already been defined as a practical expression of love (*Jn* 13,1), of total fidelity (cf. *Jn* 10,17-18).

With a humble act of service to his own, Jesus establishes the community of the disciples:<sup>56</sup> whoever wishes *to have part* in him must allow himself to be served as Lord by his Lord (*Jn* 13,9.14). The "communion with Christ", that is brought about by the blessing of the cup and the breaking of the bread (*1 Cor* 10,16), is now presented as "having part" in him (*Jn* 13,8); the price to pay, in fact, is allowing oneself to be served by the Master and Lord himself. Peter's objections are quite reasonable (*Jn* 13,8), even though he continues not to understand and to think in human fashion (*Jn* 13,7; cf. *Jn* 7,24; 8,15). He tries to refuse an inappropriate gesture, one that is humiliating for his Lord (*Jn* 13,6), and that goes against the image, and the wishes he has/nourishes for him (cf. *Mt* 16,22). But the one who does not allow himself to be served in this extreme way – Jesus declares – runs the risk of not sharing

<sup>54</sup> Washing the feet was the task of slaves (*1 Sam* 25,41), so contemptible that a Jewish slave could not be forced to do it (*Lev* 25,39); it could certainly be a sign of respect for a father or devotion for a master (*Bill* I 707; II 557). Washing the feet of one's table companions was a gesture as unusual as Jesus serving at supper (*Jn* 13,2.5).

<sup>55</sup> The expression 'loving to the end', can be understood in terms of *time* until the last moment of life, or of *quality*, to the extreme, to perfection. In either case, the end is the climax of his life and of his love; in retrospect, loving is synonymous with the way Jesus acted and the explanation for his death (*Jn* 13,34; 15,9; 17 23; 19,28.30).

<sup>56</sup> XAVIER LÉON-DUFOUR, *Lectura del evangelio de Juan*. Vol. III: Juan 13-17. Salamanca: Sígueme, 1995, 50.

his lot (*Jn* 13,8). The disciple acquires his Lord's inheritance only if he allows himself to be served by him.

That Jesus is serious in speaking to Peter becomes clear from what he says in addition: it is possible to be washed but not cleaned (*Jn* 13,10; cf. *1 Cor* 11,26); it is possible to eat with Jesus and lift the heel against him (*Jn* 13,18). Purification is not automatic, it has to be accepted, even if it comes about through an humiliating washing of the feet. The one who does not allow himself to be cleansed by the servant Jesus, who does not accept him as he is, as he wants to become for us (*Jn* 13,20), does not deserve to stay with him and will be excluded from the community of believers (*Jn* 13,27-30). The traitor remains unclean, because unbelieving, and is unbelieving because he does not accept Jesus as a gift (*Jn* 13,11; 6,64.70.71). The one who does not allow himself to be served by Jesus does not remain in the community; indeed, he continued to eat morsels from Jesus' hand, but Satan was his nourishment (*Jn* 13,26-27a; cf. *Lk* 22,3)! Only the one who allows Christ to give himself in the bread of the eucharist, only the one who allows himself to be served by his Lord, will be his companion, not only at table but for the whole of his life. It is not by chance that only after Judas has gone out from the upper room does Jesus 'feel glorified' (*Jn* 13,31) and commands his own to love one another as he has loved them (*Jn* 13,34-35). Jesus gave the commandment of love to those who allowed themselves to be loved to the end.

"When he had washed their feet, and taken his garments" (*Jn* 13,12a), Jesus sits down, resuming his authority, and begins to teach the disciples. What he had done was not to be something exceptional; it is the a pattern of conduct, a norm of behaviour among them (*Jn* 13,12b-14). Jesus does not want it to remain a beautiful memory, he requires that it become the law of Christian living. The gesture is more than a sign, it is a demonstration of the new way of living in common the fact of being disciples of Jesus: the one who commands is to serve everyone (*Jn* 13,15; *1 Jn* 3,16).

The one who knows that he is a servant cannot dream of becoming a master; the one who knows that he has been sent, cannot avoid allowing himself to be sent; serving each other is not a free option, it is the compulsory norm of behaviour for those sent by Christ (*Jn* 13,16). The carrying out of fraternal service is, in addition, the joy of the Christian, his blessing (*Jn* 13,17). It is worth noting that the first of John's beatitudes (cf. *Jn* 20,29) is linked to a way of *doing as* Jesus does. The single gesture needs to become an habitual way of acting; precisely because it is not an example to be imitated, but a gift to be accepted. The *way* Jesus acts is the basis of the command: the person of Jesus, his gesture, is the norm to be followed in interpersonal relationships in the community. A community that comes into being in an act of service by Jesus cannot continue to live without repeating this service in itself.<sup>57</sup>

And so, the "do this in remembrance of me" (*Lk* 22,19; *1 Cor* 11,24), the eucharistic anamnesis the Church must carry out, becomes in John a "you also should do as I have done" *Jn* 13,14-15). The 'eucharistic' gesture to be repeated by the Christian communities will always be the total giving of one's life to the end, recalled both in the breaking of the bread and in the service of the brethren. Why, then, – I would dare to ask – has the washing of the feet not managed to become a eucharistic memorial of the Lord Jesus until he comes? Service to the brethren is also an effective way of commemorating Christ. Living in the service of the brothers ought to constitute the other practical way of keeping the memory of the eucharistic Christ.

### 3. 'BECOMING EUCHARIST' TODAY

*Starting afresh from Christ*, the spiritual programme for the Church of the Third Millennium,<sup>58</sup> ought to be at "the centre of

<sup>57</sup> Cf. RUDOLF BULTMANN, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes*. Gottinga, 1968<sup>10</sup>, 365.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*. Apostolic Letter at the close of the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000. 6 January 2001, 29.

every personal and community project”, John Paul II reminded religious, and added: “Meet him, dear friends, and contemplate him in a most special way in the *Eucharist*, celebrated and adored each day as the source and summit of life and apostolic action”.<sup>59</sup> There is no shortage of reasons. In addition to “being ever more united to Christ”, starting afresh from Christ “means proclaiming that consecrated life is [...] “*a living memorial of Jesus’ way of living and acting*””.<sup>60</sup>

And so I repeat it, there is no other memorial of Christ so effective as that of the eucharist: it is the only one to make the remembered Christ present. It is true, “in the celebration of the eucharist and in adoration” we consecrated persons, find “strength for the radical following of Christ”. But not only this; the mystery of the Eucharist, “the daily viaticum and source of the spiritual life for the individual and for the Institute”,<sup>61</sup> “draws us into Jesus’ act of self-oblation. More than just statically receiving the incarnate *Logos*, we enter into the very dynamic of his self-giving”.<sup>62</sup> Making the eucharist reminds us “to live Christ’s Paschal Mystery, uniting ourselves to him by offering our own lives”; we are thus invited to unite ourselves with him, with the giving of one’s own life making a living memorial of Christ. “In fact, by sharing in the sacrifice of the Cross, the Christian partakes of Christ’s self-giving love and is equipped and committed to live this same charity in all his thoughts and deeds”.<sup>63</sup> Don Bosco expressed it with these words so dear to us: «*For you. I study, work, make myself holy*». Finally, “‘worship’ itself, eucharistic communion, includes the reality both of being loved and of loving others in turn. A Eucharist which does not

<sup>59</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *Homily* on the V Day of Religious Life. 2 February 2001, 4.

<sup>60</sup> CIVCSVA, *Starting afresh from Christ*. A renewed commitment to Consecrated Life in the Third Millennium. Instruction. 19 May 2002, 21.22.

<sup>61</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *Vita Consecrata*. Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation. 25 March 1996, 95.

<sup>62</sup> BENEDICT XVI, *Deus Caritas est*. Encyclical Letter on Christian love. 25 December 2005, 13.

<sup>63</sup> BENEDICT XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis*. Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation. 22 February 2007, 82.

pass over into the concrete practice of love is intrinsically fragmented”.<sup>64</sup>

“«Becoming eucharist», that is to say the gift of love for others”,<sup>65</sup> is, precisely, “the essential contribution that the Church expects”<sup>66</sup> from us. It will not be possible to make this contribution to the Church, if we don’t live by making the eucharist and making ourselves eucharist; the Eucharist in fact, “is at the root of every form of holiness [...]. How many saints have advanced along the way of perfection thanks to their eucharistic devotion!”,<sup>67</sup> among these, we know well was also Don Bosco.

To offer you more encouragement to start afresh from Christ in the Eucharist on the journey towards our holiness, “our principal task”,<sup>68</sup> “the most precious gift we can offer the young” (C. 25), allow me a further reflection on the essential elements of consecrated life and a eucharistic way of living.

Consecrated life encounters its identity when it reflects in what it does the *living memorial of Jesus’ way of living and acting*. If it is a characteristic of the consecrated person to live the evangelical values in the same way that Jesus lived them, it is good to point out that this Jesus, dead and risen, we meet alive and present in the Eucharist: therefore “by its very nature the Eucharist is at the centre of the consecrated life, both for individuals and for communities”.<sup>69</sup> Further, we can say that consecrated life has a form of being that is fully eucharistic, if it wishes to remain consistent with itself. In the Eucharist, in fact, consecrated persons come into

<sup>64</sup> BENEDICT XVI, *Ibidem*.

<sup>65</sup> Card. JOSÉ SARAIVA MARTINS, “Eucaristia: ‘Sacramentum sanctitatis’: *L’Osservatore Romano*. 9 May 2007, 5.

<sup>66</sup> BENEDICT XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis*. Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation. 22 February 2007, 81.

<sup>67</sup> BENEDICT XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis*. Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation. 22 February 2007, 94.

<sup>68</sup> Cf. JOHN PAUL II, “Discorso ai partecipanti al Capitolo Generale”. CG25, 170: *ACG* 378 (2002) p. 138.

<sup>69</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *Vita Consecrata*. Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation. 25 March 1996, 95.

contact with their ideal model and the perfect fulfilment of the fundamental demands of their life.

### 3.1 Consecrated life, “eucharistic life”

“In this framework” (that of eucharistic spirituality and of daily life) – and I quote one of the proposals, the 39th of the recent Synod on the Eucharist – “is seen in a particularly vivid way “the prophetic witness of consecrated men and women, who find in the celebration of the Eucharist and in eucharistic adoration the strength necessary for the radical following of Christ, obedient, poor and chaste. Consecrated life finds here the source of contemplation, light for apostolic and missionary activity, the fundamental reason for its commitment to the poor and the marginalised and the pledge of the reality of the Kingdom”.

This reference by the Synod to the Eucharist is not directed primarily to the Sacrament in itself, nor does it relate only to its liturgical celebration, but to the fact that in them we find, alive and present, Jesus Christ, precisely in his existence in the Paschal Mystery. In this sense one can perfectly understand the affirmation of John Paul II that the Eucharist of Christ “is not one gift, however precious among others, *but the gift par excellence*, for it is the gift of himself”.<sup>70</sup>

Following the suggestion of the Synod, I therefore invite you to contemplate the fundamental element of the consecrated life in a eucharistic key, through an image, that is at the same time both simple and significant: the heart. The profession of the evangelical counsels, as the heart of the consecrated life, beats according to the twofold movements of fraternity (*sistole*) and mission (*diastole*), both of them lived according to the different charisms. It seems to me there is, in fact, a very profound and significant similarity between the great dimensions of the Eucharist, as “the

<sup>70</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*. Encyclical Letter on the Eucharist and its relationship to the Church. 17 April 2003, 11.



heart of the Church's life",<sup>71</sup> and this 'heart' of the consecrated life that is constituted by the profession of the evangelical counsels. As John Paul II says, "The Mass is at the same time, and inseparably, the sacrificial *memorial* in which the *sacrifice* of the Cross is perpetuated and the sacred banquet of communion with the Lord's body and blood".<sup>72</sup>

### 3.1.1 Consecrated life, "memorial" through obedience

"A living memorial of Jesus' way of living and acting", consecrated life "is a living tradition of the Saviour's life and message".<sup>73</sup>

The category of "memorial", as we well know, does not indicate a "repetition" of the event, nor is it limited simply to a "remembering it", but *makes it present and actual*. Our western way of thinking accepts this actualisation of an event, with difficulty even though it is fundamental to the understanding of the meaning of a feast in traditional cultures.<sup>74</sup>

To describe the *memorial* as the "actualisation of the event" can lend itself to a certain "mythical" understanding, as though the history of salvation was not made up of unique and unrepeatable events, including the death of the Lord (cf. *Heb* 7,27; 9,12; 10,10). It would be preferable to speak, rather than of an "event that takes place", of a living real presence of the protagonist of the event, Jesus Christ, dead and risen. Consecrated life can only be a *memorial* of Jesus Christ if it continues to make present, at all times and in all places, the same *form of life*. It is this precisely that constitutes the nucleus of consecrated obedience and that Don Bosco used to express with his well-known phrase; "I am always a priest...".

<sup>71</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *Vita Consecrata*. Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation. 25 March 1996, 95.

<sup>72</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*. Encyclical Letter on the Eucharist and its relationship to the Church. 17 April 2003, 12. The Pope quotes a text from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1382.

<sup>73</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *Vita Consecrata*. Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation. 25 March 1996, 22.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. MIRCEA ELIADE, *Lo Sagrado y lo Profano*, Madrid, Paidós 1998, 53-85.

A close reading of the Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consecrata* shows that the fulcrum and the centre of the evangelical counsels is to be found in obedience: this simply reflects the witness of biblical tradition. In the OT we find obedience as the principal expression of faith: the great believers, consequently, are the great *obedient ones*. On the threshold of the NT we meet Mary, the One who believed and totally accepted to collaborate with God in his plan of salvation. And above all, the whole life of Jesus, from his incarnation (cf. *Heb* 10,5.7; *Jn* 6,38), his mission (cf. *Mk* 1,38; *Lk* 4,43, *Jn* 4,34), and especially, his passion (cf. *Mk* 14,36; *Jn* 12, 27-28; *Heb* 5,7-9) is a continuous path of perfect obedience.<sup>75</sup>

Further, according to *Vita Consecrata*, both virginity and poverty are, in a certain sense, the consequence of obedience: “Jesus is *the exemplar of obedience*, (...).In this attitude of submissiveness to the Father, Christ lives his life as a virgin, even while affirming and defending the dignity and sanctity of married life. He thus reveals *the sublime excellence and mysterious spiritual fruitfulness of virginity*. His full acceptance of the Father’s plan is also seen in his detachment from earthly goods (...).*The depth of his poverty* is revealed in the perfect offering of all that is his to the Father”.<sup>76</sup>

The memorial element is not simply reduced to the liturgical celebration in which the words of Jesus are repeated “This is my body offered in sacrifice for you” and therefore, it does not consist in sacramentally repeating an event that has happened once and for all, but in making it present in the Eucharist (“*making the eucharist*”) and in becoming a living memorial of his way of being and acting (“*making oneself eucharist*”). This prolongation of Christ’s total gift of himself in the life of each one of the consecrated comes about through the vow of obedience. The vow of obedience is the vow that best expressed this total belonging to God,

<sup>75</sup> Cf. JUAN J. BARTOLOMÉ, “La obediencia de Cristo, filiación probada”: in *Vida Religiosa* 94 (2003) p. 38-45, showed how obedience to the Father is an appropriate gospel category to explain the whole personal mystery of Christ and the carrying out of his work.

<sup>76</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *Vita Consecrata*. Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation. 25 March 1996, 22.

this total giving of oneself to God to the point of having nothing else to do but to identify oneself with the will of the Father. And so eucharistic spirituality is not only celebrating the Eucharist in a dignified manner with devotion. It should be expressed in a life of obedience, where indeed one commemorates Christ and we become his living memorial.

### 3.1.2 Consecrated life, “sacrifice” through chastity

The second great dimension of the Eucharist is the *sacrifice*. Now isn’t the time to enter into the discussion about whether the post-conciliar reform obscured or, actually marginalised the sacrificial character of the eucharistic celebration.<sup>77</sup> The biblical witnesses both in the synoptic and in the Pauline tradition are in agreement in attesting that

- Jesus established a parallel between the bread broken and his own body (*Mk* 14,22; *Mt* 26,26; *Lk* 22,19; *1 Cor* 11,24);
- Jesus made a comparison between the wine (which was to be drunk during the paschal supper) and his blood, adding that through his blood the New Covenant would come into being (*Mk* 14,24; *Mt* 26,28; *Lk* 22,20; *1 Cor* 11,25).
- The presence of the expression *for* in five texts directs all the attention on “for whom” the body is being given and the blood being poured out (*Mk* 14,24; *Mt* 26,28; *Lk* 22,20).<sup>78</sup>

Historical thinking on the sacrificial meaning of the Eucharist – derived, obviously from the Paschal Mystery – gives us some valuable teaching: it is not suffering but love at the centre of the redemption as the work of the Father through Christ, in the Spirit: Jesus can give his life as the highest expression of his own love, as he greatest gift! “Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (*Jn* 15,13).

<sup>77</sup> A programme that had its roots in the theological history of protestantism according to P. STUHLMACHER, *Jesús de Nazaret – Cristo de la Fe*. Salamanca, Sígueme 1996, 90.

<sup>78</sup> Cf. JOACHIM JEREMIAS, *Abba. El Mensaje Central del Nuevo Testamento*, Salamanca, Sígueme 1993<sup>1</sup>, 270.

It is usual to say that the Eucharist is the “memorial” of the death and resurrection of the Lord, but that is not exact if it is a reference to the *first* Eucharist, the Last Supper. In fact it was not only *anámnesis*, memorial, but *prolepsis*, anticipation: it preceded, giving full meaning to that which would happen on Golgotha. “Jesus gave this act of oblation an enduring presence through his institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper. He anticipated his death and resurrection by giving his disciples, in the bread and wine, his very self, his body and blood as the new manna”.<sup>79</sup>

Without the celebration of the Last Supper, we would not have had the strongest and most direct proof of the meaning that Jesus wished to give to his own death. In other words: the “unbloody sacrifice” (for love) *precedes* the “bloody sacrifice” (the death of Jesus on the cross). This fundamental aspect of the Eucharist as *sacrifice* and as the supreme expression of the love of Jesus for us, is closely linked to *consecrated chastity*.

The human being is called to fulfil himself in love and this, in the form of self-giving, implies the total giving of the body. The usual form this self-giving takes is in the “language” of sex; in this the body is the protagonist, although there is always the hidden danger that this does not imply the total giving of the person, and in this case, it would become a lie, given that of its nature it is a self-giving that is exclusive and total.<sup>80</sup> Sexual self-donation, however, is not the only way of giving one’s body as an expression of love; in Jesus we find the *eucharistic self-giving* as the most profound expression of love, since here the body is the sign and the instrument of the donation of the person, the true protagonist of love, and in addition it is not limited in its extent: it is “for all”. Jesus does not live his love and the donation of himself in a “sexual key”, he lives it in a *eucharistic key*.

<sup>79</sup> BENEDICT XVI, *Deus Caritas est*. Encyclical Letter on Christian love. 25 December 2005, 13.

<sup>80</sup> Cf. BENEDICT XVI, *Deus Caritas est*. Encyclical Letter on Christian love. 25 December 2005, 6.

Thus, for us consecrated persons, the special way in which we are living to the full our love and the consequent self-giving implies that: we abstain from giving our body and our affections to a single person, so as to give ourselves totally to everyone. Without doubt, here too one can run a parallel risk to that of sexual giving: there it is possible to give one's body without giving oneself; here it is possible for there to be a false giving of oneself, without that total giving of one's body, without that "using up and wearing out" also physically, that is the genuine and essential expression of a love lived in a eucharistic key.

In this way, therefore, the twofold dimension of consecrated chastity can be found, the 'sistole' of *life in fraternity* and the 'diastole' of the *total giving* in carrying out the mission. "In the Eucharist, consecrated virginity finds inspiration and nourishment for its complete dedication to Christ";<sup>81</sup> the Eucharist is also, the fount and summit of the life and mission of the Church, because "the love that we celebrate in the sacrament is not something we can keep to ourselves. By its very nature it demands to be shared with all".<sup>82</sup> In both directions, as an expression of a *love of agape*, that does not ignore the presence of *eros*, but that takes it up in such a way that it is converted into a love that is perceptible, affectionate, and not only an object of faith since it is impossible for it to be seen.<sup>83</sup>

### 3.1.3 Consecrated life, "shared meal" through poverty

Finally we consider consecrated life from the point of view of the Eucharist as *convivio*. From the anthropological point

<sup>81</sup> BENEDICT XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis*. Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation. 22 February 2007, 81.

<sup>82</sup> BENEDICT XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis*. Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation. 22 February 2007, 84.

<sup>83</sup> On this particular issue the first encyclical of Pope Benedict XVI is especially valuable. I mention just two texts in relation to *eros* and *agape*: "The more the two, in their different aspects, find a proper unity in the one reality of love, the more the true nature of love in general is realized (...). Yet when the two dimensions are totally cut off from one another, the result is a caricature or at least an impoverished form of love". (BENEDICT XVI, *Deus Caritas est*. Encyclical Letter on Christian love. 25 December 2005, 7-8).

of view, it is one of the more attractive biblical themes: "eating together" constitutes for traditional cultures in all climes, together with "fraternity" one of the more intense and significant experiences of sharing life together: "table fellowship is life fellowship".<sup>84</sup>

One of the most characteristic features of Jesus' ministry was indeed to have made it a practice to eat together, in particular with the little ones, the poor, the marginalised and, above all with the "publicans and sinners" (*Lk* 5,29-30; 15,2). By admitting to table fellowship people who were religiously and morally outside the pale, Jesus indicated that God finds joy in offering salvation to sinners and granting them his forgiveness.<sup>85</sup>

Not only in what Jesus *did* do we find the meal as an expression of the saving closeness of God; it is also there in his *preaching*, especially in the parables as the particular symbol of the Kingdom (*Mt* 8,11; 22,1-14; *Lk* 12,35-57; 14,12-24; 15,23-32; 19,5-10). In these there is a fundamental point that is scarcely to be found in other attitudes of Jesus, and it is the absolutely gratuitous nature of God's invitation to the banquet. No one is worthy to take part in this; hence the best approach is that of the *child* (cf. *Mk* 10,15), who accepts with joy and gratitude what he is given because he *doesn't deserve it*; it is the attitude of the poor person, of the beggar, the down and out, of the one who is in the squares, on the streets because he has nowhere to live (cf. *Lk* 14,21; *Mt* 22,8-10). On the other hand, the one who sticks to the rigid norms of 'justice' will be angry, and will not even want to go into the festive banquet for the return of his brother (cf. *Lk* 15,25-32), *or he will have so many things to do, that in his pride he will refuse an invitation as gratuitous as it is inopportune* (cf. *Lk* 14,18-20).

<sup>84</sup> JOACHIM JEREMIAS, *Abba. El Mensaje Central del Nuevo Testamento*, Salamanca, Sígueme 1993<sup>4</sup>, 259-260.

<sup>85</sup> Cf. JUAN J. BARTOLOMÉ, *La Alegría del Padre*. Estudio exegético de *Lc* 15. Estella: Verbo Divino, 2000.

The dimension of the *shared meal* is reflected in religious life in its truest sense in the life of *poverty*, not as a natural lack of means nor voluntary deprivation, but as a *sharing* of what one is, of what one has, *as something totally gratuitous*; so much so that the first account of the institution of the Eucharist (1 Cor 11,17-34) has as *Sitz im Leben* a community situation in which the Supper of the Lord was celebrated without the sharing one's own goods with those who were in need; the Corinthians were far from the ideal of the community as portrayed in Luke, in which "all who believed were together and had all things in common [...]. And day by day attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes they partook of food with glad and generous hearts" (Act 2,44.46; cf. 4,32).

The poverty of the consecrated person is in no way a kind of rejection of material goods, nor does it suggest that the total deprival of everything is an ideal to be achieved, as it might be in some kinds of oriental religious thinking. The poor person, because he is a believer, accepts the gifts of God with simplicity and moderation, sharing in them as an expression of his love, in a twofold movement: internally of the fraternal community, in a total sharing of goods, and externally, in the invitation to take part in this "banquet of the Kingdom", with an evangelical predilection, that is the option of the revealed God, for the poorest and the abandoned, for the marginalised, for the sinners, for all those, in human terms, insignificant. The invitation is not addressed to friends or relatives (cf. Lk 14,12-13; Mt 5,46-47), which wouldn't be a bad thing; but which wouldn't be an 'evangelical sign', nor produce the salutary shock of recognising that "the Gentiles do the same" (Mt 5,47). Evangelical poverty becomes *freedom* in order to be able to go and invite those far away to the banquet of the Kingdom, missionary zeal that comes to birth only in the heart of the poor man, who literally "has nothing to lose" and everything to gain... for Christ and his Kingdom.

### 3.2 The Salesian, man of the Eucharist

Between the mystery of the Eucharist and consecrated life there is such a close connection that there can be no explanation or foundation for the one without the other. The consecrated person if he wishes to remain such must become a man of the Eucharist; religious consecration, in fact, has “a Eucharistic structure, it is the total offering of self”, and precisely for this reason is “closely joined to the Eucharistic Sacrifice”.<sup>86</sup>

Having stated the centrality of the Eucharist for each one of us and for the Congregation, I would like, if only briefly, to point out the way in which it, “the daily viaticum and source of the spiritual life”,<sup>87</sup> is a model of “a eucharistic way of life”, in so far as it assists conformity to Christ, making us, that is, eucharistic persons. I begin from the internal dynamics of the Sacrament itself, that lead from the *celebration* of a rite to *conformity* with the mystery; from effective *attachment*, the most intense there can be in the giving of one’s life, to *adoration* of the crucified and risen Lord present in the Eucharist; from *contemplation* of Christ given for us, to the *mission* of transforming oneself into bread broken for others.

#### 3.2.1 *From celebration to conformity*

The Eucharist, “the [daily] central act of every Salesian community” (C. 88), “reveals the loving plan that guides all of salvation history (cf. *Eph* 1:10; 3:8-11). There the *Deus Trinitas*, who is essentially love (cf. *1 Jn* 4:7-8), becomes fully a part of our human condition. In the bread and wine [...] God’s whole life encounters us and is sacramentally shared with us. [...] This is an absolutely free gift, the superabundant fulfilment of God’s promises”.<sup>88</sup>

<sup>86</sup> CIVCSVA, *Starting afresh from Christ*. A renewed commitment to Consecrated Life in the Third Millennium. Instruction (19 May 2002) 26.

<sup>87</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *Vita Consecrata*. Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation 25 March 1996, 95.

<sup>88</sup> BENEDICT XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis*. Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation. 22 February 2007, 8.



The one who celebrates the Eucharist will not only confess with wonder and gratitude the absolute primacy of the gift of Christ, but will also allow his Lord to enter into his life, that is to say, “to let himself be possessed by God’s love”.<sup>89</sup> In Christ in the eucharist God is not perceived as an abstract idea, nor even as a programme of life, but as “Someone with whom I cultivate a strong personal relationship of friendship, a filial, adult and responsible one, a covenant relationship and unconditional commitment to the mission of the salvation of mankind”.<sup>90</sup> And so here “the fullness of *intimacy* with Christ is realized, *becoming one with him, total conformity to him* to whom consecrated persons are called by vocation”:<sup>91</sup> “the truth of God’s love in Christ encounters us, attracts us and delights us, enabling us to emerge from ourselves and drawing us towards our true vocation, which is love”.<sup>92</sup>

Caught up by love, personally loved by him, the Salesian becomes capable of loving and of giving himself, first to God and then with God to others. It is in this giving of oneself that one becomes one with Christ, because communicating with his Body and Blood, one takes on that eucharistic way of living that characterised the life and death of Jesus. Therefore, celebrating the Eucharist each day, “even if the faithful are unable to be present”,<sup>93</sup> in addition to its infinite value objectively, has a singular spiritual effectiveness; precisely for this reason the GC25 encouraged us to develop the community dimension of our spiritual life “celebrating the daily Eucharist with joy, creativity and enthusiasm”.<sup>94</sup> The celebration of the Eucharist “is formative

<sup>89</sup> BENEDICT XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis*. Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation. 22 February 2007, 80.

<sup>90</sup> Card. CLÁUDIO HUMMES, “Priestly Spirituality in ‘Sacramentum caritatis’”: in *L’Osservatore Romano*. 16 May 2007, 8.

<sup>91</sup> CIVCSVA, *Starting afresh from Christ*. A renewed commitment to Consecrated Life in the Third Millennium. Instruction. 19 May 2002, 26.

<sup>92</sup> BENEDICT XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis*. Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation. 22 February 2007, 35.

<sup>93</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*. Encyclical Letter on the Eucharist and its relationship to the Church. 17 April 2003, 31.

<sup>94</sup> GC25, 31: ACG 378 (2002) p. 38.

in the deepest sense of the word, since it fosters the priest's configuration to Christ".<sup>95</sup> As St Augustine dared to say: "not only have we become Christians, we have become Christ himself". Since, in the eucharistic bread and wine "Christ the Lord wanted to entrust to us his body and his blood, that he shed for us for the remission of sins. If you have received them well, you yourself are what you have received".<sup>96</sup>

But precisely because in the Eucharist celebrated "in obedience to Christ's command", God gives us his Son, "the eucharistic liturgy is essentially an *actio Dei*", and "its basic structure is not something within our power to change, nor can it be held hostage by the latest trends".<sup>97</sup> Only docile respect for the structure of the celebration will make effective our recognition of the ineffable gift and the genuine commitment to welcome it with gratitude. It is unthinkable that someone who wants to identify himself with Christ who gives himself to him totally, should celebrate the Eucharist without paying attention to its ritual structure. There is no doubt: "the *ars celebrandi* is the best way to ensure their *actuosa participatio*".<sup>98</sup>

### 3.2.2 *From conformity to adoration*

The challenge to live "*by conforming one's whole existence to Christ*"<sup>99</sup> is to be found, precisely, in what we do so that the rite we celebrate every day as a feast (cf. C. 88) does not become reduced to a mere *mimesis* of what happened in the Upper Room, repeating the same external gestures of Jesus, but that it may be a real

<sup>95</sup> BENEDICT XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis*. Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation. 22 February 2007, 80.

<sup>96</sup> SAINT AUGUSTINE, *In Iohannis Evangelium Tractatus* 21, 8: *PL* 35, 1568; *Sermo* 227,1: *PL* 38, 1099. In the Catechesis of Jerusalem it says: "Receiving the body and blood of Christ, you become one body and one blood with Christ" (22 1,3: *PG* 33 1098).

<sup>97</sup> BENEDICT XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis*. Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation. 22 February 2007, 37.

<sup>98</sup> BENEDICT XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis*. Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation. 22 February 2007, 38.

<sup>99</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *Vita Consecrata*. Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation. 25 March 1996, 16.

*anamnesis*, that commemorates while it actualises and makes present the fact that is remembered. This is possible to the extent to which the celebration leads to *contemplation* of the mystery that is brought about. In fact, “eucharistic adoration is simply the natural consequence of the eucharistic celebration, which is itself the Church’s supreme act of adoration. Receiving the Eucharist means adoring him whom we receive”.<sup>100</sup>

Contemplation necessarily leads to wonder for the gift that God has made us in Christ, to amazement in one who feels himself loved in such a way and to such a degree that he does not know how to explain it nor to be sufficiently grateful. “Why”, – affirms an astonished Paul – “one will hardly die for a righteous man... but God shows his love for us in that while we were sinners, Christ died for us” (*Rm* 5,7-8). Someone who sees himself loved in such a divine manner can only allow himself to be loved without limit and will succeed in giving himself to the end. Such a great love is not deserved nor understood; one admires it and one adores it in grateful silence.

Adoring God “not to see the world that surrounds us solely as raw material with which we can do something”, but “to discover in it “the Creator’s handwriting”, the creative reason and the love from which the world was born and of which the universe speaks to us [...]. Before every activity and every change in the world there needs to be adoration. Only this will make us really free; only this gives us the criteria for what we are doing. Precisely in a world in which progressively there is a lack of criteria for guidance and there is a risk that everyone sees himself as being the criteria, it is fundamental to emphasise adoration”. But for the Christian to adore God, is, above all to adore his Lord, “present in the Eucharist with flesh and blood, with body and soul, with divinity and humanity”. In the Eucharist Christ is not only bread to be eaten but love to be contemplated; indeed, without love given the eucharis-

<sup>100</sup> BENEDICT XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis*. Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation. 22 February 2007, 66.

tic sign would have no reason nor support. "Indeed, we do not merely receive something in the Eucharist. It is the encounter and unification of persons; the person, however, who comes to meet us and desires to unite himself to us is the Son of God. Such unification can only be brought about by means of adoration. Receiving the Eucharist means adoring the One whom we receive. Precisely in this way and only in this way do we become one with him".<sup>101</sup> "No one" – Saint Augustine wrote – "should eat this flesh without first adoring it; we should sin were we not to adore it".<sup>102</sup>

As for ourselves, "called by that very consecration to more prolonged contemplation [...] Jesus in the tabernacle wants us to be at his side, so that he can fill our hearts with the experience of his friendship, which alone gives meaning and fulfilment to our lives".<sup>103</sup> How much therefore, dear confreres, I would like that among us there should be strengthened, and where necessary recovered, that eucharistic devotion, simple yet effective, so Salesian, that has in visits and adoration of the Blessed Sacrament one of its most precious and traditional expressions! Not only because I would like us to let ourselves be formed by the real presence of the Lord we adore, but because it corresponds to a characteristic feature of our charismatic way of life.

As we all well know, frequent reception of Holy Communion was one of the practices of piety to which the "eucharistic pedagogy"<sup>104</sup> of Don Bosco gave priority in the education of his boys, and in the spiritual formation of the Salesians. If concerning Dominic Savio he wrote that "for him it was a real happiness when

<sup>101</sup> BENEDICT XVI, *Address to the Roman Curia*. 22 December 2005: AAS 98 (2006) p. 44-45.

<sup>102</sup> SAINT AUGUSTINE, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 98,9: CCL XXXIX, 1385.

<sup>103</sup> Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Mane nobiscum Domine*. Apostolic Letter for the year of the Eucharist. 7 October 2004, 30.

<sup>104</sup> Pietro Braidò, *Prevenire non reprimere*. Il sistema educativo di don Bosco. Roma, LAS 1999, p. 261. It was due to him, in fact, that "at the Oratory the custom developed of the visit to the Blessed Sacrament, as soon as students and artisans stopped work and studies for some brief recreation in the courtyard" (PIETRO STELLA, *Don Bosco nella Storia della Religiosità Cattolica*. Vol. II: Mentalità religiosa e Spiritualità. Roma, LAS 1981, p. 309).

he could pass a few moments in adoration before the Blessed Sacrament",<sup>105</sup> to the confreres during a retreat, at Trofarello in 1868, he recommended among the daily practices the visit to the Blessed Sacrament: "if time is limited, let us at least kneel before the tabernacle and say a *Pater*, *Ave* and *Gloria*. This alone will steel us against temptation".<sup>106</sup> "For us sons of Don Bosco, the eucharistic presence in our houses is a reason for frequent encounters with Christ". Is it from Christ in the eucharist visited with perseverance that we "draw energy and endurance in our work for the young" (C. 88)? Is it in this way that we are "able to counteract the daily tensions which lead to a lack of focus and find in the Eucharistic Sacrifice – the true centre of their lives and ministry – the spiritual strength needed to deal with our different pastoral responsibilities. Our daily activity will thus become truly Eucharistic".<sup>107</sup>

### 3.2.3 *From adoration to mission*

Since, dear confreres, "only in adoration can profound and true acceptance develop" of Christ in the eucharistic, "it is precisely this personal act of encounter with the Lord that develops the social mission which is contained in the Eucharist".<sup>108</sup> The one who adores the love of God in the Eucharist feels himself loved, he experiences the love he receives, that is the source of the strength to give one's life in the measure of Christ adored and received sacramentally. "*The agape* of God comes to us in corporal fashion to continue his work in us and through us",<sup>109</sup> before being

<sup>105</sup> GIOVANNI BOSCO, *Vita del giovanetto Savio Domenico, allievo dell'Oratorio di San Francesco di Sales*. Torino 1959, 71: OE XI, p. 221. Francis Desramaut comments: "The reader of the life of Dominic Savio is aware of the long silent moments of contemplation of this boy before the tabernacle and recognises the connection between them and his heroic love for God" (*Don Bosco e la vita spirituale* Turin, LDC 1967, p. 122).

<sup>106</sup> GIOVANNI BATTISTA LEMOYNE, *Biographical Memoirs of Saint John Bosco*. Vol. IX. New Rochelle 1975, p. 167.

<sup>107</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*. Encyclical Letter on the Eucharist and its relationship to the Church. 17 April 2003, 31.

<sup>108</sup> BENEDICT XVI, *Address to the Roman Curia*. 22 December 2005. AAS 98 (2006) p. 45.

<sup>109</sup> PAUL JOSEF CORDES, "L'Eucaristia e la carità": *L'Osservatore Romano*. 18-19 March 2007, p. 7.

commanded love has been given; and because it has been given it can be requested.

How can we worthily celebrate the giving of the flesh of Christ for many and becoming united totally with Him, if we then remain indifferent to one another? How can we receive from God his greatest gift, Christ the eucharist, without drawing from it the capacity to give one's own life for many? How can we adore Christ present in the sacrament and not renew our commitment to give our life in the service of those most in need? A devotion emptied of dedication betrays the spirit and the letter of the Christian Eucharist.

Adoration leads to the desire to respond with the same extreme love (*Jn* 13,1), and produces as its fruit personal conversion; there is a close "connection between the *eucharistic form of life* and *moral transformation*. [...]. In fact, by sharing in the sacrifice of the Cross, the Christian partakes of Christ's self-giving love and is equipped and committed to live this same charity in all his thoughts and deeds".<sup>110</sup> The believer who allows Christ to give himself, is converted into his table companion; and the table companion is himself transformed, by identification, into bread broken for the life of the world, completing in his body what is lacking in the passion of the Lord (cf. *Col* 1,24).

Thus, the most perfect identification with Christ occurs when the one who feels loved by Him, loves others in his turn: "A Eucharist which does not pass over into the concrete practice of love is intrinsically fragmented".<sup>111</sup> "We cannot delude ourselves: by our mutual love and, in particular, by our concern for those in need we will be recognized as true followers of Christ (cf. *Jn* 13:35; *Mt* 25: 31-46). This will be the criterion by which the authenticity of our Eucharistic celebrations is judged".<sup>112</sup> Participation in the Eucharist

<sup>110</sup> BENEDICT XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis*. Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation. 22 February 2007, 82.

<sup>111</sup> BENEDICT XVI, *Deus caritas est*. Encyclical Letter. 25 December 2005, 14

<sup>112</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *Mane nobiscum Domine*. Apostolic Letter for the year of the Eucharist. 7 October 2004, 28.

would not be authentic if it did not lead to an effective commitment to the building of a world that is more fraternal, united; since precisely in the Eucharist “our God has shown love in the extreme, overturning all those criteria of power which too often govern human relations and radically affirming the criterion of service”.<sup>113</sup>

“The wonder we experience at the gift God has made to us in Christ” “commits us to becoming witnesses of his love”. And we become so, “when, through our actions, words and way of being, Another makes himself present”, Christ. Being nourished by Him naturally leads to our bearing witness to Him with our lives; a witness that comes from our eucharistic way of living, of making ourselves eucharist, that can lead “even to the offering of one’s own life, to the point of martyrdom, [which] throughout the history of the Church, has always been seen as the culmination of the new spiritual worship”.<sup>114</sup> “The love that we celebrate in the sacrament is not something we can keep to ourselves. By its very nature it demands to be shared with all. [...] The Eucharist is thus the source and summit not only of the Church’s life, but also of her mission: ‘an authentically eucharistic Church is a missionary Church’ [...]. We cannot approach the eucharistic table without being drawn into the mission which, beginning in the very heart of God, is meant to reach all people. Missionary outreach is thus an essential part of the eucharistic form of the Christian life”.<sup>115</sup>

We need to seriously ask ourselves, my dear confreres, from where apostolic charity takes its origin in us and how we can make it take on fresh life, “that youthful dynamism which was revealed so strongly in our Founder and at the beginnings of our Society” (C. 10). If our mission does not find its source in his, “the very heart of Christ, apostle of the Father” (C. 11), revealed and adored in the Eucharist, it will neither be effective nor have a future.

<sup>113</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *ibidem*.

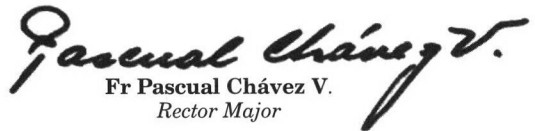
<sup>114</sup> Cf. BENEDICT XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis*. Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation. 22 February 2007, 85.

<sup>115</sup> BENEDICT XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis*. Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation. 22 February 2007, 84.

## CONCLUSION

I want to conclude entrusting you to Mary, the teacher of Eucharistic spirituality. Even though at first glance the gospels do not speak about this subject, “Mary can guide us towards this most holy sacrament, because she herself has a profound relationship with it”. It is true as John Paul II states, that, “The account of the institution of the Eucharist on the night of Holy Thursday makes no mention of Mary”. In fact there was no need. Because, over and above some uncertainty about her participation at the last supper, “an indirect picture of Mary’s relationship with the Eucharist can be had, beginning with her interior disposition. *Mary is a “woman of the Eucharist” in her whole life*”.<sup>116</sup> Indeed, “in a certain sense Mary lived her *Eucharistic faith* even before the institution of the Eucharist”; she welcomed the Word in faith and made him flesh in her womb “thus anticipating within herself what to some degree happens sacramentally in every believer who receives, under the signs of bread and wine, the Lord’s body and blood. As a result, there is a profound analogy -between the *Fiat* which Mary said in reply to the angel, and the *Amen* which every believer says when receiving the body of the Lord”.<sup>117</sup> It is my most fervent wish that God may give us the ability to welcome him like Mary, to make him flesh and blood in our flesh and to give him to the young as their Saviour.

Affectionately in Don Bosco,

  
Fr Pascual Chávez V.  
Rector Major

<sup>116</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*. Encyclical Letter on the Eucharist and its relationship to the Church 17 April 2003, 53.

<sup>117</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*. Encyclical Letter on the Eucharist and its relationship to the Church. 17 April 2003, 55.



## 4. ACTIVITIES OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL

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### 4.1 Chronicle of the Rector Major

#### – *March 2007*

The Rector Major began the month of March in Guadalajara, Mexico, for his usual annual medical check-up. He had arrived there on the last day of February coming from Saltillo, where he had been to spend some days with his family. On the evening of the 2 May he left for *Paraguay*, arriving at Asunción on the evening of the 3<sup>rd</sup> and was welcomed by the Provincial Fr Walter Jara, with some members of the Provincial Council, some Rectors and confreres and members of the Salesian Family. The main welcoming ceremony however was held at the “Mons. Luigi Lasagna” College, the cradle of Salesian presence in Paraguay. The event concluded with the Rector Major’s “Good Night” and the Blessing of Mary Help of Christians. This was followed by supper with the confreres of the community and the Rectors of the houses in the Province.

On Sunday 4 Fr Chávez presided at Mass in the National Sanctuary of Caacupé, in the presence of all the Provincials of the America South Cone Region and those of the Interamerica Region who had

arrived, of the confreres from the Province, the Salesian Family, young people of the SYM and Friends of Don Bosco.

From Sunday evening until Friday evening the Rector Major preached a *Retreat to the Provincials of the two Regions of America* at Ypacaraí. During these days he spoke personally with each of the Provincials, and received some other people who came to see him and on Friday 9, after the first conference, he left for a meeting with the Bishops’ Conference of Paraguay, to whom after a greeting he gave a presentation on Consecrated Life.

An Saturday 10, throughout the morning again at the Retreat House in Ypacaraí, he gave a conference to the confreres of the Province followed by a discussion and then Mass. In the afternoon he visited the Novitiate, spoke to the Novices and went to visit Archbishop Ismael Rolón Silvero, SDB, former Archbishop of Asunción, who retired in 1989, and the elderly and sick confreres. Afterwards he returned to the “Mons. Luigi Lasagna” House where he

had a meeting with the Provincial Council, and then took part in a concert at the Paraguayan Japanese Centre, and ended the day with a meeting with Past Pupils involved in rebuilding Paraguayan society including the Signora Minister of Education.

On Sunday morning 11 he had a meeting with the FMA, and then another with the Salesian Family which was followed by Mass in the Sanctuary of Mary Help of Christians before lunch with representatives of the Salesian Family. In the afternoon there was a meeting, with celebration and discussion, with the young people of the SYM in Paraguay, at which Fr Chávez answered questions put to him by the young people.

On Monday 12 he spent the morning in the Post-Novitiate House with the formation communities. After Mass he gave a conference to those present, the formation personnel and those in formation, followed by a discussion and then lunch. In the evening the Rector Major went to the airport for his return journey. He arrived in Rome on Tuesday 12, at 20.00.

On Thursday 15 at midday the Rector Major left for *Madrid*, where the same evening, at Guadarrama, he began preaching a *Retreat* with the Provincial Coun-

cil, the Rectors, Parish priests, Coordinators of Pastoral work and the Directors of Youth Centres.

On Saturday evening 17 Fr Chávez had a meeting with the leaders and the young people from the Youth Centres, and the following day, at 20.00, he presided at Mass in the Parish of Mary Help of Christians at Atocha, at which members of the Salesian Family took part: in the course of the celebration 13 people made their promise as Salesians-Cooperators.

On Wednesday 21, in the morning, the Rector Major concluded the Retreat and in the evening met with a group of educators (Senior Management Staff and teachers) from our schools to whom Fr Chávez spoke about the challenges posed to education nowadays. After he went for supper with a group of journalists from the religious media.

The visit to the Madrid Province ended on Thursday 22 March with a meeting of the Provincial Council. In the evening the Rector Major returned to Rome.

On Friday morning 23, he spoke to the Councillors who were in the house and received two representatives of the VDB. In the evening, accompanied by the Vicar he went to the Vatican for an appointment with the Secretary of State, Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone.

The following day he presided at a meeting of the CISI, after which he spoke personally with some of the Provincials.

On Sunday evening 25 he left for Turin and the following morning at Colle Don Bosco he presided at Mass with those attending a meeting connected with the setting up of the "*IUS Education Group*", to which he later sent a message. In the afternoon of Monday 25 he returned to Rome and received Mgr. Adriano Van Luyn, SDB, Bishop of Rotterdam.

On Tuesday 27 he held a meeting with the General Councillors present in Rome and in the evening received the Ambassador of Uruguay to the Holy See. In the morning of the following day he went to the headquarters of the USG and in the evening to "Teresa Valsè" House of the FMA for Mass.

On Thursday 29 at midday he had a meeting with Fr Kolvenbach, Superior General of the Society of Jesus at their Headquarters, and in the evening he went to the Generalate of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians for the opening Mass for a meeting of Novice Mistresses.

On Friday 30 he presided at a meeting of the Council and the following day one of the Curatorium

of the UPS. In the evening he received Fr Ángel Astorgano, SDB, Secretary General of the OIEC (International Organisation of Catholic Schools), with headquarters in Brussels.

#### – April 2007

The Rector Major spent Holy Week in Rome. On Tuesday 3 he held a meeting of the Council and gave a "Good Night" to a group of confreres on retreat at the "Salesianum". On Wednesday 4 he preached a day of recollection to the Community of the Auxilium and in the evening held another meeting with the Councillors present at the Generalate. On Holy Thursday he presided at the celebration in the Generalate. On Good Friday, 6 April, he received the Provincial of Germany, Fr Josef Grüner, and then went to the FMA at Sant'Agnello di Sorrento. Having returned to the Generalate in the afternoon of the following day he presided at the Easter Vigil.

On Easter Sunday he left for Vietnam, to visit the Province between Monday 9 and Saturday 14 April. During the visit, he met the formation communities beginning with the theologate near the Provincial House, then that of the prenovices and novices at Bathon, and that of the postnovices at

Dalat. He had a meeting with the FMA and the VDB in the Provincial House of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. He met all the Salesian Family in the parish of Tam Hai, where there were also present two Salesian Bishops, Mgr. Joseph Hoàng Van Tiem, Bishop of Bùi Chu, and Mgr. Peter Nguyen Van De, his Auxiliary. He visited the community of Than Ha, where he met the young people and the teachers from the Vocational Training Centre; the community of K'Long, where he met the faithful from the parish and visited a production centre; and the community of Duc Huy. He held meetings with the confreres in the province of Lam Dong at Dalat, and with the confreres of the whole of Vietnam and representatives from Cambodia and Mongolia, in Ho Chi Minh City. He presided at celebrations and met thousands of young people from all the Salesian centres including that in Cambodia, at Dalat and in Ho Chi Minh City. He concluded his visit with a meeting of the Provincial Council.

Fr Chávez returned to Rome on Sunday 15 April, at 07.00.

On Monday morning 16 he had a meeting with the Provincial of the Middle East Fr Gianmaria Gianazza, and with the Vicar

Fr Adriano Bregolin. In the afternoon he presided at the opening meeting of the Scientific Committee for the World Congress on "The Preventive System and Human Rights" to be held between 2 and 6 January 2009.

On Tuesday 17 he presided at an Extraordinary Meeting of the Executive Committee of the USG, at its headquarters. In the evening he gave the "Good Night" to the confreres of the Generalate community.

On Wednesday morning 18, he met with the Councillors present in the Generalate and in the afternoon received Fr Manuel De Castro, SDB, Secretary of the "Federación Española de Religiosos de Enseñanza" (FERE).

On Thursday morning 19, with Fr Adriano Bregolin and the Provincial of the Middle East he went to the Vatican for a meeting with the Secretary of State, His Em. Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone.

Afterwards he went straight to the airport to fly to *Ireland*. The Rector Major visited the Province between Thursday afternoon 19 and Sunday 22 April, when early in the morning he flew back to Rome. In Ireland, on the first day, he met the young people from "Don Bosco House", in Drumcondra, the confreres of the commu-

nity, collaborators and friends who work for the marginalised youngsters in Sean McDermott Street. On the second day he spent the morning at Celbridge, where he met the staff, the young people and the community; in the evening in Limerick he visited the University and said Mass with the communities of Milford and Pal-laskenry. On the last day, in the morning he had a meeting with the SDB, FMA, members of the Salesian Family and Friends of Don Bosco, followed by Mass. In the afternoon he held a meeting with the Provincial Council, visited Glendalough, and then in the evening met the confreres of the community at Warrenstown, Celbridge/Maynooth, and Rinaldi House, at Crumlin.

Between Sunday evening 22 and Wednesday afternoon 25, the Rector Major was in the *Liguria Tuscany Province*. After arriving in Genoa, where he was welcomed by the Provincial he went to Varazze to see the sick confreres. He had supper with the community and with Mgr. Domenico Calcagno, Bishop of Savona. The following day he was with the children in the Don Bosco elementary school in Sampierdarena, after which he went to the University of Genoa, where he received an

*Honorary Degree* in Educational Sciences, at the Faculty of Formation Sciences. In the evening he left for La Spezia, where he visited the Oratory of Canaletto, greeted the FMA Superiors of the ILS Province in their Provincial House, spoke to the members of the St Paul's Oratory and celebrated Mass in the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Snows on the occasion of the 130<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the beginning of the presence of the Salesians. On Tuesday morning 24, he gave the "Good Morning" to the Sixth Form students of the "Don Bosco" Institute of Sampierdarena; then he left for Vallecrosia, where he was welcomed by Mgr. Alberto Maria Careggio, Bishop of Sanremo, by the Mayor, the Salesian Family and the young people. Having returned to Genoa, in the evening he received *Honorary Citizenship* at the Palazzo Tursi, from the Mayor, Giuseppe Pericu. Afterwards he met Mgr. Angelo Bagnasco, Archbishop of Genoa and President of the Italian Bishops' Conference. Then in the Piazza San Lorenzo he took part in a Youth Festival with the leaders of the SYM and the young people of the Province. On Wednesday 25 he celebrated Mass in the Basilica of San Siro, former Cathedral of Genoa, and

met the Salesian Family and the young people of the SYM in the Cotton Warehouse Theatre. In this meeting there was the commemoration of the jubilees of SDB, FMA and Cooperators on the 25<sup>th</sup>, 50<sup>th</sup> and 60<sup>th</sup> anniversaries of their religious profession, priestly ordination or promise; in addition the Rector Major gave the crucifix to young volunteers leaving for Africa (Cameroun – Chad – Central Africa). In the evening Fr Chávez returned to Rome.

On Thursday 26, at midday, the Rector Major left for Lubumbashi, to visit the *Central Africa Province*. After a very troubled journey due to a delay of the London flight which meant he missed the connection at Lubumbashi and therefore a day and a half of his programme, on Saturday 28 Fr Chávez was welcomed by Bishop Gaston Ruvezi SDB, of Sakania – Kipushi, by the Provincial, the Provincil Council, the Rectors, members of the Salesian Family and the young people. In the afternoon he met all the confreres in the Province, at the Theologium, and presided at Mass. After supper he called on the Governor of the Province. On Sunday 29 Fr Chávez had a meeting with the young people, presided at Mass, and, in the afternoon met all the

Salesian Family in the Provincial House of the FMA. On Monday 30, he met with the Provincial Council and then began his journey back to Rome.

### – *May 2007*

Having returned to Rome, Fr Chávez took up his usual office work until Thursday 3 May: he received confreres, the Councillors in Rome with whom he held a meeting, spoke with Bishop George Alencherry, the brother of Fr Francis, went to the Polyclinic to visit Fr Pietro Stella, and took part in the presentation of the new ANS. On the morning of 4, he left for *Venezuela*, where on his arrival, in the afternoon of the same day he was welcomed by the Provincial Fr Jonny Reyes, by the Councillors, confreres, members of the Salesian Family and young people. In the evening after supper, he gave the “Good Night” to the confreres gathered in the Provincial House.

In the Provincial House on Saturday 5 until lunch-time, the Rector Major presided at an Assembly of the confreres. At lunch His. Em. Cardinal Rosalio Castillo Lara, SDB was also present. In the evening at Altamira, he held a meeting with the Salesian Family which concluded with Mass and supper.

Early in the morning on Sunday 6, with the Provincial and Vice Provincial he left for Valencia, where he had a meeting with the young people of the SYM, which ended with Mass and lunch. In the afternoon he visited the community in Valencia and had supper in the Don Bosco Institute.

On Monday morning 7, Fr Chávez greeted the youngsters of the Don Bosco House, and then left by air for Puerto Ayacucho. There he visited the Vicariate Residence, the "Pius XI" and met Bishop Ángel Divasson SDB. In the afternoon he took part in an Assembly for the pastoral workers in the Vicariate and then presided at Mass, in the Cathedral, with the missionaries, the Salesian Family and other pastoral workers.

On Tuesday 8, Fr Chávez presided at Mass with the Salesiani missionaries who are working in the Vicariate, gave the "Good Morning" to the young people in the Mother Mazzarello Institute, in the Centre of Capacitación, and other groups and then left by air for Charallave. In the afternoon he met the young people from Los Teques (Liceo San José), visited IUSPO, blessed the Research Centre, gave a conference to the teachers and then met the young Salesians in formation.

On Wednesday 8 he blessed the multipurpose hall in Macaracuay (Caracas). Here he had a meeting with educational and pastoral workers on the subject "Salesian Education and Social Commitment". Having returned to the Provincial House in Caracas, he met the Nunzio Apostolic and some Bishops with whom he had lunch. In the afternoon he visited the house in Sarriá, blessed the new building of the Don Bosco House, and presided at Mass during which some confreres made their Perpetual Profession.

The following day, during the morning he had a meeting with the Rectors; in the afternoon he visited ITER and had supper in the Provincial House of the FMA.

On Friday morning 11, the Rector Major celebrated Mass in San José House, where the elderly and sick are cared for among whom the mother of the Provincial to whom he gave the sacrament of the anointing of the sick. After breakfast he gave the "Good Morning" to the students in the school at Boleíta and afterwards spoke to the personnel who work in the Provincial House, and then, accompanied by Bishop Ángel Divasson, the Rector Major left for São Paulo, Brazil, to take part in the *V<sup>th</sup> General Conference of the*

*Bishops of Latin-America and the Caribbean (CELAM)*, at Aparecida. The Conference, inaugurated by the Holy Father on Sunday 13 May, would end on 31 May when Fr Chávez would make the return journey to Rome.

On his arrival at São Paulo Airport, Fr Chávez was welcomed by the Provincial Fr Marco Biaggi, various confreres and a group of youngsters from the Itaquerá centre. The following day he arrived in Aparecida.

During his stay in Aparecida, in addition to the normal work of this kind of assembly, the Rector Major had a number of engagements: he spoke with Cardinals from the Vatican Curia, Nuncios Apostolic and Archbishops and Bishops from Dioceses in which there are some of our communities and works. On the evening of Friday 18 he had a meeting with the Bishops of Argentina to agree the date and place for the beatification of Zeffirino Namuncurá. On Saturday 19 he went to Lorena, where he celebrated Mass and gave a conference to the confreres and members of the Salesian Family, and after lunch gave an interview and visited premises of "Canção Nova". On Sunday 20 he celebrated Mass at Cruzeiro; celebrated the Feast of Mary Help of Christians at Lorena

with the SDB Bishops (13 in all) and with the two FMA taking part in the V<sup>th</sup> CELAM. On Saturday 26 and Sunday 27 he met the Provincials of Brazil at Campos do Jordão.

Fr Chávez returned to Rome on Friday 1<sup>st</sup> June.

## **4.2 Chronicle of the General Councillors**

### **The Vicar of the Rector Major**

At the end of the winter session of the General Council, on 27 January the Vicar of the Rector Major went to the Don Bosco Institute at Rome-Cinecittà for the presentation of the Rector Major's Strenna. The following day, Sunday he went to Latina for the external Feast of Don Bosco.

On 31 January at our Salesian University he presided at the solemn Mass with all the Salesian communities of the Vice Province on the occasion of the Solemnity of St John Bosco.

On Sunday 4 February he was at the Salesian parish of Testaccio, for the external Feast of Don Bosco.

On 5 February he began the Canonical Visitation of the "Blessed Michael Rua" Salesian



community of the Generalate, The Visitation concluded on 23 February.

The 27 and 28 February were devoted to the ASTRA (the Extraordinary Assembly which at the Generalate represents the celebration of a kind of "Provincial Chapter").

Between 1st and 3 March he made the Canonical Visitation of the "St Francis of Sales" Salesian Community in the Vatican.

On 9 and 10 he took part in the second session of the ASTRA.

On 12 he left for *Mexico*, to visit the MEM Province.

On 13, after making an early morning pilgrimage to the Sanctuary of "Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe", he went to the Novitiate at Coacalco, where he met the novices from the Province and in the afternoon had a meeting with the Provincial Council. In the evening he paid a short visit to the local community of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.

The following day he flew to Oaxaca and then went on to Ayutla, the headquarters of the Apostolic Prelature for the Mixes. Fr Héctor Guerrero, who had been appointed by the Holy Father Bishop of this Prelature, accompanied him on this journey.

At Ayutla he had a meeting with the Missionary Salesians in this area, and said Mass with them. On the return journey he made a short stop over at Matagallinas, a school and hostel for boys and girls from the local people, managed jointly by the Salesians and the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. That same evening the Vicar returned to Mexico City and from there he was taken to Guadalajara, to the Community of the Students of Theology from the MEM Province.

On 14, after saying Mass with the local community, he visited the Guadalajara Studentate of Theology and in the late morning had a meeting with all the students of theology, Salesians and others.

Dinner was then held for all the Salesians of the two formation Communities (MEM e MEG); and the whole of the Provincial Council of the Guadalajara Province was also present. Afterwards there was a meeting with all the confreres present.

The same day, still accompanied by the Provincial Fr Miguel Aguilar the Vicar of the Rector Major returned to Mexico City.

The 16 was devoted to a meeting with the Rectors of the Province, and topics and problems arising in the Province were discussed.

On Saturday there was a short meeting with the confreres who are working in the schools, while Sunday 18, was entirely devoted to the Salesian Family: Mass in the local Sanctuary of Mary Help of Christians, a meeting with the Salesian Family, a meal together.

In the evening the Vicar was the guest of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians at the FMA Provincial Centre.

On 19 March he visited the prenovitiate and the postnovitiate. Here he had a meeting with the Salesian Brothers of the Province and afterwards celebrated Mass with them, plus the student confreres and the prenovices. In the afternoon the Vicar went to Puebla to the local community of "San Miguel", where there are also the aspirants for the Province. With them he had a festive gathering and the next morning celebrated Mass with them. At the end of the morning on 20 March, after a visit to the local Salesian house and to the city of Puebla, he returned to Mexico City. From there in the evening he left for the return journey to Italy.

Between 26 March and 4 April he took part in the meetings of the Intermediate Council at the Generalate.

On 6 and 7 April he accompanied the Rector Major, for a short

break to the house of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians at Sant'Agnello di Sorrento.

On 14 and 15 April he went to Bologna for a formation meeting with the Community of the Mission and on the same occasion he had a meeting with the Salesian Community of the "Blessed Lady and St Luke" Institute and with the Past Pupils who on that Sunday were holding their annual meeting.

On 23 April he left for *Portugal*. In the evening of that day and the following morning 24 he took part in the concluding stages of the *Eurogex* Congress – Formation of new Leaders.

In the afternoon of the 24, he had a meeting with the Provincial Council of Portugal.

The next day, 25 April, he took part in a meeting of the Confederal Central Committee of the Past Pupils.

26 and 27 were spent visiting different Salesian houses in the Province. He was able to see those in Poiares, Mirandela and Porto, where there was a meeting of the Salesian Family in the North of the country. From there he went to Mogofores and the next day to Evora, Vendas Novas, Estoril and Manique, where there was another meeting for the Salesian Family

in the Centre and the South of the country.

On 28 April, at the Provincial House he took part in the closing session of the Confederal Central Committee of the Past Pupils and returned to Rome that evening.

On 5 May he went to Lecce for the Feast of Saint Dominic Savio and on 11 May he was in the Community of the Students of Theology at the Gerini Institute to confer the Ministries.

On 13 May in the Basilica of the Sacred Heart in Rome, he presided at a solemn celebration on the occasion of the Feast of Saint Maria Domenica Mazzarello and of the 120<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the opening of the Basilica.

On 19 May he was present at the concluding celebration in the Technical School of the Gerini Institute in Rome.

On 23, in the name of the Rector Major he was present at the opening session of the six-monthly Assembly of USG (Union of Superiors General). On the same day he went to Turin for the celebrations for the Solemnity of Mary Help of Christians. Then on 24 he presided at the Solemn Concelebrated Mass for the Salesian Family and took part in the traditional procession.

Between 1st and 3 June he presided at the Generalate at the

meeting of the World Consultative Body of the Salesian Family.

### **The Councillor for Formation**

On 27 January, the General Councillor for Formation, took up again the *Extraordinary Visitation of the North East Italy Province*, during which he also took part in some important events in the life of the Province: the Formation Day for the Provincial Councils of the groups of the Salesian Family, the Youth Festival, the meeting of the "Mamma Margaret" Association of the parents of SDB and FMA, a Vocational Vigil with the young people.

In the week 5 to 10 February, he presided at the *Meeting of the Regional Coordinators for Formation*, during which there was an assessment of the implementation of the plan for the six year period, the challenges still to be faced were identified and some tasks still to be completed were considered.

During all this period, as *Moderator of the GC26*, he encouraged and accompanied the Provinces in the preparation and celebration of the Provincial Chapters. In particular he took part in the conclusion

of the Provincial Chapters of INE and ILT, on 25 April and 1 June respectively.

Finally, he brought the Extraordinary Visitation to the Province to a close with the Assembly of the Rectors and a meeting of the Provincial Council on 20-21 May. On 31 May, in order to determine the formation guidelines for the new phase of *specific formation for Salesian Brothers in Europe*, he took part in a meeting with the Provincial, the Vice Provincial, the Provincial Economist of ICP, the formation community of Turin Valdocco and with those responsible for the study centre of Turin Crocetta.

### **The Councillor for Youth Ministry**

During the whole month of January Fr. Carlos Garulo, a member of the Department responsible for the IUS, continued his visits to the Salesian *Colleges* in central and southern India and prepared for the Assembly of the IUS, that would be held in Bangalore in May.

When the winter session of the Council finished, between 27 and 29 January the Councillor Fr. Antonio Domenech took part in the celebrations for the opening of the

centenary of the presence of the Salesians at Campello (Alicante-Spain).

On the occasion of the General Assembly of the CIEC (Buenos Aires, 4-11 February) Fr. José Luis Anguiano was with the representatives of the Provinces of America between 1 and 3 February and from 12 to 15 February to continue with them the process of preparation for the III Continental Meeting of Salesian Schools in America.

Between 28 February and 3 March in the name of the Councillor, Fr. José Luis Anguiano and Fr. Dominic Sequeira took part in the meeting of those responsible for Aspirantates in the Provinces of India, in order to study together guidelines for a vocational ministry. Afterwards, Fr. Dominic left for Kochi (Kerala - India) to take part with Fr. Francis Alencherry in a meeting for the Provinces of Asia about Voluntary Service (3 to 6 March).

Between 9 and 11 March the Councillor took part in meeting of the Provincials and Delegates of the West Europe Region at Urnieta (Guipozcoa - Spain). On 14 he left for Sanlúcar (Seville - Spain) for a meeting about Voluntary Service for the Provinces of Spain and Portugal (15-18 March). On

23 March at the Assembly of the "Manos Unidas" at Madrid he presented the topic: "Education a key right for a worthy life".

Between 23 and 29 March at Colle the representatives of the IUS gathered with the Faculty of Pedagogy to set up the group *IUS-Education*: the Rector Major took part at the beginning of the work and the Councillor at the end.

Having returned to Rome, Fr. Domenech took part in the sessions of the Intermediate Council between 26 March and 5 April. After the celebrations of Holy Week and Easter, between 19 and 22 April with Fr Francis Alencherri, at the Pisana, he led the meeting in English on Voluntary Service for the Provinces of Europe and the United States.

On 27 April the Councillor took part at Duisburg (Germany) in the inauguration of the XVIII Salesian International Youth Games organised by the PGS-I and attended by over 300 athletes from the Salesian Provinces in Europe.

On 30 April he left for Quito (Ecuador) where between 1 and 3 May he took part in a meeting for those responsible at Provincial level for vocation promotion in the Interamerica Region. Afterwards

between 3 and 6 May he chaired a meeting in Spanish on Voluntary Service for the Provinces of Latin America. He then left for Brasilia, where between 11 and 13 May he chaired the same sort of meeting for the representatives of the Brazil Provinces. The following day, 14 May, he was with the Youth Ministry Provincial Delegates, with whom he studied a plan for youth ministry for the next six years.

In the meantime between 15 and 17 May in Bangalore, Fr. Carlos Garulo took part in a meeting of the IUS of India with the Regional, the Provincials and the authorities of the various *Colleges*, to determine the guidelines for the IUS in India in the light of the Common Programme 2 of the IUS.

### **The Councillor for Social Communication**

On 29 January, the Councillor for Social Communication, Fr. Tarcisio Scaramussa, had a meeting with the community of the Studentate of Theology at the Crocetta. He then carried out the *Extraordinary Visitation* of the community at Colle Don Bosco (between 1 and 9 February), and that of Turin-Leumann (between

9 and 14). Afterwards, in the Province of Portugal, between 16 and 21 February he preached the Retreat to the Salesians, in the Turcifal, Torres Vedrai Centre of Spirituality. After that he had two days of meetings in Lisbon, with the Rectors and those in charge of Social Communication in the Province.

Between 1 and 4 March in Rome at the Generalate, he took part in a Congress for Delegates and correspondents of ANS from the Regions of Europe. Then, between 5 and 24 in Piedmont he made the Extraordinary Visitation of the communities in Turin-Valdocco. On 27 April in Venice he took part in the Assembly of *EduLife*. On 3 May, in Rome-Pisana, he took part in the public presentation of the *new site of the ANS*.

Having returned to Piedmont, on 11 May he visited the novitiate of Pinerolo, meeting the novices and the community. On 14 May he took part in a meeting of the Provincial Council of ICP, with the Regional Fr Pier Fausto Frisoli.

In this period the Department was especially involved in carrying out an assessment on the experience of a specific Councillor for social communication as desired by GC25 (Cf. Constitutions 137). The work of renewal and restructuring

of the ANS site was completed and this now appears as an *online* journal, with a juridical status as a internet periodical appearing several times a week. In addition the Department has organised the involvement of the Salesians in the America South Cone and Interamerica Regions in the first course of *RIIAL* (Computer Network of the Church in Latin America for Religious in the area), and has taken part through a representative in the same course at Cochabamba-Bolivia, between 22 and 24 March.

### **The Councillor for the Missions**

Immediately after the conclusion of the winter session of the General Council, on 26 January, the Councillor for the Missions left for Kolkata, where he arrived the following day. That afternoon he made a pilgrimage to the Basilica of "Our Lady of Happy Voyage" at Bandel, calling in at the post-novitiate for the Brothers at Kalyani and taking the opportunity to speak to them about the Salesian missions. At Bandel he celebrated Mass with the communities of the Salesian Family surrounding the Basilica, and held a

meeting of the members of the Salesian Family.

On Sunday 28 January he reached the new mission of Diamond Harbour, and said Sunday Mass there with the new Christian community. In the evening he went to the Provincial house in Kolkata.

On 29 January he met with the Provincial Delegates for Missionary awareness in the Provinces of the South Asia Region for an assessment of the programmes for missionary awareness in the various Provinces.

Between 30 January and 1 February the Councillor was in the State of Tripura, that is part of the Guwahati Province (ING), where there are several new missions. This area of the North East of India is still very fertile from the point of view of first evangelisation. Fr Francis visited all the missionary foundations and the various communities, celebrated the Feast of Don Bosco in the Salesian School at Pathaliaghat and met the confreres who are working in these missions. On the evening of 1 February he went to the Provincial House of Guwahati (ING).

Between 2 and 24 February, the Councilor visited nearly all the 60 foundations in the ING, Province spread across the States

of Assam, Meghalaya and Mizoram, on some days also visiting three or more mission centres. Highlights among these quick visits were his taking part in the celebration of the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the ordination of the Dutch missionary Fr Laarhuis Herman, who in spite of his 93 years is still very active as a missionary; meetings with various groups of confreres in different parts of the Province to reflect on the missionary role; visits to some secondary stations of larger missions. Everywhere he saw the great enthusiasm of the local missionaries and the great possibilities for evangelisation. The visit ended with a meeting with the Provincial and his Council on 24 February.

On 25 February Fr Francis went to the northern part of Bengal in the Kolkata Province (INC), to visit the missions of the Province among the Nepalese and the Adivasi in North Bengal and in Sikkim. Between 25 February and 2 March, beginning with the post-novitiate in Sonada, the Councilor visited the missions of the parishes of Sonada, Mirik, Malbassy, Kalimpong, Oodlabari and Siliguri, concluding with a conference on the missions held in the novitiate of Nazareth Bhavan for the members of the Salesian Fam-

ily in the area around the city of Siliguri.

On 2 March Fr Francis left for Chennai, where he spent the night before flying to Kochi the next morning. Between 3 and 6 March he met with the representatives of the various Provinces of the Regions of South-Asia and East-Asia-Oceania in the "Alpha Pastoral Centre" in the city of Kochi for the first study seminar on Voluntary Service and the Salesian mission. At the end of the seminar he went for an evening to his sister's house and on 7 March left for Kuwait.

On 7-8 March he visited our communities in Kuwait and then went on to Rome, where he stayed until 13 March. On 14 March he left for Seville for the second seminar on Voluntary Service, in which the Spanish and the Portuguese Provinces took part.

Between 19 and 30 March Fr Francis remained in Rome, first because he was unable to make a planned visit to Pakistan, not being granted an entry permit, and then in order to take part in the Intermediate session of the General Council.

Between 31 March and 2 April Fr Francis was in Paris to meet the French Provincial Council and speak about a proposal to send young missionaries to the

Province. Having returned to Rome on 3 April he stayed there until 8 April.

Between 9 and 11 April the Councillor was in Bulgaria to visit the Salesian foundation at Kazanlak and consider strengthening the Salesian missionary presence. From there he went to Bonn to take part in the Assembly of the "Don Bosco Network" held on 12-13 April.

Between 14 and 22 April the Councillor for the Missions remained in Rome to lead the third seminar in English on Voluntary Service.

Between 23 April and 2 May he was in the AFO Vice Province and visited the Salesian centres in the Ivory Coast and in Senegal. He visited all the foundations and met the confreres who are working in the various houses, to assess the missionary work and considered its development. Here too he saw the great possibilities for the Salesian charism.

Between 3 and 6 May at Cumbayá-Quito, Ecuador, Fr Francis led the fourth seminar in Spanish on Voluntary Service and the Salesian mission. As soon as it finished he went to São Paulo, Brazil, staying in the BSP Province until 10 May, visiting the various Salesian works and meeting groups



of missionaries and Volunteers. He also took the opportunity to make a short pilgrimage to the Basilica of Aparecida.

On 11-13 May the Councillor took part in the 5th seminar in Portuguese on Voluntary Service held at the Jesuit Cultural Centre in Brasilia. On the afternoon of 13 he held a meeting with the Provincial Delegates for Missionary awareness in the Brazilian Provinces to consider ways of collaborating. The following day he left for Rome.

Between 19 and 24 May Fr Francis visited the Ethiopia Vice Province to facilitate the discernment process for the appointment of the new Superior of the Vice Province. He held three meetings with confreres: at Addis Abeba (19 May), at Adigrat (20 May) and at Zway (22 May). On 23 May he presided at the perpetual profession of the missionary Lijo Vadakkan. The following day he celebrated the Solemnity of Mary Help of Christians at Debrezeit with the novices and pre-novices of the Vice Province.

On 25 May the Councillor went to Johannesburg. Between 26 and 31 May he visited the houses around Johannesburg and in Lesotho, also going to Maseru to assess the prospects for a new

foundation in that city. On 28 May Fr Francis met all the missionaries recently arrived in the AFM Vice Province, to evaluate with them their experiences and to plan for the future. The visit ended with a meeting with the Council of the Vice Province on 1-2 June.

On 3 June Fr Francis returned to Rome for the summer plenary session of the General Council.

### **The Economist General**

When the winter session of the General Council finished, Fr Gianni Mazzali celebrated the external feast of Don Bosco on 28 January at Collevaldelsa, in the parish of Campolungo. Between 1 and 7 February in Melbourne, Australia, he took part in a meeting of Provincials and Provincial Economist from the East-Asia Region. Having returned to Rome, with the team of the Economist General's Office he directed a course for Provincial Economists held between 12 and 16 February. On 16 in Milan he took part in the Ethical Committee of *Eurizon* of the Banco S. Paolo in Turin.

Having gone to India, between 18 and 24 February he preached the Retreat for the members of the Provincial Council of the Calcutta

Province, and the following week between 25 February and 3 March, he directed a course for the Economers in the Province of Guwahati, India, also visiting some of the communities in the Province. Fr Mazzali then went to Indonesia, to Tigaraksa, to direct a course for the Economers of the Vice Province of Indonesia-Timor, between 5 and 9 March. The last stage of his Asian journey was a visit to the Province of Vietnam. At Saigon there was course for local Economers which was followed by a visit to some of the communities.

Having returned to Italy, between 25 and 28 March he visited the Province of Sicily, meeting the Rectors, the Economers and the Provincial Council. He then spent the Easter Triduum in the Holy Martyrs parish in Sangano (TO). Between 15 and 21 April in Kodjobuet, Abidjan, Ivory Coast, he preached a Retreat to a group of confreres from the Vice Province of West Africa.

After a short stay in Rome, he then left on a journey to the Andean Provinces of Latin America. With Fr Alexandre Damians he directed three successive courses for Economers and Rectors – from Bolivia in Cochabamba, from Ecuador in Cuenca and from Perú in

Lima – also taking the opportunity to visit some of the communities.

Having returned to Rome, on 16 May he celebrated Mass at the altar of Mary Help of Christians in the Basilica of the Sacred Heart, to commemorate the 120<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Don Bosco's famous Mass, on the occasion of the consecration of the church.

Between 20 and 26 May at the House of Spirituality in Prešov, Slovakia, he preached a Retreat to the Rectors and the confreres of the Province. On 1, 2 and 3 June, in the House of Spirituality in Avigliana (TO), he gave a Retreat for the Youth Leaders and those in charge of the Oratory of the Holy Martyrs parish in Sangano.

### ***The Councillor for the Region Latin America - South Cone***

When the winter session of the General Council had finished, the Regional Councillor left for Brazil for a short break with his family and for some medical checks. Afterwards at the beginning of March he went to Paraguay.

On 4 March in the Retreat House of the Salesian Family at Ypacaraí, Fr Helvécio Baruffi chaired a meeting of the *JIAR* (Committee of the Provincials of

Argentina) and in the evening he took part in a joint meeting of the two Conferences of the Regions (*CISUR* and *CISBRASIL*). When this was over the Provincials of the two Conferences met together separately, to consider the particular tasks and problems of each Conference.

On 5 March the Retreat preached by the Rector Major began at which all the Provincials of America took part except for the Superior of the Vice Province of Canada. The concluding celebration of the Retreat was held on the evening of 9 March.

On 10 March the Councillor accompanied the Rector Major on his visit to Paraguay, meeting all the Salesians and those in formation, and in the evening the Past Pupils involved in the socio-political field.

On 12 March the Regional began the *Extraordinary Visitation of the Province of Bahía Blanca*, meeting the Salesians in charge of the Mission Office, located in Buenos Aires. The official opening of the Visitation was on 13 March with a meeting of the Provincial Chapter, at which the strengths and weaknesses of the Province were presented. Afterwards the Councillor left to visit each of the houses and meet every one of the Salesians, beginning in the Mission area of

Patagonia, the land of Don Bosco's dreams. In the course of the Visitation, the Regional personally met all the Salesians, the groups of the Salesian Family, the EPC of each house, the teachers and pupils, as well as the Bishops of the Dioceses in the Province.

The Extraordinary Visitation ended with a meeting with the Provincial Council, and another with all the Rectors of the Province, on 15 and 16 May in the house of Stefanelli. The following day Fr Hélvecio took part in a meeting of the school management staff.

Leaving the Province on 18 May, the Regional visited the studentate of "Our Lady of Hope", where all the students of theology in Argentina are gathered together. The house is located in the city of San Justo, in the Province of Buenos Aires.

Leaving Buenos Aires, the Councillor went to the Province of Porto Alegre, where on 24 May he celebrated the Feast of Mary Help of Christians, in the Provincial House of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians and in Don Bosco College.

On 25 May he began his return journey to Rome, stopping off at Campos do Jordão, in the Province of São Paulo, on 26-27, to take part in the meeting of the Rector Major

with all the Provincials of Brazil, for a presentation of the results of the Vth Assembly of the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean. On the same day 27 he left to return to the Generalate in Rome, for the summer plenary session of the General Council.

### ***The Councillor for the Region Interamerica***

At the conclusion of the plenary winter session of the General Council, on 29 January Fr Esteban Ortiz González, Councillor for the Interamerica Region, went to Panama, to take part in the Feast of Don Bosco, which is this country has a huge following.

Afterwards on 1 February the Regional Councillor arrived in Bogotá (Colombia) to encourage the participation of the Confreres in the COB Province in the consultation process in view of the appointment of a new Provincial. After attending several meetings (one in Bucaramanga, one in Neiva and three in Bogotá) and after having held a meeting with the Provincial, Fr Nicolás Rivera Penagos, and his Council, on 6 February Fr Esteban Ortiz arrived in Medellín to greet the Confreres, pay a visit to the Community of

the Prenovitiate and the Novitiate, and hold a meeting with the Provincial Fr Vidal Niebles Ordóñez and his Council.

On 7 February he met with the team from the Regional Salesian Centre for Ongoing Formation (CSRFP) at Quito, and on 8 February arrived in Lima (Perú) for a visit: he met with the Provincial Fr Vicente Santilli, and his Council, spoke with some Confreres, visited the formation house at Magdalena del Mar and the work being done in the working-class district of El Callao.

On 11 February Fr Esteban Ortiz travelled to Cochabamba (Bolivia) to begin, in the name of the Rector Major, the *Extraordinary Visitation of the "Nuestra Señora di Copacabana" Province of Bolivia* (BOL). The following day he had a meeting with the Provincial, Fr Juan Pablo Zabala Tórrez, and his Council, and immediately began his visits to the Communities in the house of Kami.

The Regional Councillor interrupted the Visitation of 4 March to take part in the Retreat preached by the Rector Major to all the Provincials of the two Regions of America in Ypacaraí (Paraguay). On 11 March he returned to Bolivia and continued his visits to the Communities until 15 May when

he finished with the Community of the Novitiate.

On 19 May in Cochabamba, in the morning Fr Esteban Ortiz presented to the Provincial, his Council and a group of Confreres the Final Report of the Extraordinary Visitation; and in the afternoon he had a meeting with the Provincial and his Council thus bringing the Extraordinary Visitation to an end.

On 21 May the Regional arrived in Quito (Ecuador) for a visit to the ECU Province. On the same day he met with the Provincial Fr Francisco Sánchez Carrión, and his Council. The following day he met the team from the Regional Centre for Ongoing Formation and afterwards went to Cuenca to visit the Community of the Mary Help of Christians parish. On 24 May, the Feast of Mary Help of Christians he took part in the Mass in her Sanctuary at Guayaquil, where Bishop Luis Sánchez Armijos SDB, Bishop of Tulcán presided.

On 28 May the Regional Councillor arrived in Port-au-Prince (Haïti) for a visit. The following day, 29 May, in the morning he met with the Superior of the Vice Province, Fr Jacques Charles, and his Council, for an assessment regarding the implementation of the recommendations made at the Extraordinary Visitation the pre-

vious year. In the afternoon he went to Les Cayes, in the south of the country to visit the Vocational Training School. Before returning to the Provincial House at Port-au-Prince, he visited the new work at Grassier, close to the capital of the country where an agricultural school has been started.

On 31 May he met with the Rectors to examine the application of the Extraordinary Visitation in the Communities and in the afternoon he visited the work being done for street children.

Finally Fr Esteban Ortiz returned to Rome on 2 June to take part in the summer plenary session of the General Council.

### ***The Councillor for the Region East Asia - Oceania***

When the winter session of the Council finished, Fr Václav Klement left for a short visit to all the communities in Macau and Hong Kong, to celebrate the Feast of Don Bosco (29 January - 1 February), and took part in the annual Provincial meeting of the Salesians-Cooperators (CIN).

Between 3 and 7 February at Melbourne - Ascot Vale, Australia, the Regional Councillor presided at the annual meeting of the

Provincials of the Region, together with Fr Gianni Mazzali. This time all the Provincial Economers also took part. Thanks to the warm welcome and Australian hospitality this final meeting before GC26 was a very good occasion for exchanging ideas and friendship.

The *Extraordinary Visitation of the South Philippines Province* (FIS), with headquarters in Cebu, took the Councillor for almost two months (9 February-4 April) to the islands of Visayas and Mindanao, where the 13 lively Salesian centre are to be found. The simplicity of life and close involvement in poor areas among needy youngsters makes this Province rich in hope.

Holy Week in Manila (5-8 April) was a time for prayer, with a visit to the formation community of Parañaque, together with several sessions with Fr. Francis Gustilo planning the "Regional Services of Ongoing Formation" requested by the Region during the Team Visit in 2005. Later, another brief visit, taking part in the Provincial Chapter of the North Philippines Province (FIN), between 16 and 19 May, enabled the Regional to encourage the move to renew the religious life of the Province.

The visit of the Rector Major to the last of the Provinces in the

Region to be visited by him – Viet Nam – took Fr Klement, between 9 and 19 April, to Ho Chi Min City and Dalat. After the departure of the Rector Major, the Regional made a brief courtesy call on the two Salesian Bishops, Bishop Joseph Hoàng Van Tiem and Bishop Peter Nguyen Van De, in the Diocese of Bùi Chu in the North of the country.

In Vientiane (capital of the Democratic Republic of Laos) on 20-22 April the Regional, together with the Provincial Fr. Theparat Pitissant (THA), was able to see the constant growth of the little Centre for Vocational Training, so far taken forward by our Past Pupils from Laos, since 2004.

During two weeks in South Korea (23-30 April, 22-24 May) Fr Klement took a short break as well as visiting all the formation communities and meeting almost all the confreres before the Provincial Chapter.

Ten days (6-16 May) spent on a visit took the Regional to all the foundations in the Japanese Province (GIA), meeting all the confreres, taking part in precapitular assemblies (Tokyo, Beppu) and holding a meeting with the Provincial Council.

The last week before returning to Rome was spent concluding the

Extraordinary Visitation of the FIS Province, going to Pakistan (28 May-4 June) to the two very significant foundations at Lahore and Quetta. With the first promising Pakistan vocations and with two new missionaries who arrived in 2007 bringing the number of Salesians in Pakistan to five it is hoped to be able to consolidate the foundations well.

### ***The Councillor for the Region South Asia***

When the winter session of the General Council concluded, on 30 January the Regional Councillor, Fr Joaquim D'Souza, left for Mumbai, India, where he celebrated the solemnity of Saint John Bosco at the Marian Sanctuary of Don Bosco's Madonna. On 3 February he went to Kochi in the State of Kerala in the South of India to welcome the Rector Major, who arrived there the following day for the fiftieth anniversary of the Don Bosco Oratory and of the presence of the Salesians in Kerala (INK). After the festivities, Fr D'Souza accompanied the Rector Major to Goa for the sixtieth anniversary of the Oratory in Panjim and of the presence of the Salesians in Goa (INP). Among the

various celebrations there was also a visit to the church of the Jesuits *Bom Jesus* in Goa Velha, the oldest church in Goa, which contains the body of the great missionary and apostle of the East Indies, Saint Francis Xavier. On 8 February the Rector Major and the Regional were in Mumbai, for the celebrations of the Mumbai Province (INB). The following day the Rector Major and Fr D'Souza went to Chhota Udepur, in the missionary area of Gujarat, where they spent a memorable evening of folk songs and dancing by the different tribal groups, resplendent in their traditional multi-coloured clothes. Between 10 and 12 February, the Rector Major and the Regional were once again in Mumbai for two days of meetings with the Provincials of the Region. During these days there was also the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Sanctuary of Don Bosco's Madonna in Mumbai, built by the late missionary Fr Aurelio Maschio. On 13 February, Fr D'Souza accompanied the Rector Major to Ranchi (INN), where he met the *Adivasi* people of Chhota Nagpur, originally from central India. Not being able to go on to Myanmar since the entry permit had not been issued by the Burma Government, the Rector Major returned

to Rome on 14 February, and the Regional continued his programme of visits in the Region.

Between 15 and 21 February, the Regional, accompanied by the Provincial of Mumbai, Fr Ivo Coelho, visited some of the houses around the city of Mumbai, including the aspirantate at Lonavla and the centre of theological studies in Pune. On 22 February Fr D'Souza left for Hyderabad to make a short visit to the INH Province, which included visits to the postnovitiate at Kuranapuram and the novitiate at Manoharabad. On 24 February he had a meeting with the Provincial Council to assess with the Councillors the implementation of the recommendations of the last Extraordinary Visitation. On 26 February he opened the new post office at the Provincial house in the presence of various confreres, citizens and local civil authorities.

On 28 February the Regional Councillor flew to Colombo to begin on 1 March the *Extraordinary Visitation of the Vice Province of Sri Lanka* (LKC). Between 1 and 29 March the Visitor was in the Vice Province, passing from one to one of the 11 houses and foundations and meeting the 64 confreres and various groups of lay collaborators, Cooperators and mem-

bers of ADMA, to be found in the new Vice Province set up in 2004. Because of the conflicts between the Singalese and the Tamil people, the Visitor was unable to visit the area of Jaffna, where in difficult and dangerous conditions a confrere is working with the Tamil people. However he was able to speak to him on the telephone assuring him of his close support in the heroic mission among those suffering people.

Having concluded the Extraordinary Visitation of Sri Lanka, the Regional Councillor returned to Hyderabad on 30 March to assist at a national meeting of those working with the *YaR-Forum*, on behalf of youngsters at risk. After the meeting he moved on to Mumbai, where he spent the Easter Triduum and Easter. Afterwards after a three day break with his family to draw breath, Fr D'Souza began a more detailed visit to the Vice Province of Konkan (INP) between 13 and 23 April, at the beginning meeting the Provincial Council, and going round the houses, staying in the prenovitiate at Kudal, and concluding with a meeting of the Rectors.

On 25 April, from Goa Fr D'Souza went to New Delhi for a short visit meeting the Provincial Council and visiting the communi-



ties in the city to encourage the confreres. On this occasion he also stopped in the headquarters of the Provincial Conference (SPCI House) in New Delhi, to meet the confreres engaged in the various sectors at national level living there (Youth Ministry, Marginalisation, Social Communication and the Salesian Family).

From New Delhi, on 1 May the Councillor went to the North East of India, to visit the two Provinces of Dimapur (IND) and Guwahati (ING). Between 2 and 6 May, Fr D'Souza met with the Provincial Council of Dimapur to assess the implementation of the recommendations of the previous Extraordinary Visitation, visited the novitiate in Zubza, blessed the new residence in the aspirantate, gave a conference to the students and staff of the "Salesian College" at Dimapur and received the perpetual profession of 8 young Salesians. On 7 May he went to Guwahati for a similar visit to the ING Province which lasted until 13 May. He visited the novitiate at Sunnyside and the theologate at Mawlai in Shillong; met the Provincial Council, celebrated Mass for members of the Provincial Chapter; took part in the celebration for the anniversary of profession and of priestly ordina-

tion of various confreres, receiving the perpetual profession of 10 young confreres, and celebrated the feasts of St. Mary Domenica Mazzarello on 13 May with the FMA.

On 14 May the Regional Councillor flew to Bangalore to take part in a meeting of the IUS (15-17 May) with the Provincials and Presidents of Salesian Institutions of Higher Education, at which the Coordinator of the IUS, Fr Carlos Garulo was present. Afterwards he chaired a meeting of the Provincial Conference SPCSA (18-19 May), and made a brief visit to the Inter-Provincial Centre for Ongoing Formation, "Don Bosco Renewal Centre", on 20 May. On 23 May, Fr D'Souza returned to Rome to accompany the Vicar of the Rector Major, Fr Adriano Bregolin, to Turin for the solemn celebrations of the Feast of Mary Help of Christians and to thank the Madonna for four months of intense work in the South Asia Region.

### ***The Councillor for the Region North Europe***

At the end of the winter session of the General Council, Fr Albert Van Hecke left on 2 February for Bamberg in Germany to celebrate

the Feast of Don Bosco with the young people and the staff in the remedial education centre.

Between 4 February and 17 April the Regional was in *Austria* for the *Extraordinary Visitation* of the Province. During the Visitation the Regional was able to observe the great dedication of the confreres in the various areas of the Salesian mission: parishes, youth centres, schools, hostels, voluntary service, missionary promotion, support for the Salesian missions, involvement with refugees, the formation of the young. But also the efforts the Province is making in the ongoing formation of the confreres and lay collaborators and in evangelisation in this country ever more secularised. During this period the Regional Councillor led 4 days in preparation for the Provincial Chapter.

Between 19 March and 11 April the Councillor, with the Provincial of the East Circumscription, Fr Giuseppe Pellizzari, visited the confreres and foundations in Georgia, Belarus and the Ukraine. It was a very busy time but also one of great communion, during which it was possible to see the promising development of the Salesian presence and charism, the courage of the confreres and their fidelity to Don Bosco.

Immediately afterwards on 15 April, Fr Van Hecke left for Warsaw (Poland) to help with the consultation for the appointment of a new Provincial. The consultation process took place in the context of a day of recollection held in five houses in the Province: Sokółów Podlaski, Ostróda, Różanystok, Łódź and Warsaw.

Between 21 and 23 April, the Councillor accompanied the Provincial of Warsaw Fr Jan Niewęglowski, on a trip to Kaliningrad (Russia) to visit the confrere who is working in Swietlyi and to assess the work there.

On 25 April he went to Loreto to preside at the Feast of the Salesian Family in the Adriatic Province.

Between 4 and 7 May at Veržej in Slovenia he chaired the annual meeting of the Provincials and Delegates in the North Europe Region. The Retreat House at Veržej, totally renovated, was chosen because of its great historical importance in the development of the Congregation in 'Mitteleuropa'. The subject under discussion was: "Vocation ministry in a world ever more secularised". These days were well-organised and brought to a conclusion by Fr Chris Saldanha. In addition the meeting was an opportunity to exchange some ideas about the re-

cent Provincial Chapters in preparation for the GC26. The time spent in Veržej concluded with a meeting of the Polish Provincial Conference and a meeting of the Provincials of the Atlantic-German area and that of CIMEC.

Between 10 and 15 May the Councillor was in Great Britain to visit the communities. These were times of great fraternity, that showed the great dedication of the confreres and their fidelity to maintaining and making more relevant the charism of our Father Don Bosco in this multi-ethnic multi-religious world.

Between 16 and 23 May he remained in Rome. Then between 24 and 27 May he was in Belgium to make some visits and to spend some time with his family.

On 28 May he returned to the Generalate to prepare for the summer session of the General Council.

### ***The Councillor for the Region West Europe***

When the winter session of the Council finished, on 27 January the Regional for West Europe left for Campello (Alicante) with Fr Antonio Domènech, to attend the celebrations for the Centenary of

this well-deserving Salesian house on 28 January.

When the celebration was over, on the same day 28, he left for Bruxelles to continue the *Extraordinary Visitation of the South Belgium Province*, that had begun at Christmas time. The Visitation continued until 21 February, on which day there was the presentation of the final report to the Province gathered for the Provincial Chapter.

The following day 22 February he arrived in *Barcelona* to begin the *Extraordinary Visitation of the "Mare de Déu de la Mercè" Province*. The Visitation took place between 23 February and 20 May with some breaks already programmed:

- Between 6 and 11 March, the Visitor took part in a meeting of the Iberian Conference and that of the West Europe Region, both held in Urnieta.
- The celebration of Holy Week: the Visitor took the opportunity to go to Rome between 31 March and 4 April.
- Two trips to Madrid on two weekends to deal with some questions regarding the shared houses of the Iberian Conference.

Everyone is aware of the work undertaken during the Extraordinary Visitations. When the Visita-

tion to the Barcelona Province was complete and the final report presented to the Provincial Council, the Rectors and the assembly of the confreres, Fr Filiberto returned to Madrid on the evening of 20 May.

On 21 May he went to visit Fr Ángel Tomás, former Provincial of Valencia who had had a serious operation to the liver. While everything had seemed to go well, on 23 he returned to Valencia to take part in the funeral of Fr Ángel Tomás. It was a great shock.

On 24 and 25 he remained in Madrid; on 26 and 27 he visited his family a fulfilled the duty of every citizen voting in the "municipales y autonómicas" (local and regional) elections.

After a meeting at the House of the Salesian Missions in Madrid, on 28 May Fr Filiberto left for Tenerife to take part in the solemn Feast of the Coronation of the Image of Mary Help of Christians, a century after its arrival in Arafo, It was visited by Don Cagliero and other Salesian missionaries on the way to America.

On 1 and 2 June Fr Filiberto visited the houses of Burgos (post-novitiate) and Astudillo and returned to Roma on 3 to take part in the summer session of the General Council.

### ***The Councillor for the Region Italy and the Middle East***

At the end of the winter session of the General Council, together with the General Councillor for Social Communication, Fr Tarcisio Scaramussa, Fr Pier Fausto Frisoli undertook the *Extraordinary Visitation of the Special Circumscription of Piedmont and the Val d'Aosta* (ICP). On 29 January they met the Provincial Council.

On 31 January he took part in the Feast of Saint John Bosco, celebrating Mass with the Rector Major for the young people in the school. Between 1 and 3 February he visited the community in Pine-rolo, the location of the novitiate. On 4 February he gave the annual conference for the Salesian Family in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians. The following day he took part in a meeting of the Rectors in the Circumscription.

Between 8 and 19 he visited the community of Turin Crocetta, the International Formation Community and study centre. On 10 and 11 February, at the Sacred Heart Rome Fr Frisoli chaired the National Assembly of CNOS-School. Having returned to ICP, he then visited the communities of Novara, Chieri, Turin Valsalice, Turin Saint Paul, Bra.

Between 11 and 17 March he took part at Loreto in the Retreat for Rectors and members of the Provincial Councils of the IAD, ILT, IRO, ISA Provinces. He then continued the Visitation in Piedmont in the communities of Vercelli, Borgomanero, Cuneo, Cuminiana, Trino Vercellese, Fossano.

During the Easter period, between 6 and 13 April, he returned to Rome. On 14 he continued his visits to the ICP communities: Turin Agnelli, Ivrea, Alessandria, San Benigno Canavese, Châtillon. On 25 April he took part in the Province Feast at Fossano.

Between 7 and 9 May at Alassio he chaired the CISI, which concluded in Turin with an extraordi-

nary joint session with the FMA Provincials of Italy. He then continued his visits to the communities of Rivoli Cascine Vica, Turin Rebaudengo, Turin Saint Joseph the Worker, Muzzano.

On 14 May with Fr Tarcisio Scaramussa he chaired a meeting of the Provincial Council. On 24 May he presided at Mass in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians in Turin, at 01,30 for pilgrims from Borgomanero and at 8,30 for youngsters from Salesian schools. Afterwards at 20,45 he presided at a procession in honour of Mary Help of Christians at Trino Vercellese, in its hundreth year.

On 31 May he returned to Rome.

### 5.1 «PASSION FOR GOD – PASSION FOR THE WORLD» Message of the Rector Major to the Secular Institute, the Volunteers of Don Bosco, on the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of their Foundation (20<sup>th</sup> May 1917-20<sup>th</sup> May 2007)

*On the occasion of the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Foundation of the Secular Institute of the Volunteers of Don Bosco (VDB), which occurred on 20 May 2007, the Rector Major sent them a message given below.*

*To my dear sisters, members of the Secular Institute, the Volunteers of Don Bosco,*

It is with immense joy that I am writing this message, and would like to express my presence through it at the common celebrations for “90 years of passion for the world”, the motto you have chosen to sum up your history and, at the same time, to plan your future. There really is good reason to praise and thank the Lord who has been so good to you. From its humble beginnings the Institute has developed throughout the world and has been taken up as a life project by so many women who have discovered a calling in it responding to their de-

sire to consecrate themselves completely to God, while continuing to be fully involved in the world. And all of this as taught through Salesian spirituality. Today you make up part of the Spiritual and Apostolic Family of Don Bosco, as an original branch within it marked by your threefold Consecration - Secularity - Salesianity.

I am pleased to see that these have been 90 intense, meaningful and fruitful years, because – as you yourselves have said – they have been

“experienced in a life completely given to Christ for a greater availability to your brothers and sisters; Brought about through an encounter with Christ in daily life, in the midst of people; Involved in the human story with optimism and hope; Inspired and sustained by the Salesian charism of Don Bosco”.

By making Mary of Nazareth’s canticle our own, along with you, let us magnify the Lord who has accomplished these wonders. Or, in the words of the psalmist, let us repeat “The Lord has been good to us and we are happy”. Your thanksgiving is the best way, the more Christian way, to contemplate the past and to also merit our God’s greatness in the future,

since he wants to continue to count on you not just to do things, but rather to belong solely to God and to bring him to the entire world.

I know that for the 20<sup>th</sup> May, even if you can't do so all around the world, you have been invited to have a common celebration at local level and, where possible, regionally, in expectation of an already planned solemn celebration.

For my own part, I believe that for this moment in the history of the VDB Institute, your attention and gaze should be directed to the future: In practice I am referring to your Centenary. You have ninety years behind you now that can allow you to reach this jubilee through a good spiritual, personal and institutional preparation. It will be a particularly appropriate time for listening together to God's will for you, in this new phase of history, and to plan the future of the Institute.

In this your journey towards the Centenary the entire Salesian Family remains close to you, as it too will experience over these years a time of intense preparation for the celebration of the bicentenary of the birth of our beloved Founder and Father, Don Bosco

(1815-2015): children of saints, we cannot but focus on Salesian holiness as God's offering to the world.

It will be an occasion to write the history of the Institute, aware that we always discover our originality in our beginnings and that the course of history is there to mature and grow in charismatic identity, which is what identifies us within the Church, the Salesian Family and society.

It will also be a more opportune moment to dream and plan the future. This, obviously, is your task; nevertheless allow me to indicate some elements that could encourage and illuminate the task.

The first is the conviction of the value of your vocation, of the original contribution you are called to offer. I am not only referring to the mission field, to 'doing', but especially to the dimension of 'being', more so since a particular aspect of your charism is your "reserve". This does not imply anonymity or invisibility – because your witness of faith, gospel values, in a society which is ever more pluralist and secular, has to be more evident –, but it is simply a guarantee of your complete ties to family, and social and secular realities. This is why there is no external habit, nor life

in community, nor a specific apostolate marking out your life; your witness must indicate the presence of God in the world, like the sanctuary lamp which points to the Eucharistic presence of Jesus. It is a humble service, yes, but its function is not an indifferent one. Obviously you must focus on a lifestyle that gives rise to questions and lets those who see you guess at your deeper motivations, asking you the reason for your hope.

One thing certain is that your secular consecration has the family as a field of action and the social circles where you live and work. This does not limit the possibilities of your consecration, indeed, it should urge you on to make visible your sense of belonging to and passion for the Church; it should make you courageous evangelisers, completely taken up by a great love for Jesus, the inspiration for and main strength of your life; it should ultimately arouse in you a spirit of prophecy for proclaiming the Good News through your witness to whomsoever you should encounter along your journey.

It is up to you to determine your specific pastoral activities in the various settings you find yourselves in, taking account of the

variety of social, cultural and religious contexts you have to work in. Nevertheless an essential trait for identifying you is immense compassion for the needy, the poor and the marginalised and those who are excluded and, "at risk". The passion for God is seen in a compassion for humanity. That is the source of our life, this is the test of our experience of God and of our gospel existence. Without the first the rest is mere philanthropy. Without the second the rest is pure spiritualism.

As authentic daughters of Don Bosco, as VDB, strengthen your close affiliation to the Salesian Family, called today to think and act ever more like a spiritual apostolic movement, respecting the autonomy of each of the branches which make it up, passing from a unity of hearts to a unity of intentions and plans. The specific nature of your secular consecration comes from your "Salesianity". We are talking about a special spirituality: we find it expressed in the motto of our beloved Don Bosco: "Da mihi animas, cetera tolle". This expresses the passion of Don Bosco, who thought of nothing else but the salvation of the young and invested this "action of salvation" with his peda-



gogy of kindness, which constitutes the secret of the Preventive System. It is loving-kindness, in fact, which makes love visible, credible and effective. Goodness is love's face. Herewith the essential task of returning to the source. Today they speak of "refounding" consecrated life. Rather than pretending to start from the beginning again, creating "ex nihilo", which could end up being different from what the original founder had in mind, the truer appeal is to return to the foundations. We should, at any rate, be convinced that Christ is our only foundation, as Saint Paul put it speaking to the community at Corinth, when he invited them to overcome their divisions – those who identified themselves as being followers of Apollo: "Everyone doing the building must work carefully". "In fact", says Saint Paul "no one can lay any other foundation than that which has been laid, that is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 3,10-11). "Refounding" therefore means returning to the Founder, in your case, Blessed Philip Rinaldi. It is necessary to draw from the sources of the charism to find there inspiration, energy and light to make it more responsive to new hopes, expectations and needs. This is what

"dynamic fidelity" means.

I conclude by turning my thoughts to Our Lady, the model of a woman totally consecrated to God, and completely involved in family and social realities, always attentive to the voice of her Lord, and always open and obedient to the Spirit who was leading her. To Her, and to her maternal care, I entrust the Institute of the Volunteers of Don Bosco and each one of you.

With much affection, in Don Bosco,

Fr. Pascual CHÁVEZ VILLANUEVA  
Rector Major

## **5.2 "Report of the Superiors General" presented by the Rector Major at the Assembly of the V Conference of the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean at Aparecida (Brazil)**

*Below is a translation of the report on Consecrated Life that the Rector Major in the name of the Superiors General, presented at the Assembly of the V Conference of the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean (CELAM), meeting at Aparecida (Brazil).*

## Thanks

I want to express my thanks, in the first place, for the opportunity that has been given to me to take part and to speak in the V<sup>th</sup> General Conference of the Bishops of Latin-America and the Caribbean.

I am speaking on behalf of Religious Life in my role as President of the Union of Superiors General, and – on this occasion – also for the International Union of Female Superiors General, since I am also representing the two Superiors General present in the hall.

In this continent or sub-continent, as in no other, the communication of the faith and the commitment to human development have been so closely linked with the religious life, that the Church could not be understood without it, as the Holy Father so rightly acknowledged in his opening address at this Conference.

As *Lumen Gentium* declares in n. 44 about the religious state, that although it does not belong to the hierarchical structure of the church nevertheless it belongs inseparably to her life and witness (cf. LG 44), in Latin America and in the Caribbean this has clearly been so during the more than 500

years of contact between the Gospel and the Amerindian people.

## Consecrated Life today

Few other ecclesial institutions have paid so great attention to the renewal hoped for by the Vatican Council II as Consecrated Life. Nevertheless, after 40 years and after the many changes that have taken place, we still find ourselves in a process of transition. This – it seems to me – teaches us that today consecrated life has to accept the fact that the only way to be up-to-date is to be in a constant state of transformation, as happens in life that is never static. At the same time it also needs to accept that nothing must come between it and God if it really wants to be consecrated and to remain faithful to Christ, to the Church, to its own founders, to the men and women of today.

Listening to the reports of the Presidents of the Bishops' Conferences and to those of the Prefects of the Departments of the Vatican or of other bodies at the service of the Church, I have to acknowledge that we feel that we are in profound agreement, above all because we are all Church, and we are united with you in listening to

God in his Word and in the passage of the Spirit in history, trying to identify what God wants from us in this world that is characterised by communication and by globalisation, by secularisation and materialism, by hedonism and by relativism, in which we are called to live and to bear witness to our faith and to carry out our mission.

At the service of this creative fidelity of Consecrated Life there were created the two Unions of the Male and the Female Superiors (USG in 1952, approved in 1962) that have renewed the desire to serve it. Certainly we need to try to find a more effective way of dialogue with the Holy See (the Holy Father and the Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and the Societies of Apostolic Life - CIVCSVA) and with the Bishops' Conferences, and to strengthen the collaboration between the two Unions and with the National, Regional and Continental Conferences of Male and Female Religious.

I won't now describe the organisation and the functioning of the committees that are responsible for their organisation and the other ecclesial structures of collaboration (information that can be

found on the portal [www.vidimus-dominum.org](http://www.vidimus-dominum.org)), I want rather to mention the search for the great guiding principles in order to respond to the challenges of the world of today (cf. Topics of the Assemblies from 1968 until the present), and what we have most at heart: our identity and specific characteristics, that help Religious Life find its place in the Church.

The International Congress on Consecrated Life, held in Rome at the end of November 2004, took for its inspiration a twofold icon: that of the Samaritan Woman (*Jn.* 4) and that of the Good Samaritan (*Lk.* 10). These two figures represent the profound thirst for God and the immense compassion that ought to characterise consecrated persons. The message is clear: in the world, consecrated life has the specific mission of cultivating a strong experience of God and of bringing close to God mankind wounded and abandoned at the side of the road.

To define consecrated life as a 'Samaritan' life implied not only contemplating the path followed by these two gospel figures, but also to take up and to make one's own the social condition of a group – as were the Samaritans at the time of Jesus – who were living

“on the margins” of society and of the Church.

Making ourselves ‘Samaritans’ in this perspective, means accepting rejection by the world and by society; it involves giving up the privileges that we as consecrated persons have enjoyed until quite recently, not only in the social field but also in the Church.

For centuries consecrated life was the apple of the eye of the Church and of society; its service in evangelisation and in the mission fields, as well as its social role in human development were irreplaceable in various areas: education and culture, health care, social communication, agriculture, the care of the poor, of the native populations, of the Afro-Americans, boys and girls on the streets, those being exploited by the so-called sexual tourist industry, etc., as is happening in Latin America, in the Caribbean, in Asia, in Oceania, in Africa: to the point that, without consecrated life being involved in these areas, the Church itself would be absent. Its commitment in the social field, in which it sometimes takes the place of the State, has become so weighty that it has even the risk of watering down its mission, which is not mainly one of providing efficient

and free services but that of being a sign of the tender and saving presence of God in the world.

Today as yesterday Consecrated Life is called to be a sign of God’s closeness, of his real incarnation, of his deep-rooted solidarity with the human race even to his death on the cross. Today however, unlike yesterday, Consecrated Life is facing the challenge and the opportunity to renew itself, moving the emphasis from functionalism to the authenticity of interior and Christian charity, that transforms social commitment to “revelation”, in the most correct sense of the world, that is the manifestation of the love of God for the world.

Today consecrated life would have no significance, its witness would be invisible and without fruit, were it not to take seriously its mandate to be near the poor, the abandoned, those at risk. If consecrated life wants to survive in a world where there is an “eclipse of God” (Martin Buber), it must encounter God in his only living image, mankind (cf. Gen. 1,26). Today as yesterday men and women are the path-way for Consecrated Life.

The thirst for God and solidarity

with humanity are inseparable and are to be discovered and given life in the grace of unity. Experience of God without the mission is spiritualism, as is love for God without love for one's neighbour. And the mission without the experience of God is philanthropy or social commitment.

It is necessary to recover a passion for the glory of God and the salvation of mankind, that finds its source in the heart of Christ, the apostle of the Father, and its nourishment in the Word and in the Eucharist. This passion requires both an ability to suffer from this passion which is the suffering of love similar to that of Jesus on the Cross, and also the dynamism of the love of this passion which is being in love and a fascination.

I am convinced that Consecrated Life represents a genuine cure for our society and a gift for the Church, but only when it is a visible and credible sign of the presence of God and of his love ("mystica"), when it challenges all that threatens the human person understood according to the plan of God ("prophecy"), and shows solidarity with men and women, especially the poorest, the most needy and the excluded ("diaconia").

## Conclusion

Our presence today in this great Assembly of the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean provides us with the opportunity to renew our vocation to "be and to form disciples and missionaries of Christ" and also to express our hopes for the future that can be reduced to two:

1. to be more appreciated and taken into account,
2. to be valued not only for what we do, but also for what we are.

In spite of our limitations, Consecrated Life is being called to continue its journey offering to the Church the irreplaceable service of "belonging inseparably to her life and witness" (LG 44), through pastoral activity that is more explicitly evangelising, that influences the vital elements of the dominant culture and that brings vocations to maturity.

## 5.3 Precapitular Commission and Juridical Commission for the GC26

*Below are the two letters of the Rector Major, addressed to the confreres concerned, in which he officially establishes the "Precapitular*

*Commission” and the “Juridical Commission” in view of the General Chapter 26.*

### 5.3.1 Precapitular Commission

Prot. 07/0033

Rome, 10 January 2007

Revv.

Fr Guilherme BASAÑES - ANG

Fr Ivo COELHO - INB

Fr Carlo SOCOL - CIN

Fr Marek CHRZAN - PLS

Fr Ángel FERNÁNDEZ ARTIME - SLE

Fr Jean Noël CHARMOILLE - FRA

Fr Alberto LORENZELLI - ILT

Fr Vicente TIRABASSO - ABB

Fr José Pastor RAMÍREZ - ANT

Bro. Giampietro PETTENON - INE

Dear Confreres,

First of all my greetings and best wishes for the new year.

In the preparation of the General Chapter our Regulations make provision for the setting up of a precapitular Commission with the task of drawing up “the reports or schemata to be sent in good time to those taking part in the General Chapter” (Reg. 113).

Having consulted the General Council I have considered you for this task. Therefore ***I invite you to take part in the precapitu-***

***lar Commission***, which under the responsibility of the Moderator, must prepare the working document for the GC26.

The Moderator will inform you of the calendar of work and other details of the meeting that will begin on **Monday 1 October 2007**. On my part I thank you for your readiness to organise your commitments so that you will be able to take part and collaborate in this important task.

Let us already entrust to the Holy Spirit the work of the precapitular Commission and the fruits of the capitular process. May Mary Help of Christians and Don Bosco bless you. With fraternal affection.

Fr. Pascual CHÁVEZ VILLANUEVA  
*Rector Major*

### 5.3.2 Precapitular Juridical Commission

Prot. 07/0051

Rome, 16 January 2007

Revv.

Fr Marian STEMPEL

Fr Francesco MARACCANI

Fr José Ramón URÍA

Rome

Dear Confreres,

First of all my greetings and best wishes for the new year.

In the preparation of the General Chapter our Regulations make provision for the setting up of a precapitular Juridical Commission with the task of examining the minutes of the elections of the Delegates of the Provinces, Vice Provinces and Circumscriptions to the General Chapter.

Our General Regulations in article 115 say: *“At least three months before the opening of the General Chapter, the Provincials will send to the Moderator the minutes of the elections, which will be examined by an appropriate commission appointed by the Rector Major or in his absence by the Vicar General. If any defects should be discovered the Moderator will see that they are rectified in good time and if necessary the elections will be repeated”*.

Because of your competence and preparation I have decided to entrust this task to you. Therefore I appoint you ***members of the precapitular Juridical Commission***, whose President is Fr Marian Stempel. In addition to the minutes of the elections of Provincial Delegates to the GC26, it will examine the general lists of the confreres of the Provinces in view of the Provincial Chapters.

I thank you for your readiness to organise your commitments so

that you will be able to carry out this task. Let us already entrust to the Holy Spirit the work of the precapitular Juridical Commission and the fruits of the capitular process. May Mary Help of Christians and Don Bosco bless you. With fraternal affection,

Fr. Pascual CHÁVEZ VILLANUEVA  
Rector Major

## 5.4 Salesian Bishops

### 1. ***COSTELLOE Timothy, Auxiliary Bishop of MELBOURNE, Australia***

On 30 April 2007 the Press Office of the Holy See published news of the appointment by Pope Benedict XVI, of the Salesian priest ***Timothy COSTELLOE*** as Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of MELBOURNE, in Australia, assigning him the titular see of CLUAIN IRAIRD.

Fr Timothy Costelloe, born in Melbourne on 3 February 1954, is the first Australian Salesian to become a Bishop. He did his novitiate at Lysterfield, making his first profession on 31 January 1978. He made his perpetual profession on 8 September 1985 and was ordained priest on 25 October 1986 at East Bentleigh, St. Peter's

Church. He obtained a licence in Theology at the Salesian Pontifical University in Rome and a doctorate in Theology from the 'University of Melbourne'.

After priestly ordination he undertook various pastoral roles (including parish priest at Victoria Park) and responsibilities connected with Salesian formation. He was a Consultant and Secretary General during the Synod of Bishops for Oceania, held in Rome in 1998. In 2002 he was appointed Rector of the new formation community at Clifton Hill, and this year he was also parish priest of the nearby parish. He was Provincial Councillor with responsibility for formation and collaborated in the same field in the East Asia-Oceania Region.

## **2. CAPELLI Luciano, Bishop of the Diocese of GIZO, Solomon Islands.**

On 5 June 2007 the Press Office of the Holy See published news of the appointment by Pope Benedict XVI, of the Salesian priest **Luciano CAPELLI** as Bishop of the Diocese of GIZO, in the Solomon Islands. At the time of the appointment he was Rector of the "Don Bosco Technical School" in Honiara (Solomon Islands).

Fr Luciano Capelli, Italian in origin, was born on 19 October 1947 at Tirano, in the Province of Sondrio, and became a Salesian on 16 August 1965, when he made his first profession, in the novitiate at Missaglia (the Lombard-Emilian Province). Responding to a missionary vocation he soon left for the Philippines, where he did his philosophical studies and practical training. After perpetual profession (24 May 1971) he returned to Italy for theological studies, in Messina and in Turin. He was ordained priest in Tirano on 28 June 1975. Afterwards he obtained a licence in Education.

Returning to the Philippines he filled a number of positions of responsibility: he was Rector of the community of Tarlac between 1981 and 1984, then for six years he was Rector of the large house of Mandaluyong, in Manila (1985-1991). Appointed Provincial Councillor and Rector of Quezon City in 1991, the following year the Rector Major appointed him Provincial of the Province of North Philippines (cf. AGC 344, p. 52). At the end of the six year period in 1999, he moved on to the Salesian missionary work at Honiara, in the Solomon Islands, of which he was appointed Rector in June 2001.



*In addition there have been the following transfers of Sees:*

- **Mgr. Oscar Julio VIAN MORALES**, transferred to the Metropolitan See of Los Altos, Quetzaltenango-Totonicapán (Guatemala)

On 19 April 2007 the Presss office of the Holy See announced that H.H. Pope Benedict XVI had appointed **Mgr. Oscar Julio VIAN MORALES, S.D.B.**, Metropolitan Archbishop of LOS ALTOS, QUETZALTENANGO-TOTONICAPÁN, in Guatemala.

Born on 18 October 1947 in Guatemala City, professed as a Salesian on 7 December 1965 in the Province of Central America, ordained priest at Guatemala on 15 August 1976, Mgr. Oscar Julio Vian Morales was appointed Vicar Apostolic of El Petén (Guatemala) on 30 November 1996, with the titular see of Pupiana (cf. AGC 358, p. 96). He was consecrated Bishop at El Petén on 1 February 1997. Now he moves to the new Metropolitan See as Archbishop.

- **Mgr. Bruno PEDRON** appointed Bishop of the Diocese of Jí-Paraná (Brazil)

On 11 April 2007 the Presss office of the Holy See announced that H.H. Pope Benedict XVI had appointed **Mgr. Bruno PEDRON, S.D.B.**, Bishop of the Diocese of JÍ-PARANÁ, in Brazil.

Born on 3 June 1944 at Torreglia, in the Province of Padua, in Italy, Bruno Pedron made his first profession as a Salesian on 16 August 1963 and was ordained priest on 6 April 1974. On 24 March 1999 Pope John Paul II appointed him Coadiutor Bishop of the Diocese of Jardim (Brazil), where he was ordained on 21 May 1999. In August of the same year he became the Bishop Ordinary of the same Dioces of Jardim.

Now the Holy Father has transferred him to the Diocese of Jí-Paraná, where he succeeds the Salesian Bishop. Antonio Possamai, whose resignation on account of age the Pope has accepted.

## 5.5 Our dead confreres (2<sup>nd</sup> list 2007)

"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 AERTS Victor                   | Houthalen (Belgio)            | 17-04-2007 | 84  | BEN  |
| L AMOR MARTÍNEZ Emilio           | Burgos (Spagna)               | 25-05-2007 | 83  | SLE  |
| P AROCHA GONZÁLEZ José Luis      | Caracas (Venezuela)           | 20-03-2007 | 83  | VEN  |
| P BAROFFIO Giuseppe              | Torino                        | 23-04-2007 | 89  | ICP  |
| P BATTISTELLO Antonio            | Negrar (Verona, Italia)       | 12-04-2007 | 80  | INE  |
| P BELLETTI Antonio               | Torino                        | 10-06-2007 | 85  | ICP  |
| P BETTIN Antonio                 | Castello di Godego (Italia)   | 25-03-2007 | 90  | INE  |
| L CALOVI Ezio                    | Cochabamba (Bolivia)          | 02-06-2007 | 81  | BOL  |
| P CARONNI Amedeo                 | Manaus (Brasile)              | 25-03-2007 | 85  | BMA  |
| L CATALANOTTO Cristoforo         | Roma                          | 22-04-2007 | 84  | UPS  |
| P CERNÁNSKY Pavol                | Beckov (Slovacchia)           | 19-04-2007 | 85  | SLK  |
| P DE WAELE Jozef                 | Kortrijk (Belgio)             | 17-03-2007 | 94  | BEN  |
| P DEANE Patrick                  | Dublin (Irlanda)              | 09-05-2007 | 80  | CIN  |
| P DEZZUTTI Davio                 | Torino                        | 28-04-2007 | 80  | ICP  |
| P DOUGLAS Hugh                   | Salford (Gran Bretagna)       | 10-06-2007 | 87  | GBR  |
| L FALETTI Giuseppe               | Vigliano Biellese (Italia)    | 12-04-2007 | 91  | ICP  |
| P FELICI Sergio                  | Roma                          | 13-06-2007 | 81  | UPS  |
| P FOSSATI Luigi                  | San Benigno Canavese (Italia) | 11-04-2007 | 87  | ICP  |
| P FRIGERIO Pietro                | Ferrara (Italia)              | 27-04-2007 | 58  | ILE  |
| P GALLO Severino                 | Torino                        | 23-03-2007 | 80  | ICP  |
| L GIANCOLA Giovanni Battista     | Civitanova Marche (Italia)    | 25-03-2007 | 71  | IAD  |
| P GIBBONS James                  | Farnborough (Gran Bretagna)   | 09-05-2007 | 77  | GBR  |
| P GLIWA Tomasz                   | Wrocław (Polonia)             | 23-05-2007 | 83  | PLO  |
| P GONZÁLEZ SORIA Héctor          | Montevideo (Uruguay)          | 23-03-2007 | 85  | URU  |
| P GULLINO Michele                | Torino                        | 25-03-2007 | 88  | ICP  |
| P GUTIÉRREZ QUINTANO Ramón       | Toledo (Spagna)               | 05-04-2007 | 71  | SBI  |
| P HERAS Nilo                     | Esmeraldas (Ecuador)          | 31-05-2007 | 51  | ECU  |
| N HROMADKO Jan                   | Monti Tatra (Slovacchia)      | 12-06-2007 | 30  | CEP  |
| P IAFOLLA Antonio Paolino        | Ancona (Italia)               | 01-04-2007 | 77  | IAD  |
| P IGLESIAS RODRÍGUEZ Agustín     | Madrid (Spagna)               | 07-06-2007 | 74  | SMA  |
| P JAVORSKY Štefan                | Levoca (Slovacchia)           | 12-04-2007 | 82  | SLK  |
| P JIMÉNEZ IGLESIAS José Manuel   | Madrid (Spagna)               | 31-05-2007 | 78  | SMA  |
| P LAFOUGE Henri                  | Chevilly-Larue (Francia)      | 25-05-2007 | 69  | FRA  |
| P LAMAUTE Serges                 | St. Petersburg, FL (USA)      | 26-04-2007 | 90  | SUE  |
| P MADDHICHETTY Amala Joseph      | La Crosse, Wisconsin (USA)    | 09-06-2007 | 44  | INT  |
| P MARTÍNEZ BÁSCONES Laurentino   | Puertollano (Spagna)          | 03-04-2007 | 81  | SMA  |
| P MELLANO Enrico                 | Santo Domingo (R.D.)          | 31-03-2007 | 84  | ANT  |
| <i>Fu Ispettore per sei anni</i> |                               |            |     |      |
| P MIGLIAVACCA Enrico             | San Marino (Rep. San Marino)  | 11-06-2007 | 84  | ILE  |

| SURNAME AND NAME                 | PLACE of death                | DATE       | AGE | PROV |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------|-----|------|
| P MILAZZO Carmelo                | Pedara (Italia)               | 02-06-2007 | 90  | ISI  |
| P O'LEARY Kevin                  | Melbourne, VIC (Australia)    | 20-04-2007 | 81  | AUL  |
| L ORAPPANKAL James               | Rajapuram (Kerala, India)     | 25-05-2007 | 47  | IND  |
| P PEPE Antonio                   | Lecce (Italia)                | 31-03-2007 | 52  | IME  |
| P PILLING James                  | Farnborough (Gran Bretagna)   | 08-05-2007 | 82  | GBR  |
| P PRIOUL Michel                  | Caen (Francia)                | 11-04-2007 | 84  | FRA  |
| P RACCA Alfredo Domingo          | San Luis (Argentina)          | 16-05-2007 | 87  | ACO  |
| L RAMÍREZ Luis                   | Quito (Ecuador)               | 04-05-2007 | 90  | ECU  |
| L RAMOS Jaime Rodolfo            | Manique (Lisbona, Portogallo) | 13-06-2007 | 82  | POR  |
| P RATHNASWAMI Tarcisius          | Chennai (India)               | 23-04-2007 | 77  | INM  |
| P RESI Gustavo                   | Pordenone (Italia)            | 13-06-2007 | 91  | INE  |
| P SALCEDO MONTES Crescenciano    | Guadalajara (Messico)         | 15-05-2007 | 77  | MEG  |
| P SANDERS Arnold                 | Kortrijk (Belgio)             | 14-05-2007 | 80  | BEN  |
| P SANTOS José                    | Estoril (Lisboa, Portogallo)  | 17-03-2007 | 80  | POR  |
| P SERWA Zdzisław                 | Łódź (Polonia)                | 29-03-2007 | 76  | PLN  |
| P SHIRIEDA Giovanni Bosco        | Roma                          | 10-06-2007 | 75  | UPS  |
| P STELLA Pietro                  | Roma                          | 01-06-2007 | 76  | UPS  |
| L SWAIN Peter                    | Engadine (Australia)          | 13-04-2007 | 86  | AUL  |
| P SZILVÁGYI János                | Szombathely (Ungheria)        | 12-03-2007 | 71  | UNG  |
| P TAMAYO Félix                   | Bogotá (Colombia)             | 24-05-2007 | 67  | COB  |
| P TOMÁS GARCÍA Ángel             | Valencia (Spagna)             | 22-05-2007 | 65  | SVA  |
| <i>Fu Ispettore per sei anni</i> |                               |            |     |      |
| P VAN LUYN Jacobus Wilhelmus N.  | Hoog Soeren (Olanda)          | 05-04-2007 | 72  | BEN  |
| P VISI Carlo                     | Arezzo (Italia)               | 11-06-2007 | 84  | ILT  |
| P ZAILO Virgilio                 | Torino                        | 30-04-2007 | 84  | ICP  |
| P ZINDO Matteo                   | Torino                        | 05-04-2007 | 83  | ICP  |





