



acts

of the general council

year XC

april-june 2009

N. 404

official organ
of animation
and communication
for the
salesian congregation

Direzione Generale
Opere don Bosco
Roma

acts

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

OFFICIAL ORGAN OF ANIMATION AND COMMUNICATION FOR THE SALESIAN CONGREGATION

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Direzione Generale Opere Don Bosco

Via della Pisana, 1111

Casella Postale 18333

00163 Roma

Tipolitografia Istituto Salesiano Pio XI - Via Umbertide, 11 - 00181 Roma
Tel. 06.78.27.819 - Fax 06.78.48.333 - E-mail: tipolito@pcn.net
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«He summoned those He wanted and they came to Him»

(Mk 3,13)

**ON THE 150th ANNIVERSARY OF THE FOUNDING
OF THE SALESIAN CONGREGATION**

1. "AN ACT OF GREAT SIGNIFICANCE". 1.1. A start is made in the name of Our Lady. 1.2 Days of waiting. 1.3 The boys from the 'black belt'. **2. FOR THE YOUNG AND WITH THE YOUNG, DON BOSCO FOUNDER.** 2.1 The event. 2.2 Our young 'founding fathers'. 2.3 Involving today's young people. a) Don Bosco had the intuition that for his Congregation the right path was that of youth. b) Don Bosco was not afraid to engage his boys in activities that were courageous and humanly speaking imprudent. c) The Sodality of Mary Immaculate founded by Saint Dominic Savio, was the small field in which the first seeds of the Salesian crop germinated. **3. CONSECRATED TO GOD IN THE YOUNG.** 3.1 Sons of CONSECRATED Founders. 3.2 Don Bosco's teaching to his Salesians. **4. OUR CONSTITUTIONS, THE WAY OF FIDELITY.** 4.1 The first photograph Don Bosco wanted. 4.2 A long and thorny path. 4.3 Sacred nature of the Rule approved by the Church. 4.4 The constant recurring theme of Don Bosco and of Don Rua. 4.5 The renewal of the Constitutions 4.6 The words of the testament. **5. DON BOSCO FOUNDER OF "AN VAST MOVEMENT OF PERSONS WHO, IN DIFFERENT WAYS WORK FOR THE SALVATION OF THE YOUNG" (C. 5).** 5.1 "The Sons of the Oratory scattered all over the earth". 5.2 The vast network of the Salesian Family. 5.3 What Don Bosco heard and saw. **CONCLUSION.**

Rome, 25 March 2009

Solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord

Dear Confreres,

In these past three months, after the last letter I wrote to you there have been some events very significant for the life of the Congregation. In addition to the work of the General Council in the winter plenary session of 2008-2009, we have had the celebration of the International Congress on the "Preventive System and Human Rights", the Spirituality Days of the Salesian Family and in a more limited but no less important context, my visit to three of the Provinces in southern India: Chennai, Tiruchy and Bangalore.

Through ANS you have been promptly and extensively informed so I will make no further comment. I am also sure that those from the Provinces who attended the first two events will have informed the confreres in their own Provinces about what took place, the reflections made and the proposals and guidelines which emerged.

I am pleased to be able to be in touch with you once again and this on the day of the Annunciation of the Lord, which shows us that

our life is vocation. It is very enlightening to notice how in the Scriptures the way of being and the significant relationships of a person are defined by his condition as a creature, which does not indicate inferiority or dependence but gratuitous and creative love on God's part. This is due to the fact that man does not have in himself the reason for his existence nor for his own fulfilment. It is all gift.

It finds its place in a relationship with God to be responded to. His life has no meaning outside such a relationship. The other-one he perceives and vaguely desires is the absolute, not a foreign and abstract absolute but the source of his life who is calling him to himself. The whole history of the choice of the people of God and of individual vocations needs to be seen in these terms: the loving initiative of God, man's place in his presence, the unfolding of life as an invitation and a response, as an appeal that is accepted. The category of being a creature is therefore linked to that of someone in a dialogue with God: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, let it be done to me according to your word", Mary replies to the Angel. The gift of life contains a plan: this gradually unfolds in a dialogue with oneself, with history, with God, and demands a personal response. It is this which determines man's place in relation to the world and to all the creatures within it.

These cannot satisfy his desires and therefore man is not submissive to them. The key to this life situation is the alliance between God and his people. This is the renewed and gratuitous choice God makes. Man has to become aware of it and take it up as his plan of life, guided by the Word which challenges him and forces him to choose.

The Christian vocation therefore is not an optional extra, something tagged on externally leading to his fulfilment as a man. Rather it is purely and simply the defining element, the indispensable condition for his authenticity and completeness, the satisfaction of his most radical needs, those which are an essential part of his being a creature. In the same way, freely entering into the dynamics of the Kingdom to which Jesus invites the disciples is the only way of living that corresponds to man's destiny in this world and the next. In this way life is lived entirely as a gift, a call, a plan.

Dear Confreres, I wanted to begin this letter taking my cue from the Feast of the Annunciation of the Lord, almost by way of a commentary on the verse from Mark's Gospel which I have put in the title of this letter. It is a text which in scarcely a single verse in very schematic form reports the decision Jesus has reached to call a group of men to stay with Him and to make sharers in his own mission on behalf of mankind.

In the episode, central to Mark's account since it records the foundation of the group of the Twelve, Jesus is already the missionary of the kingdom of God in the villages of Galilee; unlike the first call which was a pressing invitation given to two sets of brothers (cf. *Mk* 1,17.20), this is a straightforward command the result of a personal decision: Jesus calls those whom he wants and he calls them to be with him, on the mountain; in order to go to him "and be his companions" (*Mk* 3,14) they have to leave the crowd and follow him. The group is formed with very precise tasks: to be with him so as then to be sent by him. The twelve therefore are among those first called whom he wants to be always with him: living with him is their first occupation, then will come the mission. For the apostle living together comes before the mission: only the companions of Jesus, his close friends, will be his representatives. Jesus does not share his mission with someone who has not shared his life (cf. *Acts* 1,21-22).

It seems to me that this is an introduction which helps us to understand well the significance and the consequences of the 150th anniversary of the founding of the Salesian Congregation. "In fact before the authorised foundation there was the real foundation of his Society which bears the date of the period in which he laid the foundations of his tiny Oratory of St. Francis of Sales. On this point his idea never changes nor for that matter that of his first collaborators".¹

What Don Bosco did calling together a group of his boys from the Oratory at Valdocco and their response is indeed a real gospel

¹ F. DESRAMAUT, 'Don Bosco fondatore', in M. MIDALI (a cura di), *Don Bosco Fondatore della Famiglia Salesiana*. Atti del Simposio (Roma, 22-26 gennaio 1989), p. 125.

experience of considerable symbolic and paradigmatic significance: like Jesus, Don Bosco called some youths who were close to him to share with them his life, dreams and mission; like Jesus, Don Bosco found his co-workers among those near to him; being with him, even though they were still so young, was the natural basis for being invited.

1. "AN ACT OF GREAT SIGNIFICANCE"²

Dear confreres, I should very much like this jubilee year to bring us to praise and thank the Lord who has been so very good and generous to us, and who urges us to deeply renew our life and mission as we recall once again what happened on that 18 December 1859, the day on which Don Bosco, in the intimacy of his room began what would come to be called the Society of St. Francis of Sales, bringing to life a project he had nurtured in his heart for so long,³ since 1841 – the year of his ordination and of his going to the Ecclesiastical College – as he was himself to write on a number of occasions.⁴ The Congregation was not founded to begin a work but to maintain and develop one; and it began among those young men to whom Don Bosco was dedicated and with them.

We have a fine history to remember, and in recounting it, we have a significant history still to be accomplished.

² F. DESRAMAUT, *Don Bosco en son temps (1815-1888)* (Torino: SEI, 1996), p. 571.

³ Already in 1850 "Don Bosco was not losing sight of the religious congregation he was destined to found... Occasionally he would speak about the advantages of community life... But his approach to this topic was always indirect, he would not specifically allude to the religious life". (BM IV pp. 294).

⁴ "Our Society really began in 1841" (BM X p. 298; cf. BM VIII p. 346). His 'Memorandum regarding the Pious Society of St. Francis of Sales, on 23 February 1874', begins: "This Pious Society has existed for 33 years", cf. P. BRAIDO, *Don Bosco per i giovani: L' "Oratorio". Una "Congregazione degli oratori"*. Documenti (Roma: LAS, 1988) p. 147.

1.1 A start is made in the name of Our Lady

On 8 December 1859 at Don Bosco's Oratory in Valdocco, the feast of Mary Immaculate was celebrated with great solemnity. The 184 boys who lived as boarders in Don Bosco's House were the soul of the thousand boys in the festive oratory who crowded into the courtyards and the surrounding fields. They had sung, prayed and received Communion during Don Bosco's Mass. Then, having eaten the plentiful feastday breakfast, they noisily joined in a hundred games, they came together in groups for catechism. Many of them had managed to talk to Don Bosco about their work, their families, their problems, their future.

In the evening after the tuneful and peaceful songs of "till we meet again", in the usual 'Good night' Don Bosco, tired but radiant, thanked Our Lady and everyone for the splendid day. Then to the boarders and their assistants-leaders (who as was then the custom wore the clerical habit) he made a short announcement which made the hearts of a score of them beat faster. "That evening Don Bosco announced that the next day he would hold a special conference in his room after the boys had retired to bed. Those concerned – priests, clerics and laymen who shared Don Bosco's work at the Oratory and enjoyed his intimacy – understood that they were invited to attend and sensed that this meeting was to be an important one".⁵

On the evening of the 9th, after the usual busy day of prayer-study-work-joy, nineteen young people crowded into Don Bosco's room. The chronicle of Fr Lemoyne and the minutes written by the biographer A. Amadei, record that Don Bosco first invoked the light of the Holy Spirit and the assistance of Our Blessed Lady, then he briefly summarised what he had told everyone in previous talks.

Then "visibly moved he declared that the time had come to start that congregation which he had long been planning and for which he had been mainly working. He disclosed that Pius IX had

⁵ BM VI p.180. Cf. *Documenti* VII p. 35.

praised his resolve and encouraged him to go ahead and that in fact this congregation already existed through the observance of the traditional Oratory rules, even though they were not binding in conscience and that the large majority of them already belonged to it at least in spirit, and a few by promise or temporary vows. Therefore the moment had come to state whether or not they wished to join the Pious Society, which would be named – or would continue to be named – after Saint Francis of Sales”.⁶

In this congregation, which would be the main support of the Oratory, only those would be enrolled who after serious reflection had the intention of consecrating themselves to God, in due time making the vows of chastity, poverty and obedience, so as to dedicate their lives to youth abandoned and in danger. “Therefore to the next conference only those should come who intend to join”.⁷ Don Bosco’s plan arising from the urgent need to have collaborators he could rely on, did not start from nothing; it was the next step in a process of education that had been going ahead well for about a decade and which from the previous year was following a written project the first *Salesian Constitutions* of 1858.⁸ In spite of that, Fr Lemoyne adds Don Bosco “was giving them all a week’s time to reflect and meditate on this important decision with God”, and “the meeting broke up in profound silence”.⁹

1.2 Days of waiting

The following days appeared to be filled with the ordinary work, but in the hearts and minds of those twenty people there were also indications of an unusual tension.

The first to pray hard and to wait was Don Bosco. For a number of years he had discretely invited to stay with him the best of his boys, in whom he clearly saw God’s call. Many gave him their

⁶ A. AMADEI, *Un altro Don Bosco. Il servo di Dio Don Rua* (Torino: SEI, 1934) p. 73.

⁷ A. AMADEI, o.c. p. 73.

⁸ Cf. G. BOSCO, *Costituzioni della Società di S. Francesco di Sales (1858-1875)*. Testi critici a cura di F. MOTTO (Roma: LAS, 1982).

⁹ BM VI p. 181-181.

promise; but then had second thoughts. Fr Lemoyne writes: "We ourselves heard Don Bosco say. "No one can realize what hardships I went through in the first twenty years or so of the Oratory because of rebuffs, antagonism, discouragement, apprehensions, disappointments, aggravation and ingratitude. Sometimes boys promised to stay and help me only so that they would be able to continue their studies comfortably. Later they had a thousand reasons for not keeping their promises. After many other fruitless attempts, we finally had eight boys don the cassock; shortly afterwards they all left the Oratory. There were even some who on the very day of their ordination or on the evening after their first Mass, told me frankly that life in the Oratory was not for them, and then left".¹⁰

The Canon and parish priest Giacinto Balleio, a pupil of Don Bosco and the tenth witness at his process of beatification, under oath declared: "He was quite sure he had achieved his goal when he saw his boys entering the diocesan seminary or serving God in a parish... He showed affection and pleasure at their choice. Nevertheless it cannot be denied that many defections were a very bitter disappointment to him. He had been particularly generous to these boys and had made unusual financial sacrifices through the years to help them get their degrees with at least a tacit agreement... But he did not complain".¹¹

In a different way, but praying and thinking equally hard were the nineteen who had to respond to Don Bosco's invitation. The 'Society' in which Don Bosco was asking them to be enrolled, promising him 'generous obedience', was a religious family, a 'congregation', like those which had been closed down by the 'Rattazzi Laws' just four years earlier (29 May 1855). From the convents and religious houses had been expelled the '*frati*' who the newspapers, with incessant ruthlessness, continued to call 'half men', 'exploiters of modern society', with the invitation to 'stamp on them like lice'. Now Don Bosco, in order to keep his Oratory going,

¹⁰ BM V pp. 262.

¹¹ BM V p. 263-264.

was asking these young men to join a religious family and be obedient to him, with the prospect (as time passed) of consecrating themselves to God with the vows of chastity, poverty and obedience. Some of them (privately, and in agreement with Don Bosco) had already made them some years before.

They were all very young and it was a question of putting one's whole life on the line with one throw of the dice: trusting in Don Bosco; until that point they were only committed by a promise or a vow to stay with Don Bosco and help him in the work of the oratories. Some were quite shocked.. Fr Lemoyne writes: "More than one whispered: «Don Bosco wants to make monks of us all!»".¹²

Joseph Buzzetti (27 years of age), was a young brick-layer from Caronno, one of Don Bosco's very first boys. For him his whole world and his life was the Oratory. Don Bosco was everything for him: following his invitation, for a year he had even worn the clerical habit and he wouldn't have minded becoming a priest. But "monk" no. He certainly didn't want to do that. (He would become a Salesian only in 1877).

Michael Rua (22 years of age) had no doubts. Don Bosco had issued an invitation. For him, as always, it was a command. So much so that the next day he went to the Mission House to begin a retreat, and received the minor orders (11 December) and the subdiaconate (17 December).

John Cagliero (21 years of age) on the other hand had many doubts. Lemoyne writes (and Cagliero was very much alive in 1907, when Lemoyne published these words): "He paced up and down the portico for a long time various thoughts crossing his mind. Finally turning to a companion, he exclaimed: I am determined and always have been never to leave Don Bosco. Monk or not it's all the same to me!" Later he wrote a note to Don Bosco declaring that he deferred completely to his advice and decision. Don Bosco, meeting him afterwards smilingly told him: 'Come. This is your life!'"¹³

¹² BM VI p. 181

¹³ BM VI p. 181.

1.3 The boys from the 'black belt'

But Don Bosco was not asking them to wager their whole lives just for his sake. He was asking them to make the decision to consecrate their lives to God for "youth abandoned and in danger" who without help were being lost there under their own eyes, and who knows in how many other places in the world; "he saw in them the ideal workers he had dreamed about for the work of his constantly expanding oratories".¹⁴

In those years the city of Turin was experiencing a turbulent expansion. In the northern part of the city a tightly packed "black belt" was being formed of overcrowded hovels full of the poorest immigrants. Larger and larger waves of poor peasant families and youngsters on their own were leaving the country-side seeking work and their fortune in the city, crowding into the shacks that sprouted among the swamps of the Dora, where the sewage of the city, without a sewage system, overflowed. They were absorbed by the large construction sites in the area to the south, by the factories, spinning mills, tanneries, brick-works, building sites. However, not all the youngsters were up to the rigours of the work (most of them died before they were 18-19 years of age). They were also thrown out for not working hard enough and ended up on the streets. In the exhausting and often desperate search for survival they formed gangs of vagabonds, who lived by stealing from the market stalls, snatching house-wives purses, relieving the merchants of their fat wallets, in constant conflict with the police who chased them and as soon as they could threw them into prison.

To bring practical help to these boys (and to the girls and to the weak) in that 'black belt' four great Christians spread themselves out: Fr John Cocchi, Canon Joseph Cottolengo, the Marquess Julia Barolo, Don Bosco.¹⁵

¹⁴ R. ALBERDI, 'Don Bosco fondatore dei salesiani', in M. MIDALI (a cura di), *Don Bosco Fondatore della Famiglia Salesiana*. Atti del Simposio (Roma, 22-26 gennaio 1989) p. 171.

¹⁵ A short and useful description of the situation in Turin in the 1840s can be found in A. J. LENTI, *Don Bosco. History and Spirit*. II: Birth and Early Development of Don Bosco's Oratory. Edited by A. GIRAUDO (Roma: LAS, 2007) p. 6-26.

The Oratory of the exceedingly poor Don Bosco, begun thirteen years before with a lean-to building, had witnessed the start of a night-school, work-shops, a house for young workers and students. In that year 1859 the house was home to 184 very poor youngsters, and the following year to 355.¹⁶ On Sundays the Oratory provided an experience of Christian life, joy, instruction and friendship with Don Bosco for more than a thousand youngsters. It was to help these very real boys, noisy, with mixed-up lives, hungry for bread and for God that Don Bosco was inviting then to 'create the Society of St Francis of Sales'.

2. FOR THE YOUNG AND WITH THE YOUNG, DON BOSCO FOUNDER

"With a religious society eventually in mind, Don Bosco was not able and did not want to bring a significant nucleus of adult collaborators together choosing them from among those who were already working in the three oratories".¹⁷ He realised that rather than have a group of volunteers who were here today and gone tomorrow it was more effective to found a stable Society of people consecrated to God for ever to be of service to him among those young people in serious difficulty. And to succeed he finally thought of his young men, those who "had spent the previous years, some for more time some for less, at the Oratory with Don Bosco".¹⁸

2.1 The event

That year 1859 18 December was a Sunday. Don Bosco concluded the busy feast day spent among a thousand youngsters, as on the feast of the Immaculate Conception and every Sunday.

¹⁶ Cf. P. STELLA, *Don Bosco nella storia economica e sociale (1815-1879)* (Roma: LAS, 1980) p. 175.

¹⁷ P. BRAIDO, *Don Bosco, prete dei giovani nel secolo delle libertà*. Vol. I (Roma: LAS, 2003) p. 439.

¹⁸ P. STELLA, *Ivi* p. 295.

Then he called together those who had decided to be part of the Pious Society of Saint Francis of Sales.

It was 21.00, after evening prayers. They were to meet in Don Bosco's room. In a few minutes there were 18 of them there including Don Bosco. Only two had not come. The seventeen assembled around Don Bosco: a priest (47 years of age), a deacon (24 years of age), a subdeacon (22 years of age), thirteen clerics (between 21 and 15 years of age), a very young student.

The precise set of minutes, signed by Fr Alasonatti and with Don Bosco's signature attached,¹⁹ "is a document of delightful simplicity, which contains the first official record of the Salesian Society",²⁰ in it one reads:

"All [present were] united in one and the same spirit with the sole purpose of preserving and promoting the spirit of true charity needed for the work of the Oratories on behalf of neglected young people at risk. For in these disastrous times of ours such young people are liable to be corrupted and plunged into godlessness and irreligion to the detriment of the whole of society.

"The Gathered group then decided to form a society or congregation with the aim of promoting the glory of God and the salvation of souls, especially of those most in need of instruction and education, while providing the members with mutual help toward their own sanctification. The project met with unanimous approval. Hence, after a short prayer and the invocation of the light of the Holy Spirit, the group proceeded to elect the members that would make up the central body of the Society and would lead this and future communities, if it should please God to grant increase.

"The group then unanimously requested Him [Don Bosco] who has been the initiator and promoter [of the work] to

¹⁹ Cf. J. G. GONZÁLEZ, 'Acta de fundación de la Sociedad de S. Francisco de Sales. 18 Diciembre de 1859', *RSS* 52 (2008) pp. 335-336.

²⁰ E. CERIA, *Annali della Società Salesiana, dalle origini alla morte di S. Giovanni Bosco (1841-1888)* (Torino: SEI, 1961) p. 33.

accept the office of Major Superior, as is becoming in every respect. He accepted the office on condition that he should have the power to choose for the office of prefect (*Vicar and Administrator*) the present writer [*Fr Alasonatti*], who has held that office in the house up to the present.

"The group then considered the method to be followed in electing the other embers of the central governing body, and it was decided to hold the election by secret ballot. This was deemed the speediest way of setting up the council, which was to consist of a spiritual director, of a financial administrator, and three councillors, in addition to the two already mentioned officers (*the Major Superior and the Prefect*).

"[...] the Seminarian, the Subdeacon Michael Rua was unanimously elected spiritual director, and he accepted [the appointment]. The same procedure was followed for the financial administrator, with the result that Deacon Angelo Savio was elected. He also accepted, pledging to discharge the duties of that office.

"Three councillors remained to be elected. The balloting for the first of these resulted in the election of the Seminarian John Cagliero. The second councillor to be elected was John Bonetti. The balloting for the third and last [*councillor*] resulted in a tie between seminarians Charles Ghivarello and Francis Provera. A second balloting produced a majority favouring Seminarian Ghivarello. Thus the central administrative body of our Society was definitively established. (*which was later called the "Superior Chapter"*)

"The report of these proceedings, as summarily described herein, was read before the assembly of all the members and elected officers and was approved as true to fact. It was then unanimously resolved that this original document should be kept on file, and to guarantee its authenticity the Major Superior and the Secretary affixed their signatures

Sac. Bosco Gio.

Alasonatti Vittorio Sac. Prefetto".

2.2 Our young 'founding fathers'

So the Salesian Congregation came into existence. So we came into existence. Those eighteen are our 'founding fathers', most of them extremely young; with the exception of Fr Alasonatti, 47 years of age, and Don Bosco, 44 years of age; Fr Rua, spiritual director was 22 years of age; Fr Savio, the economist, 24; the councillors, still clerics, were all in their twenties.

It seems to me useful to give at least a sketch of them to preserve them in our minds and hearts as our co-founders with Don Bosco. They are part of Don Bosco's life and of the history of the Congregation, and therefore of ours.

Victor Alasonatti, 47 years of age.

The only one older than Don Bosco. An amiable yet stern priest, for 19 years he had been a teacher of the children in the elementary school in Avigliana, where he had been born on 15 November 1812. Joking and pulling his leg (they had been companions at the Ecclesiastical College), Don Bosco persuaded him to come to the Oratory to 'help him to say the Breviary' among the two hundred boys in the house and the thousand in the Oratory ('Not a bit like your little school!' joked Don Bosco). He arrived the evening before the feast of the Assumption in 1854, keeping up the joke with Don Bosco: "Where do I go to say the Breviary?" Don Bosco put onto his shoulders all the administration of his house, until then managed by Joseph Buzzetti and Mamma Margaret (worn out by now: she was to die two years later). In 1855, after Michael Rua, he was the first to take private religious vows into the hands of Don Bosco. He was professed as a Salesian on 14 May 1862. He worked ceaselessly and quietly for Don Bosco and the Salesian Society, as the first Prefect, until his death at Lanzo on 7 October 1865 when he was 53 years of age.

Michael Rua, 22 years of age.

Born in Turin on 9 June 1837 into a working class family, he

lost his father at eight years of age. He became fascinated by Don Bosco while attending the first schools of the De La Salle Brothers. He declared under oath: "I remember that when Don Bosco came to say Mass for us [...], something like an electric shock seemed to run through all the children. They would jump to their feet and leave their places to mill about him [...] It took quite some time before he could get through to the sacristy. There was nothing the good Brothers could do to prevent this apparent disorder, and so we had our way. Nothing of this sort happened when other priests came, even pious and renowned ones... The secret of this attachment could only be explained by their awareness of the spiritual and untiring love he felt for their souls".²¹ Sometimes Don Bosco gave everyone a little medal. When it was Michael's turn, Don Bosco made a strange gesture: holding out his right hand he pretended to cut it with his left while saying to him: "Take it Michael take it". Michael didn't understand but Don Bosco explained it for him: "We two we'll go halves in everything". He entered the Oratory on 25 September 1852 and put on the clerical habit at the Becchi on 3 October 1852; he really became Don Bosco's right hand man: on 26 January 1854 he took part in the meeting where the close-knit group of collaborators received the same of 'Salesians'. On 25 March 1855 (at 18 years of age) he became the first Salesian taking private vows in the hands of Don Bosco. As a student of theology he helped Don Bosco in the St Aloysius Oratory; in 1858 he accompanied him to Rome to meet the Pope, to whom Don Bosco presents his Congregation. Still only a subdeacon he is elected Spiritual Director of the Society just begun. Ordained a priest on 29 July 1860, he makes his perpetual profession on 15 November 1865. At 26 years of age (1863), he obtains his diploma as a secondary school teacher and is sent by Don Bosco to direct the first Salesian house outside Turin, at Mirabello Monferrato. Having returned to Turin in 1865 he is "the second Don Bosco" in the Salesian Work which is continuing to expand. Don Bosco will say one day: "If God had said to me: 'Choose

²¹ BM II p. 247-248.

a boy endowed with all the virtues and talents you would like him to have, and I will give him to you', I would never have imagined anyone as gifted as Fr Rua".²² Appointed by Leo XIII Vicar of Don Bosco in 1884, he becomes, on the death of the Founder, his first Successor and spends his life travelling in order to keep the great family of Don Bosco united and faithful, as it was really exploding in every part of the world. On Don Bosco's death he received 64 Salesian houses, 22 years later when he died the foundations had risen to 341. In 1910, the year of his death, the first biography, written by Eliseo Battaglia appears; the title, hitting the mark, describes him well: "A Prince of Kindness".

Angelo Savio, 24 years of age.

A fellow country man of Don Bosco, he was 15 when he arrived at the Oratory on 4 November 1850. He had already known the little saint Dominic Savio (a few years younger than him) since they lived in neighbouring villages. He used to recall: "In the holidays I was at home feeling not very well; he came to cheer me up with his pleasant manner and kind words. Sometimes he came hand in hand with his two little brothers. Before he left the Oratory for the last time (1857) he came to give me a final hug". Elected Economer General for the first time in 1859 while still a deacon he was re-elected in 1869, the year of his perpetual profession, and again in 1873. At that time Don Bosco entrusted him with responsibility for the houses being built on the Ligurian coast and on the Cote d'Azur: Alassio, Vallecrosia, Marseille. Then he sent him to Rome to oversee the work of the construction of the Church and the House of the Sacred Heart. At 50 years of age (1885) he asked Don Bosco to let him finish with walls and money and left as a missionary for Patagonia, which he traversed on long apostolic/missionary journeys. Tireless and zealous he founded Salesian houses in Chile, in Perú, in Paraguay and in Brazil. He died on 17 May 1893 while on a journey of exploration in Ecuador,

²² BM IV p. 338.

where a new mission had been entrusted to the Salesians. In the dream of the wheel (4 May 1861) Don Bosco saw him in distant parts. His co-workers remembered him as a deeply prayerful consecrated religious.

John Cagliero, 21 years of age.

Born on 11 January 1838, he came from the same place as Don Bosco whom he knew having served his Mass in the parish church of Castelnovo d'Asti. His father having died, Don Bosco saw him a boy as pure as crystal, intelligent and pleasant mannered. Meeting his mother, Don Bosco asked her jokingly if she would "sell" him her son. She replied in the same humorous manner that sons are not sold though they can be "given as a gift". John accompanied Don Bosco on foot from Castelnovo to Turin running, shouting and jumping about and confiding to Don Bosco all his thoughts, memories and hopes. "From that moment I never had any secrets from him". When Don Bosco brought him to Mamma Margaret, she complained that there was no more room. "But he is so small", said Don Bosco laughing, "we'll put him in the bread basket and haul him up to the ceiling". And all three of them laughed. And so in this way in 1851 Cagliero began his extraordinary Salesian life. One of the first four to go along with Don Bosco's idea of founding a Society, he made his profession in 1862, the same year he was ordained a priest. A graduate professor of theology, incomparable music composer, Don Bosco's first missionary, he was the first Salesian Bishop and Cardinal. Rua and Cagliero were the two columns on which Don Bosco established his great work. Don Bosco had 'seen' his bright future when he lay dying during the cholera of 1854. He was preparing to give him Holy Communion as viaticum when he saw the room filled with light, a dove come down on him and a circle of Indians surround his bed. So he took the eucharist away telling him: "You're not going to die and you will go far far away...". He died in Rome on 28 February 1926: buried in Campo Verano, his remains were transferred in 1964 to Argentina, and he lies at rest in the Cathedral of Viedma.

John Bonetti, 21 years of age.

He arrived at the Oratory in 1855 from Caramagna, a small village in the Province of Cuneo. He was 17. He immediately became a friend of Dominic Savio, four years younger than he was. Don Bosco sent him with Rua, Cagliero, Savio and others to the school of Prof. Bonzanino. Every morning they had to go along via Garibaldi. He remembered doing so with Dominic Savio during a very hard winter with the snow blowing about. He made his first profession on 14 May 1862 and three years later his perpetual profession. He graduated at the Royal University in Turin. He became a priest at 26 years of age. Seeing his goodness and his special journalistic skills, Don Bosco made him the first editor of the *Salesian Bulletin*, begun in 1877. In the pages of the *Bulletin* Fr Bonetti published for the first time in instalments the 'History of Don Bosco's Oratory', using the manuscript (then private) of Don Bosco's *Memoirs*. Those instalments (together with the missionaries' letters 'from the frontiers') made the *Bulletin* extremely popular. However, in 1875/76 Don Bosco had left the *Memoirs* unfinished. Fr Bonetti persistently urged him on. We owe to that persistence the fact that Don Bosco [in spite of the huge commitments occupying him] took up his pen again and continued to write. He then collected and completed the instalments in the *Bulletin*. As a result the book entitled *Cinque lustri di storia dell'Oratorio S. Francesco di Sales* ["St John Bosco's Early Apostolate"] came out, the first documented biography of Don Bosco and much sought after. When Fr Cagliero was made a Bishop, in 1886 Fr Bonetti was elected to succeed him as: 'Spiritual Director' of the Salesians and 'General Director' of the FMA. He died at just 53 years of age on 5 June 1891. Of him Don Rua wrote: "Tireless apostolic worker, brave champion in promoting the glory of God and the salvation of souls, for his support and advice an affectionate councillor".

Charles Ghivarello, 24 years of age.

He was already 20 when he met Don Bosco at Pino Torinese and decided to enter his Oratory (1855). He knew and was a friend

of Dominic Savio for a whole year. He made his first profession in 1862. On the day of his priestly ordination in 1864 Don Bosco told him: "You will have to hear many confessions during your life". In fact, even though he was admired by everyone as a hard worker, builder and cultivator, it was in the sacrament of confession (to which he devoted hours every day) that he had a field in which to pour out as well as God's grace all his faith and his fatherly kindness. Secretary and General Councillor, in 1876 he was appointed Economer General. It was he who built the small gallery and the small chapel next to Don Bosco's room. Four year later in 1880, Don Bosco sent him to direct the orphanage of Saint-Cyr in France. From here he went Mathi, where he had the first buildings of the paper-mill put up. He spent his last 25 years at San Benigno Canavese, where he started a large mechanics work-shop. At San Benigno (as wherever he had been) he brought an enthusiasm for agriculture and fruit-farming; he died on 28 February 1913. Fr Albera, the second successor of Don Bosco, wrote of him: "His extraordinary workload was nourished and supported by his spirit of faith".

John Baptist Francesia, 21 years of age.

Born at San Giorgio Canavese on 3 October 1838, he left for Turin with his parents looking for work. While as a twelve year old he was working in terrible conditions in a factory he met Don Bosco in his festive Oratory. After two year in 1852, Don Bosco took him into his house and *Battistin*, as everyone called him, began to study to become a priest. United to Don Bosco for ever and without any doubts he was the first Salesian to obtain a degree in literature ("While many after getting their degree left Don Bosco, I stayed!"). Very young he was Dominic Savio's teacher, in a class crowded with 70 pupils (the usual number in those days). He had a great facility for writing prose and verse. He made his first profession in 1862 and was ordained a priest the following year. Between 1878 and 1902 he was Provincial. Don Bosco gave him the task of revising the Catholic Readings and the series of the Latin

and Italian Classics. After having revised and published *Cinque lustri di storia dell'Oratorio di S. Francesco di Sales* (1892) the work of Fr Bonetti (who had died unexpectedly) he himself wrote a "Popular Life of Don Bosco" (1902) with 414 pages which went through many editions and translations. Valuable for a history of the Congregation are also the many short biographies of the first Salesians to die. He lived at Don Bosco's side for 38 years. His words and his many writings were a continuous record of memories small and great of Don Bosco. He lived until he was 92 and died in Turin on 17 January 1930. Many times in his dreams Don Bosco saw him as a white-haired old man, the last survivor of the first generation.

Francis Provera, 23 years of age.

Born at Mirabello Monferrato on 4 December 1836, he got to know Don Bosco rather late in life. At 22 (after having been a shop keeper with his father) he introduced himself to Don Bosco because 'he had always wanted to become a priest'. Don Bosco immediately replied: "Those who want to come to me must let themselves be cooked". Francis was quite taken aback. Don Bosco continued: "That means you must let me have full control of your heart". "But I'm not looking for anything else. That's really why I have come". While he was studying as a cleric, in the Festive Oratory he was carrying out such an successful apostolate that Don Bosco used to say to his clerics: "Learn from him. He is a great hunter of souls". While he was studying second year philosophy, Don Bosco made him the teacher of the first year secondary school with 150 pupils! He took his religious vows in 1862. The following year, still a cleric, he went with Don Rua to found the first Salesian house outside Turin in his hometown of Mirabello Monferrato. He was such a competent prefect (i.e. administrator) that the following year Don Bosco sent him to the College of Lanzo, which needed a very able administrator. In that year, on 25 December 1864, he became a priest. In the following years Don Bosco considered him the 'perpetual prefect', sending him to

all the newly founded houses which needed an expert economer to get things under way well. Then Don Bosco recalled him to Turin, by now the centre of operations ever more onerous. Fr Provera combined his work of administration with a very full priestly apostolate: he taught philosophy to the clerics, making them really think. He was greatly appreciated for the clarity of his ideas and his facility in speaking. Few people knew that while he was administrator and teacher he was offering up for his clerics a silent and very painful illness: from 1866 an incurable ulcer on his foot was wearing him out. He died in 1874 just 38 years of age. Don Bosco said: "Our Society has lost one of its best members".

Joseph Lazzero, 22 years of age.

He arrived at the Oratory as a twenty year old from Pino Torinese with Charles Ghivarello who was also from there (1857). He wanted to become a priest and Don Bosco recognising in him good material put him studying Latin at the side of a very lively lad from Carmagnola, Michael Magone. Michael was eight years younger but they immediately became good friends. He decided to stay with Don Bosco forever and at 28 was ordained priest on 10 June 1865. When Fr Provera died, Don Bosco called him to take his place as a Councillor on the Superior Council a responsibility he held until 1898. When at Valdocco Fr Rua became 'the second Don Bosco', Fr Lazzero was appointed Rector of the House of the Oratory. Then when the boarders numbered 800, and a single Rector was not sufficient, Don Bosco entrusted to Fr Francesia direction of the students and to Fr Lazzero that of the artisans. Also in the Superior Chapter he became 'Councillor for Arts and Trades'. In 1885 Don Bosco entrusted him with the very delicate task of 'contact and correspondence' with the missionaries, who were multiplying the works in America. In 1897 (at 60 years of age, worn out by the huge amount of work, he had a collapse from which he never recovered. He lived the last 13 years (withdrawn in the house at Mathi) in patience, prayer and conformity with the will of God. He died on 7 March 1910.

Francis Cerruti, 15 years of age.

Having lost his father and being very attached to his mother he was accepted into the oratory by Don Bosco in 1856. Arriving in November from Saluggia (Vercelli), he felt lost and was very homesick. But he met Dominic Savio, who was two years older than he was, became very friendly with him and life once again seemed to smile on him. Dominic died scarcely five months later leaving him in tears. Francis (whose holiness Don Bosco put on the same level as that of Dominic) was one of the first four Salesians sent by Don Bosco to attend Turin University where he showed a lively and profound intelligence. When a case of pneumonia that had been neglected seemed about to carry him off in 1865 (as he testified under oath), Don Bosco assured him that he would live and still work for a long time. While very young, on Don Bosco's orders, he composed an *Italian Dictionary* which had a lot of success in schools and then a *History of Italian Literature* and a *History of Pedagogy*. At 26 years of age he was sent by Don Bosco to open and to direct the large work at Alassio (Savona). When he was 41, in 1885, Don Bosco wanted him at his side and made him the Director General of Salesian Schools and Salesian Publications. With a firm and secure hand he helped Don Bosco organise the young Congregation. He worked effectively to ensure the unity in teaching and approach of Salesian schools, every year providing educative-didactic norms. While working he also wrote. He published books, which quickly had a wide circulation on Don Bosco's pedagogy from *Elements of pedagogy* (1897) to *The moral issue of education* (1916). Of him Don Bosco said: "God has given us only one Fr Cerruti, unfortunately". He died at Alassio on 25 March 1917.

Celestine Durando, 19 years of age.

He arrived at the Oratory from Farigliano di Mondovì (Cuneo) in 1856, a sixteen year old. From the first evening he made the acquaintance of Dominic Savio, who, like the other members of the Immaculate Conception Sodality, used to welcome the newcomers and help them get over any problems settling in. The two imme-

diately got on well together. It was a great blessing from God for which Celestine could never be grateful enough. A year later he received the clerical habit from the hands of Don Bosco, and immediately entered fully into the life of the house. Professed in 1862, he was ordained priest two years later. He studied on his own and also taught. Don Bosco, to whom he gave himself totally, at once entrusted him (1858) with the first year secondary with 96 pupils and encouraged him to write the books his students needed. So Durando wrote some very simple text-books perfectly adapted to the capacity of his pupils who came from the countryside and the factories. His *Latin Grammar* and his *Elementary approach to Literature* had a very wide circulation. His most demanding work was his *Latin-Italian and Italian-Latin Dictionary* with 936 pages, which he finished (while continuing to teach and carry out his priestly ministry) when he was 35. Don Bosco was so pleased with this work that in 1876 (Durando was 36) he wanted to take the author to meet Pope Pius IX and present him with a copy. A Councillor of the Superior Chapter from 1865, Fr Durando was permanently responsible for the procedures for the opening of new Salesian houses. The frequent requests for foundations which arrived for Don Bosco and later Don Rua, were handed on to him for a first response, further negotiations and the necessary formal procedural matters. Among his books and dry legal matters Fr Durando was always a priest. He was chaplain to the *Generalala*, the youth detention centre where the boys were always very affectionate towards him. He also spent long hours in the confessional, in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians and in other Institutions in Turin. On his death 27 March 1907, Fr Rua said of him: "Without making a fuss, his life was filled with good works. Wherever he went he left traces of his spirit which was truly priestly and Salesian".

Joseph Bongiovanni, 23 years of age.

Born in Turin on 15 December 1836. When Don Bosco published the 5th edition of the *Life of Dominic Savio* (1878), he added

a page with a brief account of Joseph Bongiovanni. This is what Don Bosco wrote:

“One of the members who was most helpful to Dominic in setting up the *Immaculate Conception Sodality*, and in drawing up the rules, was Giuseppe Bongioanni. Both his mother and his father having died, he had been recommended to the Rector of the Oratory by his Aunt. The Rector took him in in November 1854. He was 17, most unhappy because of the circumstances he had experienced, full of worldliness and prejudice against religion. But one could see the workings of divine grace in him since he very quickly became fond of the House, its rules and the Superiors. He changed his thinking and gave himself over to acquiring virtue and to his prayers. He was a gifted young man and a fast learner... Furnished with a great imagination he showed real ability as a poet both in Italian and dialect. In ordinary conversation amongst his friends he could improvise lots of fun material in dialect but when it came to serious writing at the desk he wrote many poems which were published... He set out on an ecclesiastical career marked throughout those early years as a cleric by piety and faithful observance of the rules and zeal in doing good to his Companions. He was ordained priest in 1863, and you can imagine with what zeal he dedicated himself to exercising the sacred ministry... After he had helped Dominic Savio, with whom he was united in holy friendship, to set up the Immaculate Conception Sodality, since he was only a cleric at the time, with the Superior’s permission he founded another sodality in honour of the Blessed Sacrament. Its aim was to further worship amongst the youngsters and to prepare students who were well-known for virtue as altar servers, thus setting up an altar servers group which gave much dignity and ability to this role. He carried this on with excellent results when he was a priest. One could say truthfully that if the Congregation of St Francis de Sales was

able to give a good number of Ministers of the Altar to the Church, it is owed in great measure to the efforts of Fr Bongiovanni with the Altar Servers Society. In 1868 when it was time for the consecration of the Church built at Valdocco in honour of Mary Help of Christians, Fr Bongiovanni set to to organise what was needed for the ceremony to be carried out, especially in preparing the Altar Servers to do their part... He spared no effort care or sweat, especially for the Vigil on 8th June that year... He had done so much to prepare for the Feast that on the 9th June, the day of the consecration, he was ill and could not get out of bed. His illness continued for some days. Wanting to celebrate the divine mysteries at least once in the new church, he implored the Blessed Virgin in prayer and gained the grace to do so. On the Sunday in the octave he felt sufficiently improved to be able to prepare himself then approach the altar to celebrate Mass with immense consolation. After Mass he told some of his friends that he felt so happy he could now easily intone the *Nunc dimittis*. And so it was to be".²³ He soon felt unwell again and went back to bed. The following Wednesday, 17 June 1868, surrounded by his dearest friends he died in the name of the Lord. He was only 32 years of age.

Five have second thoughts

In the group of 18 December 1859 there are five other names: John Anfossi, Aloysius Marcellino, Secondo Pettiva, Anthony Rovetto, Aloysius Chiapale. They too, "were enrolled in the Pious Society after mature reflection". But life's ups and downs and the way they kept changing their minds ended with them sooner or later being far from the Pious Salesian Society. I give a few details about these five too, since they were also among the first to believe in Don Bosco's dream.

²³ G. BOSCO, 'Vita di Domenico Savio', in *Biografie edificanti* (Roma: UPS, 2007) p. 76.

John Anfossi, 19 years of age.

Born at Vigone, Turin, he was the same age as Dominic Savio, and was his companion and close friend all the time Dominic spent at the Oratory. Every morning he walked with him and with Rua, Cagliero, Bonetti to Prof. Bonzanino's school. After being one of those "enrolled" in the Pious Salesian Society, he made his novitiate and took the usual triennial vows. But then he preferred to continue his studies at the Seminary; he left the Congregation in 1864, two years after having made his first temporary profession. He was an excellent priest, Canon, Professor and Monsignor. He very often went to the Oratory and was a good friend of Fr Rua, Fr Cagliero and Fr Cerruti. He was the 20th sworn witness at Don Bosco's process of beatification and the 7th in that of Dominic Savio. His testimonies (hand-written copies preserved) are extensive and very beautiful. He died in Turin on 15 February 1913.

Aloysius Marcellino, 22 years of age.

Born in 1837, at the Oratory he was a companion and friend of Dominic Savio. He was among the first to be part of the Immaculate Conception Sodality. His name does not appear among the first professed. He decided to continue his priestly studies at the Seminary and became the Curate in the Parish of the Holy Martyrs in Turin.

Secondo Pettiva (or Petiva), 23 years of age.

On the feast for the opening of the church of St. Francis of Sales (1852) a boy called Secondo Pettiva – born in Turin in 1836 – sang a solo, to great applause. He became a very talented musician and at 20 years of age, with John Cagliero, the director of music at the Oratory. For a number of years he was responsible for the feasts and the collective joyful celebrations at the Oratory. When he was 24 he decided that staying with Don Bosco was not his vocation. The following year (1864) he asked his companion and friend Fr Rua to let him stay at the new house in

Mirabello. From here he returned to Turin, but was struck down by a serious form of tuberculosis. Don Bosco went to visit him several times at the Saint Aloysius Hospital and prepared him for his meeting with the Lord. He breathed his last in 1868 just over 30 years of age.

Anthony Rovetto, 17 years of age.

Born at Castelnuovo d'Asti in 1842, he entered the Oratory in 1855. A companion of Dominic Savio, he was in the founding group of the Pious Society, and the following year signed with Don Bosco and all those enrolled the letter sent to Archbishop Aloysius Fransoni seeking approval of the first Rules. In the minutes of the Superior Chapter it is written that Anthony Rovetto made triennial vows into Don Bosco's hands on 18 January 1863. He left the Oratory in 1865. Unfortunately there is no further information about him.

Aloysius Chiapale, 16 years of age.

Born at Costigliole Asti on 13 January 1843, he entered the Oratory in 1857. He was one of the boys who accompanied Don Bosco to the Becchi for the feast of Our Lady of the Rosary. A companion and friend of Dominic Savio, Michael Rua, John Cagliero... he was part of the group of the 'enrolled' which began the Pious Society, but a confidential note from Don Bosco warned him: "You do not yet know what obedience means".²⁴ He made his first profession in 1862, which he renewed five years later. Having returned to the diocese of Saluzzo and become a priest he was an accomplished preacher and became Chaplain of Fornaca Saluzzo (Cuneo).

Canon Anfossi, one of those who left the Oratory to enter the Diocessan clergy, declared that Don Bosco never took offense at these desertions, "he gave his blessing to those who left him so

²⁴ BM VII p. 6.

that they could persevere in holiness of life and succeed in helping souls ". And Canon Ballesio added: "From my contacts with Don Bosco even after my departure from the Oratory, I can safely say that he (...) never lessened his sincere love for them; he invited them to the Oratory, and still helped them when necessary".²⁵

2.3 Involving today's young people

One thing is certain: the Salesian Congregation was founded and expanded drawing in young men, who were convinced by the apostolic passion of Don Bosco and by his dream of life. We need to **tell young people** the story of the beginnings of the Congregation, of which the young men were 'co-founders'. Most of them (Rua, Cagliero, Bonetti, Durando, Marcellino, Bongiovanni, Francesia, Lazzero, Savio) were companions of Dominuic Savio and members of the Immaculate Conception Sodality; and twelve remained faithful to Don Bosco until death.

It is to be hoped that this fact 'about the foundation' helps us to involve the young people of today more and more in the apostolic work of the salvation of other young people. Being involved means becoming the soil in which the consecrated Salesian vocation grows naturally. Let us have the courage to propose to our young people the consecrated Salesian vocation!

To help you in this great undertaking I share with you my three convictions so that they may help you [together with everything I have so far told you] to 'tell the story' of our beginnings.

a) *Don Bosco had the intuition that for his Congregation the right path was that of youth.*

Our Lady showed him this **in two prophetic dreams**, and he was not afraid to give the greatest of responsibilities to the young and the very young men who had grown up in the atmosphere of his Oratory.

²⁵ BM V p. 263-4.

The first of the two dreams is remembered in Salesian tradition as '*the dream of the three stops*'. It was written down by Don Bosco himself in pages 49-50 of his 'Memoirs of the Oratory' in his own shaky handwriting.

"On the second Sunday in October 1844, I had to tell my boys that the Oratory would be moving to Valdocco. But the uncertainty of place, means, and personnel had me really worried. The previous evening I had gone to bed with an uneasy heart. That night I had another dream, which seems to be an appendix to the one I had at Becchi when I was nine years old...

I dreamt that I was standing in the middle of a multitude of wolves, goats and kids, lambs, ewes, rams, dogs, even birds. All together they made a din, a racket, or better, a bedlam to frighten the stoutest heart. I wanted to run away, when a lady very handsomely dressed as a shepherdess signaled me to follow her and accompany that strange flock while she went ahead. We wandered from place to place, making three stations or stops. Each time we stopped, many of the animals were turned into lambs, and their number continually grew. After we had walked a long way, I found myself in a field where all the animals grazed and gambled together and none made attacks on the others.

Worn out, I wanted to sit down beside a nearby road, but the shepherdess invited me to continue the trip. After another short journey, I found myself in a large courtyard with porticoes all round. At one end was a church. I then saw that four-fifths of the animals had been changed into lambs and their number greatly increased. Just then, several shepherds came along to take care of the flock; but they stayed only a very short time and promptly went away. *Then something wonderful happened. Many of the lambs were transformed into shepherds, who as they grew took care of the others.* As the number of shepherds became great, they split up and went to other places to gather other strange animals and guide them into other folds. (...)

I wanted to ask the shepherdess (...)the meaning of that journey with its halts, (...)”You will understand everything when you see in fact with your bodily eyes what you are looking at now with the eyes of your mind”.²⁶

“Through the imaginative language of the dream”, Fr Stella comments, “Don Bosco felt that he was destined to be responsible for many young people some of whom would become shepherds and help him with his work of education”.²⁷

The second dream, recorded in Salesian tradition as ‘*the dream of the pergola of roses*’, Don Bosco described in 1864. As told by Fr Lemoyne, it was published in 1903, while Fr Rua, Bishop Cagliero and Fr Barberis were still alive.

“In 1864 one night after prayers as was his custom at times, he gathered the members of his Congregation in his ante-room for a conference. Among those present were... Fr Michael Rua, Fr John Cagliero... and Fr Julius Berberis... «I have already told you of several things I saw as in a dream. From them we can infer how much Our Lady loves and helps us. But now that we are altogether alone, I am going to tell you not just another dream, but *something that Our Lady herself graciously showed me*. I am doing this that *each of us may be convinced that it is Our Lady Herself who wants our Congregation*. This should spur us to work ever harder for God’s greater glory. She wants us to place all our trust in her...

«One day in 1847, after I had spent much time reflecting on how I might help others, especially the young, the *Queen of Heaven* appeared to me. She led me into a beautiful garden.

²⁶ J. BOSCO, *Memoirs of the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales from 1815 to 1855. The Autobiography of Saint John Bosco*, tr. by Daniel Lyons, SDB, with notes and commentary by Eugenio Ceria, SDB, Lawrence Castelvechi, SDB and Michael Mendl, SDB (New Rochelle, NY: Don Bosco Publications, 1989) pp. 49-50. The italics are mine.

²⁷ P. STELLA, *Don Bosco in the history of Catholic Religious thought and practice*. Vol. I: Vita e Opere [Roma: LAS, 1979²] p. 140.

There stood there a rustic but wide and charming portico built as a vestibule. Its pillars were dressed with climbing vines whose tendrils, thick with leaves and flowers, stretched upward together and knitted a graceful awning. The portico opened on a lovely walk that soon became as far as the eye could see a breathtakingly beautiful pergola whose sides were lined with enchanting roses in full bloom.(...) The ground too was covered with roses. The Blessed Virgin said to me: – (...) This is the path you must take.

I gladly removed my shoes because it would have been a pity to step on such gorgeous roses. I took but a few steps and immediately felt very sharp thorns piercing my feet and making them bleed. I had to stop and turn back.

– “I had better wear my shoes”, I told my guide..

– “Yes indeed”, She replied, “sturdy ones”.

So I put my shoes on again and returned to the rose pergola, *followed by a number of helpers who had just showed up and asked to go along with me.*

Many of the branches were draped like festoons... There were roses about me, roses above me, and roses under my feet. (...) My lacerated legs though kept getting entangled in the lower branches. Whenever I pushed aside a bough barring my way... the thorns dug into me and made me bleed all over. The roses were thick with thorns.. Notwithstanding I went forward encouraged by the Blessed Virgin... (...) Those who were watching me passed comments: “Don Bosco’s path is forever strewn with roses. He hasn’t a worry in the world!” But they couldn’t see the thorns that were piercing my poor legs.

I called on many priests, clerics and laymen to follow me, and they did so joyfully, enthralled by the beauty of the flowers.

When however they discovered that they had to walk over sharp thorns and that there was no way to avoid them, they loudly began complaining: “We have been fooled!”

Many turned back... I went after them and call them back but it was useless. Then I broke into tears as I asked myself: “Must I walk this painful path alone?”

But I was soon comforted. *I saw a group of priests, clerics and laymen coming towards me: – “Here we are”, they said. “We are all yours and ready to follow you.* So I led them forward. Only a few lost heart and quit; *most of them followed me through..*

After walking the whole length of the pergola I found myself in another enchanting garden, and my followers gathered around me. They were exhausted, ragged and bleeding, but a cool breeze healed them all. Another gust of wind came and like magic *I found myself surrounded by a vast crowd of boys, young clerics, coadjutor brothers and even priests who began helping me care for all those boys.* Many of these helpers I knew, but many more were strangers... The Blessed Virgin who had been my guide all along, now asked me:

– Do you grasp the meaning of what you now see and what you saw before?

– No.

– The path strewn with roses and thorns is an image of your mission among boys. You must wear shoes, a symbol of mortification. The thorns... stand for the obstacles, sufferings and disappointments you will experience. But you must not lose heart. Charity and mortification will enable you to overcome all difficulties and lead you to the roses without thorns. As soon as the Mother of God finished speaking, I awoke and found myself in my room”.²⁸

As one can see reading between the lines of these two dreams and as we know from the history of the first Oratory, Don Bosco did not find long-term helpers among his fellow priests, nor did he look for them there, as the other beneficent institutions which grew up near him (the Rosminians, the Cottolengo Priests) normally did. He soon realised that he had to find the ‘shepherds’ among ‘his flock’ as Rua, Cagliero, Francesia, Cerruti, Bonetti called themselves... And to them young as they were he entrusted

²⁸ BM III pp. 25-27. The italics are mine.

the greatest responsibilities for his Congregation as it was coming to birth.

One day he expressed his idea in this way: *«It is to our great advantage that most of our Salesians came to our schools when they were young boys. Unconsciously, our pupils grow up accustomed to a laborious life, they get to know the inner workings of our Congregation, and they pick up experience in many tasks. They are ready-made assistants and teachers with one spirit and method. No one has to teach them what to do, because they learned as students... I believe that up to now there has not been a congregation or religious order as fortunate as ours in the choice of suitable candidates... Those who have lived with us will instil our spirit into others»*.²⁹

b) *Don Bosco was not afraid to engage his boys in activities that were courageous and humanly speaking imprudent.*

The first example I want to remind you about is the time of the cholera which broke out at the beginning of summer 1854. It was a time of great fear in the city of Turin: by the end of the summer the dead numbered 1248 (the city had 117,000 inhabitants); Borgo Dora was particularly hard hit: "the parish of Sts. Simon and Jude, the parish of the Oratory had 53 % of the total of those who died".³⁰ Fear caused "the closing of shops, flight from the stricken area on the part of many. What was worse, in some places as soon as someone was infected their neighbours and even their relatives were so terrified that they left them on their own without any help".³¹ An improvised isolation hospital was set up to the west of Valdocco. But there were few brave enough to offer to care for the sick. Don Bosco turned to the older ones among his boys.

²⁹ BM XII, p. 215-216. The italics are mine.

³⁰ P. BRAIDO, *Don Bosco, prete dei giovani nel secolo della libertà*. Vol. I (Roma: LAS, 2003), 263.

³¹ G. BONETTI, *Cinque Lustri di Storia dell'Oratorio Salesiano* fondato dal sacerdote D. Giovanni Bosco (Torino: Tipografia Salesiana, 1892), pp. 420-421.

Among these were the very best of his future Salesians. To four of these (including Rua and Cagliero) on 26 January in 1854 he had made the first suggestion that “with the help of the Lord and St Francis of Sales we should first test ourselves by performing deeds of charity towards our neighbour, then bind ourselves by a promise and later, if possible and desirable make a formal vow to God. From that evening on, those who agreed – or would later agree – to this were called “Salesians””.³² Yet he wasn’t afraid that the first fruits might be destroyed by the imprudent act of charity. He told them that the Mayor of Turin was appealing to the best people in the city that they might become nurses and helpers of those with cholera. If anyone wanted to join him in that charitable work he would thank them in God’s name. Fourteen volunteered, “and then another thirty, who devoted themselves with such zeal, self-sacrifice and courage that they attracted public admiration”.³³ On 5 August, feast of Our Lady of the Snow, speaking to the boarders Don Bosco said: “We should place ourselves body and soul in the hands of the Blessed Virgin (...) If you all put yourselves in the state of grace and not commit mortal sin, I promise that not one of you will be stricken”.³⁴

They were days of scorching heat, fatigue, dangers, nauseating smells. Michael Rua (17 years of age) had stones thrown at him by an angry crowd when he entered the isolation hospital; the ordinary folk thought that inside they were killing the sick. John B. Francesia (16 years of age) recalled: “How often, young as I was, I had to persuade the old people to go to the isolation hospital. – But they’ll kill me. – Whatever are you talking about? In fact you’ll feel better. And then I’m here. – Yes? Then take me wherever you want”. John Cagliero (16 years of age) was looking after the sick in the isolation hospital with Don Bosco. A doctor saw him and shouted: “This boy has no business being here! This is a very imprudent move on your part” “Don’t worry, doctor”,

³² BM V p.8. Cf. ASC 9.132 Rua.

³³ G. B. FRANCESIA, *Vita breve e popolare di D. Giovanni Bosco* (San Benigno Canavese: Libreria Salesiana, 1912) p. 183.

³⁴ BM V pp. 53.54.

Don Bosco replied. "Neither of us is afraid and nothing will happen".³⁵ John B. Anfossi at the process of beatification of Don Bosco wrote: "I was lucky enough to accompany Don Bosco on several visits to cholera patients. I was only 14 then, and I remember that I was calm and completely confident that I would not catch the disease as I nursed the sick. That's how much we trusted Don Bosco's word. His ardent spirit of sacrifice encouraged me".³⁶

With the autumn rains the epidemic came to an end. Among Don Bosco's very young volunteers not one contracted cholera.

The second example I want to remind you of is the first missionary expedition departure which happened on 11 November 1875. At the end of January Don Bosco had told the Salesians and the boys that the first missionaries would soon be leaving for the missions in southern Argentina; and on 5 February, in a circular letter he announced it officially, asking the Salesians to make themselves available.³⁷ It aroused an irresistible enthusiasm.³⁸

But among the not-so-young it caused fear and perplexity about an enterprise that seemed fool-hardy. "We have to take ourselves back to those times", – Fr Ceria writes – "when the Oratory did not yet have one might say an international atmosphere and the Congregation still had the air of a family gathered very closely around its Head".³⁹ On the day of the solemn announcement "a few of the Superiors at the sight of such elaborate display had been reluctant to take their seat on the dais. They feared that when the time came to carry out the plan it would fail for lack of personnel or means".⁴⁰ The houses opened in Italy were already numerous and the personnel the indispensable minimum. With the departure of ten missionaries (and Don Bosco did not want to send the 'rejects', but the best of the Congregation) the main works would be bled dry.

³⁵ BM V p. 64.

³⁶ BM V p. 64-65.

³⁷ Lett. 5 February 1875, E II p. 451.

³⁸ Cf. G. BARBERIS, *Cronichetta*, quad. 3, pp. 3-25: ASC A 001.

³⁹ E. CERIA, *Annali della Società Salesiana* dalle origini alla morte di S. Giovanni Bosco (1841-1888) (Torino: SEI, 1941) p. 249.

⁴⁰ BM XI p. 130.

It was difficult to imagine the huge work of Valdocco (700 boys, about sixty Salesians) without John Cagliero. At 37 he had become one of the two young columns of the Congregation: Rua, Don Bosco's silent and faithful shadow, Cagliero, Don Bosco's sharp mind and strong arm. With a degree in theology he taught the clerics. He was an incomparable director of music and composer, Spiritual Director of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians scarcely two years old. It was also difficult to take away from the fragile Salesian structure of the house at Varazze the graduate priest Joseph Fagnano. So it was with all the others who setting out for the missions undermined the Salesian forces in different works. And yet Don Bosco sent that group of Salesians to the other side of the ocean. "Who knows", – he said – "this departure, this humble beginning may be the seed that will grow into a mighty tree? It might be like a tiny grain of millet or of mustard seed that will grow little by little and accomplish great things?"⁴¹ They set out for an unknown land having as their only security Don Bosco's word. And those ten, with an act of supreme confidence in him, gave rise to the great Salesian Missions.

My heart is filled with joy looking at the Salesian world and seeing that also today we are not afraid to commit ourselves to enterprises that are courageous and humanly speaking foolhardy/imprudent. On the wretchedly poor outskirts of so many large cities where there is the danger of losing one's health and one's life among the poor youngsters there are the Sons of Don Bosco. In distant out-of-the-way places, forgotten by everyone, in villages in the Andes, in forests where threatened aboriginal tribes are living, in the endless African bush there are the joyful sounds of the Salesian oratories. If we were to forget this courage and this imprudence, if in some places we were opting for an easy life and being lazy, it is Don Bosco who calls us back to "go to them [the young] where they are to be found and provide adequate forms of service in the context of their own life style" (C. 41): "following his example, we want to meet up with them, convinced that the best

⁴¹ BM XI p. 360.

way to respond to their poverty is, in fact, through preventive action".⁴²

c) *The Sodality of Mary Immaculate founded by Saint Dominic Savio, was the small field in which the first seeds of the Salesian crop germinated*

Dominic arrived at the Oratory in the autumn of 1854, at the end of the deadly plague which decimated the city of Turin. He immediately became friends with Michael Rua, John Cagliero, John Bonetti, Joseph Bongiovanni who he used to accompany on the way to school in the city. With all probability he didn't know anything about the 'Salesian Society' Don Bosco had begun to talk about with some of his boys in January of that year. But in the following spring he had an idea that he confided to Joseph Bongiovanni. In the Oratory there were some marvellous boys, but there were also ruffians who behaved badly, and there were boys who were suffering, having difficulty in the studies and feeling homesick. Each one on his own tried to help them. Why couldn't the more willing boys join together, in a 'secret society', and become a tight group of small apostles in the middle of the others? Joseph agreed. They spoke to some others about it. They liked the idea. It was decided to call the group the "Immaculate Conception Sodality". Don Bosco gave his consent: they should try, draw up a small set of rules. He himself wrote: "One of the members who was most helpful to Dominic in setting up the *Immaculate Conception Sodality*, and in drawing up the rules, was Joseph Bongioanni".⁴³

From the minutes of the Sodality preserved in the Salesian Archives we know that the members who met together once a week were a dozen: Michael Rua (who was elected President), Dominic Savio, Joseph Bongiovanni (elected Secretary), Celestine Durando, John B. Francesia, John Bonetti, Angelo Savio a cleric, Joseph Rocchietti, John Turchi, Aloysius Marcellino, Joseph Reano, Francis

⁴² GC 26, 98.

⁴³ G. BOSCO, 'Life of Dominic Savio', in *Edifying Biographies* (Rome: UPS, 2007) p. 76.

Vaschetti. John Cagliero was missing because he was recovering from a serious illness and was living in his mother's house.

The final article of the Regulations which were approved by everyone including Don Bosco, said: "A sincere, filial, unlimited trust in Mary, a special love for her, a constant devotion will enable us to overcome every obstacle, strong in our resolve, hard on ourselves, gentle towards our neighbour, exact in everything".

The members of the Sodality decided to "look after" two kinds of boys, who in the secret language of the minutes were called 'clients'. The first category was made up of the indisciplined, those who easily swore and were not slow to use their fists. Each member took responsibility for one of them and became his "guardian angel" for as long as necessary (Michael Magone had a persevering 'guardian angel!').

The second category was made up of the new arrivals. They helped them to enjoy their first few days when as yet they didn't know anybody, didn't know how to play, spoke only the dialect where they came from and were homesick. (Francis Cerruti had Dominic Savio as his "guardian angel", and he speaks glowingly of their first meetings).

In the minutes one can see the way each meeting unfolded: a prayer moment, a few minutes of spiritual reading, an exhortation to each other to go to Confession and Communion; "there was some talk about the clients entrusted to them. They were encouraged to be patient and trust in God for those who seemed deaf and closed to all appeals; prudence and sweetness towards those who seem more easily persuaded".⁴⁴

Comparing the names of the members of the Sodality of the Immaculate Conception Sodality with the names of the first 'ascritti' (those enrolled) in the Pious Society, one has the moving impression that the 'Sodality' had been 'proving ground' for the Congregation which Don Bosco was preparing to found. It was the small field in which the first seeds of the Salesian harvest began to sprout.

⁴⁴ P. STELLA, *Don Bosco nella storia economica e sociale (1815-1870)* (Roma: LAS, 1980) p. 481.

The 'Sodality' became the yeast in the Oratory. It transformed ordinary boys into little apostles with the simplest of formulas: a weekly meeting with a prayer, a short spiritual reading, mutual encouragement to receive the Sacraments, a practical plan of how and who to help in the place where they were living, a spontaneous chat about their recent successes or failures.

Don Bosco was very happy with it. He wanted it to be transplanted in every Salesian house that was starting so that there too there might be a nucleus of committed boys and of future Salesian and priestly vocations.

In the four pages of advice that Don Bosco gave Michael Rua when he was going to found the first Salesian house outside Turin, at Mirabello (they are one of the best summaries of his educational system, and would be given to every new Salesian Rector) the following two lines can be read: "Seek to establish the Immaculate Conception Sodality. Promote it but do not act as its director. It must appear as the pupils' initiative".⁴⁵

In every Salesian house a group of committed boys called whatever we think best but a copy of the old 'Immaculate Conception Sodality'! Might not this be the secret that Don Bosco is entrusting to us once again to make Salesian and priestly vocations flourish?

3. CONSECRATED TO GOD IN THE YOUNG

That "the option for the young made by Don Bosco at scarcely 30 years of age (1844-1846), in order to become the 'mission' of the Salesians, was necessarily based on the '*humus*' of consecration"⁴⁶ had been his conviction after a long and painful apprenticeship. From the start he tried to gather round him a group of collaborators, ecclesiastics and lay people; however, no one among those first helpers will enter the Congregation. In the absence of

⁴⁵ BM VII p. 319.

⁴⁶ Cf. F. MOTTO, *Ripartire da Don Bosco*. Dalla Storia alla vita oggi (Torino-Leumann: Elledici, 2007) p. 83.

collaborators; he tried to recruit from his own nursery; in July 1849 he set on the path to the ecclesiastical state a group of four young men, who had been helping him in the Oratory; the four clerics (Joseph Buzzetti, Charles Gastini, James Bellia, Felix Reviglio) "always remained attached to Don Bosco and to his work all their lives, but they were never Salesian priests",⁴⁷ only Buzzetti will become a Brother and die a Salesian.

Who knows, perhaps it was from this experience of his that Don Bosco came to understand and defend the inseparable connection between consecration and mission in Salesian life. The diocesan priest was thus becoming "gradually... a religious, master and former of communities of consecrated persons".⁴⁸ It is clear from even the first article of the Constitutions, constantly being more clarified, that Don Bosco placed the mission to youth as the aim of the Congregation.⁴⁹ He was convinced, and it is the characteristic feature of his spirituality, that "progress towards 'holiness' is realised in the activity of service, especially for the most needy young people",⁵⁰ giving oneself to God was for him a necessary requirement for giving oneself to the young. "We consecrated ourselves to God", Don Bosco wrote to the Salesians in 1884, "to practise charity towards our neighbour solely for the love of God in order that we might not become attached to His creatures".⁵¹

3.1 Sons of *Consecrated Founders*

The group which constituted the 'Society of St. Francis of Sales' the evening of 18 December 1859, contained eighteen peo-

⁴⁷ F. DESRAMAUT, 'Don Bosco fondatore', in M. MIDALI (a cura di), *Don Bosco Fondatore della Famiglia Salesiana*. Atti del Simposio (Roma, 22-26 gennaio 1989) p. 129. Cf. MB III pp. 549-550.

⁴⁸ P. BRAIDO, *Don Bosco, prete dei giovani nel secolo delle libertà*. Vol. I (Roma: LAS, 2003) p. 435.

⁴⁹ Cf. G. BOSCO, *Costituzioni della Società di S. Francesco di Sales 1858-1875*. Introduzione e testi critici a cura di F. MOTTO [Roma: LAS 1982] pp. 72-73.

⁵⁰ F. DESRAMAUT, *Don Bosco en son temps (1815-1888)* (Torino: SEI, 1996) p. 573.

⁵¹ BM XVII p. 3.

ple, including Don Bosco; they called themselves 'enrolled'.⁵² Two of them (Cagliero and Rua) had been among those who five years earlier, on 26 January 1854,⁵³ determined to "with the help of the Lord and St Francis of Sales [...] test ourselves by performing deeds of charity towards our neighbour, then bind ourselves by a promise, and later, if possible and desirable, make a formal vow to God".⁵⁴ About three years after that 18 December, on 14 May 1862, now twenty-two in number they became consecrated persons, the first 'Salesians', making the first official vows,⁵⁵ while Don Bosco himself offered himself "in sacrifice to the Lord, ready to bear anything for His greater glory and the welfare of souls".⁵⁶

In the minutes of the 'Superior Chapter', dated 14 May 1862, we can read:

"The members of the Society of St. Francis of Sales were called together by their superior. Most of them (*who had completed the year of novitiate*) confirmed their allegiance to the fledgling Society by formally pronouncing triennial vows. The ceremony took place as follows:

"Wearing a surplice, Don Bosco, our superior, asked us to kneel; then kneeling himself, he began to recite the *Veni Creator* (...), there followed Our Lady's Litany. (...) These prayers over, all the members loudly and clearly pronounced their

⁵² Of the eighteen two were priests, Don Bosco and Don Alasonatti, one a lay man (Giuseppe Gaia) and the rest clerics, whose average age was under twenty one (Cf. P. STELLA, *Don Bosco nella storia economica e sociale (1815-1870)* [Roma: LAS, 1980] p. 295.

⁵³ This year was to be the "watershed" between the times of the Oratory and those of the Salesian Society, according to A. J. LENTI, *Don Bosco. History and Spirit*. III: Don Bosco Educator, Spiritual Master, Writer and Founder of the Salesian Society. Edited by A. GIRAUDO (Roma: LAS, 2008) pp. 312.316-319.

⁵⁴ BM V p. 8. The other two involved on that day 26 January 1854, with Cagliero and Rua, were Rocchietti and Artiglia. Rocchietti, while not being among those called together on 18 December 1859, is in the group of those professed 14 May 1862. Cf. also E. CERIA, *Vita del servo di Dio Don Michele Rua*, primo successore di San Giovanni Bosco (Torino: SEI, 1949) p. 29.

⁵⁵ Of those called together on 18 December 1859 three do not arrive at the first profession on 14 May 1862: Marcellino Aloysius, Pettiva Secondo and Rovetto Anthony. Eight others join during the three year period: Albera Paul, Boggero John, Gaia Joseph, Garino John, Jarac Aloysius, Oreglia Frederick, Rocchietti Joseph, Ruffino Dominic.

⁵⁶ BM VII p. 102. Cf. FDB 1873, *Episiodario* 5-6.

vows together according to the formulary (...)... and signed their names in a special register, as follows (*in sacris* (with holy orders) Fr. Alasonatti Victor. Fr. Rua Michael, Fr. Savio Angelo, Fr. Rocchietti Joseph, Fr. Cagliero John, Fr. Francesca John. Bapt., Fr. Ruffino Dominic; the clerics Durando Celestine, Anfossi John. Bapt., Boggero John, Bonetti John, Ghivarello Charles, Cerruti Francis, Chiapale Aloysius, Bon-giovanni Joseph, Lazzerio Joseph, Provera Francis, Garino John, Jarac Aloysius, Albera Paul; and the lay members Chevalier Oreglia Frederick of S. Stefano, and Gaia Joseph".⁵⁷

Fr Bonetti, in his chronicle, continues: "Twenty-two of us, besides Don Bosco, who was kneeling by the table on which the crucifix stood, took vows as prescribed by our rules, repeating the formulary, phrase by phrase as Fr Rua read it. Afterwards Don Bosco alone stood up and gave us a few comforting words of encouragement... Among other things he said: «(...) One may wonder: – Did Don Bosco make these vows too? – Well: as you were making your vows before me, I too was making them in perpetuity before this crucifix; I offered myself in sacrifice to the Lord, ready to bear anything for His greater glory and the welfare of souls, particularly the souls of the young. May the Lord help us to be faithful to our vows (...). My dear sons, we live in troubled times (...) *I have sound reasons – not mere probable ones – that it is God's will that our Society be born and grow.* (...) Everything leads us to believe that *God is with us* (...) Who knows but that the Lord may wish to use this Society to achieve much good in his Church! (...) Twenty-five or thirty years from now, if the Lord continues to help us, as He has done so far, our Society, may count a thousand members *in different countries*".⁵⁸

In the list of the 22 mentioned in the minutes there are eight new names all young or very young, from twenty-two year old Dominic Ruffino to the seventeen year olds Paul Albera and John Garino.

⁵⁷ BM VII p. 101.

⁵⁸ BM VII pp. 102-103. Cf. FDB 992, *Epistolario* 10. – The italics are mine.

Don Bosco only allowed his sons to make the first perpetual vows, with which one consecrates oneself to God for the whole of life, after having completed triennial vows. The minutes record: "On November 10 1865, in the presence of Father John Bosco, rector, Father John Cagliero and Father Charles Ghivarello, witnesses, and all the members of the Society of St. Francis of Sales, Father John Baptist Lemoyne (*26 years of age, a priest for three years in the diocese of Genoa, who had come 'to help Don Bosco'*) made the vows of chastity, poverty and obedience in perpetuity in accordance with the prescribed ritual".

"On November 15 – again the minutes record – in the presence of all the members of the Salesian Society, Fathers: Michael Rua, John Cagliero, John Baptist Francesia, Charles Ghivarello, John Bonetti, the clerics Henry Bonetti and Peter Racca, and the laymen Joseph Gaia and Dominic Rossi took perpetual vows in the presence of Father John Bosco, rector".⁵⁹

On 6 December added to the list of the 'perpetually consecrated' were Father Celestine Durando, layman Frederick Oreglia and the clerics Aloysius Jarach, Joseph Mazzarello and Joachim Berto.⁶⁰ As Don Bosco had explained many times in his conferences in preparation for the vows 'consecrated' means "someone belonging to God", "vowed to God". In Don Bosco's way of speaking 'consecration', 'profession', 'holy vows' become synonymous.

John Bosco always considered himself 'consecrated'

John Bosco had always thought of himself as 'belonging to God'. On fine summer nights, Mamma Margaret and her children would go outside their little house and sit down to enjoy the fresh air on the door step (which is still there worn down with time but still a silent witness). They would look up at the only 'video' there was in those days: the sky full of stars. His mamma would say quietly: "It's God who has created everything, and put so many stars up there". And John felt surrounded by the mysterious presence of that great

⁵⁹ BM VIII p. 126.

⁶⁰ Cf. BM VIII p. 127.

invisible Person, who had given life to everything, including himself. And his mother taught him to discover him everywhere: in the heavens, in the beautiful fields, in the face of the poor, in his conscience which speaks with his voice and tells him: "You have done well, you have done wrong", He felt he was 'immersed in God' and to be 'God's'.

This is the greatest gift his holy mother gave him. John Bosco made his 'consecration to God', quite unconsciously as a little boy, holding his mother's hand.

John Bosco didn't need to kneel down to pray. He prayed in the early morning when his mother got him up on his knees on the floor in the kitchen beside his brothers and his mother. Then 'he spoke to God', prayed, therefore, everywhere: on the grass in the hay, rounding up a cow that had strayed, looking up at the heavens: at the Moglia farm Mrs Dorothy and her brother-in-law John one day found him kneeling "a book dangling from his hands; his eyes were closed his face turned towards the sky",⁶¹ and they had to shake him so absorbed he was in his meditation. The years when he was a young country boy were years "in which the sense of God became more deeply rooted in him, as did contemplation to which he became accustomed in solitude and in speaking to God during his work in the fields".⁶²

Little by little prayer became for John Bosco (country-boy, student, seminarian, priest) the atmosphere that surrounded every activity without breaking its rhythm. Pope Pius XI, who as a young priest had spent only two days with the sixty-eight year old, noticed it: it was an atmosphere that filled Don Bosco's every action. And he described it in five words: "Don Bosco *was with God*".

The Pope requests consecration with vows

In 1857 Don Bosco confided to his spiritual director Fr Cafasso the difficulties he was encountering in trying to make his

⁶¹ BM I p. 147.

⁶² P. STELLA, *Don Bosco in the history of Catholic Religious thought and practice*. Vol. I: Life and Works [Roma: LAS, 1979²] p. 36.

Work stable and secure. He had thought that a serious promise on the part of the best of his collaborators to stay and work with him would have been sufficient. But the facts did not bear this out; he did not succeed in holding on to the boys and clerics to help him with his enterprise. Fr Cafasso after only a brief period of reflection replied: «What you absolutely need is a religious congregation (...) What you need is a society with vows approved by the Holy See. Only then could you have control of its members».⁶³

Not convinced, Don Bosco also consulted Bishop Losana of Biella. Then he wrote a letter to his archbishop exiled in Lyon, Archbishop Fansoni. The reply to this was “to go to Rome to receive the advice and instructions of Pius IX”.⁶⁴

Don Bosco obeyed his archbishop and in the introductory part of the *Rules of the Society of St. Francis of Sales*, 1877 Edition,⁶⁵ he wrote: “The first time the supreme Pontiff spoke of the Salesian Society, he said: «In a religious congregation or society vows are necessary, so that all its members may be united by a tie of conscience to their superior, and the superior holds himself united with the Head of the Church, and as a consequence with God Himself»”.⁶⁶

Practically everyone told him that “the seed cannot sprout upwards (*mission*) unless at the same time its roots spread downwards” (*consecration*).

Don Bosco did not hesitate any further. He was convinced that his helpers too in addition to staying with him and becoming like him needed ‘to be God’s’ in order to be able to devote their whole lives to the salvation of youth: “In young people who felt drawn to remain with Don Bosco, the idea of giving oneself to God ear-

⁶³ BM V p. 452.

⁶⁴ BM V p. 463.

⁶⁵ In this Introduction, “in the writing of which D. Bosco got the help of Fr D. Barberis and others”, “the gospel and spiritual principles of religious life were highlighted” (G. BOSCO, *Costituzioni della Società di S. Francesco di Sales 1858-1875*. Introduzione e testi critici a cura di F. MOTTO [Roma: LAS 1982] p. 20).

⁶⁶ *Regole o Costituzioni della Società di S. Francesco di Sales* secondo il Decreto di Approvazione del 3 aprile 1874 (Ed. Torino 1877) ‘Ai Soci Salesiani’, p. 19.

ly was translated into an attraction to the priestly or religious state".⁶⁷

3.2 Don Bosco's teaching to his Salesians

To the Salesians, "Don Bosco speaks about the Salesian Society as a seer and prophet (...) The person joining Don Bosco becomes part of a divine plan. Like Don Bosco, individual Salesians are chosen and predestined to be instruments of God's glory and the salvation of souls".⁶⁸

At the beginning of the book of the Rules, Don Bosco writes a long letter 'To the Salesian Confreres', forty page which the Salesian novices read and studied for a hundred years. Don Bosco extensively presents the gospel principles and his thoughts on religious life, consecration, the vows, Salesian life. At the end he writes: "Receive these thoughts as a memento which I leave you before departing for eternity towards which I feel myself rapidly drawing close".⁶⁹

Here then the "core" and at the same time the jewel in the crown of these pages on our consecration and our vows. With veneration let us listen to this 'testament' of our Founder.

The consecrated person

With our vows "we consecrate ourselves to God and place our will, our possessions and our physical and moral faculties in the power of the Superior so that we may all form but one heart and one soul in order to promote in accordance with our Constitutions the greater glory of God. (...) The vows are a generous offering.

⁶⁷ P. STELLA, *Don Bosco in the history of Catholic Religious thought and practice*. Vol. II: Religious outlook and Spirituality [New Rochelle, New York: Salesiana Publishers, 1996] p. 399.

⁶⁸ P. STELLA, *Don Bosco in the history of Catholic Religious thought and practice*. Vol. II: Religious outlook and Spirituality [New Rochelle, New York: Salesiana Publishers, 1996] p. 409.

⁶⁹ *Rules or Constitutions of the Society of St Francis of Sales* according to the Decree of Approval 3 April 1874 (Ed. Torino 1875) "To Salesian confreres", p. XLI.

(...) The Doctors of the Church are also wont to compare the religious vows to martyrdom, saying that what the vows fall short of in respect of intensity is made up for by duration".⁷⁰

"The man who consecrates himself to God in religion... lives with greater purity of heart, of will and of action, and consequently his every action and his every word are spontaneously offered to God with purity of body and of heart".⁷¹

"Through the observance of the religious vows, occupied with what redounds to the greater glory of God... (*the consecrated person*) can freely concern himself with the service of the Lord, entrusting every thought about the present and the future in the hands of God and of his Superiors who take His place".⁷²

"Whoever gives a cup of water for love of the heavenly Father will have his reward. One then who abandons the world, renounces every earthly satisfaction, gives his life and all he possesses to follow the Divine Master, what reward in heaven will he not have?"⁷³

"In all our duties, in all our labours, troubles and afflictions let us never forget that since we are consecrated to God, from Him alone we can expect our reward. Most minute is the account He keeps even of the least thing that is done for His Holy Name, and it is of faith that in His own good time He will reward abundantly. When at the end of life we shall present ourselves at His tribunal he will say to us with a loving countenance: "Well done thou good and faithful servant, because thou hast been faithful over a few things; I will place thee over many; enter into the joy of thy Lord".⁷⁴

⁷⁰ *Rules or Constitutions of the Society of St Francis of Sales* according to the Decree of Approval 3 April 1874 (Ed. Torino 1875) "To Salesian confreres, p. 25.

⁷¹ *Ivi* p. 16.

⁷² *Ivi* p. 17.

⁷³ *Ivi* p. 18.

⁷⁴ *Ivi* p. 53.

The Holy vows

Obedience

"True obedience which makes us dear unto God and to our Superiors consists in doing cheerfully whatever is commanded us by our Constitutions or by our Superiors themselves, who are the guarantors of our actions before God...; it consists in showing ourselves docile even in things that are most difficult and contrary to self-love, and in performing them courageously even when they cost us pain and sacrifice. In these cases obedience is more difficult but it is also more meritorious and leads us to the possession of the kingdom of Heaven". The consecrated person "with great confidence can say with St. Augustine: «Lord, give me what you command, and command what you will»".⁷⁵

Poverty

The consecrated person "is considered as literally possessing nothing, having made oneself poor to become rich with Jesus Christ. He is following the example of our Saviour Who was born in poverty, lived deprived of all things and died stripped of his raiment on the Cross". (...)

"It is true that at times we shall have to suffer some inconveniences in our journeys and labours, in time of health or of sickness. We shall sometimes have food, clothing and other things which are not to our liking; but it is precisely in these cases that we ought to bear in mind that we have made profession of poverty, and that if we wish to have its merit and reward we ought to bear its consequences. Let us be well on our guard against a sort of poverty highly censured by St Bernard. "There are some", he says, "who glory in being called poor, but will not bear the consequences of poverty...There are others too who are content to be poor provided they want for nothing".⁷⁶

⁷⁵ *Ivi*, pp. 27

⁷⁶ *Ivi* pp. 28.29.

Chastity

Chastity is “the virtue that is supremely necessary, the great virtue, the angelic virtue to which all the others form the crown... Our Saviour assures us that those who possess this inestimable treasure become even in this life like to the angels of God”.

“Do not enter into the Salesian Society before you have consulted some prudent person who will judge if you are likely to be able to preserve this virtue”.

And almost at the end of the long letter, Don Bosco concludes: “Whoever consecrates himself to the Lord with the holy vows makes an offering that is most precious and most pleasing to the Divine Majesty”.⁷⁷

The dream of the consecrated Salesian Society

At the end of 1881 Don Bosco (66 years of age) picks up his pen and writes to all the Salesians about a dream he had on the night between 10 and 11 September. It is the famous ‘*dream of the diamonds*’. He was walking with the Rectors of the Salesian houses when

“a man of majestic mien – so majestic that none of us could fix our gaze on him – appeared among us (...) He was clad in a rich mantle (...) The scarf was inscribed in luminous letters: *The Pious Salesian Society in 1881* – and on the ribbon were the words: *What it ought to be*. Ten diamonds of extraordinary size and brilliance adorning that august person kept our gaze from being fixed upon him (...)

“Five diamonds adorn[ed] the back of his cloak (...) the largest and most brilliant sparkled in the very centre and on it was written: *Obedience*. The diamond to its upper right read: *Vow of poverty* (...) On the diamond to the upper left was written: *Vow of chastity* (...) Their rays resembling tongues of fire flickered upward forming various maxims. (...)

⁷⁷ *Ivi* pp. 30.31.41.

On the rays of Obedience: *The foundation of the whole edifice, and a précis of sanctity.* On the rays of Poverty: *Theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Riches are thorns. Poverty is not made of words but is in the hearts and deeds. Poverty will open the gates of heaven and enter in.* On the rays of Chastity: *All virtues came with it. The clean of heart will see God's mysteries and God Himself (...).*

"A light shone, focusing on a poster which read:: *"The Pious Society as it runs the risk of being in the year of salvation 1900"* (...) The same august person appeared again (...) His cape was faded, moth-eaten and threadbare. Where each diamond had previously been set there was now a gaping hole (...) In the place of Obedience there was only a gaping hole and no inscription. In the place of Chastity: *Concupiscence of the eyes and pride of life.* Poverty was replaced by: *Comfort, clothes, drink and money.*

We were now all filled with fear"

Don Bosco continues the account saying that at that moment the gentle voice of a young man addressed them:

"Servants and instruments of Almighty God, listen and understand. Take heart and be strong. What you have seen and heard is a heavenly warning sent to you and to your confreres. Take it to heart and try to understand it...

"Preach unceasingly in season and out of season. However, make sure that you always practise what you preach, so that your deeds may be a light, which may be passed on to your confreres from generation to generation as a solid tradition.

"Take heed and understand. From morning to night ceaselessly meditate on the observance of the Constitutions.

"If you do this the hand of the Almighty will never fail you. You will be a model to the world and to the angels and your glory will be the glory of God"(...)

Don Bosco concludes his manuscript with these words: "The dream lasted almost the entire night, so that, come morning I was

totally exhausted (...) Our Society is blessed by God but He asks us also to do our share. The evils threatened will be warded off if we preach about the vices and virtues pointed out to us. If we practise what we preach, we shall be able to hand on to our confreres a practical tradition of what we have done and shall do (...) Mary Help of Christians - Pray for us".⁷⁸

A Salesian historian has said that in this dream there is little dream and a great deal of fatherly exhortation from our Holy Founder. It could well be. This takes away nothing from the force of what is said (taken for the most part from the Bible) which Don Bosco, and the Lord, gives to his sons. It ought to be the guidelines for our life and the subject of our meditation, so as to walk in the spirit of 'Salesian consecrated persons'.

4. OUR CONSTITUTIONS, THE WAY OF FIDELITY

4.1 The first photograph Don Bosco wanted

In November 1875, Don Bosco was about to fulfil his dream of sending the first Salesian missionaries to South America, to Patagonia. And for the first time in his life he wanted a photograph taken. It was to immortalise the event, to make it widely known, and to serve as a stimulus to the Salesians and to their boys. So he turned to the most distinguished photographer in Turin, Michael Schemboche.⁷⁹ In the photographer's studio he posed with the ten missionaries in 'formal dress'. The photograph shows in its details the great importance Don Bosco wanted to give to the event: those about to leave are dressed in the Spanish manner with the characteristic cloak and the missionary crucifix is clearly visible on all of them; the Argentine Consul is in dress uniform; Don Bosco is wearing the cloak and the skull-cap as on those great occasions

⁷⁸ C. ROMERO, *I Sogni di Don Bosco*. Edizione critica (Torino: Elle Di Ci, 1978) pp. 63-71; cf BM XV, pp 148-151

⁷⁹ G. SOLDA, *Don Bosco nella fotografia dell'800*. 1861-1888 (Torino: SEI, 1987) p. 124.

when he goes to see the Pope, and he is posing as he hands to the head of the expedition Fr Cagliero a book: it is the Rule of the Salesian Society. He wanted to highlight this gesture which for him had a deep significance.

Don Rua, his Successor will write: "When the Venerable Don Bosco sent his first sons to America, he had himself photographed in the act of handing Fr John Cagliero, who headed the expedition the book of the *Constitutions*. How many things Don Bosco was saying with that gesture! It was as though he were saying: «You will cross the seas, you will go to places unknown, you will have to deal with people of different languages and customs, you will perhaps be exposed to great trials. I should like to accompany you myself, to comfort you, console you, protect you. But what I cannot do myself this little book will do. Guard it as a precious treasure»".⁸⁰

4.2 A long and thorny path

My dear confreres I invite you to trace with me the long and thorny road that that "little book" of our Rules cost our Holy Founder.

After having founded our Society, Don Bosco had to write a Rule (or Constitutions) for it and obtain the approval of the ecclesiastical authorities. It was the norm to obtain first diocesan and then eventually pontifical approval. But since in those years the Archbishop of Turin was exiled in Lyon and contacts with him through a third party (not very favourable to Don Bosco) were difficult our Founder considered turning directly to the Pope.

He thought that it was a simple matter that would not take long. In fact, the first draft (1858) was the point of arrival after over a decade of educational experience he had gained in the Oratory. There were 58 articles divided into nine short chapters. They said quite simply that the Society would be composed of ecclesiastics and lay people, united by the vows, wishing to consecrate them-

⁸⁰ *Lettere circolari di Don Rua ai Salesiani* (Torino: Tipografia Salesiana, 1910) p. 409.

totally exhausted (...) Our Society is blessed by God but He asks us also to do our share. The evils threatened will be warded off if we preach about the vices and virtues pointed out to us. If we practise what we preach, we shall be able to hand on to our confreres a practical tradition of what we have done and shall do (...) Mary Help of Christians - Pray for us".⁷⁸

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⁸⁰ *Lettere circolari di Don Rua ai Salesiani* (Torino: Tipografia Salesiana, 1910) p. 409.

selves to the welfare of poor youth and to 'support the Catholic religion' among the ordinary people 'by word and writings'.

The pages reflected an atmosphere a peaceful familiarity, the Superior was the papà of a large family. The spirituality which emerged was simple and rooted in the Gospel. The members consecrated themselves to God, in imitation of Christ, the 'divine Saviour' who 'began to do and to teach'. And their mission was to consist in the practice of charity towards the young, especially the poorest, and towards 'ordinary folk'. This was the extremely simple charism the new religious Society was intending to bring to the Church.

Four years before a law signed by the Minister Rattazzi had suppressed 'religious corporations', that is to say the orders and congregations, and had 'confiscated' their houses and goods. This law, first applied only in Piedmont, was about to be extended to the whole of Italy. So that this would not happen to his Society, Don Bosco (on the advice of the Minister himself, who held him in great esteem) inserted an article in which it was stated that the Salesians would be totally religious before the Church but citizens who retained their civil rights before the State. This formulation (which had in fact pleased Pope Pius IX) was an absolute novelty, which threw open new prospects/opportunities for the Church: by adopting it, Religious would no longer have been subject to harassment on the part of the State.

As regards "a simple matter that would not take long" Don Bosco was mistaken. From a first draft (in 1855) until the definitive approval almost twenty years would pass.⁸¹ Don Bosco suffered greatly as a result. This is how he summed up that painful journey: "Our poor rules were being taken apart and insurmountable difficulties raised with every word. Those who could have done the most for me were determinedly opposed".⁸² This complaint of Don Bosco was not without cause: as can be seen from "the corrections, the additions,

⁸¹ Cf. M. WIRTH, *Da Don Bosco ai nostri giorni*. Tra storia e nuove sfide (Roma: LAS, 2000) p. 145.

⁸² MB IX p. 228. In this last line Don Bosco is referring to the serious obstacles presented by Archbishop Gastaldi, who had become Archbishop of Turin in 1871.

the re-castings which alternate throughout the almost twenty years during which the text was being formulated, ...those poor notebooks, those simple and tormented pages bear witness to how much the production of certain articles and chapters cost Don Bosco".⁸³

The main criticisms were addressed to two points on which Don Bosco never budged: the distinction in every Salesian between the 'religious' subject to the Church and the 'citizen who preserved his civil rights' (the reference to 'civil laws' caused concern, because it could appear as a recognition of the State which was persecuting the Church); and the faculty of the Superior of the Congregation to admit to sacred orders those Salesians he considered worthy.

On 3 April 1874 the text of the Rule, re-touched in some points was finally approved. But for the final step the personal vote of the Pope Pius IX was required. The historical-spiritual *Proemium* was suppressed and the 'normalisation' of the novitiate and of the studies assimilated; in addition the formula 'civil rights' was changed to 'radical control of his own property', and the 'faculty to admit to orders was granted only as a 'privilege' for ten years'.⁸⁴

Don Bosco, with a telegram from Rome, launched the great celebration in Valdocco, where they waited and prayed for the long-desired approval. But he also confessed that, 'if he had known before what it would cost him perhaps his courage would have failed him'.

4.3 Sacred nature of the Rule approved by the Church

Immediately afterwards on Don Bosco's own part there began a feeling of respect faced with the new sacred nature acquired by the Salesian Rule. That little book was no longer a battle field where corrections, additions, changes were made and unmade. It was the exposition (preserved substantially intact in the course of the long fight) of the very simple charism which the new religious Society humbly brought to the Church and which the Church approved.

⁸³ G. BOSCO, *Costituzioni della Società di S. Francesco di Sales 1858-1875*. Introduzione e testi critici a cura di F. MOTTO [Roma: LAS 1982] p. 15.

⁸⁴ Cf. M. WIRTH, *Da Don Bosco ai nostri giorni*. Tra storia e nuove sfide (Roma: LAS, 2000) pp. 154-155.

“Our Constitutions”, – he wrote in the letter ‘to the Salesian confreres’ with which the book of the Rules opens – “were definitively approved by the Holy See on 3 April 1874. This fact... assures us that in observing our rules we rest upon a firm, secure and I may add, infallible basis, since the judgement of the Supreme Head of the Church sanctioning them is infallible”.⁸⁵ With his practical sense Don Bosco immediately continues: “Yet no matter what its inherent value may be this approbation would be of little avail, if the rules were not known, and faithfully observed”.⁸⁶

4.4 The constant recurring theme of Don Bosco and of Don Rua

From that moment the observance of the Rule (that is of the consecration and the mission) become Don Bosco’s constant theme tune. In the circular Letter of 6 January 1884 he says and repeats, insists and renews this invitation:

“Keep our rules, the rules that Holy Mother the Church condescended to approve for our guidance and the welfare of our souls, for the spiritual and temporal welfare of our beloved pupils. We have read and studied these rules, and now they represent the object of our promises and vows that consecrate us to Our Lord. I, therefore, implore you with my whole soul never to allow any word of regret, or worse yet, of sorrow ever to escape from you for having thus consecrated yourselves to Our Lord (...)

“Some of you may well say that it is hard to observe the rules. Observance of the rules will be hard for anyone who observes them reluctantly or is therein neglectful. But to those who are diligent, who are solicitous for the welfare of their souls,

⁸⁵ *Regole o Costituzioni della Società di S. Francesco di Sales* secondo il Decreto di Approvazione del 3 aprile 1874 (Ed. Torino 1877) ‘Ai Soci Salesiani’, p. 3. It should be noted that when in 1875 Don Bosco used these expressions in the introduction to the first printed version of the approved Constitutions scarcely five years had passed since the definition of papal infallibility at Vatican Council I.

⁸⁶ *Ivi* p. 3.

such observance becomes an easy yoke, as Our Divine Saviour said and a light burden only (...)

"Then, too, my dear children, do we then expect to go to Paradise in a riding carriage? (...) We consecrated ourselves to God to obey, not to give orders; [...] to practise charity towards our neighbour solely for the love of God, in order that we might not become attached to His creatures. We did not intend to live a life of ease, but to be poor with Jesus Christ and to suffer here on earth with Jesus Christ, in order to become worthy of His glory in Heaven".⁸⁷

Don Rua, the first successor of Don Bosco, called 'the living Rule' and today Beatified, called the Rule: "The book of life, kernel of the Gospel, hope of our salvation, measure of our perfection, key of heaven. Venerate it as the most beautiful memory and the most precious relic of our beloved Don Bosco!"⁸⁸

4.5 The renewal of the Constitutions

After the Second Vatican Council, a Special General Chapter (1971-1972) was called to entirely re-draft the Constitutions, taking into account the two requirements indicated by the Council: to return to the original charism of the Congregation and to adapt the Constitutions to the needs of the times.

There were about seven months of intense work "in a lively and sometime tense atmosphere between the traditionalists and those in favour of change, between the demands of unity and those of decentralisation, or also between those of a central authority and those of co-responsibility".⁸⁹

In their contents and in their style the renewed Constitutions became "a Rule of Life less juridical than spiritual, which not only formulated prescriptions, but gave gospel, theological and Sale-

⁸⁷ *Lettere circolari di Don Bosco e di Don Rua ed altri loro scritti ai Salesiani* (Torino: Tipografia Salesiana, 1989) pp. 21-22. cf BM XVII, pp 2-3

⁸⁸ *Lettere circolari di Don Rua ai Salesiani* (Torino: Tipografia Salesiana, 1910) p. 123.

⁸⁹ M. WIRTH, *Da Don Bosco ai nostri giorni. Tra storia e nuove sfide* (Roma: LAS, 2000) p. 451.

sian motivations”.⁹⁰ The renewed Rules were ‘*ad experimentum*’ for six years and then for another six years.

In 1984 the XXII General Chapter, after further demanding work, approved the definitive text of our renewed Rule. This text, finally, was approved by the Holy See on 25 November 1984. The Rector Major Fr Egidio Viganò, seventh Successor of Don Bosco, in the closing address of the General Chapter was able to say: “It is a well-structured text, profound, improved, imbued with the Gospel, rich in the authentic spirit of the origins, open to universality and looking towards the future, temperate and dignified, full of well-balanced realism and of the assimilation of the principles of the Council. It is a text that has been re-thought collectively in fidelity to Don Bosco and in response to the challenges of the times”.⁹¹

4.6 The words of the testament

In the last three years of his life Don Bosco wrote in instalments in a little note book his ‘spiritual testament’. The irregular and tortured hand-writing reveal his poor eyesight and his physical tiredness. The style simple, solid, efficient. The person who prepared the critical edition writes: “One can read in it, as in a mirror, Don Bosco’s self-portrait (...) Faced with certain passages, it is difficult not to feel in the presence of a ‘sacred’ text, it is so imbued with words that are not empty nor fleeting”.⁹² In this ‘testament’, Don Bosco devotes five small pages to greeting his Salesians. I give here the essential words:

“My dear and beloved sons in Jesus Christ
Before leaving this world for eternity, I wish to fulfil a duty
towards you...

First of all I thank you with the most ardent affection of my
soul for the obedience you have given me and for all you have
done to sustain and propagate our Congregation (...)

⁹⁰ M. WIRTH, *ivi* p. 452.

⁹¹ CG 22, 134 (ACG 311 (1984) p. 139).

⁹² F. MOTTO, ‘Memorie dal 1841 al 1884-5-6. A’ suoi figliuoli salesiani’, in P. BRAIDO (a cura di), *Don Bosco Educatore. Scritti e testimonianze* (Roma: LAS 1992) p. 391.

Do not grieve over my death (...) Instead of weeping make firm and efficacious resolutions to remain staunch in your vocation until death (...)

If you have loved me in the past, *continue to love me in the future by the exact observance of our Constitutions* (...)

Adieu, dear children, adieu. I wait for you in heaven. There we shall speak of God, of Mary, the Mother and support of our Congregation (...); there we shall bless eternally this our Congregation, the observance of whose rules will have powerfully and efficaciously contributed to our salvation".⁹³

This testament contains precious and demanding words for all of us. I believe, that after the Gospel, the Rule Book ought to become the second book in our daily meditation. It will be the constant nourishment of our Salesianity, and the fulfilment of the warning in the 'dream of the diamonds': "let your morning and evening meditation be on the observance of the Constitutions".

5. DON BOSCO FOUNDER OF "AN VAST MOVEMENT OF PERSONS WHO, IN DIFFERENT WAYS WORK FOR THE SALVATION OF THE YOUNG" (C. 5)

Brought into existence 150 years ago as a Society we have become more aware that our Father had not thought only of us but had always wanted to create "a vast movement of persons who in different ways work for the salvation of the young" (C. 5). We were thought about as evangelisers and as animators of a charismatic Family. The SGC in fact said this: "Don Bosco was supernaturally inspired to create a community of religious from within his family of which the specific function was to act as a life-giving stimulant for the self-same mission. He attained his objective by degrees, establishing bonds of friendship with the better boys, testing them in practical works of charity towards their neighbour, next bind-

⁹³ F. MOTTO, *ivi*, 410-411. cf. "Constitutions and Regulations 2nd ed. 2003 pp 269.270

ing them by promise and finally guiding them on to religious consecration by vows. Thus the first Salesian community came into existence".⁹⁴

5.1 "The Sons of the Oratory scattered all over the earth"

Professor of education Joseph Rayneri, in a short publication in honour of Don Bosco wrote: "On Sunday afternoon in 1851 (*Don Bosco was 36 and it was still eight years before the founding of the Salesian Society*) the Oratory held a lottery drawing. There were many winners and everyone was happy. At the end Don Bosco flung caramels in all directions from the balcony to satisfy many a sweet tooth. Naturally this bountifulness resulted in more and louder shouts and cheers. When Don Bosco finally came down into the playground he was hoisted on their shoulders and carried in triumph with wild enthusiasm. One of the boys who was soon to don the clerical habit said to him: "Don Bosco how wonderful it would be if you could see the whole world studded with oratories!" On hearing that remark (I seem to see him even now) he turned his gaze to the horizon majestically and lovingly, and he answered, "Who knows? The day may come when Oratory boys will really be scattered all over the earth!"⁹⁵

Today whoever looks at the world sees that Don Bosco was a prophet.

5.2 The vast network of the Salesian Family

Don Bosco was not one to raise hopes that were but false, he was not a peddler in fine but empty words. Don Bosco was a great strong tree. Within him he had the divine life and he gave it. We the Salesians are the finest and richest fruit of his total consecration to God and of his passion to see young people, especially the poorest and those at risk, reach the fullness of human and Christian life.

⁹⁴ SGC, 496.

⁹⁵ BM IV p. 221.

But we are not the only fruit of this strong and large tree. "The Salesians", the SGC declared, "cannot fully re-think their vocation in the Church without reference to those who share with them in carrying out their Founder's will. Consequently they are seeking a greater union of all, whilst preserving the genuine diversity of each",⁹⁶ this is required by the one shared Salesian vocation, considering that it is a question of the same divine call "to realize in an organic though complex way the salvation of poor and abandoned youth according to the spirit of Don Bosco".⁹⁷

And Don Bosco sees 'the sons of the Oratory scattered all over the earth', a vast network of people who dedicate their lives to young people who are poor and at risk, with the same passion for God and the children of God that he had. This vast network, at the beginning made up of groups Don Bosco himself founded – first the 'Society of Saint Francis of Sales', then the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, the Association of the Salesian Cooperators and the Association of Mary Help of Christians – gradually expanded and formed the great Salesian Family containing today 26 groups.

Other groups have also begun which are waiting for the necessary conditions to be fulfilled in due time to be officially recognised as members of the Salesian Family; in the meantime the ground is being prepared in which other groups could also come to light.

We Salesians, the first-born nucleus bursting into life in the heat of Don Bosco passion, are being called by him to have *a wide heart*, which welcomes and recognises as brothers and sisters all the members of the Salesian Family; *a welcome that is grateful for and rejoices in the diversities*, as manifestations of the Spirit who speaks in many tongues; *the willingness to walk together* towards a shared goal: the Kingdom of God to be brought to the young and the poor.

⁹⁶ SGC, 151.

⁹⁷ SGC, 171.

5.3 What Don Bosco heard and saw

Fr Julius Barberis, appointed by Don Bosco 1874 'master of novices' for the whole Salesian Society, at Don Bosco's 'beatification process' declared under oath that in 1876, when Don Bosco had opened only three houses, he told how in a dream he had seen the Congregation spreading to all parts of the world. "People of every race colour and nation, were gathered there [...] I saw many Salesians leading groups of boys and girls; they were followed by other Salesians with more groups; and more came after them and still more whom I did not know until they became a huge blur. They were numberless".⁹⁸

A year later in January 1877, in his usual St. Francis of Sales annual conference speaking to "all the Oratory confreres, novices and aspirants" he mentioned a seed that was to be sown the work of the Salesian Cooperators: "It has hardly come into existence and it already numbers many members (...) Soon enough masses of people and entire cities will be united by the Lord into a spiritual bond with the Salesian Congregation (...) We shall live to see the day when entire cities and nations will differ from us Salesians only in the fact that their people will live in their own homes. If the Cooperators now number one hundred they will soon be thousands and thousands, and if they number one thousand, they shall become millions. However we must admit only those who qualify. I hope this is what God wants of us".⁹⁹

Today we can see before our eyes not as something static but dynamic not stopped but reaching out towards the future what Don Bosco heard and saw in the dreams in which God in a mysterious manner opened up the future to him. "To his Salesians", comments Fr Stella, the plans Don Bosco gives "are grandiose if not utopian".¹⁰⁰ The Salesian Family is one of these grandiose

⁹⁸ BM XII p. 338.

⁹⁹ BM XIII p. 61.

¹⁰⁰ P. STELLA, *Don Bosco in the history of Catholic Religious thought and practice*. Vol. II: Religious outlook and Spirituality [New Rochelle, New York: Salesiana Publishers, 1996] p. 373.

plans; that it doesn't remain utopian will depend on all of us, the members of this Family of Don Bosco.

CONCLUSION

My dear confreres, I have invited you to tell the story of the beginnings of our Congregation. Well then, I have made a first attempt. However, I have done so not just calling to mind what happened but trying to learn from the past; our beginnings are the best guide for us to continue to write Salesian history vigorously and fruitfully. I wanted to identify some elements which to my mind were determining in the success of this marvellous project of God: the young men, their identity as consecrated apostles, fidelity to Don Bosco by means of the Constitutions, the awareness of being an integral part of the Salesian Family, of having an indispensable role of animation within it.

It doesn't seem to me an exaggeration to affirm that at the beginnings of the Congregation the **young men** were real "co-founders" with Don Bosco; some young men in fact constitute the first nucleus engaged in setting itself up as a Society or Congregation. It is my hope that this anniversary will renew in every Salesian the courage to propose to the young the Salesian consecrated vocation and will open up a period of great vocational fruitfulness.

The celebration of the 150th anniversary of the birth of our Congregation ought to help us to be conscious of our **identity as consecrated persons**, vowed to the primacy of God, to the following of Christ, obedient, poor and chaste, totally dedicated to the young. We ought to live this identity of ours with joy and manifest it in evangelising zeal and with pastoral passion, inspired by Don Bosco's plan of life, expressed in the motto "*da mihi animas, cetera tolle*".

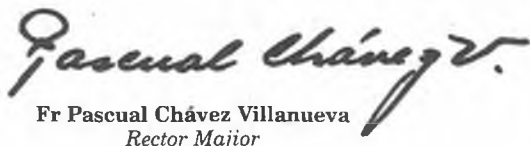
The realisation that the whole of Don Bosco can be found in the Constitutions and that our fidelity to him passes through fidelity to our Project of Life becomes an appeal to us to study deeply, med-

itate and pray the **Constitutions**, which show us the path of fidelity to Don Bosco's charism and to our vocation; indeed I would say that only the Salesian who makes the Constitutions his plan of life becomes the incarnation, the living image, of Don Bosco today. This journey of conversion for an ever more complete living out of the commitment to holiness traced out in the Rule of Life will lead each one of us to renew our religious profession on 18 December, the day of the anniversary, as the starting point for a renewed offering of our lives to God for the young. Just like Don Bosco.

Finally, the growing awareness that Don Bosco was not thinking only of a Congregation, but always wanted to create a "*vast movement of persons who in different ways work for the salvation of the young*" (C. 5), ought to remind us that, as a Congregation, we have within the **Salesian Family** a particular responsibility for unity of spirit and fraternal collaboration. We cannot live outside what is our family; it cannot grow and multiply without us, its animating heart.

I entrust to Mary Most Holy the Mother of God and the Help of Christians, each and every one of you, while we celebrate the Annunciation of the Lord, and happy and grateful we recall the 75th anniversary of the Canonisation of our beloved Founder and Father Don Bosco. Mary Help of Christians and Don Bosco will help us to live joyfully, generously and faithfully our Salesian vocation and to find in it the path of our sanctification.

With affection and best wishes,


Fr Pascual Chávez Villanueva
Rector Major

2. GUIDELINES AND DIRECTIVES

2.1 FORMATION OF THE FORMATION GUIDES FOR INITIAL FORMATION

Fr Francesco CEREDA

General Councillor for Formation

During the last six-year period, around the Congregation an assessment was carried out into the quantitative and qualitative consistency of the formation communities. Following this, the Rector Major with the General Council approved the “Guidelines for Initial Formation” in relation to each of the eight Regions. In this way a process began which is still being implemented, and which is bearing among its fruits a more determined process of inter-province collaboration and a more serious commitment to the setting up of strong teams of formation guides.

At the same time each Province has undertaken a study into vocation frailty. This has fostered greater attention to the causes and the expressions of this phenomenon; but so far the problem continues to be unresolved. Frailty cannot be solely attributed to the subjective state of the young men who nowadays are coming into Salesian consecrated life; it also depends on the weakness of the formation procedures and for it to be overcome there is a need for formation guides who are able to face the challenges to formation coming from post-modernity and from relativism.

At the beginning of the new six-year period a further step needs to be taken in which we will be engaged in the formation of formation guides. We have only to think that in 2008 the Congregation had 515 novices; 220 perpetually professed, of whom 20 Salesian Brothers and 200 Salesian clerics; 222 priestly ordinations. The figures indicate the vast task of the considerable number of formation guides involved in initial formation. These make a notable contribution to the formation of the younger generations of Salesians and provide a valuable service for which we are grateful.

On the other hand, we are aware that to carry out such a crucial task careful formation of the formation guides is more than

ever needed. If, for example, we think about the phenomenon of “those leaving” we become aware of the new and urgent challenges to formation. In 2008, 109 novices, 216 temporarily professed, 19 perpetually professed clerics and brothers left the Congregation while 62 Salesians priests joined the diocesan clergy or were dismissed or dispensed from celibacy. Therefore it is to foster the appropriate formation of formation guides that these guidelines and suggestions are offered.

1. PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS

Every Salesian, because of his familiarity with accompaniment, with educational matters, his ability to create situations for making suggestions, which he has acquired while working with young people, is potentially a formation guide. The task of formation therefore is not entirely unknown to him, in that it has a certain affinity with apostolic work. Such a task however, requires greater commitment and skill, because what is involved is the formation of consecrated Salesian vocations. It is a matter of a great responsibility which requires suitability and preparation. It is the responsibility of Province government and of the various “Curatoria” to ensure that suitable formation guides are chosen and sound teams are set up. These two requirements come before any formation for formation guides which sets out to be effective.

Selection of suitable formation guides. There are many gifts required for someone who is selected to be a formation guide. Nowadays the following are essential: a spirit of faith, a pastoral sense, a desire for communion, a tendency towards collaboration, human maturity and mental balance, an ability to listen and for dialogue, a positive yet critical approach to culture.¹ It is a question of gifts of both nature and grace, innate one might say; and at the same time of attitudes to be gradually matured through study, dis-

¹ Cf. CONGREGATION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION, *Directives on the preparation of educators in seminaries*, Rome 1993, 12-20.

cussion, experience and the spiritual life. All these gifts are necessary but today's challenges require about all a capacity for communication, able to reach the person being formed in depth. Formation guides therefore should be carefully chosen on the basis of these requirements. Each Province ought to have its own group of formation guides; they ought to constitute almost a shared "school of thought and practice". In fact, only the creation of a shared mentality, methodology, contents and criteria regarding formation, in other words a Province formation culture, guarantees the quality and the continuity of the formation procedures.

Setting up teams which are strong, stable and motivated. The other necessary requirement in order to have good formation communities and qualified study centres, is the setting up of strong, stable and motivated teams of formation guides and of teachers.² There is often a way of thinking in initial formation which attributes excessive importance to personal conversation between the formation guide and the one in formation. There is no doubt that the spiritual guide plays a crucial role, but that should in no way minimise the need for a team of formation guides. It is only together that they contribute to the integral and harmonious development of the individual in formation, to the suitability of the formation plan, to consistency in the criteria of discernment. In addition one cannot ignore the fact that formation also depends on the formation atmosphere, which the formation guides with their way of living and interacting are able to create. It should be noted that in the pre-novitiates and novitiates often real formation teams do not exist, since the work of formation is entrusted to an individual; in these cases there are dangers especially regarding vocational discernment. It is necessary therefore to set up real teams.

² Cf. FSDB 239. It should be observed that not all formation guides are teachers, but on the other hand that all teachers are formation guides; the group of teaching staff therefore ought to give more importance to the formation of its members. It is also worth pointing out that it is not necessary and sometimes it is not appropriate for all the teachers of a centre of studies to belong to the formation community; while having time for study they can also live and work in other communities.

2. PRIORITY TASKS OF FORMATION GUIDES

1. Helping in the transformation of an individual

Looking at the formation communities, one can see that a considerable amount of time and effort is taken up with conferences, lessons, studies, investigations, exams. These are things formation demands, but often they are reduced to no more than the teaching or the learning of ideas or simple facts. Certainly, in this way minds are stretched, useful things are learned; one acquires a new way of looking at life. It cannot be said, however, that this brings about in those in formation a change in mentality.

In fact, it is not enough to know more. What is needed is to reach the inner individual, his heart. "Formation should therefore have a profound effect on the individual"³ helping him to bring about a change of attitude, of convictions, of motivations, sentiments and feelings. It is necessary therefore that the subject matter proposed, the methods used and the experiences gained foster the transformation of his inner self and his conversion.

For example, it is possible to have brilliant conferences or lectures about the theology of prayer, but if this does not help in producing a love for prayer, in encouraging participation in community prayer, of infusing work with a spirit of prayer, in evoking a lively desire for personal prayer, one can legitimately question the formative effectiveness of the process. Facts are not enough therefore; a way of transformation has to be found.

Obviously the main responsibility for someone's own interior transformation rests with the person in formation. He alone can be aware of his personal convictions, interpret his own life-story, listen to the voice of his own conscience, bring about the transformation which he sees to be necessary in his own life. This is why one can say quite correctly that only the individual can form himself. Formation "is ultimately a self formation. No one can

³ JOHN PAUL II, *Vita consecrata*, 65.

replace us in the responsible freedom that we have as individual persons".⁴

In this process of the transformation of the one in formation, the teachers who are called by the "Ratio" "true formation guides",⁵ have an important role. Learning demands study, revision, reflection and personal synthesis. Teachers know that there is a danger that lectures encourage in those in formation a passive listening attitude, but that they have a determining function when they involve those taking part, offer motivation, mature convictions, engage the affections, speak to the heart. On account of this the teachers, using "active teaching methods",⁶ help the one in formation to look at himself, to assess his own ideas and attitudes, to cultivate criteria for making judgements, to adopt values, to acquire a culture which is consistent with the Gospel and with the Salesian consecrated vocation.

2. Accompanying the indepth work of the individual

To assist with the transformation of the one in formation, nowadays in Salesian formation we need to give priority to the method of personalisation, for which unfortunately we are not yet sufficiently prepared. The change in the way of thinking on the part of the formation guides and those in formation and the acceptance of a formation practice which is consistent with this method are just at the beginning. Personalisation consists mainly in assisting the one in formation to take responsibility for his own formation, and to act through personal conviction and not in order to conform with the surroundings, to overcome formalism and fear and especially to work in giving depth to his own motivation, attitudes and affections. Sometime on the other hand formation still concentrates too much on control and not on accompaniment.

⁴ JOHN PAUL II, *Pastores dabo vobis*, 69.

⁵ FSDB 240.

⁶ FSDB 241. Cf. also FSDB 133, which speaks about "a method of teaching [...] that fosters assimilation and synthesis".

The taking up of this method by formation guides and those in formation is especially necessary, given vocational frailty, the complexity of the state of society and the challenges posed by post-modernity. It is necessary to help the one in formation to take a look inside himself, to examine his inner world, to interpret his own states of mind and to understand where these are coming from. The inner journey is a long and difficult one and today's culture in no way offers it any encouragement; and yet it is the most effective for a person's formation. With the help of grace and of the formation guides, the one in formation comes to know himself deeply, and to accept himself with serenity, to work on his weaknesses and immaturity, to strengthen his conscience, to take on responsibility and to make decisions.

To help in this various means are useful, all aimed at the "management" of the inner world: personal prayer, in which the one in formation opens himself to the action of God in the depths of his own heart; the daily examination of conscience, which helps with "confessio laudis, vitae et fidei"⁷ and is preparation for the frequent celebration of the sacrament of Reconciliation; personal reflection, through which he makes his own motivations and convictions; the ability to find moments of silence during the day, which help recollection and concentration on oneself; self-discipline in organising one's time especially in time-tabling the evening hours of rest and getting up in the morning, which re-enforces the capacity to make personal decisions; communication of the faith and the sharing of spiritual experience, which leads him to face up to his own inner self; the personal plan of life, with which he accepts responsibility for his own formation; the assessment of various experiences including those of the apostolate which help him to know himself better and to plot the progress he has made; the friendly chat, spiritual direction and the celebration of the sacrament of Reconciliation, which demands that he faces up to himself in the different aspects of his life; personal study also undertaken reflectively which brings

⁷ Cf. P. CHÁVEZ, *"Lord to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life". Word of God and Salesian Life Today* in AGC 386, Rome 13 June 2004, pp. 40-42

added dimensions to his spiritual and apostolic life. It is up to the formation guide to know how to help the one in formation to make good use of these means, in such a way that he draws profit from them for his own vocational development.

3. Fostering the primacy of the spiritual life

The personal effort at inner transformation and the in-depth work undertaken by the one in formation have a goal, a focal point: the “putting on of Jesus Christ”,⁸ In fact “formation is the process of becoming more and more a disciple of Christ, growing in union with and in configuration to him. It is a matter of taking on increasingly the mind of Christ, of sharing more deeply his gift of himself to the Father and his brotherly service of the human family”.⁹

It is therefore necessary that the formation guide is in love with Jesus and that he knows how to communicate this experience. He needs to arouse in the one in formation a fascination with the person of Jesus, the desire to be identified with Him and a commitment to share his sentiments. It is the fire of the love for Jesus which begins and sustains the whole transformation process of the life of the one in formation. Human formation becomes growth towards Jesus, the free and perfect man; spiritual formation is the progressive construction of union with God; intellectual formation consists in a cultural preparation capable of contributing in a effective manner to the mission of Jesus; educative pastoral formation is achieved in becoming a good shepherd of the young following Jesus. The unifying centre of formation is always Jesus; in this way we become believing disciples and believable apostles of Jesus.

While, on the one hand, the person in formation is the “necessary and irreplaceable agent in his own formation”,¹⁰ on the other

⁸ Cf. Rom 13, 14; Gal 3, 27; Eph 4, 24.

⁹ CIVCSVA, *Essential Elements in the Church's teaching on Religious Life*, 45.

¹⁰ JOHN PAUL II, *Pastores dabo vobis*, 69.

the Spirit is *par excellence* the one who forms someone who consecrates himself to God. In this way formation becomes participation by the one in formation in the action of the Father who through the Spirit, fashions in his heart the sentiments of the Son.¹¹ This means that the first place in formation belongs to the grace of God and to the action of the Spirit. Mary allowed herself to be formed by the Spirit, in promptness and obedience, in this way becoming the mother of her son Jesus; in this she is the model for those who freely allow the Spirit to form them. It is precisely the Spirit, who working invisibly in hearts as the master of the interior life, who also makes use of visible human instruments: formation guides.¹² Through them He accomplishes the work of forming Jesus in the one who is called to follow him more closely.

The formation guide therefore, aware of his “spiritual” task and sensitive to the promptings of grace, helps the one in formation to make himself available and to allow himself to be formed by the action of the Spirit. He points out to him the less obvious obstacles, suggests how he might overcome his hesitations and fears, and above all shows him the beauty of following the Lord Jesus. The formation guide accompanies the one in formation, living as a brother at his side in daily life in cordial collaboration and helping him to assess the progress made, discern his own vocation and grow in it.

Precisely for this reason the formation guide is careful not to impede the motions of the Spirit in his own life, so as to be able to be his docile instrument in the delicate task of formation. Obviously he is not called upon to have the specific skill of a psychologist, but to be a man of the spirit, an expert in the path of seeking God, so as to be able also to accompany others in this journey. In the light of spiritual and anthropological wisdom, he does however know how

¹¹ Cf. *Vita Consecrata* 66. A similar expression is found in the Exhortation *Pastores dabo vobis* 69, where it is said that the candidate “in the first place, must grow in his awareness that the agent *par excellence* of his formation is the Holy Spirit, who by the gift of a new heart configures and conforms him to Jesus Christ the good shepherd”.

¹² Article 104 of our Constitutions calls formation guides “instruments through whom the Lord is working”.

to bring together the contribution of the psychologist and the helps offered by the human sciences when these can be of use.¹³

4. Communicating Don Bosco's charism

For us Salesians, the characteristic way of conforming ourselves to Christ consists in identification with Don Bosco: "Our living Rule is Jesus Christ [...] whom we find present in Don Bosco".¹⁴ For us the words of Paul can be applied to Don Bosco: "Be imitators of me as I am of Christ".¹⁵ He was a good shepherd; he knew how to win everyone over with meekness and the gift of himself; he expended his whole life for the young. The Salesian charism, "while it effects a particular configuration to Christ, creates a distinct Gospel awareness that permeates a Salesian's entire life, his style of holiness and the accomplishment of the mission".¹⁶ Then the Constitutions, which are the presence of Don Bosco among us,¹⁷ spell out our way of living the Gospel and of identifying ourselves more and more with the Lord Jesus. Even our style of life and action "finds its model and source in the very heart of Christ, apostle of the Father".¹⁸

The formation guide therefore cultivates a deep affection for Don Bosco; he studies him, he holds him in esteem, he prays to him. He has a clear perception of his own Salesian identity and a strong sense of belonging to the Congregation. He appreciates and sounds the depths of the spiritual and pedagogical wealth of Salesian tradition. His is a lived and joyful experience of the Salesian charism.

He infuses in these in formation his love and enthusiasm for Don Bosco. He leads them to take as their own the motto *Da mi-*

¹³ Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Vita consecrata*, 66. Cf. also CONGREGATION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION, *Guidelines for the Use of Psychology in the Admission and Formation of Candidates for the Priesthood*, Rome 29 June 2008

¹⁴ Constitutions 196.

¹⁵ 1 Cor. 11,1.

¹⁶ FSDB 28.

¹⁷ Cf. Introduction to the Constitutions.

¹⁸ Constitutions 11.

hi animas cetera tolle, echoing the yearnings of Christ the Redeemer.¹⁹ He communicates in a vital and attractive manner his own experience of Salesian life, accompanying it with the teaching of the Constitutions and Salesian spirituality, of the customs and the history of the Congregation. He provides Salesian experiences which foster appropriate attitudes and behaviour. Serious study of Salesianity in all the phases of initial formation demands well qualified teachers. The identity of the Salesian Brother and of the Salesian priest which is being formed needs to be, finally, ever more characterised by the charism of Don Bosco.

In this way the contribution of the formation guide ensures that “called to become like Christ, in the footsteps of Don Bosco, every Salesian must nurture a relationship with our Founder, take the Constitutions as his “book of life”, keep himself attuned to the Congregation’s understanding of its charism, be acquainted with and follow its guidelines, particularly those of General Chapters and of the Rector Major and his Council, and strengthen his sense of belonging to his Province”.²⁰

5. Working as a team in a spirit of communion and with co-responsibility

From what has been said so far and from a comprehensive view of formation, it is quite clear that the field of formation is a vast and complex one and that no individual formation guide, no matter how gifted and prepared, can expect to be capable of competently managing all the aspects of formation on his own. It therefore really is necessary that the formation guides in a formation community, inspired by a “spiritual experience of communion and cooperation”,²¹ show a spirit of cohesion and collaboration. They act as a team, cooperating with complementary roles and contributions and

¹⁹ Cf. FSDB 30.

²⁰ FSDB 47.

²¹ Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Vita consecrata*, 50.

“ensuring a unified and complete organization at the service of formation”.²²

The formation guides within the team and their role are more-over linked to the various aspects of the formation experience: the human and fraternal, the spiritual, the intellectual, the educative and pastoral. Therefore of particular importance are the roles of the animator – the one in charge of fraternal and community life, of the liturgical and spiritual life, of the studies, of pastoral experiences and naturally of the economer. These animators – the ones in charge carry out their responsibilities as a form of team-work, in other words, in a spirit of co-responsibility for decisions taken and for the agreed criteria under the guidance of the Rector.

Important aspects of team-work are planning the processes of formation, the implementation of formation procedures and itineraries, reflection on what has taken place, formation assessments through scrutinies, discernment and admission procedures. Nowadays one of the weaker aspects of team-work is the failure to give sufficient attention to or the inability to prepare adequate courses of formation, in particular those which regard affective life, prayer, poverty and a simple life style, “personal media”. Another element that is also neglected in team-work is the practice of discernment; we have excellent “Criteria and norms” but they are not always known and not always used as points of reference for a serious vocational discernment process.

3. NEED FOR THE FORMATION OF THE FORMATION GUIDES

In the light of the priority tasks of the formation guides indicated above, it is observed that nowadays in the Congregation most of the formation guides have not received and currently are not receiving any or scarcely any specific preparation for formation. Often the Provinces prepare formation guides by getting

²² FSDB 234.

them to obtain a degree in some particular field of study; this sort of qualification is necessary for the culture of the formation guide and as preparation for his teaching role, but it is not sufficient for his formation task. In most cases, after their studies the confreres are immediately placed in the formation teams without adequate preparation.

The lack of personnel who are prepared is especially evident in the pre-novitiate phase which continues to be the most sensitive and difficult phase because of the challenges that have to be faced. In not a few cases it happens that those who are appointed as Rectors or in charge of the pre-novitiate have not received the preparation needed. There is no doubt that life is a great teacher; a great deal can be learned from daily experience. However, the fact remains that the quality of formation would be much higher, if there had been an adequate preparation. One comes across a similar lack in the preparation of formation guides as spiritual directors. One also sees little attention given to the formation of the formation guides in practical training, which in this area is the formation phases most neglected.

For a number of years the Congregation has been experiencing a fall in vocational fidelity; there are a considerable number of confreres who are leaving after perpetual profession and priestly ordination. There are a variety of reasons for this phenomenon; they also raise questions about the process of vocational discernment and initial formation. Nowadays there are certainly challenges to formation that are new and previously unheard of, but it is also true that quite a number of formation guides often find themselves unprepared and incapable of dealing with them, especially when it is a question of helping those in formation to cope with their inner world of emotions and fears, attitudes and motivation and to build up a psychological maturity, an affective balance, a firm faith.

In addition one has the impression that after many years of initial formation, the final result of the formation process does not match expectations and the efforts made, especially in terms of a sound cultural foundation, of spiritual depth, of human maturity,

of apostolic passion. For example, it is significant that in formation communities the personal plan of life is a common practice; whereas on the other hand, during practical training and especially after perpetual profession and priestly ordination it is given up by a good number of confreres. The completion of the course of studies or the transition to the next phase of formation are not sufficient to ensure a good formation; what is needed on the part of the formation guides is the appropriate methodology for a personalised formation, one that forms long-term convictions and helps those in formation to take on board responsibility for formation.

Initial formation is the fundamental resource for the future of the Congregation, but for it to be effective, investment in the formation of the formation guides is urgent. It is necessary to learn the art of formation and to qualify oneself for the task of formation; but it is especially the formation guide himself who needs care and attention. He needs to know himself, to identify the weak areas of his own personality, to be aware of his own vulnerability, to know how, as far as is possible, to make up for what is lacking. Otherwise he runs the risk of projecting his weaknesses onto the one in formation and not being capable of helping him to face up to his inconsistencies. He is called upon to be a witness to that maturity he is recommending to the one in formation.

Therefore the formation of the formation guide has a twofold and fundamental purpose: providing care and attention for the formation guide himself and at the same time making him capable of carrying out his task of formation, going beyond a mere essentialist or functionalist view of him. It is a question of ensuring that there be an appropriate rapport in the formation guide between life and action, for if it is true that action flows from life or being, it is equally true that his actions shows the sort of person he is.

4. OCCASIONS FOR FORMATION

There are particular occasions which together contribute to the formation of the formation guides. These are important for

every formation guide, every formation community, Province and Region. While care must be taken to form the individual guides, their formation as a team must not be neglected; this requires the acquisition of a formation culture at the level of the community, province, region and congregation. These are particular and specific moments to be coordinated, so as not to clash with each other or lead to useless repetition, but they are all necessary.

1. Self-formation on the part of the formation personnel

The formation of the formation guides requires above all that they be well-motivated so as to undertake their own ongoing formation and prepare themselves better for their task. We are not speaking here of their being up-to-date in their teaching, which nevertheless is a duty to be fulfilled. However, without their being well-motivated no effort regarding the formation of the formation guides will be successful. It is therefore necessary that they look at themselves, examine their own attitudes and question themselves about their ongoing formation. It can be seen that often they have a variety of commitments; even during the holidays they generously accept the many forms of apostolate asked of them. However, if they are convinced of the need for their own self-formation or for a better preparation for their role as formation guide, they need to be able to make space for themselves, perhaps during the holidays, to attend some course or programme that could help them with their formation. It should not be forgotten that without their good example it becomes very difficult to persuade those in formation to pursue their self-formation.

2. Formation of the formation guides within the formation community

It is also important for the guides in a formation community to meet together periodically, under the guidance of the Rector to re-

flect and share about themselves as guides, about the subject matter and methodology of formation and the formation process. It is advisable to plan an annual programme for such meetings with specific dates and topics. These are different from the times required by the normal work of formation such as the planning and assessment of the formation procedures, the planning for the year, the scrutinies or the admissions; it is a question of occasions for real formation. They help the formation guides to further study their roles and profit from each others' experience; especially they serve to create and strengthen a sense of there being a community of life and of their being a formation team. The formation guides learn to work "according to the mind and practice of the Congregation and the Province, as described in the present *Ratio* and the Provincial Plan; they make their own the overall view of formation as a gradual, continuous, structured and unified process to be implemented in a Salesian manner";²³ they bring together the criteria of formation and of discernment.

3. Formation of the formation guides within the Provincial community

The annual meeting which lasts at least two days, for an exchange of ideas and the updating of all the formation guides in the Province is likewise valuable. Chaired by the Provincial Delegate for Formation this meeting can become for the formation guides "a true and proper school for their ongoing formation".²⁴ In fact it is an excellent opportunity in which to give further thought to formation topics, reflect on the positive and the negative aspects of the formation process, get to know the "Ratio" and the "Criteria and Norms", develop a unified approach regarding the criteria for vocational discernment and for admissions in the Province, foster continuity in methodology and in accompaniment among the dif-

²³ FSDB 235.

²⁴ FSDB 239.

ferent phases of formation. Sometimes this meeting can take on an inter-provincial character where there exist forms of collaboration in formation.

4. Formation of the formation guides at Regional level

Formation at Regional level also has its importance, since it provides a valuable opportunity for an exchange of ideas between the formation guides from different Provinces concerning problem areas in the formation field and the variety of experiences. It has been asked for from every Region in the Project of the Rector Major and the General Council for this six-year period. It is a useful form of support and mutual help in further reflection on formation issues, in the preparation of initiatives and aids, and in the drawing up of common Criteria. The success of these meetings depends on a good preparation and on the systematic planning of topics which are of interest to the formation guides. The need is felt for this meeting to be annual one. In some Provinces most of the formation guides are able to take part; in others the distances involved suggest that meetings be limited to those responsible and to formation guides from two or three successive phases. It is advisable that these meetings take the form of work-shops. The Regions and the Formation Department take responsibility for holding them.

5. Formation of the formation guides at Congregational level

We have seen that it is necessary to pay attention to the Salesian identity of our formation; for this reason it really is important to form the formation guides where this identity is assured and deepened. In particular our Salesian Pontifical University, precisely because of the accompaniment and the responsibility of the Rector Major and also the closeness of the Councillor for Formation with its courses seeks to guarantee charismatic identity in

formation. It regularly offers two courses specifically for the formation of formation guides.

The first is an up-dating course; it takes place every year from the middle of February until the end of May; with the title "Course of ongoing formation for formation guides", its aim is to make those who are already formation guides and want to update their preparation pedagogically and spiritually suited. The other course of "formation for formation guides", lasting two years, is provided in collaboration by the Faculties of Theology and of Education, with the award of a Licence in Spiritual Theology or Education; it provides theoretical knowledge and a study of methodology but also practical exercises in undertaking the tasks of guidance, discernment, formation, 'counselling' and vocational accompaniment; it also draws on the expertise associated with spiritual and moral theology, pedagogical methodology and psychology.

These two courses are an indication of the desire and the commitment of the Congregation to prepare its own formation guides. It is up to the Provinces to take account of their need to ensure that there are personnel adequately prepared for the formation communities, and therefore to take advantage of these two courses.

During this six-year period we have also decided to take practical steps to provide a school for the formation of spiritual directors, which while dealing with accompaniment will develop the subject matter and the methods proper to our own Salesian tradition, updated to meet current needs. We also recognise the urgent need to prepare Salesian psychologists to back up the work of the formation guides and help those in formation in their development; in this area too the UPS offers sound academic courses for the preparation of professional psychologists.

* * *

In the letter the Prefect of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated life and Societies of Apostolic Life, Cardinal Franc Rodé, sent to the Rector Major after the GC26, with regard to formation in our Congregation he says "It is good to note how the

new formation challenges are being accepted and especially how knowledge and a more faithful implementation of the Salesian 'Ratio formationis' are making progress so that in formation communities there should not develop a plurality of criteria which do not contribute to a correct application and a convergence of views at the time of admissions. (cf. *Relazione del RM al CG26*, p. 36)".

In addition, in this letter it is said: "The most complex challenge that the Congregation needs to face demands a serious search for a method of formation focused and effective, especially for the initial phases of formation. The Magisterium of the Church constantly indicates commitment to formation as a priority for every Institute, recommending that 'formation should therefore have a profound effect on individuals, so that their every attitude and action, at important moments as well as in the ordinary events of life, will show that they belong completely and joyfully to God' (*Vita consecrata* 65). The presence of many varied cultures in the Salesian Society without doubt makes the search more complicated and discernment more demanding".²⁵

These suggestions too offer us a clear view of the main problems we need to face up to in initial formation and at the same time provide an encouragement and stimulus for our commitment to the formation of the formation guides. We are aware of this and so we accept the responsibility.

²⁵ F. RODÉ, *Letter to the Rector Major of the Salesians after the GC26 on the state of the Congregation*, Rome, 22 December 2008.

4. ACTIVITIES OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL

4.1 Chronicle of the Rector Major

– December 2008

On Monday 1st December 2008 the Rector Major, with all the Councillors returned for the winter plenary session of the Council, went to the house of “San Tarcisio” in Rome, to spend the day together. They had dinner with all the communities making up the San Callisto complex. After Mass they returned to the Generalate. Then in the evening the Rector Major had a talk with Bishop Luc Van Looy.

On Tuesday 2, in the morning the Rector Major had a meeting with Fr Sergio Pellini and Fr Pier Luigi Zuffetti, to study together the project for a pilgrimage of the casket of Don Bosco in the Provinces of the Congregation, starting from July 2009. At 11.00 the *winter plenary session of the General Council* began. In the afternoon the Rector Major had a meeting with Fr Erminio De Santis, Superior of the Madagascar Vice Province.

In the following days sessions of the Council were interspersed with meetings and talks with the Councillors and various confreres. These included taking part with Fr

Francesco Cereda in the afternoon of Wednesday 3rd in a meeting of the Academic Senate of the UPS.

On Saturday 6, with Fr Fabio Attard, Councillor for Youth Ministry, the Rector Major left for *Malta* to take part in the closing celebrations for the centenary of the Salesian Oratory in Sliema.

On their arrival they were welcomed by the Superior of the Delegation, Fr Paul Formosa, the confreres, members of the Salesian Family and youngsters. In the afternoon he called on the Archbishop Paul Cremona O.P. and afterwards visited the ‘Dar Osanna Pia’ work, where he had a meeting with the young immigrants living there. Afterwards he went to Senglea, where he visited St Philip’s House. There he presided at evening prayer during which the Rector Fr Victor Mangion was installed. He then stayed for supper with the confreres.

On Sunday morning 7, he went to the island of Gozo. He celebrated Mass in the chapel of the Oratory, at the end of which he paid a visit to the Bishop Mario Grech, and then had lunch with the FMA. In the evening after having re-

turned to Malta, he attended the show "Elements" put on by Saint Patrick's Oratory. He then visited the Boys' Residence and had supper with the confreres.

On Monday morning 8, he visited the 'Bazan' complex, the 'Dar Don Bosco' residence and the centre for Salesian Youth Ministry Services. He then went to 'Savio College' for a meeting with the young people of the SYM, at the end of which he gave an interview to Radio Maria. In the evening he presided at Mass in the Co-Cathedral in Valletta and concluded his visit with supper in the Hilton Hotel with the Salesian Family.

On Tuesday morning 9 the Rector Major returned to Rome. On his arrival he greeted the *recently appointed Provincials who had come to take part in a course organised for them*, as an opportunity for reflection, formation, and sharing about the carrying out of their ministry. The Rector Major then chaired a session of the General Council and in the afternoon spoke to the Provincials, explaining the purpose of the course and introducing the work.

In the course of the week, in addition to the daily meetings of the General Council the Rector Major met in turn the Provincials who had come for the course, the Coun-

cillors and other people. These included Cardinal Ivan Dias, Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples who the Rector Major with his Vicar met on Wednesday afternoon 10.

On Saturday morning 13, the Rector Major preached and led a day of recollection for the Provincials.

On Monday 15 Fr Chávez spent the morning in the offices of the USG, of which he is President. In the afternoon at the UPS he had an annual meeting with the confreres of the Vice Province. On the way to the University he called in at the FMA Generalate to see Mother Antonia Colombo, who had just returned from hospital.

On Tuesday 16 in the morning he took part in the start of the proceedings with a group of advisers (Dr. Luciano Fiorese, Dr. Fabrizio Lucci, Dr. Enrico Oliso) who are helping with the training meeting for Provincials. In the afternoon with Fr Bregolin, Fr Cereda and Fr Frisoli, he went to the Lateran University for the *laudatio* of Archbishop Angelo Amato, in the presentation of his work "Gesù, identità del cristianesimo".

On Wednesday 17, sharing in the mourning for the death of Fr José Antonio Rico, he asks Fr José Miguel Núñez and Fr Luis On-

rubia to represent him at the funeral in Madrid.

The work of the Council continues during the rest of the week, together with the visits and talks. On Friday 19, after the session of the Council the Rector Major meets the Provincials for the conclusion of their formation course. At 13.00 he assists at the Christmas greetings for the lay staff of the Generalate.

Saturday 20 is a day of meetings, and visits from confreres and members of the Salesian Family who have come to offer their good wishes for a Happy Birthday to the Rector Major. At mid-day he presides at Mass.

On Monday evening 22, with Fr Adriano Bregolin, he goes to the Vatican where he has a talk with Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone and supper with the Salesian community.

On Tuesday 23, the Rector Major, with all the General Council have a day of recollection at Genzano, in the Novitiate House, in preparation for Christmas.

On Wednesday morning 24, Fr Chávez, with his Vicar goes to the Generalate of the FMA to wish Mother Yvonne and the Sisters of the Council in residence a Happy Christmas.

At Midnight he presides at Mass with the community of the Gener-

alate. On Christmas morning he celebrates the solemnity of the Birth of the Lord with the community of the FMA Novitiate. Between 26 and 30 December he takes a few days rest with his secretary in the house of the FMA at Sant'Agnello.

Having returned to Rome, Tuesday afternoon 31 December he goes to the Generalate of the FMA for the *presentation of the Strenna for 2009*, after which he returns to present the Strenna to the Community of the SDB Generalate, followed by the Te Deum in thanksgiving to the Lord for all His Blessings bestowed during the year coming to an end.

- *January 2009*

The Rector Major begins the new year on the Solemnity of the Mother of God celebrating Mass with the community of the *Auxilium*.

On Friday afternoon 2 January at the "Salesianum" the *International Congress on the "Preventive System and Human Rights"* begins and will conclude on Tuesday 6, the Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord. The Rector Major takes part in the Congress speaking on a number of occasions and also being involved in television interviews on 4, 5 and 6. During free moments he also sees several confreres and also

the staff of VIS and of 'Missioni Don Bosco'.

On Thursday 7 the meetings of the winter session of the General Council begin again and are his priority, although he does have some personal meetings and other engagements.

On Saturday 10 from 9.00 until 12.30 he presides at the 'Curatorium' of the UPS, held at the Generalate. In the evening with the Vicar and the Economist General he goes to the Vatican for the installation of the new Rector of the Salesian community Fr Pietro Migliasso.

During the following week, while the meetings of the General Council continue, other significant events include the joint meeting of the two General Councils SDB and FMA on Wednesday 14 January, and participation in the feast of Blessed Luigi Variara on 15 January when he presides at Mass in the parish church of Our Lady of Hope followed by supper with the community of the Daughters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary at the UPS celebrating the feast of their Founder.

On Friday 16 he goes to Verona for a medical check-up. Having returned to Rome he resumes his normal work together with visits and talks. Among these are a meet-

ing with His Eminence Cardinal Joseph Zen SDB, on Saturday 17.

On Monday afternoon 19, he greets the members of the Council of Administration of the UPS and offers best wishes to the Rector Magnificus Fr Mario Toso on his name-day. In the evening he goes to the 'Sacred Heart' house in Rome with members of the General Council for a meeting with the Council of the Circumscription of Central Italy (ICC).

On Thursday morning 22, the Rector Major receives the Superior General of the 'Missionary Sisters of Mary Help of Christians', Sr. Mary Thadavanal.

From the afternoon of 22 until Sunday 25 January he takes part in the *Spirituality Days of the Salesian Family*, being held in the 'Salesianum'. He has a number of meetings and talks during these days. On Friday afternoon 23 he gives an interview for *Sat2000* (television channel of the Church in Italy) and afterwards has a meeting with Sr. Maria Sompong Thabbing, Superior General of the Sisters Handmaids of the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

On Monday 26, after evening prayers, as usual he gives the "Good Night" to the Community of the Generalate informing them about the activities of the General

Council in the Plenary Session December 2008 - January 2009.

The winter plenary session concludes with the final meeting on Tuesday morning 27 January. In the afternoon the Rector Major gives an interview to Vatican Television and then later gives a conference to the community of the Crocetta, in Rome on pilgrimage.

The Rector Major gives two other interviews on the next couple of days: on 29 January for the TV *News Agency Rome Reports* and on 30 for Radio *Il Sole - 24 Ore*.

On Friday afternoon 30 with his secretary Fr Juan José Bartolomé, he leaves for Turin. Welcomed by the Provincial Fr Stefano Martoglio, he visits the Agnelli Salesian centre for the opening of the new Fiat automobile workshops. He stays for supper with the confreres of the community and then goes to Carmagnola, the birth place of Michael Magone, the 150th anniversary of whose death is being celebrated. At Carmagnola the Rector Major presides at a Mass commemorating Don Bosco's young pupil.

He returns to Turin where on Saturday 31, he celebrates the *Solemnity of Saint John Bosco*. In the morning he visits the "Andrea Beltrami" Community; then he has a meeting with those responsi-

ble for the "Don Bosco Missions Office", Fr Pier Luigi Zuffetti, and before lunch with His Eminence Cardinal Severino Poletto, Archbishop of Turin who had come to Valdocco to celebrate Mass. In the evening the Rector Major himself presides at Mass in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians.

- February 2009

Early on Sunday morning 1 February the Rector Major returns to Rome from where at mid-day he leaves again for Frankfurt, Germany, with Fr Adriano Bregolin and Fr Juan José Bartolomé. Welcomed by confreres from the Salesian community in Mainz, they spend the night there.

Next morning with his companions Rector Major continues his journey to Chennai, to begin a *visit to several of the Indian Provinces*. He arrives in **Chennai** at midnight on Monday 2. Waiting for him are the Provincial Fr Stanislaus Swamikannu, his Council, some confreres, members of the Salesian Family and some young people. On Tuesday 3 the Rector Major has a meeting with the Rectors and those in charge of communities in the Province in the Provincial House "The Citadel". In the afternoon at Chennai - Egmore, he presides at a thanksgiving Mass

for the 50th anniversary of the Salesian house of "Don Bosco Egmore". After the Mass there is a concert.

On Wednesday 4 February with his Vicar and secretary he calls on the Archbishop of Chennai, Archbishop Chinnapa Malayappan SDB, prays at the tomb of St Thomas, has breakfast and returns to the Citadel where he give a talk to the Salesian Family which is followed by Mass. Afterwards he visits the community of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians in Chetpet. In the afternoon while the Vicar is holding a meeting of the Provincial Delegates of India for the Salesian Family, Fr Chávez visits "Wisdom Town", where he blesses the sports centre. Afterwards he pays a visit to the Social Services Centre in Vyasarpadi, a complex of works founded by Fr Mantovani for the poorest and the marginalised people. Having returned to the Provincial House, the Rector Major has supper and then has a meeting with the Provincial Council.

On Thursday morning 5, he travels to Tirupattur, the site of the celebration of the Platinum Jubilee of the Chennai Province. On the way he visits the Bishop of Vellore, Bishop Soundararaju Periyana-yagam SDB, who offers the Rector Major and his companions break-

fast. Then he visits "St. Joseph's Boys' Home" in Vellore-Katpadi, and carries on to the Novitiate in Yellagiri Hills. After lunch he visits BICS, a university computer education centre, and then continues his journey to Tirupattur, cradle of the Salesians in southern India.

At "*Sacred Heart College*" in Tirupattur the formal celebration of the Platinum Jubilee is held at which the Provincials from the South Asia Region take part. On 6 Fr Chávez presides at the thanksgiving Mass. He then visits Dominic Savio school. In the morning and the first part of the afternoon with Fr Adriano Bregolin, he holds a meeting with the Provincials.

In the evening of 6 February the Rector Major leaves for Yercaud, in the Province of **Tiruchy**. He is welcomed by the Postnovitiate community and other Salesians from the Province to whom he gives the Good Night. On Saturday morning 7 he presides at Mass on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of "*Jnanoyada College*" in Yercaud. This is followed by a concert. In the afternoon Fr Chávez has two meetings, the first with the perpetually professed confreres and then with the Rectors of the communities. The day ends with supper and the Good Night.

On Sunday 8, the Rector Major has a meeting with the confreres in initial formation and then another with the Provincial Council which is followed by Mass. In the afternoon having left Yercaud, he visits "Don Bosco Anbu Illam" in Salem a centre for street children with all the social services programme of "Don Bosco Bhavan".

Then he goes to Mannuthy (Trichur), in Kerala, in the **Bangalore** Province. On Monday 9 February he has a meeting with the confreres of the Province and then another with the Salesian Family, which concludes with Mass. In the afternoon he calls on Archbishop Andrews Thazhath of Trichur. Having returned to Mannuthy he gives an interview for Catholic Television and the press which is followed by a concert. He ends the day at "Don Bosco College", where he has supper with the confreres of the Province and gives the Good Night.

On Wednesday 10, he presides at Mass and has a meeting with the students of "Don Bosco College" in Mannuthy, followed by another with the Staff. After lunch he leaves for Irinjalakuda, where there is an event organised by "Don Bosco Higher Secondary School". Then he sets out for Angamaly, where he is welcomed

by the Salesians and the educative community. In the evening he leaves for the airport for the return journey to Bangalore, Frankfurt and Rome. On the afternoon of 11 February he is back home in Rome and takes up again his work of animation and government, alternating between office work and meetings and discussions.

On Friday 13 the Rector Major goes to the Vatican for a meeting of the "*Committee of the 16*", at the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, followed by a meeting of the Executive Committee of the USG (Union of Superiors General) and of the UISG (Union of Female Superiors General). In the afternoon he receives a visit from Bishop Carlos Fernando Ximenes Belo SDB. On Saturday evening 14 he welcomes Fr José Pastor Ramírez, former Provincial of the Antilles and the new World Delegate for the Association of the Don Bosco Past Pupils.

The following week (16-22 February) is mainly spent on the ordinary work of animation and government, with various meetings with the Councillors in residence, Confreres and other people. A meeting should be mentioned with those responsible for Vocation Promotion in the Italy - Middle East

Region held at Genzano on Friday morning 20 February. The Rector Major presided at Mass, gave a conference and held a discussion with those taking part. After lunch he returned to the Generalate where in the evening he presided at a Mass for the first anniversary of the death of Fr Helvécio Baruffi.

Towards the end of Saturday morning 21 the Rector Major went to the Vatican, where he had lunch with the confreres of our Salesian community. In the evening he was at the UPS for the conclusion of the Seminar organised on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the Founding of the Salesian Congregation.

Between Sunday 22 and Saturday 28 Fr Chávez took a short break in the mountains.

4.2 Chronicle of the General Council

The winter plenary session December 2008 - January 2009 was preceded by a *Meeting of the Provincials of Europe*, held at the "Salesianum" between 27 and 30 November 2008, in which the whole General Council took part, with the aim of giving a practical form to the "Project for Europe" launched by the GC26.

The plenary session which began on 2 December 2008, kept the Councillors busy until 27 January 2009. In addition to the plenary sessions, 24 in all, there were other meetings of groups or commissions for the study of various topics. During this session, there was also the gathering of new Provincials – between 9 and 20 December 2008 – who had meetings with the Rector Major and the Council. The Councillors also made their contribution to other meetings especially those held at the Generalate. As always in addition to the more pressing issues or problems for the animation and guidance of the Congregation, sufficient time was given to the ordinary matters of business coming from the Provinces, such as: appointments of Provincial Councillors and the

approval of the appointments of Rectors, the opening and canonical erection of houses and/or activities, matters regarding confreres and economic-administrative issues. The following is a summary of the more important items on the agenda.

1. Appointment of Provincials

In this session Superiors were appointed for six Provinces. Following a careful process of discernment, and taking special account of the results of the consultation held in the Province the General Council made the necessary provision. This is the list of the Provincials appointed in the course of the session: Aldo Cipriani, for the Province of Japan; Michael Peedikayil, for the Province of New Delhi (India); Thomas Anchukandam, for the Province of Bangalore (India); Thomas Dunne, for the Province of East United States-Canada; Timothy Ploch, for the Province of West United States; Victor Pichardo for the Province of Antilles.

In n. 5.5 of this number of the AGC there are some biographical details of the Provincials appointed.

2. Report of the Extraordinary Visitations

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

3. Topics of study and practical decisions

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

tion and government for the six-year period and to the life and activity of the Council itself. Some practical decisions were made regarding matters discussed. The main topics considered were as follows:

– **Project for Europe.** The General Council approved the “Project for Europe” drawn up as a “working document” during the meeting of the Provincials of Europe. The Rector Major appointed the ‘Commission for the Project for Europe’, entrusting its coordination to Fr Francesco Cereda, Councillor for Formation. The Commission is made up of the three Councillors for the Salesian mission, the three Regional Councillors for Europe and three Provincials from the Regions concerned. The Commission has the task of identifying the objectives and the strategies of the Project for Europe, of defining them in terms of results that can be evaluated, encourage and monitor the implementation of the Project. It will meet every six months and then report to the Rector Major and the General Council. The “Project for Europe” is given to all Salesians so that may be a process of sharing on the part of the whole Congregation regarding this ini-

tiative (**n. 5.2** of the present issue of the AGC gives text of the “Project for Europe” approved by the General Council together with the letter of the Rector Major to the Confreres).

– **150th Anniversary of the founding of the Congregation.** The General Council following the presentation by the General Councillor for Formation who is chairing the Commission set up for the purpose, noted the preparation of a *formative and spiritual itinerary* at personal, community and province levels, to culminate with the renewal of profession on 18 December 2009.

– **Salesian Mission Offices.** Following a proposal by the General Councillor for the Missions, Fr Václav Klement, and the Economist General, Br. Claudio Marangio, the General Council reflected on the Salesian Mission Offices, examining and focusing on the current situation, the challenges that are emerging and the main internal problems of the Offices. A meeting of the Rector Major with those responsible for the Mission Offices is planned for 26-28 March 2009.

– **“The Colle 2015 Project”.** Following a presentation by the

Economer General, Bro. Claudio Marangio, the General Council noted and approved in general terms the "Colle Project" to be carried out in view of 2015, which includes some work on the lower church; the re-location of the present museum; renovation of rooms for visitors giving them a youthful aspect; renovation of the rooms of the confreres of the Colle community and the premises of the press. The "Colle Project" also includes the possible future location of the tombs of the Rector Majors in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians at Valdocco, in view of the centenary of the death of Don Rua.

– **Vocational Training in the Congregation.** The Youth Ministry Department propose a process of reflection and planning for the area of Vocational Training (VT) in the Congregation, with a series of steps to be followed: bringing together two representatives from each Region to examine the situation; the setting up of a coordinating team; the drawing up of a plan in preparation for the next plenary session; bringing a confrere into the Department (a Brother) who can take the work forward.

– **Study of proposals presented by the Social Communication Department.** The General

Council following a presentation by the General Councillor Communication, Fr Filiberto González, noted some proposals regarding the way ahead and the future policies for the *Agenzia ANS*, adding some new features, and for the *Portal* of the Congregation which needs a new lay out.

– **Reflection on the aspects and style of the Extraordinary Visitations.** In the course of the session the General Council studied further the subject of the Extraordinary Visitation. In addition to considering the documents dealing with it such as the *Vademecum for the life and action of the General Council*, the Councillors who in the past had made such Visitations shared their own experiences. At the end of the study, the Rector Major emphasised the two main purposes of the Extraordinary Visitation, which – being 'canonical' is undertaken in the name of the Rector Major – in the first place it ought to put the Province on the same wave-length as the Rector Major and his Council and then report to the Rector Major and the Council on the state of health of the Province. Among the necessary requirements for a Visitation: a good preparation; a good implementation, on two levels, to en-

courage the confreres and to support the communities; the identification of two or three courses of action for the future.

– **Reorganisation of the Provinces in Argentina.** In the plan for the reorganisation of the Provinces in Argentina, the General Council studied the combination of the three current Provinces of Buenos Aires (ABA), Bahía Blanca (ABB) and La Plata (ALP), which would become a new Province of Southern Argentina (ARS). The proposal to have the headquarters in Buenos Aires was accepted. There was also consideration of the combination of the two Provinces of Córdoba (ACO) and Rosario (ARO) into a single Province of Northern Argentina (ARN), which would have headquarters in Córdoba. In a future session the details of the proposals for unification will be clarified and approved.

– **Unification of the Vice Province of Canada with the East United States Province.** Following a request from the Superior of the Vice Province of Canada, made with the agreement of his Council on the basis of a proposal from the confreres who are working in the Salesian houses in Canada, having heard the opinion

of the Provincial of East United States, the General Council, after a period of discernment expressed its own agreement for the canonical closure of the Vice Province of Canada and the aggregation of the six canonically erected houses of the Vice Province of Canada to the Province of the East United States (SUE), to which they will belong juridically from 1 July 2009.

– **Reflection on Salesian presence in North America.** There had been a previous discussion within the General Council about the Salesian presence in North America. The following points were underlined: the current situation which requires further reflection; the urgent need for a process of accompaniment, starting some specific initiatives; the suitability of organising a meeting with the Provincials similar to that for Europe to reflect on a possible future revision of the Salesian presence in the whole of America.

– **Consultation for a possible new structure of the Vice Province of French-speaking West Africa (AFO).** Following the presentation by the Regional Councillor for Africa and Madagascar, Fr Guillermo Basaños, the General Council considered the results of a consultation among the

confreres in the AFO Vice Province about the advisability of the creation of a new Circumscription. It was proposed to take the question up again after the Extraordinary Visitation by the Regional Councilor of this Vice Province, after the meeting of the Rector Major with the CIVAM in October 2010, after a study of this Region in the Intermediate Session in February 2011 and after the Team Visit which will take place in 2012, in the context of a possible different geographical organisation of the Salesian presence in the whole of Africa.

– **Letter convoking Provincial Chapters.** Among other topics considered by the General Council there was that of the celebration of the next Provincial Chapters. The letter of the Vicar of the Rector Major, dated 24 January 2009, sent to Provincials and Provincial Councils was considered in which it is asked that the Provincial Chapters be convoked and celebrated between September 2009 and May 2010, with the following two specific tasks for all the Provincial Chapters in the Congregation: to study and assess the practical implementation of the deliberations and guidelines of the GC26, in accordance with article 171 of the Constitutions; in the

light of GC26 verify and integrate the priorities and the working guidelines of the Provincial Structural Plan. The chapter documents to be approved by the Rector Major and the General Council need to be sent to the General Secretariat before 31 May 2010.

– **Recognition of Groups of the Salesian Family.** The General Council expressed its own favourable opinion about three new groups belonging to the Salesian Family:

□ **Canção Nova** is an international lay movement engaged in evangelisation, in particular through the media, founded in 1978 by 12 young people guided by a Salesian priest Fr Jonas Abib. The movement draws its inspiration from number 45 of the Apostolic Exhortation “*Evangelii Nuntiandi*”, which encourages the use of the media in evangelisation. On 3 November 2008 the Holy See recognised Canção Nova as an Association of the Faithful.

□ The second group “**The Disciples**”, or “Don Bosco Secular Institute”, is a public Ecclesiastical Association, male and female, begun in India in 1973 under the inspiration of the Salesian Fr Joseph D’Souza, originally in its female

branch. In 1983 the brothers were added to the sisters. On 21 April 2000 the Secular Institute was recognised by the Diocese of Ambikapur. The Disciples drawing their inspiration from the Gospel passage about the mission Jesus entrusted to the 72 disciples, dedicate themselves to proclaiming the Gospel, to teaching catechism, to the care of the sick and the service of the poor. Today they number slightly more than 400 and are present in 44 dioceses in India and 6 in Italy.

□ **The Congregation of the Sisters of Saint Michael the Archangel**, also called “**Michaelite Sisters**” was founded towards the end of the XIX century by Blessed Fr Bronislao Markiewicz and the Servant of God Mother Anna Kaworek. In 1956 the Congregation obtained from the President of the Polish Bishops’ Conference the Decree of praise, confirmed by the Congregation of Religious which recognised it as a Religious Institute of Pontifical Right. The Michaelite Sisters combine a contemplative attitude with works of apostolic charity in pedagogical, catechetical, charitable and social services, in parish ministry and on the missions. The basis of the life of the Sisters is expressed in the

two formulae: “Who is like God?” and “Work and Temperance”. The Congregation has about 300 Sisters in Poland, Belarus, Ukraine, Germany, France, Cameroon, and Italy.

– **Approval of the Budget for 2009**. In the course of the session the General Council – following the presentation of the Economist General – examined and approved, in accordance with the Regulations, the **2009 Budget** of the Direzione Generale Opere Don Bosco.

– **Distribution of the “Fund for the Missions”**. The General Council considered and approved the proposals presented by the Commission for the 143rd (December 2008) distribution of assistance from the Mission Fund. These are funds coming from the Mission Offices for the benefit of the numerous projects and plans of the Congregation. Following discussion a letter prepared by the General Councillor for the Missions Fr Václav Klement, with the Economist General, Bro. Claudio Marangio, and sent to the Provincials and Provincial Economers, Project and Development Offices and Mission Offices was presented in which was communicated what had emerged within the General Council regarding the process of distribution;

it is a question of some recommendations so as to improve the process and make it more smooth, in view of the work over the next few years.

– **Reports on activities of the Departments** The General Councilors with responsibility for the Departments presented reports on the activities of their Departments in the period July-November 2008.

4. Among **significant events** in the course of the session, in particular could be mentioned:

- **The meeting of the SDB and FMA General Councils.** An opportunity for discussion and reflection in a fraternal atmosphere was the meeting between the two General Councils of the Salesians and of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians which took place at the SDB Generalate in the afternoon of Wednesday 14 January 2009. It was the first of the new six-year period in the context of the plenary sessions which the Councils of the two Congregations were holding. Carefully prepared for by the two Councils, the meeting opened with the greetings of the Rector Major, Fr Pascual Chávez Villanueva, and of the Mother General, M. Yvonne Reun-goat, which were followed by the

introduction of each one present. The meeting then focused on two topics. First an exchange of ideas in connection with the Strenna of the Rector Major, on the invitation to a commitment to making the *Salesian Family a vast movement of persons for the salvation of the young*. There was an opportunity to exchange ideas, expectations, hopes and to make practical suggestions about increasing collaboration among the groups. The second topic referred to a consideration of the periodic meetings, now quite organised, of the two Councils; the questions were raised: what should be the subject matter? How should this be organised? How to make the meetings more practical and effective?

- **A Day of Recollection at Genzano.** The whole of Thursday 23 December 2008, was devoted by the General Council to a Day of Recollection held in our Novitiate at Genzano, led by Fr Maurizio Verlezza, Rector of the Postnovitiate community at Roma – San Tarcisio, with a reflection entitled “*At the school of Jesus the Word*”.

- **The International Congress on “The Preventive System and Human Rights”.** Between 2 and 6 January 2009 the General Council took part in the International Con-

gress on "The Preventive System and Human Rights", an initiative promoted by the Youth Ministry Department which had entrusted the organisation to VIS ('International Volunteer Movement for Development'). The Congress was not considered simply as a event to bring to a close the year of the 2008 Strenna on "human rights" but was intended as a decisive impetus in the support of a process of research, formation and action to be carried forward at province and local level to improve our presence in the field of education.

• **The Spirituality Days of the Salesian Family** (22-25 January 2009) were, as always, a good experience of Salesian spirituality on the topic of the 2009 Strenna, with a very successful combination of illuminating subject matter, effective group work, fraternal communication among those taking part and the groups of the SF, of celebration and prayer with an attempt to make the idea of the Salesian Family more evident considering that its strength lay in being a family but its weakness in not always acting as a movement.

5. DOCUMENTS AND NEWS ITEMS

5.1 Letter of Cardinal Franc Rodé, Prefect of the Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life

Below is the letter from Cardinal Franc Rodé, Prefect of the Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life addressed to the Rector Major, with the evaluation of the Vatican Congregation following the presentation of the Report on the state of the Congregation on the occasion of the GC26 and then the text of the Chapter documents ('Da mihi animas, cetera tolle').

CONGREGATION

INSTITUTES OF CONSECRATED LIFE AND THE SOCIETIES OF APOSTOLIC LIFE

Vatican City, 22 December 2008

Reverend Father,

The Report on the state of the Society of St Francis of Sales, Salesians of St John Bosco and on its life for the six-year period 2002/2008 sent as a sign of communion with the Apostolic See and in fulfilment of what is said in can. 592 § 1 of the Code of Canon Law has been received by this Department.

The Report accompanied by an extensive statistical survey and by

the Documents drawn up by the XXVI General Chapter, provides for a very broad reading of and introduction to the life of the Salesian Society present in one hundred and twenty-five countries.

The intensive work of the Rector Major, combined with that of his Council and the effective functioning of the Departments (Formation, Youth Ministry, Salesian Family, Social Communication and Missions), which is explained with a wealth of data and plans are of particular interest because they illustrate a form of government which has a pastoral and animating nature aimed at co-involving the Salesian Communities in the different countries with well-directed and critical attention to emerging cultures. In addition the services and institutions of a general nature such as the Secretariat and the Archives, the Postulation Office for the Causes of the Saints of the Salesian Family, the Salesian Pontifical University and the Salesian Historical Institute are facilities which sustain with their certainly valuable contribution the vitality of the whole Society.

The innovative and co-involving Salesian spirit starts therefore from central authority and is supported by these bodies imbuing the whole Society with John Bosco's

charismatic passion. At the same time these animating structures in the abundance and variety of the paths pursued by the different Provinces and Vice Provinces are a stimulating reminder to creative fidelity to the Salesian charism; to Salesian holiness, confirmed by many people in the Church; to a careful *scrutatio* of today's signs of the times; to the passion for education; to attention given to sharing life with the laity thus contributing to vitality in the Church; to communion in unity.

The text reports that between 2002 and 2008 the animation programme was organised around four priorities: the primacy of the spiritual life in the community; the witness of communion and fraternity by the community; the giving of fresh significance of the Salesian presence among the young; personal and community commitment to formation.

One notes, in particular, the commitment on the part of central government to give significance to the fundamental motivations for Salesian consecration, encouraging a personal meaningful response to the *vocatio*, fully aware that the most effective way of proclaiming the Gospel remains fidelity to the Lord Jesus. One is pleased to note the emphasis given in community

life to the centrality of the prayer and fraternal dimension in the experience of Salesian life and mission. Regular *Lectio divina*, an essential requirement for giving meaning to life, has made it possible to communicate a lived experience of a meeting with the Word who saves in order to draw other young people to Don Bosco's charism and to communicate cultures of communion and of values in apostolic and pastoral contexts.

From the Report one also sees that the Society is experiencing overall a period of numerical stability. If on the one hand the Salesian presence is suffering a decline in the western world, on account of the ageing of the members and the widespread vocational crisis, on the other one observes that in areas of more recent evangelisation the novelty and the evangelical ferment are encouraging the raising up of numerous vocations. In this sense it is good to see how the new formation challenges are being tackled and especially a knowledge and a more faithful implementation of the Salesian *Ratio formationis* fostered, so that in formation communities "a plurality of criteria does not develop which does not contribute, at the time of admissions, to a correct approach and to a convergence of judgements". (*Re-*

port G26, p. 36).

In this way it is emphasised that the most complex challenge that the Congregation has to face requires a serious search for a well-focused and effective method of formation, especially in the stages of initial formation. The Magisterium of the Church constantly indicates the commitment to formation as the priority duty of every Institute, recommending that "Formation should therefore have a profound effect on individuals, so that their every attitude and action, at important moments as well as in the ordinary events of life, will show that they belong completely and joyfully to God" (*Vita Consecrata* 65). The variety of cultures present in the Salesian Society, certainly makes this search more complex and discernment more demanding.

The aims which have guided the process of the last six years are reviewed by the GC26 Chapter Documents and proposed in a decisive and strong manner centred around the vocational-charismatic theme: in the light of the centrality of Jesus Christ and his Gospel and in the light of man's new horizons.

We appreciate in particular the determination shown in indicating God's call and the urgent need for evangelisation for the pro-vocation

and the con-vocation of the young in the *sequela apostolica*. We also applaud the determination you show to turn decisively to the new frontiers: you have made decisions to be near "poor young people" and to accompany them, near to "families" but also to ask demanding questions of social communication. Finally you have decided to give special attention to a revitalisation of "Salesian presence in Europe" and to launch "new models" of management that can support the Salesian mission with flexibility and adaptability.

In particular, we are very pleased to recommend very strongly the dedication to education through research, study and especially presenting the Gospel as a way of living and in a continuous and caring way accompanying the young in their daily lives in the places where they construct their value-system for life and make decisions about their future.

«As opposed to what happens in the technical or financial fields, where today's advances can be added to those of the past, no similar accumulation is possible in the area of people's formation and moral growth, because the person's freedom is ever new. As a result, each person and each generation must make his own decision anew,

alone. Not even the greatest values of the past can be simply inherited; they must be claimed by us and renewed through an often anguishing personal option. When the foundations are shaken, however, and essential certainties are lacking, the impelling need for those values once again makes itself felt: thus today, the request for an education which is truly such is in fact increasing» (Benedict PP. XVI, *Letter on Education*, 21 January 2008).

With real gratitude for the presence and the work of the Salesian Society in the Church, I am very pleased to express once again to you and to your Council very best wishes for a future that does not quench the Spirit and offers prophetic witness (cf. *1 Ts* 5, 19) in obedience to the Gospel.

May the power of the charismatic experience and the beauty of your Plan of Life sustain the passion and the radical nature of *Da mihi animas et cetera tolle*: may the holiness of Don Bosco with his total dedication to education and to the Church be the measure of your aspirations.

With my blessing, as I express best wishes for the approaching feast of Christmas,

Franc Card. Rodé
Franc Card. RODÉ, C.M

5.2 “Project for Europe”

Below is the Letter of the Rector Major “To Salesian Confreres of the Congregation” in which he presents the first steps of the “PROJECT FOR EUROPE”. It is followed by the document approved by the General Council with the main subject matter of the “Project”

5.2.1 Letter of the Rector Major to Salesian Confreres

Prot. 09/0107
Rome, 31 January 2009

TO SALESIAN CONFRERES OF THE CONGREGATION

Subject: The first steps in implementing the Project for Europe

Dear Confreres,

First of all my very best wishes. In this letter I want to give you some news about practical developments regarding the “Project for Europe”, which Pope Benedict XVI in his two addresses at the GC26 and the Chapter itself indicated to us as one of the new frontiers, in the “re-launching of the Salesian charism” in this continent (GC26, 108).

The General Chapter XXVI in particular requested that «the Rector Major with his Council define the nature and the objectives of the Congregation's intervention on behalf of a renewed Salesian presence in Europe» (CG26, 111). Already in my closing address at the GC26 I offered some initial explanations and guidelines in this regard; subsequently other steps were taken.

Last August I gave the Provincials of Europe and their Councils an *Enquiry regarding the Project for Europe*. I ask them to say what they thought about such a Project, to reflect on what they considered important in order to revive the Salesian witness and mission in the continent, to send me their proposals with regard to the priorities, forms of collaboration, the ways in which to coordinate the Project. The replies to these requests were interesting and valuable; they were the proposals in a "Working Document" I prepared, which contained in the first part a summary of these replies and in the second part the essential elements needed to put the Project into effect.

Then on 27-30 November at the Generalate there was a *Meeting of the Provincials of Europe*. At the beginning of the meeting I presented the Working Document.

Starting from that, the Provincials and the General Councillors worked first in groups and then according to the Regions on the three areas on which the Project is focused: re-vitalisation from within of the Salesian presences, re-location and re-structuring, Europe a mission territory. At the end, the reflections and the proposals which emerged were given to the Rector Major and to the General Council for the drawing up of the Project. On that occasion it was also agreed that meetings of the Provincials of Europe would take place every two years and would be held in November 2010 and 2012.

Recently I set up the *Commission for the Project for Europe*. It is made up of the Councillor for Formation Fr Francesco Cereda, as the chairman; of the three Councillors for the Salesian mission: Fr Fabio Attard, Fr Vaclav Klement, Fr Filiberto Gonzalez; of the three Regional Councillors for Europe: Fr Pierfausto Frisoli, Fr José Miguel Nuñez, Fr Stefano Turanský; of three European Provincials: Fr Juan Bosco Sancho for the West Europe Region, Fr Stefano Martoglio for the Italy and Middle East Region, Fr Marek Chrzan for the North Europe Region. This Commission has the task of identifying the objectives and the strategies of

the Project for Europe, of defining them for each of the three areas, in terms of results that can be evaluated, encourage and monitor the implementation of the Project. It will meet every six months in one of the Provinces in each of the three European Regions and then report to the Rector Major and the General Council.

Finally, in this winter session of the General Council we have completed the *Formulation of the Project for Europe*, which I attach to the letter of presentation. It will certainly be a help in setting the whole Congregation thinking and in enabling the activities of the Rector Major and the Council, of the Provinces and of the Regions of Europe, of the Congregation to converge. The Project having been drawn up, it is now a matter of putting it into effect; the path has been marked out and it will be easier to follow it.

Today we are beginning "the year of grace" for the 150th anniversary of the founding of our Congregation. The Project for Europe is the first seed of the GC26, which begins to take root precisely in that place where the Congregation began and from where Don Bosco's charism has spread throughout the world. With this Project the missionary priorities

indicated in the last six years are not diminished; they remain, while requiring us to look at Europe more specifically and in a more coordinated way.

In the letter he sent me at the beginning of the GC26, Pope Benedict XVI wrote this: «At a time when in Europe vocations are declining in number and the challenges of evangelisation are increasing, the Salesian Congregation needs to devote its attention to strengthening the proclamation of the Christian message, the presence of the Church and Don Bosco's charism in this continent. Just as Europe has been generous in sending numbers of missionaries to the whole world, so now may the whole Congregation by making a special appeal to those Regions rich in vocations, be responsive in its regard» (GC26 p. 92).

This then is the time for *missionary generosity*; I therefore appeal to all of you, dear confreres, also those who are in initial formation, to respond with eagerness and enthusiasm to the needs of evangelisation, following the example of the great apostle and missionary Saint Paul, the two thousandth anniversary of whose birth the whole Church is remembering this year.

Let us entrust to Mary Help of Christians and to Don Bosco these proposals of ours; may they intercede for us.

Yours in the Lord,

Pascual Chávez V.
Fr Pascual CHÁVEZ VELANUEVA
Rector Major

5.2.2 The main lines of the "Project for Europe" indicated by the General Council

Presentation

Attentive to the challenges and to the new frontiers identified by the GC26, the Project for Europe is meant to involve the whole Congregation in the re-enforcing of the Salesian charism in Europe, especially by means of a profound spiritual and pastoral renewal of the confreres and of the communities, so as to continue Don Bosco's project on behalf of the young especially the poorest of them. It has been prepared by the Rector Major and the General Council, to whom the GC26 entrusted the task, after having involved the Provincials of Europe and their Provincial Councils.

The *frame of reference* has been the "Working Document" prepared by the Rector Major and presented

by him at the Meeting of the Provincials of Europe, which has as its title "For a renewed Salesian presence in Europe". In it are indicated the nature, the objectives and the strategies of the Project which are then to be given practical form by the Commission for the Project for Europe appointed by the Rector Major. Therefore the Project does not dwell on the objectives and strategies, but only presents the areas and the interventions; the areas indicate the priorities, while the interventions propose practical steps to be taken.

The *areas* of the Project were identified in the Meeting of the Provincials of Europe. They indicate the three priority choices of the Project and regard: the re-vitalisation from within of the Salesian presence, the re-location and re-structuring of the presences, the re-enforcing of the more needy Provinces with Salesian personnel. These areas are no different to the priorities of the GC26; rather they are their practical expression for Europe. In this regard, at the Meeting of the Provincials of Europe the Rector Major declared that "the total and heartfelt taking up and the generous implementation of the GC26 guidelines are the obvious and only way ahead" for the Project for Europe.

For this reason the first and fundamental priority for the Project for Europe is the strengthening of the faith experience and vocational option of the Salesian, his formation and spirituality, community life, care of vocations to consecrated Salesian life. The second priority is the re-location and re-structuring of presences on the basis of the criteria of significance, with the intention of indicating where and how the Salesian mission is to be carried forward in the future. Finally, the third priority is the creation of the necessary conditions for warmly welcoming with a careful process of inculturation Salesians from other Regions in the Congregation, who are to be engaged in the evangelisation of Europe.

The *interventions* of the Project refer to three different levels: the Rector Major and the General Council, the Regions, the Provinces. At each of the three levels an attempt is made to take into account the multiplicity of those involved; others already in existence will need to be better specified. For example, in addition to the Rector Major and his Council there are the Departments and the Commission for the Project for Europe. At Regional level the responsibilities of European Re-

gions are not the same as those of other Regions in the Congregation; then there are the Provincial Conferences in the Region, the Team Visits, the Meetings of the Provincials of Europe, etc. There is a similar diversification at Province level. The Commission for the Project for Europe will subsequently be able to assess better the various people involved and the procedures of involvement.

Approval of this document on the Project for Europe was given in the session of the General Council on Tuesday 27 January 2009.

1. FIRST AREA:

RE-VITALISATION FROM WITHIN OF THE SALESIAN PRESENCE IN EUROPE

1.1. Rector Major and General Council

1.1.1. The Commission for the PE will encourage the Regions to organise initiatives in the area of the spiritual and pastoral experience of the European Salesian confreres, in view of a real charismatic renewal and a real return among the young.

1.1.2. The Formation Department in dialogue with the Commission

for the PE, will continue to foster the process of inter-province collaboration in initial formation among the European Provinces aimed at the re-location of formation communities, at the quality of the formation provided and with formative attention to the European context.

1.1.3. The Formation Department will organise a joint meeting of all the Provincial Formation Delegates of the three Regions every two years and foster the necessary forms of synergy to provide a good quality initial formation, both for the formation communities and for the study centres, with strong inter-province teams of formation personnel and of teachers.

1.1.4. The Formation Department will encourage the European Provinces to have a practical planned programme aimed at all those in formation for the study of languages, especially Italian and English, in the curricula for studies, for the summer-time and in the period of practical training and will see that it is implemented.

1.1.5. The Departments for the Salesian mission, in dialogue with the Commission for the PE, will co-ordinate and promote European meetings of those organisations of

cooperation already established, so as to foster the growth of a European mentality, formation for evangelisation, the creation of forms of synergy.

1.1.6. The Departments for the Salesian mission will promote European meetings of Salesians and lay people on new topics and with specific objectives, as for example education and evangelisation in multi-religious and multi-cultural contexts, groups for the evangelisation of the young, schools of prayer, youth pilgrimages, European voluntary service, evangelisation through music, the theatre, radio, internet, social communication, etc.

1.1.7. The Commission for the PE will identify the more significant experiences in each European Region in the area of the three priorities of the Rector Major's Project for the six-year period, will see that information about them is widely shared and will assess whether they could be transferred to other European Regions.

1.1.8. The Commission for the PE will send to all the Provinces of the Congregation at least twice a year a communiqué, which will keep interest in the Project for Europe alive, providing information about the progress made in the Project.

The Department for Social Communication will promote the distribution of news about individual projects, with interviews, articles for reflection, video, and provide motivational material and stimuli on the wider aims of the Project.

1.2. European Regions

1.2.1. Each of the European Regions through its forms of animation, will see to the implementation of the three priorities of the Project for the six-year period, "Returning to Don Bosco to start afresh from him", "Keeping alive the urgent need for evangelisation and the need for vocation ministry", "Promoting simplicity of life and commitment to the new frontiers", in order to re-vitalise from within the Salesian presence in Europe.

1.2.2. Each Region will commit itself to pursuing procedures to foster vocations to Salesian consecrated life among young Europeans, including young immigrants.

1.2.3. The Regions will together organise joint initiatives for the ongoing formation of Salesians and in particular for those in formation, and for confreres who exercise a role of animation and government.

1.3. European Provinces

1.3.1. The Province will take up the tasks proposed by the GC26 and by the Project of the Region for animation during the six-year period as a practical expression of the willingness to re-launch the Salesian charism.

1.3.2. The Province will take care of the evangelising dimension of the Provincial and local educative pastoral plan, and strengthen the structured programmes for education to the faith of the young in the various locations, groups and associations.

1.3.3. The Province will continue to develop a sense of commitment in all activities, in the educative pastoral community, in the group and association, in order to create a vocational culture, with a promotional plan which involves all the communities in prayer, in the presentation of vocations and in the accompaniment of the young.

1.3.4. The Province will appoint a Provincial Delegate as the point of reference for the Project for Europe, who will keep in close contact with the Regional Councillor and will involve in the processes of providing information and of reflection the lay people in posi-

tions of responsibility within the works.

2. SECOND AREA:

RE-LOCATION AND RE-STRUCTURING OF THE PRESENCES IN EUROPE

2.1. Rector Major and General Council

2.1.1. The Youth Ministry Department, the Regional Councillors for Europe and the Commission for the PE will help the Regions to reflect on the significant impact of the Salesian presences, in particular in the light of the GC26 criteria for significance and of the strategic choices of evangelisation and of the new frontiers in Europe.

2.1.2. The Commission for the PE and the Youth Ministry Department will firmly promote the priority choice of a Salesian presence in the school and in professional formation.

2.1.3. The Youth Ministry Department will foster, with the involvement of lay people, reflection, sharing of experiences, the study of proposals, the coordination of Salesian efforts in Europe in schools and in professional formation, through the European Consultative Body for Schools and that for Profes-

sional Formation, and share the results with the Commission for the PE.

2.1.4. The Rector Major and the General Council will promote and accompany the process already begun of the re-organisation of the Provinces in the Regions of West and North Europe.

2.1.5. The Commission for the PE will reflect during the six-year period on a new design for the European Regions in order to offer their proposals to the Rector Major and the General Council in view of the GC 27.

2.1.6. The Commission for the PE will present the results of the work done in the Regions regarding relocation and re-structuring to the Meetings of the Provincial of Europe in 2010 and 2012.

2.2. European Regions

2.2.1. Each Region will coordinate, through the Regional Councillor and the Regional Provincial Conference, the processes of the relocation and re-structuring of the Salesian presences in progress in the Provinces and encourage any possible forms of synergy.

2.2.2. Each Region, in addition to promoting projects which require

the contribution of Salesian personnel sent by the Rector Major, will study and propose to the Commission for the PE inter-province projects for collaboration among the European Provinces in the three areas of the Project of the Rector Major and the General Council for the six-year period 2008-2014.

2.3. European Provinces

2.3.1. The Province will continue the processes of the re-location and re-structuring of Salesian presences and will promote any possible forms of synergy with other European Provinces..

2.3.2. The Province will identify and inform the Commission for the PE should there be any "new presences or new forms of presence" which are of particular significance and require the collaboration of others.

3. THIRD AREA:

EUROPE MISSION TERRITORY

3.1. Rector Major and General Council

3.1.1. The Commission for the PE will help to "rejuvenate the more needy Provinces with Salesian per-

sonnel" and therefore offer the Department for the Missions criteria for discernment regarding the candidates to be sent, the communities to welcome them, their formation in the area of the interplay of cultures, their successful integration into European communities.

3.1.2. The Department for the Missions will examine and assess the reports which each Region or Province presents to the Rector Major, requesting the sending of Salesian personnel. The Commission for the PE will assist the Department for the Missions, determining the priorities on the basis of the greater significance of the proposal and a better guarantee of the integration of the confreres.

3.2. Regions

3.2.1. Each European Regional Councillor will request those Provinces which intend to ask the Rector Major for new Salesian personnel, to draw up one or more plans for the re-launching of the Salesian charism in which the personnel sent by the Rector Major are to be engaged.

3.2.2. The Provincial Conference of each European Region will assess the soundness of these plans for the re-launching of the charism,

choose those most significant and in practical terms capable of achievement and present them to the Rector Major with its own evaluation.

3.2.3. Each European Region will reflect on the need for the exchange of European Salesian personnel, on the possibility of a redistribution of Salesian personnel and on the need for forms of inter-province collaboration, and present these reflections to the Commission for the Project for Europe.

3.2.4. The other Regions of the Congregation will be involved in reflection on the proposals, will maintain contacts with the confreres sent, will be kept informed by the Commission for the PE and through the Regional Councillors about the needs of the European Provinces.

3.3. Provinces

3.3.1. Each Province in Europe should consider the way it will be part of the Project for Europe and draw up plans to present first of all to the Regional Provincial Conference and then to the Rector Major.

3.3.2. Each Province in Europe will be engaged in the accompaniment,

the formation and the fitting in of the confreres who are sent for specific projects, examined by the Commission for the PE and approved by the Rector Major.

3.3.3. Each Province in the Congregation will consider and communicate to the Department for the Missions the way it intends to take part in the Project for Europe; it will then put itself at the Rector Major's disposal by sending confreres for that purpose.

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

*Below is the text of the Message which the Rector Major, Fr. Pascual Chávez Villanueva, sent to the young people of the Salesian Youth Movement (SYM) on the occasion of the Feast of Don Bosco 31 January 2009. The Message, with the title **BUILD A VAST MOVEMENT FOR THE SALVATION OF THE YOUNG**, recalls the Strenna for 2009, with an explicit invitation to the young people to "collaborate with your youthful enthusiasm and drive to making the Salesian Family a great Movement, as vast as the world, for the salvation of the young".*

**BUILD
A VAST MOVEMENT
FOR THE SALVATION
OF THE YOUNG**

My Dear Young People,

Last summer I took part in the World Youth Day in Australia. It was great to see so many young people coming from all parts of the world, despite the distance and the expense, belonging to diocesan groups, to groups led by religious institutes or by the movements.

My thoughts immediately went to the great adventure that began with Jesus of Nazareth. From the edge of the ocean I thought of the banks of a lake in a tiny and unknown country. Those banks enclosed the whole world of a group of fishermen whose experience was limited to the waters of a lake with its sudden storms and its long and mysterious silences, and it was precisely on the banks of that lake that they met Jesus.

Fascinated by the man, they followed him, listened to him and often didn't understand him. They had doubts about him until the end, and they betrayed him. Finally, however, they all associated themselves with Peter's passionate profession of faith: «Lord to whom shall we go? You alone have the words of eternal life» (*Jn* 6,69).

They had been caught up in his total selfless love. A love far greater and more real than all their weakness, their every betrayal. And so that tiny seed germinated, and became a great people who cover the face of the earth: the Church.

I also had the joy of meeting the young people of the Salesian Youth Movement. In front of those thousands of enthusiastic young people there came into my mind the memory of a small group of young men who on the cold evening of 18 December 1859 had met together in Don Bosco's room to make the most important decision of their lives: to stay with Don Bosco, giving themselves totally to the Lord. And so in a simple and humble way, 150 years ago, a seed was sown. I can see the young Cagliero who a week before that decision, walking up and down the yard, uncertain, confused, thinking first one thing and then another, until he finally declared: «Monk or no monk, I'm staying with Don Bosco!». He stayed with Don Bosco, carrying that tiny seed to the furthest boundaries of Patagonia. It is a story far greater than him, far greater than those poor but generous young men. From that tiny seed there came the Salesians, the

Daughters of Mary Help of Christians the Salesians-Cooperators.

A story that has reached even us because that seed has become a great tree: the Salesian Family.

Yes, it's true; they were poor young men, limited in their human and cultural experience. But, in Don Bosco, they had met Jesus Christ who launched them on a mission that humanly-speaking was impossible, a mad adventure: «You will be my witnesses to the ends of the earth» (*Acts* 1,8). To you too, young people of the beginning of this third millennium, Jesus entrusts the mission which two thousand years ago he gave to his disciples: «I am sending you to proclaim my gospel to the ends of the earth. Go with that love and that apostolic and educative passion which led Don Bosco always to give preference to the young, the poor, the people not yet evangelised.»

Do not be afraid! The Risen Jesus will give you the power, the energy, the joy that come from the Holy Spirit. With the strength of the Spirit, the Church carries out her mission, making Jesus present today; the same Spirit who raised up and formed Don Bosco, has made that seed a fine large tree. To continue this mission I address to you dear young people, the press-

ing invitation to ***collaborate with your youthful enthusiasm and drive in making the Salesian Family into a great Movement, as vast as the world, for the salvation of the young.***

You are not just the ones to whom the Salesian mission is directed, but, with the freshness of your youth, you are the beating heart of this great Movement. So you may ask: «But what do we have to do, how can we respond to the mission which Jesus entrusts to us, and in practical terms how do we set about evangelising and educating our companions?»

I'm sure that if you know how to find a place for prayer, and you listen attentively with docility to the Holy Spirit, it will become more and more clear what to do in a practical way in this work of your own evangelisation and education and that of your companions which is so important.

But here in very simple terms I want to give you some suggestions to reflect on in the generosity of your hearts.

Above all I invite you to cultivate as a fundamental attitude: the will to *walk together towards a shared goal*, with a deep spirit of communion, with the convinced desire for synergy, with a mature ability to

plan together. We have received the great gift of Salesian Youth Spirituality which constitutes the source of our communion and the energy for our mission which we need to understand more deeply and share more and more.

Our common mission, our shared goal is the world of youth. For this reason, dear friends, we need to be *part of the youth scene*. Jesus is sending you together with the whole Salesian Movement to the world of today's young people, with its lights and shades, with its anxieties and hopes, with its moments of joy but also its suffering, with its irrepressible life, but also with its deserts where only the bitter herbs of loneliness grow. I am thinking of the world of the school, of the university, of work; I am thinking about the places for free time and entertainment; I am thinking, in particular, about the desperate places of youth deprivation. It's a question of being actively present in all these places fostering a better quality of life, better and deeper interpersonal communication and sharing to overcome so much individualism and so much loneliness in which many young people are living, bearing witness to the positive values that give meaning and flavour to life, and above all, making the person of Jesus Christ

the source of the fulness of humanity, of life and of joy present among the young.

Here is another suggestion: *make the voice of the young heard*, in particular that of the many who don't have a voice and no one listens to; make their needs and their expectations known, defend their rights and support them in their demands. Above all make this voice of the young heard among your own companions, who often don't know about these situations of marginalisation and hardship; make it heard by the groups of the Salesian Family. Like Dominic Savio who took Don Bosco to the person sick with the plague and left on his own, you too ought to take the Salesian Family by the hand so that it takes care of today's sick people. If you don't go there among your peers, perhaps no one else will in your place.

But also together, as a Movement, you ought to be the voice of the young speaking to society and also to the Church: with a spirit of creativity promote initiatives that make their plight known, their problems, hardships, their expectations and hopes. The many good things too that are already taking place in the world of youth need to be made known, the many positive

initiatives for which often no space is found in the media; in this way foster a positive view of the world of the young among adults, infecting them with your enthusiasm and drive.

We are being called to go together to the heart of life, accepting the challenges arising from its cultural and social complexity. The family, school, social communication, culture, politics - all require new forms of solidarity. The response is to be found in living as active citizens for the common good, which, for the Salesian Family means promoting a shared commitment with regard to the great challenges: of life, of poverty in all its forms, of evangelisation, of peace, of human rights. For you, young people, civilian, social and missionary *voluntary service* constitutes a possible vocation of significance and of great commitment which the Movement ought to promote.

Another area to be considered as a Movement is *missionary commitment*. In these last few years in the missionary expeditions there have always been some young people who are devoting some years of their lives to spreading the Gospel; but also in your own countries you can set up net-works of collaboration and support which sustain the

missionary work of the Salesian Family and of the Church.

Be ready and willing to opt for demanding and generous forms of service even to the extent of accepting the gift of God who calls you to a *vocation of special consecration*.

Strengthen your own Salesian Youth Movement promoting contacts and knowledge about each other between the various groups in the same Salesian centre or in the same local area, encouraging the sharing of ideas and resources, collaboration in joint projects in the service of the great causes of life and of solidarity. Open up the SYM to other Movements in the local Church, collaborate with institutions and organisations in civil society, especially those which are working among the young and in the field of youth in straightened circumstances. Make the Salesian presence, as a Movement, visible in the Church and in society by taking part in joint projects, offering your resources and capabilities in support of initiatives on behalf of the young, encouraging forms of collaboration that are multifaceted, flexible, directed towards the same goal, and can be repeated...

And now the final suggestion which I think it is important that I

make. The Salesian Movement was born from the apostolic heart of Don Bosco, enflamed with charity for the salvation of the young. For this reason we will build the Salesian Movement if we are *present among the young with hearts centred on Christ*. We are being called to model our heart, poor and sometimes even sinful on that of Jesus, in whom God revealed Himself to the world as the One who gives life, so that man might find happiness and have life to the full (cf. *Jn* 10,10). What is needed is a faith that constantly grows stronger, nourished by the Word of God and by the Eucharist, which is often immersed in the ocean of God's mercy and discovers more and more how beautiful it is to allow oneself to be helped by a spiritual guide.

Following paths of *spiritual growth and development and of pastoral formation* we will be able to carry out our shared mission which is the Christian education and guidance in life of the young person.

Here is the question put by the Pope to the young people at the last World Youth Day in Sidney; he said: «Dear young people, let me now ask you a question. What will *you* leave to the next generation? Are you building your lives on firm

foundations, building something that will endure? Are you living your lives in a way that opens up space for the Spirit in the midst of a world that wants to forget God, or even rejects him in the name of a falsely-conceived freedom? How are you using the gifts you have been given, the "power" which the Holy Spirit is even now prepared to release within you? What legacy will you leave to young people yet to come? What difference will you make?» (Homily at the final Mass at Randwick Racecourse on 20 July 2008).

Let us walk together with hope: «You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses to the ends of the earth» (*Acts* 1,8). My dear young people, these words of Jesus are addressed to each one of you. Never ever forget it! The Risen Jesus opens up for each one of you these wide horizons, points out to you too the ends of the earth. But these begin here and now in your own countries, in your own cities where Providence has placed you. We are part of a great Family born in the heart of Don Bosco and increased with the gift of Mary Mazzarello and of all the Saints who have given it life, in a special way the young saints, Dominic

Savio, Laura Vicuña, Zephyrinus Namuncurá, the five young martyrs from the Poznań oratory, and so many others. Today the Lord is calling us to continue this beautiful adventure for the benefit and the salvation of the young.

Mary, who was the Mother and Teacher of Don Bosco, cannot leave us alone on this journey. She is for us too the Mother and Teacher who opens our hearts to Christ and to the young, so that at the service of the poorest young people we can build a Movement of salvation and the fulness of life.

On the Solemnity of Saint John Bosco

Turin, 31 January 2009

Fr Pascual CHÁVEZ VILLANUEVA

5.4 Canonical closure of the Vice Province of Canada, with the aggregation of the houses and confreres to the East United States Province

Below is the Decree of the Rector Major with which the canonical closure of the "Saint Joseph" Vice Province of Canada, is decided and the houses and the confreres are aggregated to the "Saint Philip the Apostle" Province of the East United States.

Prot. 009/2009

THE RECTOR MAJOR OF THE SALESIAN SOCIETY OF SAINT JOHN BOSCO

("Societas Sancti Francisci Salesii")

- having considered the situation of the Salesian presence in Canada, with the intention of providing a more effective animation of the charism and the mission of Don Bosco for the young people of Canada;
- having taken into account the context and the possibility of a closer link with the nearby Province of East United States;
- given the positive opinion expressed by the Council of the Vice Province of Canada;
- having heard the opinion of the Provincial and the Council of the Province of East United States with headquarters in New Rochelle;
- after a careful process of discernment undertaken by the General Council and having obtained the agreement of the Council in the session of 8 January 2009, in accordance with article 132 of the Constitutions,

DECREES

• that the Salesian Vice Province of **"Saint Joseph" of CANADA**, canonically erected 05.01.1988, be canonically closed;

• that the Salesian Houses of Canada:

- EDMONTON - Salesian Residence *"Saint Francis of Sales"*,
- ETOBICOKE *"Mary Help of Christians"*,
- MONTREAL - Maria Ausiliatrice *"Maria Ausiliatrice"*,
- SCHERBROOKE *"Saint John Bosco"*,
- SURREY *"Our Lady of Good Counsel"*,

with their works and confreres, be aggregated to the **"Saint Philip the Apostle" Province with headquarters in New Rochelle, NY, USA (Province of East United States)**.

The present decree will officially come into force on 1 July 2009.

With best wishes for a fruitful development of the Salesian charism.

Rome, 24 January 2009
Feast of St. Francis of Sales

Fr. Pascual CHÁVEZ VILLANUEVA
Rector Major

Fr. Marian STEMPEL
Secretary General

5.5 New Provincials

Below (in alphabetical order) are some biographical details of the Provincials appointed by the Rector Major with his Council in the course of the plenary session December 2008 –January 2009.

1. **ANCHUKANDAM Thomas**, Provincial of the **BANGALORE Province (India)**.

To guide the "Sacred Heart" Province of Bangalore, India, the priest *Thomas Anchukandam* has been appointed. He succeeds Fr. Jose Kuttianimattathil.

Born on 17 May 1955 at Anthinadu, Kerala (India), he has been a Salesian since 24 May 1974, the date of his first religious profession which he made in the novitiate of Yercaud. Perpetually professed on 25 May 1981, he was ordained priest on 27 December 1984.

After ordination he pursued his studies in Rome, obtaining a Licence in Church History. From 1994 he was the teacher of Church History at the theologate of "Kristu Jyoti College" in Bangalore, where he was also Rector between 2003 and 2009. In 2003 he was appointed to the Provincial Council and made Provincial Delegate for Formation.

Now he has been called to the ministry of Provincial.

2. *CIPRIANI Aldo, Provincial of the JAPAN Province.*

Fr. Aldo Cipriani succeeds Fr. Orlando Puppo as Provincial of the "Saint Francis Xavier" Province with headquarters in Tokyo, Japan.

He was born on 7 August 1949 at Castel Focognano, in the Province of Arezzo, in Italy. He made his novitiate at Chieri-Villa Moglia, in the Central Province, where he made his first profession on 16 August 1966. He left as a very young man for the missions, destined for Japan. He completed his studies in Hong Kong, before going to Japan for practical training and theological studies. In Tokyo he made his perpetual profession on 19 July 1972 and was ordained priest on 12 March 1977.

After ordination he exercised his educational and pastoral ministry in various houses in the Province. In particular, between 1986 and 1997 he was Provincial Secretary, living in the house of Tokyo – Yotsuya, where he was also Economer (until 2006). In the year 1997-1998 he was Vice Provincial and afterwards Provincial Economer between 1998 and 2007. He was also Delegate for Social Communica-

tion and the Press.

Now he has been called to animate and guide the Province as Provincial Superior.

3. *DUNNE Thomas, Provincial of the EAST UNITED STATES.*

Fr. Thomas Dunne is the new Superior of the "Saint Philip the Apostle" Province with headquarters in New Rochelle, NY, USA [East United States Province].

Born on 22 March 1943 in Brooklyn, NY, USA, Thomas Dunne made his first profession as a Salesian on 16 August 1961 in the novitiate in Newton, his perpetual profession on 15 August 1967 and was ordained priest at Columbus on 23 March 1972.

After ordination he exercised his educative and pastoral ministry in various houses in the Province. Between 1982 and 1985 he was Vice Provincial. Afterwards between 1985 and 1988 he was Rector of the community at Stony Point and at the same time a Provincial Councillor. The between 1988 and 1991 he was again Vice Provincial for three years. Then he worked in the house in East Boston, also collaborating (starting in 2000) with the Archdiocese of Boston. From 2006 he was Provincial Councillor and Provincial Delegate for the Sale-

sian Family and for Social Communication.

Now he succeeds Fr. James Heuser in guiding the Province.

4. *PEEDIKAYIL Michael, Provincial of the NEW DELHI (India) Province.*

Fr *Michael Peedikayi*. has been appointed Provincial of the "Jesus the Good Shepherd" Province of New Delhi, India. He succeeds Fr. Charles Lobo.

Born on 1 October 1948 at Alleppey, Kerala (India), he has been a Salesian since 24 May 1968, the date of his first profession which he made in Shillong. Perpetually professed on 24 May 1974, he did his theological studies at the Bangalore theologate and was ordained priest on 22 December 1977 at Thathampally.

After ordination among other pastoral roles he was at the Bandel - Sanctuary between 1985 and 1992. In 1992 he was appointed Rector of the Bandel - Don Bosco, community. From here he went to New Delhi - Alaknanda, where he was Rector between 1993 and 1998. Then he worked in the house in Hatia, where he was Vice Rector and from 2001 to 2003 he was the priest in charge at Kereng, Gumla. In 2003 he was appointed Vice

Provincial, a role he filled until his appointment as Provincial. Between 2003 and 2007 he was also Rector of the Provincial House in New Delhi. He also filled the roles of Provincial Delegate for Formation (from 2003), for Youth Ministry (between 2003 and 2007), for the Salesian Family (from 2004).

Now the Rector Major and his Council have called him to carry out the ministry of Provincial.

5. *PICHARDO MORONTA Víctor, Provincial of the ANTILLES Province.*

To guide the Antilles Province with headquarters in Santo Domingo (D. R.) Fr *Víctor Pichardo Moronta*, has been appointed to succeed Fr José Pastor Ramírez.

Born at Constanza, La Veja (Dominican Rep.) on 7 October 1962, Fr. Víctor Pichardo made his first profession as a Salesian on 16 August 1985 in Santo Domingo. Perpetually professed on 15 August 1992, he was ordained priest at Jarabacoa (D. R.) on 30 July 1994.

After ordination he exercised his educative and pastoral ministry in the houses of Santo Domingo - María Auxiliadora (1994-1997), Jarabacoa-Aspirantate (1997-1998) and Santo Domingo - Domingo Savio (1998-1999). Afterwards he

was in Rome, - UPS, where he obtained a Licence in Spiritual Theology. Having returned to the Province he was Rector of the "Don Rua" community in Santo Domingo (2001-2003). Appointed to the Provincial Council he was transferred to the Provincial House where he held various roles: Provincial Delegate for Youth Ministry and vocational guidance, for Economy and (from 2008) for Initial and Ongoing Formation. Between 2003 and 2006 he was Vice Rector of the Provincial house community.

In 2006 he was appointed Rector of Jarabacoa - Aspirantate. Now he has been appointed Provincial.

6. *PLOCH Timothy, Provincial of the WEST UNITED STATES.*

Fr. Timothy Ploch is the new Provincial of the "Saint Andrew" Province of the West United States with headquarters in San Francisco, CA (USA).

Fr. Timothy Ploch was born in Paterson, NJ (USA) on 8 June 1946 and has been a Salesian since 16 August 1965, the date of his first religious profession which he made in the novitiate in Newton, as a member of the East United States Province (SUE). Perpetually professed on 15 August 1971, he

was ordained priest at Westerville on 24 April 1976.

After ordination he completed his studies (M.A. in Theology), and undertook an educative pastoral ministry in various houses in the SUE Province. Rector of the community in Columbus between 1985 and 1990, in 1990 he was appointed Provincial of the East United States, a service he carried out in the six-year period 1990-1996. Afterwards he was in the community in Miami and from 1999 in the house in Port Chester - Holy Rosary, as Rector and parish priest. Provincial Councillor between 2003 and 2006 he was also Provincial Delegate for the Salesian Family and for Social Communication.

Now he has been called to guide the sister Province of the West United States.

5.6 New Salesian Bishops

1. *TEIXEIRA José Valmor César, Bishop of Bom Jesus da Lapa (Brazil).*

On 28 January 2009 the Press Office of Holy See made public the appointment by Pope Benedict XVI, of the Salesian priest *José Valmor César TEIXEIRA as Bish-*

op of the Diocese of BOM JESUS DA LAPA (Brazil).

Born in Rio do Sul (Brazil, SC) on 1 March 1953, José Valmor César Teixeira made his first Salesian profession on 31 January 1971 in the novitiate at Taquarí. He then did his studies of philosophy at Ascurra and his practical training before making his perpetual profession on 31 January 1977. He was ordained priest at Rio do Sul, his native city on 9 December 1979.

Having obtained a Licence in Philosophy and Sociology, he carried out his ministry in houses of the Province. In 1985 he was appointed a Provincial Councillor. The following year he was sent to Rome to complete his ecclesiastical studies obtaining a Licence in Church History at the Gregorian University.

Having returned to the Province he was again appointed to the Provincial Council. He then obtained a Licence in Education at the Catholic University of Porto Alegre. In 1989 he was appointed Rector of Curitiba-Istituto; a year later he was given the task of Vice Provincial, a role he carried out for six years (1990-1996). Between 1997 and 2000 he was again Rector of Curitiba-Istituto. From 2000 he was Rector of the complex work

of Viamão (including also the prenovitiate and the postnovitiate). On 1 June 2002 the Rector Major with his Council appointed him Provincial of the Porto Alegre Province a position he held for the six year period 2002-2008.

2. FIANDRI Mario, Vicar Apostolic of El Petén (Guatemala).

On 10 February 2009 the Press Office of Holy See made public the appointment by Pope Benedict XVI, of the Salesian priest *Mario FIANDRI* as *Vicar Apostolic of EL PETÉN (Guatemala)*, assigning him the titular see of Madarsuma (Africa). He succeeds the Salesian Bishop Oscar Julio Vian Morales, who in 2007 was appointed Metropolitan Archbishop of Los Altos, Quetzaltenango-Totonicapán (Guatemala).

Born on 8 December 1947 at Arborea, Italy, Mario Fiandri made his novitiate at Lanuvio and made his first profession as a Salesian on 10 December 1963, in the Roman Province. Having completed the years of formation in Italy, he made his perpetual profession on 13 August 1969 at Loreto and was ordained priest on 10 August 1974 in Arborea, his home town.

Between 1966 and 1969 he had attended the then Salesian Pontif-

ical Atheneum (PAS), obtaining a Licence in Philosophy.

Shortly after his ordination he left as a missionary in the Province of Central America, where he held several responsibilities including that of Principal of the Salesian Philosophical Institute of Guatemala; then between 1978 and 1984 Rector in Managua (Nicaragua) and between 1984 and 1987 Rector of the house of "Divine Providence" in Guatemala City. Between 1991 and 1994 he was in Rome

where he obtained a Licence in Sacred Scripture at the Pontifical Biblical Institute. Having returned to the Province he was a teacher of Philosophy, Rector (1996-1999), then Principal and teacher of Sacred Scripture in the Theologate in Guatemala City. For a long time he was also parish priest of the "Don Bosco" Sanctuary in Guatemala. At Province level, between 2004 and 2008 he was Delegate for Formation. Finally he was Delegate for University Ministry.

5.7 Salesian personnel at 31 December 2008

Prov.	Tot. 2007	Temp. Professed				Perp. Professed				Tot. Professed	Novices	Tot. 2008
		L	S	D	P	L	S	D	P			
AET	121	6	42	0	0	20	8	0	44	120	14	134
AFC	222	4	60	0	0	29	14	0	93	200	11	211
AFE	179	4	49	0	1	17	4	0	93	168	10	178
AFM	59	2	13	0	0	8	0	0	33	56	1	57
AFO	152	1	53	0	0	13	6	0	70	143	11	154
AFW	126	10	48	0	0	12	5	0	43	118	10	128
AGL	79	1	21	0	0	8	4	0	38	72	3	75
ANG	78	4	26	0	0	8	3	0	35	76	3	79
ATE	131	7	40	0	0	7	11	0	61	126	10	136
ANT	167	4	20	0	0	12	5	0	121	162	9	171
ABA	119	3	4	0	0	14	6	0	91	118	0	118
ABB	93	0	4	0	0	8	3	0	70	85	1	86
ACO	124	2	17	0	0	13	7	0	86	125	2	127
ALP	66	0	2	0	0	9	2	0	52	65	0	65
ARO	96	4	6	0	0	12	5	0	60	87	2	89
AUL	108	1	7	0	0	12	3	0	81	104	6	110
AUS	80	0	1	0	0	6	0	0	69	76	3	79
BEN	218	0	2	0	0	33	0	1	176	212	0	212
BOL	172	5	46	0	0	15	7	0	92	165	5	170
BBH	162	5	23	0	0	27	5	0	96	156	7	163
BCG	159	6	33	0	0	20	4	0	87	150	7	157
BMA	112	2	24	0	0	11	2	0	63	102	5	107
BPA	104	3	10	0	0	9	5	0	74	101	4	105
BRE	120	5	27	0	0	12	5	0	59	108	9	117
BSP	169	8	24	0	0	16	7	0	99	154	2	156
CAM	200	4	16	0	0	26	6	0	140	192	14	206
CAN	33	0	1	0	0	4	0	0	28	33	0	33
CEP	173	0	8	0	0	12	5	1	139	165	2	167
CIL	195	3	23	0	0	13	10	0	132	181	2	183
CIN	126	0	12	0	0	29	1	1	78	121	0	121
COB	175	2	35	0	0	16	3	0	105	161	6	167
COM	159	5	28	0	0	15	2	0	102	152	9	161
CRO	83	0	12	0	0	2	1	0	66	81	4	85
ECU	201	3	22	0	0	17	5	0	141	188	6	194
EST	108	0	19	0	0	2	4	0	83	108	6	114
FIN	230	3	30	0	0	18	7	0	161	219	3	222
FIS	100	5	16	0	0	11	1	0	67	100	4	104
FRB	275	1	7	0	0	40	3	0	211	262	2	264
GBR	86	1	4	0	0	7	0	0	71	83	0	83
GER	346	2	8	0	0	73	1	2	248	334	1	335
GIA	120	1	5	0	0	15	3	0	91	115	4	119
HAI	66	1	16	0	0	3	4	0	37	61	1	62
INB	204	2	52	0	0	11	6	0	128	199	8	207
INC	239	1	54	0	0	18	8	0	149	230	6	236
IND	213	2	34	0	0	5	22	0	145	208	16	224
ING	417	14	104	0	0	26	47	0	213	404	17	421
INH	186	0	47	0	0	5	17	0	102	171	19	190
INK	336	2	84	0	0	9	32	0	197	324	19	343
INM	349	7	70	0	0	15	22	0	223	337	17	354
INN	162	3	46	0	0	15	16	0	82	162	6	168
INP	103	0	24	0	0	8	5	0	62	99	5	104
INT	204	1	80	0	0	7	26	0	84	198	12	210

Prov.	Tot. 2007	Temp. Professed				Perp. Professed				Tot. Professed	Novices	Tot. 2008
		L	S	D	P	L	S	D	P			
IRL	97	0	7	0	0	6	0	0	79	92	1	93
ICC	568	1	37	0	1	76	15	2	409	541	3	544
ICP	569	3	14	0	0	144	6	2	388	557	2	559
ILE	373	4	26	0	0	48	4	0	273	355	1	356
IME	260	1	22	0	0	27	9	0	190	249	3	252
INE	422	6	14	0	0	79	10	1	289	399	4	403
ISI	253	1	9	0	0	21	6	1	206	244	3	247
ITM	170	21	51	0	0	9	19	1	57	158	14	172
KOR	127	6	32	0	0	19	2	0	61	120	3	123
LKC	63	0	19	0	0	3	4	0	32	58	6	64
MDG	82	4	19	0	0	5	5	0	46	79	11	90
MEG	202	2	18	0	0	14	7	0	152	193	8	201
MEM	177	2	27	0	0	13	8	1	119	170	8	178
MOR	108	0	8	0	1	11	6	0	76	102	1	103
MOZ	53	1	9	0	0	6	5	0	30	51	6	57
MYM	73	4	33	0	0	1	0	0	27	65	12	77
PAR	98	2	22	0	0	5	2	0	63	94	5	99
PER	155	5	33	0	0	11	13	0	93	155	12	167
PLE	278	1	10	0	0	15	6	0	232	264	4	268
PLN	289	0	36	0	0	8	8	0	231	283	6	289
PLO	213	2	24	0	0	2	7	0	169	204	4	208
PLS	230	1	23	0	0	7	2	0	184	217	4	221
POR	120	0	2	0	0	31	2	1	79	115	0	115
SLK	232	4	25	0	0	13	7	1	168	218	3	221
SLO	104	0	5	0	0	8	0	0	88	101	2	103
SBA	169	0	0	0	0	28	1	1	139	169	0	169
SBI	187	0	2	0	0	50	5	1	128	186	0	186
SLE	213	3	0	0	0	68	2	0	137	210	0	210
SMA	287	0	4	0	0	69	8	0	196	277	1	278
SSE	239	2	12	0	0	26	7	0	179	226	1	227
SVA	153	0	6	0	0	26	6	1	114	153	0	153
SUE	168	1	7	0	0	34	2	0	114	158	2	160
SUO	103	1	4	0	0	22	1	0	74	102	0	102
THA	84	0	5	0	0	12	2	0	66	85	2	87
UNG	38	0	5	0	0	2	6	0	29	42	1	43
URU	105	1	6	0	0	6	3	0	86	102	1	103
VEN	213	6	25	0	0	16	8	0	143	198	12	210
VIE	251	17	82	0	0	22	17	0	100	238	36	274
ZMB	82	3	21	0	1	6	3	0	42	76	9	85
UPS	124	0	0	0	0	9	0	0	128	137	0	137
RMG	81	0	0	0	0	19	0	0	61	80	0	80
Tot.	16118	255	2163	0	4	1770	602	18	10648	15460	515	15975
Ep.	116									117 (*)		117 (*)
Tot.	16234	255	2163	0	4	1770	602	18	10648	15577	515	16092

Note (*): At 31 December 2008 there are 116 Bishops + 1 Prefect Apostolic
 ** Column D indicates permanent Diacons

5.7 Our dead confreres (2nd list 2008 and 1st list 2009)

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

Deceased 2008 – 2nd list

NOTE: We print a 2nd list of those the news of whose death in 2008 arrived after the publication of AGC403.

SURNAME AND NAME	PLACE of death	DATE	AGE	PROV
P ALLEGRA Armando	Pedara (Italia)	30-12-2008	74	ISI
P BECERRA CUSPOCA Pedro	Bogotá (Colombia)	29-12-2008	86	COB
P BIANCHI Pietro	Imphal, Manipur (India)	08-03-2008	86	IND
P BOVIO Mario	Bollate, MI (Italia)	21-12-2008	82	ILE
P CLEMENTE PRIETO Rafael	Córdoba (Spagna)	24-12-2008	80	ECU
P DACANCQ Antoon	Boortmeerbeeck (Belgio)	18-12-2008	84	BEN
P GIARRATANO Giuseppe	Palermo (Italia)	23-03-2008	84	ISI
P LEHRBAUM Josef	Klagenfurt (Austria)	27-12-2008	82	AUS
P LUNA Roger	Oakland, CA (U.S.A.)	13-12-2008	79	SUO
P MOHR Paul Georg Michael	Campo Grande (Brasile)	08-06-2008	76	BCG
P MULARCZYK Jerzy	Lubin (Polonia)	27-12-2008	67	PLO
L PEPATI Enrico	Torino	28-12-2008	97	ICP
P RICO José Antonio	Madrid (Spagna)	16-12-2008	84	SMA
Fu per sei anni Ispettore e per 12 anni Consigliere Generale				
P SARANITI Francesco	Pedara, CT (Italia)	22-12-2008	71	ISI
P SIMONCELLI Giusto	Caracas (Venezuela)	02-12-2008	96	VEN
P SPANO Anthony	Hackensack, NJ (U.S.A.)	18-12-2008	93	SUE
L STRINGARI Luiz	Campinas (Brasile)	19-12-2008	97	BSP
P VACCARO José Rosario	Bogotá (Colombia)	01-12-2008	94	COB
L VAN DEN BOS Bertus	Wijchen (Olanda)	28-12-2008	82	BEN
P VAN WAELVELDE Joseph	Lubumbashi (Congo R.D.)	29-12-2008	86	AFC
P VRIJSEN Methieu	Kortrijk (Belgio)	21-12-2008	85	BEN

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Deceased 2009 - 1st list

SURNAME AND NAME	PLACE of death	DATE	AGE	PROV
L AFEK Michał	Piła	05-03-2009	64	PLN
P AHERN Patrick Martin	Nelspruit (Sud Africa)	23-01-2009	78	AFM
P AICHINGER Hermann	Graz (Austria)	24-01-2009	91	AUS
P ALONSO DURO Carlos	Santiago de Chile	06-03-2009	78	CIL
L ATZENI Antonio	Nuoro (Italia)	12-01-2009	77	ICC

SURNAME AND NAME	PLACE of death	DATE	AGE	PROV
L BAGGIO Fulvio	Treviso (Italia)	22-01-2009	82	INE
P BALBI Mario	Newark, NJ (U.S.A.)	23-02-2009	88	SUE
P BASILE Antonio	Piedimonte Matese (Italia)	16-03-2009	81	IME
L BERSEZIO Secondo	St. Petersburg, FL (U.S.A.)	12-03-2009	91	SUE
P BOCCALATTE Angelo	Quito (Ecuador)	18-01-2009	88	ECU
L BONETTO Giuseppe	Cairo (Egitto)	12-02-2009	78	MOR
P BRIGNOLI Beniamino	Treviglio (Italia)	10-01-2009	92	ILE
L CABRITO RIVAS Elpidio	León (Spagna)	04-03-2009	67	SLE
P CALANDRA Antonino	Pedara (Italia)	22-02-2009	86	ISI
P CARRETO CARRETERO Marcelino	Córdoba (Spagna)	02-02-2009	72	SSE
P CASSETTA Francesco	Bahía Blanca (Argentina)	14-01-2009	85	ABB
Fu Ispettore per sei anni				
L COAQUIRA Józef Bernabé	Arequipa (Perù)	05-02-2009	99	PER
L CZUBAK Józef	Lad (Polonia)	27-02-2009	79	PLN
P D'ANGELO Héctor Jorge	Bahía Blanca (Argentina)	22-02-2009	78	ABB
P DE MEULENAERE Paul	Lubumbashi (Congo R.D.)	12-02-2009	76	AFC
P DUBOIS Pierre	Toulon (Francia)	24-01-2009	81	FRB
L FARET Pietro	Selargius (Italia)	05-02-2009	63	ICC
P FARIAS Eusebio Segundo	Córdoba (Argentina)	18-01-2009	89	ACO
P FERLINGHETTI Francesco	Milano (Italia)	20-01-2009	72	ILE
P FOGGIO Michele	Civitavecchia (Italia)	14-03-2009	83	ILE
P FONCK Jozef	Zelzate (Belgio)	03-02-2009	81	BEN
P FRIGO Antonio	Castello di Godego (Italia)	12-01-2009	88	INE
P GAŁECKI Czesław	Wrocław (Polonia)	07-02-2009	76	PLO
P GALLIGANI Guido	Varazze (Italia)	13-01-2009	81	ICC
P GARBARINO Giacomo	Zoagli GE (Italia)	07-02-2009	86	ICC
P GARZA MARTÍNEZ Jesús	Puebla (Messico)	01-01-2009	71	MEM
P GIL Andrzej	Lubin (Polonia)	11-03-2009	65	PLO
P GIRAUDO Victorio Vito	Córdoba (Argentina)	04-02-2009	94	ACO
P GONZÁLEZ GILL Abrahán	Asunción (Paraguay)	10-03-2009	88	PAR
L GORTON Christopher	Manchester (Gran Bretagna)	31-01-2009	100	GBR
P GRIENENBERGER Lucien	Mulhouse (Francia)	12-02-2009	89	FRB
P GRIFA Gennaro	Salerno (Italia)	01-03-2009	89	IME
P GUÉZOU François	Yellagiri Hills (India)	29-01-2009	84	INM
P LEWICKI Zdzisław	Marszałki (Polonia)	06-03-2009	71	PLO
P MACCHI Gian Carlo	Parma (Italia)	06-02-2009	88	ILE
P MARCHISIO Pietro	Torino	01-11-2009	91	ICP
P MARTÍN MARTÍN José Manuel	Sevilla (Spagna)	30-01-2009	92	SSE
L MATTIO Giuseppe	Torino	16-01-2009	89	ICP
P MELO Benito	Córdoba (Argentina)	06-03-2009	80	ACO
P MURDOCH Ian	Gawler (Australia)	08-01-2009	60	AUL
Fu Ispettore per sei anni				
L NEUTZNER Rodolfo	Campo Grande (Brasile)	08-02-2009	77	BCG
L OCCHIENA Michele	Torino	19-01-2009	89	ICP
P OCHABA Jozef	Les Ponts-de-Cé (Francia)	22-01-2009	88	FRB
L O'KANE John	Cape Town (Sudafrica)	15-02-2009	77	AFM

SURNAME AND NAME	PLACE of death	DATE	AGE	PROV
P ORIVE DE LA CRUZ Aniceto	Madrid (Spagna)	30-01-2009	91	SMA
P PEKAREK Josef	Zlín (Rep. Ceca)	25-02-2009	78	CEP
P PINOT Adrien	Caen (Francia)	17-01-2009	98	FRB
L PRADA Carlo	Treviso (Italia)	25-01-2009	91	INE
P RODRÍGUEZ DIEGUEZ Manuel	León (Spagna)	23-02-2009	104	SLE
P RONCAN Mario	Castello di Godego (Italia)	17-01-2009	91	INE
P ROTA Giuseppe	Varese (Italia)	03-01-2009	86	ILE
L RULL Ignacio	Barcelona (Spagna)	17-01-2009	64	PER
P RYAN Martin	Dublin (Irlanda)	12-01-2009	85	IRL
P SÁENZ MARTÍNEZ Joaquín	La Paz (Bolivia)	27-02-2009	86	BOL
P SCHMIDT Pietro Paolo	Stefenelli (Argentina)	06-02-2009	85	ABB
P SEGNERI Ettore	Roma	01-03-2009	85	ICC
P STEIBL Rupert	Bogotá (Colombia)	09-02-2009	78	COB
P SUZUKI Katsushige D. Savio	Tokyo (Giappone)	09-01-2009	66	GIA
P TENGATTINI Angelo	Milano (Italia)	12-01-2009	59	ILE
L TSU Sing Ming Bartholomew	Hong Kong	15-01-2009	77	CIN
P VADACHERY Benedict	Irinjalakuda (Kerala, India)	05-03-2009	85	INK
P VERCELLONE Juan	Tucumán (Argentina)	23-01-2009	100	ACO
P VIDAURRE GANUZA José	Pamplona (Spagna)	28-01-2009	88	SBI
P VIGANÒ Pietro	Arese (Italia)	01-03-2009	92	ILE
L ZUCCARATO Paolo	Torino	24-02-2009	62	ICP

