



# acts

**of the general council**

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year XCI

january-april 2010

**N. 406**

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**

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OFFICIAL ORGAN OF ANIMATION AND COMMUNICATION FOR THE SALESIAN CONGREGATION

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Editrice S.D.B.  
Edizione extra commerciale  
Direzione Generale Opere Don Bosco  
Via della Pisana, 1111  
Casella Postale 18333  
00163 Roma

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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](mailto:tipolito@pcn.net)  
*Finito di stampare: gennaio 2010*

## BRINGING THE GOSPEL TO THE YOUNG

### STRENNA 2010

#### Centenary of the death of Don Michael Rua

**PREMISS:** Some significant events in the second half of 2009 – **COMMENTARY ON THE STRENNA 2010:**

**1. Introduction: the motives behind the Strenna.** – **2. Being disciples and apostles: our vocation.** – **3. The task of the disciples is to hear the “desire to see Jesus”** – **4. First disciples, then apostles.** – **5. To help the young “to see Jesus”.** 5.1. The aim of evangelisation: meeting Christ in the Church. 5.2. Method of evangelisation: walking together. 5.3. Motivation for evangelisation. 5.4. Re-thinking pastoral work. 5.5. Processes to implement in order to change. – **6. Don Michael Rua, disciple and apostle.** 6.1. “The most faithful one” 6.2. Fruitful Fidelity. 6.3. Dynamic Fidelity. – **7. Suggestions for putting the Strenna into practice** – **8. Conclusion:** *Don Bosco evangeliser, sign of God’s love for the young* (Meditation on the painting of Don Bosco by Sieger Koeder).

Turin-Valdocco, 18 December 2009

*150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Founding of the Salesian Congregation*

Dear Confreres,

I am writing to you from Valdocco, today 18 December, the date on which we are celebrating the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of our beloved Congregation, the date on which we raise a hymn of praise to the Lord, who has been so magnanimous to us. God had blessed abundantly the action of that group of young men from the Oratory of Valdocco who, gathered around Don Bosco «all unanimously determined to promote and maintain the true charity that is needed in the work of the festive oratories for abandoned youth nowadays exposed to many dangers», decided to form «a Society or Congregation» (cf. *BM VI*, pp. 182). It is the concluding celebration of this jubilee, opened last year, in which we want to renew our religious profession to make our own the pledge of our young founding fathers: that of always remaining with Don Bosco, following his ‘dream,’ his apostolic project, to ensure, *God willing*, the continuity and the development of his charism and of his mission.

From this perspective, the year 2009 has been very enriching and fruitful with very many activities in the Provinces fostering the spiritual and pastoral renewal of the confreres. One feature which has especially helped with this commitment has been the re-discovery of the Constitutions, genuinely «Don Bosco's will and testament, for us our book of life and for the poor and little ones a pledge of hope» (C. art. 196). Allow me, dear confreres, to say to you once again that these need to be always better known, loved, prayed and lived.

From the start 2010 opens with the shining figure of Don Rua. He knew how to become the son, the disciple and the successor of Don Bosco. He went halves, that is was in full communion with him in his labours and sufferings. Day after day he imitated our Father, and with fruitful and dynamic fidelity he made the Congregation and the Salesian Family flourish and expand. In all of this he takes his place before our eyes as our model! Looking again at Don Rua once again we want to make our own the suggestions offered in my previous circular letter. They are simple and clear. A real plan of life.

At this point, before presenting you with the commentary on the Strenna for 2010, I want to give you some information about the main events of these last few months: from July until the present. For a more detailed account I refer you to the Chronicle of the Rector Major and those of the Councillors, included in this issue of the Acts. You will find there the visits to the various Provinces and talks in a number of meetings and gatherings. Here I should just like to mention those events which to me seem most outstanding.

First of all I want to mention the pilgrimage in the steps of Saint Paul, which with the all members of the Council we made between 27 June and 5 July. We passed through the main places associated with the life of the Apostle Paul on his journeys in which he met Christ, and his untiring travels proclaiming the Gospel, from Tarsus, the place where he was born, to Damas-

cus, and Antioch, and Ephesus and to Athens. It was, as we had planned, a real spiritual experience, marked by the reading of the Word of God and by “lectio divina” led by Fr Juan José Bartolomé, and by reflections on Paul the evangelist. A subject which reminded us of the commitment to evangelisation proposed to us by the GC26 and which represents the focal point of the Strenna for 2010. The pilgrimage was also an opportunity to meet the Salesian communities working in those places: Damascus and Aleppo in Syria, Istanbul in Turkey. In each of the communities, the visit of the Rector Major and the Council was an occasion for fraternity and celebration, also on the part of the young people and the Salesian Family.

Something which affected us deeply, a real blow to the heart, was the death of our very dear confrere Fr Antonio Domenech, which happened on 20 July, at the house of Martí Codolar, in Barcellona. I cannot but recall his memory, given that Fr Domenech was a member of the General Council for 12 years, offering his services to the Congregation in the Youth Ministry Department. They were years of total dedication, of work reflecting his many talents and dynamism. We shall never forget the witness he gave: his love for life, the strong faith and sense of hope which marked the years of his illness. A period of suffering, of trial and of grace, which transfigured him and then brought him to the definitive meeting with the Lord. To him go our thanks and our admiration.

On 15 and 16 August, with Mother Yvonne Reungoat, I took part in the “European *Confronto*” at Colle Don Bosco, also celebrating the anniversary of the birth of our Founder and Father. This event, with the presence of Confreres, Daughters of Mary Help of Christians and leaders from all the Provinces of Europe, was a gathering at which once again we were able to experience how the charism of Don Bosco is relevant and “close” to the young. This fact alone would be sufficient for us to appreciate the value of the experience of the *Confronto*. One needs to add that this gathering had been prepared with great care and skill



by the SDB and FMA Youth Ministry Departments, and brought out clearly the leading role of the young people themselves, as Don Bosco wanted. These are the obvious elements which always ensure the success of this kind of event.

In the first days of September with Fr Adriano Bregolin and some other friends we made the 'Pilgrimage to Santiago'. It was a very beautiful experience in human and spiritual terms. It seems to me an expressive icon of the journey of life and of the faith journey each one of us is called upon to make. In an interview I gave for the Provincial Newsletter of the Province of León, Spain (which provided us with logical support during the walk) I pointed out that this walk tests, first of all, the pilgrim's physical fitness, teaching him to adapt his own pace to that of his travelling companions, provides time and space to contemplate nature as one slowly follows the scallop shells (the sign indicating the pilgrim's route) which show the path to be followed, helps one to come to terms with oneself in silence, and very simply invites each one to reflect on one's life and to pray. You can very well imagine the joy at reaching the goal with so many other pilgrims, and then having the opportunity to say mass on the tomb of the Apostle.

On the last Sunday of September I met those taking part in the *Harambée*. Afterwards in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians, I had the grace of sending on its way 140<sup>th</sup> Salesian missionary expedition. This year the number of missionaries, particularly high, was intended to represent another sign of the celebration of the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Congregation. An expedition like this is always something beautiful and significant in which we put into practice what the Lord Jesus asked of us: to be his witnesses even to the ends of the earth. It is also the continuation of what Don Bosco began in far off 1875, when he sent his first Salesian missionaries to Argentina.

Between 6 and 14 October we had the 'intermediate reunion' of the General Council, during which, taking up again

the study of the Regions, we examined that of South Asia. This reflection allowed us to get to know better the state of this Region, at the moment the most fruitful one in vocations in the Congregation, identifying the challenges which have to be faced, assessing the available resources and suggesting the general outlines for the immediate future. The subject will be taken up again with the Provincials of the Region in Sri Lanka during the next term.

Between 21 and 26 of the same month I went to Perù for the meeting of the Provincials of the Interamerica Region. Meetings of this kind at which the Vicar also takes part, are intended to be a form of accompaniment for each of the Regions. I already referred to this in previous letters. I should like to underline the fact that the experience of the meetings and their subsequent practical consequences are seen more and more to be profitable for the method chosen, and enriching for the Provincials taking part. On the occasion of this meeting, I also chaired a seminar of updating with the Provincials, the Delegates for Formation and Youth Ministry and some leaders, on the document of the Vth General Conference of the Latin-American Bishops at Aparecida. Meetings of this kind were conducted by Fr Egidio Viganò after the Conferences of the CELAM in Puebla and Santo Domingo. The purpose was to put the Congregation in harmony with the Latin American Church.

In the month of November I visited the Provinces of Dima-pur and Guwahati, in India, which can very rightly be considered one of the most successful examples of the inculturation of the Salesian charism and mission. Demonstrating this are both the growth of the Church in this area of north-east India, and the development of our Congregation. There is no doubt that the name of Don Bosco is like a magic word in this whole area, the result of the missionary stimulus given from the very beginning by Bishop Louis Mathias and all the great missionaries responsible for such an exemplary and fruitful establishment

of the Church and for the faithful inculturation of the charism, comparable to that achieved by the first missionaries in South America. They were confreres who were courageous and enterprising who made great efforts to learn local languages and cultures. Committed to human development, especially through education, they were always great evangelisers and cultivators of vocations. The recognition given us by the people close to us and by outsiders, by Christians and by non-Christians, by men of the Government and of the Church, is confirmation of how great were the epic deeds of the missionaries in this part of India. This splendid achievement also makes us reflect on why in certain places the Congregation has developed so well even among the tribal groups, while in others it is such a struggle to establish a local Church and to have vocations for the Church and for the Congregation.

Still in the month of November, between 15 and 22, at Turcifal, in Portugal, I preached a Retreat for the Provincials, the members of the Provincial Councils and other invited confreres, from the West Europe Region. It seems to me that this is one of the specific services of animation of the Rector Major who in this way can better communicate his vision of consecrated life in general, and Salesian life in particular, and pass on his teaching and the lines of government with which he wants to enlighten and guide the Congregation. Personally I was very happy with the atmosphere of prayer and reflection that was created. At the end of the Retreat I wanted to go to Fatima to pray to the Madonna and to entrust to her all of you, dear confreres, our works with the world of people, adults and the young who move around them. I cannot hide from you that I felt a real need to make this visit to the Sanctuary sanctified by the presence of Mary.

In conclusion, at the end of the month of November, I took part in the Bi-Annual and General Assembly of the USG (Union of Superiors General), in which we reflected on consecrated life in Africa. At the next Assemblies we will be reflecting on conse-

crated life in Europe and I can assure you that this topic arouses a great deal of interest: we are convinced that if consecrated life came to birth in Europe and from here developed and spread throughout the world, it is important that it is re-born here. As you can see this is in line with the 'Project for Europe' which more and more is also being taken up by other Congregations.

And without further ado I move on to give you my **Commentary on the Strenna for 2010**.

\* \* \*

*«Truly, nothing is more beautiful  
than to know Christ and to make him known to others».<sup>1</sup>*

My Dear Confreres,  
Daughters of Mary Help of Christians,  
All the Members of the Salesian Family,  
Young People,

Here I am once again for this annual appointment for the presentation of the commentary on the Strenna for 2010. As a real spiritual and pastoral programme, it will help us to strengthen our Salesian identity, re-invigorate our communion of minds and hearts to place ourselves within the Church as "disciples and apostles" for the building of the Kingdom and the transformation of the world. Today more than ever the world needs Christ and his Gospel; for this people are required who make the Kingdom of God the cause for which they live, as did Jesus; the witness is needed of disciples, new men and women, born not of the "flesh" but of the Spirit; apostles are required who are seriously engaged in the preservation of creation, in justice, in solidarity and in brotherhood and sisterhood among all peoples.

<sup>1</sup> BENEDICT XVI, cf. *Sacramentum Caritatis*, n. 84.

## 1. Introduction: the motives behind the Strenna

After my appeal last year in which I invited the Salesian Family to live and act as a “movement” so as to be more visible, more significant and more effective in its service for the salvation of the young, in 2010 I should like to see you animated by the same spirit and involved in a joint project: proclaiming the Gospel to the young, and in this way leading them to a personal meeting with the Lord Jesus.

It is a question of a word of advice offered to us by the Holy Father himself who in a letter sent to me on the occasion of the XXVI General Chapter of the SDB, wrote:

«May evangelisation be the main and priority frontier of their mission today. It presents many tasks, urgent challenges, vast fields of activity, but its fundamental purpose is that of proposing that everyone should live their human life as Jesus lived it. In multi-religious situations and in secularised ones, it is necessary to find new ways of making Jesus known, especially to the young, so that they may discover his perennial fascination».<sup>2</sup>

Therefore, on the occasion of the centenary of the death of Don Michael Rua, most faithful to Don Bosco and to his charism, I should like to invite all the members of the Salesian Family to become ever more and more disciples in love with Jesus and his enthusiastic apostles and to commitment themselves to the evangelisation of the young. Let us speak to them about Christ, let us tell them about our meeting with Him, let us tell His story, without which there is the risk that He slips into the realms of mythology and idealism, let us give them the programme of happiness which He offers us in the Beatitudes, let us tell them how beautiful life is once He has been encountered

<sup>2</sup> BENEDICT XVI, *Letter to Fr Pascual Chávez Villanueva, Rector Major of the Salesians, on the occasion of the XXVI General Chapter*, 1 March 2008, n. 4; cf. GC26 of the SDB, p. 91.



and how much joy there is in being embraced by Him and being drawn into the cause of the Kingdom of God.

The commitment to evangelisation flows from the identity of the disciple who after setting out to follow the Lord Jesus become His personal representative and ardent missionary. We want to take up the challenge of helping the young to “learn to look on this other person not simply with my eyes and my feelings, but from the perspective of Jesus Christ”.<sup>3</sup> It is true, we are Salesians and as such we carry out our mission of evangelising by *educating* and of educating by *evangelising*. This is not just a slogan nor a meaningless expression. It indicates the close link which exists between evangelisation and education; without confusing the one with the other and respecting their autonomy they are at the service of the building up of the human person in order to bring him or her to the fullness of Christ. Education is genuine when it takes into account all the different characteristics of the children, of the adolescent, of the young person and is clearly directed towards the all-round formation of the individual, opening him up to the transcendent. Evangelisation on its part has a strong educational dimension, precisely because it seeks the transformation of the mind and heart, the creation of a new person the result of his being conformed to Christ.

The Strenna for 2010 takes its cue from the Pauline year just concluded and from the Synod on the Word of God, while we still await the Pope’s post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation, which will help us to proclaim and to witness to the beauty of the Encounter with Christ, the Word of God, who is living amongst us. During the Synod, at which I had the grace to be present, I spoke about the passage from Luke and the disciples on the way to Emmaus, seen as a model, from both its content and its method of the evangelisation of the young; it could be useful to take it in hand again and meditate on it.

<sup>3</sup> BENEDICT XVI, cf. *Deus caritas est*, n. 18.

Here, then, the spiritual and pastoral programme for the year 2010:

**«Sir, we want to see Jesus».  
In imitation of Don Rua,  
as authentic disciples and zealous apostles  
let us bring the Gospel to the young.**

Already a good number of the groups of the Salesian Family are in harmony with this task. By way of example I will give you two passages from the General Chapters of the SDB and of the FMA.

The XXVI General Chapter of the Salesians shows its awareness of the urgent need to evangelise and of the centrality of proposing Jesus Christ: «We perceive evangelisation as the principal requirement of our mission, aware that the young have a right to have Jesus proclaimed to them as the source of life and promise of happiness now and in eternity. Our “fundamental purpose is that of proposing that everyone should live their human life as Jesus lived it. ...At the centre should be the proclamation of Jesus Christ and of his Gospel, together with the call to conversion, the acceptance of the faith, their taking their place in the Church; then from this will come faith journeys and forms of catechesis, liturgical life and the witness of charitable work».<sup>4</sup>

The XXII General Chapter of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians then, recognises that it is the love of God which urges us on: «The Upper Room where the apostles were together is not a place for them to stay but one from which to launch out. The Spirit changes them from fearful men into zealous missionaries who, full of courage, carry the good news of the Risen Jesus along the world’s highways. Love leads to exodus and to a

<sup>4</sup> BENEDICT XVI, *Letter to Fr Pascual Chávez Villanueva, Rector Major of the Salesians, on the occasion of the XXVI General Chapter*, 1 March 2008, n. 4; cf. GC26 of the SDB, p. 91.

going out of oneself towards new frontiers to make a gift of oneself: love grows through love.<sup>5</sup> Mary, who from the Upper Room teaches us to throw open the doors was the first to experience the exodus and to set out on her journey. The first to be evangelised became the first evangeliser. Carrying Jesus to others, she offers her service, brings joy, makes love an experience».<sup>6</sup>

## 2. Being disciples and apostles: our vocation

Being disciples who welcome in their heart the Word of God and apostles who with joy pass it on is the vocation of every Christian. The life and mission of the Church consists precisely in this. Jesus himself began proclaiming the Good News of the Kingdom of God and calling the disciples to send them out to preach. Not only the Twelve, but all the baptised are called to be disciples who make themselves familiar with the Word, identify themselves with the Lord to the extent of having His sentiments, who have the mind of Christ, they live in close union with Him, and then become convinced and zealous apostles, sent out in all areas of life to bear witness to the faith, to explain their hope, to collaborate in the transformation of culture and of society, to build a world where justice and peace reign, to be alive to solidarity among peoples and social groups and fraternity among all people.

No Christian can withdraw from the vocation and mission. All of us – not just priests, missionaries or religious – moved by the love that the Lord has for us and in virtue of our Baptism, are called to be evangelisers. We can respond to this mandate of the Lord in the family, at work, in our communities, with words and deeds, that is with the love we put into our actions and our words, making sure that they are according to the Gospel. Evangelising means putting in some yeast with such power as to

<sup>5</sup> Cf. BENEDICT XVI, *Deus caritas est*, n. 18.

<sup>6</sup> GC XXII FMA, *The greatest of these is love*, n. 33.

change the way of thinking and the heart of individuals and through them the structures of society, so that they are more in harmony with God's plan. It is not a question of an inward looking activity; evangelising is launching a real social revolution, the most profound, the only effective one. This explains why it meets with so much resistance and opposition, open or hidden.

Before thinking about the ways and means of evangelising, it is necessary to have a motive, to be, that is, "those in love" with God having experienced his friendship and closeness: «No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you» (*Jn 15,15*). Between the time of the call and that of the sending out there is the time in which the disciples "stay" with the Lord, to learn his way of life, to learn how to interpret personal and universal history as the history of salvation, to experience in their own lives the truth, the goodness and the beauty of the message which is entrusted to them and which they are called upon to proclaim.

In this regard, this is what I said in my opening remarks at the bi-annual Assembly of the Union of Superiors General, in preparation for the Synod on: "The Word of God in the life and mission of the Church". «Only the minister of the Gospel – consecrated or lay – who keeps the Gospel in his heart, making it the object of contemplation and a motivation of prayer, will succeed in keeping it on his lips as a treasure to speak about and will hold it in his hands as an inescapable duty to pass on».<sup>7</sup>

In the beautiful task of welcoming, incarnating and communicating the Word of God, Mary is our mother and teacher, because – as Saint Augustine says – She conceived the Son first in her soul then in her flesh. In fact in Luke's gospel Mary is presented as the one who replies with extraordinary openness to the message of the Angel: «Behold the handmaid of the Lord, let

<sup>7</sup> P. CHÁVEZ, *It would not be right for us to neglect the Word of God*, Greetings at the opening of the Assembly of the USG, Rome 21 November 2007.

it be done to me according to your word» (*Lk* 1,38). Mary is the model of the disciple who in the face of events she sees but does not manage to understand keeps all these words and meditates on them in her heart (cf. *Lk* 2,19). At the beginning of her Son's ministry, at the wedding at Cana, she invites the servants, to «do what he tells you» (*Jn* 2,5), and during his ministry she is to be found among the disciples who «hear the word of God and keep it» (*Lk* 11,27-28). When the time of the passion arrives, Mary is at the foot of the cross, sharing, to the bitter end, the abandonment, the rejection, and the suffering of the Son, and carefully safeguarding his will and testament: «Women, this is your son» (*Jn* 19,25-27). And finally after the resurrection, she devotes herself to prayer with the disciples awaiting the promised Holy Spirit (cf. *Acts* 1,14). This then is our model of the disciple and of the apostle of the Word.

### **3. The task of the disciples is to hear the “desire to see Jesus”**

Precisely because evangelisation is not just a message to be proclaimed but is the revelation of God in Jesus it is authentic when it leads to an encounter with Jesus and is effective when it communicates the salvation which God wants to give in the Son. Therefore evangelisation implies an inner dynamic which begins from the religious sentiment expressed in the human desire to see God as the Psalmist puts it: “Of you my heart has spoken: seek his face; it is your face O Lord that I seek” (*Psalms* 26,8). And one of the disciples dared to ask Jesus: «Lord, show us the Father and we shall be satisfied» (*Jn* 14,8). This tells us that evangelisation is a personal meeting and a person is evangelised precisely when s/he encounters and welcomes the person of Jesus.

The evangelist John records that some Greeks, on the way to Jerusalem for the Passover Feast approached Philip with the



request to “see Jesus” (*Jn* 12,21). Faced with such an unexpected request and not knowing what to do, Philip spoke about it to Andrew and together, “they went and told Jesus”. He then realised that the hour, so often delayed, had come for Him to be glorified. At that moment when those who were far away felt the desire to see him, Jesus knew that the time had come to announce his handing over of himself to death, the hour of his glorification, the decisive moment of the salvation of the whole world.

Jesus came to the awareness of his hour when he knew that there were some Greeks who wanted to see him. He came to know of it because two disciples told him. Without realising it Philip and Andrew help Jesus to know this crucial moment in his life. Without these two disciples the Greeks would not have been able to show their desire to see the Lord; without them Jesus would not have known that the moment had arrived for his glorification. Jesus needed the disciples to recognise in the desire to be seen by those far away the arrival of the hour of his glory.

Today too, Jesus needs disciples who succeed in recognising in peoples’ hearts, in their joys and in their fears, a desire that is not always put into words to approach Him and meet Him. What once again urged Jesus to undertake the work of salvation was knowing that he was wanted. Only the disciple who stays close to him can recognise among the many who are looking for him the one who really wants to find him. The disciple follows Jesus in order to facilitate the meeting with him of those who want to see him. It is in this way that the disciple of Jesus becomes his apostle: Jesus needs disciples, companions in his life and mission in order to recognise the arrival of his hour. Bringing to him those who want to see him, the disciple of Jesus is changed into his apostle.

Identifying among the many aspirations of young people nowadays the real desire to “see Jesus” is for us, members of

the Salesian Family, the motive, if not the only one, no less fundamental, to become real disciples of Christ. If we don't do it, who will present to Jesus the dreams and the needs of the young? Who will help the young to see Jesus? The members of the Salesian Family are being called to listen to the sighs of the young to meet Jesus, and at the same time, to interpret the world of youth in a way that highlights the desire the young people have to draw close to Jesus. This is our way of helping Jesus today to save the young. And it is in this way that we become his real companions and his apostles.

This means that the evangelisation of the young has to start from the practical situations in which they are to be found giving special attention to their culture, deeply marked by the value of individualism and self-centredness which leads them to gather together in groups with their peers and keep their distance from the world of adults. In this regard, quite enlightening are the words of Benedict XVI in his catechesis on 5 August 2009, speaking about the holy Curé d'Ars: «If in his time the “dictatorship of rationalism” existed, in the current epoch a sort of “dictatorship of relativism” is evident in many contexts. Both seem inadequate responses to the human being's justifiable request to use his reason as a distinctive and constitutive element of his own identity. Rationalism was inadequate because it failed to take into account human limitations and claims to make reason alone the criterion of all things, transforming it into a goddess; contemporary relativism humiliates reason because it arrives *de facto* at affirming that the human being can know nothing with certainty outside the positive scientific field. Today however, as in that time, **man, “a beggar for meaning and fulfilment”, is constantly in quest of exhaustive answers to the basic questions that he never ceases to ask himself**».<sup>8</sup> Here then is why the young – especially them – have a need, not always recognised or expressed, of patient and understanding guides.

<sup>8</sup> *L'Osservatore Romano* English Edition 12/19 August 2009, p. 15.

As regards attitudes towards religion in general and to Christianity in particular, information about the young leaves no room for doubt. Keeping their distance, soon giving up contact, a sense of irrelevance are the features of the relationship of young people with religious institutions, topics and people. Nowadays it is more and more common to come across youngsters who have never had contact with anything religious, or whose contact has been insufficient for them to understand the question of God, or those who have distanced themselves after an experience which at first had been quite promising.

Hearing the cry, explicit or implicit, of the young who want to see Jesus means in present day circumstances going out to those places and life situations where the youngsters feel at home, to make clear to them that among the most authentic desires concerning life and happiness is hidden the question about the meaning and the search for God.

My predecessor, dear Fr Juan Edmundo Vecchi, had dealt with this situation very precisely. "The world of youth is mission territory as far as the numbers involved are concerned of those who need to hear again the first proclamation, as regards the ways of life and the cultural models to which the light of the Gospel has not yet arrived, and as regards the verbal, mental and existential language which does not fit in with tradition".<sup>9</sup>

"It should be recognised that young people are interested in God. All research confirms this. A high percentage say that they feel the need for God and that they are convinced of his existence. However, they don't feel the need for any religious practice or for consistent moral behaviour, nor do they adhere to any "truth" about God which anyone from the Church proposes.

The image of God that young people have is quite varied, almost kaleidoscopic. But it would be too hasty to label it a false

<sup>9</sup> J.E. VECCHI, "L'areopago giovanile", NOTE DI PASTORALE GIOVANILE (NPG) 1997, n. 4 (May), p. 3.

one. Rather it is incomplete or out of focus, sometimes quite considerably so.

Given a certain mistrust of institutions and the image of God they present, and taken for granted some of the principles for evaluation typical of current thinking, there are no criteria to assess objectively the validity of the different representations of God.

In taking up one of them therefore a subjective choice seems to prevail. This is not entirely bad: faith is a free act of the will moved by grace and enlightened by reason. But there are certainly some unbalanced images. God is not an object, an image, an interrogator, a relationship and a discovery in purely individual terms. As a result one has a notably vague concept of God himself [...]

There are some young people for whom the idea of a personal God has almost disappeared. So too, any question at all about God. Ideas and questions remain in the recesses of the mind as though in a hidden corner no longer visited.

In this situation which is more comparable to a city square than to a church, one asks the question: when and how should one speak about God, towards what sort of image/idea of him should one direct experiences and messages. It is clear that just as God revealed himself through facts and words, so too our speaking about him happens through facts and words, events and illustrations".<sup>10</sup>

#### **4. First disciples, then apostles**

To be able to help youngsters to see Jesus it is necessary to know him, to live with him, to be one of his. In other words, it is not possible to be witnesses and apostles of Jesus without first

<sup>10</sup> J.E. VECCHI, "Parlare di Dio ai giovani", NPG 1997, n. 5 (June), pp. 3-4.

being his disciples. In fact, a person does not become an apostle by wanting to be one, but by being called. Philip, Andrew and the other members of the first apostolic community were called by Jesus, one by one, by name, chosen from among a large crowd: «those whom he desired, came to him,» twelve, «to be with him and to be sent out to preach» (*Mk* 3,13-14). And to go with Jesus they had to leave the people who were following him and follow him. Those who are invited to stay with Jesus and to preach in his name do not belong to the group who are looking for him; they are part of those who have already met him and have decided to stay with him.

The first mandate the apostle receives, the initial invitation addressed to him by the one who calls him, is to “stay” with his Lord. In the apostolate this living together comes before being sent out; companionship come before preaching; personal fidelity is the premise to the mission. In fact, those will be sent by Jesus who have lived with him, sharing the journey and the repose, bread and dreams, successes and disappointments, life and plans. Before the gospel fills their minds and becomes the reason for their labours it has to have been accepted into their hearts and become the cause of their joy. Jesus does not entrust his gospel to someone who has not given his life to him (cf. *Acts* 1,21-22). The first ones sent out by Jesus were his first companions.

Because they had been with him the people who wanted to know Jesus approached the disciples; the desire to find Jesus led the crowd to look for those who followed him. Only the disciple who lives with Jesus can facilitate access to him for someone who wants him. From this arises the urgent need that youngsters feel that they are meeting disciples of Christ who will take them to Him, precisely because they are always with him. Only authentic disciples can be credible apostles.

In the year just finished the person of Paul helped us to understand that before the “gospel of grace” was proclaimed to everyone, came the experience of the meeting with the Risen

One: Paul was able to preach the gospel of God and in a completely new way because the Risen One had been revealed to him (cf. *Gal* 1,15-16) on the road to Damascus. From this experience came Paul's plan of life «For me to live is Christ» and his pastoral plan "Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel" (*1 Cor* 9,16). If "Christ is everything for us" and if "nothing comes between us and the love of Christ", our life then becomes a joyful witness and a proposal to everyone of the meeting with Him.

## 5. To help the young "to see Jesus"

Finding Jesus doesn't mean immediately meeting him. "Finding" Jesus in some kind of strong religious experience which produces great joy and enthusiasm does not always lead to faith, to an authentic encounter with the Lord, because, as in the parable of the seed (cf. *Mk* 4), the soil in which it falls is not prepared.

In the encounter, the initiative comes from Jesus. "He takes the first step and seeks an encounter. He goes into a house, he goes up to a well, where a woman has gone to draw water, he stops in front of a tax collector, he looks up at someone who has climbed a tree, he joins someone on a journey. From his words, from what he does, from the person that he is there comes something fascinating that attracts the person he speaks to. It is admiration, love, trust, and attraction.

For many people the first meeting will be transformed into wanting to listen to him again, to become friends with him, to follow him. They will sit around him asking him questions, they will help him in his mission, they will ask him to teach them to pray, they will be witnesses of his happy and his sorrowful days. In other cases, the meeting concludes with an invitation to a change of life".<sup>11</sup> This is the unanimous testimony of the four evangelists.

<sup>11</sup> J.E. VECCHI, "Educare alla fede: l'incontro con Cristo", NPG 1997, n. 3 (April), p. 3.

The experience is not a different one when one thinks of the meeting of Jesus with the young. For each one of them the most explosive event occurs when Jesus is seen as the one who gives meaning to life, the one to turn to when seeking the truth, the one through whom to understand a relationship with God and with whom to interpret the human condition. The most important thing is to move on from admiration to knowledge, and from knowledge to intimacy, to love, to following, to imitation.

The fact remains that one cannot “see Jesus”, if He does not “let himself be seen”. No one can come to me, he said, unless the Father who sent me draws him. (cf. *Jn* 6,44). The desire to meet him, therefore, is not enough to come to the joy of recognition; nor is it sufficient to find his disciples in order to meet Jesus and to recognise him as Lord.

The Emmaus account, the model for the meeting between the believer and the Word incarnate (cf. *Lk* 24,13-15), identifies the goal which the believer has to reach, and indicates the path to get there. The episode illustrates the faith journey and describes the stages which are always relevant. The account in Luke offers us a *precise programme for evangelisation*, in which is described who it is who evangelises and how one evangelises: it is Jesus who evangelises through his word and the eucharistic gift of himself walking with the disciples.

### ***5.1 The aim of evangelisation: meeting Christ in the Church***

The account begins by narrating the fact of two disciples of Jesus leaving Jerusalem. Disconsolate over how much had happened three days earlier, they abandon the community, in which however there are some starting to say that the Lord has been seen alive; the two disciples cannot believe women’s gossip (cf. *Lk* 24,22-23; *Mk* 16,11). Only at the end of the journey when they see Jesus repeat the gesture of breaking the bread do they

recognise him, only to lose sight of him at once and to return to the community. The unexpected conclusion of the journey to Emmaus was to find themselves again with the community in Jerusalem. The Risen One did not stay with them, and they were unable to remain alone: they returned to the community where they encounter Christ again in the witness of the Apostles: «Indeed the Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon» (*Lk* 24,34). This is a criterion to assess the authenticity of an encounter with Christ: the gift of the community, which is rediscovered as one's own home, the dwelling place of the Lord, the hearth at which all those who have seen the Lord belong.

Re-discovering the community and finding oneself in the Church, the place in which to live the shared faith is the logical consequence of a personal encounter with the Risen One. Outside the community the proclamation of the gospel seems chatter not to be believed (cf. *Lk* 24,22-23). Today, as yesterday, or more than yesterday, we have to deal with the obstacles which evangelisation encounters. The first is disinformation, because not only do people say little about Jesus, they are trying to make him disappear from today's culture, from organised society, from personal conscience. His presence is considered irrelevant in society and his absence is seen as an advantage. The second obstacle is a purely subjective view of Jesus, who, deprived of his historical reality, becomes more and more a Jesus made to suit us, viewed according to our own desires or needs. The third obstacle is more subtle: in an attempt at inter-religious dialogue they would try to reduce Christ to one among a number of other spiritual teachers or founders of religions, so as no longer to recognise him as the only Saviour of all. Finally, there is the danger, not imaginary but very common among Christians themselves, of considering Christ to be so well known that he has nothing new to say to us; having become insignificant, it is no longer worth the trouble of having him as guide and Lord.

The account in Luke about the disciples on the way to Emmaus tells us that if the Risen One had not become their com-



panion during the journey and at table the two disciples would not have managed to discover that he was alive, nor would they have had again the desire to live together. Let us take good note of this: it does not matter whether the one returning to the community had abandoned it beforehand; it is however decisive that they return as soon as possible, immediately after seeing the Lord. Only the one who recovers the common life knows that the Risen One was with him and will recover the joy of having felt him near (cf. *Lk* 24,35.32).

One has to have doubts about a form of evangelisation, which over and above its methods and intentions, does not start from the evangeliser's life in common, and which does not arise from the joy at having met the Lord in the community. If it were like that, such evangelisation would not have its origin in a meeting with the Risen Lord, nor would it lead to a meeting with him. Those who saw the Risen Lord and ate with him could not hold on to him for themselves but discover the desire to tell of their lived experience, returning to their community. This is not by chance, but is the proof of a law of Christian life: someone who knows and proclaims that Jesus is Risen lives that experience in common.

Even though it is true that one can meet Jesus anywhere, his house, the place where he lives is the Church, the community of believers, of those, that is, who confess him as their Lord, the family of his disciples, of those who share life and mission with him.

There is no doubt that we really have to work to correct a distorted image of the Church that many young people can have. Some "speak about it affectionately as though it were their own family, indeed their own mother. They know that in her and through her they have received spiritual life. Even though they are aware of limitations, wrinkles and even scandals, nevertheless that appears secondary compared with the benefits she brings to the individual and to humanity as the dwelling place of

Christ and from where his light shines out: in the efforts to do good which are observed in works and individuals, in the experience of God moved by the Spirit that is found in holiness, the wisdom which comes from the Word of God, the love which unites and creates solidarity beyond national and continental boundaries, the prospect of eternal life.

Others keep it at a distance as though it were something that had nothing to do with them, of which they do not feel a part. They judge it from the outside. When they say "the Church" they seem to be referring only to some of her institutions, to some formulation of the faith or to moral norms which they don't like. It is the idea one gets from reading some newspapers. [...] They are mistaken precisely in what constitutes the Church: its relationship, indeed its identification with Christ. For many this is a truth that is not known or in practice forgotten. There are even those who see it as a pretext of the Church so as to monopolise the person of Christ, to control any interpretations of him and to manage the patrimony of images, of the truth of the fascination that Christ represents.

For the believer, on the other hand, this is the fundamental point: the Church is the continuation, the dwelling place, the actual presence of Christ, the place where he dispenses grace, the truth and life in the Spirit. [...] That is precisely what it is. The Church lives with the memory of Jesus, continues to meditate and to study his word with all the means available drawing from it new significance, re-actualises his presence in its celebrations, seeks to throw the light that comes from his mystery on to the events and on to the concepts of current day life, taking up and carrying forward Christ's mission in its totality: the proclamation of the Kingdom and the transformation of the less-than-human living conditions. Above all Jesus is its head who draws individuals together, unites them in a visible body and, gives strength to the communities".<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> J.E. VECCHI, "Maestro, dove abiti?", NPG 1997, n. 7 (October), p. 3.

If this is what the Church really is, we have the task of seeing to it that the young love her as the Mother of their faith, who raises them as children of God, who helps them find their vocation and mission, who accompanies them along the path of life and who waits to lead them into the house of the Father. This is what Don Bosco knew how to do in an incomparable way in the education and the evangelisation of his boys at Valdocco. Let us see what we can do today for the young people who want to see Jesus.

## **5.2 Method of evangelisation: walking together**

The probable reason why the Emmaus episode is so relevant lies in its being so close to our spiritual situation today. It is easy to identify oneself with these disciples who are returning home before the sun goes down, weighed down with thoughts of sadness. In the experience of the two disciples on the way to Emmaus we find the necessary steps to be taken in the education to the faith of the young, the Easter experience which accompanies the beginning of life in community and apostolic witness.

### *Starting point: going to Jesus with one's disappointments*

It was not so much what had happened in Jerusalem "in those days", as their deep personal frustration that led to their leaving for Emmaus. They had lived with him and that living together had awakened in them hopes of something better: it seemed "he would be the one who would liberate Israel" (Lk 24,19-21). Instead, his death on the cross had buried all their hopes and their faith. It was more than logical that they would feel the failure, and feel that they had been deceived. Nowadays young people have little in common with these disciples; but perhaps they have nothing more in common than the frustration of their dreams, the fatigue in their lives and the disenchantment in discipleship. It is not worth it, they often think, following Jesus: it is not worth the trouble: someone who is not present is of no value for their lives.

That is time to head for Emmaus. On their journey, with their anguish, there is also the opportunity for an encounter with Christ. But they are not to travel alone. The young need a Church which representing Jesus is close to their problems and their worries, which not only shares their journey and their fatigue, but also knows how to talk to them, puts itself on their level, taking an interest in what worries them, accepting their uncertainties. How can the Salesian Family represent the Risen Lord, if it is not concerned about them, if it doesn't ask itself about their "joys and hopes" and "sadness and anxiety" in other words if it is not concerned about their lives?

*During the journey: from knowing many things about Jesus to letting him speak*

On the journey, the stranger seems to be the only one who has no idea about what happened in Jerusalem (Lk 24,17-24). But knowing so many things about Jesus did not bring the disciples to recognise him; they knew the *kerygma* but they had not arrived at faith, they knew so much about him but they were not capable of seeing him; they knew so much about a dead man, so that they did not manage to see him alive. The stranger had to really make an effort to make them see what had happened in God's light. Jesus set himself to interpret his life for them presenting it as the fulfilment of the promises. In order to understand they had to let him speak.

Like Christ, the Salesian Family must give up nourishing the young with vague hopes, false expectations; instead it must teach them to accept what happens in them and around them, helping them to interpret the events in the light of God according to his word. If we do not bring them to the conviction that everything that happens is part of a divine plan, the fruit and proof of a huge love, how will the young succeed in feeling loved by God? To succeed, we have to become their companions in the search for the meaning in life and in the search for God. There we have a way, still little taken in the Church, urgently needed

for young people: For ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ.<sup>13</sup>

*The decisive stage: welcoming Jesus into one's home*

Arriving at Emmaus, the disciples still had not come to the personal knowledge of Jesus, they had not identified the Risen One in the stranger who accompanied them. In reality, Emmaus was not the goal of their journey, but a decisive stage in it. Invited to stay, and still unrecognised, Jesus repeats his gesture without saying anything. Eucharistic practice is among those who already believe the password for his real presence.

The two on the way to Emmaus did not recognise the Lord as they were walking along the road with him and were learning from him to understand the meaning of the events which had happened. What Jesus had not been able to do with his accompaniment, with his conversation, with the interpretation of the Word of God he did with the eucharistic sign.

The eyes to contemplate the Risen One are opened when he repeats the gesture which best identifies him (cf. *Lk* 24,30-31). When the bread is broken in community, Jesus emerges from anonymity. "No Christian community, however, is built up unless it has its basis and centre in the celebration of the Eucharist".<sup>14</sup> An education to the faith which forgets or delays the *sacramental* encounter of the young with Christ, is not the way to find him. The Eucharist is and must remain "the source and summit of evangelisation";<sup>15</sup> it is the "source and the summit of Christian life".<sup>16</sup>

"Like us, young people find Jesus in the church community. In the life of the church, however, there are times when Jesus reveals himself and communicates in a very particular way:

<sup>13</sup> Cf. DV 25.

<sup>14</sup> PO 6.

<sup>15</sup> PO 5.

<sup>16</sup> LG 11.

these are the sacraments, especially Reconciliation and the Eucharist. Without the experience to be found in them knowledge of Jesus remains inadequate and limited, to the extent that it is not possible to distinguish him among men as the Risen Saviour.

In fact there are those who, while sharing the social life and the ideals of the Church, would only place Jesus among the great sages, among the religious geniuses; perhaps they would consider him as the high point of human fulfilment who has an influence on us on account of the profundity of his teaching and the example of his life. However, what is missing is any personal experience of the Risen Lord, of his power to give life, of communion in him with the Father.

It has rightly been said that the sacraments are a real memorial of Jesus: of what he did and still does for us today, of what that means for our life: re-kindling therefore our faith in him by which we see him better in our life and in events.

They are also the revelation of that which seems hidden in the cracks of our life experience, of which we then become aware: in the sacrament of Reconciliation we discover the goodness of God at the beginning and throughout the unfolding of our life; in its light we appreciate its slipping by and we try to build it up in a new way. They are energy, transforming grace since they communicate to us the life of the risen Christ and engraft us into it; they give us an understanding that is not theoretical but lived of its importance, its characteristics and its possibilities.

They are prophetic, the pledge of a promise of communion and happiness that has been given to us and in which we trust. In the sacrament of Reconciliation our eyes are opened and we see what we can become according to God's plan and wishes for us; we are given the Spirit again which purifies and renews us. It has been said that it is the sacrament of our future as his children, rather than of our past as sinners. In the Eucharist Christ incorporates us in his offering to the Father and strengthens

our giving ourselves to men. It inspires in us the desire and gives us the hope that both the love for the Father and for our brothers and sisters will become a grace for everyone and everything: we proclaim his death and resurrection, come Lord Jesus".<sup>17</sup>

### **5.3 Motivation for evangelisation**

The urgent need to evangelise is not proselytism, but the expression of a passion for the salvation of others, the joy of sharing an experience of the fullness of life in Jesus. Someone who has met the Lord cannot remain silent: He has to proclaim him. Staying quiet would make him dead again; and He is living! The missionary spirit incarnates the command that Jesus addresses to the disciples: «you will be my witnesses to the furthest ends of the earth» (*Acts* 1,8).

Don Bosco made his own this appeal of Jesus from the very beginning of his work taking the gospel to the poorest boys. Speaking about the Congregation he said: "this Society's origins are found in simple catechetical instructions".<sup>18</sup> And immediately after the approval of the Constitutions (1874), on 11 November 1875, he sent the first missionary expedition to Latin America. As the Salesian Family we are invited to make our own what was the original inspiration of Don Bosco: the evangelising and missionary dimension of his life, but also his charism. All this represents a fundamental point of the spiritual testament that he left us.

The missionary spirit is particularly alive today, since the world has once again become "mission territory". On the other hand nowadays there is a different way of understanding missionary activity, of carrying out the "missio ad gentes". This is

<sup>17</sup> J.E. VECCHI, "Lo riconobbero nello spezzare il pane", NPG 1997, n. 8 (November), pp. 3-4.

<sup>18</sup> BM IX 35.

done while respecting the various cultural contexts, in dialogue with the other Christian confessions and the different religions, with a commitment to human development and to leavening culture.<sup>19</sup> However this does not excuse us from being missionaries, rather it engages us even more strongly.

#### ***5.4 Re-thinking pastoral work***

If we want to evangelise today, in addition to giving priority to the need to evangelise we need to renew pastoral work. Here then are some observations in this regard.

##### *Centrality of the person of Jesus Christ*

Evangelisation does not have the Lord Jesus only as its contents; He is its principal subject. In fact Jesus Christ does not propose a message that can be separated from his person, so that his words, his actions, his earthly experience can be reduced to simple means of communication. He himself is the content of his proclamation because he is the living and effective Word through which God communicates himself to man. The source of the whole work of evangelisation is the personal encounter with Christ. Obviously it is not a question of a simple exhortation but a clear indication which leads to the truth, and which has very relevant consequences. Among these, I mention first of all the need to bridge the gap between the contents and the method of evangelisation, and in the second place the urgent need to keep a balance between starting from the questions of those we are evangelising and presenting them with Christ and him alone. This requires of us that we examine whether our pastoral methods are consistent with the centrality of the proposal of Jesus Christ. A method which puts exclusively at the centre listening to the Word frustrates the effectiveness of the Word itself.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. EN 19.



*The witness of the evangelised and the evangelising community*

Witness is a key element in pastoral activity. The priority of witness arises quite logically from the centrality of the person of Jesus Christ in the work of evangelisation. This does not primarily arise from our giving a response to human needs, but from the encounter with a personal mystery of grace to which one bears witness; therefore it is not a question of starting from a void or an empty space but of starting from the fulness of a love which expands and in which one participates. Precisely on this account at the centre of evangelisation is the witnessing presence of a community which forces people to examine their consciences because of the way it lives, and not simply a pastoral plan which draws together a variety of more or less like-minded individuals. Therefore assuming particular significance is the person of the evangeliser who is first of all a believing disciple and then a credible apostle, or rather a credible apostle precisely because already a believing disciple.

*Evangelisation and education*

Within the Salesian Family the need is felt to re-think the relationship between evangelisation and education, overcoming the mere repetition of generic formulae. In this regard the XXVI General Chapter of the Salesians affirms: «In the Salesian tradition we have expressed this relationship in various ways: e.g. “upright citizens and good Christians” or “evangelising by educating and educating by evangelising”. We note the need to continue to reflect on this delicate relationship. In any case we are convinced that evangelisation offers education a model of fully developed humanity and that education, when it succeeds in touching the heart of the young and developing the religious meaning of existence, encourages and accompanies the process of evangelisation».<sup>20</sup> The development of this work finds its point of reference in the clear affirmation of the same

<sup>20</sup> GC26 SDB n. 25.

Capitular text, according to which «we safeguard both the proclamation in its entirety and the gradual way in which it is offered»,<sup>21</sup> without giving in to the temptation to change the gradual nature of the pedagogical processes into selecting only parts of the message, or in delaying the explicit proclamation of Jesus Christ, making a personal encounter with the Lord impossible.

### *Evangelisation in different contexts*

Evangelisation also requires special attention being given to the different contexts. The urgent need for proclaiming the Risen Lord impels us to confront situations that resonate in us as both an appeal and a concern: peoples not yet evangelised, the secularism which threatens lands which are of ancient Christian tradition, the phenomenon of migration, new and dramatic forms of poverty and violence, the spread of movements and sects. Every context presents its own challenges to the proclamation of the gospel. We also feel called to respond to certain opportunities such as ecumenical, inter-religious and inter-cultural dialogue, the new sensitivity for peace, safeguarding human rights and protecting the environment and all creation, the many expressions of solidarity and voluntary movements. These elements, recognised in the Apostolic Exhortations which followed the Continental Synods, are challenges for the entire Church and require us to find new ways for proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ while respecting and appreciating local cultures.

### *Attention to the family*

Special attention needs to be given to the family which has the primary responsibility for education and the first place in evangelisation. The Church has recognised the serious difficulties in which the family finds itself and accepts the need to of-

<sup>21</sup> *Ibidem.*

fer it extraordinary help in its formation, its development and the responsible exercise of its role in education. For this reason, we too are called to see to it that youth ministry is always more and more open family ministry. So during the XXVI General Chapter Pope Benedict said to us Salesians: «In the education of youth it is extremely important that the family play an active role. Families frequently have difficulty in facing the challenges of education; they are often unable to make their own contribution or are absent. The special tenderness and commitment to young people that are characteristic of Don Bosco's charism must be expressed in an equal commitment to the involvement and formation of families. Your youth ministry, therefore, must be decisively open to family ministry. Caring for families does not mean taking people away from work for young people; on the contrary, it means making it more permanent and effective».<sup>22</sup>

### ***5.5 Processes to implement in order to change***

To face up to the demands of evangelisation and to undertake a re-evaluation of youth ministry, it is necessary to change our way of thinking, modify structures and to set in motion some processes of change. It is necessary to move:

- from a mentality that favours roles of direct management to one that favours an evangelising presence among the young;
- from an evangelisation made up of events lacking continuity to a systematic and integrated evangelisation programme;
- from an individualist mentality to a communal style which involves the young, families and lay people in proclaiming Jesus Christ;
- from an attitude of pastoral self-sufficiency to one of sharing in planning by local Churches;

<sup>22</sup> BENEDICT XVI, *Address of His Holiness at the Audience to the Chapter members*, 31 March 2008; cf. GC26, p. 125.

- from considering the effectiveness of our presence in terms of the esteem of others, to understanding it in terms of fidelity to the Gospel;
- from a mentality of cultural superiority to one of positive acceptance of cultures different from our own;
- from considering the Salesian Family only as a chance to meet, get to know, and exchange experiences, to a commitment to making it a true apostolic movement on behalf of the young.

I am convinced that «to respond as disciples of the Lord Jesus we have no other alternative than a spiritual life, an intense life filled with faith, hope and charity lived at depth and with the radical approach of the evangelical life, a life illuminated by obedience, poverty and chastity. This is our prophetic message! Jesus has taught us and has communicated his spirit to us so that we might be the salt of the earth, the light of the world and the leaven in society, called to give light and to shine out, to preserve and to give taste, to make grow and to transform.

All this implies:

- taking up with creativity and enthusiasm the new evangelisation so as to reach the heart of culture, especially that of the young those for whom we work;
- recovering the centrality of God in personal and community life, ensuring a high level of spiritual life in the community and making the witness of the community in its following of Christ intelligible;
- putting our money on the creation of a community with a genuine family spirit, with a wealth of human values and completely dedicated to the service of the young, especially the poorest, the needy, the marginalised, so as to make it a home and a school of communion;
- giving a new significance to the Salesian presence among the young, making choices according to our charism which permit us to share our life with the young, creating a new

style of presence which is more decisively evangelising, locating ourselves where we can be more fruitful on the pastoral, spiritual and vocational levels».<sup>23</sup>

## **6. Like Don Michael Rua, disciple and apostle**

Whoever reads the history of the Salesian Congregation, 150 years after its foundation and a hundred years after the death of Don Rua, the first successor of Don Bosco, cannot but recognise, that our charism flows from the very mission of the Church, that what drives it is the pastoral zeal which Don Bosco acquired at the school of Cafasso, that, in a word, we are being sent out by Jesus to carry out his own ministry and his own work, but with the smiling face of Don Bosco and with the determination of Don Rua.

### **6.1 “The most faithful one”**

Therefore at this point I must refer to Don Michael Rua, the model for us as Salesians of what it means to be disciples and apostles. The celebration of the centenary of his death offers us a stimulus to be disciples and apostles of Jesus in the footsteps of Don Bosco, of whom he was the first successor.

He «was the most faithful, therefore the most humble and at the same time the most valiant of the sons of Don Bosco». With these words Paul VI, on 29 October 1972, the day of his beatification, delineated for always the human and spiritual figure of Don Rua. Again in that homily,<sup>24</sup> proclaimed under the Cupola of Saint Peter's, the Pope described the new Blessed with words which identified his fundamental characteristic: fidelity. «Successor of Don Bosco, that is continuer: son, disciple, imitator...

<sup>23</sup> PASCUAL CHÁVEZ VILLANUEVA, *Sotto il soffio dello Spirito. Identità carismatica e passione apostolica. Retreat to the FMA Chapter members*, LDC Turin 2009, p. 17.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. AAS an. and vol. LXIV, 1972 n. 11, pp. 713-718.

He made the example of the Saint a school... his life a history, his rule a spirit, his holiness a type, a model; he made the spring a stream, a river». The words of Paul VI raised to a higher level the earthly life of "slight and worn-out profile of a priest". They disclose the diamond which glistened in the meek and humble fabric of his days.

It had all started long before with a strange gesture. Eight years of age and having lost his father, with a broad black band fixed to his jacket by his mother he had stretched out his hand for a medal from Don Bosco. But instead of a medal Don Bosco had given him his left hand while making a sign as though cutting it in half. And he said to him: "Take it, little Michael, take it". And before those wide-open eyes which gazed on him transfixed, he said six words which were to be the secret of his life: "We two will always go halves".

And slowly the remarkable shared process began between the holy master and the disciple who went halves with him in everything and always. Michael began to take in Don Bosco's way of thinking and behaving. He was to say later: "Watching Don Bosco even in his tiniest actions made a greater impression on me than reading and meditating any holy book".<sup>25</sup>

## 6.2 *Fruitful Fidelity*

More than one Cardinal in Rome, at the death of Don Bosco, was convinced that the Salesian Congregation would quickly disintegrate; Don Rua was 50 years of age. It would be best to send a pontifical Commissioner to Turin to arrange the union of the Salesians with another Congregation of proven tradition. "In great haste", – Fr Barberis testified under oath – "Bishop Cagliero called together the Chapter with some of the older ones and a letter to the Holy Father was drawn up in which all the Superiors, and the older confreres declared that in total agree-

<sup>25</sup> A. AMADEI, *Il Servo di Dio Michele Rua*, vol. I, SEI Turin 1933, p. 30.

ment they would accept Don Rua as Superior, and not only would they submit to him, but would receive him with great joy... On 11 February the Holy Father confirmed and declared Don Rua in office for twelve years according to the Constitutions".<sup>26</sup>

Pope Leo XIII had met Don Rua and knew that under his direction the Salesians would continue their mission. And so it was. The Salesians and Salesian houses multiplied like the loaves and fishes in the hands of Jesus. Don Bosco had founded 64 houses; Don Rua took the number to 341. At the death of Don Bosco the Salesians were 700; with Don Rua, in 22 years as the Superior General, they became 4,000. The Salesian Missions, which Don Bosco had tenaciously begun, and during his lifetime had spread to Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego, Uruguay and Brazil; Don Rua multiplied the missionary outreach and Salesian missionaries arrived in Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, China, India, Egypt and Mozambique.

So that fidelity to Don Bosco might not diminish, Don Rua was not afraid to travel far and wide. His whole life was studded with journeys. He went to his Salesians wherever they might be, he spoke to them about Don Bosco, re-awakened in them his spirit, informed himself in fatherly fashion but carefully about the life of the confreres, about the works, and left written instructions and words of advice so that fidelity to Don Bosco might flourish.

### ***6.3 Dynamic Fidelity***

In the same homily at the beatification Paul VI declared: «Let us meditate for a moment on the characteristic aspect of Don Rua, the aspect that makes us understand him... The marvellous fruitfulness of the Salesian Family... had in Don Bosco its origin, in Don Rua its continuation. It was this follower of

<sup>26</sup> *Positio* 54-55.

his that served the Salesian work in its expansion, developed it according to the letter but with ever-inspired newness».

Paul VI continues: «What does Don Rua teach us? To be continuers... Imitation in the disciple is not passiveness or servility... Education is an art that guides the logical but free and original expansion of the pupil's potential qualities... Don Rua is really qualified as the first continuer of the example and work of Don Bosco... We are aware of having before us an athlete of apostolic activity, still in the mould of Don Bosco, but with growing dimensions of its own... We give glory to the Lord who wanted... to offer to his apostolic labours new fields of pastoral work, which impetuous and disordered social development opened up before Christian civilisation».

Reading through even only rapidly the impressive number of Don Rua's letters, of his circular letters, the volumes which describe his work as the Successor of Don Bosco for 22 years, one discovers in an impressive manner that what the Pope said is true: his fidelity to Don Bosco is not static but dynamic. He was really aware of the changing times and of the needs of the young, and fearlessly opened up Salesian work to new fields of pastoral ministry.

## **7. Suggestions for putting the Strenna into practice**

After these references to Don Rua, who did so much to develop the Salesian Family, here are some ideas which will be useful so that the groups of the Salesian Family may together be engaged in bringing the gospel to the young. They are offered to the individual groups but also to the Consultative Committees of the Salesian Family at local and Province level.

7.1 In the local and Provincial Consultative groups of the Salesian Family to reflect on how best to implement what is suggested in section 5.4, that is how to *re-think the pastoral ap-*



*proach*, so as to make effective the choices regarding the centrality of the proposal of Jesus Christ, personal and community witness, the reciprocal relationship between education and evangelisation, attention to the variety of circumstances and the involvement of families.

7.2 Starting from the “*Mission Statement of the Salesian Family*”, identify in the local and Provincial Consultative groups the best ways to plan and organise together *experiences of the evangelisation of the young*, promoting the “spiritual and prayerful reading of the Sacred Scriptures” also among themselves and making themselves more and more evangelisers among their companions.

7.3 Foster collaboration among the Salesian Family at Province and local level, so as to carry out the *mission to youth*, as an updated form of proclamation and catechesis, involving the young people themselves as evangelisers of their peers.

7.4 Make good use of the **Apostolic Exhortations** at the conclusion of the continental Synods in order to identify priorities and approaches suited to the specific contexts for the evangelisation of the young. In the case of Latin America, use the “Continental Mission” issued by the Assembly of Bishops held at Aparecida; in the case of the Africa and Madagascar Region, follow the guidelines of the Synod of Bishops of October 2009.

## 8. Conclusion

As usual I conclude this presentation of the Strenna with a story, which this time is offered to us by the commentary given by Fr Joseph Grünner, Provincial of Germany, on the picture “Don Bosco puppeteer”, painted by Sieger Koeder, a retired parish priest in the Diocese of Rottenburg-Stuttgart and a friend of the Salesians. As soon as I saw the picture I was fasci-

nated by the powerful and thoughtful representation of our dear Founder and Father.

It is truly an icon of “Don Bosco evangeliser, sign of the love of God for the young”. Like all icons it needs to be studied and appreciated as a whole but also in the details. I hope that reflecting on it encourages each one of us to be zealous evangelisers of the young, convinced that in the Gospel we are giving them the most precious gift: Christ, the only one capable of making them understand the meaning of their lives, of challenging them to make demanding choices in their lives and themselves become apostles of the young.

***Don Bosco evangeliser,  
sign of the love of God for the young***

Meditation on the painting of Don Bosco by Sieger Koeder

***“Be merciful even as your Father is merciful” (Lk 6,36)***

*We might be surprised by the way the priest artist Sieger Koeder has painted Don Bosco. He doesn't show him according to any of the many existing photographs, for example among his boys, nor even as the “typical saint” Instead the painting shows Don Bosco as he really was and continues to be, revealing his innermost being. In this way the painting also becomes a beautiful illustration of what our Father describes in his letter from Rome in 1884, as the centre of his preventive system.*

***Don Bosco: exciting puppeteer***

*On the right we see Don Bosco, dressed in his cassock, standing behind a dark curtain which serves as a back-drop. He is hidden from the view of the spectators, though they can see the two puppets he is holding up. From his face we can see his concentration and also his enthusiasm: he is smiling, and is obviously totally absorbed in what he is doing. He seems to enjoy the enthusiasm of the spectators.*

**Don Bosco: educator full of ideas**

*He knows how to fascinate boys, youths, adults, to win them over with games and entertainments of the simplest kind, making use of words or of the press, devoting himself to them with his creativity and his great sensitivity. He makes use of everything to win them over for what he considers is the mission entrusted to him by Providence. He does so putting at the centre “the message” of which he is only the mediator not the protagonist.*

**Don Bosco: passionate catechist**

*The two puppets in Don Bosco’s raised hands – one representing the father, the other the son being embraced by the father- are symbols of his plan of life: to make poor and abandoned boys and also the working classes understand the mystery of God’s immense love and his infinite mercy towards everyone. The biblical narrative of the merciful father who had always kept in his heart the memory of his prodigal son, and had always hoped for and awaited his return (cf. Lk 15,11-32), is not only the subject of the puppet show but the dominant theme of Don Bosco’s whole life. The painting shows the culminating point of the biblical story: the merciful father dressed as for a feast, hugs the prodigal son who has now returned, restoring to him the dignity and all the rights that he had before, and in this way opening up new prospects for his life.*

**Don Bosco: merciful father**

*Don Bosco does not “play” the father like an actor in a show, but he becomes and is so in reality, taking as his model the father in the story in the Bible. In the lower part of the painting, to the right of the curtain, Don Bosco is shown in the act of protecting one of his boys, who is looking attentively at Don Bosco. This boy is painted in the same blue colour as the puppet representing the prodigal son; perhaps he symbolises the older brother in the parable, who is not yet ready nor in the right mood to accept the father’s mercy. Equally, it could be that it represents the many boys to whom Don Bosco offered a safe place where they could experience security, charity, affectionate and effective love in contrast to all that they had experienced on the streets and in prison.*

### ***Don Bosco with his boys***

*Don Bosco's audience are children and boys who are closely following what he is doing. Don Bosco, for a second time, has been represented on the left hand side of the picture: standing among them and embracing them affectionately, as the merciful father does in the show. The youngsters are fully absorbed in what is happening on the stage, listening to the message, and at the same time, experiencing its effect: with Don Bosco they can feel at ease, accepted for what they are. Don Bosco's charity can be felt and becomes a sensitive and persuasive experience. This is the love of the "father, brother and friend".*

### ***Don Bosco: with a message for the world***

*The picture has set the scene under the open sky outside the walls of the city which can be seen in the background. In his day Don Bosco went to the inner city of Turin walking here and there around the streets and squares looking for and meeting children and youngsters. He entered their world, went to meet them, in a certain sense putting himself on their level, as is described in the letter from Rome. That was his favourite place to carry out his mission as pastor and evangeliser: accepting the youngsters where they were but opening them up to "higher things" and directing them towards "heaven" Don Bosco is painted, one might say, with his feet on the ground in the real world and with his eyes and his hands towards the heavens, and he never forgot neither the one nor the other.*

### ***Don Bosco: a witness with an invitation***

*In the liturgy for the ordination of a priest the Bishop invites the one he is ordaining: "Now live what you preach!" That is what Don Bosco did for the whole of his priestly life. He was convinced of the infinite and unfailing love of God for men, of the love of God who is more ready to forgive and to build up what is weak than to punish. Don Bosco was a persuasive witness through his whole being and all that he did, in the playground and in the work-shop, in the class-room as in chapel: the witness to the fatherly mercy of the "Good God", who never gives up on man, but leads him from separation and solitude to a return "home".*

*This painting by Koeder shows us a man to admire but more than that it is an invitation from Don Bosco to us: "Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful".*

Dear confreres, members of the Salesian Family, friends, as disciples in love with Jesus and as his convinced and joyful witnesses and apostles let us bring the young to Christ and bring the Gospel to the young.

  
Fr Pascual Chávez Villanueva  
Rector Major

## 4. ACTIVITIES OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL

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### 4.1 Chronicle of the Rector Major

*Below are some of the main events from the Rector Major's diary between June and November 2009.*

#### – **June-July 2009**

The months of June and July 2009 – between 2 June and 31 July – were mainly devoted by the Rector Major to presiding at meetings of the General Council in the course of the *summer plenary session*, with all that is implied in the preparatory phase of the meetings themselves and the subsequent implementation of the deliberations approved.

To the particular times of the work of the Council each day were added personal meetings and discussions with Councillors, Provincials, confreres and other people as well as some special meetings or events.

Here some of these events are mentioned. The first was a meeting with the communities of the “Callisto Complex” where the Rector Major went on 1 June with all the Councillors, on the occasion of the presence in the St Tarcisius community of Don Bosco's Casket.

It is worth recording that on Saturday 6 June, after a meeting

in the morning with the members of the Consultative Committee for Vocational Training Centres, the Rector Major went in the afternoon to vote, for the first time as an Italian citizen, in the elections for the European Parliament.

On the evening of 9 June he gave the official welcome to the Provincials who had come to the Generalate for the usual course at the beginning of their term of office. A course of formation in which the Rector Major is also involved especially on Wednesday 10 for a complete presentation of the role and tasks of the Provincial (which will then be taken up again by the various Councillors) and on Saturday 20 when he leads a day of recollection for the Provincials and presides at the closing Mass. During these days he also meets personally each of the Provincials, studying together the situation of the Province and any particular problems, and the tasks facing the Provincial during the coming six years.

Among the meetings in these days was that on the evening of Thursday 11 with Magdi Cristiano Allam, elected member of the Eu-

ropean Parliament, who gave the Good Night and stayed for supper.

On Sunday 14, the Rector Major spent the morning at Genzano, at the invitation of Bishop Marcello Semeraro for the celebration of the Feast of *Corpus Christi*, and that of the Mayor Enzo Ercolani, for the *procession of flowers*, which this year coincides with the presence of Don Bosco's Casket. After the Mass, in the Town Hall the Rector Major received a presentation and then spoke about the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Salesian Congregation.

On the evening of Friday 19 June, the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart, he presides at the community Mass in the Generalate, at the end of which he gives a small memento to the confreres who are celebrating jubilees of religious profession (Br. Luigi Caldarelli, Br. Luigi Zanon, Br. Valentino Persico, Fr Carlo Garulo and Fr Giancarlo Manieri).

On Wednesday 24 June, the Solemnity of St John the Baptist, the traditional feast of Don Bosco's name-day and the feast of the Rector Major, he spent the day in the Parish of Our Lady of Hope, with the whole Council, the Provincials of Italy and of the Provincials who have come for the course, with Cardinal Oscar

Andrés Rodríguez Maradiaga, Bishop Angel Divasson, Mother Yvonne Reungoat and a number of FMA, with the Superior General of the Salesian Oblates, the Superior General of the Sisters of Charity of Miyazaki, and many confreres and members of the Salesian Family.

On Thursday morning 25 Fr Chávez presided at a session of the Council, and at midday with all the Councillors, the confreres of the community and those working in the *Direzione Generale* welcomed the Casket of Don Bosco, which was staying briefly at the Generalate. In the evening he presides at Mass and after supper takes part in a prayer vigil and then the departure of the Casket of Don Bosco.

Between 27 June and 5 July the Rector Major and the Councillors – joined by the Procurator, Fr Francesco Maraccani – passed through the main places associated with the life of the Apostle Paul on his journeys in which he met Christ, and his untiring travels proclaiming the Gospel, from Tarsus, the place where he was born, to Damascus, and Antioch, and Ephesus and to Athens. It was, as they had planned, a real spiritual experience, marked by the reading of the Word of God and by "*lectio divina*" led by Fr Juan José Bar-

tolomé, and by reflections on Paul the evangelist. A subject which reminded us of the commitment to evangelisation proposed to us by the GC26 and which represents the focal point of the Strenna for 2010. The pilgrimage was also an opportunity to meet the Salesian communities working in those places: Damascus and Aleppo in Syria, Istanbul in Turkey. In each of the communities, the visit of the Rector Major and the Council was an occasion for fraternity and celebration, also on the part of the young people and the Salesian Family.

On their return home they took up the work of the General Council according to the programme arranged.

On Monday 6 July the Rector Major received among others, Archbishop Riccardo Ezzati, SDB, Archbishop of Concepción (Chile).

In the afternoon of Wednesday 8, with all the Councillors the Rector Major went to Castel Gandolfo for the half-yearly joint meeting of the two Councils SDB-FMA.

In the evening of 9 July he went to the *Sacro Cuore* for supper with Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone and the Provincial Council of the Circumscription of Central Italy (ICC).

Early in the morning of Friday 10, Fr Chávez received Bishop Francesco Panfilo SDB, then

presided at a session of the General Council at the end of which he left for the UPS, with Fr Adriano Bregolin, Fr Francesco Cereda and Br Claudio Marangio for the installation of the new Rector Magnificus, Fr Carlo Nanni. After lunch he returned and in the afternoon received Bishop Mario Fiandri, SDB, the new Bishop of the Vicariate of Petén in Guatemala.

At mid-day on Sunday 12 July Fr Chávez received Fr Ferrington Poobalarayen, the new Delegate for Sudan. In the evening he left for Turin with Fr Francesco Cereda and Fr Juan José Bartolomé. The next morning with the Provincial Fr Stefano Martoglio, he went to Les Combes to welcome the Holy Father, Benedict XVI, who was returning to spend part of his holiday in our house.

On Friday morning 17, the Rector Major, Fr Adriano Bregolin and Br Claudio Marangio went to Villa Barberini, in Castel Gandolfo, for a meeting with the Secretary of State, H.E. Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone. In the afternoon he gave the opening address at the meeting of the Commission for the "Project for Europe" with which he met again on Sunday 19 to chair the final meeting.

On Saturday 18, with his Vicar, Fr Chávez left for Barcelona,



Spain, to visit Fr Antonio Domech, seriously ill. Two days later on Monday morning 20, the news arrived of the death of the dear confrere, who had done so much as the Councillor for Youth Ministry.

On Thursday 23, the Rector Major presided at a study session with the whole General Council on the Encyclical *Caritas in veritate*, presented by Fr Mario Toso.

On Friday 24, after the session of the Council Fr Chávez left for Verona for an Academy and to preside at Mass for the jubilee of religious profession of some FMA at Forette. He returned home on Sunday afternoon and later attended the supper for the opening of the World Assembly on the centenary of the Association of the FMA Past Pupils. On Wednesday 29 he then took part in its conclusion in the Basilica of Don Bosco at Cinecittà, giving a short address together with Mother Yvonne Reungoat and the President of the Association.

The Rector Major ended the month of July Friday 31, presiding at the conclusion of the summer plenary session of the General Council.

### – August 2009

The Rector Major spent the first days of August in Rome with meetings and receiving people as well as

with office work. Among the meeting should be mentioned that with the Central Committee of the World Confederation of Don Bosco Past Pupils on Monday 3 August.

On Wednesday 5, with Fr Juan José Bartolomé, Fr Chávez left for Turin for a few days rest at Les Combes. Having arrived in Turin they were met by the Provincial Fr Stefano Martoglio, who took them to Châtillon, where they had lunch with the community before going on to Les Combes.

Fr Chávez stayed at Les Combes until the morning of Saturday 15 August when he left for Colle Don Bosco, where together with Mother Yvonne Reungoat, he was welcomed by the Salesian community, the group of prenovices and confreres who were following a course of Italian and those attending the “European *Confronto*”. In the Congress marquee there was a question and answer session for the young people with the Rector Major and the Mother General. In the afternoon after celebrating Mass in the small church of Mary Help of Christians, he returned to Turin. Here he greeted the community of the St Aloysius Oratory and visited the building site of the Church of St John the Evangelist which is being renovated and then went to Valdocco.

On Sunday morning 16 the Rector Major returned to Colle Don Bosco for the conclusion of the “*Confronto*”, celebrating Mass on the anniversary day of the birth of Don Bosco. In the afternoon he returned to Rome.

On Wednesday 19, Fr Chávez went to the “*Fraterna Domus*” House at Sacrofano for a day meeting the confreres from Italy of the “*quinquennium*” to whom he gave a talk on “The Word of God and the young”, and then in the afternoon chatting with them about it and finally celebrating Mass.

On Thursday evening 20, the Rector Major left for Brazil to ***visit the Provinces of Campo Grande and Recife.***

On Friday afternoon 21, he arrived in *Campo Grande*, where he was welcomed by the Regional, Fr Natale Vitali, the Provincial, Fr Lauro Shinohara, confreres, members of the Salesian Family and young people. In the evening he visits “*Ampares*”, a reception centre and speaks to the members.

He spent Saturday 22, as a day of celebration at Corumbá. He visited the Don Bosco parish, had a meeting with the authorities and with the members of the various active groups attached to the “*SEMPER*” centre (the manage-

ment team, Vocational Training Centre, Don Bosco College). Then he met the teachers and staff of the College and of the “*Saint Teresa*” Faculty and had lunch with the community, the confreres and invited guests. In the afternoon he greeted the Salesian Family in the Church of Mary Help of Christians and then celebrated Mass in the FMA community and then returned to Campo Grande.

On Sunday morning 23, he had a meeting with the Salesian Family in the theatre of the Don Bosco College in Campo Grande and had lunch with the community of the prenovices, novices, postnovices, those on practical training and the students of theology. In the afternoon he had a meeting with the Youth Leaders and concluded the day with Mass in the Saint John Bosco parish.

On Monday morning 24, he had a meeting with the staff of the Don Bosco College, had lunch with the Rectors of the houses in the Province and then a meeting with the confreres. In the evening he presided at the official opening of the Missionary Museum.

On Tuesday morning 25, he had a meeting with the Provincial Council and after lunch travelled to *Recife*, where he was met by the Provincial Fr João Carlos Ribeiro,

and by some other confreres and members of the Salesian Family.

On Wednesday 26, in Recife, he spent the morning at a meeting of the Provincials of Brazil (*CIS-BRASIL*). In the afternoon he had a meeting with the Provincial Council, and the various Provincial teams.

On Thursday 27, at Jaboatão, Fr Chávez held a formation day for the confreres of the Recife Province. He also visited the school next to the novitiate.

On Friday morning 28, in the Sports Hall of the "Sacred Heart" house in Recife, the Rector Major presided at Mass for the young people from the SDB and FMA houses. In the afternoon, at Carpina, he visited the school and the aspirantate and then met the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians to whom he gave a conference and then celebrated Mass.

On Saturday 29, the Rector Major was welcomed by the Salesian Family in the church of the Sacred Heart in Recife. Mass followed and then a first conference for the Salesian Family and the teachers. After lunch he greeted the coordinators of the various groups of the Salesian Family and then had a meeting with the coordinators of the groups of the "Joseleitos" and the "Medianeiras da Paz", and then

gave a second conference to the Salesian Family which was followed by a question and answer session and then the Blessing of Mary Help of Christians.

On Sunday 30, Fr Chávez began his return journey to Rome, stopping off for several hours at São Paulo, where he gave a TV interview to the *Canção Nova* and said Mass for some confreres and the prenovices.

### – September 2009

On Tuesday 1 September, the Rector Major went to the Generalate of the Combonian Missionaries of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, where he led the reflection in preparation for their General Chapter. In the afternoon with Fr Adriano Bregolin, his brother and a cousin he left for Spain to take part as pilgrims in the *Walk to Santiago*. Having arrived at midnight at Vigo, they were welcomed by Fr Ángel Fernández Artime, who would be their support during the walk and other confreres from the Mary Help of Christians community.

On Wednesday 2, they walked along the first stage of the "Portuguese walk" from Tui to Redondella. On Thursday 3, they walked the second stage from Redondella to Pontevedra. When

they arrived they went to the Salesian house of Cambados. In the evening after Mass and supper Fr Chávez gave the "Good night" to the confreres. The third stage on Friday 4, took the pilgrims from Pontevedra to Caldas de Reis. Arriving there they went to the FMA house. In the evening after Mass and supper the Rector Major gave the Sisters the "Good night". On Saturday 5, they walked the fourth stage, from Calda des Reis, to A Esclavitude. Arriving there they went to the Salesian house of Santiago. Here too, in the evening after Mass and supper, the Rector Major gave the confreres the "Good night".

The fifth and last stage on Sunday 6, took them from A Esclavitude to Santiago de Compostela. Arriving at Santiago they prayed in the Cathedral, then went to the Office for the document attesting to the completed walk. In the evening with the Provincial Fr José Rodríguez Pacheco, Fr Filiberto Rodríguez, Superior of the Vice Province of Angola, Fr Ángel Fernández and some other confreres Fr Chávez celebrated Mass in the relic chapel of St James the Apostle.

On Monday morning 7, Fr Chávez and Fr Bregolin went to La Coruña, for the beginning of a new

phase of social work for immigrants. Then, stopping at Cambados for lunch, they returned to Vigo, where the Rector Major presided at Mass for the two communities in Vigo, had supper with the confreres and then gave the "Good night". On Tuesday 8, the Rector Major and his Vicar visited the two social works dependent on the parish of Mary Help of Christians in Vigo and returned to Rome.

Between Wednesday 9 and Friday 11 September the Rector Major was in the office where he carried out his ordinary work and had many visitors and meetings with the Councillors and other confreres. Among the visitors should be mentioned on Thursday 10, at supper, two Salesian Bishops from Brazil, Bishop Valerio Breda of Penedo, and Archbishop Edvaldo Gonçalves Amaral, formerly of Maceió, on the occasion of their "*Visita ad limina*".

On Friday morning 11, the Rector Major went to the Auxilium for a meeting with the Academic Council of the Faculty. On his return he had a meeting with Fr Adriano Bregolin, Fr Giovanni Garzia and Fr Fernando Donald Reginold, confreres responsible for the parish of 'The Nativity of Mary' at Selva Candida in Rome,

entrusted to the community of the Generalate.

Early on Saturday morning 12, the Rector Major, accompanied by Fr Adriano Bregolin and Fr Alberto Lorenzelli, left for La Spezia, where he presided at Mass on the occasion of the installation of Sr Celestina Corna as the Provincial of the a Emilia-Liguria-Tuscany Province (ILS) of the FMA. After lunch Fr Chávez, accompanied by Fr Piergiorgio Placci, Vice Provincial of the ILE Province went on to Milan. On his arrival he was welcomed by the Provincial, by the Rector of the community and the confreres. After supper he gave the "Good night" to the youth leaders in the Province.

On Sunday morning 13, he met the young confreres of the Province, then the confreres making their perpetual profession, and then gave a message for a TV programme and concluded with a greeting for young missionary volunteers. In the afternoon he presided at Mass during which he received the perpetual profession of 7 young confreres and 2 FMA Sisters, in the Basilica of Saint Augustine. Immediately after the Mass Fr Chávez, accompanied by the Provincial and his Vicar left for Bologna. Having arrived in the community, he stopped to greet the

confreres and had supper. Then, with Fr Adriano Bregolin, he continued his return journey to Rome.

The days 14 to 16 September, passed in Rome were, as always, full of meetings and greeting visitors.

On Thursday 17, Fr Chávez met the new-missionaries of the 140<sup>th</sup> missionary expedition. At lunch were Bishop Valmor Cesar Teixeira SDB of Bom Jesus da Lapa, and Bishop António Emidio Vilar SDB, of São Luiz de Cáceres. In the afternoon he received Fr Luigi Bolla, a missionary among the Achuar Indians in the Amazon region. After evening prayer he gave the "Good night" to the confreres of the Generalate community after which he had supper with the group of missionaries.

On Monday 21 Fr Chávez made a flying visit to Verona to see Fr Francesco Maraccani, who was in hospital in Negrar. At the airport he was welcomed and then accompanied by the Rector of the Community of the Don Bosco Institute, Fr Germano Colombo, and by Fr Gianmario Breda. After lunch with the Don Bosco community he returned to Rome.

At midday on Tuesday 22, the Rector Major presided at Mass for the confreres of the community of the Saint Thomas Institute in

Messina, who were on pilgrimage to Rome and then had lunch with them. In the afternoon, accompanied by Fr Saimy Ezhanikatt, he went to Sant'Agnello, to the FMA house where he stayed until Friday 25.

At midday on Saturday 26 the Rector Major travelled to Turin where he was welcomed by the Provincial Fr Stefano Martoglio. In the evening in the multimedia hall of the *Missioni Don Bosco*, he took part in the filming of the presentation of the Strenna for 2010. After evening prayer he gave the "Good night" to the confreres of the Valdocco community.

On Sunday morning 27, he met those taking part in the *Harambée*, and spoke to them about the urgent need to evangelise. At midday he presided at Mass for the 140<sup>th</sup> *Salesian missionary expedition*. In the evening he left for Madrid. Welcomed by the Director of the Mission Office, Fr Agustín Pacheco, he had supper with the confreres working in the office and then continued on his journey to São Paulo, Brazil.

On Monday morning 28, he arrived at São Paulo, where he was welcomed by a group of confreres. Later he went on the Manaus. Here he was welcomed by his Vicar, by the Regional Fr Natale Vitali,

by the Provincial Fr Damásio Medeiros, and other confreres. In the evening he presided at Mass.

Tuesday morning 29 was dedicated to *meetings with the Provincials of the Latin America South Cone Region*. In the evening he had a meeting with the confreres of the Manaus Province, which was followed by Mass and the installation of the new Provincial Fr Benjamin Morando.

On Wednesday 30 he returned to São Paulo, where he spent a short time at the Provincial House before taking the flight for Madrid, Spain.

#### – October 2009

The Rector Major arrived in Madrid on Thursday 1 October, to be welcomed by the Provincial Fr Luís Onrubia and the Vice Provincial Fr Mariano Sáez.

He spent Friday 2 at Salamanca, where he met the Bishop Carlos López Hernández a Salesian past pupil, had a meeting with the Past Pupils of the Mary Help of Christians College and in the afternoon celebrated Mass with the Salesian Family. He blessed a statue of Don Bosco placed in the College playground, gave a conference to the religious in Salamanca and finally greeted the young people taking part in a musical.

Having returned to Madrid, on Saturday morning 3, Fr Chávez held a meeting with the confreres of the Province at Atocha, celebrated Mass with the Salesian Family in the church of Mary Help of Christians, and in the afternoon met the young people in the house of Paseo Extremadura.

On Sunday 4, the Rector Major celebrated Mass in the Parish of St John Bosco in Paseo Extremadura, which was broadcast on Spanish Television (TVE). Afterwards he had a meeting with the Provincial Council. In the evening after evening prayer he gave the "Good night" to the confreres of the Provincial House.

On Monday morning 5, the Rector Major presided at Mass on the occasion of the beginning of the Academic Year 2009-2010 of the Don Bosco Centre for Higher Education (CES) and gave the opening lecture. After lunch he returned to Rome.

Between Tuesday 6 October and Wednesday 14 there was the *intermediate session of the General Council* at which Fr Chávez presided, with the presence of his Vicar, of the Councillors for sectors and of the Regional Fr Maria Arokiam Kanaga, since on the agenda – in addition to other items – was the examination of the South Asia

Region. During the session, in addition to the meetings of the Council (usually in the morning and evening) the Rector Major's programme was full of meetings with the Councillors, with confreres and other people. Worthy of note, on Thursday 8 the visit of Cardinal Joseph Zen who stayed for lunch, and the Provincial of the Czech Republic Fr František Blaha. On Friday 9 he received Dr. Magdi Cristiano Allam, accompanied by Fr Maurizio Verlezza.

On Sunday morning 11, the Rector Major went to Ciciliano for a Mass at the end of the Inter-Chapter Assembly of the Sisters of the Sacred Heart of the Word Incarnate.

On Monday 12, in the afternoon before the meeting of the Council he received Bishop Luc Van Looy, who was in Rome on Church business.

On Wednesday 14, in the first part of the morning the Rector Major concluded the intermediate session of the General Council. At midday he concelebrated at the community Mass on the occasion of the birthday of Fr Adriano Bregolin, which was followed by lunch. In the afternoon he left for Sant'Agnetello, accompanied by a couple of friends from Mexico. He stayed there until Saturday 17.

Having returned to Rome, on Sunday 18 the Rector Major had as a guest at lunch Bishop Albert Vanbuel SDB a Bishop in the Central African Republic, who was taking part in the Synod for Africa.

On Monday morning 19, at the invitation of Fr Joseph Tobin, Superior General of the Redemptorists and the Vice-President of the USG, he greeted the members of the General Chapter of the Redemptorists, which was being held at the 'Salesianum'. He then wished a happy birthday to the Rector of the Generalate community Fr Giuseppe Nicolussi and afterwards met the confreres who were taking part in the Synod of Bishops for Africa (Archbishop Basile Mvé of Libreville, Archbishop Jean-Pierre Tafunga, Coadjutor Archbishop of Lubumbashi, Bishop Albert Vanbuel, of Kaga-Bandoro, Fr Guillermo Basaños and Fr Aimable Musoni), who stayed for lunch. In the afternoon he received Fr Luigi Mezzadri, lecturer in history at the Gregorian and Fr Emanuele Boaga, a Carmelite in charge of their Historical Institute and Fr Francesco Motto.

On Wednesday 21, the Rector Major left for Lima, Perú, for a *meeting with the Provincials of the Interamerica Region*, and afterwards some days of reflection on

the V<sup>a</sup> General Conference of the Latin-American Episcopate held at Aparecida. On his arrival he was welcomed by the Provincial Fr Vicente Santilli and other confreres by the Provincial Sr Matilde Nevares, and a group of FMA, by members of the Salesian Family and some young people. Having arrived at the Retreat House of the Dominican Sisters, where the meeting was to take place, Fr Chávez greeted the Regional Fr Esteban Ortiz and the Provincials, the Delegates for Formation and Youth Ministry representatives of the SYM and of the "Preferential Option" Group of the Interamerica Region, to whom after supper he gave the "Good night".

On Thursday 22 and Friday 23, until early afternoon the meetings with the Provincials took place with the Rector Major leading them together with Fr Adriano Bregolin. In the afternoon of 23, when the meeting with the Provincials was finished he left for Magdalena del Mar, the formation house, where he had a meeting with the Rectors, Salesians from the houses in Lima and the confreres in initial formation. Then he went to the Headquarters of the CONFER (Conference of Religious), where he gave a talk for men and women religious.



On Saturday 24, he began three days of reflection on the Aparecida meeting with Mass and an opening conference and then took part in the rest of the programme. In the evening he went to the Saint Francis of Sales College where he had a meeting with the Salesian Family and the young people of the SYM from the Perú Province, which was followed by supper.

On Sunday 25, the meeting on Aparecida continued. In the afternoon Fr Chávez paid a visit to Bishop Ramón Gurruchaga SDB. Afterwards he met the FMA in their Provincial House. Then he blessed the Centre for Pastoral Formation. The day ended with supper with those in formation at Magdalena.

Monday 26 was the last day of reflection on Aparecida, which ended with the final address by the Rector Major who shortly afterwards left for the airport for the return journey to Rome.

The following days the Rector Major spent in his office with the usual busy programme of work. On Thursday evening 29 he went to the UPS for Mass for the memorial of Blessed Michael Rua, with all the communities of the Vice Province. Afterwards he had supper with the confreres of the Blessed Michael Rua Community.

### – November 2009

Early on Sunday morning 1 November, Fr Chávez went to St Peter's Basilica. There he celebrated Mass of the Feast of All Saints for those taking part in the *Saints' Run*, promoted by the 'Don Bosco in the World' Foundation. Having returned home, at midday accompanied by his secretary Fr Juan José Bartolomé, he left for **Kuwait**. He was welcomed at the airport by the Rector of the community, Fr Tony D'Souza, and by the confreres from the two centres and by a group of Cooperators accompanied by the Vicar Apostolic, Bishop Camillo Ballin, MCCG, who took him personally to his residence for a short rest. At 08.00 he went to the "Indian English Academy School" in Salmiya, belonging to the "Saint Francis Xavier" Province of Mumbai (INB) and dedicated to the education of the poorest young people of different nationalities and faiths. He was enthusiastically welcomed and presided at a concert at the end of which he gave a talk and then met the lay co-workers, teachers and administrative staff. At midday in the residence of the Vicariate Apostolic, as a guest of Bishop Ballin, the Rector Major dined with all the priests and women religious in the

Vicariate, a representative of the Nunciature and Salesian confreres. In the afternoon, Fr Chávez met the local Salesian confreres. The day ended with Mass in the parish of Saint Teresa. In the evening the Rector Major met the Salesians-Cooperators, the Past Pupils and the Salesian Family and then left for the airport, to continue his journey to Delhi.

On his arrival on Tuesday morning 3 he was welcomed at the airport by Fr Michael Peedikayil, Provincial of New Delhi (INN), and a group of confreres. Before lunch he gave an interview. In the evening he celebrated Mass and then met the confreres and members of the Salesian Family.

The following day, Wednesday 4 November early in the morning the Rector Major and Fr Michael Peedikayil left for Kolkata, where they were welcomed by Fr Maria Arokiam Kanaga, the Regional Councillor for South Asia and some confreres from the Province. At midday they continued on their way to **Dimapur**. There they were welcomed by Fr James Poonthuthil, Provincial of Dimapur (IND), and numerous SDB and FMA.

Late in the afternoon he presided at Mass with a large group of Salesians, Daughters of Mary Help

of Christians, Salesians-Cooperators and representatives of other groups of the Salesian Family. At the end of Mass he gave a conference to the confreres there who are working in the States of Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam and Manipur.

On Thursday 5 November, the Rector Major greeted the Salesian Bishops Joseph Aind of the Diocese of Dibrugarh, and P. K. George of the Diocese of Miao, who had come to take part in the various events of the visit to the Provinces of Dimapur and Guwahati. Afterwards he left for the "Don Bosco Higher Secondary School" where he was welcomed by more than two thousand youngsters who had come from the 46 Salesian centres in the States of Nagaland, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh and Upper Assam. Then he presided at an academy in which, in addition to the youngsters from our works, Salesians, Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, Cooperators, Past Pupils, teachers government officials friends and supporters of Don Bosco took part.

The Rector Major was accompanied by Archbishop Dominic Lumon, Archbishop of Imphal and Administrator Apostolic of the Diocese of Kohima, by Bishop John Thomas of Itanagar, by the Sale-

sian Bishops Joseph Aind and P. K. George, by Fr Maria Arokiam by the Provincials Fr Michael Peedikayil (INN) and Fr James Poonthuruthil (IND) and many other guests. In the afternoon, at the Provincial House, the Rector Major met the Salesians-Cooperators from the Province. When the meeting with the Salesians-Cooperators was over, Fr Chávez went to the postnovitate house, where he was welcomed by the Salesians in formation, by a large number of priests and by over 100 representatives of the Salesian Family (FMA, MSMHC, SS. CC., Past-Pupils) and other religious. Here the Rector Major celebrated Mass.

The following day Friday 6, the Rector Major, with Fr Maria Arokiam, joined the Provincial Council and then presided at Mass, at which he gave the habit to the novices. At the end of the Mass, Fr Chávez met a representative group of the Past Pupils together with the Provincial Delegates from the States of Nagaland, Manipur, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. Early in the afternoon the Rector Major, Fr Maria Arokiam, Fr James Poonthuruthil, Fr Michael Peedikayil and other confreres left by car for Guwahati. Having arrived at midnight at Umran, an agricultural school in the Province of Guwa-

hati, they were welcomed by the community.

Between Saturday 7 and Tuesday 10 the Rector Major visited the ***Province of Guwahati, which is celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its erection as a Province***. On Saturday morning 7 he was driven from Umran to Shillong. As he was passing through Mawlai, Shillong, the children and the faithful of the Dominic Savio parish came to welcome him with wreaths of flowers. Having arrived at the "Don Bosco Technical School" in Shillong, in the Mini Stadium, the Rector Major celebrated Mass in front of two thousand youngsters and numerous Salesians and members of the Salesian Family. After Mass there was an academy. After lunch the Rector Major went to the compound of the archiepiscopal palace to take part in the Official Celebrations for the *Platinum Jubilee of the Diocese of Shillong*. The occasion was given a particular lustre by the presence of the Salesian Bishops from the region: Archbishop Dominic Jala of Shillong; Archbishop Thomas Menamparambil of Guwahati; Bishop. Joseph Aind of Dibrugarh; Bishop George P.K. Miao and Bishop Robert Kerketta, retired bishop of Tezpur. Present for the great celebration

were also the Provincials Fr José Almeida, (Guwahati), Fr Thomas Anchukandam, (Bangalore), Fr James Poonthuruthil (Dimapur), Fr Noel Maddhichetty (Hyderabad), Fr Thomas Ellicherail (Calcutta) and Fr Michael Peedikayil (New Delhi), in addition to a very large number of Cooperators, Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, Missionary Sisters of Mary Help of Christians and Past Pupils. Later Fr Chávez left for Nongthymmai, on the outskirts of Nongshilliang, to bless and open the "Shelter Home Don Bosco" in Rilang. Among those present should be mentioned Mr. BM Lanong and Mrs Ampereen Lyngdoh, respectively Vice-President and Minister of Education in the Government of the State of Meghalaya.

At the end of this event the Rector Major and his companions left for the "Sacred Heart Theological College", to meet the community of the Studentate and to celebrate, with the Salesian Family, the Jubilee of the Province. The "Sacred Heart" has given to the Congregation over 700 priests. After supper the staff of the Studentate and the Provincials who had come for the Jubilee celebrations held an informal gathering.

The following day Sunday 8 November, the Rector Major made a

short visit to "Savio Juniorate" and greeted the aspirants before going to the "Sunnyside" Salesian novitiate of Shillong. In the novitiate, Fr Chávez celebrated Mass and blessed the habits of 24 novices and the medals of the 3 brother novices in the community. At the end of the morning he visited the "Madonna Convent", Mother House of the Sisters of the Visitation, founded by Archbishop Hubert Rosario SDB, a group hoping to become members of the Salesian Family. Then he left for the Provincial House of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians (FMA) at Nongthymmai, Shillong. After this in the early afternoon the Rector Major took part in the Blessed Sacrament Procession of the city of Shillong, walking with the other faithful – about 150,000 – three kilometres. The procession is one of the most important religious events of the Catholic Church in the city and is held each year on the second Sunday of November, bringing together the faithful from all over the Archdiocese. This year, the procession, concluding with adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and benediction, had a special significance as it coincided with the closing of the celebrations for the Platinum Jubilee of the Archdiocese of Shillong. At the end

Fr Chávez had a meeting with the National Federation of Don Bosco Past Pupils in the "Don Bosco Technical School" in Shillong. Then the Rector Major went to the residence of Archbishop Dominic Jala with the Bishops and the Provincials who had taken part in the procession, for supper.

On Monday 9 Fr Chávez visited the Museum and the Library of the "Sacred Heart" and then left for Cherrapunjee, for the blessing of the Sanctuary of Don Bosco, an event in which very many Salesians, students and people took part. Immediately after lunch the Rector Major returned to Shillong, to go to "St. Anthony's College", the first Salesian university institution which was also celebrating its Platinum Jubilee. Present at the celebration were Dr. D. D. Lapang, 'Chief Minister' of the State of Meghalaya, Mr. Charles Pynogrope, Speaker of the House, other Ministers, Bishops, members of the Salesian Family, staff and students. When the programme was completed the Rector Major was driven to Guwahati. On his arrival he visited the Provincial House of the FMA, "Auxilium Convent" He had supper there and gave the "Good night" to the Sisters and then went to the SDB Provincial House where he spent the night.

The following day Tuesday 10 November, in the morning in the Cathedral of Guwahati the Rector Major presided at Mass with the Salesians of Assam and Tura. In this way concluding the Jubilee Celebrations of the Province. After breakfast the Rector Major and Fr Maria A. Kanaga had a meeting with the Provincial Council and then left for Azzara. Here Fr Chávez blessed the foundation stone of the "Don Bosco" University. Gathered for this event at the DBCET were about 1,500 people, including many distinguished guests, members of the local Church, government officials, teachers and students from various schools in the city. After lunch the Rector Major met the staff of the new University and then left for the airport of Guwahati, accompanied by Fr Maria Arokiam. Stopping off at Delhi, he had supper in the community of the "SPCI Centre" the office of the Provincial Conference of South Asia and then left for Rome.

He spent the following days – from Thursday 12 to Saturday 14 – in the house with the usual busy programme of work. Among meetings he had one should mention that with H.E. Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, together with Fr Adriano Bregolin, in the evening of Thurs-

day 12, and the one with four Salesian Bishops from Brazil, on their "*Visita ad limina*": Bishop Fernando Legal, Bishop Irineu Danelon, Bishop Tarcisio Scaramussa and Bishop António Carlos Altieri, at supper on Friday 13. Earlier that evening of Friday 13, Fr Chávez had presided at Mass with the community in suffrage for his brother Miguel Ángel, who had died the previous day.

On Sunday 15, at midday the Rector Major left for Portugal, to *preach the Retreat for the Provincials and Provincial Councils of the West Europe Region*. The retreat was held at Turcifal in the Spirituality House of the Diocese of Lisbon, and ended on Saturday 21.

During the week there were some meetings and other activities. On Tuesday 17 Fr Chávez gave an interview for the Salesian Bulletin of Portugal and another for a magazine. On Wednesday 18, after the conference in the afternoon he had a meeting with the Provincial Council of France-South Belgium, in which the Regional Fr José Miguel Núñez also took part. In the evening at supper time he met Bishop Joaquim Mendes SDB, Auxiliary Bishop of the Diocese of Lisbon, who came to greet the Rector Major. On Thursday 19, after the morning conference,

Fr Chávez, accompanied by the Provincial of Portugal and the Regional went to pay a call on the Patriarch, H.E. Cardinal José Policarpo. After lunch he gave a television interview to *Canção Nova*, and then had a meeting with the Provincial Council of the León Province. In the afternoon of Friday 20 he received a visit from the Provincial, Sr Santos Maria da Conceição and the General Councillor Sr Maria Luisa Miranda.

On Saturday 21, at the end of the Retreat, Fr Chávez went to the Sanctuary of Fátima, and then left for the airport to return to Rome.

On Sunday morning 22, he met the Team reflecting on Youth Ministry gathered at the Generalate with the Councillor Fr Fabio Attard and his collaborators in the Department.

On Monday morning 23, he went to the Headquarters of the USG for a meeting of the Executive Committee. In the early afternoon he greeted the confreres who were concluding the formation course for missionaries.

Between Wednesday 25 and Friday 27, he took part in the *Assembly of the USG*, during which he was re-elected as President.

On Saturday morning 28, he left for Sicily for the "Youth Festival". On his arrival he was met by

Fr Gianni Mazzali SDB Provincial and by Sr Anna Razionale FMA Provincial, and other confreres, Sisters and members of the Salesian Family. He was immediately taken to the Plaja for a meeting with the leaders. After lunch he went to Zafferana, where he had a meeting with the Provincial Councils of the Salesian Family.

The following day Fr Chávez, accompanied by the Provincial visited the sick confreres at Pedara, and then went to the "PalaCatania", where the "Youth Festival" was being held with about 4,000 young people from the various Salesian houses in Sicily. In the evening he returned to Rome.

On Monday 30 November, at the beginning of the *winter plenary session* there was a gathering of the General Council in the Rome-San Tarcisio house which ended with Mass and lunch with all the confreres of the San Tarcisio community and of the other communities of the "Callisto Complex".

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

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

The Vicar of the Rector Major, Fr Adriano Bregolin, at the end of the *summer plenary session* of the General Council, took part in some key moments in the Assembly of the Past Pupils of the FMA, which was being held in Rome at the 'Salesianum'. In particular on 31 July he led the discernment of the Assembly in the election of the World President.

On 4 August he went to Fatima in Portugal for a formation meeting (5-6 August) for young priests and brothers of the *quinquennium* from the West Europe Region.

Between 14 and 16 August he accompanied the Rector Major to Turin on the occasion of the 'European *Confronto*' of the Salesian Youth Movement. During the second half of the month of August he was in the Generalate.

Between 2 and 8 September he accompanied the Rector Major in Spain. Together they spent some days on holiday making the "Walk to Santiago". At the end of this experience, they celebrated Mass on Sunday 6 August with some confr-

eres and friends at the tomb of the Apostle. On 7, still together they were present at the opening of a new social work: an office providing help for foreign workers in La Coruña.

Having returned to Rome, on the evening of 15 he left for Buenos Aires. Having arrived there, on the 16 he left at once for the city of Rosario. He visited some houses in this Province including Funes - Aspirantate, Rosario - 'Saint Dominic Savio', Rosario - 'San José', San Nicolás de los Arroyos and the Agricultural School at Ferré. On 19 he took part in a meeting of the Salesian Family of Argentina in Rosario - 'San José'. Between Sunday 20 and Friday 25 September he preached a Retreat to Salesian confreres in Manucho.

On 26, Saturday, with the Provincials of Argentina he went to Manaus, in Brazil, for the meeting of the Provincials of the Latin America South Cone Region. The Rector Major had also arrived from Italy for the occasion. 29 was devoted to a meeting with the Provincials on the subject of religious discipline and the associated formal interventions. In the evening, with the Rector Major and all the Provincials, the Vicar took part in the installation of the new Provin-

cial of Manaus, Fr Benjamin Morando.

On 30, with the Rector Major he took a flight to Europe, stopping between 1 and 4 October in the Madrid Province and taking part in some events in Salamanca and Madrid.

Having returned to Rome, between 5 and 14 October he was present at the *intermediate session* of the General Council.

After a short break, on 21 October he left with the Rector Major for Lima, Perú. He gave the *Provincials of the Interamerica Region* a talk on the subject of religious discipline and spoke with them about some of the problems met with in this Region. Between 25 and 27 October he made a short visit to the houses in Cuzco and Calca. On the 27 October he left to return to Italy. On 28 he went to Turin where he took part in some of the ACSSA Congress on Don Michael Rua. On the evening of 29, the feast of Blessed Michael Rua, he presided at the Solemn Concelebration in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians.

Between 30 October and 1 November he spent some time with his family.

On 3 November he left for Japan. Here on 4 he visited the Salesian house of Osaka and met the local



Salesian Family to whom he gave a conference and then socialised with them.

On 5 November he met the Rectors of the Japan Province. On 6 he was accompanied by the Provincial and the Vice Provincial to Nagasaki. Here too, after a pilgrimage to the site of the Japanese martyrs and the centre of the atomic bomb catastrophe in 1945, he met the Salesian Family. Late in the evening he move on to Beppu.

The 6 November was dedicated to the *Sisters of Charity of Jesus* (formerly the 'Sisters of Charity of Miyazaky'). It was the closing day of their Special General Chapter. The Vicar spoke to all the Chapter members and then celebrated the closing Mass. In the afternoon he met the local group of the Salesian Family.

On 8 he went to Tokyo-Chōfu, where in the afternoon there was a large meeting of the Salesian Family, where the Vicar gave a conference and celebrated Mass after which there was a short concert in the course of a festive meal.

On 9, after Mass celebrated in the FMA Community for elderly and sick Sisters also in Tokyo-Chōfu, he visited the "Salesio Kosen" Polytechnical School. In the afternoon he then visited the FMA Centre in Akabane, spoke to the Salesian Sis-

ters in the city and then stayed with them for a festive supper.

On 10 November, after Mass celebrated with the confreres in formation, he went to the airport to return to Italy.

After a few days in the Generalate between 11 and 14 November, on 15 the Vicar Fr Adriano Bregolin left for Canada. Having arrived in Montréal, the same day he celebrated Mass in the parish of Mary Help of Christians, and then met the confreres of the Montréal and Sherbrooke Communities. The following day he met the local Salesian Family, gave a talk and joined them in a social gathering. On 17 he visited the Salesian Youth Centre, spoke to the Confreres of the Mary Help of Christians Community and joined them at a thanksgiving lunch with all the lay collaborators in our works. In the evening he visited the 'St. Joseph' parish.

The following day, 18 November, accompanied by the Provincial Fr Thomas Dunne, he went to New York - New Rochelle in the USA. In the afternoon he visited the house in Port Chester, meeting the novices and celebrated Mass in the local parish for Spanish-speaking immigrants.

The next day he had a meeting with the Provincial Council during

which programmes, animation procedures and problems of the SUE Province were considered.

On 20 he went to Stony Point to the "Marian Shrine – DB Retreat Center". He looked round the place, celebrated Mass and met the confreres.

In the evening of the same day he went to Orange to meet the confreres in formation. With them he spent some time in prayer then a lengthy period of discussion and then supper. On 21 November he left for Italy.

After a short break, between 25 and 27 November he took part in the USG Assembly in the 'Salesianum'.

### **The Councillor for Formation**

During the days 1-17 August the Councillor for Formation visited *three Provinces in India*. In detail in the Province of *Guwahati (ING)* he went to the prenovitiate in Agartala; in Shillong in the "Sacred Heart College" he conferred the ministries, gave the opening lecture for the Academic Year on the subject "Studying theology after the Synod on the Word of God", he took part in the *Curatorium*; still in Shillong he presided a Mass

for the first profession of the FMA, met the Salesian brothers in specific formation, visited the "Savio Juniorate" apostolic school, met the novices in Sunnyside; and finally visited Guwahati - Azara on the occasion of the beginning of the new "Don Bosco" University. In the *INH* Province in *Hyderabad* he took part in two days of the Assembly of the Regional Conference of South Asia; went to the novitiate at Manoarabad and the postnovitiate at Karunapura; he visited the parish of Saint Teresa, the Don Bosco school and the house for street boys at Navajeevan. In the *Bangalore* Province (*INK*) he had a meeting with the staff and also the students and the *Curatorium* of the "Kristu Jyoti College" in Bangalore; he went to the prenovitiate in Mysore; again in Bangalore he visited the church of Don Bosco and the parish of Our Lady of Lourdes.

On Saturday 22 August in Rome - Sacrofano he gave a day of recollection for Salesian priests and Brothers in the "*Quinquennium*" of the Italy Middle East Region. On Friday 28 August at Frascati he took part in the Provincial Assembly of the Circumscription of Central Italy (*ICC*) on the subject "The Year of the Priest". On Saturday 5 September in Milan he presented

the Strenna for 2010 to the Lombardy Province of the FMA and presided at Mass for the installation of the new Provincial.

Between 14 and 19 September he was in *New Delhi*, in India. Here, in the first place, he had a meeting with the Provincial Formation Commission. Afterwards on 15-16 with the Councillor for Youth Ministry he had a meeting with the Regional Commissions for Formation and Youth Ministry on the subject of the third key issue of the GC26 on "the need for vocation ministry" On 17-18 he took part in the Regional Formation Commission. In New Delhi, he also visited the technical school of Okhla, the school of Alaknanda, and the Ashalayam house for street boys.

Between 21 September and 2 October he was in *Brazil and Argentina*. On 22-23 September in San Paolo he took part in a meeting of the Regional Commissions for Youth Ministry and Formation of the Latin America South Cone Region, which had studied together the third key issue of the GC26 on "the need for vocation ministry". On 25-26 he went to Buenos Aires to meet the senior staff of the Salesian Theological Institute of the *ISET* and the community for the specific formation for priests in San

Justo. Between 27 September and 2 October he met the formation communities of the Campo Grande Province: the aspirantate and prenovitiate, the novitiate and the postnovitiate; he visited the Don Bosco parish and the "Don Bosco" Museum of Cultures; finally he met the Provincial Formation Commission.

After the intermediate session of the General Council he went to *Mozambique* between 16 and 28 October; here he visited the novitiate at Namasha, the prenovitiate at Moamba and the aspirantate at Matola. He took part in a meeting of the joint Commissions of Youth Ministry and Formation on the third key issue of the GC26; then he took part in the Regional Formation Commission and the meeting of the Provincials of the Africa and Madagascar Region.

Afterwards he took part in the meeting of the Regional Commissions for Youth Ministry and Formation for the Interamerica Region in Lima on 30-31 October, and for the North Europe Region at Krakow on 4-5 November. In Krakow he then took part in the meeting of the Regional Formation Commission of the same Region on 6-7 November. For the Italy and Middle East Region the meeting of the joint Commissions of Youth

Ministry and Formation took place in Rome - Saint Tarcisus on 10-11 November; followed by the meeting of the Regional Formation Commission on 12-13.

Finally on 18 November the Councillor for Formation took part in the *Curatorium* of Turin-Crocetta; on 19 November in the Commission for the places of Salesian interest and in the *Curatorium* for the specific formation of Salesian Brothers at Valdocco; on 5 December the *Curatorium* of the students of theology of the 'Gerini' in Rome.

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

The first task of the Councillor for Youth Ministry in the month of August 2009 was to take part in the meeting for the new Rectors in the Provinces of Spain which was held in the Provincial House of the León Province between 31 July and 6 August.

Between 8 and 16 August the Councillor took part in the "2009 *Confronto*" at which about 250 young leaders representatives of the various countries in Europe were present. The conclusion of the *Confronto* was blessed by the presence of the Rector Major and the Mother General who spoke

with the young people before the celebration of the final Mass.

At the end of August, between 30 August and 1 September 2009, Fr Fabio Attard with Fr Antoni Balcerzak led three days of reflection and study for SDB FMA and lay collaborators in the Youth Ministry sector in Austria.

This was followed by six meetings in the Regions, during which the Youth Ministry Department and the Formation Department jointly held study days on the subject of vocation promotion and the accompaniment of young people for Salesian religious life. The meetings were as follows: between 12 and 19 September 2009 during a visit to New Delhi; the 2nd in Brasilia, Brazil, between 28 September and 1 October 2009. the 3rd in Maputo, Mozambique, between 19 and 25 October 2009; the 4<sup>th</sup> in Lima, Perú, between 26 and 31 October 2009; the last two in Europe - 5<sup>th</sup> in Krakow, Poland, between 3 and 8 November 2009; the 6<sup>th</sup> in Rome, Italy, between 10 and 13 November 2009.

During the first days of October Fr Fabio took part in the meetings of the *intermediate session* of the General Council.

The Councillor was invited to give three conferences on Youth Ministry, on the educational emer-

gency and on spiritual accompaniment: the first at Nave, as the Opening Lecture of the Academic Year 2009-2010, on Saturday 10 October 2009; the second in Messina, at the Congress on the Educational Emergency on Monday 23 November 2009; and the third at Valdocco, Turin, on Saturday 28 November 2009, organised by the ICP for SDB, FMA and lay collaborator on spiritual accompaniment.

In addition the Councillor also took part in the following meetings: with the management team of the DBYN at Bruxelles, between Thursday 15 and Saturday 17 October 2009; at the conference on evangelisation which Mons. Coda gave at Turin-Crocetta, on Friday 13 November 2009.

His final commitments were: the consultation for the new Provincial of Great Britain, between 14 and 19 November 2009; the 1st meeting of the Team for the Review of Youth Ministry held at the Pisana between Friday 20 November and Sunday 22 November 2009.

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

The Rector Major entrusted to the Councillor for Social Communication (SC), Fr Filiberto

González, the *Extraordinary Visitation of the Province of Mexico – México (MEM)*. He undertook this in two periods: the first between 1 August and 30 September, and the second between 3 and 24 November. During this time Fr Filiberto met the Provincial and his Council, all the religious communities and all the educative communities and the main groups for educative pastoral work. At the end of the Visitation he gave all the confreres of the Province a report, he presided at a concelebrated Mass and had a meal with them.

In addition to the ordinary engagements of the Visitation, on 6 August the Councillor presided at the celebration of the professions of the FMA from Southern Mexico (MME), and on 15 August the perpetual profession of a confrere from MEM and the first professions of the confreres from the Provinces of MEG e MEM, the two celebrations being held in the National Sanctuary of Mary Help of Christians in Mexico City.

During his visit to the communities in Puebla he recorded a hour's long interview for the "El Sembrador" TV in which he spoke about the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Congregation, Don Bosco the educator and the Oratory, the Preventive System and the

Salesian Missions in a programme for the whole of Latin America.

On 1 October he returned to the Generalate and took part in the *intermediate session* of the General Council between 4 and 14 October.

Between 15 and 18 October with Fr Jaime González, a member of the SC Department he took part in a meeting of the SC Delegates from the Iberian Region in Barcelona (Martí Codolar and Sarriá).

Between 23 and 30 October with Fr Julian Fox, a member of the SC Department he took part in three meetings held in the Provincial house in Hyderabad, India, for the South Asia Region, for the Provincial Delegates for SC; for the Editors of the Salesian Bulletin and Directors of Publishing houses; and the Directors of the Centres of Formation in SC. He visited and greeted the Salesians and the street children in the Don Bosco centre.

Having returned to Mexico, on 3 November Fr Filberto continued with the second part of the Extraordinary Visitation which he concluded on 24 November.

In the meantime the members of the Department Team, in addition to their ordinary work, had been preparing the *DVD* of the Strenna and of the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Congregation, the

publication of the magazine "Salesians 2010", and the make-over of the *sdb.org* site among other things.

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

Immediately after the summer plenary session of the General Council, Fr Václav Klement left for the *Extraordinary Visitation of the Provincial Delegation of Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands*, belonging to the FIN Province (August 2-28). Going round the ten communities with 38 confreres for the second time as Visitor he was able to notice the growth in quality of the mission, Salesian animation and sharing with the confreres the challenges of the patient work for vocations and evangelisation.

Afterwards with the FMA General Councillor for the Missions, Sr. Alaide Deretti, he directed an American Seminar for the formation of the Delegates and the Coordinators of Missionary Promotion (Cumbayá-Ecuador, 29 August-4 September), attended by 30 SDB and 37 FMA. Among the many fruits of the event was the preparation and organisation of meeting between the three Departments for

the Salesian mission (SC, Missions, Youth Ministry) with the logistical and professional support of the 'Regional Centre for Ongoing Formation' in Quito and of the Province of Ecuador.

The preparation course for the 140<sup>th</sup> *Missionary Expedition* (Rome-Salesianum and Colle Don Bosco, 5-27 September) was led for the first time after the GC26 by a complete team from the Department: Fr Alfred Maravilla (missionary formation), Fr Stanislaw Rafalko (Missionary-projects and missionary voluntary service), Fr Dionisio Pacheco (secretary, UPS missionary course). The Rector Major presented the missionary cross to 33 SDB missionaries, 6 FMA missionaries and 15 lay missionary volunteers from five European countries.

Afterwards the Councillor stayed in Turin to visit the Mission Office (28-29 September) with the Director, Fr Pier Luigi Zuffetti, getting to know the staff and appreciating all the services offered.

The first visit in connection with missionaries for the "Project for Europe" – between 30 September and 3 October – was to twelve missionaries in Hungary at Budapest and Kazincbarcika. On his way back he took part in the annual meeting of the Provincials of the

*CIMEC* Zone (CEP, CRO, SLK, SLO, UNG) at Bratislava, together with the Regional Fr Štefan Turanský (3-4 October), giving an input on missionary promotion.

After the *intermediate session* of the General Council, the Councillor for the Missions took part in the IX General Assembly of the "Don Bosco Network" (Rome-Sacred Heart 15-16 October), followed by a Missionary Congress at Venezia-Mestre (INE) which brought together various missionary groups in the Triveneto Province.

As a follow-up to the first meeting of the Commission for the "Project for Europe", Fr Klement visited some Provinces in the North of Europe to assess the welcome and the subsequent formation given to the confreres who have been sent by the Rector Major to contribute to the re-vitalisation of the Salesian charisma. He made short visits to the Provinces of GBR (London, 19-20 October), IRL (Dublin, 21-22 October), BEN and FRB (Bruxelles, Leuven, Amsterdam - 23-24 October) and finally AUS (Vienna, 26-27 October). At the same time he was able to share the results of these visits with all the Provincials of the German-Atlantic Zone (Benediktbeuern, 25 October).

To recover his physical and spiritual energies the Councillor paid a short visit to his family followed by a retreat at Sebranice (CEP), between 28 October and 6 November. Before returning to Rome he led the Provincial Days of the Prague Province on the subject "Salesian Evangelisation today" at which about 200 members of 7 groups of the SF took part.

A short visit to the new missionary foundation in *Bangladesh* at Utrail (9-14 November) enabled him to get to know the hopes and the challenges of this first foundation begun by Fr Francis Alencherri in February 2009; he also met Bishop Ponen Paul Kubi, CSC. of Mymeshing.

The last Regional Seminar of 2009 for the Missionary Promotion Delegates was held in Manila, "Tuloy sa Don Bosco", with 15 SDB and 7 FMA Delegates between 15 and 18 November.

As part of the organisation of the *DOMISAL* (Salesian Missionary Day) 2010 – "*Salesians of Don Bosco walking with the Rom - Sinti*" – the Councillor took part in the International Congress at Košice - Bardejov (SLK, 20-23 November) attended by 89 SDB, FMA, lay collaborators and also a number of the *Rom* involved in this mission.

The final event in this six-month period was the "Seminar for the Directors of Provincial Mission Offices", held in Rome, at the Generalate between 25 and 28 November. Taking part with the Councillor for the Missions and the Economer General were 37 Directors of Mission Offices from all the eight Salesian Regions.

Starting in August the Department for the Missions has been building on the site (AGORA-reserved) an interactive platform for missionary formation (in 5 languages) and missionary promotion. In this way all the basic material for the Delegates for missionary promotion are available - the thirty topics of basic missionary formation on the pattern of the annual course for new missionaries (three sections: cultural dynamics, missionary motivation, the dynamics of the Salesian missions).

## The Economer General

When the summer session of the General Council was over, Bro. Claudio Marangio went to Colombia between 12 and 26 September for a visit to the two Provinces of Bogotá and Medellín; in Bogotá, his visit fitted in with the Extraordinary Visitation by the Regional.



Having returned to Rome, on 2 October he went to Turin-Valdocco for meetings with the ICP Provincial and the one in charge of the Missions Office in view of a renewal of the agreement between the Piedmont Province and the *Direzione Generale*. The following day, 3 October he took part in the meeting of the Council of Administration of the SEI Publishing House.

Having returned to Rome, between 5 and 14 October he took part in the *intermediate session* of the General Council and when this was over, between 16 and 19 he made a visit to the Ukraine Delegation.

Still in the month of October, on 28 and 29 he took part in a meeting of the Committee of the Bonn Missions Office Bonn, and then went to visit two Provinces of Brazil - Porto Alegre (between 31 October and 6 November) and Brazil - Campo Grande (between 6 and 13 November).

Having returned to Rome, on 19 November, with the Councillor for Formation he went to Turin to take part in the work of the Central Commission for the 'Valdocco Project'. Still with the Councillor for Formation on 24 November he chaired a meeting of the Administrative Committee of the PAS.

Finally between 25 and 28 November, with the Councillor for the Missions, he led a Seminar at the Generalate for Directors of Provincial Mission Offices.

### ***The Councillor for the Africa - Madagascar Region***

During the second half of August 2009, the Regional Councillor for Africa and Madagascar, Fr Guillermo Basaños, started the consultation process for the appointment of new Superiors in the Vice Provinces of Equatorial Tropical Africa (ATE), English-speaking West Africa (AFW) and French-speaking West Africa (AFO). He was able to hold several sessions with the confreres at Yaoundé (Cameroun) in the ATE Vice Province; in Ibadan (Nigeria), Ashaiman (Ghana) and Freetown (Sierra Leone) in the AFW Vice Province, and finally in Lomé (Togo) in the AFO Vice Province.

On 2 September he began the *Extraordinary Visitation of the ZMB Vice Province*, visiting all the communities and meeting each confreres in the four countries which make up this Vice Province: Zambia, Malawi, Zimbabwe and Namibia. The Visitation in ZMB ended on 26 November with a

meeting of the Council of the Vice Province, in the Provincial House at Chawama (Lusaka, Zambia). At this point the Regional Councillor had already visited 32 countries out of the 37 which are in the Region.

There was a break in the Extraordinary Visitation of ZMB during the month of October when Fr Basaños took part in the *2<sup>nd</sup> Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops for Africa*, between 4 and 25. He was one of six Salesian Synod Fathers taking part in the significant event.

The same day that the Synod finished he returned to Africa, specifically to Maputo (Mozambique), where he presided at the eighth Conference of the Provinces and Vice Provinces of Africa and Madagascar (CIVAM). It was suitable occasion to give a first-hand account of the spirit and the significance of the Synod. On 1 November, at the end of the CIVAM meeting, he visited the inter-province novitiate at Namaacha.

From Maputo, on 2 November the Regional Councillor took up again the Visitation to ZMB, arriving in Harare (Zimbabwe). At the end of November he returned to Rome to take part in the winter plenary session of the General Council.

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

At the end of the June-July session of the General Council Fr Natale Vitali took part in the *Curatorium* of the Regional Formation Centre for Brothers (CRESCO) in Guatemala. It was the first time that the two Regional Councillors for America had been present. The Latin America - South Cone Region was represented by a staff member Fr Santiago Negrotti from ABA, and by 7 Brothers from the Region.

On 8 August he began the *Extraordinary Visitation of the Province of Recife, Brazil*. This Province has 18 Salesian communities and 106 Salesians, who are working in colleges, parishes, social centres and other works for poor youngsters. The Visitation ended on 12 November.

At the same time the Visitor held the consultation for the new Provincial of Recife, with eight meetings in which 100 Salesians from the Province took part.

Between 17 and 20 August, the Regional took part in the *Curatorium* of the studentate of theology in São Paulo, Lapa. Afterwards he accompanied the Rector Major on the visit he was making between

21 and 25 August to the Province of Campo Grande and between 26 and 29 to the Province of Recife.

On 31 August he attended a meeting of the Provincial Council of Buenos Aires and on 1 September he took part in the *Curatorium* of the theologate in Buenos Aires, where all the students of theology from Salesian Argentina are to be found.

On 3 September he took part in a meeting of the Provincial Council of Paraguay and also in a meeting of the Salesian priests and brothers of *CISUR* who are in the first five years of their priesthood or perpetual profession.

On 23 and 24 September he took part in a meeting of the Delegates for Youth Ministry and for Formation in the Region at São Paulo, with the presence of Fr Fabio Attard and Fr Francesco Cereda.

Between 28 and 30 he took part in a meeting of the Provincials of the Region in the city of Manaus, Brazil, attended by the Rector Major and his Vicar. On 29 September Fr Benjamin Morando began his term of office as Provincial of Manaus.

Afterwards on 1 October the Regional took part in a Rectors' Meeting of the Province of Manaus.

On 20-21 October, during the Extraordinary Visitation, he held a

meeting with the Rectors in the Province of Recife, with the Youth Ministry Delegates and also the parish clergy.

On 26 and 27 he held a meeting with the five Provincial Councils of Salesian Argentina, in the context of the work being undertaken in preparation for the two new Provinces of Argentina.

On 13 November, at Córdoba, he took part in a joint meeting of the SDB and the FMA Provincials in Argentina and on 15 in a meeting of the Provincials of *CISUR*.

On 16 November he went to the Province of Porto Alegre, Brazil, to visit the formation houses and to take part in a meeting of the Provincial Council; he did the same on 19 in the Province of Uruguay, visiting also the joint theologate with Paraguay; and again the same in Chile, taking part in the Provincial Council meeting and visiting the novitiate, the postnovitiate and the theologate.

On 27 November he returned to Rome.

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

At the end of the summer plenary session of the General Council, on 1 August Fr Esteban Ortiz

González, Regional Councillor for Interamerica set off for Guatemala (CAM) to take part in the *Curatoriun* of CRESCO (Centre for Specific Formation for the Salesian Brother), which was held on 3 and 4 August.

On Thursday 6 August he went to Bogotá (COB) to take part on Friday 7, in the *Curatoriun* of the Formation Community of the students of theology from the Provinces of the Andes (BOL, COB, COM, ECU, PER).

On Sunday 9 August he went to Montréal, where he took part in the Retreat for the Confreres of the Communities in Canada, since 1 July 2009 part of the New Rochelle Province (SUE); the preacher was Fr Michael Winstanley, Provincial of Great Britain (GBR).

On Sunday 16 August he moved on to Medellín (COM) to meet the Provincial Fr Vidal Niebles and the Provincial Council and to visit the formation houses. In the afternoon of Tuesday 18, he took part in the funeral of Fr Gustavo Acosta, a confrere of the Province who that morning had died after a long illness.

The following day Wednesday 19 August Fr Esteban Ortiz travelled to Bogotá to begin, in the name of the Rector Major, the *Extraordi-*

*nary Visitation of the "Saint Peter Claver" Province (COB)*. The same day he met the Provincial, Fr Mario Peresson; the following day the Provincial Council; on Thursday 20 August the Salesians of the Communities of Bogotá and Mosquera with whom he opened the Extraordinary Visitation, while in the evening of the same day, in the Community of the Theologate, he began the visits to the houses (19).

In the context of the Extraordinary Visitation, the Regional Councillor took part on 3 and 4 September, in a Rectors meeting, and on Saturday 5 in the "Province Feast" in "La Holanda" community which is celebrating the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Agricultural School. Here among those celebrating was Bishop Jesús Coronado, retired bishop of Duitama, and founder of the work.

Between 12 and 20 September as part of the activities of the Extraordinary Visitation, the Economist General, Br. Claudio Marangio was in the Province.

On Sunday 18 October Fr Esteban Ortiz interrupted the Visitation of the communities to go to Lima to coordinate the *annual meeting of the Provincials of the Interamerica Region*. The meeting took place between 19 and 23 October;

the Rector Major with his Vicar Fr Adriano Bregolin was present for two days.

When the meeting was over, everyone took part in a course on the concluding document of the V<sup>th</sup> General Conference of the Latin-American Episcopate held at Aparecida, led by the Rector Major with the assistance of Archbishop Pedro Barreto of Huancayo, Bishop Norbert Strotmann of Chosica, Dr. Luis Solari and Fr Rafael Borges, a member of the Youth Ministry Department Team. Also taking part were the Provincial Delegates for Formation and for Youth Ministry, the consultants of the Salesian Youth Movement from the Provinces in the Region and members of the Regional Team which coordinates work with young people at risk.

The Provincial Fr Vicente Santilli and his Council, as also the confreres of the Province (PER), did their utmost to ensure the success of all the meetings.

On Wednesday 28 October the Regional Councillor returned to Bogotá to conclude the Extraordinary Visitation. On Saturday 7 November, in the 'Leo XIII' College, he presented the final report to the Rectors of the Communities and to the Confreres who had come for the conclusion of the Visitation; in

the afternoon he met the Provincial and his Council.

On Sunday 8 November he travelled to Quito, where he met the Provincial Fr Marcelo Farfán and his Council to reflect on the letter which the Rector Major has sent after the recent Extraordinary Visitation to the Sacred Heart Province of Ecuador (ECU). During his stay in Quito he greeted those taking part in the third level course in Salesian studies at the Regional Centre, met the Team of the Centre and took part in the opening of the Provincial Chapter.

On Wednesday 11 November he moved to Port-au-Prince to hold the consultation in view of the appointment of the new Superior of the "Blessed Philip Rinaldi" Vice Province of Haïti (HAI). On Thursday 12 there was a meeting in the prenovitiate at Thorland attended by 51 Confreres from all the Communities in HAI to reflect and pray on the occasion of the consultation.

On Friday 13 Fr Ortiz moved on to Santo Domingo and the following day took part in a meeting of the two Provincial Councils (SDB and FMA) in the first part of the morning; afterwards he met the Provincial Fr Víctor Pichardo and his Council.

On Sunday 15 November he travelled to New York to visit his

family; on Thursday 19 he went to New Rochelle to meet the Provincial Fr Thomas Dunne and take part in a meeting of the SUE Provincial Council, which was chaired by the Vicar of the Rector Major, Fr Adriano Bregolin.

Finally on Friday 27 November he returned to Rome for the winter plenary session of the General Council.

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

The Regional Councillor for East Asia-Oceania Fr Andrew Wong left Rome to visit the Region on 1 August 2009. He went to Manila and made his annual spiritual retreat there between 3 and 12 August.

From 13-25 August he went to the Vice-Province of East Timor-Indonesia (ITM). He talked to the Provincial, the Provincial Councillors, and the Rectors. This was in preparation for the formal consultation and discernment for the new Superior of the Vice-Province to be undertaken in 2010.

From 26-31 August he went to the Vice-Province of Myanmar (MYM). He did the same thing as in ITM for the same purpose.

From 1-6 September he went to the Province of Thailand (THA)

and particularly to the communities that he has not yet visited last year. These communities are in the southern part of the country. He had the chance to meet the confreres and the other members of the Salesian Family at Hua Hin. They were having a seminar on St. Francis of Sales with Fr Joseph Boenzi as the resource person. At the end of his visit to the communities he received the news of the car accident and death of Fr Gerardo Macapinlac, a Rector of the Philippine North Province. He was able to bless the deceased confrere before he was taken to Manila for the burial.

From 7-10 September he went to Cambodia to visit the communities in Sihanoukville (south of the country) and Poipet (north of the country). In fact it was not possible to go to Sihanoukville due to the heavy rain and floods that covered the roads.

From 11-15 September he visited the communities of the Province of Japan (GIA). On 14 September together with the confreres he celebrated the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of religious profession of Rev. Fr Tassinari at Beppu-Sōenchō. It was a very moving experience as the missionaries and local confreres shared in a real family spirit and joy the good, old days of the early

works of the Salesians in the country. In fact, Beppu was a missionary centre for the foreign missionaries way back in 1931.

From Japan he went to Hong Kong on 16 September to begin the *Extraordinary Visitation of the Province of China (CIN)*. The confreres are in Hong Kong, Macau, Mainland China and Taiwan. The Visitation was interrupted by the Councillor's meeting in Manila from 22-24 October. It was the annual meeting of the *Cura-torium* of the Region, held at the Don Bosco Center of Studies, Parañaque, Manila.

From 25 October to 19 November the Councillor continued his Extraordinary Visitation of CIN. He met the Provincial, the Provincial Council and the Rectors on 20-21 November and thus concluded the Extraordinary Visitation.

On 23 November the Councillor left Hong Kong and returned to headquarters in Rome.

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

The Regional Councillor for South Asia, Fr Maria Arokiam Kanaga, left Rome on 2<sup>nd</sup> August and reached the Salesian community of Fujairah in the United Arab

Emirates for an animation visit. The community has a parish and two schools. After spending three fruitful days there, meeting the people and the staff, he left for Chennai, India on 6<sup>th</sup>. On 7<sup>th</sup> He left for Vijayawada of Hyderabad Province and the following morning he met around 40 confreres of the Province for a discernment process for the consultation of the new Provincial.

On 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> August he participated in a meeting of all the members of the SPCSA Assembly animated by Rev. Fr Francesco Cereda, the Councillor for Formation and Rev. Fr Chrys Saldanha of the Department. From the afternoon of 10<sup>th</sup> the semester meeting of the SPCSA Assembly (Salesian Provincial Conference of South Asia) was held till the evening of 11<sup>th</sup> August. The meeting concluded with a meeting with the street children in Hyderabad and a dinner, in which also all the Provincials and Delegates of the Provincial Conference of the Salesian Sisters of India participated.

On 12<sup>th</sup> August the Regional presided over the first ever Salesian Family Consultation meeting at Regional level. All the Salesian Provincials and the FMA Provincials were present. The Founder of The Disciples, the Superiors Gen-

eral of the SMA and VSDB Congregations and the representatives of SMI and MSMHC Congregations also attended the meeting. The group expressed happiness for having come together and decided to meet every two years for planning the common mission. On 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> August the Regional met the confreres of Hyderabad Province in three places, namely, Karunapuram, Hyderabad and Cuddapah to consult them for the nomination of the new Provincial. He also visited the communities of Kurnool, Punganur, Cuddappah and Sodum in the Province.

Returning to Chennai he participated in the national meeting of all the Salesian Institutions of Higher Education at Ennore, Chennai. Some thirty institutions attended the two-day meeting. On 19<sup>th</sup> he went over to Tiruchy and participated in the Inauguration of the University media courses in Don Bosco Alaihal Communications Centre, Tiruchy. On 20<sup>th</sup> there was the solemn inauguration of the *Extraordinary Visitation of the Province of Tiruchy (INT)* with Mass in the Provincial house. All the Rectors were present for the occasion. From the next day, starting with Kazhiappanallur house, the Regional visited seven houses until the 2<sup>nd</sup> of September. On the third

he attended and preached for the funeral of Rev. Fr Benjamin Puthota, who died unexpectedly in Turkey where he was Rector. The next day he was back in Tiruchy and had meetings with the leaders of the Salesian Family and with the young Salesians of the Province, as part of the activities of the Visitation. He visited three more houses before he left for Sri Lanka on 11<sup>th</sup> September for a meeting with the leaders of that Vice Province. Returning on 14<sup>th</sup> he continued the Visitation of houses except for 28<sup>th</sup> when he held a meeting with the young priests of the *quinquennium*.

On 1<sup>st</sup> October the Regional held a meeting of all the Commissions of the Province to study their functioning. He left for Rome on 3<sup>rd</sup> for the Intermediate Session of the General Council for a discussion of the South Asia Region. After a fruitful meeting of 10 days he returned to Tiruchy on 15<sup>th</sup> and continued the Visitation of the houses until the end of the month. On 30<sup>th</sup> he met the Provincial Council to present to them his main observations. The next day, he met the Rectors and other available confreres to present to them his final report and to celebrate the thanksgiving Mass.

On 4<sup>th</sup> November the Regional travelled to Dimapur to join the



Rector Major and his Secretary Fr Juan José Bartolomé on their visit to Dimapur and Guwahati Provinces. The Guwahati Province was celebrating its Golden Jubilee. He accompanied the Rector Major on his visit until 10<sup>th</sup> when he travelled together with the Rector Major to Delhi. The Rector Major and his Secretary, after visiting the SPCSA House left for Rome during the night. In the next two days the Regional took part in the National Seminar on the Preventive System and Human Rights, organised jointly by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, Jugend Dritte Welt and Don Bosco Youth Animation of South Asia, at which he gave the keynote address. He visited the two Salesian presences of Kathmandu, Nepal from 14<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup>. He then proceeded to Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala to make his annual retreat from 19<sup>th</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup>. He returned to Chennai for two days and then returned to Rome on 28<sup>th</sup> November.

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

When the summer session of the General Council was over, after a short period of rest, Fr Štefan Turanský began the *Extraordinary Visitation of the "Saint John Bo-*

*sco" Province of Wrocław, Poland (PLO)*, which lasted between 2 September and 23 November 2009.

The first meeting with the Provincial Council, with the Salesians responsible for Youth Ministry and Formation enabled the Councillor to acquire a general picture of the Province. Afterwards there was a meeting with the Rectors of the Salesian communities and with the Salesian parish priests.

The Visitation was interrupted by the Regional taking part in the celebration of the first profession of the novices of Pinerolo, which was held at Colle Don Bosco on 8 September. At the invitation of the Director of Novices, Fr Turanský presided at Mass also because more than half the novices come from the North Europe Region. Taking part in the ceremony were numerous confreres, parents, relatives and very many young people.

Afterwards the Councillor went to Smižany (in the east of Slovakia), where in the house of the Pallottine Fathers between 11 and 13 September, he led a meeting for about 50 Superiors of the communities of various female religious Congregations. In the course of the three days he presented the contents of the Instruction of the Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and the Societies

of Apostolic Life on "*The service of authority and obedience*" (11 May 2008).

On 15 September he took up again the Extraordinary Visitation of the Wrocław Province. This Province, about 20 years after the fall of Communism, is trying to adapt to the new challenges: the entrance of the country into the European Union, the migration of young people and whole families, the precarious state of the economy, the secularisation of society and so on. In recent years the Salesians have opened various new works for the young (schools, education centres for youngsters with difficulties) with the intention of extending the field of its mission.

During the Visitation the Councillor also met various youth groups and visited different Salesian schools. Very useful and encouraging especially were the meetings with the teachers who with zeal and dedication are engaged in Salesian education.

Very encouraging and useful was the visit to the inter-province novitiate at Kopiec. At present there are 9 novices there (8 from two Polish Provinces and one from the East Circumscription).

Between 2 and 5 October Fr Turanský made a quick visit to Bratislava (Slovakia) for a meeting

of the Provincials and Vice Provincials of the Provinces of Central Europe). It was also an opportunity to take part briefly in a Congress for about 800 leaders.

Another break in the Visitation occurred between 23 and 26 October at Benediktbeurn (Germany), where there was the first meeting of the Provincials and Provincial Delegates from the Atlantic-German zone. The subject of the meeting was *The formation of the lay people* who are working and engaged in our centres. Also taking part in the meeting were several experts in the field from Belgium and Germany.

Between 2 and 7 November the Councillor took part in a meeting of the Delegates of the North Europe Region organised by the Councillor Youth Ministry Fr Fabio Attard, and the Councillor for Formation, Fr Francesco Cereda. Finally he took part in a meeting of the KSIP in Warsaw on 16 November.

The conclusion of the Extraordinary Visitation of the Wrocław Province (23 November 2009) was marked first of all by a good meeting with the Salesians-Cooperators, gathered together from all their Centres and then the final meeting with the Provincial Council, with the Rectors, and with the parish priests.

On 29 November the Councillor returned to Rome for the winter session of the General Council, in the first days of which – between 4 and 6 December – he led the consultation for the appointment of the new Provincial of Prague. The meetings with the confreres were held in Prague, Brno and Ostrava, which this year is celebrating the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the presence of the Salesians.

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

At the end of the summer plenary session of the General Council, the Regional Fr José Miguel Núñez left Rome to go to León to take part in the course for new Rectors which was held in the Provincial house between 1 and 4 August. On 4 August he travelled to Barcelona to give a Retreat to those from the Region on practical training on the themes of the GC26.

At the end of the Retreat on 11 August Fr José Miguel went to Turin to take part in the “European 2009 *Confronto*” with the young people of the SYM.

On 15 August he was in Granada for the beginning of a new year of the Salesian novitiate in that city. With the Regional presiding at

Mass, five Salesian staff and seven novices began the year.

On 17-20 there was a meeting of the reflection group from the West Europe Region in the monastery of Oseira (Ourense), with the topic of the situation of Salesian life in the continent of Europe, its challenges and prospects.

Between 21 and 27 August Fr José Miguel preached a Retreat to the Salesians of the Bilbao Province in the Salesian house of Pake-Leku in Urnieta (Guipuzkoa).

Between 30 August and 2 September the Councillor took part in the annual meeting of formation personnel in Spain and then in the Regional Formation Commission in Madrid, in the El Plantío house.

Between 3 and 7 September Fr José Miguel made his own retreat in the monastery of San Pedro di Cardena, in the Province of Burgos. Between 7 September and 14, he had a week's rest with his family in the city of Mérida.

On 15 September Fr José Miguel began the *Extraordinary Visitation of the Bilbao Province*. It will take place over almost three months, with some breaks for other engagements in the West Europe Region and the Congregation.

On 10 and 11 October he went to the city of Algeciras for the opening of the 75<sup>th</sup> Jubilee Year of the

presence of the Salesians.

Between 3 and 5 November he chaired the meeting of the Iberian Conference in Madrid and took part in a joint meeting of the Iberian Conference with the CIEP, the coordinating body of the FMA in Spain and Portugal.

Still in the month of November, the Councillor took part in the Retreat which the Rector Major preached in Lisbon for the Provincial Councils of the West Europe Region. The Retreat took place between 15 and 21 November, but on 20 Fr José Miguel travelled to Rome to take part in the meeting of the Commission appointed by the Rector Major for the review of Youth Ministry in the Congregation. The meeting was held between 20 and 22 November.

Afterwards the Councillor returned to Bilbao to conclude the Extraordinary Visitation with a meeting with the Provincial Council and the Rectors.

On 29 November, Fr José Miguel gave a conference on "Evangelisation on the new frontiers of the mission", during the VIIth in the series of National Youth Ministry Days held each year in Seville.

On 30 November he returned to Rome to take part in the winter plenary session of the General Council.

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

Between 2 and 13 August 2009, Fr Pier Fausto Frisoli visited his brother and parents. Between 14 and 16 he took part in the "European *Confronto*" at Colle Don Bosco, and then (between 17 and 19 August) he visited the confreres preparing for perpetual profession and afterwards (between 20 and 22 August) the confreres in the first five year period after ordination and perpetual profession. After a brief return to Rome, between 26 and 28 August he went to Messina, to visit the confreres in the first phase of preparation for their perpetual profession. In the month of September he took part in the School Days organised by the Lombardy-Emilian Province at Bologna and Milan. On 10 September he met the people working in the National Headquarters of VIS. On 12 and 13 September at Rignano Garganico (Foggia) he attended the presentation of a book on Fr Angelo Gentile.

He then took part in the Provincial Council meeting of the Central Italy Circumscription (ICC). Between 21 and 23 September at Rome 'Sacred Heart' he chaired the Provincials Conference of the Region. On 24 he met the confreres

in the community of the National Offices in Rome 'San Lorenzo' and welcomed the new Secretary of CISI and President of CNOS, Fr Luigi Perrelli.

On 28 and 29 September he began the *Extraordinary Visitation of the Lombardy-Emilian Province*, meeting the Rectors at Como and the Provincial Council in Milan.

He then went to visit the communities of Kaunas and Vilnius in Lithuania and afterwards the communities of San Marino, Rimini, Codigoro, Castel de' Britti, Ferrara, Ravenna, Varese, Parma, Bologna 'Saint John Bosco', Lugano (Switzerland). On successive returns to Rome he took part in the National Executive Committee of the CNOS-FAP, the National Congress of the CNOS-Scuola and CNOS-FAP on "The urgent need to evangelise in the schools and the vocational training centres", in the course for new appointed Rectors (between 9 and 13 November).

On 28 November he returned to Rome for the winter plenary session of the General Council.

### **The Secretary General**

Implementing the guidelines for the planned programme of the six-year period, the Secretary General

in agreement with the Rector Major and the Regional Councillor organised in this period a *meeting for Provincial Secretaries of the East Asia - Oceania Region* held in Seoul in Korea between 26 and 30 October.

As was indicated in the letter calling the meetings, their purpose was updating and an exchange of ideas. Subjects on the agenda were those of particular interest to the Secretary and the Provincial Secretariat with regard to documentation, to the statistics, juridical aspects, the archives and libraries. Special attention was given to the archives and to the various juridical issues. The active participation of the Secretaries and the fraternal atmosphere of the meetings should be mentioned, as well as the value of the opportunity to get to know the different situations.

From Seoul the Secretary went to the Province of Japan, where thanks to the kindness of the Superior and the confreres he was able to visit some of the houses in the Province admiring the rich variety of the works and the commitment of the confreres.

A special word of thanks is due to the community of the Provincial house in Seoul, which hosted the Secretaries in a spirit of Salesian welcome.

### 5.1 “Justice and culture: ways ahead for consecrated life”

*Below is the text of the “Opening Address” of Fr Pascual Chávez, in his role as President of the USG, at the 74<sup>th</sup> Half-yearly Assembly of the USG (Union of Superiors General) held at the ‘Salesianum’ on 25-26 November 2009.*

*The general topic «Justice and culture: ways ahead for consecrated life» was considered with particular reference to consecrated life in Africa, as a response to and an implementation of the Synod of Bishops which was held the previous month of October. The Opening Address of our Rector Major highlights some points also very relevant to our Salesian presence and mission in Africa, and not only there.*

My dear brothers in Christ,

I greet each and every one of you in the name of the members of the Executive Council and on my own behalf; welcome to our half-yearly Assembly 74<sup>a</sup> of the USG, followed by the General Assembly.

The half-yearly Assembly has taken as its theme “Justice and cultures: future paths for consecrated life”, which on the one hand continues the reflection of the preceding Assembly (in May last: “Geographical and cultural changes

in Institutes of Consecrated Life: challenges and perspectives”) while on the other hand, it brings in new elements offered by the African Synod, which concluded a month ago.

### 1. SOCIAL AND ECCLESIAL CONTEXT

The context in which our Assembly is taking place is marked, in the social area, by the first inklings of an exit from the severe financial-economic crisis which has impacted on most of the world, leaving millions without work and resulting in a loss of quality of life for them. Benedict XVI’s Encyclical *Caritas in Veritate* drew up a framework of causes at the basis of this political and social failure and offered some points towards a renewed economic order.

From an ecclesial point of view we are at the conclusion of the liturgical year, the Solemnity of Christ the King of the Universe just behind us, and where we celebrated and anticipated, through the liturgy, the consummation of history and the full realisation of God’s loving plan, since he wants all men to be saved and achieve the fullness of life in Christ.

We are dealing with two planes of the one unique history we are involved in, especially as human be-

ings who fully share in the human reality, with its “joys and hopes, sorrows and anxieties” (cf. *GS* 1), but also as believers and consecrated apostles who live their faith, give their witness of life and carry out their mission, collaborating in the coming of God’s Kingdom.

The most interesting thing is precisely the fact that the entire commitment of men and women of good will, whatever their culture, nation, social status and faith, for building a more just, sympathetic, human and fraternal world is not lost in some vast emptiness, but taken up by the Lord, who brings it to its fullness when “God will be all” (*1 Cor* 15:28).

Our consecrated life in this context has a precious significance because of its presence in all cultures and all peoples, because of its incarnation in them, and thus for its commitment to reconciliation, justice and peace through its witness of fraternal life and its dedication to social transformation, by removing the causes of injustice, poverty and exclusion.

## 2. THE THEME OF OUR MEETING

The theme chosen for the Assembly, “Justice and cultures: future paths for consecrated life”, should enlighten us to be able to

effectively find “future paths” for consecrated life.

Archbishop Buti Thlagale OMI, of Johannesburg, Br Anthony Rogers FSC, secretary of the Office for Human Development of the FABC (Manila) and Fr Jean Jacques Perrenès OP, member of the Dominican Centre for Inter-religious dialogue in Cairo, will offer us their reflections and will involve us in their experience through their addresses: “Justice and cultures: future paths for consecrated life”, taken as a whole, in *mission* and in *fraternal life*. All of this on Wednesday 25.

The following day, Thursday 26, our representatives at the Synod, Frs. Gerard Chabannon MAfr, P. Fiorentini Aquiléo IMC, P. Edouard Tsimba CICM, P. Kieran O’Reilly SMA and Fr Antonio Pernia, SVD will offer us respectively “Justice, cultures and the African Synod: **intuitions and** paths for consecrated life”, “provocations for **spirituality** of mission”, “for living in **communion**”, “for being authentic **prophets** in history”, “**open paths**”.

On the third day, Friday 27, we will have the General Assembly where, besides the reports from the USG secretary and the various Commissions, as happens every three years we will have the elec-

tion of the President, Vice President, Executive Council members and members of the Council of 16 and Council of 18.

### 3. CONSECRATED LIFE IN AFRICA

Allow me to recall that the choice of theme was something we did in view of the commitment to more closely accompany Consecrated Life in various contexts. Thus, after the reflection by the previous Assembly on geographical and cultural changes, with their challenges and perspectives, and on the shift of consecrated life from Europe to other continents, we proposed to examine them one by one. Africa was first up and today it is at the centre of our attention, having as reference both the recent Synod, and the experience of the Congregations and Institutes in the continent.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops which took place in Rome from 4 to 25 October last took as its theme *The Church in Africa at the service of reconciliation, justice and peace. "You are the salt of the earth... You are the light of the world"* (Mt 5:13.14). Given the situation prevailing in Africa today, both its light and shadow, it becomes a very current theme which needs to involve all missionaries of the Gospel. We

should not wonder, then, that consecrated persons were called in more than once by the Synodal Fathers, since much is expected of their witness and prophetic role.

#### 3.1. *Reconciled with God and ambassadors of Christ* (cf. 2 Cor 5:18-20)

Despite the many positive signs which are an invitation to hope, there remain not a few tragic situations of war, huge numbers of refugees, extreme poverty, sicknesses and hunger haunting Africa, which continues to struggle on between crisis and chaos (cf. *Message*, §§ 4-6). The Synod, because of its choice of this theme, wanted to face up to the challenges of reconciliation, justice and peace in Africa in the light of faith (cf. *Message*, §§ 7-8). It is God in fact who, through Christ, has reconciled us with himself and entrusted us with the ministry of reconciliation. We are, then, ambassadors of Christ (cf. 2 Cor 5:18-20). Christ Jesus himself, having become wisdom, justice, sanctification and redemption through God's working (1 Cor 1:30), is our peace (cf. *Eph* 2:14). The belief of the Synodal Fathers is that, only by being reconciled with God in Christ through the Holy Spirit poured out on us,



can we be reconciled amongst us and be witnesses and ministers of reconciliation in society, thus becoming salt of the earth and light of the world. The members of consecrated life, through witness of their religious life in the evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty and obedience, are prophets and models of reconciliation, justice and peace. According to the Synod, their apostolate becomes more effective the more they are committed to loyal communion and pastoral overall solidarity with the local hierarchy (cf. *Message*, §§ 17.21; *Propositio* 3).

### **3.2. Consecrated Life in Africa, prophecy of communion and solidarity**

In re-affirming the need to continue the proclamation of the Gospel to the Peoples of Africa, the Synodal Fathers recalled the words of Pope Benedict XVI wherein “life in Christ is the first and principal factor of development” (Encyclical *Caritas in veritate*, n. 8; cf. *Message*, § 15). If involvement on behalf of development comes from a change of heart which itself derives from conversion to the Gospel, we can understand the importance of the witness of members of consecrated life who live out profoundly

their charism and the evangelical counsels in their own communities, in the Church and in the world. Like leaven in the dough, they transfigure earthly realities and become signs and instruments of the Kingdom to come (cf. *Lineamenta*, § 59). Through their life, they offer a concrete example of fidelity to the Lord and of communion in diversity, overcoming traditional and cultural practices that are in open contradiction to the Gospel.

Therefore, the Synod says legitimately: “The Church expects much from the witness of religious communities, which feature racial, regional and ethnic diversity. Through their life in common they proclaim that God makes no distinctions amongst people, and that we are all his children, members of the same family, living in harmony despite diversity, and in peace” (*Propositio* 42). According to the *Lineamenta* (cf. § 59; *Instrumentum laboris*, § 126), the commitment to reconciliation, justice and peace, is intrinsic to the vocation of consecrated persons. They are, in some way, the living memory of the belief of every Christian that there is no “stable city” on earth (*Heb* 13,14) or, better still, that we belong to no tribe, race or people on earth, but that we are citizens seeking the definitive coming

about of the Kingdom of God, and constantly invoke its coming.

### **3.3. Consecrated life, a model of inculturation of the faith in Africa**

Consecrated persons, strong in their numerical growth in Africa, contribute effectively to the witness of a Church which reflects the light of Christ in the world. However this demands that their communities be rooted in African culture, in the living Tradition of the Church and in Gospel values (cf. *Instrumentum laboris*, § 70). In effect, the Church can form authentic Christians only by seriously taking in hand the inculturation of the Gospel message, which is a reflex and consequence of the incarnation of the Word. Culture, when transformed and regenerated by the Gospel, produces from its own living tradition original expressions of life, celebration and Christian thought (cf. *Instrumentum laboris*, §§ 73-74).

Amongst other values of African culture, we speak of the deep religious sense which leads to recognising the existence of God the creator and a sense of family which leads to respect for life. Nevertheless, these values need to be permeated and purified by the Gospel,

so that Africa can truly be the "spiritual lung" of humanity today (the expression is Pope Benedict XVI's quoted by the *Message*, § 38), given the threat of the double virus of practical materialism and religious fundamentalism. Even here the contribution of consecrated life seems precious, as a source of "spiritual energy" which feeds the Church: through the simplicity of their chaste lifestyle, a visible sign of their total self-gift to Christ and his Church, through their evangelical spirit of detachment and honesty in the use of material goods, and through obedience to their superiors, consecrated persons work to spread the Kingdom of justice, peace and the love of Christ especially to the those who are least (cf. *Lineamenta*, § 59; *Instrumentum laboris*, § 113). By doing this, they are in the vanguard of authentic inculturation which, as a way towards full evangelisation, "seeks to put man in the situation of accepting Jesus Christ in the completeness of their own personal, cultural, economic and political being, in view of complete adherence to God the Father and a holy life through the action of the Holy Spirit" (JOHN PAUL II, post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa*, § 62).

While I thank, right now, all those who will throw light on our

reflection, and I wish all of you a serene and fruitful Assembly, let us entrust ourselves to the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary invoked by the Synodal Fathers as Queen of Peace and Our Lady of Africa (cf. *Message*, § 43) who, as the Virgin who welcomed, the Spouse in the mystery of the covenant, and Mother in the gift of the Son of God, is an eschatological icon of the Church on the road.

Rome, Salesianum. 25-26.11.2009

Fr Pascual CHÁVEZ VILLANUEVA, SDB

## **5.2 “Preventive System and Human Rights: the educational challenge for the Third Millennium”**

*Below is the text of the Address of the Rector Major at the Conference held in the Chapter Hall of the Senate of the Italian Republic on the subject “Preventive System and Human Rights” in the afternoon of 14 December 2009, on the occasion of the official presentation of the Acts of the International Con-*

*gress on “Preventive System and Human Rights” held at the beginning of January 2009, in which over 350 people, Salesians and lay people directly involved from all over the world took part.*

Mr President, Senators, Honourable Members, Ladies, Gentlemen, I am happy to be here this evening and to be able to extend Christmas greetings and best wishes to this prestigious place, in the name of the entire Salesian Family. A special thanks to the President of the Commission Senator Pietro Marcenaro, who made this initiative possible.

The days of preparation for the holy event of Christmas are particularly significant ones in the Christian tradition and for very many peoples around the world.

For us Salesians this year, and the days of Christmas preparation, are doubly significant because we are also celebrating the birth of our Congregation.

Don Bosco founded the Salesian Congregation<sup>1</sup> on 18 December 1859, not in order to give rise to a

<sup>1</sup> The Religious Congregation founded by Don Bosco was officially named by him as the “Society of St Francis of Sales”, wishing – on the one hand – through the term “Society” to indicate not only the religious but also the social value of the Congregation, and – on the other hand – taking St Francis of Sales as protector, the Saint of meekness and kindness, one of the characteristics of the ‘preventive system’ in Salesian education. Today we more commonly speak of the Salesian Society or Salesian Congregation.

new work that he had already set in motion, but to maintain and develop it, a work of recovery and promotion, today we would say of integral human development, which came about from amongst the boys whom Don Bosco had dedicated himself to, and with them.

Halfway through the 19<sup>th</sup> Century Don Bosco was working not only 'for', but 'with' the poorest and most neglected youth in a Turin that was undergoing a tumultuous development, and which was unfortunately afflicted with huge pockets of poverty and violence. On the northern outskirts of the city a 'black belt' was developing made up of crowded hovels filled with poor immigrants. Increasing waves of very poor farming families and youngsters on their own were leaving the countryside and coming to seek work and their fortune in the city, crowding into shacks which had sprung up along the banks of the Dora, where all the cities untreated sewerage poured into. Those young people, many of them still just boys, or even children, were taken on and exploited in the building works in the southern part, in manufacturing industries, spinning mills, tanneries, furnaces, factories. Subjected to inhumane working hours, many died prematurely at 18-19 years of age; many

others, maybe thrown out for "poor performance", ended up on the street. In the exhausting and often desperate search for survival, these boys often came together in gangs, lived off stealing from the merchants' stalls, like little pick-pockets, always at loggerheads with the police who chased after them, and were thrown into prison as soon as they were caught.

The disconcerting nature of circumstances of this kind strikes the eyes and minds of any of us who visit poor countries, but also those of us who have occasion to come into contact with pockets of poverty and violence in our own society.

It is the world-wide dimension that these phenomena assume which has urged us to strongly draw the attention of all educators to them, as indicated in my *Strenna* to the Salesian Family for 2008. By means of a questionnaire on educational practices regarding human rights already put into practice in 97 Salesian Provinces and then through participative activities over a two year period in 130 countries, the Congress organised in Rome in January 2009 was prepared, and it ratified in a solemn way the essential link in education of the young between the "Preventive System and Human Rights". Now with the Acts, and with the

multimedia material to be presented this evening, I am presenting the involvement and commitment of the Salesian Congregation in "educating with the heart of Don Bosco, for the integral development of the lives of the young, especially the poorest and most disadvantaged, by promoting their rights".

The Oratory of a very poor Don Bosco began in 1843 in a shed, and gave rise to evening classes, workshops, a home for children and working boys. On 18 December 1859, 184 youngsters were boarding with Don Bosco (the following year there would be 355), and they were the soul of the festive oratory which numbered up to a thousand boys on Sundays.

The Salesian Congregation on 18 December 1859 in Valdocco came into being amongst these boys, and more precisely 16 of them, between 15 and 21 years of age, who had themselves experienced the work of recovery and promotion by Don Bosco and took on the role of principal protagonists.

The charism of Don Bosco, a holy educator and an educator Saint, his love for poor and neglected young people anticipated, in many of its aspects, theories of modern pedagogical choices; in particular, the outlook which we define today

based on the human rights of the child.

In a context where the child, the needy youngster – because poor, illiterate, neglected, a migrant (the 18 December also happens to be World Day for Rights of Migrants) – is seen as deviant, a threat to society, with consequent repressive policies by institutions, Don Bosco highlights an educational view and approach and trusts young people, believes in their capabilities as a person, their own development and that of the community in which they live, and he invented and put into practice a new educational system: the 'Preventive System'.

For Don Bosco the marginalised young person is not a passive beneficiary, a simple recipient of welfare, someone to offer things and services to.

Don Bosco proposes a new view of the marginalised young person, the educational relationship between educator and one being educated, one that anticipates a view of the child as the subject of rights, which the New York Convention ratified for the first time 20 years ago on 20 November 1989, in an article of international law which is binding today for 193 States.

Don Bosco's Preventive System has great relevance today and wide social projection: it aims to cooper-

ate with many agencies in the transformation of society, working for a change of criteria and life perspectives, for the promotion of a culture of the other, a constant attitude of commitment to justice and the dignity of the human person.

We have close up experience of having built a financial and economic system based on false values.

We have this same close up experience of damage to the environment and the impact this has on climate, peoples, development.

This is the moment for proposing authenticity, solidarity, simplicity for a new kind of active and responsible citizenship of the world, able to undo the narrow concept of a national or statistical citizenship in the name of a planetary citizenship, in order to remove the deeper causes of injustice, poverty, exclusion. Our work with the poor and the needy cannot be a "palliative" work meant to relive suffering, but has to be a work which transforms society.

Today the Salesians of Don Bosco and the 27 member groups of the Salesian Family are at work daily in schools, centres for technical formation, oratories, centres

where large numbers of young people gather, taking in and re-integrating street children, child soldiers, young people in alternative settings to prison, in 130 countries around the world, on behalf of some 15 million boys and girls.

The UN Special Reporter on the right to education, here in Rome at our Congress on the "Preventive System and Human Rights", told us that the Salesians today are probably the most representative educational agency in the world. We recognise this with humility but also with great awareness of our responsibility.

As always, as an integral part of our charism, the Salesians of Don Bosco are very sensitive to the topic of violation of human rights, especially where it concerns the young. The basis of human rights for us is the ontological fact of the dignity of every person, intrinsic to human nature; human rights for us belong to God's plan for every man and woman, "without distinction of race, colour, gender, language, religion, political opinion or any other kind, national or social origin, wealth, birth or other circumstance".<sup>2</sup>

Already in April 2002 as Rector Major I launched for all educators

<sup>2</sup> Art. 2 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

in the Salesian Family this appeal, which I repeated at the Campidoglio for everyone, laity and civil society, believer and non-believer: "Before it is too late, let us save the young who are the hope of the world".

As a Salesian Family, the challenge for us however is focused on prevention rather than denunciation, on preventive education, on breaking the vicious cycle which perpetuates continuous violations of human rights and the dignity of the person, on fostering a widespread culture, one which gets out of the lawyers' and legal philosophers' rooms to become the patrimony of humanity.

The challenge for us is to educate young people to individual and social commitment and involvement in human development, becoming active in a new responsible world citizenship.

On the topic of human rights, no country or society is immune. Questions about human rights are not just in reference to developing countries. Also countries which define themselves as "advanced democracies" adopt human rights policies which have a "double-standard".

60 years from the Universal Declaration on Human rights, with the new tools that we have at our

disposal (I am thinking of new technologies, but also the opportunities for our young people to give a year of civil service abroad), education to human rights is for us today more than ever before, an urgent commitment and one of the highest priorities as a form of ongoing education, a privileged way of prevention, human development, to build a more equitable, just and sound world.

Only education can promote a new world. Education is not simply instruction. Education is the art of forming the human person, developing all his or her dimensions, so each man, woman and child can live a free and dignified existence in peace; at the same time education is the most radical way of removing the causes which block such promotion.

Faced with the "educational emergency" which marks our current circumstances with great polarity and ambivalence, faced with an education that is often considered from the "logic of the marketplace", faced with an education too often a slave to the maintenance of the *status quo* which continues to privatise wealth and socialise every kind of poverty, faced with the rupture between education and society, the divide between school and citizenship, as a Salesian Congre-

gation we feel the need to unite ourselves with the young, with teachers, educators, families and associations, institutions in civil society, to give value to the quality of our educational proposals, our ability to help young people to mature, and not only that but, universal values of respect and the promotion of the dignity of every human being, personal and social responsibility for justice and solidarity, active citizenship.

The right to education is not, as is often maintained, purely a question of access to instruction, but also one of the quality of education, as a right in itself but also an empowering right for the promotion and enjoyment of all other human rights.

Of education understood in qualitative terms, education not only 'to', but also 'for' human rights, is an essential component.

Human rights are not taught from on high, are not imposed, but education to human rights is an ongoing education. In the new globalised context, education to and for human rights offers new frontiers and opportunities for dialogue and networking with so many individuals and social agencies.

In a context of militant and exacerbated secularism, which tends to eliminate values which instead

belong also to the secular world, human rights are a tool capable of going beyond narrow national borders in order to impose common limits and objectives, create alliances and strategies and mobilise resources.

The topics, best practices, tools, conclusions and guidelines proposed by the Salesian Family at the end of a long participative course of preparation, are particularly significant today at the end of 2009, a year dedicated by the General Assembly of the United Nations to learning about human rights, and on the occasion of the 10<sup>th</sup> December, World Human rights Day, which saw the beginning of the second phase of the UN World Programme for education to human rights, focused on forming educators, one of the key issues for we Salesians too.

The launching of the Acts of the International Congress a multimedia work in 7 languages which will go to 130 countries around the world is one of the contributions of the Salesian Family for education to and for human rights, for the promotion and protection of the rights of the young as essential instruments in sustainable development.

Promoting human rights as a way of promoting a culture of



peace and human development, as a commitment to justice and the dignity of each person are a Salesian challenge, but also one for secular and active citizenship in the Third Millennium.

Everyone of us is called to join together in this challenge in a more incisive and effective alliance.

Thank you.

Rome, 14 December 2009

Fr Pascual CHÁVEZ VILLANUEVA  
*Rector Major*

### 5.3 Don Bosco and Government Institutions

*Below is the text of the Rector Major's address at the **Symposium on the occasion of the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Founding of the Salesian Society** which was held in Rome on 15 December 2009, with the particular subject of Don Bosco's relationship with Government Institutions. The Symposium was promoted and organised by the Ministry of the Interior of the Italian Republic with the Salesian Pontifical University.*

Mister Minister, Mister Under-Secretary, Mister Prefect Giuseppe Procaccini, Mister General Director of the Post-Graduate School

our host, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am grateful for this Symposium which the Ministry of the Interior has organised in order to highlight the relationship of mutual collaboration between Don Bosco and the Government Institutions in those troubled decades which witnessed national unification and the birth of the modern Italian State.

The lectures this evening have shown us the context and the reasons for the fruitful inter-relationship between a citizen, a priest and an educator, the founder of a vast educational family spread throughout the world, and men with the responsibility for government, who, while holding positions at times different from his, nevertheless felt themselves united by a common ideal and by a high sense of their own civic responsibility.

It was a time in which the future was viewed with hope but also apprehension. Massimo d'Azeglio wrote in the preface to "I miei ricordi", expressing a common feeling: «Italy's first need is to form Italians endowed with elevated and strong characters. And yet, every day things are going in the opposite direction: unfortunately Italy has been created but not the Italians».

This year the Society founded by Don Bosco commemorates it 150

years of life. From its early stages the work of Don Bosco and of those who continued in his footsteps, with its own teaching methods and its educational, moral and religious aims inspired by a Christian humanism with a long-standing European tradition, accompanied the unfolding of the historical drama of the Italian people in all its stages bright and sad, as it has also done in the other 130 countries in which it is at present spread. A mission received from the Founder and pursued with a universal vision, for the formation of "upright, useful, industrious citizens and good Christians", as Don Bosco used to say.

The Saint of youth had a sharp eye for social problems and he was convinced that the preventive education of the young could well constitute one of the most effective means for the healthy preservation of society and for its spiritual and moral foundation, but also for the prosperity of the nation. For this reason he gave great importance to the school and to vocational training in addition to the Oratories and Youth Centres. He chose to work with the young especially those belonging to the weakest elements in society, but his motto was "in the vanguard of progress".

As the historians have pointed out, the work of Don Bosco accom-

panied the evolution of Italian society making a much valued contribution to the ordered integration and the development of the young, starting from his first experiences with the young immigrants to Turin in the eighteen hundreds. Instructing, educating, forming minds and hearts, shaping the values of the spirit, fostering vocations for the benefit of the civil community, providing the skills needed to enter the world of work and of the professions..., these are all means, effectively and constructively preventive to contribute to the formation of useful citizens and genuine Christians capable of playing their part, collaborating with all the elements present in contemporary society. The educational effectiveness of the net-work of Salesian centres spread throughout the land can be witnessed in the quality of the past-pupils, among whom many occupy posts of responsibility in the service of the community at national level (some of whom are present here).

For us Salesians it is important – on the one hand – to cultivate an attentive critical eye on the historical experience of Don Bosco, to continue to study and further understand it, because it represents the roots of our identity, and – on

the other hand – to consider attentively what is being done today, in function of the future. «Our times call for action», – Don Bosco said – “[...]. Today the world wants to see things being done; it wants to see priests working, teaching and helping poor and destitute youths» (BM XIII, 96).

Education has always been a priority in history. We want our educational mission to remain faithful to the intuitions and to the method of Don Bosco, making our own his basic principle: an affectionate approach to the young in their practical circumstances, to their needs and limitations, to their dreams and to their potential; being close to them, offering encouragement and incentives; an assistance which guides, corrects and accompanies on the way to maturity; the effective good example of the educators, who are seen as models to imitate and who are able to offer significant values to pursue.

We want to do all this, just as Don Bosco did in dialogue and in collaboration with the civic Institutions.

Our thanks, therefore, to all those who inspired, organised and made this Symposium possible. Our thanks to the speakers, in a special way to Prof. Aldo Giovanni Ricci, for the fruitful research and

the interesting original material discovered, and to the Rector Magnificus of the Salesian University Fr Carlo Nanni.

Rome, 15 December 2009

Fr Pascual CHÁVEZ VILLANUEVA  
*Rector Major*

#### **5.4 The Rector Major's Address of Thanks for the conferment of Honorary Citizenship of the City of Turin on 18 December 2009, the day of the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Salesian Society**

*Below is the text of the Rector Major's address following the conferment of Honorary Citizenship of the City of Turin on 18 December 2009, the day of the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Salesian Society*

Your Excellency Mr Mayor, President of the City Council, Councilors,

In the first instance I would like to thank you, in my own name but also that of the Salesian Congregation, for bestowing honorary citizenship on me just a few moments ago. I am very well aware that it is a gesture of recognition for Don

Bosco, whose unworthy ninth successor I am, and for the Salesian Congregation which began here 150 years ago, and which has become one of the most widespread apostolic, spiritual families in the world.

I would like to add that precisely because of the presence of the Salesians in more than 130 countries around the world, Turin, Valdocco, and other places too in Piedmont, are known and loved everywhere. Don Bosco is a precious gift which Italy, and in more concrete terms, Piedmont, has given to the youth of the world. And we have become "ambassadors" of Turin.

It is well known how Don Bosco showed respect towards civil authorities. Without ever adopting a servile attitude, he demonstrated a sincere esteem and trust, and did not fail either to ask for comprehension regarding his work, and any help that might be offered.

It is good to recall that the relationship between the Salesian Family and the Turin City Council begins with the opening of Don Bosco's work. The oldest letter which our founder sent to the Mayor of Turin, then called the Vicar of the city, is from 13 March 1846. In it Don Bosco describes the beginnings of his Oratory and for the Mayor of the time, Michael Benso

di Cavour, sums up its purpose thus: "the aim of this catechising is to gather boys on feast days who, having been left entirely to themselves, are not involved in any church. Teaching is restricted entirely to this: 1<sup>st</sup>. A love for work, 2<sup>nd</sup> Frequenting the Sacraments, 3<sup>rd</sup> Respect for all authority".

Don Bosco immediately set up a close relationship with the city authorities, asking for help, but letting them know about his activities and inviting the successive Mayors to Valdocco to see the "early foundations" of the growing Oratory.

In 1851 Don Bosco came to the balcony of the City Hall, along with the Deputy Mayor, to draw the winners of the first great lottery he had launched to support the Oratory.

The relationship did not diminish in difficult moments for the citizens of Turin, such as during the cholera epidemic in 1854. Just the opposite in fact! Don Bosco took in young lads left orphans by the epidemic, for which the Mayor thanked him in words of esteem and admiration.

It should not be thought that all the Mayors who followed belonged to clerical political parties - not at all! It was only gradually that Don Bosco and then the Salesians became part of the *DNA* of the city,

profoundly Turinese, gradually developing a lasting and heartfelt collaboration between both sides of the "free Church in a free State" fostered by the Italian Risorgimento.

This relationship continued solidly with Don Bosco's successors; one need only cite the funeral commemoration that the City Council wanted for Don Rua, Don Bosco's first successor, on the day of his death, 6 April 1910. The Mayor of the time, Senator Rossi, introduced himself to the City Council on that occasion in the following words: "Allow me to make an exception to the Rules which prevent any interruption to proceedings during the approval of the City budget, but this morning someone has died who incarnates not just humanity, but a grand notion, indeed a grand mission: the education of the people".

*A changing city but a lasting relationship*

The focus of this relationship has always been to keep pace with the city through its constant changes. Don Bosco writes in his *Memoirs of the Oratory*, written between 1873 and 1876: "taking part in the early Sunday catechism lessons from 1842 to 1845 were young lads from various places: Savoyards, those

from the Val d'Aosta, Bielle, Novara, Lombardy; mostly 'foreign' youngsters, spending only a part of the year in Turin; stone-cutters, brick-layers, plasterers, pavers, fitters, and others coming from distant parts".

Always accustomed to thinking in educational terms and therefore according to criteria of change and development, the Salesians have made their presence in the Turin area a fixed point in their programme of work, adapting it according to the changing needs of the citizens, while at the same time remaining faithful to their own aims and calling.

At the present moment in the area covered by the Turin City Council there are ten Salesian religious communities, sharing the work with many adult lay persons, of seven oratories, two kindergartens, one primary school, four lower secondary schools, four upper secondary schools and technical institutes, three professional formation centres, two universities and four university colleges, with a daily total of students that goes well beyond ten thousand.

All of these centres have always had, amongst other things, two precise features: in the first place their openness to the local area and to forming educational networks,

firstly with public bodies, but also with other educational organisations, and secondly the desire to contribute, thanks to the Salesian style, to the formation of people who dedicate their lives, in a professional and ongoing way, to the "public good". in political and administrative roles for the benefit of all Turinese society.

This has given rise, and I refer here just to recent years, to projects which have come about and been developed together with the various Council Departments of the Turin City Council. To mention only some by way of example: the Day Centres network; the project which has lasted for many years called, "Young for the young" which aims at educational work on the street; day reception centres and reception communities for young migrants who have been left to themselves; sound accompaniment, other forms entrusted to volunteers and young people; more than twenty years of experience in collaborating in projects for *summer youth programmes*; managing with the City Council the new "joint management housing project". At the same time, people have come from Don Bosco's houses and playgrounds who have given and still dedicate their lives to local authority institutions and to form-

ing others to a sensitivity for the common good, which then becomes a personal commitment and an ability to manage the 'public good'.

This privileged relationship has often been confirmed by the City of Turin, in the first place personally by Mayor Chiamparino, also through his friendly, competent and ready presence at many of our feasts and shows, including more recently at a formation gathering for young Turinese on active citizenship, in this way uniting the efforts of institutions and the Congregation in order to help young people to dream, inviting them to make more effective the consequences of the "good Christian education" they have received in Don Bosco's home.

Absolutely relevant, even if hard to quantify because of their widespread distribution throughout the Turin area, are the number of past pupils, friends of Don Bosco, adults and families, who after coming into contact with the Salesian Congregation have then brought Don Bosco's style to their own work and their own way of being citizens: sharing responsibility in a Christian way with others for the good of all, serving all citizens, in a special way, within and beyond Salesian works, being faithful to Don Bosco's mandate, that is by acting,

as he himself wrote, "to gather up those youngsters most at risk and by preference those who have just come out of prison", at the same time developing a special concern for the young who "are far from their families, strangers in Turin" with the intention of "lessening the number of unruly youngsters and the potential prison population".

Today, as then, the Salesian Congregation in this city aims to continue to be responsible for young people at risk who pass through the oratories and attend vocational training courses and it does so giving particular attention to second generation foreigners, while at the same time not neglecting in its many formative, pastoral and recreational activities the many 'normal' youngsters encountered in the daily round of its pastoral and educational activity.

Because, in addition to the foreign children without adult accompaniment who 'live in' at many of our oratories, almost a basic community which does not mean a low-level educational content, we aim to look after youngsters in difficulty, children of immigrants, who as we know are present in considerable numbers in Turin today. We know well how this City through its public, religious and private in-

stitutions has built up a protective network for them, one which we like to call, along with Don Bosco, a preventive network.

The Salesian Congregation in Turin is part of this and will continue to be because, "It is enough for you to be young for me to love you", as Don Bosco used say, and also because, it seems good to me to recall, that we are part of "a Turin system" integrating and networking with public, religious and private institutions, of which other cities are envious.

We are aware of the difficulties these youngsters encounter in the difficult phase of integration, of holding together their different cultures, that from which they come and which they have no need to lose, but also that of this city which has always taken the responsibility of welcoming and integrating migrant groups. Perhaps it is because the 'Social Saints' in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century still continue their protection today, and because the introverted and reserved nature of the "*bôgianen*" of the Turinese is free of showy ostentation, and full of common sense. There are youngsters, nevertheless, who unless someone gets to them first (Don Bosco's prevention) will find others drawing them into circles of easy prosperity which, we know, may also be those

of physical and moral ruin. Helping them to construct a personality through the integration of values of different cultures, is not only a survival strategy which allows the adolescent to keep his or her ethnic traditions but something which, at the same time, establishes contact with the culture that has welcomed them. It is our way of "taking care of them".

All this, I am convinced, follows the line of "giving more to those who have less".<sup>3</sup> In other words, it seems to us a priority to better understand the typical features of those who are the preferred beneficiaries of the Salesian mission: "young people who are poor, neglected and at risk". It is a predilection which presupposes a "universal love", marked by certain features; excluding nobody, but not giving priority to everybody, which would be a contradiction. Ours is a gospel predilection which in practice "gives the most to whoever in his or her life has received the least".

Our educational praxis needs to be renewed because of the changes

in the new young people we are sent to, in other words, it must continue to have the flavour of the extraordinary which becomes the ordinary, one tinged with a daily presence, anchored in the social and local context where each one works, in order to express its social action in the daily round of encounters, presence, attention.

To conclude, I am convinced that the mark of our being with young people in difficulties will be that of ensuring for them the chance of an education. An education which translates into "*helping each one to develop to the full his potential as a person by forming his conscience, developing his intelligence, helping him understand his own destiny*".<sup>4</sup>

For these new arrivals too, the Saint of Turin would say today: "I do not hesitate to take a risk in projects which may benefit endangered youth or help lead souls to God" (BM XIV, 536). Perhaps taking a risk has been moderated at times, but we remain convinced that "Education is a thing of the heart, and God alone is master of the heart and we cannot succeed

<sup>3</sup> Pascual Chávez in CISI/FEDERAZIONE SCS/CNOS, *Giving more to those who have less, an educational rethinking for a changing culture*, Acts of the Frascati seminar 27-30 December 2004.

<sup>4</sup> Pascual Chávez, *Let us educate with the heart of Don Bosco, to develop to their full potential the lives of young people, especially the poorest and most disadvantaged, promoting their rights*. AGC, n. 400. Rome 2008.



unless God teaches us the art and gives us the key".<sup>5</sup>

As Salesians we have learned all this, but it can never be done alone, always in dialogue with those who share the mission to make young people "good Christians and upright citizens". With all this on the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Congregation it is good to recall here, in the Turin City Council, that the Congregation considers the city to be the cradle in which it was all born.

Turin, 18 December 2009

Fr Pascual CHÁVEZ VILLANUEVA  
Rector Major

## 5.5 New Salesian Bishops

### 1. **TOSO Mario, Secretary of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace**

On 22 October 2009 the Vatican Press Office gave the news of the appointment by the Holy Father Benedict XVI of Fr **Mario TOSO, S.D.B. as Secretary of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace**, at the same time raising him to the dignity of *Bishop with*

*the Titular See of BISARCIO (Italy, Sardinia).*

Mario Toso, who was born at Mogliano Veneto (TV) on 2 July 1950, made his first religious profession as a Salesian of Don Bosco on 16 August 1967 and his perpetual profession on 24 September 1976. After having completed his theological studies at the Faculty of Theology Turin-Crocetta, he was ordained priest on 22 July 1978. He obtained a degree in Philosophy at the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart in Milan (1978) and afterwards the Licence in Theology at the Lateran Pontifical University. Professor of Theoretical Philosophy at the Salesian Pontifical University, between 1994 and 2000 he was Dean of the Faculty of Philosophy. In July 2003 he was appointed Rector Magnificus of the Salesian Pontifical University (UPS), a position he held until July 2009. From November 2003 he was also a Consulter of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, of which he has now been appointed Secretary. He is the author of a number of publications.

On 12 December 2009 Bishop Mario Toso received episcopal ordination at the hands of Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, S.D.B., Secretary

<sup>5</sup> Letter of Don Bosco, *Epistolario*, Turin 1959.

of State of the Holy Father, in the Basilica of Saint Peter in the Vatican.

## 2. **MORESCHI Angelo, Vicar Apostolic of GAMBELLA (Ethiopia)**

On 5 December the Holy Father Benedict XVI raised the Prefecture Apostolic of Gambella (Ethiopia) to the rank of Vicariate Apostolic, while retaining the same name and territorial extension. In addition, the Supreme Pontiff appointed as the *first Vicar Apostolic of Gambella (Ethiopia), Fr Angelo MORESCHI, S.D.B.*, the former Prefect Apostolic of the same ecclesiastical circumscription, assigning him the *Titular See of Elefantaria di Mauritania*. The Prefecture Apostolic of Gambella, entrusted to the Salesians (SDB), was created on 25 November 2000, following the division of the Prefecture Apostolic of Jimma-Bonga. The territory of the Prefecture (now Vicariate) covers an area of about 50.000 sq.km. and has a population of 507.000. Catholics number about 8,500.

Angelo Moreschi was born at Nave (Brescia) on 13 June 1952 and has been a Salesian since 1 September 1974 when he made

his first profession in the Lombardy-Emilian Province. Perpetually professed on 15 August 1980, he studied theology at Cremisan, in Palestine. He was ordained priest at Brescia on 2 October 1982. The same year, taking part in the "Project Africa", he left for Ethiopia, where he worked for a number of years in the community of Dilla – which was then attached to the Lombardy-Emilian Province – where he was Rector and parish priest (from 1991). Joining the Vice Province of Ethiopia-Eritrea, in 1998 he became a member of the Council of the Vice Province. When the Prefecture Apostolic was established on 25 November 2000, he was appointed the first Prefect Apostolic.

## 3. **ŠTUMPF Peter, Bishop of the Diocese of MURSKA SOBOTA (Slovenia)**

On 28 November 2009 the Holy Father Benedict XVI appointed *Bishop Peter ŠTUMPF, S.D.B.*, until then the Titular Bishop of Numidia and Auxiliary Bishop of Maribor (Slovenia), *Bishop of the Diocese of Murska Sobota, in Slovenia*.

Born on 28 June 1962 at Beltinci (Slovenia), Peter Štumpf made his first religious profession as a

Salesian of Don Bosco on 9 October 1980, and his perpetual profession 29 September 1985. He studied theology at the Faculty of Theology at Turin-Crocetta and was ordained priest on 29 June 1990. He then worked in the Salesian parishes of Ig, Sevnica, Maribor and Veržej. In 2002 he obtained a doctorate in Theology at the theological Faculty of Ljubljana. He was then parish priest at Rakovnik (Ljubljana) and Dean of the southern section Ljubljana. On 24 May 2006 he was appointed Titular Bishop of Musti di Numidia and Auxiliary Bishop of Maribor, receiving episcopal ordination on 10 September the same year (cf. also AGC n. 394, 5.1).

**4. CASTRELLÓN PIZANO**  
*Camilo Fernando, Bishop*  
*of the Diocese of BARRAN-*  
*CABERMEJA (Colombia)*

On 2 December 2009 the Holy Father Benedict XVI entrusted to *Bishop Camilo Fernando CASTRELLÓN PIZANO, S.D.B.*, until then the Bishop of Tibú (Colombia), the *Diocese of Barrancabermeja (Colombia)*.

Born on 22 September 1942 at Bogotá, Colombia, Camilo Castrellón made his first Salesian religious profession on 29 January 1963 and perpetual profession on 24 December 1968. He studied theology in Bogotá, where he was ordained priest on 2 December 1972. He later completed his studies obtaining a Licence in Theology at the Javeriana Pontifical University (1972), a Licence in Education at the Salesian Pontifical University in Rome (1983) and then a Licence in Philosophy at the Santo Tomás University in Bogotá.

After priestly ordination he undertook an intense educational and apostolic ministry in the houses of the Province, until in 1985 he was called to the Provincial house and joined the pastoral team. In 1988 he was appointed Provincial Councillor and then in 1993 Rector of the large community of “Niño Jesús” in Santafé di Bogotá. In June 1998 the Superiors entrusted to him as Provincial the guidance of the Bogotá Province. On 23 April 2001 he was appointed by the Holy Father Bishop of Tibú, and received episcopal ordination on 6 June the same year (cf. also AGC n. 376, 5.5).

## 5.6 Our dead confreres (3<sup>rd</sup> 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." (*Const.* 94).

SURNAME AND NAME	PLACE of death	DATE	AGE	PROV
P ACOSTA BETANCUR G. de Jesús	Medellín (Colombia)	18-08-2009	73	COM
L AIMASSO Giuseppe	Lombriasco (Italia)	16-11-2009	72	ICP
L ALCALDE GARCÍA Fermín	León (Spagna)	13-09-2009	60	SLE
L ALONSO MARTÍNEZ Zósimo	Ávila (Spagna)	02-10-2009	91	SMA
P ANNONI Paolo	Milano (Italia)	09-09-2009	96	ILE
P ARÉCHIGA LIMÓN Ramón	Guadalajara (Messico)	14-09-2009	48	MEG
P BARREIROS Ernesto	Poiara da Régua (Portogallo)	23-10-2009	90	POR
P BENEDETTI Renato	Parma (Italia)	20-07-2009	61	ILE
L BRACCHI Francis	Bellflower, CA (USA)	19-08-2009	93	SUO
L BRAVO AMARO Luis Gastón	Santiago de Chile	09-08-2009	89	CIL
P BUMBALO Salvatore	Pedara (Italia)	04-12-2009	93	ISI
P CANGIANI Laureano Elviro	Buenos Aires (Argentina)	10-08-2009	82	ABA
P CASASNOVAS Alfonso	Manaus (Brasile)	16-12-2009	84	BMA
L CHAN Yim Chi Boniface	Hong Kong (Cina)	11-09-2009	78	CIN
P CHIAMENTI Faustino	Porto Alegre (Brasile)	04-11-2009	81	BPA
P CLAES Henri	Zelzate (Belgio)	23-10-2009	87	BEN
L CLEVES RENZA José Hilario	Bogotá (Colombia)	09-08-2009	86	COB
L COMPERNOLLE Luk	Lubumbashi (Congo R.D.)	23-09-2009	68	AFC
P CRESPO MANJÓN Gregorio	Vigo (Spagna)	24-09-2009	83	SLE
P Da SILVEIRA Sabastião Alves	Recife (Brasile)	27-11-2009	72	BRE
P DE LA GARZA NAJERA Javier	México (Messico)	27-09-2009	72	MEG
L De RAIMOND Philippe	Les Ponts-de-Cé (Francia)	13-09-2009	79	FRB
P DE SILVA Edwin	Pyin Oo Lwin (Myanmar)	30-11-2009	65	MYM
P DÍAZ MACHADO Jesús Antonio	Caracas (Venezuela)	22-09-2009	91	VEN
P DOMÈNECH i COROMINAS Antoni	Barcelona (Spagna)	20-07-2009	66	SBA
<i>Fu per 2 anni Ispettore e per 12 anni Consigliere Generale per la Pastorale Giovanile</i>				
P ECHEA GUZMAN Valentín	Cusco (Perù)	19-12-2009	89	PER
P ENNE Johannes	Comodoro Rivadavia (Argentina)	21-11-2009	74	ABB
P FEDER Daniel	Campinas (Brasile)	21-08-2009	94	BSP
L FONTANELLA Felice	Torino	29-07-2009	86	ICP
L FONTANILLA Bernardo	Makati City (Filippine)	03-10-2009	79	FIN
L FRAGA António	Paradana (Portogallo)	04-08-2009	81	POR
P FRISO Guerrino	Caracas (Venezuela)	25-12-2009	92	VEN
P FRITSCH Robert	Chambéry (Francia)	24-11-2009	86	FRB
P GÓMEZ BARÉS Julián	Sevilla (Spagna)	13-10-2009	83	SSE
P GONZÁLEZ DIZ Domingo	Sevilla (Spagna)	29-12-2009	80	SSE
<i>Fu Ispettore per 6 anni</i>				
P GOTTER József	Kazembe (Zambia)	27-09-2009	69	ZMB

SURNAME AND NAME	PLACE of death	DATE	AGE	PROV
P GREGORIO ROMÁN Juan José	San Juan (Porto Rico)	09-12-2009	74	ANT
P GUARDE Alexandre	Porto Velho (Brasile)	03-08-2009	95	BMA
L HENDRIKS Henk	Wijchen (Olanda)	16-07-2009	91	BEN
P HERNÁNDEZ FARELO José María	León (Spagna)	09-08-2009	78	SLE
P HERNANDO Santiago	Buenos Aires (Argentina)	23-12-2009	93	ABA
P HEROLD Winfried	Neunkirchen (Germania)	12-08-2009	80	GER
P HO (WOU) Kwang Tsyrt, Martin	Hong Kong (Cina)	30-07-2009	80	CIN
P IACOANGELI Roberto	Roma	27-12-2009	93	UPS
P IGUACEN GLARÍA José Luis	Barcelona (Spagna)	17-08-2009	80	SBA
P IRLIK Józef	Oświęcim (Polonia)	02-11-2009	77	PLS
P JELlici Luigi	Siliguri (India)	11-08-2009	94	INC
P JUKNEVICIUS Kryzantas	Kaunas (Lituania)	04-12-2009	92	ILE
P JURÍO BERRADE Jesús	Barcelona (Spagna)	23-10-2009	58	SBA
P KALINOWSKI Lucjan	Okuniew (Polonia)	10-08-2009	44	PLE
P KOLLÁR František	Bečov (Slovacchia)	27-11-2009	95	SLK
L KUSIAK Bronisław	Maków Mazowiecki (Polonia)	17-10-2009	86	PLE
P LAKSHMAN (Neththasinghe) Nicholas	Colombo (Sri Lanka)	30-12-2009	54	LKC
P LENAERTS Jacques	Kigali (Rwanda)	23-11-2009	80	AGL
P LONGO Nicola	Civitavecchia (Italia)	25-12-2009	58	ICC
P MA (alias MACHUY) Alexander	Hong Kong (Cina)	28-12-2009	90	CIN
<i>Fu Ispettore per 6 anni</i>				
P MACAPINLAC Gerard	Hua Hin (Thailandia)	05-09-2009	50	FIN
P MADDHICHETTY Ray Peter	Chennai (India)	30-11-2009	75	INM
P MAFFEI Giuseppe	Torino	27-12-2009	78	ICP
P MAGAROTTO Agostino	Castelfranco Veneto (Italia)	10-09-2009	89	INE
P MANASSERO Matteo	Lombriasco (Italia)	07-10-2009	81	ICP
P MARULANDA Jorge Eliécer	Cali (Colombia)	23-12-2009	67	COM
L MELLANO Giuseppe	Torino	08-08-2009	93	ICP
L MIRAGLIA Antonino	Pedara (Italia)	03-12-2009	86	ISI
P MOLL ANGLADA Bartolomé	Barcelona (Spagna)	24-10-2009	81	SBA
P MORENO Eraclio	Bahía Blanca (Argentina)	12-11-2009	95	ABB
P MOYA LÓPEZ Ramón	Madrid (Spagna)	24-07-2009	60	AFO
P OLIVÉ PICAÑOL Ramón	Barcelona (Spagna)	05-08-2009	85	SBA
P O'MAHONY Donal	Dunboyne, Co. Meath (Irlanda)	19-11-2009	90	IRL
L ORTÍZ REBOLLAR José Manuel	Logroño (Spagna)	30-07-2009	78	SBI
P PECORELLA Giovanni	Palermo (Italia)	10-08-2009	74	ISI
P PEDRON Luigi Danilo	Valencia (Venezuela)	05-12-2009	82	VEN
P PENENGO GALVALISI Horacio	Montevideo (Uruguay)	27-09-2009	62	URU
P PERUCCHI Giovanni	Piura (Perù)	12-08-2009	71	PER
P PINTO Cosimo	Cisternino (Italia)	24-12-2009	81	IME
P PIOVESAN Leone	Bahía Blanca (Argentina)	30-09-2009	78	ABB
P POWER Michael	Johannesburg (Sud Africa)	20-11-2009	80	AFM
P PUTHOTA Benjamin	Istanbul (Turchia)	27-08-2009	77	LKC
<i>Fu Ispettore per 12 anni</i>				
P RECALDE ATIENZA Joaquín	El Campello (Spagna)	26-12-2009	80	SVA
P REPETTI Enrico	Savona (Italia)	02-12-2009	79	ICC

SURNAME AND NAME	PLACE of death	DATE	AGE	PROV
<b>P RESÉNDIZ MARTÍNEZ Raúl</b>	Zamora, Mich. (Messico)	25-11-2009	72	MEG
<b>P REVILLA Lazaro</b>	Burgos (Spagna)	12-12-2009	70	FIN
<i>Fu Ispettore per 6 anni</i>				
<b>L RODRÍGUEZ ARCE Alberto</b>	Pamplona (Spagna)	22-09-2009	66	SBI
<b>P ROS GALBETE José Luis</b>	Aibonito (Porto Rico)	19-12-2009	75	ANT
<b>E ROSA Onofre Cándido</b>	Belo Horizonte (Brasile)	09-12-2009	85	—
<i>Fu Vescovo per 38 anni: per 6 anni Vescovo Ausiliare e Coadiutore di Uberlândia (MG - Brasile), per 4 anni Vescovo di Corumbá (MS - Brasile), per 18 Vescovo di Jardim (MS - Brasile) e per 10 anni Vescovo emerito</i>				
<b>P RUBINI Luigi</b>	Hong Kong (Cina)	10-11-2009	89	CIN
<b>P SABATTI Lucio</b>	Brescia (Italia)	23-09-2009	71	ABB
<b>P SANTANA ARENCIBIA Gregorio</b>	Las Palmas de G. Canaria (Spagna)	30-09-2009	83	SSE
<b>P SCHÜSSLBAUER Siegfried</b>	Ens Dorf (Germania)	26-11-2009	75	GER
<b>P ŠIMIĆ Petar</b>	Zagreb (Croazia)	26-12-2009	71	CRO
<b>L SIMÕES Francisco</b>	Vendas Novas (Portogallo)	17-12-2009	86	POR
<b>L SIRONI Angelo</b>	Arese (Italia)	13-10-2009	88	ILE
<b>P SOLAROLI Ercole Michele</b>	Makati City (Filippine)	19-11-2009	82	FIN
<b>P STRAPPAZZON Tarcisio</b>	Arese (Italia)	16-07-2009	94	ILE
<b>P TOMASZEWSKI Stefan</b>	Międzyzlesie (Polonia)	29-08-2009	78	PLE
<b>P TYMINSKI Joseph</b>	St. Petersburg, FL (USA)	15-10-2009	89	SUE
<b>P VALONGO Luigi</b>	Maracay (Venezuela)	10-10-2009	76	VEN
<b>L VAN DER HEIJDEN Pieters</b>	Caracas (Venezuela)	29-08-2009	71	VEN
<b>P VAN LOCHEM Henk</b>	Soest (Olanda)	06-09-2009	79	BEN
<b>P VAN TITTELBOOM Casimir</b>	Sint-Denijs-Westrem (Belgio)	26-09-2009	84	BEN
<b>L VIGUÉ Robert</b>	Toulon (Francia)	02-09-2009	84	FRB
<b>P VIVAR Telmo</b>	Guayaquil (Ecuador)	30-08-2009	82	ECU
<b>P WANG Chung Ren Francis</b>	Taipei (Taiwan)	18-07-2009	49	CIN
<b>P ZRIM Joze</b>	Golnik (Slovenia)	28-07-2009	92	SLO
<b>P ZULIANI Antonio</b>	Conegliano (Italia)	30-07-2009	89	INE











