



acts

of the general council

year XCII

may-august 2011

N. 410

official organ
of animation
and communication
for the
salesian congregation

Direzione Generale
Opere don Bosco
Roma

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

OFFICIAL ORGAN OF ANIMATION AND COMMUNICATION FOR THE SALESIAN CONGREGATION

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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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Finito di stampare: maggio 2011

SPIRITUALITY AND MISSION

Disciples and apostles of the Risen Lord

Starting point. – 1. PASCHAL ORIGIN OF THE MISSION. – 2. THE EXISTENTIAL DYNAMISM OF THE MISSION. – 3. WAYS OF CARRYING OUT THE MISSION. – 4. THE PROFOUND MYSTICAL NATURE OF THE MISSION. – Conclusion.

Rome, 24 April 2011

Solemnity of Easter

My Dear Confreres,

I greet you with the great joy of the Risen Lord, the new Adam, who makes us disciples and apostles to carry out His mission of renewing the human race to its very depths, freeing it from every kind of evil and transforming it with the power of Love. It was on the Solemnity of Easter that Don Bosco was finally able to find a 'lean-to shed' in which to begin his educational and pastoral mission on behalf of poor and abandoned boys. It was on the Solemnity of Easter that our founder and father was canonised, confirming with sainthood his spiritual and pedagogical experience at Valdocco. It is on this Solemnity of Easter that I am inviting you to live your lives in every part of the world with a genuine missionary spirit.

After my last letter in which I presented the commentary on the Strenna "Come and see" and invited you to foster a 'vocational culture' the fruit of an environment marked by an attractive and involving family spirit, by a strong spiritual experience and by a demanding apostolic dimension, there have been some quite significant events which I will now tell you about.

First of all, on the subject of the Strenna for 2011, at the "Salesianum" in Rome were held the Spirituality Days which attracted a large attendance of the different groups of the Salesian Family. It is a great pleasure to see how this occasion has become a powerful means of bringing together the various

branches, increasing a sense of the identity, communion and the mission of the entire Family of Don Bosco.

Between 8 and 11 February, with Fr Francesco Cereda and Fr Juan José Bartolomé, I took part in a theological Seminar, organised by the Union of Superiors General (USG) and the International Union of Female Superiors General (UISG), on the subject "The theology of the consecrated life. The nature and significance of apostolic consecrated life". Taking part were 30 men and women theologians from around the world and 20 Superiors General, male and female. The subject was chosen by the two Unions of Superiors in order to identify the emerging and vital questions, which apostolic consecrated life is encountering, encouraging a spirit of dialogue between questions and answers, between expectations and proposals, between challenges and the ways ahead. In different forms and according to different needs, two questions immediately emerged as needing further attention and analysis; they are the two questions to be found in the title of the Seminar: the significance and the nature.

The *significance* of Consecrated life can only be found in its gospel relevance, and therefore is to be sought not so much in the recovery of its visibility and prestige in society and/or in the Church but rather in its charismatic, evangelical and prophetic nature: its being a living memorial of Christ's way of life, according to the charism of the foundation, wrapped up in the Mystery of God and committed to throwing light on it in the midst of the world loved by Him. The *nature* of Consecrated life is to be understood more and more nowadays as a "relational" one, and one which is "in progress". Such a nature is founded on the common baptismal consecration; in this is recognised a profound fraternity with all Christian vocations; from this, by the gift of God, it draws its greatest grace, in trying to re-propose and put into practice Jesus's way of life. It is a nature "in progress" precisely because it is balancing between one point of reference, which is always the same, the life of Jesus,

and another which is constantly changing, the actual historical situation.

Then, the first three “Team Visits” took place: to the South Asia Region at Bangalore in India; to the East Asia and Oceania Region at Hua Hin in Thailand; and to the America South Cone Region at Santiago in Chile. The topics chosen by the two Regions of Asia are especially worth mentioning, they regard the inculturation of the Salesian charism, and evangelisation in societies which are post-Christian, Christian and multi-religious.

Finally we have been living in these days in solidarity with the people of Japan, severely tried by an earthquake and by a devastating tsunami which, especially after the severe damage to some of the reactors in a nuclear power station, terrified the whole world and led them to raise their voices demanding reflection and a rethink.

This new letter of mine, again along the lines of the GC26, is closely linked with the last two Strennas of 2010 and 2011 and in perfect harmony with the next Synod of Bishops, which has for its subject “*New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith*”. This is a reflection on the missionary nature of the Church and of the Congregation and, in particular, on evangelisation as the context of the normal activity of the Church, of the proclamation of the Gospel “ad gentes” and the work of evangelisation “intra gentes”.

The conviction is now shared by many that the whole world has become mission territory. Article 6 of our Constitutions says in this regard “the Salesian vocation places us at the heart of the Church and puts us entirely at the service of her mission”. For us this is translated into the mission of being evangelisers of the young, paying special attention to apostolic vocations, education to the faith for the working classes, particularly by means of social communication, and in proclaiming the Gospel to those who have not yet received it. It is my hope and prayer

that reading my letter will encourage you to be joyful and convinced disciples and apostles of Jesus.

Starting point

In this letter of mine on spirituality and mission, I should like to start from *Mt 28,16-20*, the classic Gospel text on the missionary mandate which the Risen Lord entrusts to his disciples and with which Matthew's Gospel concludes. It is a passage which we Salesians, sent to the young, certainly carry in our hearts as the way to give real meaning to our lives, and as an inner stimulus for what we are doing. In the few words of the Gospel text the genuine nature of the Christian mission is expressed in a wonderful synthesis, the great value of which needs to be always rediscovered in constant prayer, in the task of reflection and in the living by obedience. I invite you therefore to listen with open hearts and fresh minds to the words which the Risen Lord addressed to the Eleven in his final meeting with them. They sum up and provide a key to the full understanding of the whole Gospel narrative.

The eleven disciples set out for Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had arranged to meet them. When they saw him they fell down before him, though some hesitated. Jesus came up and spoke to them. He said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, make disciples of all the nations; baptise them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to observe all the commands I gave you. And know that I am with you always; yes, to the end of time".

In this short passage one thing is immediately striking: the imperative commanding way in which the Risen Lord consigns to the apostles and through them to the Church of every age the missionary mandate "Go make disciples of all the nations". This is enclosed within two affirmations in the indicative,

which concern Jesus himself and express His identity: a declaration about his universal authority – “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me” – and a re-assuring word – “I am with you always, to the end of time”. The missionary mandate therefore is preceded by a declaration by Jesus who proclaims his sovereign and universal authority; it is then followed by the promise to remain always and everywhere with those He has sent.

The *literary structure* of the account describes very effectively the *essential Christological nature* of the mission. The apostolic mandate is enclosed within two statements which refer to the Risen Lord, since it is in starting out from Him that the nature and the significance of the Christian mission can be understood. What the apostles and missionaries of every age have to *do* derives from what He *is*, which has its origin in Him and with Him grows. What Jesus risen from the dead has become has inevitable consequences for what his disciples have to do; to put it in other words, since the Risen One is the Universal Lord and the constant companion of the disciples who have seen and adored Him, He can send them out with a precise task; to change the nations into disciples, consecrated by God, through the baptism administered by them, to carry out the will of the Lord Jesus.

I am therefore going to offer you some reflections on this central theme, developing four points which this very rich gospel account proposes: the paschal origin of the mission; its existential dynamism; ways of putting it into practice; its profoundly mystical nature.

1. PASCHAL ORIGIN OF THE MISSION

As I have already indicated, the first affirmation in the text is a solemn declaration on the lips of Jesus himself of the absolute Dominion of the Risen One. In a profound manner it

expresses the effect of the paschal event: through the resurrection, Jesus has been given the full exercise of his power, and even in his human nature fully shares the saving Dominion of God over the cosmos and over history.

On this account, to Him can be attributed the name which in *Mt* 11,25 is addressed to the Father: "Lord of heaven and of earth". In this title we hear the echo of the prophecy of Daniel concerning the Son of Man (cf. *Dn* 7,14), which Jesus applies to himself before the Sanhedrin: «You will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power and coming on the clouds of heaven» (*Mt* 26,64). In this way we can understand that Jesus solemnly proclaims to the disciples his victory over the powers of evil and of death, and shows himself to them as the one bringing renewal for creation.

There is another element not to be undervalued: the universal Dominion which God has given to the Risen One is not spoken of as a personal achievement but as something received. God has given Him a dominion which belongs to Himself alone; on his part Jesus knows that he has received a sovereignty which belongs only to God. Jesus has freely and consciously accepted a power which belongs to God. The immediate consequence of this recognition on his part of his being universal Lord will be the missionary mandate.

The apostolic mission, therefore, is not an act of benevolence by Jesus who sends; it does not come from the compassion aroused by seeing his own people lost. The apostolic mission is in the first place the consequence and the explicit expression of the Dominion of Jesus. Since He is aware of being Lord of heaven and of earth he sends his disciples changing them into apostles. There is a universal mission, because there is a universal Lord. It is most important for someone sent by the Lord, who day after day comes into contact with the most varied and painful forms of human, material and spiritual poverty, to contemplate and meditate on this mystery. A person feels himself

sent by the Lord when he believes that He is his only Lord; precisely because he submits himself to the authority of the Lord Jesus, the believer in the Risen Lord is conscious that he has been sent by Him.

Pastoral work, especially in the most desperate and poor places on the planet makes one experience at first hand the brutal power of selfishness and the abuse of power from which result the inhuman conditions in which so many brothers and sisters are forced to live. Daily contact with this harsh reality can even lead to discouragement and to the wearing down of inner strength or to the temptation to seek solutions which are not those suggested by the Lord Jesus. An apostle's gaze of faith therefore has to be permanently fixed on the One who has full power in heaven and on the earth, to be able to confirm himself in the deep conviction that Jesus is the escatological source from which flows the renewal of the world (cf. *Jn* 7,37-39; 19,34). In Him and only in Him is a power which is seen to be more powerful than any power on earth because it is the power of God Himself that nothing can resist. The one sent by Jesus can never forget, without losing his very reason to live, that he comes into being as a result of the exercise of the authority of his Lord.

Then it should be added, as the *Letter to the Hebrews* teaches, that this power has been acquired by Christ precisely through the path which has led him to make himself intimately at one with man and with his state of frailty. From the priestly perspective so typical of this book of the New Testament, it is said that Jesus has been "made perfect" in his role as mediator between God and man through suffering (cf. *Heb* 2,10; 5,9). The High Priest who has gone through to the highest heaven and had been enthroned at the right hand of the Father is the one who has become "completely like his brothers" (*Heb* 2,17) and "has been tempted in every way that we are" (*Heb* 4,15).

For this reason the author of this splendid homily can encourage persecuted Christians, reminding them that Jesus “because he has himself been through temptation he is able to help others who are tempted” (*Heb* 2,18). It is an overwhelming message, powerful as it is consoling: the victorious power of the Risen One is that of the One who has made every man His brother, sharing totally in human misery, and for precisely this reason He has become victor. “The glory of Christ”, Cardinal Vanhoye affirms in one of his commentaries, “is not the glory of an ambitious person, pleased with his own undertakings, nor the glory of a warrior who has defeated his enemies with the force of arms, but it is the glory of love, the glory of having loved to the end, of having re-established communion between us sinners and his Father”.¹

When therefore Jesus tells the Eleven that He has been given every power, He certainly doesn’t do so to inform them of His success, but to transmit to them and through them to every human being, the best news ever: He *has conquered for us*; he is the Lord of all so that everything may be ours and we may be God’s (cf. *1 Cor* 15,28). For this reason we are called upon to abandon the old world, the world of corruption and sin, of lies and senselessness, in order to enter a new creation in what we could call a new *habitat*, of which Jesus is Lord. It is the *habitat* of the Kingdom of God, the Kingdom of justice, love and peace, in which one enters putting on the new man. The power of witness of the missionaries comes precisely from having discovered in their own lives this belonging to the Kingdom, from having experienced in themselves the powerful solidarity of Christ and his dominion of love which renews and transforms everything with His power.

The universal character of this Dominion of love is forcefully emphasised by the fact that in these verses the adjective

¹ A. VANHOYE, *Accogliamo Cristo nostro Sommo Sacerdote. Esercizi Spirituali con Benedetto XVI*, LEV, Città del Vaticano 2008, 28.

“all” is used four times: “*all* power”, “*all* the nations”, “*all* that I have commanded you”, “*always*”. Insisting on this adjective, the evangelist certainly wanted to show that there is nothing in space or in time that is outside the influence of the Lord Jesus, that can be beyond the reach of the renewal which He has introduced in history, which is not included in the scope of His action.

Among the various considerations to which this fact could give rise, it is of interest to us to link together the saving Dominion of Jesus with the universality of the mission. The text of Matthew is quite explicit: evangelisation has to be directed towards “all nations”. Already at the Last Supper Jesus had clearly spoken about the universal dimension of His saving work, declaring that His blood, in which is established the new and eternal covenant, would be shed “for many” (*Mt* 26,28). It was therefore clear to the newly-born community that following the death and resurrection of Jesus it was necessary to overcome every kind of sense of exclusivism regarding salvation; but the effort needed to translate this certainty into practical attitudes and decisions was certainly not small. What was needed was a complete turning upside down of their way of thinking, in which an outstanding role was played by the activity of the great Apostle of the Gentiles, who is the model for every missionary, Paul of Tarsus. At the thought that “one man has died for all” (*2 Cor* 5,14), he feels himself possessed and driven by the love of Christ: *caritas Christi urget nos*. Although born and grown up with a mentality of the most extremely exclusive Hebrew view of salvation, Paul learned to view the men and women of other places and cultures through totally new eyes, because “God wants everyone to be saved and reach full knowledge of the truth” (*1 Tm* 2,4).

Dear confreres, for us too nowadays the universal horizon of the mission continues to be an open challenge and a goal far from attained. Clearly it is not a question of an ecclesial colonisation of the planet, but of the service of love and of truth with

regard to the millions, hundreds of millions of men and women who do not yet know the newness of Christ and the sweetest experience of his love and of his companionship. John Paul II in his great encyclical *Redemptoris missio*, referring to the good news of the Gospel writes: "Indeed, all people are searching for it, albeit at times in a confused way, and have a right to know the value of this gift and to approach it freely. The Church, and every individual Christian within her, may not keep hidden or monopolize this newness and richness which has been received from God's bounty in order to be communicated to all mankind".²

In the context of a world ever more marked by globalisation, with those phenomena which flow from it of a meeting of cultures and of different traditions, of migrations, of the supremacy of the market, the challenge of the universality of the mission re-presents itself with extreme urgency. The religious indifferentism and cultural relativism – a feature in particular of the West, tend to dim the perception of the unique nature of Jesus Christ, and to encourage reducing the faith to the private realm and even to the mere subjectivity of a "self-service" religion, from which there can obviously be no missionary outreach. Also our Christian communities, and we Salesians too, run the risk of being contaminated to the extent of no longer recognising the urgent need to evangelise, to open ourselves up to others outside, to meet the brother who is different, to dare to become involved personally in bearing witness. The danger is spreading among us of increasingly not being open to evangelisation and puts at risk our apostolic vocation, precisely because we are not always conscious of the danger. And we make ourselves unaware when we do not live in submission to the sovereignty of the Risen Lord.

We too can be affected by this atmosphere and allow ourselves to be caught up in enterprises which are not directly con-

² JOHN PAUL II, *Redemptoris missio*, 11.

cerned with witnessing to Jesus, and becoming satisfied with something which at first sight appears to be more effective than the evangelical sowing of the Word of God. Or else we may be tempted to stay put in places which are stagnant, far from the frontiers of the first proclamation. That word which is born in the heart of Christ the Lord and commands us to lead all people to Him ought to trouble our consciences, re-awaken us from any lethargy and laziness and give us the courage of recklessness: as happened with the first apostles who preached the Christ putting their lives at stake.

2. THE EXISTENTIAL DYNAMISM OF THE MISSION

From the affirmation of the Dominion of Christ there inescapably follows the imperative of the mission. The way in which the gospel text is expressed is significant. Having affirmed the Dominion of Jesus it continues: «*Go therefore and make disciples...*». That “therefore” expresses the essential connection between the first affirmation and the second. The establishment of the Dominion of Christ which is then the movement through which the love of God reaches out to man gives rise to the movement of the mission.

The *going out of the disciples* to the whole world derives precisely from the eternal *going out of God* to meet every person in Christ the Lord, and precisely for this reason it should reflect in depth: there can be no decisive journey on the basis of human calculations; it has to allow itself to be continually shaped by its docility to the will of the Lord Jesus. And, in fact, the sending out does not come from the heart of well-intentioned disciples but from the sovereign will of their Lord, it does not depend therefore on the good will of those being sent since it is a precise mandate of the Lord Jesus who is fully aware of his power.

It is this teaching, I think, which is being handed on to us in those episodes in the *Acts of the Apostles* in which the Lord

seems to be indicating very directly the places where the missionary ought to be going. To the Deacon Philip, for example, an angel says: "Be ready to set out at noon, along the road that goes from Jerusalem down to Gaza" (*Act* 8,26); there he will meet an official of the Queen of Ethiopia. To Paul and Timothy, who wanted to go from Mysia to Bithynia, "the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them" (*Act* 16,7) and, while they were at Troas, a vision in the night told the Apostle to go Macedonia. The episode is not a simple anecdote; throughout the whole history of Christianity the saints have in different ways had the experience of the Lord pointing out to them a particular objective to which they were to devote their energies. Don Bosco, we know very well, was no exception; from being a small boy he felt himself being sent on a specific mission and he lived his whole life carrying out this mandate.

At this point I cannot but refer to the missionary dreams of Don Bosco. He dreamt very precisely about some peoples to whom he had to send his first missionaries. This is the sign that the going out of the disciple is in truth moved by the presence of God. Naturally, these extraordinary experiences of divine enlightenment cannot be the usual way of carrying out discernment. In fact, in normal circumstances light regarding the pastoral choices to be made has to be sought in prayerfully listening to the Word of God, in accepting the proposals and the requests of the Church, paying attention to the signs of the times; but their presence in the history of the Church and in particular at the time of the founding of Institutes, remains an eloquent sign of how apostolic activity requires total docility to the will of God and to the breath of the Spirit.

If from the "geographical" point of view the mission has no frontiers, since the proclamation of the Dominion of Christ has to be offered to everyone, we could ask ourselves: from the individual's point of view how far should the journey of the one being sent take him? The reply cannot but be the same: as far as the total giving of himself, without limit, without frontiers,

without resting place. To the apostle, in fact, as to Peter, the Lord says: "*Duc in altum*, put out into deep water" (*Lk* 5,4). The "deep water" is not a particular place to go to, but the situation in which they leave behind them the safety of the shore and the security of the land under their feet to face the open sea. That is a place in which the only security comes from the companionship of the Lord and obedience to his will; it is a place one would never go to on the basis of sound worldly wisdom; it is the place towards which the great biblical personages directed their steps, quite apart from the paths of the world they had already trodden.

Telling us "*Andate*", the Lord is also asking us as individuals and as communities, to arrive primarily at that 'place' which one reaches only by means of a profound act of faith and openness, which increases when and wherever the certain and the unknown danger grows. The experience of missionary life has to make this journey, since it is only in going there where God leads us that we will find Him anew and we shall also become capable of understanding the places and the situations to which God has sent us.

On the other hand was not this perhaps the experience of Paul the apostle? Well before his missionary journeys he had to make a much more demanding one: that deep into his own heart, accepting a radical turning upside down of his previous view of the world and of life. This journey which started on the road to Damascus, saw him arrive at his destination in a way completely different from what he would have imagined: no longer with the self-confidence of a man sure of himself and of his justice who sets out to put into effect his own plans and is convinced of acting in the name of God, but with the humility of someone who has surrendered and handed himself over to a greater Mystery and is anxious to understand what the Lord wants of him.

Without this first and fundamental journey we would not have had the great apostle of the Gentiles, the indefatigable

voyager who travelled the paths of the world as far as the centre of the Empire, to proclaim the folly and the weakness of the cross as the wisdom and the power of God. We would not have the one who spent his life creating communities, of which he always felt himself father and teacher. We would not have had the one who finally proclaims Christ especially by martyrdom, taking the giving of his life to its ultimate conclusion.

We cannot do less than ask ourselves just how far we have really come on this first and fundamental faith journey, and to what extent we are convinced that this is the fundamental requirement so that for all our going about in the world one can really use the term, so elevated from a Christian point of view as is that of "mission". This is the word Jesus uses to describe and introduce Himself, and with which He indicates what the Father has made of Him: the One who has been sent, the Missionary, the Apostle.

The going out of the apostles and of missionaries, set in motion by God's own going out, is not however the only sort of movement these words highlight. In fact, in the affirmation "make disciples" is included the movement of those who, becoming indeed disciples, open themselves to Christ and go out to meet Him. Being a disciple is one way of living one's life which one enters into accepting a 'discipline', that is a way of acting which one learns by staying close to Jesus and by accompanying Him through life. Those first sent out by the Risen Lord were primarily his disciples and they were sent to 'give disciples' to his Lord. Before going out in his name therefore one has to stay beside Him, before having the world as one's destination and "making disciples" as one's task, one has to have learned from living with him what it means to be sent by the One who was sent: only the Apostle of the Father is the master of his own apostles.

It is well-known that the contents of the mission is explained with different shades of meaning by the four evange-

lists, as is also recognised in *Redemptoris missio* n. 23, and that in Matthew the emphasis is placed on the founding of the Church; however, this is not the place for that sort of discussion. Rather more to the point is to say that, since Christian discipleship cannot in any way at all be a question of being forced into belonging, the expression “make disciples”, while it is the handing on of an authoritative teaching, opens the way to a very clear path of freedom.

Becoming disciples of Jesus, in fact, means becoming disciples of the true Wisdom, and hence being reached in the very depth of one’s being by the splendour of the divine light. This implies the exercise of one’s own freedom in taking the person Jesus Christ as one’s pattern of life. At the same time it means entering into the great family of the disciples which is the Church, discovering the company of so many other brothers and sisters not only in communion with us now in this present time, a community which extends to all the continents, but also, in a timeless communion with all those Christians who have gone before us and are now with God, beginning with the Most Holy Virgin and all the Saints in heaven.

What a marvellous movement is that of a freedom which Christian discipleship possesses and which breathes the fresh air of the Gospel, allowing itself to be reinvigorated by the Spirit of Christ! It is like a dance, a celebration of freedom which involves not only individuals, but whole communities and cultures. These in opening themselves to Christ lose nothing of the authentic values they bring with them but they rediscover them at a higher level in Christian discipleship, purified from what might have been ambiguous or transient in them. We can understand how delicate and demanding the role of missionaries is in this service of genuine freedom to those they encounter, what close harmony with the Lord it requires, what theological and cultural preparation it needs, what a capacity for listening and for dialogue it presupposes. Certainly superficiality and improvisation in this field can only do

damage because we always run the risk of “making disciples” of our ideas and our attitudes, of our strategies and our plans, of our way of thinking and our cultural schemes rather than disciples of Christ and of his Word And then rather than encouraging the movement of peoples towards the joy of the faith we would run the risk of being an obstacle to it or of slowing it down.

3. WAYS OF CARRYING OUT THE MISSION

Entrusting the mission to the apostles, Jesus tells them what, in a certain sense, will be their “working instruments”: the word and the sacraments. In fact he tells them that they have to “*teach them to observe all the commands I gave you*” and that they have to “*baptise them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*”. This combination of word and sacramental sign, of teaching and salvific action, will always be the characteristic of the mandate of Jesus. The Gospel accounts of vocation say that He sent the Twelve “to preach with power, to cast out devils” (*Mk* 3,14-15) and in the whole gospel tradition the proclamation of the Kingdom is always accompanied, when not preceded (cf. *Mk* 1,21ss), by gestures of liberation and salvation which witness to the effect produced.

From the placing together of these two fundamental elements of the Christian mission, clearly emerges the fact that the Word of God which the missionary has to hand on to men is never merely an intellectual doctrine, a collection of abstract truths, a code of moral behaviour but is the expression of the living and real self-communication of God. The Word of God is alive and active, it acts with power so much so that the Lord can introduce Himself to humanity solemnly declaring: “I have spoken and I have done it!” (*Ez* 37,14). And in fact the whole history of the world from the creation onwards is set in motion

by that creative Word of God (*Jn* 1,1-3), which in the incarnation takes the human face of Jesus (*Jn* 1,14). The Word of God is God Himself, manifested in Jesus Christ.

When therefore the missionary proclaims Christ to people he is not introducing into their lives something extraneous from the outside, but rather making accessible that Word which has always been the foundation of their life and which reveals in a definitive way its significance and value. The Church, as the recent Synod of Bishops authoritatively recalled has been constituted the house of the Word not to hold on to it, but rather to spread it throughout the world. A word that no longer says anything, a silent word is a dead word; the Apostle proclaiming the Word, as well as spreading it, saves it from oblivion; it gives life to the world.

In this regard it is worth listening once again to the some passages from the *Message to the People of God* by the XII Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on "The Word of God in the life and mission of the Church".

«"For the Law will go forth from Zion and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem" (*Is* 2,3). The embodied Word of God "issues from" his house, the temple, and walks along the roads of the world to encounter the great pilgrimage that the people of earth have taken up in search of truth, justice and peace. In fact, even in the modern secularized city, in its squares and in its streets – where disbelief and indifference seem to reign, where evil seems to prevail over good, creating the impression of a victory of Babylon over Jerusalem – one can find a hidden yearning, a germinating hope, a quiver of expectation. As can be read in the book of the prophet Amos, "The days are coming, declares the Lord God, when I shall send a famine on the country: not hunger for food, not thirst for water, but famine for hearing the word of the Lord" (8,11). The evangelizing mission of the Church wants to answer this hunger. Even the risen Christ

makes an appeal to the hesitant apostles, to go forth from their protected horizon: "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations... and teach them to observe the commands I gave you" (Mt 28,19-20). The Bible is fraught with appeals "not to be silent", to "speak out", to "proclaim the word at the right and at the wrong time", to be the sentinels that tear away the silence of indifference».³

And after having referred to the challenges arising from the new means of communication, in which the voice of the divine word ought also to resound the *Message* continues very effectively:

«In an age of images particularly provided by the dominating means of communication, such as television, the privileged model of Christ is still meaningful and evocative today. He would turn to the sign, the story, the example, the daily experience, the parable: "He told them many things in parables... indeed, he would never speak to them except in parables" (Mt 13,34). In proclaiming the kingdom of God, Jesus never spoke over the heads of the people with a vague, abstract or ethereal language. Rather, he would conquer them by starting there where their feet were placed, in order to lead them, through daily events, to the revelation of the kingdom of heaven. Thus, the scene evoked by John becomes significant: "Some wanted to arrest him, but no one actually laid a hand on him. The guards went back to the chief priests and Pharisees who said to them, 'Why haven't you brought him?' The guards replied, 'No one has ever spoken like this man'" (7,44-46)».⁴

Here some really fascinating spiritual horizons open up for communicating the Gospel, in which the apostle, making his

³ XII ORDINARY GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS, *Message to the People of God*, 10.

⁴ *Ibid*, 11.

own the sentiments and the thoughts of Christ, learns to become His spokesman, according to the splendid image of Paul: "we are ambassadors for Christ: it is as though God were appealing through us" (2 *Cor* 5,20). Like Jesus, the beloved Son of God, before setting himself to evangelise the world, the evangeliser today has to see himself and want himself to be as God has proclaimed and wished him to be: a beloved son. The apostle before seeing the gospel as a task, finds it and treasures it in his own heart. When he proclaims it, like Jesus, he will be a witness worthy of belief who knows how to evoke a response and therefore "make disciples".

And if sometimes we have the impression that the Word we proclaim is not understood and not accepted by many, or that the results of our labours are very small, let us remember the parable of the sower. Jesus told it precisely to respond to the discouragement of the disciples who after their first enthusiasm which He evoked, gradually saw the number of the group of those who followed Him diminish. They had begun in fact to ask themselves how could the salvation of Israel possibly come about from such a humble activity as the preaching addressed to ordinary people without any position in society. Precisely by means of his parable Jesus wanted to produce optimism and confidence: a person with the patience of a countryman can recognise that the thankless task of generous sowing, even though it may be put at risk by sterile soil, is repaid abundantly.

Commenting on this parable in one of his meditations on the spirituality of the priest, the theologian in those days J. Ratzinger stated: "we need to think about the situation very often almost hopeless of the farmer in Israel, who wrings a harvest from a soil which at any moment threatens to become a desert. And yet, however many the unsuccessful efforts that may have been made, there are always seeds which come to maturity for the harvest, and growing in the midst of all the dangers come to fruition, abundantly repaying all the efforts. Making this allusion Jesus is saying: all the things in this

world which are really useful begin in a small and hidden way [...] That which is small begins here in my words and it will continue to grow, while that which today is made a great fuss of has already some time ago sunk”.⁵

In the proclamation of the word therefore there is a logic of smallness and of humility which every missionary has to learn. Not rarely “they go out full of tears, carrying seed for the sowing”, but he or whoever comes after him will have the joy of “coming back full of song carrying their sheaves” (cf. *Psalm* 125/126). What is asked of him after all is not success but fidelity to his Lord, even when this means misunderstandings and a price to be paid. In the end, only this fidelity to the Word does not lead to disappointment. Let us therefore make our own the words with which Paul, distancing himself from the false missionaries who were disturbing the early church of Corinth, described his own way of proclaiming the Gospel: “we will have none of the reticence of those who are ashamed, no deceitfulness or a watering down the word of God, but the way we commend ourselves to every human being with a conscience is by stating the truth openly in the sight of God” (2 *Cor* 4,2).

Also along these lines are to be found the celebration of the sacraments and more broadly the liturgy of the Church which the text of Matthew refers to introducing the subject of baptism with the Trinitarian formula. From the modern man’s efficiency point of view there is nothing that produces such criticism as the logic of the liturgy. With all the urgent problems in the world, – he is led spontaneously to argue – is it not a waste of time to devote time in one’s life to performing ceremonies? And yet it is precisely the liturgical celebration, and in particular celebration of the sacraments, which has within itself the power of the Passover of the Christ, the powerful action of the life of God.

⁵ J. RATZINGER, *Servitori della vostra gioia. Meditazioni sulla spiritualità sacerdotale*, Ancora, Milano 1989, 18s.

Baptising “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” does not only have the meaning, in the ordinary sense of “acting in the name of”, appealing to a legal authority who has made us his representative; it also has the meaning, in the biblical sense of “acting in the name of” referring to the living presence and the active power of the Triune God. Here more than anywhere else the mission achieves its proper aim, since it leads men not only to encounter a testimony about God but God Himself in His wholeness.

And men indeed have to be baptised, that is immersed, through faith, in the bosom of the Trinity which is their home; they have to be introduced into the power of love which is revealed in the Paschal Dominion of Christ. This is the real “efficiency” which regenerates the world, without which in vain is our earlier rising and our going late to rest, who toil for the bread we eat, while the Lord pours gifts on his beloved while they slumber (cf. *Psalms* 126). It is from this that the life of the Church comes, that human race renewed by the paschal grace that the Lord makes grow in history also through us.

4. THE PROFOUNDLY MYSTICAL NATURE OF THE MISSION

The final word Jesus says to the Eleven after having entrusted to them the missionary mandate is a word of re-assurance: “*I am with you always; yes, to the end of time*”. It is a great promise which serves as a guarantee of encouragement and a reason for confidence, In it there is the echo of the support which God has also guaranteed in the Old Testament to those He had called for a special vocation: “Do not be afraid, I am with you”. In it is seen above all the identity of Jesus. who from the beginning of Matthew’s Gospel, in the infancy narratives is presented as Emmanuel, “God with us”. The events of the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus have not therefore

removed his presence from history, not his desire to stay close to those who shortly before had not stayed close to him; the commitment of the Risen One to be with them has been made definitive and permanent, in time and space, until the end of time.

We are certainly conscious of how much consolation and how much strength come from these words. For someone who knows himself to be and wants to be one of those sent by Him, every day of his life opens and closes in the light of a re-assuring presence, stronger than any loneliness and any fear. The joy of a life of chastity of one who lives awaiting the best of Lovers, the wealth of one who renounces earthly goods while not failing to seek "souls", the freedom of our obedience which makes us similar to our Lord all find here their most authentic foundation, and it is precisely of this mystery that they are meant to be a visible and eloquent sign. Christ is with us, and fills our life to overflowing. The inner fulness which flows from this is indeed the true treasure of the missionary, and the greatest gift that he can hand on to those to whom he is sent. Nothing is more persuasive or convincing than a person who, representing the Lord Jesus in his very being, shows himself to be filled with His luminous presence, even to the extent of letting Him appear in the serenity of his face, in the depth of his gaze, in the humility of his manner, in the sincerity of his words and actions. As Jesus was for the apostles the image and visible presence of the Father so the true missionary is called to be the transparent image of the Risen Lord. And this he can be because Christ really is with him, in a companionship so close that it becomes a real inhabitation: the apostle, like Paul can declare: "I live now not with my own life but with the life of Christ who lives in me" (*Gal* 2,20).

In this way the mission truly reaches the mystical depth appropriate to it. From the very beginning in fact, summoning the Twelve, Jesus appointed them: "to be his companions and to be sent out to preach" (*Mk* 3,14). We all know from personal

experience how easy it is to feel in the practical circumstances of our lives a certain tension between these two things, and how it is possible to fluctuate with a sort of interior division between prayer and works, contemplation and action, dedication to God and giving oneself for others. Now from the very start of the call of the Twelve these two aspects are presented together, and closely connected one with the other: only by being in a close personal relationship with Jesus is it possible to reflect for others his presence and to really be bearers of his Word.

The one who has first heard it can take the Word to the world, as Mary did in the house of Elizabeth. The one who stays beside Him becomes the brother of Jesus, fully occupied in listening to His word. In no way can staying with Jesus be understood as something one does *from time to time* in between activities. The Gospel of John is very clear in this regard, when it speaks about the absolute necessity of *remaining* in Him, since without Him one can do nothing. And in fact, precisely because of the new experience of the resurrection, by which the presence of Christ pervades all time and every place, the close connection between prayer and proclamation becomes perceptible in a new way. Contemplation and witnessing become closely intertwined and refer one to the other in a way similar to that of the two-fold beating of our heart.

Naturally in the personal experience of every missionary, this close identification of prayer with proclamation is never the starting point but rather the goal to be reached. It requires an adequate process of formation and constant interior vigilance. Only in this way will it be possible to avoid a false spiritualism, which detracts from apostolic work and gives a false impression of closeness to God which the facts deny; at the same time one can overcome an empty activism, which only results in emptying the life of the disciple, and may even lead to him giving up. The fundamental requirement and the very heart of the mission therefore consists in learning the supreme

art, that of living in Jesus, under his Dominion, profoundly identified with Him, with His thoughts, making His word one's own nourishment.

Asking himself about the way ahead for the Church in the Third Millennium following the celebration of the Great Jubilee, John Paul II wrote in the Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte*:

*"We put the question with trusting optimism, but without underestimating the problems we face. We are certainly not seduced by the naive expectation that, faced with the great challenges of our time, we shall find some magic formula. No, we shall not be saved by a formula but by a Person, and the assurance which he gives us: I am with you! It is not therefore a matter of inventing a "new programme". The programme already exists: it is the plan found in the Gospel and in the living Tradition, it is the same as ever. Ultimately, it has its centre in Christ himself, who is to be known, loved and imitated, so that in him we may live the life of the Trinity, and with him transform history until its fulfilment in the heavenly Jerusalem. This is a programme which does not change with shifts of times and cultures, even though it takes account of time and culture for the sake of true dialogue and effective communication. This programme for all times is our programme for the Third Millennium."*⁶

He then continues indicating for the Church the urgent need to draw up plans for a pedagogy of holiness, as the "*high standard of ordinary Christian living*",⁷ on the basis of the conviction that "this is the will of God, your sanctification" (1 Ts 4,3). He himself was aware of the objection that might be raised that such an approach could seem too generic and too elevated as the basis of pastoral planning, but with great clarity

⁶ JOHN PAUL II, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 29.

⁷ *Ibid*, 31.

he replies that only by taking this approach seriously and consistently can a way be found to solve the various problems of pastoral life. Holiness cannot be tacked on at a later stage to an apostolic plan based on other criteria, but needs to be the fundamental inspiration behind all pastoral thinking, otherwise the real danger of getting lost in pointless discussions and idle speculation which do not reflect the mind of God becomes only too real.

Conclusion

My dear confreres, nowadays the criticism is sometimes made of consecrated life that it provides many services but offers little holiness. Perhaps it is precisely about this that we need to examine ourselves, so that our Salesian Family, our apostolic communities may be true schools in which in a practical way the art of holiness is learned, that is, the art of living a genuine Christian life as our Holy Founder Don Bosco practised it and passed it on to us.

In those places where we find ourselves living, as disciples and apostles we are called to be saints. Everywhere the mission is taking on new tasks; it requires individuals and communities in love with Jesus and courageous in their witness and service. Everywhere, but especially to Europe, the Congregation is now turning its attention and employing its best forces. It is the time of the mission! May genuine missionary vocations, holy and generous, continue to be raised up among us; may we help to produce among the young and the lay missionary volunteers disciples and apostles.

Together with you I entrust this missionary commitment of the Congregation to Mary Help of Christians, Mother of the Church. She has always been present in our history and her presence and her help will not be lacking at this time. As in the Upper Room, Mary expert in the ways of the Spirit, will teach

us to allow ourselves to be guided by Him «to discover the will of God, and know what is good, what it is that God wants, what is the perfect thing to do» (*Rm 12,2b*).

With great affection, respect and gratitude.


Fr Pascual Chávez Villanueva
Rector Major

2. GUIDELINES AND DIRECTIVES

2.1 VOCATIONAL FIDELITY

Fr Francesco CEREDA

General Councillor for Formation

At the end of January the Rector Major announced for the whole Congregation a three-year period of preparation and a year-long celebration for the bi-centenary of the birth of Don Bosco. For all of us a “time of grace” is beginning in which we have the opportunity to study further the charism of Don Bosco in some of its fundamental aspects: history, pedagogy, spirituality and the mission with and for the young. Especially the possibility is being offered to us to recognise with gratitude the gift of the Salesian consecrated vocation to which God has called us and which we have accepted with joy. The Strenna for 2011 also suggests that we re-examine and describe to the young our vocation story. This then is a favourable time to re-discover and to revitalise the gift of our vocation and commitment to fidelity to it.

In recent years the Provinces have undertaken a process of reflection on the vocational fragility¹ of candidates and of those in formation, seeking its roots, expressions, causes, and identifying the priorities in what needs to be done to overcome it. This fragility is a feature of the younger generations nowadays and continues to persist in our initial formation, especially in the Provinces which have not resolved the problems of weakness in the teams of formation personnel, in the processes of formation, in the formation procedures. In these years we have had an annual average loss of about 110 novices and 220 temporary professed out of an average of 530 novices who begin; vocational fragility is one cause of these leaving, even though it is not the only one; it is important therefore to keep it in mind.

¹ F. CEREDA, *Vocational Fragility*, in AGC 385, Rome 2004.

Now the time has come to begin in the Provinces a process aimed at strengthening the vocational fidelity of the confreres in the period of ongoing formation but also of those who are in initial formation. In fact it should be noted that the period of temporary profession requires fidelity; it is not a provisional experience. The formula for temporary profession makes it clear that it is a decision which is subjectively definitive; in it the one making the profession says that, "although it is my intention" to offer himself to God "for all my life", he makes the vow "to live obedient poor and chaste" for a specific period of time, "in accordance with the Church's dispositions".² This should be taken more into account in initial formation. It should also be observed that vocational fidelity is a reminder of the possibility of infidelity in its various forms, and that the lack of fidelity does not coincide with leaving; but it is also useful to remember that by encouraging processes of fidelity, to some extent infidelities, in other words failures in religious discipline, and the phenomenon of those leaving can be overcome.³

1. EXPERIENCE OF VOCATIONAL FIDELITY

1.1. Re-examining the story of one's own vocation

Vocational fidelity is first of all a gift from God, as is the vocation itself. We are aware that *the initiative of God* is at the

² Cf. C. 24.

³ The Assembly of the Union of Superiors General has dealt with the subject of vocational fidelity on two occasions; in this regard see: USG, *Fidelity and abandonment in today's consecrated life*, Litos 2005; and USG, *Promoting perseverance in consecrated life. Anthropological challenges to formation*, Litos 2006. In the 2005 Assembly Luis Oviedo OFM presented the results of a survey, in which a significant sample of male religious institutes took part. He made the point that the larger number of perpetually professed leaving do so in middle age: 37.8% in the age group 31-40 and 33.0% in the age group 41-50; in particular 42.2% of those leaving do so in the first 10 years after perpetual profession and 31.3% in the following 10 years. He also noted that 42% of those who leave do so for affective problems, to which could be linked other similar motives, such as immaturity for 21.3% and psychological problems for 21.0%.

very beginning of our vocation story. Through love He has called us into existence, he has made us grow up in a family, he has made us live in a particular culture. In Baptism He made us his children. Through the course of our lives, by means of encounters and particular situations, He has accompanied our maturing in the faith, in love for Jesus, in accepting His Word and the Sacraments, in entrusting ourselves to Mary, in our feeling part of the Church, in giving ourselves to others.

Then the day came when we felt drawn to follow Jesus more closely. The call did not come out of the blue; it was the result of a *plan of love* which God had first thought of before our birth and put into effect through His actions and our responses. With the eyes of faith, looking back over the past, we can see how we have been the object of God's predilection. He chose us before we chose Him, He placed His trust in us, He seduced us;⁴ He guided us. We fell in love with Jesus; we felt happy about continuing His presence and action in the world.⁵ God opened up our hearts, giving us the grace to make us feel loved by Jesus and to love Him with all our hearts; He helped us to identify with His feelings and His way of life; He made us ready to serve the young as Don Bosco did. Thus with religious profession in the Congregation we offered to God and to the young not only our heart, our goods, our independence but our whole selves.

We were aware that every choice we make means the renunciation of other opportunities; on the other hand we found the decision for Jesus and his mission so attractive that we felt happy to leave other things. That is what Don Bosco did, for the sake of souls letting everything else go; that is what the merchant in the gospel did, who after having found the *precious pearl*, with joy sold everything so as to be able to acquire it.⁶ The acceptance of the vocation to consecrated life was motivated by the beauty of the gift; we were convinced that we were finding

⁴ Cf. Jer 20,7.

⁵ Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Vita consecrata*, 22.

⁶ Cf. Mt 13,44-46.

happiness in this vocation; we preferred to say no to some good things in order to say yes to others which to us were better. And so we began a journey of fidelity to the vocation God had given us; in fact, it is on the vocation that fidelity is based.

We do not chose a vocation, rather it is given to us; we can only recognise it and accept it; if it were us to chose it, we would no longer be dealing with a vocation but with a plan that we could always change. With religious profession God confirms the covenant established with us in baptism.⁷ He consecrates us to live totally for Him in communities of brothers, following Christ obedient, poor and chaste, at the service of the young;⁸ we respond to His action of consecration offering ourselves. Being faithful means renewing our response to this *special Covenant* that the Lord has made with us.⁹ Following the example of Don Bosco, each day we say: "I have promised God that I would give of myself to my last breath for my poor boys". Sometimes our response can be uncertain, weak, unfaithful, but not for this reason does God's Covenant with us cease; He does not withdraw His Covenant. God's faithfulness is the foundation of ours and invites it.

1.2. The possibility of a definitive choice

Vocational fidelity is a commitment of love; it is a free choice which involves the whole of life until the very end. The commitment "for ever" is demanded by love; in fact the measure of love is not to have any limit; such was the love of Jesus who "having loved his own who were in the world he loved them to the end".¹⁰ In inter-personal relationships, love is total and unconditional commitment; a partial or provisional love is

⁷ Cf. C. 23.

⁸ Cf. C. 3.

⁹ Cf. C. 195.

¹⁰ *Jn* 13,1.

not genuine; putting conditions to love, for example a time limit, empties love of its meaning. Love demands totality and to be definitive. This applies even more so with regard to love for God and for Jesus, a radical, total love, for ever.

Sometimes a question may come to us: is it possible to live faithfully until the very end? If we were to rely solely on our own strength, it would be difficult to answer; but fidelity finds its support in the *faithfulness of God*. Through His covenant God unites Himself to us as a trustworthy partner; it is not a question therefore of how long our strength lasts but how long His lasts; it lasts for ever. The history of salvation is the testimony to the fidelity of God. God is always faithful. That gives us confidence because we know that, in spite of our weakness, God who began His work in us will see that it is finished;¹¹ He will not let us be tempted beyond our strength;¹² His grace will be sufficient for us.¹³ In spite of our infidelities, He remains faithful because He cannot deny Himself.¹⁴ God never takes back His gifts.¹⁵ God's faithfulness make ours possible.

Another question could trouble us: how can we be faithful until the very end? We cannot know whether or not our commitment will be definitive; only *fidelity day by day* is what, with the grace of God, we can ensure. When in religious profession we say "for ever", we are not stating what will happen, but what we want to happen. In this regard the Rector Major writes: "Fidelity has a *typical* feature that distinguishes it from other virtues. We can compare it, in the area of the fine arts, to music, as compared with painting or sculpture. In a single moment of time I can contemplate a beautiful statue or a famous painting, but I cannot listen, instantaneously to the Ninth Symphony of Beethoven or the Magic Flute of Mozart: here is

¹¹ Cf. *Phil* 1,6.

¹² Cf. *1 Cor* 10,13.

¹³ Cf. *2 Cor* 12,9.

¹⁴ Cf. *2 Tm* 2,13.

¹⁵ Cf. *Rm* 11,29.

indispensible its “unfolding” in time, its ‘historicity’... In similar fashion fidelity cannot be realised except as an historical experience”.¹⁶ Therefore it is necessary to ensure a response to God every single day.

Since we are living in a world which is constantly changing and we ourselves are changing, there can only be a *dynamic and creative fidelity*. It is not a question of remaining faithful but of becoming faithful. Making religious profession is “like designing a frame: marking its limits and separating what it inside from what remains outside; this space has to be filled with future decisions which will be considered successful and true only if they are in accordance with the first freely chosen one”.¹⁷ It is necessary to deal with new circumstances by making decisions consistent with the initial commitment. It will not always be easy; there may perhaps be infidelities; the doubt may arise that we have chosen the wrong path, that we did not understand what we were choosing, that we never imagined the difficulties. No one can know how the future will be and therefore anticipate the problems; one cannot have complete knowledge of a form of life before having committed oneself to it; no one can have an experience of the different forms of life and then chose the right one. Life is a continuous unfolding of the choice made and a renewed commitment to live it to the full.

2. FIDELITY “UNDER THREAT”

In the modern age fidelity is not immediately perceived as of value; it is therefore hard to create a mentality of fidelity. Culture, especially postmodern culture, while it appreciates values such as, for example, a person’s sincerity or the authenticity of his relationships, it does not favour firm ties. On the other hand,

¹⁶ P. CHÁVEZ, *Fidelity, source of life fulfilled*, in: USG, *Promoting perseverance in consecrated life*, o.c., 27.

¹⁷ A. CENCINI, *Mi fido... dunque decido*, Milano 2009, 74.

fidelity also becomes weakened as a result of ways of thinking about and living the Christian vocation and in particular the vocation to consecrated life. Even though situations may present difficulties and threats, it is always necessary to look for ways of changing them into opportunities and advantages.

2.1. The speed of cultural change

In recent times the accelerated expansion of technology, the central role of economic activity and the enormous impact of the media have contributed to a notable cultural shift in society, not only in that of the West but, on account of globalisation, also in the rest of the world. Some aspects of one's own culture or cultures present challenges to vocational fidelity or threaten it. It is necessary to be aware of this in order to change such challenges into the starting point for action.

In the consumer society a person experiences the *difficulty of making a choice*; often he is led to satisfy what is immediate and close at hand; one becomes accustomed to a "use and throw away" mentality. Even convictions, values and relationships are considered commodities to be obtained, used and thrown away. The culture of pleasure-seeking is making rapid strides, of what I like and what gives me satisfaction. The consumer models of life are spreading also in poor countries. With this mentality, if a choice is not liked or proves difficult, it can be changed. Priority is given to the exclusive fulfilment of one's own needs and desires; respect for fidelity, truth, stable relationships is lost; long term commitments are neglected. In this way a person is in danger of being psychologically fragile and immature.

In addition, there is a widespread *relativist mentality*. There are a huge number of images and opinions. Not having the time or the opportunity to stop and think, there is the danger of knowing about everything new but of living superficially. The search for truth is not attractive because such an effort requires

hard work, and the result is uncertain. One does not know how to distinguish what is essential from what is ephemeral. Thus everything becomes fluid; history loses its meaning and nihilism is always on the horizon. We are in a "fluid" society. Living with constant change, people are afraid of taking on commitments. They prefer to live "for the day" and to be involved in the present. They find it difficult to understand why anyone should tie themselves down with definitive choices in early youth, when they have no experience of the future. If by chance, commitments have previously been made, abandoning the decisions taken is justified by saying: "today I see things differently, and tomorrow I might see them differently again".

In an atmosphere like this therefore, decisions often depend more on one's own first reactions, emotions and desires rather than on motivations and convictions; one is easily carried away by facile enthusiasm and a spontaneous response. A strong impression can sometimes lead to radical and unexpected changes in life-choices without the consequences being assessed; what is important is to overcome the situation of uneasiness in which one finds oneself and achieve a state of well-being hoped for though not guaranteed. In this way the ability to wait, renounce and make sacrifices in view of more long-lasting benefits in the future is diminished. It becomes hard to accept the cross of everyday life, discipline, asceticism, self-control, and therefore one easily gives up in the face of difficulties. So the question arises: how can we live faithful to the vocation of consecration at a time of radical changes and of swift transformations?

2.2. The weakness of the identity of consecrated life

In addition to cultural aspects, there are also factors within consecrated life which make it weak. This happens especially when the sense is weakened or lost of one's own identity as a consecrated person, who is called to live as "a living memorial

of Jesus' way of living and acting" among the young.¹⁸ If consecrated life is not lived in a prophetic way, the spiritual approach of the primacy of God, service of the poorest ones, the brotherly atmosphere of communion not only lose their proper identity, but they also put at risk the fidelity of the consecrated person. Then the risk increases when the "liberal model" of consecrated life, which can make headway especially in secularised cultures, is adopted.¹⁹

Consecrated life requires a deep experience of faith and of the spiritual life, which permeates one's way of life, gives the primacy to God, makes us experience the love of the Lord Jesus, fills the heart with apostolic passion. However, when the *spiritual life is lived on a superficial level* or the spiritual experience is only marginal or loses its mystical power, the values of consecrated life are not interiorised so as to penetrate the heart at the level of the affections, sentiments, convictions and motivations. Then it is possible to live in an exterior manner a life of prayer, obedience, poverty and chastity, or community life; there is no longer an authentic life but only formal observance; the radical nature of the gospel is not being lived. Progressively the vocation of consecrated life loses its meaning.

Consequently, as time passes there is also *the loss of apostolic passion*, the capacity for selflessness and generosity is diluted, one feels psychologically and spiritually tired. The apostolate among the young ceases to be a presence which animates and evangelises; it is carried out only for the sake of duty. Because of a lack of reorganisation of the works, of people getting older and the shortage of vocations, some confreres find themselves overburdened with an excessive and not always satisfying work-load; others are discouraged by the sense of their own inadequacies or the lack of results; so it is not difficult to understand the reasons for a certain sense of apostolic frustra-

¹⁸ JOHN PAUL II, *Vita consecrata*, 22.

¹⁹ Cf. P. CHÁVEZ, *You are my God. My happiness lies in you alone*, in AGC 382, Rome 2003.

tion. There is no longer any dynamism, inventiveness, creativity. And then when apostolic commitment loses its meaning, we ask ourselves about the meaning of our vocation.

If then there is a *lack of fraternal life*, individualism takes hold; and this leads the confrere to distance himself from the community and to live in his own world. In this way the family spirit and the sense of belonging suffer damage. Community meetings become formalities. Everyone would like a close human contact but sometimes they feel more like employees in a business enterprise than people consecrated for a mission. Gradually, if care is not taken, there is a slide in the direction of mediocrity and a tendency to adopt bourgeois values; asceticism is avoided; an easy life is sought. Confidence in the charism is lost. Lacking a life enhancing environment in community, some begin to seek it outside. Consecrated life now begins to feel a burden and fidelity begins to cause problems.

There are also other factors which increase the difficulties. In the past the consecrated person enjoyed prestige; this facilitated fidelity, even in the cases where the individual felt fragile or less secure in his vocation. Nowadays the Church sometimes appears less than credible, and the image of the consecrated person enjoys less esteem; so there is little appreciation for his role; often indifference, lack of interest or apathy are met with. Ever more in secularised societies religion tends to be relegated to the private sphere. It requires courage and a higher level of vocational maturity than formerly to overcome this atmosphere but unfortunately not everyone manages to do so.

3. FIDELITY "SAFEGUARDED"

The vocation is an inestimable gift but it is also "a treasure in earthenware jars";²⁰ it is therefore necessary to make every

²⁰ 2 Cor 4, 7.

effort to “fan it into a flame”²¹ with fidelity. Precisely because it is exposed to the dangers and threats of a mentality and of styles of life which are weak, especially to our radical fragility, fidelity is something to be lived every day. It is nourished by vigilance, prudence and care but it also needs to be cultivated and protected.

3.1. At the time of initial formation

Present day experience teaches us to give importance to the inner world of a person with its affections, emotions and feeling, but also with its attitudes, motivations and convictions. For this reason the whole process of formation needs to be one in which the individual makes it his own, beginning with initial formation which is organised so as “to have a profound effect on individuals”.²² Here then some aspects of the experience of initial formation, which encourage a life of fidelity.

Above all from the very beginning of formation, the process of *assisting in human maturity* deserves great attention. A lack of self esteem, for example, makes the person feel little understood or appreciated or loved by others; when he does not receive sufficient affection and consideration, he finds life difficult and closes in on himself; this explains some problems connected with the practice of chastity which then eat away at fidelity. It is therefore necessary that the person in formation, while discovering the presence of God in his life story, pays attention to what is happening deep within himself, not keeping quiet about personal problems, questions, uncertainties and therefore having recourse to psychological help and to spiritual accompaniment. At this initial stage formation ought to aim at preparing people in psychological and affective maturity and an ability to live their chastity in a calm manner which gives strength to their fidelity.²³

²¹ 2 Tm 1,6.

²² FSDB 208.

²³ F. CEREDA, *Formation to affectivity and to chastity*, in AGC 408, Roma 2010.

Since love occupies a central place in life, formation in affectivity and to chastity requires a deep *spiritual life*, aimed essentially at becoming in love with Jesus, and together with Him, with God, with Mary and with Don Bosco. Feeling the Risen Jesus to be his "friend",²⁴ this "strong, lively and personal love"²⁵ for Him becomes the unifying centre of the life of the one in formation. He gradually takes on the sentiments of Jesus, he discovers the meaning and the beauty of giving himself to God in Salesian consecrated life, he experiences a strong sense of belonging to the Church and to the Congregation, he cultivates an attachment to Don Bosco and enthusiasm for the youth mission. It is love which keeps fidelity to the vocation alive. For this reason it is necessary to encourage a great change in formation practice and to help the one in formation to acquire the capacity for personal prayer, beginning with daily meditation, for at least half an hour and preferably in the form of "lectio divina", the visit to the Blessed Sacrament and adoration, Confession, and leading up to union with God. Personal entrustment to Mary should be cultivated; this has a strong affective aspect which sustains chastity and fidelity.

Initial formation which is the process of identifying with the Salesian consecrated vocation, sets out to form disciples and apostles of Jesus according to the style of Don Bosco; at its centre therefore is the spiritual life and *apostolic commitment*. Love for the Lord becomes apostolic passion which inspires the one in formation with enthusiasm for the youth mission and leads him to love young people with generous availability and willingly to be among them, putting his whole self at their service. And this sustains his fidelity.²⁶ Following in the steps of the re-thinking process of youth ministry, formation for ministry is needed, which involves updated reflection and com-

²⁴ JOHN PAUL II, *Pastores dabo vobis*, 45, 46.

²⁵ *Ibidem*, 44.

²⁶ Cf. C. 195.

mitted exercise of the process that the Congregation is following.

The same love motivates *intellectual formation*. Full of apostolic zeal, the one in formation recognises the need to prepare himself for educative pastoral service. In intellectual formation he finds a solid foundation for his spiritual life; he acquires knowledge and skill for the Salesian mission; he acquires a mentality consistent with his vocation. At the same time he appreciates the positive aspects of modernity and post-modernity and prepares himself so as not to lose his way in the face of the relativist and nihilist tendencies of culture and of moral disorientation. For this reason intellectual formation needs to assist the change of mentality and, if it is to have an influence on the motivations and the convictions of the one in formation, it also needs to take on an affective connotation.

Nowadays we are more conscious of the importance of initial formation; on this account notable strides had been made to improve the contents and the methods employed in formation, strengthening the formation communities and the centres of study and preparing formation personnel. No matter how good initial formation is, however, there is an awareness that in life there are continuous and unforeseen changes; therefore there is the challenge for formation to develop in the one in formation the capacity to live his vocation in creative fidelity, in other words to acquire a *mentality of ongoing formation*. "Initial formation should be closely connected with *continuing formation*... creating a readiness on everyone's part to let themselves be formed every day of their lives".²⁷ On this account it is necessary that the one in formation strengthens his ability for self-formation, taking care, however, not to encourage individualism in his formation or in formation procedures.

²⁷ JOHN PAUL II, *Vita consecrata*, 69.

3.2. At the time of ongoing formation

Ongoing formation is a great support for vocational fidelity; in fact it is a great help in facing up to the challenges posed by a culture which changes and an individual who evolves in the course of life. In the Congregation it needs to be better taken care of. Some aspects are now suggested at personal, community and province level that can encourage fidelity.

Personal commitment

In the first place ongoing formation is entrusted to personal responsibility.²⁸ What is needed is a attitude and a personal commitment to wanting to grow in one's vocation. "All formation... is ultimately a *self formation*. No one can replace us in the responsible freedom that we have as individual persons".²⁹ Unfortunately it happens that especially in the first years of full involvement in the apostolate, but not only then, by throwing ourselves into our work we expose ourselves to the dangers of habit, activism, lack of motivation. Therefore there needs to be a personal commitment by which we know how to use all the opportunities that come our way in our lives to keep alive within us the desire to grow and to be faithful; community guidance, an atmosphere of prayer, apostolic zeal, study, brotherly relationships, all need to be fully appreciated.

One of the most effective means to safeguard vocational fidelity is the *spiritual life*. Our heart is made to love and to be loved; embracing consecrated life, we have given our heart to the Lord Jesus in response to the love we have received from Him. The Eucharist, the sacrament of Reconciliation, "lectio divina", devotion to the Virgin Mary, personal prayer, union with God are some of the fundamental expressions of our spiri-

²⁸ Cf. C. 99: "Each Salesian accepts responsibility for his own formation".

²⁹ JOHN PAUL II, *Pastores dabo vobis*, 69.

tual life. Prayer is like the oil with which we keep aflame the lamp of our love for the Lord Jesus and nourish joy in our Salesian vocation; but when it is neglected, the flame of love is extinguished and we find ourselves more exposed to the "temptations" which threaten fidelity.

Together with the spiritual life and as its fruit is the *apostolic passion* of "da mihi animas, cetera tolle". It is a question of a pastoral zeal inspired by love for the Lord Jesus and for the charism of Don Bosco, which makes us seek in everything "the glory of God and the salvation of souls". Apostolic passion brings out the best in us: love for the young, generosity, dedication, creativity, communion with other pastoral workers, but also a spirit of sacrifice, asceticism, self discipline. It purifies our motives; it keeps us from discouragement in times of difficulty; in exchange it fills us with joy and satisfaction in our vocation.

In spite of all this, a vocational crisis is always possible; it does not arrive out of the blue, but develops progressively; it may have to do with the life of faith, psychological weariness, apostolic disappointment, a loss of motivation. Often these crises have something to do with *affectivity and chastity*; it begins with little concessions and self satisfactions which at first may seem permissible or innocuous, but which gradually become habits and ambiguous forms of behaviour, finally evolving into a vocational crisis. In these moments too, however, it is always possible to turn back and to take up a faithful life again; these situations are not irreversible. It is important to recognise that we are fragile; we can never presume on our own strength. Precisely on this account we need to exercise prudence and vigilance and have self discipline and self control. Very helpful in this area is sincerity with ourselves and with a spiritual guide; it takes courage to look at ourselves honestly before God, to recognise in ourselves sentiments, behaviour and attitudes which are not coherent. This shows that we are taking responsibility for our life and our

vocation, and a seriousness in wanting to live faithful to our commitment.

Community care

The community is the great support for fidelity, being close to the confreres in their concrete circumstances. The community may have its weaknesses and limitations but it also has *elements of vitality* which make it the ideal place to deal with the challenges of the vocational fragility of those in formation and with the difficulties in vocational fidelity of the confreres of all ages. When something is enthusiastic, vibrant and full of life, it stirs up interest, captivates and attracts. But, above all, it brings about fruitfulness, authenticity and total commitment. Life begets life. Therefore, if a community is to help its confreres live their fidelity in a creative manner, it must give full expression to the life-giving elements it already possesses, namely the ability to offer a prophetic witness, to attract vocations, to strengthen the sense of belonging, to engage its confreres in tasks and ways of life requiring greater commitment, to draw in lay people and the young, and to increase its impact on the Church and on the local area.

Among the vital elements one which contains great reserves of strength for fidelity is the *style of life and of work*. Acceptance and the joy of being together make each one feel loved, appreciated and valued. There is a rich depth of relationships to be discovered and to be experienced. The family spirit creates a mentality of shared searching and discernment; the atmosphere of faith and of prayer strengthens inner motivations and makes the members ready to live their lives in a radical gospel manner and apostolic dedication; a working together that is well organised, and community and pastoral projects encourage development, improve the apostolic enterprise, help avoid stress and exhaustion. And if someone should find himself in difficulty, the sense of mutual responsibility of the confreres makes them attentive to the first signs of

his being unsettled, their friendship, concern and understanding support him; their lives and example act as a stimulus for him.

Also of particular significance is the effort made by the community to help the confreres to study more deeply *the nature of consecrated Salesian life*. The community encourages the updating in Salesianity,³⁰ reflection on the Constitutions,³¹ the study of the situation of young people, also by means of their presence at its meetings and its presence in the places where they live their lives,³² learning new approaches in youth ministry and in catechetics, communicating the charism.³³ In this way the confreres express a deep sense of gratitude to God for the gift of their vocation; they feel proud to be members of the Congregation and sons of Don Bosco; they experience joy, enthusiasm and commitment in their vocation.

The way which the *service of authority* is exercised in the community makes a decisive contribution to all of this. The Rector sets out to create an atmosphere of acceptance and respect for each confrere, so as to make him "feel at home";³⁴ maintains daily contact with each one, acting always as "father, brother and friend".³⁵ It is his concern to keep everyone united in a brotherly atmosphere and one of co-responsibility. He shows solicitude for anyone who is suffering, who feels alone, who finds himself on the fringe, who is in difficulty. With the friendly chat and spiritual accompaniment he helps the confrere to live a mature affective life, to assume responsibility for his own formation, to find joy in a warm relationship with the Lord Jesus, to make good use of his time and of the media, to plan his own personal life and to face up to the difficulties of

³⁰ Cf. GC26, 10.

³¹ Cf. GC26, 10.

³² Cf. GC26, 15.

³³ Cf. GC26, 21.

³⁴ Cf. C. 16.

³⁵ C. 15.

apostolic activity. His animation has the aim of ensuring a good level of spiritual and pastoral life in the community, seeing to the prayer and ascetical dimension of the community,³⁶ fraternal sharing and the apostolate.

Responsibility at Province level

Although it is something quite complex, the Province community also plays a notable part in cultivating the fidelity of its members, in that it infuses in them above all the *sense of belonging*. The sense of fraternity which is experienced in the Province, especially on the occasions of professions, ordinations and anniversaries, solicitude in the case of illness, closeness at times of loss in the family are proof of the affection for the confreres and ties which link the Province together. It is important that the relationship between the confreres and the superiors is peaceful; the confreres should be involved in the processes of discernment with regard to important provincial decisions; within the Province a mentality and a “culture” should be perceptible which is consistent with the nature of Salesian consecrated life.

At the same time *ongoing formation* is of great help for the development and the fidelity of the confreres. In a world which is changing rapidly and where people develop with the passing of the years, “ongoing formation assists a religious in integrating creativity within fidelity... in the concrete circumstances of life”.³⁷ It facilitates the changing of the “province culture” especially with regard to the nature of consecrated life. Good provincial animation helps in this, when it provides a variety of opportunities for the growth and spiritual and pastoral renewal of the confreres. In particular, special attention needs to be given to the confreres on practical training and

³⁶ Cf. CIVCSVA, *Fraternal life in community*, 23: “Community that is not mystical has no soul, but community that is not ascetic has no body”.

³⁷ CIVCSVA, *Potissimum institutioni*, 67.

during the “quinquennium”; in fact the change is not always easy from a organised and accompanied life in the formation community to full involvement in educational and pastoral work; there needs to be a re-thinking of the ways in which these confreres are involved and accompanied.

Finally of relevance is the way in which the Province carries out its *mission in the local area*. This in fact exerts a considerable influence on the fidelity of the confreres. Therefore this means that they should be able to dedicate themselves to the young especially the poorest ones using their gifts and abilities and having the opportunity of a guiding presence among them. It means that they can live and work together in communities which contain the appropriate number and quality of consecrated confreres, fully dedicated to God and sustained by Him. It means that in the educative pastoral communities those present are sufficient to carry out a calm and effective work which bears witness, attracts vocations and involves the co-workers. The mission plays a central role in the lives of the confreres and constitutes a stimulus for their vocational fidelity; the Constitutions state that “our mission sets the tenor of our whole life”.³⁸ Therefore every Province engaged in the process of “redesigning its presences” paying attention to the processes of re-organisation, re-shaping, re-location, cannot but take these criteria into account if it wishes to ensure that the confreres are happy and are faithful to their vocation. It should be aiming not so much at beginning or continuing the works, important though this may be, but above all at ensuring a better quality of pastoral activity of the Salesian presence in the area, since only in this way will the Salesian charism have a future.

³⁸ C. 3.

PRO-FORMA FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. The *confrere*, in either initial formation or ongoing formation, reflects personally on these guidelines; reviews his life at present, assessing it from the point of view of vocational fidelity; enters in his personal plan of life whatever can help him live faithfully.
2. The *local community* organises moments for sharing in which it reflects on its vitality, on how it is living the Salesian consecrated vocation and on the assistance it offers its members to live in fidelity.
3. The *formation community* examines itself on what it is doing to assist those in formation to assume a mentality of vocational fidelity and of ongoing formation.
4. The *Province* reflects on its “culture”, on the arrangements for ongoing formation, on the means for strengthening vocational fidelity. It looks for the best way to involve the confreres, the local communities and the formation communities in this process regarding fidelity.

4. ACTIVITIES OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL

4.1 Chronicle of the Rector Major

– December 2010

On Wednesday morning 1 December, the Rector Major chaired the opening meeting of the *winter session of the General Council*. In the afternoon together with Fr Francesco Cereda, he went to the UPS to speak at the Academic Senate.

On Friday 3, he chaired the meeting of the Council and afterwards at midday met the DBI (*Don Bosco International*) group, made up of Fr Fabio Attard, Fr Meinolf von Spee, Fr Ángel Astorgano, Dr. Mattia Tosato and Fr Miguel Ángel García.

On Saturday 4, with the whole of the General Council the Rector Major visited the Vatican Library at the invitation of H.E. Cardinal Raffaele Farina.

On Sunday evening 5 December, at supper he welcomed the *new Provincials who had come for the course of formation*.

On Monday morning 6, Fr Chávez received Fr Valerio Bocci, Director of the Elledici, and afterwards had a first meeting with the Provincials. In the afternoon he gave an interview to TV2000.

Starting on Tuesday 7 and throughout the formation course

for the new Provincials which continues until 18 December, in the times at his disposal the Rector Major meets each of the new Provincials in person. This is a list of the Provincials taking part in the course received by the Rector Major: Jorge Crisafulli (AFW); Faustino García (AFO); Raminedi Balaraju (INH); Dariusz Bartocha (PLS); Sylvain Ducange (HAI); Víctor Pichardo (ANT); Artur Pereira (POR); Petr Vaculík (CEP); Martin Coyle (GBR); Marek Chmielewski (PLN); Alfred Leja (PLO).

In this period he also had a number of other meetings with the Councillors, other confreres and visitors as well as the ordinary meetings of the Council.

On Wednesday 8, the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of Mary, the Rector Major celebrated Mass in the Generalate of the FMA.

On Saturday 11, the Rector Major leads a morning of recollection with the Provincials. He has dinner in the Vatican Community, and together with them Cardinal Angelo Amato.

In the afternoon of Monday 13 Fr Chávez went to the UPS for the

blessing of the new infirmary and for the traditional meeting with the confreres of the Vice Province followed by supper.

On Friday 17, after the meeting of the General Council and after speaking with one of the Provincials he received Mons. Jonas Abib, Founder of "Canção Nova", accompanied by members of the Committee.

On Saturday morning 18, with his Vicar, the Rector Major concluded the meeting with the new Provincials. He then presided at Mass with the confreres of the Community of Saint Thomas from the UPS. Afterwards there was the customary exchange of Christmas greetings and gifts with the World Committee of the Past Pupils and the Central Committee of the Salesians-Cooperators.

Monday 20 December is the Rector Major's birthday. Throughout the day Fr Chávez receives many good wishes. At Midday he presides at Mass with the community of the Generalate.

On Tuesday morning 21, he went to the Generalate of the FMA to offer Christmas Greetings to Mother Yvonne and the General Council. On his return he preached as part of a day of recollection for the community of San Tarcisio, and then chaired a meeting of the

General Council. In the afternoon he received the Superior of the UPS Vice Province and the Rector Magnificus, and then celebrated Mass with the San Tarcisio community.

On Wednesday 22, the Rector Major chaired two sessions of the Council, one in the morning and another in the evening. In the afternoon he received the Principal and the Superior of the Community of the Auxilium, who had come to bring Christmas greetings; afterwards he received Dr. Magdi Cristiano Allam.

On Friday 24 December, with the whole General Council the Rector Major went to Genzano for a half-day of recollection in preparation for Christmas. In the afternoon he received Mother Antonia Colombo, accompanied by two other Sisters from the 'Ersilia Canta' Community. At mid-night he presided at Christmas Mass with the Community of the Generalate. On Saturday 25 he went to the Auxilium for Christmas Day Mass.

On Sunday 26, the Feast of the Holy Family, Fr Chávez had lunch with the members of the "Mexican Salesian colony" in Rome.

On Tuesday 28, at midday the Rector Major went to the House of the Daughters of Christ the King and presided at Mass there for the

VDB, who were holding the World Congress for those responsible at Regional level. He had lunch with them.

On Friday 31 December, as is the tradition, in the afternoon he went to the Generalate of the FMA to present the *Strenna for 2011* and on his return to the Pisana, presented it to the confreres of the Community, after which he presided at the singing of the Te Deum.

– January 2011

On Saturday 1 January, the beginning of the New Year, the Solemnity of the Divine Motherhood of Mary, with his secretary, Fr Juan José Bartolomé and Fr Filiberto González, the Rector Major went to Sant'Agnello, where welcomed by the FMA community he spent a few days resting. He stayed there until lunch on Wednesday 5 January.

On Friday 7, there were two sessions of the Council at the end of the morning and in the evening, in which Fr Tadeusz Rozmus, the Extraordinary Visitor to the Province of Germany took part. Early in the afternoon Fr Chávez received Archbishop Nosiglia of Turin.

On Saturday morning 8, he went to the Vatican, where he had a meeting with S. E. Mons. Fernando

Filoni, to introduce Bro. Alfonso Doménech Vitoria who is to take the place of Bro. Bruno Trevisan with the particular role entrusted to him in the Secretariat of State. At lunch he thanked Bro. Bruno Trevisan for the service he had given and introduced Bro. Alfonso Doménech to the community.

On Monday morning 10, the Rector Major received Bro. Claudio Marangio, and then chaired two sessions of the Council, one in the late morning and the other in the evening.

On Friday morning 14, Fr Chávez chaired a meeting of the Council and at lunch welcomed those taking part in a Meeting of CNOS/Fap - Industrialists.

On Saturday 15, the Rector Major, in his role as Grand Chancellor chaired the 'Curatorium' of the UPS, which was held at the Generalate.

On Tuesday morning 18, as usual the Rector Major chaired the session of the Council. After lunch he received Bro. Jean Paul Muller, SDB, and in the late afternoon took part in a meeting of the two General Councils SDB - FMA.

From Thursday afternoon 20 January until Sunday 23 the Rector Major took part in the *Spirituality Days of the Salesian Family*. During these days he received a

number of those taking part in the Days.

On Monday 24, Feast of Saint Francis of Sales, the Rector Major received Fr Michael Casey, appointed the new Provincial of the Irish Province. In the afternoon he had a meeting with the two Regionals of America and the Councillors who would be taking part in the Team Visits to these two Regions.

On Tuesday 25, before the meeting of the Council the Rector Major received Fr Mark Tipps, appointed the new Provincial of the North Belgium - Holland Province. At lunch he also welcomed Mons. Savio Hon Tai-Fai, with whom he spoke immediately afterwards. In the afternoon he received Fr Raphael Jayapalan, the new Provincial of the Chennai Province.

On Wednesday morning 26, Fr Chávez presided at Mass for the World Consultative Group for Social Communication and at the usual time held a meeting of the Council.

On Thursday 27, at the usual time there was a meeting of the Council. In the evening the Rector Major gave the Good Night to the confreres of the Community of the Generalate, telling them about the work which had been undertaken

in the winter session and informing of the change of the Economist General: Bro. Jean Paul Muller has taken the place of Bro. Claudio Marangio, who had asked to be relieved of the office on account of extreme exhaustion.

On Friday 28, Fr Chávez presided at Mass with the Council and chaired the final meeting of the session.

On Sunday 30, with Fr Nino Zingale, the Rector Major travelled to Turin. He was welcomed by Fr Stefano Martoglio, ICP Provincial, and after lunch, they went together to Trino Vercellese for the celebration of the 120th anniversary. Fr Chávez met the members of the educative-pastoral community and the civil authorities who at the end of the commemorative event conferred on him honorary citizenship. Afterwards the Rector Major blessed a bust of Don Rua, then presided at Mass, which was followed by supper concluded by the Good Night, at the end of which he returned to Valdocco.

On Monday 31, the Rector Major celebrated in Turin the Solemnity of Saint John Bosco. In the course of the day he spoke with the Provincial, with Archbishop Nosiglia of Turin, gave a number of interviews for the media and in the evening presided at Mass for

the young people during which he gave the Message for the SYM.

– February 2011

On Tuesday 1, Fr Chávez returned to Rome. In the evening he met with the Committee he had set up of historians, educationalists, and experts in spiritual theology, for the preparation of the Congress on “The development of the charism of Don Bosco” to be held at the ‘Salesianum’ in November 2015.

On the days following in addition to his office work he had a number of meetings with the Councillors present and various other confreres. In particular, on Thursday 3 he met Bishop Luc Van Looy SDB of Ghent (Belgium).

On Saturday morning 5, he attended the episcopal consecration of Archbishop Savio Hon Tai-Fai SDB, appointed Secretary of the Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples.

On Sunday morning 6, Fr Chávez met the Group which was reflecting on ‘Rethinking Youth Ministry.’ In the evening before the supper arranged in honour of Archbishop Savio Hon Tai-Fai, the Rector Major greeted a Chinese group assembled from different parts of the world for his episcopal ordination.

On Monday morning 7, Fr Chávez held a meeting of the Councillors in residence. In the evening, with Fr Francesco Cereda and Fr Juan José Bartolomé, he went to the Generalate of the Company of Saint Teresa of Jesus, where there was the *Symposium on the Theology of Consecrated Life*, organised by the USG and the UISG, which continued until 12. The Rector Major took a break on Thursday 10 and with his Vicar went to Trieste.

On Saturday 12, at the end of the Symposium, the Rector Major left for some days rest in the mountains. He returned in the afternoon of Friday 18.

On Saturday 19, Fr Chávez presided at Mass for those taking part in the course for Provincial Economers. He then received the SMA (‘Sisters of Maria Auxiliatrix’) who had come to take charge of the Care Home in Messina, after which with Bro. Claudio Marangio he went to the Vatican. At midday he took part in a working lunch with a group of benefactors connected with the funding of the reconstruction of a house in Haiti.

On Monday 21 February at midday, accompanied by Fr Juan José Bartolomé, the Rector Major left for India. Arriving at Bangalore on Tuesday 22, they were met by the Provincial Fr Thomas Anchukan-

dam, and other confreres and taken to the Provincial House, where they were welcomed by the Regional Councillor Fr Maria Arokiam, with a group of confreres who performed a ceremony of greeting and welcome. In the evening they were taken to the Theologate, 'Kristu Khyoti College', for Mass with the whole community, and afterwards to the Retreat House of the Sisters of the Holy Cross.

Between Wednesday 23 and Monday 28, the Rector Major preached a *Retreat* to the Provincials and Provincial Councillors of the South Asia Region and spoke with each of the Provincials (Fr Michael Fernandes INB, Fr Thomas Ellicherail INC, Fr James Poonthuruthil IND, Fr Jose Almeida ING, Fr Raminedi Balaraju INH, Fr Thomas Anchukandam INK, Fr Raphael Jayapalan INM, Fr Michael Peedikayil INN, Fr Ian Figueiredo INP, Fr Albert Johnson INT) and with the former Provincials Fr Susai Amalraj and Fr Stanislaus Swamikanu. He also had a meeting with the Directors of Novices in the Region.

On Monday 28 the Retreat ended with the final Mass. After breakfast at the 'Don Bosco Renewal Center' Fr Chávez, with the other confreres visited a country park and after lunch returned to

the Provincial House. In the evening at the National Biblical, Catechetical and Liturgical Centre of the Bishops' Conference of India (NBCLC) there was a welcoming concert and the opening of the Team Visit. Among those present was H.E. Dr Bernard Moras, Archbishop of Bangalore and a good number of members of the Salesian Family.

– *March 2011*

Between Tuesday 1 and Saturday 5 March the Rector Major presided at the *Team Visit to the South Asia Region*, taking part in which were the Vicar Fr Adriano Bregolin and the Councillors Fr Fabio Attard, Fr Václav Klement and Fr Maria Arokiam Kanaga. During the days of the Visit Fr Chávez met individually and in groups all the Provincial Councillors. In addition on Thursday 3, he spent the evening at the Provincial House with the confreres of the Province and those taking part in the Team Visit. In the evening of Saturday 5, after the conclusion of the Visit, the Rector Major, with his Councillors said evening prayer with the Provincial Council of Bangalore and the community of the Provincial House, had supper with them and then went to the airport to go to Thailand.

On Sunday 6, at the airport of Bangkok, Fr Chávez and those with him were met by the Provincial, Fr Paul Prasert, and other confreres and by the FMA Provincial and some other Sisters. Arriving at the Provincial House they were welcomed by various groups of the Salesian Family. In the afternoon the Rector Major went to Banpong for a meeting with the Past Pupils.

On Monday 7, at midday, the Rector Major went to Sampran for a meeting with the FMA, with whom he celebrated Mass and after lunch he gave them a conference. Later he visited the formation community of the confreres. He then went to the Nunciature, at the invitation of H.E. Archbishop Giovanni Danilo. After supper he travelled to Hua Hin.

Between Tuesday 8 and Saturday 12 March at Hua Hin Fr Chávez presided at the *Team Visit to the East Asia and Oceania Region*.

When the Team Visit was over, between Sunday 13 and Tuesday 15 the Rector Major preached a *Retreat* to the Provincials of the Region. During these days Fr Chávez spoke with each Provincial. On Monday 14, he had a visit from Bishop Joseph Prathan, SDB, bishop of the Diocese of Surat Thani.

Having returned to Rome, on

Thursday 17, at midday Fr Chávez received Mons. Mauro Maria Morfino SDB, appointed by the Holy Father Bishop of the Diocese of Alghero-Bosa, in Sardinia.

On Saturday evening 19, accompanied by Fr Adriano Bregolin, Fr Václav Klement, Bro. Jean Paul Muller, and Fr Juan José Bartolomé, the Rector Major left for Santiago in Chile.

Having arrived on Sunday 20, they were met by the Regional, Fr Natale Vitali, by the Provincial and other members of the Provincial Council, who took them to the Provincial House where they said Mass. After lunch the Rector Major gave an interview to the Provincial media. In the evening they were taken to the Retreat House at Lo Cañas, the location for the *Team Visit to the Latin America South Cone Region*.

Between Monday 21 and Friday 25, Fr Chávez presided at the Team Visit, met the Provincial Councils, visited the formation communities of the postnovitiate and the theologate.

On Wednesday afternoon 23 he went to Valparaíso, for an evening visit to the Salesian and the educative-pastoral communities.

On Thursday 24, Archbishop Riccardo Ezzatti SDB of Santiago, presided at Mass.

When the Team Visit was finished, on Saturday morning 26, the Rector Major visited 'Blessed Philip Rinaldi' community at Macul for elderly and sick confreres and then had a meeting with the members of the Provincial Council and the Rectors of all the communities and works in the Province, followed by another meeting with all the confreres of the Province who had come for the occasion, In the evening at the 'Gratitud Nacional' Fr Chávez met the young people of the Salesian Youth Movement of the Salesians and the FMA, then the Salesian Family and then presided at Mass. He ended the day with the Provincial and the members of the General Council present, in the house of H.E. Archbishop Riccardo Ezzatti, who wanted to offer a meal to the Rector Major and those who accompanied him.

On Sunday morning 27, Fr Chávez presided at Mass in the Provincial House of the FMA, which was followed by breakfast, and then later he held a meeting with the SDB Provincial Council.

On Monday 28 he began the return journey to Rome.

Back home, as well as his office work, on 29 and 30 he had various personal meetings. On the evening of Wednesday 30, assisted by Fr

Adriano Bregolin and Fr Francesco Cereda, he presided at a meeting of the preparatory group for the "International Congress of Salesian History" planned for 2014, consisting of the Rector Magnificus of the UPS, professors of Salesian history, pedagogy and spirituality from the University and the Salesian Historical Institute.

In the evening of Thursday 31 he received Dr. Thomas Han, Ambassador of Korea to the Holy See. In this way the busy month of March 2011 was brought to a close.

4.2 Chronicle of the General Council

The *2010-2011 winter plenary session* of the General began immediately after the Meeting of the Provincials of Europe in which almost all the Councillors including the Regionals took part and was held between 1 December 2010 and 28 January 2011. In addition to the plenary meetings, 30 in all, there were other meetings of groups or commissions for the study of various topics. During this session, there was also – between 6 and 18 December – the gathering

of new Provincials who had meetings with the Rector Major and the Council. The Councillors also made their contribution to other meetings especially those held at the Generalate. As always in addition to the more pressing issues or problems for the animation and guidance of the Congregation, sufficient time was given to the ordinary matters of business coming from the Provinces, such as: appointments of Provincial Councillors and the approval of the appointments of Rectors, the opening and canonical erection of houses and/or activities, matters regarding confreres and economic-administrative issues. The following is a summary of the more important items on the agenda.

1. Appointment of Provincials

In this session the Superior was appointed for twelve Provinces. Following a careful process of discernment, and taking special account of the results of the consultation held in the Province the General Council made the necessary provision. Here is the list in alphabetical order of the Provincials appointed during the session: Fr Dariusz Bartocha, for the Province of Kraków, Poland; Fr

Claudio Cacioli, for the Province of Lombardy-Emilia, Italia; Fr Michael Casey, for the Province of Ireland; Fr George Chalissery, the Vice Province of Zambia; Fr Josef Grünner, for the Province of Germany; Fr Alejandro Hernández, for the Province of Central America; Fr Albert Johnson, for the Province of Tiruchy, India; Fr Cristóbal López, for the Province of Bolivia; Fr Artur Pereira, for the Province of Portugal; Fr Paul Prasert, for the Province of Thailand; Fr Jayapalan Raphael, for the Province of Chennai, India; Fr Mark Tips, for the Province of North Belgium.

In **n. 5.4** of this number of the AGC there are some biographical details of the Provincials appointed.

2. Reports of the Extraordinary Visitations

The examination of the reports of the Extraordinary Visitations to the Provinces presented by the respective Visitors is always one of the more important items on the agenda of the General Council for the animation of the Congregation in its various local presences. This study provides the opportunity to reflect together on the progress of

each Province on the basis of the Visitor's observations and to offer suggestions for action regarding its government. This results in recommendations useful for the Rector Major's concluding letter and in proposals for initiatives and guidance on the part of the General Council. During this session, reports from the following nine Provinces were studied: the Province of Guadalajara - Mexico; the Province of Porto Alegre - Brazil; the Province of the Middle East; the Province of East Africa; the Province of Valencia - Spain; the Province of Mumbai - India; the Province of Japan; the Province of Ireland; the Province of Germany.

3. Topics of study and practical decisions

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

matters discussed. The main topics considered were as follows.

– **Team Visits 2011-2012.** The subject of the "Team Visits" planned for 2011-2012 was briefly taken up again to organise better the reflection and decisions regarding the Team Visits to the different Regions of the Congregation, and therefore to examine at greater depth the current challenges of the times in which we are living and the present day context in which the Salesian life and mission are being carried out: *the cultural challenges* (postmodernism, intercultural inculturation, secularism and secularisation); *church challenges* (new evangelisation, theological reflection – spiritual and pastoral vitality – social commitment, inter-religious dialogue); *institutional challenges* (vocational discernment and personal accompaniment, the assimilation of the guidelines in our pastoral work, weakness in government and animation); *personal challenges* (individualism, the identity of our Salesian consecrated vocation, the affective dimension).

– **The common Identity Card of the Salesian Family.** On two occasions of study the General Council took up again the reflection on the *Identity Card of the*

Salesian Family taking into account the suggestions and observations which had been sent in by the Councils of all the groups and by the Consultative Group of the Salesian Family. Nonetheless the Identity Card of the Salesian Family has not yet been approved making necessary a further revision and improvement of the text.

– **New structure of Salesian Spain.** After a long period of discernment within the General Council and taking into account the work of the commission for the re-structuring and the opinion of the Superiors of the Provinces of Spain, with their Councils, a decision was taken with the aim of making the best use of the Salesian personnel, re-vitalising the charism and strengthening the evangelising zeal among the young, re-newing our consecrated life and giving a fresh impetus to the Salesian charism in Spain, especially in the area of vocations. In this way after GC27 Spain will go from six to two Provinces with a special statute: the Mediterranean Province (SBA-SVA-SSE) at present with 515 SDB and the Central North West Province (SMA-SBI-SLE) with 648 SDB.

– **Updating on the topic studied in the Meeting of the In-**

termediate Council. The General Council concluded the study, begun in the intermediate session in October 2010, of the current situation of the North Europe Region, identifying the main challenges which emerge and offering the Provincials, the members of the Provincial Councils and all the confreres some working guidelines, taking into account an overall view of the Region and of the three zones in which it is organised. These are the guidelines proposed: strengthening the charismatic identity of consecrated life; giving attention to vocation ministry; sustaining and expanding educational presence; helping in the process of the Salesian transformation of the parishes; the organisation and re-structuring of the Region.

– **Approval of Provincial Chapters.** The remaining 7 Provincial Chapters were studied and approved. In this way the study of the Provincial Chapters held in almost all the Provinces and Vice Provinces after the GC26 was completed. For the General Council this undertaking provided a time of contact with almost all the Congregation, as seen through the Provincial Chapters, and also of ongoing formation, regarding both more precision in what is

wanted and reference to the Constitutions and Regulations.

– **Approval of the Economic Budget 2011.** In the course of the session, the General Council – following the presentation by the Economer General – examined and approved, in accordance with the General Regulations, the **Budget for 2011** of the Direzione Generale Opere Don Bosco.

– **Distribution of the “Mission Fund”.** The General Council considered and approved the proposals presented by the Commission for the n. 147 – December 2010 – distribution of assistance from the “Mission Fund”. These are funds coming from the Mission Offices for the benefit of the numerous projects and plans of the Congregation.

– **Preparation for the bicentenary of the birth of Don Bosco.** The Rector Major presented the preparation process and the celebration of the bicentenary of the birth of Don Bosco (1815-2015), launched on 31 January 2011 with a special letter in which the Rector Major gave the aim to be achieved, the three years of preparation (16.08.2011 - 15.08.2014) and the year of celebration (16.08.2014 - 16.08.2015). It is a process which

covers the life, the pedagogy and the spirituality of the Saint of youth. In concluding his letter, the Rector Major proposes an updated version of the prayer to Don Bosco, inviting the Salesians to make it their own and to say it in their daily practices of piety.

– **Reports of activities of the Departments.** The General Councillors responsible for Departments gave reports on the activities of their Departments in the period August-November 2010.

– **Appointment of the new Economer General.** Following the request by Brother Claudio Marangio to be relieved of the responsibility of the office of Economer General on account of serious exhaustion due to the intense work in which on a daily basis he had faced problems of great responsibility, the Rector Major on 25 January 2011, after having consulted the General Council, appointed as the new Economer General, the confrere **Brother Jean Paul Muller**. Originally from Luxembourg, 53 years of age, he belongs to the Province of Germany.

Among the **significant events** during the session the following in particular are noted:

• **Meeting of the SDB and FMA General Councils**, held on 18 January 2011 at our Generalate. After a welcome outside and the traditional photograph in front of the monument of Don Bosco, there was a moment of prayer after which Mother Yvonne Reungoat and Fr Pascual Chávez greeted everyone. The Rector Major then gave a talk about the subject of the Strenna for 2011 with the title "*Fundamental elements for a vocational culture, bearing in mind the current climate*". Afterwards Fr Fabio Attard, Councillor for Youth Ministry gave a report in *Power-Point* for use with groups reflecting on the Strenna for 2011. Then after a short discussion, Mother Reungoat and Fr Chávez made their closing remarks. The meeting ended with the Good Night of the Rector Major.

• **Spirituality Days of the Salesian Family** (20-23 January 2011) were, as always, a beautiful

experience of Salesian Spirituality connected with the Strenna for 2011, with a very successful combination of enlightening talks, of efficient group work, of fraternal communication among those taking part and the groups of the SF, of celebrations and of prayer.

Intermediate Session of the General Council

Between 11 and 19 April 2011 the *intermediate session of the General Council* took place, with the presence, in addition to the Rector Major and his Vicar, of all the Departmental Councillors and the two Regional Councillors concerned with the main topic under discussion which was a careful study of the two Regions: Latin America South Cone and Inter-america. As always the conclusions of the study will be presented and subjected to the approval of the General Council at the next summer plenary session.

5.1 Letter announcing the three years of preparation for the bicentenary of the birth of Don Bosco

Prot. 11/048

Rome, 31 January 2011

Solemnity of Saint John Bosco

Dear Confreres,

We are approaching the Bicentenary of the birth of Don Bosco, which will be celebrated on 16 August 2015. It is a very special event for us, for all the Salesian Family and for the whole Salesian Movement, which requires an intense and profound process of preparation, so that it may prove fruitful for all of us, for the Church, for the young and for society.

The XXVI General Chapter, taking as its theme the motto of Don Bosco “*Da mihi animas, cetera tolle*” and putting as the foundation of the five key issues “Starting afresh from Don Bosco”, has set us on our way to the Bicentenary. In the letter announcing the GC26 I wrote: «By making our own the motto *Da mihi animas, cetera tolle*, we intend to take up Don Bosco’s spiritual and apostolic programme resulting in his tireless work for the “glory of God and the salvation of souls”. In this way we can find once again the origin

of our charism, the purpose of our mission and the future of our Congregation» (AGC 394 p.6).

The putting into practice of the GC26, which asks us to strengthen our charism and revive in the heart of each one of us the apostolic passion, is therefore the first practical way of preparing for this bicentenary celebration. On the other hand, for the whole Salesian Movement, for the animation of which we are those primarily responsible, it is important to identify a common path.

1. Three years of preparation for the Bicentenary

The preparation which I am proposing to you, takes the form of a process in three stages which begin respectively on 16 August 2011, 16 August 2012 and 16 August 2013, with each one ending on 15 August of the following year. Each stage is meant to focus on one aspect of the charism of Don Bosco. The theme for each of the three stages of preparation will coincide with the theme of the Strenna for that year.

First year of preparation:

Knowledge

of Don Bosco’s history

16 August 2011 - 15 August 2012

The first stage concentrates on a knowledge of Don Bosco's history and of his context, of Don Bosco as a person, of his experience of life and of his choices. In recent years there have been new publications in this regard, the findings of which need to be assimilated systematically. During this first year of preparation we need to set ourselves a systematic plan for the study and assimilation of Don Bosco. The generations of those who knew Don Bosco or had come in contact with his first witnesses have now come to an end. It is necessary therefore to draw on the sources and on the studies about Don Bosco, in order to deepen our knowledge first of all about him as a person. The study of Don Bosco is an essential condition in order to be able to communicate his charism and propose his current relevance. Without knowledge there cannot be love, imitation or intercession; then only love can lead to greater knowledge. It is a question therefore of a knowledge which starts from love and leads to love: an affective knowledge.

***Second year of preparation:
Don Bosco's Pedagogy
16 August 2012- 15 August 2013***

Some years ago I spoke about

the importance of a deeper study of Don Bosco's pedagogy; now this needs to become a programme to be put into practice in this second year of preparation for the celebration of the bicentenary. Then I wrote: «Nowadays a deeper understanding is needed of *Salesian pedagogy*. In other words we need to study and apply that updated preventive system desired by Fr Egidio Viganò... developing its great implicit principles, modernising concepts, guidelines and interpretations so as to express the basic ideas in a modern manner: the greater glory of God and the salvation of souls; living faith, firm hope and pastoral charity; the good Christian and upright citizen; the threefold "cheerfulness, study and prayer"; the three "S" (in Italian): health, knowledge and holiness: piety, morality and culture; evangelisation and civilisation.

The same can be said of the great guidelines regarding attitudes: make yourself loved rather than feared; reason, religion, loving kindness; father, brother, friend; familiarity, especially in recreation; winning over the heart; the consecrated educator for the good of his pupils; freedom to run about, play and chatter» (AGC 394 pp. 11-12).

***Third year of preparation:
Don Bosco's Spirituality
16 August 2013-15 August 2014***

Finally we must have a knowledge of Don Bosco's spirituality and live it. A knowledge of his life and activity and of his method of education is not enough. At the basis of the fruitful results of his actions and of his relevance there is a profound spiritual experience. «It is not easy to identify precisely Don Bosco's spiritual experience. Perhaps this is an aspect of our founder that has not been studied at sufficient depth. He is a man totally intent on work. We have no descriptions of his interior development, nor has he left us any explicit reflections on his spiritual life; he wrote no spiritual diaries, offered no specific interpretations. He preferred to pass on to us a spirit by describing the events of his life, or through the biographies he wrote of his boys. It is certainly not enough to say that his spirituality is that of one engaged not in contemplation but in active pastoral work, a pastoral work of mediation between theoretical spirituality and its popular expression» (ACG 394 p. 12).

2. The year of celebration of the Bicentenary

***Year of celebration:
Don Bosco's mission
with the young and
for the young
16 August 2014-16 August 2015***

The celebration of the Bicentenary of the birth of Don Bosco will take place after the XXVII General Chapter: it will begin on 16 August 2014 and end on 16 August 2015. The process and the theme of the bicentenary year, following on consistently from the years of preparation, will refer to: *Don Bosco's mission with the young and for the young*. The communication to others of the message of the Bicentenary will certainly take into account what has been acquired and matured during the three years of preparation.

The Calendar of the Congregation, in addition to the two celebrations of 16 August in 2014 and 2015 at Colle Don Bosco, includes two international events: the International Congress of Salesian Studies on "*The development of the charism of Don Bosco*" at the 'Salesianum' in Rome in the month of November 2014 and the 'Bosco Camp' of the SYM with the theme "*Young people for the young*" in Turin in August 2015.

This year needs to be planned in good time in the Provinces so that we can concentrate on the process of spiritual and pastoral renewal which we intend to pursue as the Congregation, the Salesian Family and the Salesian Movement emphasising the importance and the relevance of the messages we intend to communicate. It is absolutely essential to avoid dispersion, fragmentation and repetition, focusing rather on decisiveness and effectiveness. All of this in view of the aims to be achieved.

3. Prayer to Don Bosco

The preparation and the celebration of the Bicentenary are an opportunity to take up again with the young, the lay people, the Salesian Family and the Salesian Movement prayer to Don Bosco. I propose an updated rewording of the prayer "Father and Teacher of youth".

Saint John Bosco, Father and Teacher of youth, docile to the gifts of the Spirit and open to the reality of your times you were for the young, especially the little ones and the poor, a sign of the love and the special care of God.

Be our guide as we walk the path of friendship with the Lord Jesus,

so that we may discover in Him and in his Gospel the meaning of our lives and the source of true happiness.

Help us to respond with generosity to the vocation we have received from God, so that in daily life we may be builders of communion, and may collaborate with enthusiasm, and in communion with the whole Church, in creating a civilisation of love.

Obtain for us the grace of perseverance in living a high standard of Christian life, according to the spirit of the beatitudes; and grant that, guided by Mary Help of Christians, we may one day be with you in the great family of heaven. Amen

I would suggest that Salesian communities make daily use of this prayer, each day at the end of Evening Prayer or Spiritual Reading just as each day after meditation we invoke Mary Help of Christians with the prayer of entrustment. They should also see to it that this invocation is used in the daily prayers with the young.

May the Spirit of Christ help us to pursue our path of preparation for the Bicentenary and may Mary Help of Christians support us; on the seriousness and the depth of

the preparation depend in fact the spiritual, pastoral and vocational fruits which we are looking for from the bicentenary year. May Don Bosco, as always, be our model and our guide.

A Happy Feast of Don Bosco!
Yours in the Lord,

Pascual Chávez V.
Fr Pascual CHÁVEZ VILLANUEVA
Rector Major

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

Below is the text of the Message which the Rector Major, Fr Pascual Chávez Villanueva, sent to the young people of the Salesian Youth Movement (SYM) on the occasion of the Feast of Don Bosco on 31 January 2011. The Message draws its inspiration from the Strenna for 2011, given to the Salesian Family – COME AND SEE – which is an invitation to call many people together to know and to follow Jesus. It is a commentary on the Strenna, addressed to the young, which in a novel way the Rector Major puts on the lips of Don Bosco, who describes his own experience of meeting and getting to know Jesus,

which becomes an incentive for the young on their journey to meet Jesus to find in Him the meaning for their lives and to become His friends, followers, co-workers in the service of Love, “protagonists in society and in the Church”.

My Dear Young People,

I greet you and assure you of my great joy in sending you this message. They are words and feelings which I express in the presence of the Lord Jesus the Good Shepherd. I pray that his merciful heart may enlighten your minds, warm your hearts and fill your lives with meaning and dynamism.

Every day I keep you in my heart, and I constantly pray for you; yes, I pray for you so that you may remain united with Christ, and giving myself totally to you is what profoundly guides my whole life. In this way I am always praying for you, and when, visiting the Salesian houses scattered around the world, I am able to meet you face to face it gives me great joy and I bless the Lord. In your bright, joy-filled eyes I see a great desire for life and a hidden desire to make of your lives something beautiful. Naturally you ask the question: what should we do and how? I am struck by how many of you are still uncertain and con-

fused; and I know very well that you are not waiting for some abstract theory or programme. Therefore in answer to your question I can do nothing better than speak with the heart of our Father Don Bosco. He it is who now speaks to you through me; it is he who shows his care for your life now and in the future, because he wants you to be happy in this world and for ever.

I should like you to know my dear young people what led me to come to understand every day more deeply the meaning of my life. For me this happened and resulted from my meeting with a real "living" person.

For me this was first of all my Mamma, Margaret. When we looked at a fine field of ripe grain together she would say to me: "Let us thank the Lord, Johnny. He has been good to us. He has given us our daily bread." When I told her about the dream I had had which would leave a mark on my whole life, with that insight which only a mother's heart can have she declared. "Who knows but you are to become a priest." Simple words, but they made me understand that God had a dream for me to be fulfilled, a plan, a marvellous idea, a story of love which in a mysterious and

silent way he was weaving within me: to give my life to the young, for them and with them. All this made me dream on a large scale.

My Mamma taught me the religious meaning of life not only in words but also and especially by her example, such as when, awakened in the middle of the night by the neighbours, and asked to go to the help of someone seriously ill she got up, and quickly went to do what she could. The same readiness and the same love she showed to the beggar who knocked at the door, as she never failed to give a piece of bread or some hot soup. In this way I learned that it was not enough to dream, but that one had to pay the price so that the dreams became true. From her I learned simple religious behaviour, the practice of prayer, doing one's duty, sacrifice. Her loving presence reminded me that life is the most precious gift that God has given us, and that we have to give it back to him filled with the fruit of good deeds.

Throughout my life, especially when I had to make important decisions, I came across people enlightened by the Holy Spirit who helped me to understand that life is a vocation and implies self-giving, and they guided me in listen-

ing to the Lord's call and in accepting the mission He was entrusting to me. This personal experience firmly convinced me of the importance, for young people, of finding an environment in which human and Christian values were the atmosphere one lived in and breathed, as well as the importance of meeting significant adults, spiritual guides capable of putting flesh and blood on the values they speak about, showing themselves to be credible witnesses and models for life. At the Oratory in Valdocco, the family atmosphere which I created was not that of a greenhouse, a nursery where the timid and those sensitive to the cold could feel at ease, without venturing out beyond their restricted view of life. Oh no! Valdocco was a workshop where a vocational culture was fashioned. I used to lead my sons to reach their real maturity as men and as Christians according to the spirit of freedom of the gospel, so that they would become "people-for-others". The strong personalities who grew up at Valdocco are the proof of this: from Dominic Savio and Michael Magone to the missionary pioneers: Cagliero, Lasagna, Costamagna, Fagnano; and then Rua, Albera and Rinaldi, my first successors, and so many other outstand-

ing figures, priests and Salesian brothers, religious and lay people fully involved in society and in the Church. Vocation was in the air they breathed, a desire to make life a great gift to the Church and to society. After me, many other Salesians and lay people in the Salesian Family have done the same thing in their houses.

You too, my dear young people can meet significant people in your families or in the area around you. There are marvellous people full of humanity and capable of living and bearing witness to a deep spirituality. You can look to them as practical examples for your own lives. There are priests, consecrated persons, lay men and women, who are living with joy the fullness of baptism. Led by the Spirit and listening to the Word of God, they have been enabled to develop their Christian lives and so make courageous and demanding life-choices. In this way they have become authentic witnesses of Christ in the Church and in society.

These people are for you a little like John the Baptist, witnesses and facilitators of the meeting with Jesus. In fact the Baptist pointed out Jesus of Nazareth to his disciples as the One who could satisfy their hearts' deepest desires, the

One who could fill their lives with meaning and with joy, the One who really was the way, the truth and the life. Today's witnesses, those we meet on our life's journey are "our John the Baptists". Those who once again can show us the Lord of Life!

And this happens not only along the path of life of believers, the life of every person at some precise moment comes across the face and the gaze of Jesus and this encounter can be decisive. From the encounter with Jesus of those first disciples up to today, the invitation has "caught" many young people, men and women. «We have found the Messiah» Andrew will tell his brother Simon. «We have found the One Moses and the prophets spoke about, Jesus of Nazareth», Philip will tell Nathanael. «To whom shall we go? Only you have the words of eternal life» Peter will say to him. For all of them it was, and it will be an encounter which colours the whole of their lives. One of John's disciples even remembers the precise time of that meeting with Jesus: «It was about four in the afternoon».

To you as to them, Jesus asks the basic question: «What are you looking for?» or better «Who are you looking for?» We are troubled by this question which won't go away,

piercing our hearts and plumbing the depths of our very being: we cannot escape it or remain indifferent to it. Then the mystery of grace moves us and we desperately seek an answer: «Master, where do you live?» «Come and see», is Jesus's reply. And they went and saw where he was living and stayed that day with him. A meeting, a personal friendly relationship which fills the heart and changes one's life, today as then. All those who meet him, who follow him, are impressed by the depth and the fullness of his life. A life which remains for ever the model of a vocation lived with absolute fidelity to God and to other people.

When you ask, my dear young people «what should we do to give to our lives real meaning?» look at that Man who has loved us so much as to give himself totally for us. He is the model for every plan of life, and the faithful and full response to every vocation, because he is a Man totally focused on a central idea. In Him, everything – every power, physical, mental, intellectual, affective, of his will – is concentrated harmoniously around the core of what He has and what He is. He is not a "butterfly person" who moves constantly from one flower to another

seeking an ephemeral beauty, but he is a "rock of a man", firmly anchored and rooted in a solid foundation which unifies and harmonises his life with the will of the Father, which guides everything he does and everything he says, which fills all his activity and his prayer. This unifying focal point around which he totally concentrates his whole being is his great dream, a far-reaching project, his vocation.

One of the parables he tells us – about the man who is ploughing in a field, finds a treasure and sells everything he has in order to possess it – describes very well his own experience: that dream which has filled his heart so that, as he himself says: "where your treasure is there will your heart be also".

Jesus lives with genuine passion his dedication to the dream he has in his heart: the preaching and the building of the Kingdom of his Father who wants all men to be saved and to reach the fulness of life. His is not a life lived in indifference and indolence. Rather it is a life lived with boundless intensity. It is a life lived with energy and dynamism. His words leave us in no doubt: «I have come to bring fire on the earth and how I wish it were already kindled!». The image of fire is very expressive and de-

scribes the ardour with which he pursues the cause he has embraced.

This fire is the Holy Spirit which renews us, first of all in prayer. The fruit of the Holy Spirit is love which shows itself in the peace within us, in the joy of our surroundings, and in the dynamism of our life. Renewed by the Spirit, we become people who are fulfilled: patient, faithful, committed.

This same fire, my dear young people, should warm your hearts today.

You cannot allow yourselves to be resigned to living your life as though it were a simple biological process (birth, growth, reproduction, death); you cannot organise your way of living as though it were a life without energy, anaemic, without passion for God and one's neighbour. You cannot waste your lives by becoming merely consumers or spectators. You are called to be protagonists in society and in the Church: «you are the salt of the earth and the light of the world» Jesus would say.

The decision to follow Jesus in a radical manner all depends on our committing everything we have to being able to be in love with God and to spend ourselves in the service of people, especially the poor and the abandoned.

Yes, my dear young people! "Today" God needs you to "re-make" the world. Every man, every woman has a dream to live by and to speak about. Moved by the Spirit of Jesus, I too have always had a dream and today still have it: a vast movement of adults and of young people which can be the prophecy of this new world. A world in which every man and woman can obtain justice. A world in which at the centre are always the "little ones", the least. A world in which people can be brothers and sisters for each other. This new world can take shape, it can become real, if you follow Jesus, if you take to heart his words, and in this way make God's dream become true.

All of us together we can give life to a great Salesian Movement ready to help the young, especially the poorest ones and those in difficulty, planning for the present and for the future, focusing on the important aims for the renewal of ourselves and of others, making a significant contribution to changing the world and history. The Salesian Family wants to take up this task as a vocation and as a special mission. And you dear young people, you need to feel yourselves at home in this Family, aware that you are the joy and the most mature fruit of our work.

In the Church and in the Salesian Family there are a variety of vocations, but always the work of education and evangelisation, to which we are called, puts down its roots in the depths and in the tenderness of the love of God, reaches us through the dedicated love of Christ and is transmitted to the human race through total dedication to other men and women.

Vocation is never a flight from a hostile world, seen as difficult or as a disappointment, nor is it a choice which has as its primary objective apostolic efficiency but rather a path of love which leads to the Love. It is from the fundamental experience of a love which presents itself as unique and exclusive, that a new way of seeing and responding to reality flows. The heart purified by the gift of itself to God and by the Holy Spirit, becomes capable of appreciating the inner beauty of every creature and of loving it without self-interest. It is God's own mercy which takes possession of the human heart and cures every sorrow and every weakness.

I pray for you my dear young people, so that today many of you will allow yourselves to be captivated, fascinated by God to the point of giving yourselves totally to

Him. If you place yourselves at the service of Love the deepest joys will not be lacking for you. These are the joys of a fruitfulness which comes from intimacy with God and the labours of a worker who lives solely for the cause of the Kingdom.

I also pray for my beloved sons the Salesians, so that they may live with joy and fidelity the great experience of spiritual fatherhood. May they be your skilled guides in the search for meaning and in the drawing up of your plan of life; sincere brothers who make themselves your travelling companions and for you break the Word of God which gives life, enlightens and gives comfort on the tiring journey; the Word which opens the way to prayer and rekindles the secret flame we carry in our hearts. Without this capacity for contemplation our spiritual and apostolic life will not be sustained. May you my dear Salesians, be enlightened guides for those who seek spiritual direction and who are already living in practice a sacramental and church life; wise and patient teachers for those who are searching for their vocation.

I pray, in particular, that the Holy Spirit may raise up zealous creative workers capable of coming to the aid of all those young people who

nowadays no longer knock on the doors of the Church. These are young people who on their way following the star would rather meet the Magi than the scribes in Jerusalem; young people who no longer ask us what they should believe but rather what does it mean to believe. For all these reasons a real change in our pastoral approach is necessary.

My dear young people and beloved Salesians, let us place our lives as a vocation and our mission as educators under the motherly protection of Mary. It was Mary who became a disciple of Jesus, in her heart and in her life constantly listening to the Word of God. It was She who responded to God's call with the total, courageous and free gift of herself: «Behold the handmaid of the Lord.» From Her, the new woman, teacher of faith and of wonder, the Salesian Family learns how to be the disciple of the Lord, and the "Mother" who gives birth to and educates young people so that they give their life generously in order to achieve its complete fulfilment.

Turin, 31 January 2011

Affezionatissimo in G.C.

Jac. Gio. Bosco

Sac. GIOVANNI BOSCO

5.3 Appointment of a new Economist General

*On 25 January 2011, the Rector Major with his Council appointed as the new Economist General in the place of Brother Claudio Marangio the confrere Brother **JEAN PAUL MULLER**. In giving the news Rector Major, explained that "he had accepted the request of Brother Claudio Marangio to be relieved of the office on account of extreme exhaustion, experienced after a period of intense work in which on a daily basis he had had to face problems of great responsibility".*

Jean Paul MULLER was born on 13 October 1957 at Grevenmacher, Luxembourg, and has been a Salesian since 16 August 1979, the date of his first profession which he made in the novitiate of Jünkerath, as a Salesian Brother in the Province at the time of North Germany. At the end of the period of formation, he made his perpetual profession on 15 August 1984. Afterwards he worked in the Salesian houses of Bendorf (1984-1990), Köln (1991-1994), Helenenberg (1995-2000), Köln (2000-2003), Bonn (2003-2011). In 1990 he became a member of the Provincial Council of North Germany, a position he continued to

hold when the two Provinces of Germany were combined. He has had a number of roles of special responsibility. Since 2001 he has collaborated as a consultant in the Justice and Home Affairs Commission of the European Community. In 2004 he was elected a member of the "Executive Committee of the German Catholic Mission Council" (DKMR). Since 2005 he had been in charge of the Bonn Mission Office.

5.4 New Provincials

Below (in alphabetical order) we provide some biographical details of the Provincials appointed by the Rector Major with his Council in the course of the plenary session December 2010 - January 2011.

1. *BARTOCHA Dariusz, Provincial of the Province of KRAKÓW (Poland)*

To lead the "Saint Hyacinth" Province of Krakow (Poland) Fr *Dariusz BARTOCHA* has been appointed. He succeeds Fr Marek Chrzan, who in July 2010 was appointed Regional Councillor for the North. Europe Region.

Born on 6 March 1965 at Kielce (Poland), Dariusz Bartocha made

his first profession on 30 August 1986 in the novitiate at Kopiec. Perpetually professed on 1 August 1992, he was ordained priest in Krakow on 11 June 1994.

After ordination he exercised his ministry between 1994 and 1998 in the house of Kielce; then he was transferred to the house of Kraków - Youth Ministry Centre, where he was Rector for six years 2000-2006. In 1997 he became a member of the Provincial Council. In June 2007 he was appointed Vice Provincial, the role he was filling until his present appointment as Provincial.

2. *CACIOLI Claudio Silvano, Provincial of the Province of LOMBARDY-EMILIA (Italy)*

Fr *Claudio Silvano CACIOLI* is the new Provincial of the "Saint Charles Borromeo" Province with headquarters in Milan [Province of Lombardy-Emilia], taking the place of Fr Agostino Sosio.

Claudio Silvano Cacioli was born on 8 July 1966 in Milan and has been a Salesian since 8 September 1991, when he made his first religious profession at the end of his novitiate at Pinerolo. Following the normal course of Salesian formation he made his perpetual profession on 14 September 1997 and

was ordained priest on 19 June 1999 in Milan.

After ordination, he worked in the Salesian houses of Sesto San Giovanni (1999-2001), Bologna - Our Blessed Lady of St Luke (2001-2005). From 2005 he was Rector of the Treviglio community. In 2008 he became a member of the Provincial Council, and was Delegate for Education and Culture.

3. *CASEY Michael, Provincial of the Province of IRELAND*

To lead the "Saint Patrick" Province of Ireland – including the Delegation of Malta – the Rector Major with his Council has appointed Fr *Michael CASEY* to take over from Fr John Horan.

Michael Casey was born on 23 November 1959 at Ennis (Co. Clare), Ireland. He made his first Salesian profession on 8 September 1979, perpetual profession on 29 August 1985, and was ordained priest on 10 June 1988 at Ennis his home town.

After ordination, he exercised his ministry in the following houses of the Irish Province: Maynooth (1988-1991), Dublin - Don Bosco House (1991-1994), Dublin - Rinaldi House (from 1994), as Rector. In 1999 he became a member of the

Provincial Council and in 2004 was appointed Provincial Delegate for the Salesian Family in Ireland.

4. *CHALISSERY George, Superior of the Vice Province of ZMB*

Fr George CHALISSERY is the new Superior of the *Vice Province of ZAMBIA-MALAWI-ZIMBABWE-NAMIBIA (ZMB)*, succeeding Fr Joseph Czerwiński.

Born on 23 December 1952 at Edathuruthy (Kerala, India), George Chalissery has been a Salesian since 24 May 1970, when he made his first profession in the novitiate of Yercaud. Perpetually professed on 10 June 1977, he was ordained priest on 3 January 1981 in Rome, where he obtained a Licence in Theology at the U.P.S.

Having returned to India he was sent to the "Kristu Jyoti College" studentate in Bangalore, where he remained until 1991, when he asked to be able to leave for Africa, for the missions in East Africa, which then depended on the Indian Provinces. He went to the theological centre in Nairobi (1991-1993) and in 1993 was appointed Rector of Iringa (Tanzania). After only one year he was called back to Nairobi as Rector of the Don Bosco-Utume studentate of theology. He also became a member of

the Provincial Council. In 1997 he was appointed Vice Provincial and in 1999 Provincial of the East Africa Province. At the end of his mandate as Provincial he was appointed Rector at Mafinga -Seminary (Tanzania) until 2008, when he was transferred still as Rector to Moshi (Tanzania). Now the Rector Major with his Council has given him the responsibility of Superior of the ZMB Vice Province.

5. *GRÜNNER Josef, Provincial of the Province of GERMANY*

Fr Josef GRÜNNER has been confirmed as Provincial of the "Saint Boniface" Province of Germany, with headquarters in München.

Born on 26 September 1949 at Mötzing-Dengling (Bavaria), Josef Grünner has been a Salesian since 15 August 1968, when he made his first religious profession in the novitiate of Jünkerath. He studied philosophy and theology at Benediktbeuern, obtaining a Baccalaureate in Philosophy and in Theology and a Diploma in Social Pedagogy. Perpetually professed on 8 December 1976, he was ordained priest at Benediktbeuern on 29 June 1979.

After ordination, for many years he was part of the team at the Cen-

tre of Studies at Benediktbeuern. In 1994 he became a member of the Provincial Council and in 1997 he was appointed Vice Provincial of the Province of Southern Germany. On 17 June 2003 he was appointed Provincial of the same Province. When the two Provinces of North and Southern Germany were combined in a single Province of Germany, Fr Josef Grüner continued as Provincial. Now the Rector Major with his Council has confirmed him in office.

6. **HERNÁNDEZ VILLALOBOS**
Alejandro, Provincial of the Province of CENTRAL AMERICA

To lead the "Divine Saviour" Province of Central America Fr *Alejandro HERNÁNDEZ VILLALOBOS* has been appointed to succeed Fr Luis Corral Prieto.

Alejandro Hernández, born on 12 January 1958 at San José di Costa Rica, made his first profession as a Salesian on 15 January 1976, his perpetual profession on 13 September 1982, and was ordained priest on 15 August 1985 in Guatemala City.

After ordination he worked for six years (1985-1991) in Soyapango (El Salvador), then for ten (1992-2002) at Guatemala-Theologate.

Then he was at Santa Tecla - College, as Rector (2002-2005) and from 2005 Rector of the Provincial House in Guatemala City. In 2003 he became a member of the Provincial Council and in 2005 he was appointed Vice Provincial. He had also been Delegate for Formation and for the Salesian Family.

7. **JOHNSON Albert, Provincial of the Province of TIRUCHY (India)**

Fr *Albert JOHNSON* is the new Provincial of the "Our Lady of Good Health of Velankanni" Province with headquarters in Tiruchy (India). He succeeds Fr Amalraj Susai.

Albert Johnson was born on 7 November 1965 at Sivagangai-Ramnad, Tamil Nadu, India. He made his first religious profession as a Salesian on 24 May 1984, and perpetual profession on 24 May 1992. On 29 December 1995 he was ordained priest in Madras.

After ordination and having completed his studies at Bangalore "Kristu Jyoti College", he worked for five years (1997-2002) as Bursar in the house of Madras - Basin Bridge. Afterwards he was Rector of different communities: Lalgudi (2002-2003), Kuthenkuli (2003-2008), Tiruchirapalli-Manikan-

dam (2008-2009), Tiruchirapalli-Kallukuzhy (Provincial House) from 2009. In 2005 he became a member of the Provincial Council and in 2007 was appointed Vice Provincial, a role he was still carrying out when he was appointed Provincial. From 2008 he was also Provincial Delegate for Youth Ministry.

8. *LÓPEZ ROMERO Cristóbal, Provincial of the Province of BOLIVIA*

To succeed Fr Juan Pablo Zabala as Provincial of the "Our Lady of Copacabana" Province of Bolivia has been appointed Fr *Cristóbal LÓPEZ ROMERO*.

Born at Vélez Rubio (Almeria, Spain) on 19 May 1952, Cristóbal López R. made his first profession on 16 August 1968 and perpetual profession on 2 August 1974. He was ordained priest in Barcelona on 19 May 1979.

In 1984 he left as a missionary for Paraguay. A member of the Provincial Council from 1987, he had various responsibilities (including those of Provincial Delegate for Youth Ministry and Editor of the Salesian Bulletin for Paraguay). In 1994 he was appointed Provincial of the Province of Paraguay (cf AGC 350), a position he held until

2000. For a time he was President of the Conference of Religious of Paraguay (CONFERPAR). Having completed his term as Provincial in 2003 he went to Morocco, to the Salesian house of Kénitra (FRB), where he was Rector of the community and of the JUK-SPEL vocational training centre. At this time he was also a member of the Council of Priests and of the Diocesan Council for Catholic Education. Now the Rector Major with his Council has called him to take on the responsibility of Superior of the Province of Bolivia.

9. *PEREIRA Artur Guilhermino, Provincial of the Province of PORTUGAL*

To lead the "Saint Antony" Province of Portugal Fr *Artur Guilhermino PEREIRA* has been appointed. He succeeds Fr João de Brito Carvalho.

Born at Vale Frechoso (Vila Flor), Portugal, on 13 February 1955, Artur Pereira became a Salesian on 6 October 1975, when he made his first religious profession. Perpetually professed on 15 April 1981, he was ordained priest in Lisbon on 24 July 1983. With a degree in Theology at the Catholic University of Lisbon, he also obtained a Masters in Education there.

After ordination, he exercised his ministry in positions of responsibility in a number of Salesian houses. After two years in Manique (1984-1986), between 1986 and 1995 he worked in Mirandela. Then between 1995 and 2001 he was Rector of the house Lisbon - Oficinas de S. José. Moved to Manique again, he was first Vice Rector and then Rector; then he spent three years (2005-2008) in Lisbon - Casa Dom Bosco. In 1991 he became a member of the Provincial Council and in 2005 he was appointed Vice Provincial, while being also Rector of the Provincial House, Delegate for the Salesian Family and Coordinator of schools at Province level

10. *PRASERT Somngam Paul, Provincial of the Province of THAILAND*

Fr Paul Somngam PRASERT is the new Provincial of the "Saint Paul" Province of Thailand as he takes over from Fr John Bosco Thepharat Pitisant.

Paul Somngam Prasert was born on 25 April 1962 at Udon Thani, Thailand, in the northeast of the country. He made his first profession on 1 May 1983 in the novitiate of Sampran and his perpetual profession on 23 March 1990. On 1

May 1993 he was ordained priest in Banpong.

After ordination he exercised his ministry between 1993 and 1997 in the house in Hat Yai. Between 1998 and 2007 he was Rector of the house in Hua Hin. He became a Provincial Councillor in 2001 and in 2002 he was appointed Vice Provincial. At the same time he was Provincial Delegate for Formation. From 2007 he was also Rector and school Principal in the house of Banpong - Sarasit. Now the Rector Major with his Council has entrusted him with the responsibility of Provincial.

11. *RAPHAEL Jayapalan, Provincial of the Province of CHENNAI (MADRAS), India*

Fr Jayapalan RAPHAEL succeeds Fr Swamikannu Stanislaus as Provincial of the "Saint Thomas the Apostle" Province of Madras (Chennai), India.

Jayapalan Raphael was born on 9 September 1958 at Kallery, Tamil Nadu, India, and became a Salesian on 24 May 1977, the date of his first profession which he made in the novitiate of Yercaud. On 24 May 1984 he took perpetual vows and on 27 December 1987 he was ordained priest at Kalleri, his home town.

After ordination between 1989 and 1992 he was in Rome, continuing his studies at the Salesian Pontifical University, obtaining a Licence and then a Doctorate in Catechetics and Youth Ministry. Having returned to India, between 1992 and 1998 he was in the Provincial House in Madras - Citadel. After another period in Rome to complete his studies in the "Blessed Michael Rua" community at the UPS, between 2001 and 2004 he was Rector of "Rinaldi Juniorate" in Madras, and then (between 2004 and 2009) of the house "Poonamallee - Becchi" in the same city of Madras. Between 2002 and 2008 he was a member of the Provincial Council. The work he undertook at the service of the Bishops' Conference of India in the National Catechetical Office was much appreciated.

12. *TIPS Mark, Provincial of the Province of BEN (North Belgium and Holland)*

The Rector Major with his Council has appointed Fr *Mark TIPS* as Provincial of the "Saint John Berchmans" Province with headquarters in Brussels, comprising Belgium and Holland (BEN), to take over from Fr Jozef Claes.

Mark Tips was born on 10 Au-

gust 1950 at Hesselt, Limburg (Belgium). He made his first profession on 7 September 1969, perpetual profession on 1 May 1975 and was ordained priest on 18 February 1978 in the house of Oud-Heverlee.

After ordination he exercised his ministry in several houses and works in Belgium, with various responsibilities. Among these, he was Rector in several communities: Vremde (1986-1991), Eeklo (1991-1994), Oud-Heverlee (1996-2000), again in Vremde (2001-2005). A member of the Provincial Council between 1996 and 2000, in 2005 he was appointed Vice Provincial, and also Provincial Delegate for the Salesian Family and later also for young people in difficulty. In the year 2000-2001 he was in Rome at the UPS, and obtained a Licence in Religious Studies. He later also obtained a Diploma in Social Pedagogy.

5.5 New Salesian Bishops

1. *HON TAI-FAI Savio, Secretary of the Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples.*

On 23 December 2010 the Holy Father, Benedict XVI appointed the

Salesian priest Fr *Savio HON TAI-FAI* Secretary of the Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples (“Propaganda Fide”), and at the same time assigned him the Titular See of Sila, with the dignity of Archbishop.

Born on 21 October 1950 in Hong Kong, Savio Hon Tai-Fai made his first religious profession as a Salesian on 15 August 1969 in Hong Kong, part of the Province of China, and perpetual profession on 15 August 1975. From the University of London he obtained a baccalaureate in Philosophy. He studied theology in Rome at the Salesian Pontifical University, obtaining a licence and later (after ordination) a doctorate in Theology. He was ordained priest in Hong Kong on 17 July 1982. After he returned to Hong Kong, he was a teacher of Theology in the “Salesian House of Studies”. In addition he was Rector of the house of Hong Kong - St. Anthony for two periods (1989-1991 and 1995-1998) and between 1998 and 2001 of the “Salesian House of Studies”. Between 1995 and 2001 he was Vice Provincial and between 2001 and 2006 Provincial of the Province of China. Ordinary Academician of the Pontifical Academy of Theology from 1999, in 2004 he was appointed by the Holy Father a mem-

ber of the International Theological Commission for a five year period, which was then extended for a second five year period in 2009. Among his more significant roles was that of being the one in charge of the Chinese translation of the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

His episcopal ordination at the hands of H.H. Benedict XVI took place on 5 February 2011 in St Peter’s Basilica.

2. *MORFINO Mauro Maria, SDB, Bishop of the Diocese of Alghero - Bosa.*

On 31 January 2011 the Press Office of the Holy See announced the appointment of the Salesian priest *Mauro Maria MORFINO* as Bishop of the Diocese of Alghero - Bosa, in Sardinia, Italy. At the time of the appointment he belonged juridically to the Salesian Circumscription of Central Italy.

Mario Maria Morfino was born at Arborea (Province of Oristano, Sardinia) on 23 March 1958 and made his first profession as a Salesian on 12 September 1975. He pursued high school studies in Arborea, Oristano and the P. L. da Palestrina Conservatoire of Music in Cagliari. He did his practical training at Arborea and Cagliari - San Paolo, and began studies of

Philosophy at the Pontifical Faculty of Theology of Sardinia. He studied theology at Cremisan, in the Holy Land. Perpetually professed on 25 September 1983 he was ordained priest at Arborea on 19 July 1986.

He then obtained a Research Doctorate in Biblical Studies: SBF - Jerusalem 10 October 1992. During the same decade he undertook periods of study in France, England and Germany and made various study journeys especially in Middle East Archeology in Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and

Turkey. In Sardinia he exercised his ministry in the houses of Cagliari-Parish and Cagliari-Institute. He was also Spiritual Director of the Pontifical Sardinian Regional Seminary, Professor of Hebrew, Exegesis of Prophetic Literature, Exegesis of Wisdom Literature, General Introduction to Sacred Scripture and Vice Principal of the Pontifical Theological Faculty of Sardinia.

His episcopal ordination at the hands of H.E. Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone SDB, Secretary of State was on 3 April 2011 in Alghero.

5.6 Salesian personnel at 31 December 2010

Prov.	Tot. 2009	Temp. Professed				Perp. Professed				Tot. Professed	Novices	Tot. 2010
		L	S	D	P	L	S	D	P			
AET	135	10	40	0	1	20	12	0	46	129	11	140
AFC	220	9	65	0	0	27	11	0	99	211	19	230
AFE	174	4	45	0	0	15	10	0	90	164	6	170
AFM	52	0	3	0	0	6	9	0	34	52	3	55
AFO	159	2	53	0	0	14	9	0	75	153	8	161
AFW	134	6	60	0	0	13	7	0	41	127	17	144
AGL	76	3	18	0	0	8	7	0	38	74	8	82
ANG	71	3	17	0	0	8	1	0	38	67	10	77
ATE	141	6	32	0	0	8	11	0	65	122	10	132
ANT	173	2	24	0	0	14	5	0	120	165	8	173
ARN	212	6	22	0	0	24	9	0	137	198	6	204
ARS	259	4	7	0	0	33	7	0	206	257	4	261
AUL	107	3	6	0	0	12	1	0	77	99	6	105
AUS	77	0	6	0	0	5	0	0	67	78	0	78
BEN	207	0	4	0	0	31	1	1	167	204	0	204
BOL	167	3	36	0	0	16	9	0	94	158	5	163
BBH	155	4	20	0	0	22	0	0	89	135	3	138
BCG	155	10	23	0	0	19	7	0	87	146	2	148
BMA	99	3	23	0	0	10	3	0	51	90	3	93
BPA	106	4	13	0	0	9	4	0	72	102	1	103
BRE	113	2	24	0	0	13	3	0	62	104	4	108
BSP	155	5	23	0	0	15	1	0	100	144	2	146
CAM	206	3	23	0	0	24	3	0	140	193	0	193
CEP	161	0	6	0	0	11	4	1	136	158	0	158
CIL	186	1	25	0	0	13	5	0	132	176	0	176
CIN	112	1	6	0	0	26	4	1	73	111	2	113
COB	165	2	28	0	1	13	5	0	105	154	6	160
COM	156	4	26	0	0	16	10	0	97	152	10	162
CRO	88	1	14	0	0	2	3	0	64	84	2	86
ECU	191	3	16	0	0	14	7	0	135	175	7	182
EST	106	1	18	0	0	1	6	0	75	101	9	110
FIN	214	1	30	0	0	15	4	0	159	209	2	211
FIS	104	5	20	0	0	8	3	0	68	104	4	108
FRB	255	1	8	0	0	34	2	0	192	237	0	237
GBR	87	1	3	0	0	6	0	0	72	82	0	82
GER	326	4	4	0	0	67	1	2	232	310	1	311
GIA	114	0	7	0	0	14	2	0	85	108	2	110
HAI	64	1	14	0	0	2	4	0	42	63	5	68
INB	217	1	52	0	0	10	14	0	134	211	13	224
INC	243	2	53	0	0	17	6	0	153	231	10	241
IND	230	2	44	0	0	6	14	0	155	221	13	234
ING	432	14	102	0	0	28	48	0	216	408	26	434
INH	186	1	50	0	0	5	12	0	112	180	11	191
INK	346	2	89	0	0	8	28	0	204	331	9	340
INM	364	5	80	0	0	16	15	0	227	343	15	358
INN	175	4	46	0	0	15	14	0	92	171	9	180
INP	103	0	28	0	0	7	5	0	58	98	2	100
INT	213	0	75	0	0	7	20	0	97	199	18	217
IRL	91	0	4	0	0	7	2	0	75	88	2	90
ICC	548	3	31	0	0	73	21	2	389	519	1	520
ICP	539	1	11	0	0	131	8	2	382	535	2	537
ILE	347	1	21	0	0	42	9	0	241	314	7	321

Prov.	Tot. 2009	Temp. Professed				Perp. Professed				Tot. Professed	Novices	Tot. 2010
		L	S	D	P	L	S	D	P			
IME	246	0	17	0	1	27	7	0	187	239	2	241
INE	409	6	20	0	0	80	3	1	288	398	2	400
ISI	245	0	10	0	0	18	2	1	197	228	2	230
ITM	176	22	54	0	0	10	13	1	64	164	27	191
KOR	122	4	28	0	0	20	9	0	60	121	4	125
LKC	63	0	18	0	0	3	4	0	37	62	3	65
MDG	94	3	28	0	0	6	6	0	48	91	8	99
MEG	196	2	21	0	0	13	1	0	153	190	5	195
MEM	172	4	21	0	0	11	11	1	112	160	3	163
MOR	100	1	9	0	1	9	2	0	85	107	0	107
MOZ	57	3	13	0	0	5	3	0	32	56	6	62
MYM	76	5	35	0	0	1	5	0	25	71	4	75
PAR	97	5	17	0	0	4	2	0	63	91	1	92
PER	154	4	42	0	0	8	6	0	90	150	5	155
PLE	267	1	13	0	0	14	2	0	234	264	7	271
PLN	289	0	31	0	0	6	7	0	240	284	5	289
PLO	207	1	28	0	0	2	4	0	162	197	8	205
PLS	215	0	16	0	0	7	5	0	183	211	5	216
POR	109	0	1	0	0	26	1	1	73	102	0	102
SLK	218	5	13	0	0	12	14	1	168	213	5	218
SLO	103	0	5	0	0	7	2	0	87	101	1	102
SBA	163	0	1	0	0	26	0	1	134	162	0	162
SBI	180	0	1	0	0	46	5	1	120	173	0	173
SLE	204	2	0	0	0	65	0	0	136	203	0	203
SMA	276	0	4	0	0	67	9	0	192	272	0	272
SSE	218	1	8	0	0	23	6	0	170	208	1	209
SVA	149	0	4	0	0	22	7	1	110	144	0	144
SUE	184	1	8	0	0	32	2	0	132	175	4	179
SUO	102	0	4	0	0	20	1	0	71	96	1	97
THA	89	2	8	0	0	12	5	0	64	91	0	91
UNG	41	0	1	0	0	2	8	0	27	38	1	39
URU	103	1	5	0	0	7	3	0	83	99	1	100
VEN	204	3	31	0	0	15	4	0	143	196	4	200
VIE	294	19	79	0	0	26	35	0	112	271	38	309
ZMB	84	2	27	0	0	6	2	0	39	76	4	80
UPS	129	0	0	0	0	9	2	0	123	134	0	134
RMG	82	0	0	0	0	17	0	0	62	79		
Tot.	15833	251	2119	0	4	1664	604	18	10503	15162	481	15643
Ep.	119									119 (*)		119 (*)
TOT.	15952	251	2119	0	4	1664	604	18	10503	15281	481	15762

Note (*): At 31 December 2010 there are 119 Bishops (not counting Savio Hon Tai-fai not yet consecrated)

** Column D indicates permanent Diacons

5.7 Our dead confreres (4th list 2010 and 1st list 2011)

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

Deceased 2010 – 4th list

NOTE: We print a 4st list of the dead for 2010, news of whose death came after the publication of AGC n. 409.

SURNAME AND NAME	PLACE of death	DATE	AGE	PROV
P CESARIO Francesco	Napoli (Italia)	27-12-2010	84	IME
P DABROWSKI Arkadiusz	Bydgoszcz (Polonia)	21-12-2010	84	PLN
P FRACASSI Angelo	Civitanova Marche (Italia)	21-12-2010	81	ICC
P GOUGAIN Jean	Toulon (Francia)	22-12-2010	92	FRB
P GURGEL Raimundo Benevides	Recife, PE (Brasile)	30-10-2010	76	BRE
<i>Fu Ispettore per 6 anni</i>				
P KERKETTA Elias	Maligaon, Guwahati (India)	21-12-2010	79	ING
P NIETO TINJACA Jorge	Medellín (Colombia)	30-12-2010	85	COM
<i>Fu Ispettore per 6 anni</i>				
P POULIN Hector	Brandon, FL (USA)	27-12-2010	78	SUE
L SERRANO GUZMÁN Rafael	Sevilla (Spagna)	23-12-2010	76	SSE
P TOHILL Bernard	Hong Kong (Cina)	21-12-2010	91	CIN
<i>Fu per 7 anni Ispettore, per 6 anni Consigliere Regionale e per 12 anni Consigliere Generale per le Missioni</i>				
P VÁSQUEZ PACHECO Adán	San José (Costa Rica)	29-12-2010	75	CAM
P WALSH James	Manchester (Gran Bretagna)	18-12-2010	92	GBR

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Deceased 2011 - 1st list

SURNAME AND NAME	PLACE of death	DATE	AGE	PROV
P ALESSANDRI Charles	Béziers (Francia)	02-04-2011	88	FRB
P ALMEIDA GORDILLO Jorge	Guayaquil (Ecuador)	07-04-2011	94	ECU
L AMBROGIO Anthony	St. Petersburg, FL (USA)	07-02-2011	76	SUE
P AMBROSIO Eduardo Francisco	Belo Horizonte (Brasile)	30-01-2011	80	BCG
P APARICIO SERNA Gregorio	Bilbao (Spagna)	24-03-2011	86	SBI
L ARIANO Giulio	Torino	13-02-2011	88	ICP
P AYLWARD Terence	Manchester (Gran Bretagna)	23-01-2011	87	GBR
P BERNARDI Umberto	Torino	18-01-2011	79	ICP
P BOLDETTI Alfonso	Roma	09-04-2011	89	ICC
P BRICENO GUEDEZ Rogerio	Medellín (Colombia)	12-01-2011	86	COM

SURNAME AND NAME	PLACE of death	DATE	AGE	PROV
P BURZIO Francesco	Castelnuovo Don Bosco (Italia)	19-03-2011	58	ICP
P BUZZETTI Carlo	Lyon (Francia)	06-03-2011	67	FRB
P CAPRIOGLIO Arturo	Torino	17-03-2011	88	ICP
P CARBOGNO Bernabè Corrado	Venezia-Mestre (Italia)	23-03-2011	83	INE
L CASTELAIN Bernard	Toulon (Francia)	25-02-2011	73	FRB
P CECCHINI Francesco	Civitanova Marche Alta (Italia)	01-03-2011	91	ILE
P CHIARI Vittorio	Monza (Italia)	11-02-2011	73	ILE
P CHIOSSO Giacomo Lodovico	Torino	31-01-2011	88	SUE
E CORONADO CARO Jesús María	Bogotá (Colombia)	01-01-2011	92	-
<i>Fu per 9 anni Prefeto Apostolico di Ariari (Colombia), per 8 anni Vescovo Ordinario di Girardot (Colombia), per 12 anni Vescovo Ordinario di Duitama-Sogamoso (Colombia), per 6 anni Vescovo emerito</i>				
P CUADRA GONZÁLEZ Cayetano	Ourense (Spagna)	13-01-2011	79	SLE
P DE FERRARI Rolando	Santiago del Cile	20-03-2011	83	CIL
L DE LA FUENTE MARTÍNEZ Gregorio	Madrid (Spagna)	03-03-2011	79	SMA
P De SOUZA Woldinei Junior	Joaçaba, SC (Brasile)	02-01-2011	29	BPA
P DELLA BIANCA Quinto	Caracas (Venezuela)	22-02-2011	96	VEN
L ESTÉBANEZ LLORENTE Antonio	A Coruña (Spagna)	12-03-2011	69	SLE
P FERNÁNDEZ MAQUIEIRA Rafael	Fernando de la Mora (Paraguay)	03-03-2011	80	PAR
P FERRETE CARRASCO Antonio	Sevilla (Spagna)	02-03-2011	88	SSE
P FILIPEC Václav	Uherské Hradiště (Rep. Ceca)	01-04-2011	91	CEP
P FOGLIATTI Pierino	Córdoba (Argentina)	10-02-2011	87	ARN
P GIRARDO Florentino	San José (Costa Rica)	28-02-2011	91	CAM
P GRZESIAK Florian	Racibórz (Polonia)	03-03-2011	87	PLS
P GUÉNÉ Claude	Toulon (Francia)	04-03-2011	77	FRB
P GUGGEMOS Michael	Seeg - Aligau (Germania)	12-03-2011	79	GER
P GUTIÉRREZ LÓPEZ Jesús Antonio	Medellín (Colombia)	15-01-2011	83	COM
P GUZMÁN LUCERO Carlos Emilio	Medellín (Colombia)	20-03-2011	42	COM
P HLINKA Anton	Trencin (Slovacchia)	26-03-2011	84	SLK
P IZAKOVIC Jozef	Bratislava (Slovacchia)	16-02-2011	87	SLK
P KAIGARULA Edwin Rutatinisibwa	Kiria-ini, Nyeri (Kenya)	14-03-2011	44	AFE
P LAGES Antônio	Lorena (Brasile)	08-02-2011	102	BSP
L LAPUENTE ALCUBERRO Ángel	Arévalo (Spagna)	20-03-2011	81	SMA
P LEMEQUE Eliseu	Moatize, Tete (Mozambico)	07-04-2011	38	MOZ
P LEWANDOWSKI Kazimierz	Szczecin (Polonia)	25-03-2011	63	PLN
P LORENZO INYESTO Ángel	León (Spagna)	01-04-2011	86	SLE
P MACARIO Lorenzo	Roma	02-03-2011	76	UPS
P MAIORANA Aurelio	Pedara (Italia)	28-03-2011	96	ISI
P MANDIÉ Marinko	Sta María Tlahuitoltepec (Mex)	07-03-2011	84	MEM
P MARTELLA José Orlando	Buenos Aires (Argentina)	23-01-2011	79	ARS
P MARTÍN NOTARIO Antonio	Sevilla (Spagna)	13-02-2011	95	SSE
P McDONALD Alan Cedric	Adelaide (Australia)	09-02-2011	92	AUL
P MED John	Imphal, Manipur (India)	25-01-2011	94	IND
<i>Fu Ispettore per 6 anni</i>				
L MINHOF Edmund	Jünkerath (Germania)	04-04-2011	79	GER
P MOLARO Teofilo	Torino	24-01-2011	72	ICP
L NOCCHI Valentino	Roma	04-01-2011	87	ICC

SURNAME AND NAME	PLACE of death	DATE	AGE	PROV
P NUGENT Francis Edward	Torino	20-01-2011	89	ICP
L ORIZIO Giovanni	Torino	24-02-2011	94	ICP
L PANNEKEET Bruno	Assel (Olanda)	19-02-2011	75	BEN
L PARANTHARA Joseph	Calcutta (India)	06-04-2011	79	INC
L PARDO RINCÓN Ramón Josué	Bogotá (Colombia)	12-03-2011	84	COB
L PAYET Edmund	Toulon (Francia)	14-01-2011	86	FRB
L PEIRA Rocco	Torino	15-01-2010	90	ICP
P PEREIRA Francisco António	Vendas Novas (Portogallo)	14-03-2011	89	POR
P PETRY Ivo	Porto Alegre (Brasile)	09-01-2011	78	BPA
L PRASCH Maximilian	Amberg (Germania)	08-02-2011	82	GER
P PRZYBYLSKI Tadeusz	Kraków (Polonia)	23-01-2011	83	PLS
P RANSENIGO Pasquale	Roma	02-03-2011	78	ILE
P REGNAUT André	Caen (Francia)	06-01-2011	90	FRB
P RESENDE Francisco David	Belho Horizonte (Brasile)	14-01-2011	85	BBH
P RIVADENEIRA José	Sevilla Don Bosco (Ecuador)	01-03-2011	66	ECU
P ROJAS ANDRADE Rimsky Mario	Santiago del Cile	28-02-2011	54	CIL
P RYBIŃSKI Marek	Manouba (Tunisia)	18-02-2011	33	IRL/PLE
P SIMIONATO Provino	Torino	08-04-2011	84	ICP
P ŠIPKOVSKÝ Bernardin	Ilava (Slovenia)	23-01-2011	87	SLK
P SPADONI Leo	Passirana di Rho, MI (Italia)	18-01-2011	80	ILE
P STEIGENBERGER Johannes	Gmunden (Austria)	19-01-2011	82	AUS
L TIERNEY David	St. Petersburg, FL (USA)	28-01-2011	93	SUE
L VIGUIÉ Jean	Toulon (Francia)	10-01-2011	82	FRB
P WAGNER Klemens	Daun (Germania)	27-03-2011	76	GER



