



acts

of the general council

year XCII september-december 2011

N. 411

official organ
of animation
and communication
for the
salesian congregation

Direzione Generale
Opere don Bosco
Roma

acts

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

OFFICIAL ORGAN OF ANIMATION AND COMMUNICATION FOR THE SALESIAN CONGREGATION

year XCII
september-december 2011 **N. 411**

1. LETTER OF THE RECTOR MAJOR	1.1 Fr Pascual CHÁVEZ VILLANUEVA INCULTURATION OF THE SALESIAN CHARISM <i>«So though I am not a slave of any man I have made myself the slave of everyone so as to win as many as I could» (1Cor 9,19)</i>	3
2. GUIDELINES AND POLICIES	2.1 Fr Filiberto GONZÁLEZ PLASENCIA Guidelines for Appointing a Lay Man or Woman as Provincial Delegate for Social Communication	57
3. RULINGS AND DIRECTIVES	(none in this issue)	
4. ACTIVITIES OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL	4.1 Chronicle of the Rector Major 4.2 Chronicle of the General Council 4.3 Chronicle of the General Councillors	63 72 77
5. DOCUMENTS	5.1 Our entrustment to Mary 5.2 Publications for the 150th anniversary of the Unification of Italy 5.3 New Provincials 5.4 Our dead confreres	100 109 110 114

Editrice S.D.B.

Edizione extra commerciale

Direzione Generale Opere Don Bosco

Via della Pisana, 1111

Casella Postale 18333

00163 Roma

Tipolitografia Istituto Salesiano Pio XI - Via Umbertide, 11 - 00181 Roma
Tel. 06.78.27.819 - Fax 06.78.48.333 - E-mail: tipolito@donbosco.it

Finito di stampare: settembre 2011

INCULTURATION OF THE SALESIAN CHARISM

«So though I am not a slave of any man I have made myself the slave of everyone so as to win as many as I could» (1Cor 9,19)

1. "The Law of all evangelisation". 2. Changing cultural paradigms. Globalisation. – Inter-religious dialogue – The youth situation. – The digital world, a continent to be leavened. 3. The early Church, a model and norm for inculturated evangelisation. A mission which succeeds because it is well inculturated. – Unity in faith, diversity the way it is lived. – Remembering the poor. – A living together that brings problems with it. – The fact and the principle. 4. Looking at Don Bosco. A gesture very much to the point. – "Some special souvenirs" – ***«We want souls and nothing else »***. – ***«Always remember that God wants us to exert all of energies for poor and abandoned children »***. – ***«A mission having been started efforts should always be made to set up and consolidate schools »***. – ***«God called the poor Salesian Congregation to promote ecclesiastical vocations among poor youth »***. – ***«Absolutely all of you can become true evangelical labourers »***. – ***«Let the world know that you are poor»***. – ***«With the gentleness of Saint Francis of Sales the Salesians will draw to Jesus Christ the peoples of America»***. – ***«Constantly promote devotion to Mary Help of Christians and to the Blessed Sacrament»***. Conclusion.

16 August 2011

Anniversary of the birth of Don Bosco

My Dear Confreres,

I am writing to you on the day when the three years of preparation for the bicentenary of the birth of Don Bosco begin. We hope and pray that each one of us may be a faithful incarnation of our beloved Father, so that like him we may become signs of the love of God especially for the young.

I wanted to take as a starting point for this circular letter a beautiful and meaningful passage from the first letter to the Corinthians in which Saint Paul, renouncing his rights as a free man, declares that he has freely become the slave of everyone in order to bring to faith in Christ the greatest number of people. He made himself "a Jew with the Jews," a man outside the Mosaic law for those outside the law, and he

made himself "weak for the weak"; in a word he made himself "all things to all." And he concludes: "I still do this, for the sake of the gospel, to have a share in its blessings" (cf. *1 Cor* 9,19-23). Here we find the model of the missionary: he is someone who identifies himself totally with each one of those to whom he is sent, with the sole purpose of winning as many as possible for his Lord!

In my last letter, dear confreres, I invited you: "to live your lives in every part of the world with a genuine missionary spirit"; for this I offered you "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" as it is for the Congregation. Today I want to reflect with you on a subject which is closely connected with those dealt with previously, and develops an extremely important aspect to ensure that our mission in the Church is genuine and effective. I want to speak to you about the inculturation of the Salesian charism - a task which the more I come to know the situation around the whole Congregation I see as extremely urgent.

The Salesian charism, "the principle of unity in the Congregation," is and can remain, the source of the "different ways of living the one Salesian vocation" (C. 100), if we succeed in implanting it, with both fidelity and creativity, in those places where we have been sent and where we work. We can say that this "planting of the charism" in different cultures is a task carried out for over a hundred years by our Congregation, starting with the first missions launched by Don Bosco in Argentina; and we can recognise that consoling fruits have not been lacking. Nevertheless we have to admit that today the challenge is much more demanding, as we find ourselves present in all the continents and in contact with the most diverse cultures. We are convinced that in order to remain faithful to God who sends us and to the young who are those to whom especially we are sent, we have to live our Salesian identity with

generosity; but this does not mean that we have to put it into practice in the same way everywhere. The Salesian mission will be meaningful and effective, and will therefore have a future, if we succeed in being at the same time faithful to ourselves and also "at home" in the cultural context in which it is carried out, that is to say if, thanks to his sons, Don Bosco knows how to assume the features of each of the cultures that welcomes him.

1. "The Law of all evangelisation"

"The Salesian vocation places us at the heart of the Church and puts us entirely at the service of her mission" (C. 6). And the Constitutions also recognise that the "mission sets the tenor of our whole life" and "specifies the task we have in the Church" (C. 3). This means that the mission is part of our charismatic identity; so that the failure of the mission would indicate the failure of the charism. A mission which is not adequately inculturated is, without doubt, a failed mission: "the [inculturated] accommodated preaching of the revealed Word ought to remain the law of all evangelisation".¹

The mission owes its origin not to the Church but to the Risen Lord (cf. *Mt* 28,19; *Acts* 1,8), who has entrusted it to his witnesses (cf. *Lk* 24,46-48) assuring them of the presence and of the assistance of his Spirit (cf. *Jn* 20,22-23). What is more, the mission of Christ owes its origin not to him but to the Father who "so loved the world" (*Jn* 3,16) as to send "his Son, born of a woman, born a subject of the Law, to redeem the subjects of the Law, so that we could receive adoption as sons." (*Gal* 4,4-5). Therefore the mission comes from the inner life of God who has generated the Son and has sent him to become incarnate in human history, and revealing his love in this way, to bring the work of salvation to its completion. From God the Fa-

¹ *Gaudium et Spes* 44.

ther too proceeds the Paraclete whom Jesus has sent to his Church (*Jn* 15,26); and as had already happened with Jesus (*Lk* 4,18-19), she began her mission when she received and welcomed the gift of the Spirit (*Act* 2,1-33). As it is for the Church, so it is for the Congregation: its mission is not primarily what, in some way, it does for others; its mission is rather making God present in the person of those He has sent: the Son, the Spirit, the community. In this way the mission is freed from the excessive burden of responsibility for the results, and becomes the effective and visible proclamation of the love of God which shows itself first in the lives and then in the action of those He has sent. The Church only has meaning as the sign and the instrument of the communication of this “missionary” love of the Triune God; in fact, “all the Church’s activities are to be imbued with divine love,” which is “the source of the Church’s mission.”² And it is with this mission that we, by our vocation, are associated, being “in the Church signs and bearers of the love of God for young people, especially those who are poor” (C.2).

Therefore, when “the fullness of time had come,” and God wanted to redeem those who were under the law and make them his adopted children, “he sent his Son” among us: the eternal Word of the Father (*Jn*,14), came to be part of human history humbling himself in the womb of a woman as in the context of a particular culture. It is this “making himself small” of the Word, this assuming the condition of a slave without clinging on to his equality with God but emptying himself (cf. *Phil.* 2,6-7), and it is this making himself contingent in time and in space – not pretending but truly so – which reveals God’s condescension to mankind, proclaiming his infinite love. So you see in fact Jesus of Nazareth fully assuming the culture of his contemporaries with all its greatness and its limitations,

² Cf. BENEDICT XVI, *Address to those taking part in the X Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue*, Rome, 7 June 2008.

the son of a particular people, Israel of those days. Truly obedient to the Father and truly obedient to man!

And it is precisely in obeying this plan that the Son became our Saviour. «Quod non est assumptum, non est sanatum»; «quod semel assumpsit numquam dimisit»³: these two well-known axioms of the Church Fathers express very well this paradoxical law of salvation: there is no salvation without incarnation, nor is there incarnation without inculturation. Affirming, therefore, “the natural missionary role of the Church means essentially bearing witness to the fact that the task of inculturation, as the total spreading of the Gospel and its subsequent translation in thought and life still continues today and constitutes the heart, the means and the scope of the *new evangelisation*.”⁴

2. Changing cultural paradigms

Those carrying out the mission of the Salesians in today's world are a community of about sixteen thousand members present in all the continents and spread through 132 different countries. Even though not all the confreres are aware of it, the well-known phenomenon of globalisation is a fact of life in our Congregation. This presents us with the challenge ever more pressing, of the realisation of the one Salesian charism in a multiplicity of varied social, religious and cultural contexts. There is no doubt that the Salesian charism is one and the same, valid for all and for each individual; but it cannot be lived out in an univocal way; if it is not well rooted in the culture in which the community carries out its mission, it will not be able to release the potentialities for salvation it contains,

³ Cf. A. GRILLMEIER, *LThK* 8, pp. 954-955; Id., *Jesus der Christus im Glauben der Kirche*. I, Freiburg 1979.

⁴ JOHN PAUL II, *Address at the end of the work of the International Council for Catechesis*, Rome, 26 September 1992.

neither will it have significance in the world of today, nor will it survive in tomorrow's.

Not rarely during my visits to the Provinces, I have the impression that many of our confreres, taken up with the urgent apostolic needs of the moment, do not give sufficient attention to this responsibility. There are also some doubts about initial formation: it is natural that in the formation years, emphasis is given to the personal acquisition by the young confrere of the charism, but perhaps there is some neglect of education to an appropriate cultural sensitivity, with particular regard to youth cultures, or the right weight is not given to it.

We are living through a period of great change, from which neither the Church nor the Congregation is immune, a change giving rise to crises and to insecurity, but nonetheless evoking new expectations and offering real opportunities, scarcely imaginable a short time ago. I feel I must here refer, if only briefly, to some of the facts which best illustrate the change taking place and which raise questions about our way of living as consecrated educators and of carrying out our mission.

Globalisation

Without doubt globalisation is a special feature of the times in which we are living. A recent unstoppable phenomenon which regards in the first place the new kinds of juridical, productive and financial organisations, evolved in the so-called 'first world' with the precise intention of creating on a world scale a single market to maximise profits, globalisation has succeeded not only in unifying and homogenising economic conditions but also styles of life, culture and more generally 'politically correct' ideologies in conformity with the western model. Globalisation has eliminated distances and frontiers, has brought peoples and individuals closer together; nowadays it is possible to send to all parts of the world an almost infinite number of pieces of information. This possibility of linking to-

gether in a few seconds places thousands of miles apart has also resulted in conditioning systems of production and commerce: capital no longer has a homeland, nor are fixed places of work guaranteed nor the security of citizens - given the flow of migrants and the phenomena linked to them. It should be recognised that globalisation has offered and still offers undoubted advantages, but it also has to be said that it has conditioned and still conditions every aspect of modern day society, by now changed into a "global village", so that societies which formerly were distinct for their cultures, traditions, beliefs and customs are now sinking into an amalgam which threatens their separate identities.

It is a matter therefore of an ambiguous situation, with a tendency to reduce everything and everyone to the same level according to parameters which have no respect for differences and which exclude anyone who does not fit in. "One has the impression that the complex dynamism, caused by the globalisation of the economy and the media, eventually tends to reduce the human person to a market variable, to a piece of merchandise, which really makes the person a totally irrelevant factor in the decisive options. Man risks feeling trampled by the faceless globalised mechanisms and increasingly loses his identity and dignity as a person. In virtue of such a dynamism, cultures also run the risk of being homogenised if they are not accepted and respected in their originality and richness, but forcefully adapted to the needs of the market and fashion. The result is a cultural product, bearing a superficial syncretism, imposing a new scale of values, derived from criteria that are regularly arbitrary, materialistic, consumerist and opposed to any kind of openness to the Transcendent."⁵

In the Congregation, as in the Church, we are not outside this process and we will have to take seriously the challenge to

⁵ JOHN PAUL II, *Address to the members of the Pontifical Academies at the Sixth Public Session* (8 November 2001).

promote and pass on “a living culture, a culture capable of fostering communication and brotherhood between different groups and peoples, and between the different fields of human creativity. Today’s world is challenging us, in other words, *to know and respect one another in and through the diversity of our cultures*.”⁶ Through our apostolic presences, and first of all within our religious communities, becoming more and more pluralistic, we are being called to live and to bear witness to a communion in which “solitude is overcome through concern for one another, in which communication inspires in everyone a sense of shared responsibility, and in which wounds are healed through forgiveness...The nature of the charism in communities of this kind directs their energies, sustains their fidelity and directs the apostolic work of all towards the one mission. If the Church is to reveal her true face to today’s world, she urgently needs such fraternal communities, which, by their very existence, contribute to the new evangelisation, inasmuch as they disclose in a concrete way the fruitfulness of the “new commandment”.⁷

Living together as brothers and as workers for peace and solidarity with everyone, we promote the unity of the human family and the transformation of the world according to the heart of God; “from faith lived with courage, today as in the past, flows a rich culture of love for life,”⁸ which is a distinguishing feature of the Salesian charism. In this way we can effectively respond to our task and offer an original contribution, which is that of having “to face in a creative way the challenge of inculturation, while at the same time preserving their identity”⁹.

⁶ JOHN PAUL II, *Address to the Representatives of the World of Culture and Science*, (Tbilisi, Georgia, 9 Novembre 1999).

⁷ VC 45. Cf. BENEDICT XVI, *Homily on the Solemnity of Corpus Christi* (23 June 2011).

⁸ BENEDICT XVI, *Address to the II Ecclesial Convention of Aquileia* (7 May 2011).

⁹ VC 51. “The challenge of inculturation ought to be taken up by consecrated persons as a call to fruitful cooperation with grace in facing cultural diversity” (VC 79).

Inter-religious dialogue

In the context of our apostolic activity, in addition to the process of inculturation, we find ourselves more and more faced, and at times challenged, by cultural pluralism and especially by religious pluralism, phenomena which pervade the present world. The tendency to level everything down, a feature of the current process of globalisation, is opposed by a strong affirmation of particular cultures and religions, both ancient and modern; they demand to be recognised and respected, they try to affirm or to protect themselves, demonstrating at times fundamentalist reactions when they perceive threats to their identity and to their freedom of expression. In this way in the current historical circumstances inter-religious dialogue has taken on new and inevitable urgency, thus becoming an essential element of the mission.

For some time the Church has been committed to “building bridges of friendship with the followers of all religions, in order to seek the true good of every person and of society as a whole”.¹⁰ And although the Gospel continues to be “the permanent priority” of its mission, “inter-religious dialogue is a part of the evangelising mission of the Church”¹¹: dedicating themselves therefore to evangelisation, each one of the faithful and all Christian communities are called to put this dialogue into practice.

For the Salesians who nowadays are working for young people in every situation imaginable, the *missio ad gentes* included, inter-religious dialogue cannot be considered a marginal activity in our lives as believers and as we place ourselves at the service of the faith, nor as a purely personal or Congregational choice but needs to be seen as “an essential service to

¹⁰ BENEDICT XVI, *Address to delegates of other Churches and ecclesial communities and of other Religious traditions*, Rome, 25 April 2005.

¹¹ JOHN PAUL II, *Redemptoris Missio*. Encyclical on the permanent validity of the Church’s missionary mandate, 44.55. Rome 12 September 1990.

humanity,”¹² indeed as, “something which arises from the very demands of the faith. It issues from the faith and needs to be nourished by the faith.”¹³

In fact, dialogue between believers of different faiths and also with non-believers, “must be a journey of faith”;¹⁴ it does not require us to renounce any element of our Christian identity, neither in what we believe nor in what we practise, nor to put it in parentheses or even in doubt; just the contrary: those who question us, be they the youngsters we teach or the people who share in our work of education, want to know clearly, and quite rightly, who we are, what we think, and for Whom we are working. Certainly, we educate and accompany young Christians in their faith journey; but we are equally aware that, in ever growing numbers, young people or co-workers belonging to other religions or indifferent from the religious point of view, and even non-believers, seek us out as educators, travelling companions and guides. We draw close to them therefore with heartfelt interest, we live and work with them fully respecting their freedom, always presenting ourselves as joyful witnesses of Jesus Christ and loyal members of a faith community.

For us dialogue, rather than a ‘method’ for carrying out the Salesian mission, is the very “way” of achieving it. And if there is a “dialogue of action” which leads us to seek concrete forms of genuine collaboration, “as we apply our religious insights to the task of promoting integral human development, working for peace, justice and the stewardship of creation,” we ought above all as educators to concentrate, on the “dialogue of life” which involves simply “living alongside one another and

¹² JEAN LUIS, CARD. TAURAN, *Address at the VI Conference of Doha on Interreligious Dialogue* (13 May 2008).

¹³ Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, *Letter to the Presidents of Bishops’ Conferences on the Spirituality of Dialogue* (3 March 1999) 1.

¹⁴ BENEDICT XVI, *Address to the participants in the X Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue*, Rome, 7 June 2008.

learning from one another in such a way as to grow in mutual knowledge and respect.”¹⁵

In this way dialogue changes into proclamation: “two ways of implementing the mission of the Church.”¹⁶ We do it as believers and educators: entering into dialogue with other believers we bear witness to Christ and we imitate him “in his concern and compassion for each one and with respect for the individual’s freedom.”¹⁷ In a world marked by religious pluralism, proclaiming one’s faith has new consequences, still to be explored; having given ourselves completely to God we walk together with people of different faiths and cultures towards the one Father, placing them at the centre of our concerns, listening to and making our own the questions which torment them, seeking together for answers which give meaning to our shared history.

The youth situation

While globalisation and inter-religious dialogue are factors that nowadays challenge the Salesian mission ‘from outside’, that is to say which come from the change in the current cultural paradigm, I seem to observe in the Congregation a rather worrying phenomenon which could undermine the inescapable responsibility we have to inculturate the Salesian charism for the benefit of the young through education and evangelisation. Here and there I note among the confreres a more or less conscious resistance, and at times an openly expressed inability to approach sympathetically, to throw light on wisely - the result of personal study, and to welcome cordially the new forms of

¹⁵ BENEDICT XVI, *Address to Clerical and Lay Representatives of other Religions*, London, 17 September 2010.

¹⁶ Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue *Dialogue and Proclamation. A Reflection and Orientations on Interreligious Dialogue and the Proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ*, 82. Rome, 19 May 1991.

¹⁷ Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, *Letter to the Presidents of Bishops’ Conferences on the Spirituality of Dialogue* (3 March 1999).

expression which are a feature of today's young people, as well as the collective experiences by means of which they give expression to their 'spectacular' life styles,¹⁸ that is to say those which they normally demonstrate in their free time, almost always on the fringes of ordinary social institutions.

Some of the results of the profound cultural change in which we are immersed in the West are, for example, the interpretation of reality more as something that is changing rather than something of its nature stable, and the self-affirmation of the individual who sees himself and wishes to be seen as of absolute value constantly seeking himself, endowed with an almost limitless freedom to experiment and proud of his personal autonomy. In this context, the young – half the world population is under 20 years of age – unfortunately become victims rather than protagonists. Without roots and detached from any firm foundations they are forced to create their own personal identity alone, and to choose the path to its fulfilment. They do not find in society, and often not in the Church either, models to be imitated, attractive aims to be pursued or reliable guides to turn to, even more so since the family is not present or is inadequately prepared, while the school appears to be far removed from the world of youth and ineffective in its methods both educational and didactic.¹⁹ Living according to a freedom more and more without norms or limits, immersed in a cultural climate ever more complex and confused, surrounded and sometimes overwhelmed by a market with a multitude of differing religious and moral values, they are obliged to "invent their own lives without a guide book."²⁰

¹⁸ Cf. J. GONZÁLEZ-ANLEO - J. M. GONZÁLEZ-ANLEO, *La juventud actual*, Verbo Divino, Estella 2008, 44. For a description of the life styles of young people in western societies see the monograph "De las 'tribus urbanas' a las culturas juveniles", *Revista de estudios de Juventud* 64 (2004) pp. 39-136.

¹⁹ "Is this not to hide from young people the signs of the sun going down on our culture?" (U. GALIMBERTI, *L'ospite inquietante. Il nichilismo e i giovani*, Feltrinelli, Milano, 2008, p. 13).

²⁰ J. A. MARINA, *Aprender a vivir*, Ariel, Barcelona 2004, p. 183.

The GC 26 highlights this situation when, speaking about the new frontiers, it states: "we also acknowledge the expectations of young people who are spiritually and culturally poor, and who ask us to be involved: young people who have lost meaning in life, lack affection because of family instability, those left disillusioned and empty by the consumerist mentality, the religiously indifferent, those lacking motivation because of permissiveness, ethical relativism, the widespread culture of death."²¹

This affective solitude is not the only, nor I would say the most widespread form of existential poverty which today's young people meet. By far the greater majority of those living in the so-called 'Third World' are very familiar with economic want, the precarious state of family life, racial discrimination, educational and cultural shortcomings, the lack of work preparation, shameless exploitation by third parties, illegal employment as labourers, the closure of all forms of escape in their lives, various dependences and other forms of social deviance.

The current picture of the lost generation of youth is so desolate that it demands an urgent conversion and compassion (cf. *Mk* 6,34; 8,2-3) no less than action (cf. *Mk* 6,37; 8,4-5), because all of us feel that we are sent to be for them "signs and bearers of the love of God" (*C* 2). A simple list of situations will make clear how urgent the matter is:

- The millions – about a hundred – of street children who have decided to make the street their natural, 'habitat' so intolerable was their family situation. Some find a refuge in caves or drains, a thousand in Bucharest alone, a million in western Europe, 12 million in the world.
- About 300,000 child-soldiers, who operate in a regular army or as mercenaries, mere youths but already engaged in the service of death.

²¹ GC26, 98.

- The ever-growing number of violated youngsters, victims of pedophilia and of the so-called sex tourism: a million children according to UNICEF statistics are being introduced every year in the sex market, a market with a turnover of 13 billion dollars every year.
- There are 250 million minors, boys and girls between 5 and 15 years of age forced to do work - illegal because of its physical, psychological or mental dangers, made into slaves, and this more than a century after the legal abolition of slavery.
- The number of poor and marginalised youngsters, deprived of access to any of the benefits to which every human being has the right is beyond calculation: more than 600 million children are living below the poverty threshold, 160 million of those are undernourished; 6 million die every year of hunger: 17 thousand a day, 708 every hour...
- The nobody's children without parents, homes or country number about 50 million. Those without education, illiterates come to 130 million. At least 6 million babies have been mutilated and it is said that about 4 million women and children have been forced to be organ donors.
- Every minute in the five continents 5 babies contract AIDS. There are almost 11 million children who have contracted the virus. In Africa alone there are 13 million orphans as a result of AIDS. And how many are the babies suffering from tuberculosis, malaria, meningitis, hepatitis, cholera, ...?
- There are more than 50 million babies who are displaced or refugees victims of racial hatred, wars, persecutions, crowded into refugee camps or wandering here and there.

Faced with such a tragic picture of the ills of the world of the young, we Salesians cannot but be, like Don Bosco, "on the side of the young, because we have confidence in them, in their willingness to learn, to study, to escape from poverty, to take their future into their own hands ... We are on the side of the young because we believe in the worth of the individual, in the

possibility of a different kind of world, and above all in the great value of working for education.” So many evils pricked our consciences: on 20 April 2002, at the end of the GC25, I and 231 representatives of the Salesians in the world signed an appeal addressed to all those with responsibilities regarding the young, but which above all we took as our obligation: “Before it is too late let us save the youngsters, the future of the world.”²²

The digital world, a continent to be leavened

“If she wishes to remain faithful to her mission as the universal sacrament of salvation, the Church needs to learn the languages used by men and women of every time, ethnic background and place. And we Salesians, in a special way need to learn and to use young peoples’ language... Basically it is a question of a communication problem, of the inculturation of the Gospel in social and cultural situations; a problem of education to the faith for the new generations.”²³

This effort to inculturate the Salesian view of life in today’s world necessarily has to take into account the new *digital continent*, which is not merely a technical matter; in fact it shapes new cultural models; and if it be true that it creates previously unheard of possibilities for inter-communication, it also presents dangers previously unknown.

The term “digital continent” is the happy choice of Pope Benedict XVI in his World Communications Day Message for 2009, in a context where he was appealing to young people to evangelise their peers.

There is a biblical image which can help us understand what it means to inculturate the charism in the digital continent, one we find in Mt 13:33 (and Lk 13:20-21): the woman

²² Cf. GC 25, “An appeal to save the young people of the world”, *The Salesian Community today*. Chapter Documents, AGC 378 (2002), pp. 110-112.

²³ PASCUAL CHÁVEZ, “Concluding Address at the GC 26, in “*Da mihi animas, cetera tolle*”. Chapter Documents GC26, S.D.B. Publishers, Rome 2008, p. 140.

who 'hides' yeast in three measures of flour until it is 'leavened all through'.

What, then, might it mean to 'leaven' the digital continent all through? It is a homely image but one that strikes home right now at a time when the World Wide Web, to take one example, is moving from Web 2.0 to Web 3.0, from a Web which has concentrated on linking people interactively to one which now seeks to link data meaningfully. This change is happening subtly under our very eyes, not unlike the secret activity of yeast in dough. Which of us has not clicked on a link to a major city to be then presented with a variety of options – lodgings to stay in, events to be part of, places to visit, and quite possibly according to our personal interests! Did the computer know those interests? Not as such, but it knew how to make a few meaningful connections. The answer lies in semantics, and only human beings can (and they do, and this is what we must not overlook) offer these semantics in ways that machines can interpret.

The Christian classic spiritual tradition offers us a further image which can be helpful in this context, to be found in St Teresa of Avila's *Interior Castle*, a text which is timeless in its application: "I began to think of the soul as if it were a castle, made of a single diamond or of very clear crystal"²⁴, she says, and then leads us through seven 'mansions' or rooms, each a place on the path to ultimate union with God at the centre. It too can be a helpful image in the digital continent. Think of the castle as the digital continent, with many 'rooms' and 'links'. How do we find our way around? Are various rooms meaningfully connected? Could we find certain paths to arrive at the centre? The centre is still God, by the way, and Christ is the guide, but "...the proclamation of Christ in the world of new

²⁴ Teresa of Avila, St. ((Teresa de Cepeda y Ahumada, 1515-1582), *Interior Castle or The Mansions*,

technologies requires a profound knowledge of this world if the technologies are to serve our mission adequately.”²⁵

Or we might want to bring our 21st century fascination with ecology to the task. Think of a garden, maybe a bit overgrown but with paths and lots of vines and creepers. We could follow those paths and creepers and find our way around, but we can also imagine how things are just beneath the soil where everything is thriving with the complex, messy, but eminently ecosystemic stuff of life!

All three images, the yeast, the castle, the ecosystem, help us appreciate more deeply what it might mean to inculturate the charism in the digital continent. It is one of the tasks of New Evangelization. In some ways it is a hidden task but with recipes we can follow. There is a true Guide to the virtual castle if we can but coax the technologies into serving our mission. And we are invited into the complex, maybe messy, but eminently ecosystemic stuff of life, conscious that Jesus wants us to be there in His name!

We cannot avoid living, or at least partly living in the digital continent today. As Manuel Castells has sagely said: “One might say, ‘Why don’t you leave me alone? I want no part of your Internet, of your technological civilization, of your network society. I just want to live my life’. ...If this is your position, I have bad news for you. If you do not care about the networks, the networks will care about you, anyway. For as long as you want to live in this society, at this time and in this place, you will have to deal with the network society.”²⁶

Instead of being dragged unwillingly into the digital continent, we have a duty to be there effectively and efficiently. Today this means, amongst other things, taking care of mean-

²⁵ Benedict XVI, Message for the XLIII World Communications Day (24.01.2009).

²⁶ Cf. M. CASTELLS, *The Internet Galaxy: Reflections on the Internet, Business, and Society*, University Press, London 2001, p. 282.

ingful structure, introducing meaningful connections into our documents and data. We can guide search technologies, for example, with documents focused more on semantic structure than how 'pretty' they might need to look, and especially with semantically prepared data. The former task belongs to every Salesian who 'tweets', emails, or writes! The latter, to those who have responsibility for the thousands of Salesian websites around the world.

This latter group is no minor cohort of the Congregation! Very few communities, centres, works are without a website. Those responsible, ultimately we hope a Salesian SDB or lay partner, play an increasingly significant role in how the charism is to be understood and inculturated in the digital continent. They can, in fact, determine how 'charism' becomes an important search word today, leading to contexts which we wish to determine rather than leaving it to the search engines to guess, and guess wrongly.

In other words, entering the complex stuff of life that is today's digital continent requires awareness, clarity and a thirst for appropriate knowledge on our part. Our Social Communication department is certainly working at this and can already offer confreres and lay partners interesting reflections and in some cases precise technical advice. None of it is advice for advice' sake, nor technology for the sake of technology. The Social Communication sector is working hand in hand with the Youth Ministry, Formation, Missions sectors as represented by their respective departments, on behalf of the charism and the common mission. Together they are helping us to inculturate, propose and spread a faith perspective based on our Father Don Bosco's vision, in a rapidly changing world.

Summing up: the Congregation is committed through education and anticipation to give a voice back to the young, to help them to find themselves, and to accompany them with patience and trust as they build their own lives, and to offer the

means to gain a livelihood; but at the same time, we are committed to offering them a way of relating to God they will find suitable for them. And we want to do this living in their world and speaking their language, walking side by side with them, not only as those for whom we primarily work but above all as travelling companions. Or does the fact have nothing say to us that we came into existence as a Congregation, on far off 18 December 1859 *among* a group of youngsters, to be exact *with* 16 of them, adolescents between 15 and 21 years of age, who having experienced the effect on their own lives of being rescued and helped by Don Bosco, wanted to take part in his mission, taking on a role of major protagonists?

To recreate the Salesian charism in the most varied situations in which we find ourselves, it is not enough to adapt it to the different circumstances of young people; much rather, it is necessary to invest in the young, helping them to become the protagonists, the trusted co-workers without ever forgetting that they are the very reason for our consecration to God and for our mission.

3. The early Church, the model and norm for inculturated evangelisation²⁷

The gospel came to birth, was formulated and proclaimed within a particular culture. We know that the first affirmations about the resurrection of Jesus (cf. *1 Cor* 15,3-5; *Acts* 2,24-35), about his being the Messiah (cf. *Acts* 5,42; 9,22) and his universal Lordship (cf. *Acts* 2,36), as well as the calls to conversion (cf. *Acts* 2,40; 3,19), were all formulated in the cultural categories proper to Israel. While this new faith was being pre-

²⁷ For this biblical reflection I have relied on JUAN J. BARTOLOMÉ, *Paolo di Tarso. Una introduzione alla vita e all'opera dell'apostolo di Cristo*, LAS, Rome 2009, pp. 177-192.

sented to the Jews, there was no need to add long explanations of expressions used (cf. *Acts* 3,21-26), nor an introduction to the underlying thought (cf. *Acts* 2,25-32.34-35). It is enough to think of Peter's first preaching in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost (cf. *Acts* 2,14-41) in order to find a good example of evangelisation that is perfectly inculturated in the religious mentality of both the preacher and his listeners.²⁸

A mission which succeeds because it is well inculturated

Only twenty five years after the death of Jesus, and thanks to the marvellous missionary expansion undertaken by the group of the 'Hellenists' (cf. *Acts* 6,1; 9,29), in Christian communities believers of pagan origin and culture become the majority. It is obvious that the oldest disciples of the Lord were not prepared to cope with the situation which was developing as a consequence of the opening up of the gospel to the Gentiles and of their incorporation in the life of the community.

It was no longer a question of finding a place in the community for single individuals, as had been the case with the eunuch (*Acts* 8,26-40) or with the centurion Cornelius (*Acts* 10,1-11,18). It was necessary to become accustomed to the presence of whole communities of different ethnic extraction, mentality and customs, within the one and definitive people of God. The community of Jerusalem itself, where from the beginning there had been believers from varied cultural backgrounds (cf. *Acts* 2,5-12; 6,1; 9,29), had experienced the difficulties which living together had brought (*Acts* 6,1-6) and had even suffered persecution because of it (*Acts* 8,1-3). What was at stake was the very identity of the new shared common life arising from the one confession in Christ Jesus.

²⁸ Another good example of the inculturation of the Gospel, which was not successful however, is the address by Paul at Athens, "a city full of idols" (*Acts* 17,16-31). When Paul spoke to a curious audience about a God unknown to them, they let him speak until he mentioned the resurrection of a dead person ..., an affirmation culturally unacceptable.

The detailed information provided by the sources confirms the importance attributed to this conflict by both Paul, one of those directly involved (*Gal* 2,1-10), and Luke (*Acts* 15,1-35). Even though the two accounts are not a complete formal summary nor even impartial, one can gather the essentials from them; the discussion centred on the problem of circumcision: should it or should it not be imposed on new non-Jewish Christians? Basically there was the desire to integrate the pagans among the Jewish people as a condition *sine qua non* of their insertion in the Christian community. Circumcision had been and continued to be, the *sign of the covenant* (*Jn* 17,11), the identification mark of the people of God and the proof of its fidelity; consequently it was not considered sufficient to believe in Jesus; this faith had to be grafted onto the regime of the mosaic law.

The praxis of Hellenist Christians, for whom circumcision was not imposed – as on the other hand the Jews did with the ‘fearers of God’ – so as not to raise obstacles in the way of the conversion of pagans, was considered by some an opportunistic tactic contrary to the salvific will of God. We owe it to Paul that he clearly made known and passionately defended a missionary practice which did not impose on the believers coming from paganism the need to become like the Jews; it is true that it was not he who initiated this approach, but he made it his own coherently and with conviction (*Acts* 11,22). Paul speaks about the distinction between the ‘gospel of noncircumcision’ he preached, and the ‘gospel of circumcision’ (*Gal* 2,7), which had Peter as its main spokesman. It should be noted that here it is a matter of two expressions which are unique in the whole of ancient literature. In this way the one gospel (*Gal* 1,6-9) is accepted in different ways, according to the ‘cultural’ perspective of those listening; what is preached is always and only Christ Jesus; but not in the same way, and not with the same practical implications, for Jews and Gentiles.

Unity in the faith, diversity in the way it is lived

Behind these events a paradigm can be found, in other words a norm to guide action: in fact, a great change is beginning to take place in the history of Judaism, in which an heir to its own promise makes an appearance; he does not feel obliged to observe the law, which until then had been the only guarantee of participation in the covenant with God. This fact is even more decisive for the origin of the Christian community, since the gospel of Jesus was already being lived, 'independently of the Mosaic law' (*Rm* 3,21), freed therefore from that Jewish culture which until then had been its womb and covering.

At stake was nothing less than the [self]awareness of the Christian community, which saw itself progressively detached from the law of Moses and therefore no longer just Jewish. It was not that the law had become useless; it had preserved its value but only for some, while faith in the Lord Jesus was offered to all and for the salvation of all. The followers of Christ, whether Jews or gentiles became from that time on and for always the new people of God, the true Israel.

If on the converts from paganism no other servitude was to be imposed than that sweet yoke of faith in Christ, the pagan-Christian communities were recognised as members by absolute right of the body which is the Church; within it all were living the one faith, but not all in the same way. As Paul was to write half way through the 50's, each one was to continue to live 'in the part which the Lord has allotted to him' (*1 Cor* 7,17): just as the pagan did not have to become a Jew in order to be a Christian, likewise the Jew did not have to give up living as a Jew in order to become a Christian. In this way Christian life was expressed in a plurality of cultures because a single culture exclusively Christian did not exist.

For the Judo-Christian communities, and for the evangelisation of the Jews, the prescriptions which were valid until

that time remained in force. But that Jewish understanding of the law, of the history of salvation and of the people of God which did not permit along side it any other way to salvation was destroyed. This meant a great change – painful certainly – for the first Christians who were all Jews: they could continue to obey the law (*1 Cor* 9,20-21), as part of their ancestral way of life and customs, but they could not exclude their non-Jewish brethren from the faith. In this way the way was open not to the fusion of groups culturally heterogeneous, but focusing rather on living together as brothers, each one preserving his own identity.

Remembering the poor

The agreement reached by both parties made it possible to proclaim the Gospel to two separate audiences, that of the pagans and that of the Jews, and declared equal rights between the two missions already in fact in operation: one could be, indeed one should be Christians, according to Jewish custom or that of the pagans (cf. *Gal*, 2,14). Thus there were different ways of living the faith, while it remained the one, just as the common shared life was one.

This unity, sealed by a handshake “in a sign of communion” (*Gal* 2,9), was confirmed by a request to “remember the poor” which Paul and Barnabas were only too ready to accept. This fact is not insignificant. Paul at once declared that he took this task very much to heart; and in fact, collecting money for the poor of Jerusalem became for him an integral part of his mission of evangelisation (cf. *Gal* 2,10; *Rm* 15,25-26; *1 Cor* 16,1-3; *2 Cor* 8-9). The ‘poor,’ it should be remembered, were the Christian Jews in Palestine, who at a time of great enthusiasm for the immediate return of the Lord had placed at the disposal of the community “goods and possessions” (*Acts* 2,45; 4,32-35). Not forgetting them became for Paul an important part of his ministry, in order to strengthen the communion between the different churches (cf. *1 Cor* 11,23-26; *Rm* 15,27), so much so,

that he came to consider it as a form of worship, and himself the minister of Christ (*Rm* 15,16).

This 'remembering' was not limited solely to economic assistance, but brought about in a practical way the unity of the Church; it was a way of fulfilling a mutual 'debt of love' among them (*Rm* 13,8). Paul could not imagine a believer, Jew or pagan, who could think that he had no need of the other (cf. *1 Cor* 12,14-26).

A living together that brings problems with it

An important question left unanswered by the assembly, to judge from Paul's own testimony (cf. *Gal* 2,11-21), was the freedom to take part in the common table on the part of Christians coming from the pagan world. The social and cultural reluctance shown by the Jewish Christians to sit at table with everyone (*Lv* 17,8-14; 18,6-9) reflected a traditional and deeply felt fear – a way of thinking always present in a minority of communities – of being assimilated and of losing their own identity. Two models of the mission, with different ritual and cultural demands, could only make life together difficult. The living together of Jews and pagans, within the same Christian community, in this way was put under threat. Would it not have been better to confess the same faith in communities kept separate by social, cultural, religious barriers?

Even though, for different reasons, neither Luke nor Paul agreed with this suggestion; Luke mentions the so-called 'apostolic decree' (cf. *Acts* 15,13-29; 21,25). In this it was forbidden to eat meat sacrificed to idols (*Lv* 17,8; *1 Cor* 8,10); they were to abstain from blood (*Lv* 17,10-12) and from the flesh of animals which had been suffocated (cf. *Gn* 9,4; *Lv* 17,15; *Dt* 14,21); they were to avoid illegal unions (matrimony between blood relatives?) (cf. *Lv* 18,6-18; *1 Cor* 5,1-13). These commands, cultural in origin, were based on Old Testament laws for pagans living in Israel (cf. *Lv* 17-18); and, according to rabbinical tradi-

tion, were part of the seven commandments which everyone had to obey.

The existence of such a decree presupposes in the Christian community a twofold presence, Jewish and pagan, and shows that difficulties remained in the common life to which the mission to the gentiles had given rise. The prohibitions of things considered 'abominations,' were connected to the fact of 'ethnic Christians' belonging to the Judeo-Christian community 'and were aimed at facilitating relations between the two groups. They were intended therefore to encourage living together, eliminating the more repugnant connotations which the Jews associated with the pagans. Imposing only these obligations on the 'ethnic Christians' (*Acts* 15,29), did not raise questions about their Christian identity; rather it sanctioned freedom regarding circumcision and the law, but asked for some renunciations of a cultural nature, in order to facilitate the common life for the Jewish Christians. There is a principle here: more important than one's own culture is the brother for whom Christ died, as Paul will say elsewhere (*1 Cor* 8,11).

Paul appears to be unaware of this arrangement: he does not speak about it in his account of the events (*Gal* 2,9) and it never appears in his letters, even though on some occasions he had to face similar problems (cf. *1 Cor* 5-6; 8,1-11,1; *Rm* 14). In any case, the lack of any regulation which would give full recognition to Christians coming from paganism as brothers loved by God, soon became evident.

The fact and the principle

On account of these tensions, within the Christian community of the 50's a dangerous situation, close to a schism, was created which the assembly of Jerusalem wished to overcome. It was recognised, not without considerable effort, that the Christianity which was coming into being was not just a Jewish style of a Messianic movement. If it were considered possible to

be conscious of one's own identity, the universal nature of salvation ought to be defended all the more.

The Council of Jerusalem offers us some points to resolve our problems about the inculturation of the gospel, offering us openings regarding ways of facing up to and resolving them. We can learn to see:

- 1° That the real problems of the Christian communities are those which arise *from the preaching of the gospel*. The concern to safeguard the gospel in all its truth (*Gal 2,5.14*) came after the work carried out in the mission, and was a logical consequence of it. And again: with regard to the problem dealt with in Jerusalem, Christians did not have ready-made solutions; they sought them in the community by means of dialogue and fraternal discernment.
- 2° That the preaching of the gospel, having to be adapted to *Jews and Gentiles*, responds to the practical historical circumstances, and has to be adapted to the needs of the listeners; precisely on this account problems will not be lacking for the confession of the one faith and for life in common. These problems, however, in so far as they are inevitable, cannot break the communion which arises from the one vocation to salvation.

If in order to communicate salvation to the one hearing the Word, the preaching of the gospel needs to be 'inculturated', in order to live the common shared salvation, one's own culture is negotiable; it is Paul himself who witnesses to this: "So though I was not a slave to any human being I put myself in slavery to all people to win as many as I could. To the Jews I made myself as a Jew, to win the Jews; to those under the Law as one under the Law (though I am not), in order win those under the Law. To the weak I made myself weak to win the weak. I accommodated myself to people in all kinds of different situations so that by all possible means I might bring some to salvation. All this I do for the sake of the gospel that I may share its benefits with others." (*1Cor 9:19-23*). On the other hand, it is the

brother for whom the Lord died who can never be sacrificed. The line that can never be crossed in the proclamation of the gospel is not therefore the culture through which it is transmitted, nor that in which it is received, but the companion in faith who can never be rejected. The reason for this is that culture, while very important, does not have an absolute value, because only love is absolute.

4. Looking at Don Bosco

In the seventies Don Bosco reached "the summit of his enterprises and his activities", guided solely by "the primary aim he had always taken as his life's mission: the salvation of the young, assistance, education"²⁹: to the care and expansion of the by now numerous works for youth were added the worries and the laborious procedures needed to give life to and to obtain juridical recognition for the organisations of support and of animation, which were the Salesian Congregation, the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians and the Union of Salesian Cooperators. "At the same time as this, in 1875, the final initiative was developed, the missionary one ... There quickly followed the universalisation of the educational methods and the so-called Salesian spirit, giving rise to an operational and spiritual movement virtually as vast as the world."³⁰

The ideal of the missions had always accompanied Don Bosco³¹: he lived in a period of a great missionary re-awakening, so that his call to be an apostle of youth came to him and devel-

²⁹ PIETRO BRAIDO, *Don Bosco prete dei giovani nel secolo delle libertà*. Vol. II, LAS, Rome ³2009, p. 9.

³⁰ PIETRO BRAIDO, *Don Bosco prete dei giovani nel secolo delle libertà*. Vol. I, LAS, Rome ³2009, p. 370.

³¹ Cf. BM X, pp. 46-48. "The former missionary aspirations which in the years of the Convitto led him to learn a little Spanish and to pack his bags in order to join the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, Don Bosco himself explains, never left him." (PIETRO STELLA, *Don Bosco nella Storia della Religiosità cattolica*. Vol I: Vita e Opere, LAS, Rome ²1979, p. 168).

oped as "the development of an initial idea ..., that of winning souls through the Christian education of the young, especially the poor, and through the style and the methods devised for this"³² in his educational system. So, for Don Bosco, the missions became "the priority area in which it was possible to exercise his special vocation as the apostle of youth."³³ As he was gradually discovering God's plans, he turned towards projects which were different but complementary: "he continued to turn his attention to the problem of the missions and, at the same time, he began to favour the idea of founding his own Institute."³⁴

Certainly, the evangelisation of Patagonia was a *missio ad gentes*, a genuine *plantatio Ecclesiae*, which was deliberately preceeded by the presence of the Salesian missionaries among the Italian emigrants in Buenos Aires and San Nicolás de los Arroyos, 250 km to the north-west of the capital. This, not only because of their cultural proximity and their moral support, (in fact "they would not find themselves isolated, but among friends, among their fellow Italians"³⁵), but above all, because the disastrous religious and moral situation of the immigrants made "more necessary a presence among the Italians than among the natives."³⁶ Don Bosco agreed that his confreres should apply themselves, in the first place, to the priestly ministry, and to the education of the sons of the Italian workers' families. This was an apostolate not so very different from what the Salesians were undertaking everywhere else. He believed,

³² Cf. ALBERTO CAVIGLIA, "La concezione missionaria di Don Bosco e le sue attuazioni salesiane", in *Omnis terra adoret Te* 24 (1932) p. 5.

³³ LUIGI RICCI, 'Il Progetto missionario di Don Bosco', in *Centenario delle Missioni Salesiane 1875-1975. Discorsi commemorativi*, LAS, Roma 1980, 14.

³⁴ AGOSTINO FAVALE, *Il progetto missionario di Don Bosco e i suoi presupposti storico-dottrinali*, LAS, Roma 1976, p. 10. Don Bosco's missionary project gave rise to an exceptional increase in vocations; as he himself recognised: "One of the effects of the missionaries' departure was the increased number of applicants, priests included, for the Congregation...an ever greater number applied for admission into the Society." (BM XI, p. 382).

³⁵ Cf. PIETRO STELLA, *Don Bosco nella Storia della Religiosità cattolica*. Vol I: Vita e Opere, LAS, Roma 1979, p. 171.

³⁶ DON CAGLIERO, *Lettera a Don Bosco* (04.03.1876), ASC A1380802.

among other things, that in this way his missionaries would be able to prepare themselves better for the mission among the indigenous people ("savages", as he used to call them)³⁷, in obedience to the command of the Lord.³⁸ In his own mind, in fact, the 'missions' in Patagonia occupied the first place.³⁹

But both in the apostolate among the Italian immigrants, and in the mission centres among the aborigines, Don Bosco gave special preference to young people most in need and to providing education: "But we can, I saw it in a dream," it is Don Bosco speaking, "we know that a missionary who gathers a goodly group of young men about him will make progress and do much good."⁴⁰ And speaking with the Pope about the evangelisation of Patagonia, he says that he had considered planning "a chain of schools ...along our side of the border almost separating it from the rest of the continent."⁴¹ Fr Barberis says, "Don Bosco's best hopes for *the successful future of his missions* was linked to his Salesians' preference for poor youngsters: one who starts out on this road, the Blessed declared, will not go backwards."⁴²

The decision to "work for the ordinary people with the education of poor youth"⁴³ was not only an inspired, because effec-

³⁷ "Savages" as used by Don Bosco is a broad term indicating all the inhabitants of Patagonia, no longer only the Indians in an uncivilised state; this explains how he could hope to find sons of the Indians ready to be prepared for the priesthood" (EUGENIO CERIA, *Commento alla lettera* 1493, *A don Giovanni Cagliero*, 12.09.1876: *Epistolario* III Ceria, 95). Cf. FRANCIS DESRAMAUT, *Don Bosco en son temps (1815-1888)*, SEI, Torino 1996, pp. 957-958.

³⁸ See the farewell address of Don Bosco at the departure ceremony on 11 November 1875, in GIULIO BARBERIS, *Cronichetta*, quad. 3 bis, 3-9; *Documenti* XV, 311-319. The idea of the *missio ad gentes* will re-appear in Don Bosco's farewell address to the departing missionaries in the following years.

³⁹ Cf. PIETRO BRAIDO, 'Dalla pedagogia dell'Oratorio alla pastorale missionaria', in Pietro Braido (ed.), *Don Bosco Educatore*. Scritti e Testimonianze, LAS, Roma ³1997, p. 200.

⁴⁰ BM XII, p. 200.

⁴¹ BM XII, p. 162.

⁴² BM XII p. 200 (the italics are mine).

⁴³ It seems to be an expression of Don Bosco, taken from a long conversation with Fr Barberis on 12.08.1876. Cf. GIULIO BARBERIS, *Cronichetta*, Quaderno 8, pag. 75: ASC A0000108.

tive, method of evangelisation⁴⁴ but was and is the strategic choice which defines the missionary dimension of the Salesian charism⁴⁵: “without education, in fact, there is no long-lasting and profound evangelisation, there is no growth and maturing process, there is no change of mentality or of culture.”⁴⁶

Until 1966 the missions appeared in the Constitutions as one of the apostolic works “on behalf of youth especially the poor and abandoned” (art. 7) and in the present Constitutions it is said that missionary work, recognised as “an essential feature of our Congregation”, “mobilizes all the educational and pastoral means proper to our charism” (C. 30).

At the death of Don Bosco the Salesians were present in America in Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil, Chile and Ecuador. They were different countries with different needs and solutions, but the missionary strategy of Don Bosco remained unchanged. He had such confidence in his intuitions that he had no doubts in predicting (1876) a promising future for his missionary strategy: “In time it will also be adopted in all the other missions. Why do things differently in Africa and the Orient?”⁴⁷

Committed as we are to taking God to the young, dear confreres. let us take up the challenge of the inculturation of the Salesian charism as a fundamental part of our mission, “as a call to

⁴⁴ “Having attracted the young, one could also, by means of the education of the sons spread the Christian religion among the parents” (GIULIO BARBERIS, “La Repubblica Argentina e la Patagonia”, in *Lecture Cattoliche* 291-292 [1877] 94).

⁴⁵ “In other words a ‘Salesian’ mission in the course of its efforts to form the first nucleus of the people of God, will leave in the newly born Church the stamp of the sensitivity of Don Bosco’s charism, especially as regards the education of the new generations and concern for problems in the youth sector” (AA.VV., *The Project of Life of the Salesians of Don Bosco*. A guide to the Salesian Constitutions, SDB Publications, Rome 1986, pp. 308).

⁴⁶ Letter of His Holiness BENEDICT XVI to Fr Pascual Chávez, Rector Major S.D.B. on the occasion of the General Chapter XXVI, in “*Da mihi animas, cetera tolle*”. Documenti Capitolari. CG26, Editrice S.D.B., Roma 2008, p. 91.

⁴⁷ GIULIO BARBERIS, *Cronichetta*, Quaderno 8, pag. 84: ASC A0000108. Cf. JESÚS BORRERO, “Originalità delle Missioni Patagoniche di Don Bosco”, in MARIO MIDALI (a cura di), *Don Bosco nella Storia*. Atti del 1° Congresso Internazionali di Studi su Don Bosco, LAS, Roma 1990, p. 468.

fruitful cooperation with grace in facing cultural diversity"⁴⁸ in the young people with and for whom we are working. Let us look again at Don Bosco, so that we can, indeed we must, learn from him and from his farsighted apostolic wisdom, made evident in the transplanting of the Salesian life and mission in America, "the greatest enterprise of our Congregation."⁴⁹

For this reason I want to present to you *some of the elements which I consider essential for inplanting and developing our charism* wherever, we as Salesians carry out the mission of the Church. Living and working in all the political, social, cultural and religious contexts imaginable, we always need to be identified with Don Bosco, with his non-negotiable pastoral options, and with his pedagogical method which is right on the mark.

A gesture very much to the point

"When the Venerable Don Bosco sent his first sons to America," Don Rua wrote on 1 December 1909, "he wanted a photograph taken which showed him in their midst as he gave Don Giovanni Cagliero, the leader of the expedition, the book of our Constitutions. How many things Don Bosco was expressing in this gesture! It was as though he were saying: 'You will be crossing the high seas, going to unknown lands, you will have to deal with people with different languages and customs, perhaps you will be exposed to great trials. I should like to accompany you myself, to comfort, console and protect you. But what I cannot do myself, this little book will do.'"⁵⁰

⁴⁸ VC 79.

⁴⁹ Don Bosco, *Letter to Don Giuseppe Fagnano* (31.01.1881): *Epistolario* IV Ceria, p. 14. At the beginning of the mission he had written to the Pope that Patagonia was "the principal objective of the Salesian mission" Cf. *Letter to Pius IX* (09.04.1876): *Epistolario* III Ceria, p. 34.

⁵⁰ Fr Michael Rua, *Letters and circulars to the Salesians*, Direzione Generale Opere Don Bosco, Turin 1965, p. 498.

Don Rua was referring to the historic photograph which to-day – an inspired choice! – is in our Constitutions, at the beginning of the text.⁵¹ In it, in a pose specifically chosen by himself, Don Bosco preserved for posterity his handing over in person the book of the Constitutions to Don Cagliero; through them he was handing over himself. That Don Bosco is present in the Constitutions is not a clever invention of his successors,⁵² the identification comes from Don Bosco himself. In fact he wanted his sons to think of the Constitutions as a loving souvenir from him, his living testament:⁵³ “If you have loved me in the past, continue to love me in the future by the exact observance of our constitutions,” he wrote in his Spiritual Testament.⁵⁴ Rightly therefore, Salesian tradition, from Don Rua onwards, has seen in the Constitutions “always present Don Bosco, his spirit and his sanctity.”⁵⁵

The inculturation of the Salesian charism has therefore, as an essential pre-requisite the practice of the Constitutions, a joyful and faithful practice, *sine glossa*, but suited to the times and places of the mission, open to the culture of the place and

⁵¹ It was the first photograph Don Bosco specifically wanted, and he made use of the services of the well-known and expensive, Turin studio of Michele Schemboche. Don Bosco wanted to immortalise the event for posterity and to publicise it. Mr Giovanni B. Gazzolo, the consul of Argentina, who had come from Savona, is wearing a splendid uniform; the missionaries are dressed in the Spanish manner, with the characteristic cloak, and the crucifix on display; Don Bosco is wearing a cassock for formal occasions. “We can therefore consider this picture as symbolic of him, his ‘official photograph’” (GIUSEPPE SOLDÀ, *Don Bosco nella fotografia dell’800 (1861-1888)*, SEI, Torino 1987, p. 124).

⁵² “We can say that in the Constitutions we have all of Don Bosco; in them his unique ideas about the salvation of souls; in them his perfection with the holy vows; in them his spirit of sweetness, amiability, tolerance, piety, charity and sacrifice” (DON FILIPPO RINALDI, “Il Giubileo d’oro delle nostre Costituzioni”, *ACS* 23 [1924] p. 177).

⁵³ “Make every point in the Holy Rule a souvenir of me” (MB X, p. 647. Cf. MB XVII, p. 296).

⁵⁴ Don Bosco, *Memorie dal 1841 al 1884-5-6 pel sac. Gio. Bosco a’ suoi figliuoli salesiani* [Testamento spirituale]. Edizione critica curata da Francesco Motto. Cf. PIETRO BRAIDO (ed.), *Don Bosco Educatore, scritti e testimonianze*, LAS, Roma 1997, p. 410.

⁵⁵ AA.VV., *The Project of Life of the Salesians of Don Bosco*. A guide to the Salesian Constitutions, SDB Publications, Rome 1986, p. 80.

of the young, a practice which, in addition to ensuring that we obey his words and make our own his choices, is a credible expression of our “staying with him” and a filial commitment to “doing as he did” for the salvation of the young. Don Bosco will be able to accompany us wherever we may be sent, he will comfort and console us, he will protect and guide us, if we associate ourselves closely *with him* living *like him*. Living the Constitutions is to incarnate Don Bosco: the Salesian who practises the Constitutions represents Don Bosco and makes him return among the young. For them nothing is more urgent: they need him, they have a right to him.

“Some special souvenirs”

In the address he gave at the solemn and moving farewell celebration for the first Salesian missionaries⁵⁶ on 11 November 1875, Don Bosco promised to leave them “some written mementos that would be a father’s testament to the sons he would perhaps never see again. He had jotted them down in a notebook while on a recent trip by train. He had had copies made, and he gave one to each missionary as he left the altar of Mary Help of Christians.”⁵⁷

Written in his own hand and almost without any corrections, the short text appeared to be a collection of a variety of pieces of advice mainly of an ascetical nature; but in fact they are, “notes for a very practical treatise on missionary ministry,”⁵⁸ “a short synthesis of missionary ministry and spirituality,”⁵⁹ based on four key ideas: zeal for the salvation of souls; fraternal, apostolic and

⁵⁶ A moving and contemporary chronicle of the event can be found in CESARE CHIALA, *Da Torino alla Repubblica Argentina*. Lettere dei missionari salesiani, in *Letture Cattoliche* 286-287 (1876) pp. 41-60; “Partenza dei missionari salesiani per la Repubblica Argentina”, in *L’Unità Cattolica* 266 (1875) p. 1062; MB XI, pp. 590-591.

⁵⁷ MB XI, p. 364-5.

⁵⁸ ANGEL MARTÍN, *Origen de las Misiones Salesianas*. La evangelización de las gentes según el pensamiento de San Juan Bosco, Instituto Teológico Salesiano, Guatemala 1978, p. 172.

⁵⁹ PIETRO BRAIDO, *Don Bosco prete dei giovani nel secolo delle libertà*. Vol. II, LAS, Roma ³2009, p. 156.

educational charity; a profound religious life and aspects of missionary strategy.

When Don Bosco drew up the 'Souvenirs' between September and October 1875, his missionary experience was limited, and that of his sons non-existent. He was writing shortly before sending the first expedition, forced by circumstances and full of paternal concern regarding his young missionaries and "he did his best to make them happy, giving generously of the treasury of his experience"⁶⁰, an experience acquired through contact, personal or by letter, with great missionaries during and after the First Vatican Council, and which he himself would continue to reflect on during the succeeding years while carrying out his missionary project in America.⁶¹

In spite of this, Don Bosco repeatedly insisted that the 'Souvenirs' should not be forgotten. The first missionaries were still on the high seas on the way to Argentina and he already asked Fr Cagliero to read "together the souvenirs I gave you before your departure,"⁶² and it was a request he would often repeat.⁶³ In fact, during the decade 1875-1885 his correspondence consisted solely in "a strong recommendation, explicit or implic, about the 'Souvenirs,'"⁶⁴

Why did Don Bosco give such importance to these pieces of advice, even though he was not an experienced missionary and he did not have any specific competence in the area? Without

⁶⁰ BM XI 366. Cf. CESARE CHIALA, *Da Torino alla Repubblica Argentina. Lettere dei missionari salesiani*, in *Lecture Cattoliche* 286-287 (1876) pp. 57-58.

⁶¹ Thus AGOSTINO FAVALE, *Il progetto missionario di Don Bosco e i suoi presupposti storico-dottrinali*, LAS, Roma 1976, p. 76; FRANCIS DESRAMAUT, *Il pensiero missionario di Don Bosco. Dagli scritti e discorsi del 1870-1885*, in *Missioni Salesiane 1875-1975*, LAS, Roma 1976, pp. 49-50.

⁶² *Letter to Don Cagliero* (04.12.1875): *Epistolario* II Ceria, p. 531.

⁶³ Cf. *Letter to Don Cagliero* (14.11.1876): *Epistolario* III Ceria, p. 113; *Lettera a Don Valentiino Cassinis* (07.03.1876): *Epistolario* III Ceria, p. 27.

⁶⁴ JESÚS BORREGO, "Recuerdos de San Juan Bosco a los primeros misioneros. Edición crítica - Posibles fuentes - Breve comentario en la correspondencia de Don Bosco", *RSS* 4 (1988) p. 181, nel quale sono citate parecchie lettere di Don Bosco ai missionari in Argentina.

doubt it was because he was very concerned that his young missionaries should cultivate religious life, personal and community, remaining faithful to the typically Salesian way of life; he considered this even more important than being and presenting themselves as able apostles and competent missionaries. Everything was based on the awareness that the mission in Argentina was the first *missio ad gentes* that he had undertaken, that his young missionaries would have to create a new form of apostolate, both among the emigrants and with the indigenous peoples, that they would have to transplant a charism not yet well defined and, what was more, far from himself and from the religious and cultural environment in which they had grown up.

In my opinion, in the 'Souvenirs to the missionaries' one can see the preoccupation of the Founder, almost the apprehension of the Father⁶⁵ regarding the fate of the mission; and this from the dawn of the stupendous Salesian enterprise as was the presence in Argentina. Some suggestions should also be noted in order to be an incentive for missionary activities and foundations, and even more determining, ***some sound advice for safely facing up to the present challenge of the inculturation of the Salesian charism***. What I am about to refer to is certainly not everything that has to be done, but, and I am convinced of this, it is the essential; there can be other things, but this must not be missing. *It is Don Bosco who is speaking to us:*

«We want souls and nothing else »

The supreme objective, the fundamental reason, the *point of departure and the criterion for the assessment* for any kind of

⁶⁵ In the farewell address Don Bosco said to the missionaries: "I only say that even though in this moment my soul is saddened at the thought of your departure, my heart is greatly consoled in seeing our Congregation strengthened." "Never forget that here in Italy you have a father who loves you in the Lord, and a Congregation that thinks of you in every circumstance, provides for your needs and will always welcome you as brothers" (BM XI pp. 361.362).

effort in Salesian inculturation is not different – nor could it be – from that of the Congregation, that is the salvation of souls, nothing else. Don Bosco repeats it to the missionaries from the very start, in his words of farewell (“God [...] for the good of their souls is sending you”⁶⁶) and in the first of the souvenirs he gives them (“Seek souls and not money, honours or dignities”⁶⁷). He will repeat this constantly in his letters to the youngest missionaries – a significant fact.⁶⁸ Ten years later Fr Lasagna was to write: “We want souls and nothing else, Make this resound in the ears of our confreres.” And on his death bed, in a moment of “great anguish,” to Bishop Cagliero he said just these words: “Save many souls in the missions.”⁶⁹

«Always remember that God wants us to exert all our energies for poor and abandoned children»

Among the characteristic features of Don Bosco’s missionary strategy the most distinctive and significant was his “choice of the working classes”, “a constant and unwavering choice which follows the two parallel lines of the poor and the young ... In mission lands this is as clear as the sun.”⁷⁰ Don Bosco wanted the fundamental option, his personally and that of the young Congregation, to be transplanted in America by his first missionaries: he shows this in the fifth piece of advice (“Take special care of the sick, the children, the aged and the poor”⁷¹), which he was to repeat with almost the same words

⁶⁶ BM XI, p.360.

⁶⁷ BM XI, p. 364.

⁶⁸ Cf. *Lettera* al chierico A. Paseri (31.01.1881): *Epistolario* IV Ceria, p. 10; *Lettera* al chierico A. Peretto (31.01.1881): *Epistolario* IV Ceria, p. 11; *Lettera* al chierico L. Calcagno (31.01.1881): *Epistolario* IV Ceria, p. 13; *Lettera* al chierico J. Rodríguez (31.01.1881): *Epistolario* IV Ceria, p. 17.

⁶⁹ BM XVIII, p. 449.

⁷⁰ SEBASTIANO CARD. BAGGIO, “La formula missionaria salesiana”, in *Centenario delle Missioni Salesiane 1875-1975*. Discorsi commemorativi, LAS, Roma 1980, p.43.

⁷¹ BM XI, p. 364.

ten years later: “take special care of the children, the sick and the aged.”⁷²

A year had not passed since the first expedition and he was already thinking about sending another “twenty heroes for the other world”, when he writes to Don Cagliero: “Do what you can to gather together poor young boys, but give the preference to those, if it is possible to have them, who come from among the indigenous peoples”,⁷³ and a fortnight later he was insisting: “Always remember that God wants our efforts to be directed towards the Pampas and Patagonia and towards poor and abandoned children.”⁷⁴ That this special concern was not merely an opportunistic tactic is clear from his ‘Testament,’ when, after having wished for the Congregation “a happy future ahead” “prepared by Divine Providence,” he adds: “The world will always welcome us as long as all our concern is for the under-developed peoples, for poor children, for those members of society most in danger,”⁷⁵ To serve and evangelise the young, and among these those most in need, is the reason for our being in the Church (C. 6), an element “very specifically part of Don Bosco’s charism”.⁷⁶ In the places where we are sent we must choose the young, and among these the most wayward or abandoned, if we want to be true Salesians. It is up to us, present throughout the world and close to so many young people, to incarnate God and to inculturate the Salesian mission.

⁷² Letter to don Pietro Allavena (24.09.1885): *Epistolario* IV Ceria, p. 339.

⁷³ Letter to don Giovanni Cagliero (13.07.1876): *Epistolario* III Ceria, p. 72.

⁷⁴ Letter to don Giovanni Cagliero (01.08.1876): *Epistolario* III Ceria, p. 81. Don Cagliero presto se ne persuaderà.

⁷⁵ BM XVII, p. 250. Don Bosco, *Memorie dal 1841 al 1884-5-6 pel sac. Gio. Bosco a’ suoi figliuoli salesiani* [Testamento spirituale]. Edizione critica curata da Francesco Motto. Cf. PIETRO BRAIDO (ed.), *Don Bosco Educatore, scritti e testimonianze*, LAS, Roma ³1997, p. 437.

⁷⁶ PASCUAL CHÁVEZ, Concluding Address at the GC 26, in “*Da mihi animas, cetera tolle*”. Chapter Documents GC26, S.D.B. Publishers, Rome 2008, p. 138.

«A mission having been started, efforts should always be made to set up and consolidate schools»

The missionaries sent by Don Bosco to Argentina did not 'have to' open schools to assist the Italian immigrants nor to evangelise the indigenous people. If they took the risk of doing so it was on Don Bosco's precise instructions. "Once a foreign mission has been founded," he said in the "Spiritual Testament" it shall be continued with energy and spirit of sacrifice. Always concentrate your efforts on opening schools."⁷⁷ This is in fact the missionary strategy put into practice in Patagonia, so that Don Bosco himself said: "I just want to spend the remaining days of my life"⁷⁸, which he did entirely in the field of education: "opening colleges in the towns bordering the lands of the Indians, welcoming there the sons of the indigenous people, and through them drawing close to the adults. It was a tactic similar to the one which his long experience as an educator and director of schools had found effective in civilised places."⁷⁹

For Don Bosco, the *Missio ad gentes* and education were not two different or successive apostolic activities; he was convinced (and this is a particular characteristic of his way of carrying out the mission in the Church)⁸⁰ that in order to have an

⁷⁷ BM XVII, p. 250. Don Bosco, *Memorie dal 1841 al 1884-5-6 pel sac. Gio. Bosco a' suoi figliuoli salesiani* [Testamento spirituale]. Edizione critica curata da Francesco Motto. Cf. PIETRO BRAIDO (ed.), *Don Bosco Educatore, scritti e testimonianze*, LAS, Roma ³1997, p. 438.

⁷⁸ Don Bosco, *Letter to Card. Alessandro Franchi* (10.05.1876): *Epistolario III* Ceria, p. 60.

⁷⁹ PIETRO STELLA, *Don Bosco nella Storia della Religiosità cattolica*. Vol I: Vita e Opere, LAS, Rome ²1979, p. 174. Cf. JESÚS BORREGO, "Estrategia misionera de Don Bosco, in Pietro Braido (ed.), *Don Bosco nella Chiesa a servizio dell'umanità*. Studi e testimonianze, LAS, Rome 1987, pp. 152-164.

⁸⁰ The priority given by Don Bosco to education soon gave rise to surprise and some criticism: "Some people are saying that in Don Bosco's missions in America they are now only concerned with opening colleges and setting up hostels" (GIOVANNI B. FRANCESIA, *Francesco Ramello, chierico salesiano, missionario nell'America del Sud*, Tip. Salesiana, San Benigno Canavese 1888, p. 117). Fr P. Colbachini, a Missionary of St Charles (Scalabrinian), wrote to a priest friend of his in 1887: "The Salesians in Rio,

effective mission it was necessary to make great efforts in the education of youth. "The corner stone and the vital principle of Salesian missionary practice is [...] the redemption of unbelievers by means of the ministry of education among the youth and the children ... Where the mission is a Salesian one, along side and together with the priestly role there should be the school ministry and teaching. All Salesian houses [...] are a school ..., a specific means for evangelisation."⁸¹

This strategic choice of Don Bosco, my dear confreres, should make us think; it is an invitation to rethink and perhaps even, and why not, reorganise our apostolate: if the young are "the home ground of our mission" (Fr Egidio Viganò), their education is the ordinary way in which we reach out to them, and the stable way of being with them as bearers of the Gospel. A presence of ours which is not clearly educative, a Province which does not promote the formation, formal or informal, of the young, ... how can it be called Salesian? To multiply and reinforce the education we offer in the whole world and in each of our works is the right way to inculturate our charism.

«God called the poor Salesian Congregation to promote ecclesiastical vocations among poor youth»

Once a mission was begun, the effort to set up schools had as its aim "cultivating vocations for the priesthood and finding some sisters among the girls."⁸² For Don Bosco the forming of vocations was the "hidden" project which guided his most im-

in San Paolo, in Montevideo, Buenos Aires, and all the Salesians in the world, except for a few in Patagonia, don't concern themselves with the mission [...] They become teachers and directors of colleges of arts and trades ...: it is a great mission, but it is very different from what most people would think" (M. FRANCESCONI, *Inizi della Congregazione Scalabriniana (1886-1888)*, CSE, Roma 1969, p. 104).

⁸¹ ALBERTO CAVIGLIA, "La concezione missionaria di Don Bosco e le sue attuazioni salesiane", in *Omnis terra adoret Te* 24 (1932) pp. 5-10.12.20.24-26.

⁸² BM XVII, 250. Don Bosco, *Memorie dal 1841 al 1884-5-6 pel sac. Gio. Bosco a' suoi figliuoli salesiani* [Testamento spirituale]. Edizione critica curata da Francesco Motto. Cf. PIETRO BRAIDO (ed.), *Don Bosco Educatore, scritti e testimonianze*, LAS, Roma 1997, p. 438.

portant decisions, especially in the field of education.⁸³ As he wrote in his 'Spiritual Testament,' he was convinced that "God called on the poor Salesian Congregation to foster ecclesiastical vocations among boys who were poor or of low social status."⁸⁴

Scarcely six months had passed since the first expedition when, in July 1876, he asked for and received permission to open a novitiate in America; the Salesians – just ten and very young⁸⁵ – had discovered, he tells Pius IX, "some boys who show a desire to become priests, and seven of these having made their request were accepted into the Salesian Congregation. It is their desire to become missionaries and, they say, to go to preach to the under-developed peoples."⁸⁶

As well as indicating the enthusiasm for vocations which the presence of the young missionaries provoked, this note also reveals Don Bosco's firmest intentions: to see to it that "the Patagonians evangelise the Patagonians". For him to have native vocations was "the most suitable means to attract adults to the faith, to give to Patagonia its new Christian and civilised face."⁸⁷ Native vocations therefore were the priority means in advancing and ensuring education and evangelisation in the missions. "They [vocations] have already begun to appear among the local people and I hope that from this in a few years only an occasional expedition [of new missionaries] will be necessary."

⁸³ Cf. ARTHUR J. LENTI, *Don Bosco. Historia y Carisma*. I: Origen: De I Becchi a Valdocco. Juan J. Bartolomé - Jesús G. Graciliano (eds.), CCS, Madrid 2010, pp. 495-96; ARTHUR J. LENTI, *Don Bosco. Historia y Carisma*. II: Expansión: De Valdocco a Roma. Juan J. Bartolomé - Jesús G. Graciliano (eds.), CCS, Madrid 2011, pp. 558-559. 574.

⁸⁴ BM XVII, p. 236. Don Bosco, *Memorie dal 1841 al 1884-5-6 pel sac. Gio. Bosco a' suoi figliuoli salesiani* [Testamento spirituale]. Edizione critica curata da Francesco Motto. Cf. PIETRO BRAIDO (ed.), *Don Bosco Educatore, scritti e testimonianze*, LAS, Roma³1997, p. 415.

⁸⁵ All between the 37 years of age of Don Cagliero and the 20 of the cleric Giovanni B. Allavena.

⁸⁶ Cf. MB XII, p. 659. *Letter to Pius IX* (07.1876): *Epistolario* III Ceria, p. 70,

⁸⁷ PIETRO SCOPPOLA, *Commemorazione civile di Don Giovanni Bosco nel centenario della sua morte*. Tipografia Don Bosco, Roma 1988, 22.

"Wherever you go," he writes to Don Fagnano, just appointed Prefect Apostolic of Southern Patagonia – "try to set up schools, set up junior seminaries too, so as to cultivate, or at least seek out some vocations for the Sisters and for the Salesians."⁸⁸ And in the report presented to Leo XIII, he will list among the purposes of the Salesian missions in America, "to open hostels close to the indigenous peoples so that they may serve as junior seminaries for the most poor and abandoned. In this way we are making progress in propagating the gospel among the Indians."⁸⁹

Don Bosco was so convinced of the urgent need for vocation promotion among the natives, and of the immediate success it would have, that before sending the missionaries, he offers them, again among the 'Souvenirs,' a "small treatise" for the cultivation of *ecclesiastical* vocations, concentrated entirely on love, prevention and frequent reception of the sacraments.⁹⁰

That he did not see his dream fulfilled during his lifetime,⁹¹ does not weaken but rather re-enforces the strength of his conviction. Like him, we Salesians, "are convinced that many young people are rich in spiritual potential and give indications of an apostolic vocation" (C. 28). The lack of vocations experienced in some Provinces and the vocational frailty which occurs to some extent everywhere challenge us even more than in

⁸⁸ Letter to Don Fagnano (10.08.1885): *Epistolario* IV Ceria, p. 334. "If in the missions and in any other way you come across a young man who gives some hope of the priesthood, be aware that God is placing a treasure in your hands" (Letter to Don Pietro Allavena (24.09.1885): *Epistolario* IV Ceria, p. 339. The italics are mine)

⁸⁹ *Memoriale* on the Salesian Missions presented to Leo XIII (13.04.1880): *Epistolario* III Ceria, p. 569.

⁹⁰ JESÚS BORREGO, "Recuerdos de San Juan Bosco a los primeros misioneros. Edición crítica – Posibles fuentes – Breve comentario en la correspondencia de Don Bosco", *RSS* 4 (1988) p. 203. The 18th piece of advice can be found on p. 208. In the 'Spiritual Testament' he will bring together and amplify these points regarding vocation ministry.

⁹¹ There was to be a delay until 1900 before in the aspirantate in Bernal, Argentina, there were two sons of natives among the 12 coming from the region of Río Negro (LINO CARBAJAL, *Le missioni salesiane nella Patagonia e regioni magallaniche*. Historical-statistical Study, Salesian Press, San Benigno Canavese 1900, p. 104).

Don Bosco's day to create "a vocation culture in every setting, such that young people may discover life as a call."⁹²

A ministry, which, even if well-planned and effective in its results, does not promote a vocation culture in our centres would not be Salesian. The norm, criterion and the process of the inculturation of the Salesian charism has been and should remain the promotion of vocations in the Church. The revival in vocations is not only a proof of the effectiveness of our apostolic work; even more it is the fulfilment of our specific charism.

«*Absolutely all of you can become true evangelical labourers*»

In transplanting the Salesian life and mission in America, Don Bosco always relied on all the means he could possibly find, whether in his religious family, in the Church or in society. First among them all were the Salesian Brothers, who were never missing from any expedition starting with the first; in fact, among the eight pioneers of the mission in Patagonia, in January 1880, there would also be a Brother, as Don Bosco had promised the Archbishop of Buenos Aires, not only to do catechetical work,⁹³ but also to teach "agriculture with the more usual arts and crafts."⁹⁴

More characteristic of Don Bosco's mind was the numerous presence in very quick time of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. The first six Salesian Sisters – three of them were in their teens, while the Superior, Sr. Angela Vallese, was only 24 years of age – joined Don Bosco's missionary project in the

⁹² GC26, 53.

⁹³ "Don Bosco gave them the official title of catechists" (CESARE CHIALA, *Da Torino alla Repubblica Argentina. Lettere dei missionari salesiani*, in *Lettere Cattoliche* 286-287 (1876), p. 36.

⁹⁴ Letter to Mons. Aneiros (13.09.1879): RAÚL A. ENTRAIGAS, *Los Salesianos en la Argentina*. III, Plus Ultra, Buenos Aires 1969, p. 85

third expedition, at the end of 1877.⁹⁵ Their presence was quite a novelty: "it is the first time there will be Sisters [...] in those remote regions." But soon it was seen as providential; their proverbial charity contributed "very considerably, without any doubt, to the conversion of the Indians,"⁹⁶ and to the education of poor and abandoned girls. By 1884 they had educated about a hundred girls and brought the same number to an edifying life. In 1900 there were already the first native professed.⁹⁷ Sharing the same missionary practice, Salesians and Salesian Sisters together transplanted the Salesian life and charism in America.

"Co-apostles of Patagonia", "an instrument in the salvation of thousands of young children,"⁹⁸ were the Cooperators, already present and at work in the old and in the new continent, and seen by Don Bosco as his external face, the moral, spiritual and material support of his apostolic endeavours. When "officially invited to take over the care of Patagonia," he says that "the time of mercy has come for those indigenous people," writing to the Cooperators declaring that only "full of trust in God and in your charity I accepted this arduous enterprise."⁹⁹ Faith in God and confidence in the charity of good souls were the resources which underpinned his apostolic dreams. For this reason he saw the presence of Cooperators "almost as a necessity for every Salesian house so that it can have life and increase."¹⁰⁰

⁹⁵ BM XIII, pp. 235.241-243.

⁹⁶ "Los verdaderos héroes del desierto", in *La América del Sur* 4 (1880) 1152.

⁹⁷ Cf LINO CARBAJAL, *Le missione salesiane nella Patagonia e regione magallaniche*. Historical-statistical Study, Salesian Press, San Benigno Canavese 1900, pp. 63-64. 104-105.

⁹⁸ "Three thoughts of Don Bosco to the Cooperators" (28.01.1886), in *Bollettino Salesiano* 3 (1886) p. 32.

⁹⁹ Cf. "Don Bosco ai benemeriti Cooperatori e Cooperatrici", in *Bollettino Salesiano* 1 (1886) p. 3. In preparing the expedition in 1886 he once again appealed to their charity: "listen with me to the voice of the dear missionaries and to the cry which so many of the poor of those far-off lands raise to us" (*Circolare ai Cooperatori* [15.10.1886]: *Epistolario* IV Ceria, p. 362).

¹⁰⁰ "Monsignor Cagliero nel Chili", in *Bollettino Salesiano* 9 (1887) 110.

Always under pressure to respond to the missionaries' need "for personnel and money", Don Bosco wanted to increase the group of the Cooperators: young people and adults, priests and laity, bishops and even the Pope¹⁰¹ were invited by him to take up his apostolic project: "all of you here," he will say in his famous conference at Valdocco on 19 March 1876, "priests, students, artisans and coadjutors, all of you can become true evangelical labourers in the Lord's vineyard."¹⁰²

There is no doubt; having seen the unlimited horizons of his missionary project and conscious of his own insufficiency and that of his institutions, Don Bosco sought ever wider forms of collaboration, giving rise in fact and quite intentionally to a movement both ecclesial and civil, "a vast movement of persons who, in different ways work for the salvation of the young" [and who] live in communion with each other, share the same spirit.. continue the mission he began" (C. 5). Making the Salesian Family "a true apostolic movement on behalf of the young"¹⁰³ is for us, not only a way of acting so as to change hearts, minds and structures, but a good way to inculturate the charism. It is an expression of fidelity to Don Bosco. It is up to us to make our own what Don Bosco had so much at heart, and to promote it in his way and for the same ends.

«Let the world know that you are poor»

First among the 'Souvenirs,' as though it were the basic principle of the evangelising efforts of the missionaries, Don Bosco wrote: "Seek souls and not money." He was not unfamiliar with the situation in which most of the Italian priests who had come to accompany the thousands of immigrants were living in Argentina. "It pains me deeply to say this," the arch-

¹⁰¹ Cf. *Letter* to Don Giovanni Cagliero (01.08.1876): *Epistolario* III Ceria, p. 81. MB XIII pp. 496, 606

¹⁰² BM XII, p. 459.

¹⁰³ GC26, 31.

bishop of Buenos Aires wrote "but the majority come to make money and nothing else."¹⁰⁴

Precisely because the shortage of resources, of personnel and funding was proverbial in Don Bosco's apostolic undertakings, and since "ours ought to be real poverty ... in our rooms, our clothes, our food, books and journeys, etc.,"¹⁰⁵ the first missionaries lived in straightened circumstances and in the midst of great difficulties; when Fr Tomatis was asked what they usually ate in community, he replied with a smile: "In the morning bread and onions; in the evening onions and bread."¹⁰⁶

It is not surprising that Don Bosco did not insist too much on this subject in the letters he sent to the missionaries; he seemed to be more concerned, and considerably so, about the debts incurred, the restitution of loans, which was a topic contained in the regular communications to the Cooperators. His was a poverty which was austere, industrious, full of ideas ("in our straightened circumstances we shall make every sacrifice to come to your aid"¹⁰⁷), supported by an unfailing trust in Providence. But precisely for this reason, since the first missionary communities survived "on loans and without any organised cooperation"¹⁰⁸, much more significant is Don Bosco's advice: "Let the world know that you are poor in clothing, food and abode, and you will be rich in the eyes of God and will win the hearts of men."

For Don Bosco poverty in one's personal life was an indisputable virtue, but not a lack of means in the works of educa-

¹⁰⁴ Letter of Mons. Aneiros to Don Bosco (18.12.1875): MB XI, p. 603.

¹⁰⁵ MB IX, p. 701.

¹⁰⁶ *Cronaca di San Nicolás de los Arroyos* (1875-1876) pag. 10: ASC F910.

¹⁰⁷ Letter to Don Giovanni Cagliero (06.08.1885): *Epistolario IV* Ceria, p. 328. Cf. Letter to Don Giacomo Costamagna (31.01.1881): *Epistolario IV* Ceria, p. 7; *Circolare ai Cooperatori Salesiani* (15.10.1886): *Epistolario IV* Ceria, pp. 360-363.

¹⁰⁸ JUAN E. BELZA, *Luis Lasagna, el obispo misionero*. Introducción a la historia salesiana del Uruguay, el Brasil y el Paraguay, Editorial Don Bosco, Buenos Aires 1969, p. 169.

tion.¹⁰⁹ As the fundamental recommendation addressed to all Salesians, he left written in his 'Spiritual Testament': "Love poverty [...] Let no one be able to say: these furnishings do not suggest poverty, the poor do not eat or dress or have rooms like this. Whoever gives cause for remarks of this kind brings disaster upon our Congregation, which must be able to pride itself on its vow of poverty. Woe to us if those from whom we seek alms are able to say that we live an easier life than they do." And he linked the future of the Congregation to the poverty of life of its members: "Divine Providence has prepared a happy future for our Congregation [...] When the desire for ease and comfort grows up among us our pious Society will have run its course."

As Jesus sent his first apostles as poor men ordering them not to take anything for the journey, since they had the gospel (cf. *Mk* 6,8), Don Bosco wanted his Salesians to be poor so as to have their treasure in poor youth: "all our concern is for the under-developed peoples, for poor children, for those members of society most in danger. This is our real wealth which no one will envy and no one will take from us."¹¹⁰

Those for whom we work in the first place, the young people most in need are the reason for our 'espousing' apostolic poverty, our witness of it "helps the young to overcome their selfish possessive instinct and opens them to the Christian sense of sharing" (C. 73). Proclaiming with our life that God is our only treasure, detaches us from everything that makes us insensitive to God while it opens us up and makes us available to the needs of the young. Truly living evangelical poverty wherever we have been sent, in addition to realising the true meaning of *cetera tolle*, helps us to incarnate the Salesian

¹⁰⁹ An anecdote told by Don Rinaldi about Don Bosco's thoughts on Salesian poverty can be found in: BM XIV, pp. 435.

¹¹⁰ Don Bosco, *Memorie dal 1841 al 1884-5-6 pel sac. Gio. Bosco a' suoi figliuoli salesiani* [Testamento spirituale]. Edizione critica curata da Francesco Motto. Cf. PIETRO BRAIDO (ed.), *Don Bosco Educatore, scritti e testimonianze*, LAS, Roma³1997, p. 435. 437-438.

charism: it is in fact a sure criterion which guides its implantation and provides a means of assessment wherever and whenever it is implemented.

«With the gentleness of Saint Francis of Sales the Salesians will draw to Jesus Christ the peoples of America»

Don Bosco thought of the missionary activity in America as a continuation of what he had done and was considering doing in Turin and in the other foundations in Europe. "The cherished objectives of this mission" he wrote to the Pope were "to make provision for the Italians and to try something in the pampas [...] The first is already in hand [...] With regard to the second, to bring the gospel to the under-developed peoples, it has been determined to open colleges, hostels, centres near those tribes."¹¹¹ The Salesian preferred option for schools and for the young in the missions was for Don Bosco a well-established conviction; however, evangelising *by educating* or as he put it "drawing close to the great mass of the people through the education of poor youth", was, in so far as it was a missionary method, a novelty which was not intelligible to everyone. In addition, although already in use it could lead to some failures, since as Don Bosco thought, "those to whom the education of the young is entrusted either do not use a suitable method, or are lacking in the right spirit, or are not capable."¹¹²

Therefore in the 'Souvenirs' for the missionaries, he again draws attention to the Preventive System. In fact there was no real need. In sending his own people to mission lands, all he did was to transplant the major options, the pedagogical method and the style of education which he had used at Valdocco, and in which his missionaries had grown up and been educated. Nevertheless he was to insist on apostolic charity ("Seek souls ...",

¹¹¹ Official Report to Pius IX (16.06.1876), page 4: ASC A8290109.

¹¹² Don GIULIO BARBERIS, *Cronichetta*, Quaderno 8, pag. 75: ASC A0000108. Cf. MB XII, pp. 279-280.

“take special cure of the sick, of the young, of the old and of the poor ...) experienced as both fraternal charity (*“Love one another advise one another correct one another, and never be carried away by anger or rancour, let the good of one be the good of all ...)*¹¹³ and pedagogical charity (*“Charity, patience and gentleness, no humiliating reprimands, no punishments ever. Be kind to everyone you can reach, and do no harm to anybody. This applies to the Salesians whether they are among themselves, the pupils, the boarders or others”*)¹¹⁴.

Although Don Bosco took for granted the practice of his style of education, it was not easy to transplant it in American lands. Not all the Salesian houses, Don Rua writes to Bishop Cagliero, “are directed with gentleness and with the preventive system”; and Don Bosco was to send to Don Costamagna, the Provincial from 1880, after the death of Don Bodrato, a letter which could be considered a short treatise on the Founder’s thinking about education: “The preventive system really is our own; never harsh punishments, never words which humiliate, no severe reproaches in the presence of others ... Use should be made of negative punishments, and always in a way so that those who are warned become our friends more than before, and never go away feeling humiliated by us ... Gentleness in speech, in action, in advising wins over everything and everyone.”¹¹⁵

Today as yesterday, in other continents just as in the past it was in America, there are real challenges to putting the preventive system into practice, due to cultural reasons, or to changes in the world of youth. First of all one notes, here and there, difficulty in understanding it and putting it into practice, and often a attitude towards to the young which is not Salesian is justified

¹¹³ BM XI, pp. 364-365. JESÚS BORREGO, “Recuerdos de San Juan Bosco a los primeros misioneros. Edición crítica – Posibles fuentes – Breve comentario en la correspondencia de Don Bosco”, *RSS* 4 (1988) pp. 207-208.

¹¹⁴ BM XVII, p. 578

¹¹⁵ *Letter to Don Giacomo Costamagna* (10.08.1885): *Epistolario* IV Ceria, pp. 332-333.

on the grounds that, in that part of the world it is for adults to speak and take the lead, and that all the young have to do is obey. In other cases, the educational method is marked by an authoritarian style which leaves no room for reason and much less for loving kindness. Finally, in other parts of the world, it becomes really difficult to know how to interpret and to incarnate the preventive system, especially where cultural changes have brought the young to a high level of self sufficiency, so that they feel that they have all the rights possible without any of the responsibility.

It is absolutely necessary to know the preventive system well if we are to develop its great potential, modernise its applications, re-interpret its great basic ideas (the greater glory of God and the salvation of souls; a living faith, a firm hope, theological-pastoral charity; the good Christian and the upright citizen; cheerfulness, study and piety; health, study and holiness; piety, morality, culture; evangelisation and civilisation), the great methodological guidelines (making oneself loved before making oneself feared; reason, religion, loving kindness; father, brother, friend; friendliness especially in recreation; winning over the heart; plenty of freedom to jump, run, shout at will). All of this for the formation of new young people capable of changing this world.

I feel I really must say that the preventive system is an essential element of our charism, which needs to be known, updated according to philosophical, anthropological, theological, scientific, historical and pedagogical developments, and that its inculturation in the varied contexts - economic, social, political, cultural and religious in which those we work for are living is indispensable, if we really want to be faithful to Don Bosco and to inculturate his charism. I would dare to say that this is one of the most urgent tasks facing the Congregation.

«Constantly promote devotion to Mary Help of Christians and to the Blessed Sacrament»

An essential element in the Salesian mission is *the presence of Mary*, a typically evangelical conviction (cf. *Jn* 2,1.12; *Acts* 1,14) and a certainty of faith deeply lived by Don Bosco.¹¹⁶ This active presence of Mary in the life of the Church has been well-described by the title of Help of Christians. Don Bosco's souvenir to the missionaries recommends this "devotion" which needs to be carefully cultivated. "Here not a day shall pass," he said in his farewell address, "without our praying for them [the first missionaries] to Mary Help of Christians, and I believe that Mary who now blesses their departure, will not fail to bless the progress of their mission."¹¹⁷

With the use of the title of "Mary Help of Christians" the Salesian charism is opened up to the missionary dimension, and a feature of Salesian missionary activity is the spreading among the people of devotion to Mary Help of Christians, the celebration of the principal Marian feasts, the publication of booklets and holy pictures, the building of Marian churches in every part of the world, the visible expression of the diffusion of Don Bosco's apostolic and educational charism. "The Holy Virgin Mary" – he wrote in his 'Spiritual Testament' "will continue most certainly to protect our Congregation and Salesian houses, if we persevere in our trust in her and continue promoting her devotion."¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶ It is Don Bosco's constant wish and prayer for the missionaries: May Mary guide you to win many souls, and to reach heaven: cf. *Letter* to Mons. Cagliero (10.02.1885): *Epistolario* IV Ceria, p. 314; *Letter* to Don Costamagna (10.08.1885): *Epistolario* IV Ceria, p. 333; *Letter* to Don Tomatis (14.08.1885): *Epistolario* IV Ceria, p. 337; *Letter* to Don Lasagna (30.09.1885): *Epistolario* IV Ceria, pp. 340-341.

¹¹⁷ BM XI, p. 361. On the eve of the departure Don Bosco gave Don Cagliero a list of recommendations and errands he had written down, which ended like this: "Do the best you can: God will do what we cannot do. Leave everything to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and to Mary Help of Christians and you will realise what miracles are" (BM XI, p. 369).

¹¹⁸ BM XVII, p. 235. Don Bosco, *Memorie dal 1841 al 1884-5-6 pel sac. Gio. Bosco a' suoi figliuoli salesiani* [Testamento spirituale]. Edizione critica curata da Francesco Motto. Cf. PIETRO BRAIDO (ed.), *Don Bosco Educatore, scritti e testimonianze*, LAS, Rome ³1997, p. 415.

The tradition, uninterrupted since 1875, of consigning the crucifix to departing missionaries in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians expresses that conviction and at the same time becomes the basic condition for the renewal of the Salesian charism in all times. Mary, as she is represented in the painting by Lorenzone, is Mother of the Church and the Queen of the Apostles, who assists and accompanies Salesian work in the world. The crucifix which is consigned is an expression of the real possibility of being called by God towards horizons of generosity without limit. For so many sons of Don Bosco, courage and fidelity have made them capable of giving their lives in martyrdom.

A typical consequence of this pastoral and educational approach, which gives visible prominence to the presence of Mary Help of Christians through the building of churches and the erection of statues dedicated to her, is the victory over any tendency to take up opposing positions, and to have recourse to violence, by the promotion of a culture of peace and of reconciliation among peoples, groups and families, emphasising her presence as the “Star of Evangelisation” at the birth and expansion of the Church.

Of particular significance for us is the putting of Marian devotion side by side with the sacramental relationship with the Lord Jesus in the Eucharist. This shows that our entrustment to Mary reaches its high point in recognising her as “woman of the eucharist”¹¹⁹: the more Mary makes us eucharistic minded, so much the more she carries out her mission, that of leading us to Jesus, of making us carry Jesus within us, of teaching us to make of our lives a sacrifice pleasing to God, in union with the perfect sacrifice of the Son. In the typical Salesian way of seeing things, the work of education and evangelisation find in the re-

¹¹⁹ Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*. Encyclical letter on the Eucharist in its relationship to the Church (17.04.2003) 53-58.

lationship with the Lord Jesus and Mary the “columns,” the support and the expression of a strong faith in God to whom nothing is impossible, and trust in Mary in whom God “has done great things” (*Lk* 1,49).

What should we think, dear confreres, of Salesian foundations, sometimes more than a hundred years old, where we have not succeeded in making our youngsters and co-workers feel the maternal presence of Mary, or even worse, where we have allowed a progressive separation from Christ in the Eucharist to spread? Can we call them ‘Salesian,’ even though they continue to educate and evangelise? I sincerely believe that if we want to remain faithful to our Father’s original project, Mary has to return as the motive and guide of our evangelisation, and the Eucharist as its centre of gravity and its missionary nature.

Conclusion

My dear confreres, as a Congregation we have a splendid history of the inculturation of the Gospel in mission lands. There have been, and there still are Salesians who have fully taken their place among the people, learning their language, rebuilding their world-view, collecting their traditions and customs, writing books of grammar and dictionaries, defending their lands and their institutions, setting up federations of native peoples. It is a history of which we cannot but be proud. Our recognition, our esteem and admiration, our gratitude go to them all. None the less, in this letter I wanted rather to deal with the subject of inculturation from the point of view not so much of the gospel as of the charism, so as to indicate that in every continent (Europe, America, Asia, Africa, Oceania, and *the Digital Continent*), in every kind of context (social, political, cultural and religious) and type of work (formal education, non-formal, informal, primary level, secondary level, university level of evangelisation or mission, of social development) the charism

has to be inculturated. This is the reason for pointing out the criteria indicated by Don Bosco himself in his 'Souvenirs' to the first missionaries. In fact, these continue to be our reference point. Neither those to whom we are sent, not the mission, nor the method are optional for us. They have been given to us as an inheritance to be taken up, safeguarded and developed.

I would like to conclude with two passages as eloquent as they are demanding from the post-synod exhortation "Vita Consecrata", which, speaking precisely about the mutual enrichment of inculturation and charism says: "The challenge of inculturation ought to be taken up by consecrated persons as a call to fruitful cooperation with grace in facing cultural diversity. This presupposes serious personal preparation, mature gifts of discernment, faithful adherence to the indispensable criteria of doctrinal orthodoxy, moral integrity and ecclesial communion. Supported by the charism of their founders and foundresses, many consecrated persons have been able to approach cultures other than their own with the attitude of Jesus, who "emptied himself, taking the form of a servant" (Phil 2:7). With patient and courageous efforts to initiate dialogue, they have been successful in establishing contact with the most diverse peoples, proclaiming to all of them the way of salvation.¹²⁰ And in the following number the exhortation adds: "In turn, a genuine inculturation will help consecrated persons to live the radical nature of the Gospel according to the charism of their Institute and the character of the people with whom they come into contact. This fruitful relationship can give rise to ways of life and pastoral approaches which can bring enrichment to the whole Institute, provided that they are consistent with the founding charism and with the unifying action of the Holy Spirit."¹²¹

With you all I want to start this period of three years in preparation for the bicentenary of the birth of Don Bosco, which

¹²⁰ VC 79.

¹²¹ VC 80.

ought to be for us all a real renewal, spiritual, missionary, educational, charismatic. To Mary Help of Christians our mother and teacher I entrust each and every one of you.

Pascual Chávez V.
Fr Pascual Chávez Villanueva
Rector Major

2. GUIDELINES AND DIRECTIVES

2.1 GUIDELINES FOR APPOINTING A LAY MAN OR WOMAN AS PROVINCIAL DELEGATE FOR SOCIAL COMMUNICATION

Fr Filiberto GONZÁLEZ PLASENCIA
General Councillor for Social Communication

Our mission¹, practical needs and the Salesian *Magisterium's* understanding today of new culture and social communication², all lead us to appreciate the intrinsic relationship between education, communication, and evangelisation, and the changing times in which we live³. These lead me, after reflection with the Department team, to offer some food for thought and some criteria which can help introduce lay Provincial delegates into this field. Such individuals can share our spirit and the Salesian mission openly and in an up-to-date way in the spirit of the Church (Vatican II) and justified by our charismatic perspective (GC24). Not to take decisive steps in the social communication area means not only being left behind in the race, but finding ourselves off-track, becoming mere observers and critics of the cultural and technical evolution which is part of the lives of those to whom we are sent.

¹ C. 43: We work in the social communication sector. This is a significant field of activity which constitutes one of the apostolic priorities of the Salesian mission.

Our Founder had an instinctive grasp of the value of this means of mass education, which creates culture and spreads patterns of life; he showed great originality in the apostolic undertakings which he initiated to defend and sustain the faith of the people.

Following his example we utilize as God's gift the great possibilities which social communication offers us for education and evangelization. R 31 34, 41.

² Don EGIDIO VIGANÒ, *La Comunicazione Sociale ci interpella*, ACG 302 (p. 3-33); Don JUAN E. VECCHI, *La Comunicazione Sociale nella missione salesiana*, ACG 370 (p. 3-44); Don PASCUAL CHÁVEZ, *Con il coraggio di Don Bosco nelle nuove frontiere della Comunicazione Sociale*, ACG 390 (p. 3-57).

³ Cf. Message of His Holiness BENEDICT XVI for the XLIII World Communications Day, 2009 - *New Technologies, New Relationships. Promoting a Culture of Respect, Dialogue and Friendship*.

The Church has realised the importance of communication in the new culture. This is why Pope Benedict XVI has created a new Pontifical Council for Evangelisation and Culture, placing new evangelisation at the centre of digital culture, with its new technologies and languages. The Rector Major, Fr Pascual Chávez, when he touches on the subject, quotes GC26 104 / 5: *"... the need... to change our mentality and modify our structures, moving from...a timid attitude and sporadic presence in the media to one of responsible use and a more incisive educative and evangelising animation."* I note, and not as a secondary thing, that the Pope has appointed the Rector Major as a consultant for the new Council, because the gospel, youth and communication are the basis of the future for the Church.

It is a fact that the gradual decrease in the number of Salesians urges the vast majority of the confreres to strive for better personal and community witness and restructure Provinces and works in order to be more amongst the young, while some others, we see, try to multiply their work despite the lack of personnel, with resulting increased anxiety which leads to mental, physical, vocational exhaustion and more; some others just give in and accept the *status quo*, let things die slowly because they have lost the dream, the creative call, the passion for God and the salvation of youth. Herewith the need to recognise and value the baptised lay person and his or her valuable complementarity and cooperation in the field of religion and the Salesian mission, more so when there are few Salesian personnel trained in the field. It is one way today of being Church and walking with Don Bosco and the times.

First of all I offer some general considerations:

- We are aware of the importance of the communications Sector and its Delegation on behalf of the mission of the entire Province.
- There is a strong desire in all of us to transform our lives according to the spirit and teaching of Vatican II and the

GC24, including in this area, by sharing our spirit and mission with the laity.

- We recognise realistically that there are few Salesians specialised in the field and with little opportunity to devote themselves to it full time.
- We are aware that the burden of responsibility on an individual Salesian can lead to a fragmented personal presence, weak image, superficial interventions, poor results.
- We value lay people who have a solid Christian and Salesian preparation, with training and experience in this field, and who are capable of working in a team with other delegations and sectors for the Salesian Mission: Youth Ministry, Missions, without forgetting Formation and Economy⁴.

On the basis of these guidelines I offer some practical criteria that may be of help when it is thought appropriate to entrust the Delegation for Social Communication in a Province to a lay man or woman, a practice increasingly common in a number of our Provinces:

1. **Any kind of Delegation is within the competence of the Provincial**, so it is carried out under his leadership, direction and responsibility. Communication, therefore, as a sector of the Salesian Mission, has the Provincial at its head.
2. **The Social Communication Delegation must carry out its activities according to the principles of the charism and the Congregation:** Constitutions and Regulations, General Chapters, the *Magisterium* of the Rector Major and his Council and, in particular, the principles and guidelines of the new Salesian Social Communication System (SSCS 2011), and those which come from the SC Department.

⁴ DIREZIONE GENERALE OPERE DON BOSCO (Social Communication Department) *Guidelines for the Salesian Congregation: Salesian Social Communication System* (2nd edition), Rome 2011.

3. **The Provincial delegates leadership in SC understood as a sector, field, and cultural, social and pastoral dimension of the mission, but not the responsibility to govern**, to people with a satisfactory level of knowledge and Salesian identification who are trained and involved and not only skilled in SC.
4. **The SC Delegation, as for the Delegations for other sectors, operates in function of the Congregation's mission in a particular Province, and is part of its structure and strategic plan (OPP).** Other specific plans results from this, including the Provincial Social Communication Plan (PSCP) and, within this, but with particular relevance to it, the Provincial Social Communication Formation Plan (PSCFP).
5. The SC Delegation's service takes the form of structures and processes which do not run parallel with but **in teamwork and mutual harmony with other Delegations for the Provincial Mission**. All departments and sectors serve the mission, and from this arises the need for teamwork and harmony. Autonomy, however, is necessary because of specific content, methodologies and processes.
6. **The Provincial, in agreement with his Council, may delegate a layperson for SC leadership/animation**, preferably from the Salesian Family, beginning with an agreed trial period, and then if this is successfully completed by drawing up a contract for a determined period, but allowing, by mutual agreement, for the possibility of bringing this contract to an end if the work is not carried out as agreed in the contract. Likewise, at the conclusion of the contract, the Provincial may re-appoint the same or another lay person, or a consecrated Salesian, who can carry out this service to the Province on a full-time basis.
7. There are no people already made for a Delegation, as it is with Salesians. **Lay people must be formed over time.**

They should not be asked to be the same as religious, but they collaborate with the riches of their baptism and their specialisation for the Salesian mission, a practice introduced by Don Bosco and now supported by the Rector Major and by Salesian teaching

8. **The Provincial and his Council are to offer the SC Delegate effective support**, Salesian formation and professional development in view of personal development, the sector itself and the Salesian mission entrusted to the Province. The world today is immersed in communication and it depends on it. It is not just a question of tools, but the social, cultural, pastoral and technological environment in which we live.
9. **The Provincial will provide the Delegate with a team** with which he or she will be able to carry out the Provincial role in the best way possible and offer support by making the appointments he considers necessary.
10. **The Delegate, in agreement with the SC Team, will prepare and present communication projects for the Province (in agreement with the Delegates for YM and Missions) and for formation to communication (in agreement with the Councillor for Formation).** These will be in line with the OPP, EPP and the SSCS (Salesian Social Communication System: service, animation, formation, information and business - production), so that the Provincial and his Council can review and approve them.
11. **The Delegate will provide the Provincial and his Council with a quarterly account of planning and work and use of personal time**, according to an agreed schedule or whenever the Provincial considers it convenient (written into the work contract).
12. **It is appropriate for the SC Delegate and Delegations for Youth Ministry and Missions to work in**

close relationship – the same applies for Formation and Finance – creating stronger and increased teamwork on behalf of the Province's mission and in its service, bearing in mind the differences and respecting the variety of sectors, areas, methods, roles and tasks. They should work by mutual agreement, following written guidelines which do not depend on the personal whim of whoever is in charge at the time.

13. **If the Provincial appoints a lay person as a Coordinator** and a Salesian as Delegate, the Coordinator should also take part in national or international SC meetings, since it is this person who has the role not merely nominal of collaboration in the ordinary work of the Delegation.
14. **The Provincial motivates the Province** (SDBs and lay people who work with us) by providing the criteria on which he has based his choice and decision, and presents and supports the delegate in his or her role and function in the structure and organisation of the Province, OPP and overall teamwork among the Provincial Delegations for the mission.

It is my hope that these guidelines can help the Provinces, especially the Provincials and their Councils, to provide an ever better service to the Salesian Mission. The Social Communication Department, with its Salesian and lay personnel, is always available to offer its help. May Mary Help of Christians continue to guide us in our service to those the Lord has entrusted to us.

4. ACTIVITIES OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL

4.1 Chronicle of the Rector Major

– April 2011

The Rector Major began the month of April in residence. On the morning of 1 April, in addition to his normal office work he received several people including the Provincial of Milan, Fr. Agostino Sosio. In the evening, in the Vatican, he had a meeting with H. E. Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone.

On Sunday morning 3 April he presided at Mass for the Provincial Council and the local Superiors of the FMA Province ILS. In the evening of that day he gave an introduction to the *Retreat for the Provincial Councils, Rectors and Superiors* of the ICC Province of the Salesians and the ILS and IRO Provinces of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.

Between Monday 4 and Saturday 9 April Fr Chávez led the Retreat, giving a meditation in the morning and a conference in the afternoon. The Retreat ended with Mass on Saturday morning.

On Monday morning 11, Fr Chávez received the Mother General of the Sisters of Charity of Jesus, Sr Apollinaris Yukiro Shimura, accompanied by the Sisters of the General Council and by the

Provincials. He then gave a short talk to the Vatican Press personnel, and at 11.00 started the *Intermediate Session of the General Council*, which was to keep the Rector Major and the Councillors busy until Tuesday 19 April, with one or two meetings each day.

There were other engagements during the week, including various visitors and meetings. Among the visitors was the Provincial of Hungary Fr Simon Majooran, on 13, and Fr Miran Sajovic and Fr Roberto Spataro from the Faculty of Christian and Classical Literature at the UPS, on the 14. Among the meetings on 12 there was one with the leaders and those responsible for the Associations of Volunteers in different areas of the Congregation.

On Thursday 14, after the first meeting of the Council the Rector Major went to the Chamber of Deputies for a seminar on the “150 Years of United Italy and the presence of the Salesians ‘Making the Italians ... with education’” on the occasion of the publication of the two volumes: *Salesiani di don Bosco. 150 anni di educazione in Italia* (edited by Francesco Motto)

and *Le Figlie di Maria Ausiliatrice in Italia (1872-2010). Donne nell'educazione* (edited by Grazia Loparco - Maria Teresa Spiga).

At midday on Saturday 16, he went to the Nunciature Apostolic. In the afternoon he received Mr. Angelo Orsini, President of the 'Auxilium' Association of Chiari (BS), with his family.

On Sunday 17, the Rector Major presided at the Palm Sunday Mass. After supper he gave the Good Night to the confreres from the UPS and the Generalate who were making their Retreat.

On Tuesday morning 19 April, the Intermediate Session of the General Council concluded. In the afternoon the Rector Major left for Venice to spend two days with the Salesian Community and the EPC of Astori at Mogliano Veneto. On his arrival he was welcomed by the Provincial Fr Eugenio Riva, and by the Rector of the community Fr Maurizio Tisato. Arriving in Astori he said evening prayer with the community, and after supper took part in the show "Tracce di cielo" put on by the theatre group from Chioggia, which ended with his Good Night.

On Wednesday 20, during the morning Fr Chávez met all sections of the School, visited the various departments of the Centre

and in the afternoon preached a short period of recollection for the members of the Educative Community of Mogliano Veneto and the teachers from Este, which ended with Mass.

On Thursday 21 he returned to Rome and in the evening, presided at the Holy Thursday celebration.

On Saturday 23, at 22.00 he presided at the Easter Vigil with the confreres of the Generalate community and a group of the faithful. The following day, Easter Sunday, before Mass the Rector Major received Dr. Magdi Cristiano Allam.

Early on Wednesday morning 27 April, accompanied by Fr Nino Zingale, Fr Chávez left for Lubumbashi, for the celebration of the *centenary of Salesian presence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo*. On their arrival they were met by the Regional, Fr Guillermo Basañes; by the Provincial, Fr Joachim Tshibangu and his Council and by a large number of confreres; by the Provincial Sr Bernardette Chongo Cola and many Daughters of Mary Help of Christians; by members of the Salesian Family, Friends of Don Bosco and young people. They were then taken to the 'Theologium' where there was an official welcoming ceremony and the Rec-

tor Major replied with a message. In the evening they were invited to supper by the Governor of the Region, Mr. Moise Katumbi Chapwe and his wife.

The whole of Thursday morning 28, was spent at the 'Theologium', where the Rector Major met most of the confreres, Salesians in formation and the prenovices. Following his formal address Fr Chávez talked with those present. Then the Rector Major paid a visit to the sick and those in the Don Bosco Clinic. After lunch he returned to the Provincial house and then in the evening went to call on Archbishop Jean-Pierre Tafunga, SDB.

On Friday morning 29, at the Cité des Jeunes the Rector Major celebrated the Centenary with the young people of the Salesian Youth Movement of the Province and the boys and girls from the houses of the SDB and the FMA. In the afternoon he met the Salesian Family.

He spent Saturday 30 at Kansebula. On his arrival he was welcomed at the Cathedral by Bishop Gaston Ruvezi SDB, with the priests of his diocese. He then greeted the children from the Shibukeni Primary School, the students from the Kwesu Senior School and those for the FMA Col-

lege. Then he went to the Salesian cemetery, where he paid his respects to the six Salesian pioneers and founders of the Salesian presence in the Congo, and then met the community of the FMA novices and a group of the Sisters who were making a Retreat at Kwesu. At Kansebula he then met the SDB novices and postnovices. After lunch before returning to the Provincial house he was welcomed by Bishop Ruvezi in his house and had a meeting with some of his close collaborators and visited the School.

– May 2011

On Sunday 1 May, the Rector Major presided at the Solemn Centenary Concelebration in which the whole Salesian Family took part, and during which 8 confreres made the perpetual profession: six from this AFC Province and two others from AFO.

On Monday morning 2, accompanied by the Regional, Fr Guillermo Basaños, by the Provincial Fr Joachim Tshibangu and other Councillors and by the Rectors of the houses in Kinshasa, Fr Chávez left for that city. After being welcomed at the airport, they immediately went to Masina, where there was a celebration in-

cluding the inauguration of a statue of Don Bosco, the blessing of a new bell for the Church of Mary Help of Christians, Holy Mass, lunch and a concert ending with the Good Night. Later the Rector Major visited the "Café Mozart" of the FMA, who gave him supper.

On Tuesday 3, at Masina there was a meeting together with Mass with the confreres of the three communities in the Kinshasa area. He then left for the airport for the return journey to Rome.

Having arrived in Rome on 4 May, in the afternoon after lunch the Rector Major greeted a group of Bishops from the Bengal Region of India, including two Salesians, the Archbishop of Calcutta, Mons. Lucas Sirkar and Bishop Joseph Gomes of the diocese of Krishnagar, who had come to Rome for the "ad limina" visit.

On Saturday morning 7, with his Vicar, he received Dr. Carlo Di Cicco, Deputy Director of the Osservatore Romano. Later he presided at the community Mass of the Generalate on the first anniversary of the death of Fr Paolo Marin. In the evening with the Councillors in residence, he went for supper to the Salesian community in the Vatican.

On Sunday 8 the Rector Major left for the *Team Visit to the North*

Europe Region – the Atlantic and German Zone, which was being held in Germany at the Aschau-Waldwinkel house between Monday 9 and Friday 13 May.

At the end of the Team Visit the Rector Major, Fr Adriano Bregolin and Fr Marek Chrzan went to *Poland*. On their arrival they were met by Fr Sławomir Łubian, Provincial of the Warsaw Province. In the house they met the other Provincials and Vice Provincials of the Polish Provinces.

Saturday 14 was spent on a meeting with the Provincials and Vice Provincials. At midday the Rector Major presided at a Mass at which those taking part were the Superior General of the Michaelites, the Superior General of the Michaelite Sisters, the two FMA Provincials, the Provincials and Vice Provincials of Poland, confreres of the community and a group of young people.

On Sunday 15, after Mass the Rector Major his Vicar and Fr Marek Chrzan left for the *Ukraine*. On their arrival at Kiev, they were met by the Delegate, Fr Rino Pistellato and other confreres. In the afternoon Fr Chávez had a meeting with the confreres of the Ukraine-Byzantine Delegation and then another with the Council of the Delegation. This

was followed by a Marian celebration at which the FMA, parents of the Salesians, members of the Salesian Family friends, co-workers and young people took part.

On Monday 16, the Rector Major took part in the Divine Liturgy at which the Major Archbishop Sviatoslav Shevchuk presided, and then met the confreres of the Latin rite, which was followed by another meeting with all the confreres in Ukraine. After lunch they left for Minsk, *Belarus*, where they arrived after midnight.

On Tuesday 17, Fr Chávez blessed the community house and then had a meeting with the confreres in Belarus, followed by a visit to the construction site of the new church, Mass and lunch. In the afternoon the Rector Major, with those accompanying him paid a visit to the Archbishop, Mons. Tadeusz Kondrusiewicz and then went to see the two other houses in Minsk, Borobliany. From there they went to the airport and left for Moscow, in *Russia*.

On Wednesday morning 18, the Rector Major met most of the confreres who are carrying out the Salesian mission in the various centres in Russia. After the meeting, Mass was celebrated in the

parish of the Cathedral, at which the Salesian Family also took part. In the afternoon he visited the Don Bosco house in Fili; and also visited an Art Gallery.

On Thursday 19 there was a meeting with the Council of the Circumscription followed by Mass. After lunch the Rector Major and his Vicar went to the airport to return to Rome.

On Friday morning 20, Fr Chávez went to the Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and the Societies of Apostolic Life for a meeting of the "16 Committee."

On Saturday 21, at midday he went to the Auxilium for the celebration of the Patron of the Faculty.

On Monday morning 23, there was a meeting of the USG Executive Committee at the General Curia of the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary. In the afternoon Fr Chávez left for Turin. In the evening he gave the Good Night in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians, after evening prayer and then after supper he met the leaders of the "Andiamo Ragazzi" Music Group.

Tuesday 24 May was the Feast of Mary Help of Christians. The Rector Major met the Director of the Turin Mission Office, Fr Pier

Luigi Zuffetti, then the European novices, then the Archbishop of the Archdiocese of Turin Mons. Cesare Nosiglia. In the afternoon he had a meeting with the FMA and in the evening presided at Mass in the Basilica and took part in the traditional Procession.

Having returned to Rome, between Wednesday 25 and Friday 27 Fr Chávez presided at the half-yearly USG Assembly and from Friday evening 27, until Sunday 29 he took part in the World Consultative Committee Meeting of the Salesian Family at which he presented the "Charter of Identity of the Salesian Family," the letter launching the three years of preparation for the bicentenary of the birth of Don Bosco and the topic of the Strenna for 2012.

Early on Monday morning 30 May the Rector Major went to Genzano. He presided at Mass with the Rectors of the Circumscription of Central Italy (ICC) and, after breakfast gave them a talk. In the afternoon he received Bishop Jesús Juárez SDB, of the Diocese of El Alto, in Bolivia.

On Tuesday 31 May after the Councillors returned to Rome for the Plenary Session of the Council there was a meeting together to share ideas in the Rome – San Tarcisio house.

– June 2011

On Wednesday 1 June the *Summer Plenary Session of the General Council* began and will then keep the Rector Major and the Council occupied until the end of July.

The work of the Council is clearly the priority task of the Rector Major during the two months of June and July. However, in the time available, there are also numerous audiences, meetings and other activities, to which this chronicle briefly refers.

On the evening of Friday 3 June the Rector Major paid a visit to the Gerini - Studentate community. He was welcomed by the Superior of the UPS Vice Province, Fr Joachim D'Souza, by the Rector of the Community Fr Riccardo Castellino, by the Rector of the Gerini Centre and by the staff and students.

Among meetings he held during the week 6-11 June could be mentioned that with Fr. David Jaeger, OFM, the legal representative of the Salesians in the Holy Land for everything regarding the house of Beitgemal (on Monday 6), with Fr Nihal Kahanawitaliyanage, Superior of the Vice Province of Sri Lanka (on Tuesday 7), with the Secretary of State, H. E. Cardinal

Tarcisio Bertone (on Thursday 9), with Fr Simon Manjooran, Provincial of Hungary (on Friday 10), with Fr Josef Claes, Provincial of North Belgium-Holland (on Saturday 11).

On Friday evening 10 the Rector Major officially welcomed a group of *new Provincials*, who had come for a *course of formation* at the beginning of their term in office.

The course began on Saturday 11 with Mass together with the Council, at which the Rector Major presided. He then also spent part of the morning with the Provincials.

The course for new Provincials continued until 24 June with a fixed programme of meetings with the Councillors and the Departments and moments of reflection and sharing. In these days the Rector Major met with each of the Provincials in turn to reflect together on what regards the Provincial himself personally and the leadership of the Province. Other audiences and meetings also continued. Among these was a meeting, which included the Vicar, with the General Council of the FMA, at the invitation of Mother Yvonne Reungoat, on the evening of Monday 13, to share some ideas.

On Saturday 18, the Rector Major led a morning of recollection for the Provincials including a talk and Mass. At one point in the course of the morning he received and chatted with two confreres from India: Archbishop Chinnappa Malayappan of Madras-Mylapore, and Bishop Joseph Anthony Irudayraj, of Dharmapuri.

Among meetings in this period, in addition to those with the Provincials, some Councillors and some confreres of the community, were those with the Rector of the Vatican community Fr Pietro Migliasso, on Monday 20, the confreres responsible for the Vatican Press, Bro. Antonio Maggiotto and Bro. Giuseppe Canesso, on Tuesday 21. A meeting with H. E. Cardinal Raymond Leo Burke on Wednesday 22 should also be mentioned.

On the afternoon of 23 June the Rector Major had a meeting with the Administrative Committee of the UPS. He then had a meeting with the Provincials to whom after evening prayer he gave a Good Night thus bringing to an end the course of formation.

On Friday 24 June the Solemnity of Saint John the Baptist, as is traditional (recalling the celebrations held at Valdocco for Don Bosco), the *Feast of the Rector Ma-*

jour was celebrated. Fr Chávez presided at Mass at which in addition to confreres of the Generalate and the new Provincials, H.E. Cardinal Raffaele Farina, other Provincials, various Rectors of houses in Rome, the Superior of the Vice Province of the UPS and the Rector Magnificus, Mother Yvonne with five of the FMA General Council took part. Afterwards the guests attended the lunch which followed with some celebratory items.

On Saturday morning 25, Fr Chávez presided at the 'Curatorium' of the UPS.

Between Sunday 26 June and Saturday 2 July the Rector Major with all the General Council made a *Retreat* led by Fr Andrea Bozzolo in the Alpine house of Santa Fosca, in the Dolomites, which depends on the Salesian house of Belluno, in the North East Italy Province.

– *July 2011*

Having returned to Rome on Saturday 2 July, with the Councilors, during the following week the work of the Plenary Session of the Council is resumed interspersed with various activities and a number of audiences.

Among the audiences and meet-

ings on 4 July was that with two Comboniani missionaries, Fr. Danilo Cimitan and Fr. Firmo, with Fr Adriano Bregolin and Fr Guillermo Basaños, and in the evening a meeting with Archbishop Riccardo Ezzatti SDB of Santiago in Chile.

On Thursday afternoon 7 the Rector Major and all the Councilors went to Castel Gandolfo for a joint meeting of the two General Councils SDB - FMA.

On Friday at the usual time in the morning Fr Chávez presided at a meeting of the Council and in the afternoon accompanied by the Vicar and the Regional, he travelled to *Hungary*. Welcomed by the Provincial Fr Simon Manjooran, they went to the Provincial House where they held a meeting. This was followed by supper and a visit to the city of Budapest.

The following day, Saturday 8, the Rector Major and his companions held a series of personal meetings after which there was a meeting with all the confreres of the Province followed by Mass and lunch. In the evening they returned to Rome.

On Sunday 10 July in the Generalate the Rector Major joined in celebrating the 60th anniversary of ordination of Fr Angelo Botta,

for a long time a missionary in Ecuador, where he was also Provincial, and then for many years Secretary of the Rector Major.

Among the events of the week 11-17 July in addition to the meetings of the General Council, on Monday 11 at midday, there was a visit from H. E. Cardinal Raffaele Farina, together with Dr. Bruno Bruni, Mr. Edgardo Iozia and Fr Gianni Caputa; on Wednesday 13 a meeting with the Provincial Council of Germany; on Friday 15 a meeting with the Councillors who would be taking part in the Team Visit to the Interamerica Region.

On Saturday morning 16, Fr Chávez had a meeting with the Executive Committee of the IUS, and then received the President of the SYM in Europe, David Viagulasamy, accompanied by Fr Fabio Attard and his Department.

On Sunday 17, at midday he received the coordinators of the Salesians-Cooperators of the Lazio Region, Paolo and Marina Palombi.

The following week was mainly spent on work of the Session of the General Council. However, among the many meetings was that on Wednesday 20 with Dr. Piergiorgio Bassi accompanied by

a group of business men. In the afternoon of Thursday 21 he went to Castelgandolfo to give a talk to the new FMA Provincials.

On Saturday afternoon 23, he left for Turin where he was welcomed by the Provincial Fr Stefano Martoglio, who took him to Châtillon. From there the following morning he went to Les Combes, where he met H. E. Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, and then took part in the blessing of our restructured Alpine house called "House of the Popes," and afterwards in the concelebrated Mass.

On Monday 25, among a number of meetings, in the morning there was one with a group of Rectors from the AFC Province accompanied by Fr Guillermo Basañes, and in the afternoon a meeting with the group preparing the Spirituality Days of the Salesian Family.

On the following days the work of the General Council continued with some further audiences. The 2011 Summer Plenary Session of the Council concluded on Friday 29 July. On the previous evening during the Good Night to the confreres the Rector Major gave an account of the Session mentioning some of the main topics dealt with and the decisions taken.

4.2 Chronicle of the General Council

On 1 June 2011 the *Summer Plenary Session* of the General Council began and kept the Councillors busy until 29 July 2011. In addition to the plenary meetings, 29 in all, there were other meetings of groups or commissions for the study of various topics. During this session, there was also - between 11 and 24 June - 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 five 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 Gregory Chambers, for the Province of Australia; Fr Claudio Ciolli, for the Vice Province of Madagascar; Fr Pasquale Cristiani, for the Province of Southern Italy; Fr Jean Claude Ngoy, for the Province of Central Africa; Fr Giovanni Rolandi, for the Province of East Africa.

In **n. 5.3** 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 ten Provinces or Vice Provinces were studied: the Province of North Belgium; the Province of São Paulo, Brazil; the Province of Seville, Spain; the Province of Croatia; the Province of Venezuela; the Province of Vietnam; the Circumscription of Central Italy; the Vice Province of Madagascar; the Vice Province of Angola; the Vice Province of Southern Africa.

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.

– The Strenna of the Rector Major for 2012. Opening the work of the Plenary Session, the Rector Major presented the topic for the Strenna for 2012:

***“I am the good shepherd.
The good shepherd lays
down his life for his sheep”
(Jn 10,11)***

**Let us make the young our
life's mission
by coming to know and
imitate Don Bosco**

The theme of the Strenna for 2012 is closely linked to the first year of the three years of preparation for the bicentenary of the birth of Don Bosco, which is totally concentrating on knowing his history. The Rector Major recommends the study of Don Bosco and, through the events of his life to know him as an educator pastor, founder, guide, legislator. It is a question of a knowledge which leads to love and to imitation.

– **Rethinking Salesian Youth Ministry.** Following the presentation by the General Councillor for Youth Ministry, the Council examined the document: *A Rethinking of Salesian Youth Ministry – An aid for reflection in the communities and Provinces*. It is an outline for reflection, which together with a letter from the Rector Major will be sent to the Rectors and Confreres of local Communities who are asked to offer their own contributions to the rethinking of the pastoral praxis of the community in order to reflect further on the basic lines of Salesian ministry and to assess their impact on everyday praxis.

DBI (Don Bosco International). The General Council considered the *Mission Statement* and the map of strategic aims for the three year period 2012-2014 of “Don Bosco International”, repeating that the starting point ought to be that of identifying its way of operating in line with the priorities of the Rector Major and his Council. DBI ought to be a formal platform for dialogue with the European Institutions and the already existing Salesian networks at the service of the Congregation. The guidelines presented will be

the basis for strategic plan which will be presented to the Rector Major and his Council in the winter session December 2011 to January 2012, for approval. The General Assembly of the DBI in January 2012 will adopt this plan.

– **Assessment half way through the six-year period.**

The final part of the session was devoted to the assessment half way through the six year period of the Project of animation and government of the Rector Major and his Council 2008-2014, according to the scheme which in the first part requested a reflection on the implementation of the Project in the individual sectors and regions through a series of questions: How was the Project communicated and received in the Congregation/Regions? What has been achieved of what was planned and with what results? What are the new elements introduced in these three years which were not planned? Meanwhile, in the second it was requested that an assessment be made on the functioning of the Departments, on their relationship with the Regions and the Provinces, of their collaboration with other Departments and with the Regions.

– **Study of the structure of the central government of the Congregation.**

In view of a response to the request made at the GC26 (n. 118), the General Council began in this session the study of an important and quite demanding subject regarding the assessment of the Central Government of the Congregation, with regard to both its composition and its functioning. Taken into consideration were: the chapters in the Constitutions and the General Regulations about the service of authority, the “*Vademecum for the life and action of the General Council*” and the summary of the reflections of the General Council 2002-2008 on this subject of the Assessment of the Government of the Congregation.

– **Special Circumscription of East Europe.**

The General Council studied the subject of the reorganisation of the Salesian presences in the Special Circumscription of East Europe, taking into consideration the work carried out by the relevant Commission set up by the Rector Major and the reflection undertaken in a meeting of the Rector Major, his Vicar and the Regional for North Europe with the Council of the Special Circumscription of East Europe,

held in Moscow the previous May, to identify solutions for the future.

– **Charter of Identity of the Salesian Family.**

In the course of the session the final draft of the *Charter of Identity of the Salesian Family* was presented by the Rector Major and approved by the Council. It gathers together the reflection and the experience which has been coming to maturity in these years starting from the two previous ‘Identity Cards’ on communion and on mission in our Family and which – assuming and integrating these previous two documents– describes the charismatic identity of the Salesian Family: in other words everything that refers to the mission, to the spirit, to relationships, to formation, to the methods of education and evangelisation. The Charter of Identity of the Salesian Family will be translated into various languages and officially handed over to the Salesian Family in January 2012.

– **Approval of the Consolidated Account for 2010.**

In the course of the session, the General Council – following its presentation by the Economist General – examined and approved, according to the norms of the General

Regulations, the Consolidated Account of the Direzione Generale Opere Don Bosco at 31 December 2010.

– **Distribution of the “Mission Fund”.** The General Council considered and approved the proposals presented by the Commission for the n. 148 – June 2011 – 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.

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

- **Meeting of the two General Councils** of the Salesians of Don Bosco and of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, held on Thursday 7 July at the “Santa Rosa” House at Castel Gandolfo, with the purpose of sharing ideas about and discussing the three years of preparation for the *Bicentenary of the birth of Don Bosco*: common experiences and specific experiences, and the *Charter of Identity of the Salesian Family*.

- **Retreat** (Santa Fosca di Cadore, 26 June - 2 July). A very

beautiful and enriching experience was the Retreat at Santa Fosca di Cadore, preached by Fr Andrea Bozzolo, lecturer at the International Theological Institute in Turin-Crocetta, with the subject *«Have at heart only souls»*, a theme very much in tune with the beginning of the three year period of preparation for the bicentenary of the birth of Don Bosco.

Intermediate Session of the General Council

This is a short summary of the *intermediate session of the General Council* held between 11 and 19 April 2011 with the presence in addition to the Rector Major and his Vicar, of all the Councillors for the various sectors and the two Regional Councillors involved in the subject. The main topic of the meetings was the careful study of the two Regions: Latin America, South Cone, and Interamerica.

As regards the **Latin America, South Cone Region** the following challenges were identified: Returning to Don Bosco in South America, in other words, promoting today among the Salesians the nature of our consecrated life; promoting the right number and quality of the confreres in the Salesian communities to ensure

their vitality, spiritual, fraternal and apostolic; promoting a rethinking of Youth Ministry and of vocation promotion, taking up and putting into practice the decisions of the GC 26, regarding the second and third key issues; ensuring a good quality formation; working on the reordering of the Salesian presences, their management and sustainability.

As regards the **Interamerica Region** the challenges and the working guidelines are the following: promoting the quality of consecrated life, seeking to harmonise charismatic identity and apostolic passion in order to live the gospel in a radical manner according to the GC26; strengthening the Youth Ministry apostolate and within it vocation promotion (Cf. Letter of the Rector Major in the AGC 407, Strenna for 2011) with the co-responsible participation of lay people; ensuring an initial and ongoing formation aimed at living the gospel in a radical manner; starting the process of the reordering of the presences in the Provinces in order to simplify the works, reduce their number and begin new presences, if appropriate; strengthening the presence of the Salesian Family in the Region.

4.3 Chronicle of the General Councillors

The Vicar of the Rector Major

At the conclusion of the winter plenary session of the General Council, the Vicar of the Rector Major, Fr Adriano Bregolin went to Lugano, in Switzerland, for the celebration of the Feast of Don Bosco. Here he met the local educative community and presided at the solemn Mass on 31 January. In the afternoon of the same day he returned to Rome.

Starting on 3 February he carried out the *Canonical Visitation of the "Blessed Michael Rua" Community-Generalate*. The Visitation ended on 11 February. A short rest followed. Having returned to Rome he remained in residence between 20 and 25 February.

On 26 he left for Bangalore (India) to take part in the *Team Visit to the "South Asia" Region*. When this was over, on 6 March with the Rector Major he went to Thailand. Having arrived in Bangkok, the following day he went to Hua Hin to take part in the *Team Visit to the "East Asia - Oceania Region"*. The Visitation finished on 12 March. For the next few days a short visit to Burma had been

planned but the Vicar of the Rector Major had to forgo this on account of some travel problems which would not have allowed him sufficient time with the confreres. He therefore stayed in Hua Hin with the Rector Major, during the days Fr Chávez was preaching a Retreat to the Provincials of the Region. He then returned to Rome on 16 March.

After a short stay at the Gener-
 alate, on 19 March Fr Adriano
 Bregolin left for Santiago in Chile,
 where he took part in the *Team
 Visit to the "America South Cone"
 Region*. At the end of this, on Sat-
 urday 26 March, with the Rector
 Major he met first of all the Rec-
 tors and then a large part of the
 Confreres of the Province of Chile,
 gathered for an Assembly which
 was held in Macul. In the after-
 noon of the same day at the "La
 Gratiud Nacional" Salesian
 house in Santiago, he took part in
 the meeting with the young peo-
 ple of the Salesian Youth Move-
 ment and then of the Salesian
 Family in Chile. On Sunday 27
 March with Fr Chávez, in the
 morning he went to the Provincial
 House of the FMA for Mass and a
 meeting with the Sisters; in the
 afternoon he had a meeting with
 the Provincial Council. On 28 he
 left again for Rome.

Between 31 March and 2 April
 he carried out the *Canonical Visi-
 tation of the "Saint Francis of
 Sales" Community in the Vatican*.

On 3 April he went to Sicily, to
 Zafferana Etnea, where he had a
 meeting with the Rectors of the
 Sicilian Province on the subject
 "Animation of Salesian Communi-
 ties and the care of religious disci-
 pline."

Having returned to Rome, with
 the Rector Major he preached a
 Retreat to the Salesian Rectors of
 the Circumscription of Central
 Italy and the FMA Superiors of
 the Rome and of La Spezia, be-
 tween 3 and 9 April.

After this during the following
 week he took part in the *Interme-
 diate Session of the General Coun-
 cil*. This ended on 19 April. In the
 afternoon of the same day he ac-
 companied the Rector Major to
 Mogliano Veneto for a meeting
 with the Salesian community and
 the local educative community.

Having returned to Rome on 21,
 he celebrated the Easter festivities
 and then remained at the Gener-
 alate until 7 May.

On 8 May he left with the Rec-
 tor Major for Germany where at
 Aschau-Waldwinkel, in Bavaria,
 there was the *Team Visit to the At-
 lantic-German zone of the North
 Europe Region* between the

evening of 8 and the morning of 13 May.

At the end of this, the Vicar with the Rector Major and the Regional Councillor Fr Marek Chrzan went to Warsaw. At the Provincial House, on 14 May, he took part in a meeting of the Provincials and Vice Provincials of the four Polish Provinces. Then on 15, still with the Rector Major and the Regional Councillor he went on to Lviv, Ukraine, for a visit to assess the situation of the East Circumscription. Here he took part in meetings with the confreres of the Byzantine rite Delegation and with the confreres of the Latin rite. The following day still with Fr Pascual Chávez and Fr Marek Chrzan, he went to Minsk, where in the morning of 17, there was a meeting with the Salesian confreres who are working in Belarus. In the afternoon, with the Rector Major and the Regional Councillor he left for Moscow. On Wednesday morning 18, with the Rector Major he met most of the confreres who are living their Salesian vocation and mission in the various works in Russia. After the meeting there was Mass in the Cathedral parish, in which the Salesian Family took part. In the afternoon he visited the Don Bosco centre at Fili. On Thursday

19, there was a meeting with the Council of the Circumscription, followed by Mass, and in the afternoon he returned to Rome.

On Saturday 21 May at midday the Vicar accompanied the Rector Major to the Auxilium for the celebration of the Patron of the Faculty.

Between Wednesday 25 and Friday 27, with Fr Chávez he took part in the Half-yearly Assembly of the USG and between Friday evening 27 and Sunday 29 he presided at the meeting of the World Consultative Committee of the Salesian Family, at which were presented the "Charter of Identity of the Salesian Family," the letter launching the three years of preparation for the bicentenary of the birth of Don Bosco and the topic of the Strenna for 2012.

In the month of June and July the Vicar took part regularly in the meetings of the General Council as well as the Retreat held at Santa Fosca between 26 June and 2 July.

On Thursday afternoon 7 July with the Rector Major and all the Councillors he went to Castelgandolfo for a meeting of the two General Councils SDB - FMA.

On Saturday afternoon 23 July with the Rector Major he travelled to Turin. From there with the

Provincial Fr Stefano Martoglio, he went to Châtillon, to meet the confreres and spend the night. The following day 24 July, in the morning he went to Les Combes, where with the Rector Major he met H.E. Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone and took part in the blessing of the restored "House of the Popes." The same day he returned to Rome.

The Councillor for Formation

At the end of the winter plenary session of the General Council, in *February* 2011 the General Councillor for Formation, between 7 and 12, took part in Rome in the Theological Seminar of the Union of Superiors General (USG) and the International Union of Female Superiors General (UISG) on the Theology of the Apostolic Consecrated Life. On 13-19 he held a meeting half-way through the six-year period with the Regional Coordinators of Formation at Quito; then on 19-21 he visited the aspirantate, the formation communities of the prenovitiate, novitiate and postnovitiate and met the Provincial Formation Commission of the Province of Ecuador. Finally, 22-28 in Mexico he visited the

interprovincial formation communities of MEG - MEM: the prenovitiate at Irapuato, the novitiate at Coacalco, the postnovitiate at Mexico City, the theologate at Tlaquepaque, which operates in collaboration also with the Antilles Province; he met the formation teams and took part in the "Curatoria" of all these communities; he reflected with the Provincial Formation Commissions of the two Provinces MEM and MEG.

In the month of *March* 2011, on 10 he took part in the celebration of the 25th anniversary of the International Voluntary Movement for Development (VIS) in Rome. Between 16 and 18 he visited the theologate of San Justo and the ISET theological study centre at Buenos Aires and then took part in the Provincial Formation Commission of the Province of Southern Argentina (ARS). On 19-20 he visited the aspirantate and the formation communities of the prenovitiate, postnovitiate and theologate in Santiago, Chile and took part in a meeting of the Provincial Formation Commission of the Province of Chile. Then 21-26 he took part in the *Team Visit to the America South Cone Region*.

In *April*, between 2 and 9 he visited the Circumscription EST,

with the Regional Councillor for North Europe Fr Marek Chrzan, meeting the confreres in Belarus at Minsk and at Smargon, the confreres in Russia at Moscow and Gatchina, the confreres in Ukraine of the Latin rite at Korostyshiv, at Peremyshlany and at Bibrka, the confreres of the Ukraine Delegation of Greek Catholic rite at Lviv. After returning to Rome, on 15 April he took part in a meeting of the Group of personnel at the UPS and on 16 the Council of Administration of the Opera PAS; on 29 he took part in the "Curatorium" of the "Saint Thomas" formation community in Messina.

In May 2011, on 2 he met the Italian prenovices at Genzano. On 6-8 he visited the Salesian community and the theological faculty of Benediktbeuern; and then on 8-13 he took part in the Team *Visit to the Atlantic-German zone of the North Europe Region* at Aschau - Wandwinkel. Afterwards, in Africa, on 19-21 he visited and took part in the "Curatorium" of the novitiate and the postnovitiate in Lomé (Togo) and he chaired a meeting of the Formation Commission of the AFO Vice Province; between 21 and 27 at Yaoundé (Cameroon) he visited the formation communities for the specific

formation of Salesian clerics, for the specific formation for Salesian brothers and the prenovitiate; he took part in the "Curatorium" of the theologate and chaired the meeting of the Formation Commission of the ATE Vice Province.

In June, participation in the plenary session of the General Council was accompanied by some other commitments. On 11 he chaired the "Curatorium" of the "Zeffirino Namuncurá" Community of Rome-Gerini; on 13 in Rome he took part in the Theological Commission of the Union of Superiors General; on 18 in Turin he chaired the "Curatorium" for the specific formation of Salesian brothers at Valdocco and the Commission for the "Project for the Salesian Places of Interest"; on 23 in Rome he took part in the Council of Administration of the Opera PAS and on 25 the "Curatorium" of the UPS.

The Councillor for Youth Ministry

During the months of February and May 2011, the main task assigned by the Rector Major to the Councillor for Youth Ministry Fr Fabbio Attard, and which was his priority occupation for most of the

time between 12 February and 26 May, was the *Extraordinary Visitation of the North Belgium Province with the Delegation of Holland*.

Before this Visitation, at the beginning of February the Department organised two important periods of reflection. The first was the meeting of an international team on the process of the rethinking of Youth Ministry between 3 and 6 February 2011, and immediately afterwards between 7 and 10 February 2011, a meeting of the Consultative Committee of the Department on the first key issue of the GC26: *Returning to Don Bosco*.

In addition, during the months of March and April 2011, the Councillor took part in four *Team Visits*: to Bangalore, India, for the South Asia Region between 1 and 5 March 2011; to Hua Hin, Thailand, for the East Asia - Oceania Region, between 8 and 12 March 2011; to Santiago in Chile, for the Latin America - South Cone Region between 21 and 26 March 2011; and to Aschau-Waldwinkel, Germany for the Atlantic-German zone of the North Europe Region between 8 and 13 May 2011.

At the end of the month of May 2011, the Councillor was invited to Malta to offer a reflection on

the subject of Youth Ministry in a postmodern context to a group of ministers, linked to the presence and the work undertaken by the Jesuits on the island.

The months of June and July were devoted mainly to the plenary session of the General Council.

The Councillor for Social Communication

At the conclusion of the winter plenary session of the General Council, the General Councillor for Social Communication, Fr. Filiberto González, after a short time in Mexico to resolve a passport problem, on 9 February left for Luanda, Angola, to begin the *Extraordinary Visitation of the "Mama Muxima" Vice Province of Angola*, which was his priority concern and kept him very busy until 7 April 2011. On 10 February he opened the Visitation in the community of the aspirantate at Viana, in the presence of the confreres from Luanda, the postnovices, the prenovices and the aspirants. The following day he had his first meeting with the Provincial and with the Delegate for Youth Ministry and his team. On 11 he had a meeting with the

Provincial and the Provincial Council. After some other meetings during the following days (including one with the Formation Commission, one with the Provincial Economist, with the Delegate for Youth Ministry and with the Project Office) and after visiting the Provincial House of the FMA at Kasenga, on 16 Fr Filiberto began the process of visiting the individual Communities, everywhere meeting the confreres individually and as communities, the co-workers, the young people and the groups of the Salesian Family present and working in the area: Luanda-São Paulo (17-21 February); Cabiri (21-23 February); Kala Kala (23-24 February); N'Dalatando (24-27 February); Don-do (27 February - 3 March); Calulo (3-6 March). On 7 March at Cabiri there was a meeting with all the Principals of the schools in the Vice Province together with the Provincial. The visits to the communities then continued: Viana, aspirantate (7-9 March); Benguela (11-15 March); Luena (17-21 March); Luanda-Palanca, postnovitiate (21-25 March); Cabinda (26-27 March), and he also met the local Bishops; Luanda - Lixeira (28 March - 4 April), also meeting the Nuncio Apostolic on 29. Having completed the visit to

Lixeira, on 5 April in the headquarters of the Vice Province, the Councillor met the Council of the Vice Province to draw up the conclusions of the Visitation. On 6 April at Luanda-Palanca he met the young confreres on their quinquennium. On 7 April he presented to the Rectors of the Vice Province gathered in the Provincial House Luanda, the final report. After lunch with the Superior and his Council, the Rectors, confreres of the communities in Luanda and the postnovices he left for Rome.

Having returned to Rome, Fr Filiberto González took part in the meetings of the *Intermediate Session of the General Council* between 11 and 20 April. Immediately afterwards, accompanied by Fr Julian Fox, between 23 and 29 April he chaired a meeting of the Provincial Delegates for SC from the East Asia - Oceania Region at Manila - Tuloy, and between 1 and 6 May, still accompanied by Fr Julian Fox, he chaired a meeting of the Provincial Delegates for SC from the South Asia Region at Tiruchy. The main topic of both these meetings was the new, 2011, Salesian Social Communication System (SSCS).

Between 12 and 15 May at Genzano, he chaired a meeting of the

Delegates for SC together with representatives for the "Project for Europe", accompanied by Fr Julian Fox and Fr Donato Lacedonio. Between 20 and 23 he visited the Province of Hungary meeting the Provincial and members of his Council, the Delegate for SC and the person responsible for the SB. On 26-27 April, at Munich in Bavaria, he met the Directors of the Publishing Houses: CCS Madrid, ELLEDICI Turin, DON BOSCO Munich, Edições Salesianas Oporto.

In the months of June and July Fr Filiberto's main engagement was taking part in the meetings of the *Summer Plenary Session* of the General Council.

The Councillor for the Missions

Immediately after the winter plenary session of the General Council Fr. Václav Klement left for several visits in four Provinces in the Africa-Madagascar Region, visiting especially some frontier presences meeting Provincial Councils and confreres involved in missionary promotion. In Ethiopia (AET, 30 January - 5 February) he visited six communities; in Chad and in the Central African Republic he visited three commu-

nities (ATE, 6-11 February); in Ghana, Sierra Leone, Nigeria he visited six communities (AFW, 12-19 February); in Zambia and Zimbabwe he visited five communities (ZMB, 20-25 February). On his return journey he had a short stop over in Johannesburg (AFM, 26-27 February).

The Councillor dedicated almost the whole of the month of March to *Team Visits*, with the Rector Major and other General Councillors (South Asia, at Bangalore - India; East Asia - Oceania, at Hua Hin - Thailand; America South Cone at Santiago in Chile). In these Team Visits among the other contributions he presented a vision of 'Salesian Missionary Culture' and a first draft of 'Missionary Formation of the Salesians of Don Bosco', prepared jointly with the Councillor for Formation. In between the Team Visits and the return to Rome he took the opportunity to make two short visits: one to the Delegation of Indonesia (ITM) at Jakarta between 13 and 16 March; the other to the historic missionary places in North - Central Patagonia (ARS) between 26 March and 2 April.

Before the intermediate session of the Council Fr. Klement took part in the III General Assembly of "Don Bosco Network" at

Krakow (4-5 April). He followed this up with a short visit to see the progress of 'Project for Europe' in the Provinces of Great Britain and Ireland (6-10 April), meeting some new missionaries and the Provincial Councils to assess the process for their welcoming and formation in the two Provinces.

During the *intermediate session of the General Council* (11-20 April) the Councillor for the Missions organised a meeting at the Generalate for the Directors of Missionary Voluntary Service (AUL, AUS, CEP, GBR, IRL, PLS, SUE), gathered together in the context of Salesian Missionary Day 2011 on Missionary Voluntary Service (11-12 April). The Directors decided to exchange and share on a permanent basis their formation material and their experiences of accompaniment in the communities which host volunteers. In this way an informal network has been created which better oversees missionary Voluntary Service and helps the Provinces just starting.

Afterwards Fr Klement carried out the *Extraordinary Visitation of the "Blessed Michael Rua" Vice Province of Johannesburg (AFM)*, in the three countries (South Africa, Swaziland and Lesotho)

between 21 April and 26 May. It is the smallest Circumscription in Africa: it has 3 novices and 52 confreres of whom 10 in initial formation; it has 7 canonically erected communities and 4 other presences. In 2011 the Vice Province celebrated 5 ordinations to the priesthood and 3 ordinations of deacons: this is contributing to the relaunching of missionary spirit and of the vocational culture. It is significant that among the 16 local confreres there are 5 brothers; it should also be noted that in the last six years two frontier works have been opened (Lesotho Maseru, CFP at Ennerdale).

The last period before the plenary session of the General Council was devoted to the annual meeting of the Directors of the five Mission Offices (Bonn, New Rochelle, Madrid, New Delhi and Turin), held in Madrid 27-29 May; also taking part were the Economist General Bro. Jean Paul Muller and Fr. Stanislaw Rafalko. Fr. Klement returned to Rome on 29 May.

On Pentecost, 12 June, the theme for the 25th Salesian Missionary Day for 2012 was announced: «Telling the story of Jesus». Teaching material for every community have already been sent to the Provinces (2 DVD with

formation material and 8 short films, a poster, prayer and booklet: all are available on the site www.sdb.org).

The Economist General

After his appointment as Economist General, Jean Paul Muller used the first two months getting to know the workings of the Economist's Department and the various structures of the Direzione Generale.

During the course for new Provincial Economists in the month of February and the course for new Provincials in June he increased his knowledge of the concerns and the opportunities of the individual Provinces.

Taking part in the *Team Visits* to the Latin America South Cone Region in Chile and to the Atlantic-German zone of the North Europe Region, in Germany gave the Economist General a good opportunity to introduce himself and to reflect on the implementation of the GC26, especially on the subject of poverty.

A first meeting with the Economists of the CISI, on 29 April in Rome - Sacred Heart and a later meeting on 6 May in Verona with the Council of *EduLife* s.p.a. helped

the Economist to familiarise himself with these associations.

On two occasions the Economist General held meetings with the Council of Administration of the Opera PAS to study the financial organisation of the University in Rome, the investments necessary, and possible synergy among the various Salesian works involved.

Taking part in the General Assembly of the "Don Bosco-Network" (4-6 April) at Krakow, Poland and the international meeting of the Mission Offices in Madrid (26-29 May) helped him understand the connections between the Direzione Generale and the various organisations which are working for the benefit of our young people throughout the world.

The Councillor for the Africa - Madagascar Region

At the end of the winter plenary session of the General Council, the Regional Councillor for Africa and Madagascar, Fr. Guillermo Basaños, left for Argentina, where between 29 January and 14 February he was mainly with his family. On 30 January at Alta Gracia - Córdoba he presided at the first professions of the novices from the

Provinces of ARN, ARS, PAR and URU. The following day at Córdoba, in the Provincial House of ARN, he celebrated the 25th anniversary of his own religious profession, with some of his companions in the novitiate and their former Director of Novices Fr Juan Cantini. Then on Saturday 12 February Fr Gillermo Basaños presided in the Salesian house of Santa Isabel - Buenos Aires (ARS), at the 50th anniversary of the matrimony of his parents, Juan Carlos and Teresita del Carmen.

Having arrived in Africa, between 16 and 25 February he was in the AFC Province to begin the Consultation process for the appointment of the new Provincial. In addition to a meeting of the Provincial Council he chaired various assemblies of confreres for this purpose: at Lubumbashi on 18 February, at Kinshasa on 21 and at Goma on 23. For the same purpose of holding a Consultation for a new Provincial the Regional Councillor went to AFE, where he was able to meet the confreres at Morogoro - Tanzania, on 28 February and then at Nairobi - Kenya, on 2 March.

Afterwards, Fr Guillermo Basaños went to the Vice Province of AGL to bless the first stone of the church of Mary Help of Chris-

tians at Buterere - Burundi, on 4 March and the following day to Kigali - Rwanda, to bless the new Provincial House.

Between 7 March and 25 April in the name of the Rector Major he carried out the *Extraordinary Visitation of the "Mary Immaculate" Vice Province of Madagascar and Mauritius*. He had meetings with the confreres in all 11 communities and also with the Salesian Bishop of Ambanja, Mons. Rosario Vella. During the Visitation he was also able to start the Consultation process for the appointment of the new Superior.

Between 27 April and 2 May, with the Rector Major he took part in the celebrations for the centenary of the Salesian presence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, held in Lubumbashi and Kinshasa.

On the afternoon of 4 May he was already in Kankan - Guinea Conakry. There in the name of the Rector Major he presided at celebrations for the 25th anniversary of the foundation of our presence in that country. The main event was the celebration of Mass in the Cathedral at Kankan, where the first African Salesian missionary 'ad gentes', Fr Engelbert Ruhinyura, who died on 2 December 1996 is buried.

On 5 May the Councillor met the Council of the Vice Province of AFO at Bamako - Mali, and immediately afterwards took part in the Retreat for the Rectors and other confreres in the Vice Province in the centre at Sebenikorò.

Between 11 and 18 May he visited the AFW Province, in fact Ghana. At Ashaiman he took part in a Provincial meeting of Salesian Brothers and also in a meeting of the Council of the Vice Province. He was also able to visit our two communities in Sunyani, giving special attention to the novitiate.

On 20 and 21 May he took part in the 'Curatorium' of the novitiate and the post-novitiate of AFO and ATE at Lomé-Gbodjome, in Togo, attended also by the Councillor for Formation. The solemnity of Mary Help of Christians Fr Basañes spent with the communities in Lomé.

On the morning of 26 he returned to Rome in view of the summer plenary session of the General Council.

The Councillor for the Latin America - South Cone Region

At the conclusion of the winter plenary session of the General Council, the Regional Councillor

for Latin America, South Cone, Fr. Natale Vitali, left for Chile, where on 31 January he celebrated the Feast of Don Bosco in the parish of Mary Help of Christians in Puerto Natales.

He had a talk with the Provincial of Chile, Fr Leonardo Santibáñez, and visited the retreat house of Lo Cañas, Santiago, to prepare for the planned Team Visit.

On 9 February he travelled to Porto Alegre, Brazil, to meet the Provincial Council, giving the Provincial the letter of the Rector Major at the conclusion of the Extraordinary Visitation, carried out previously.

On 10 February he left for the *Province of San Paolo, Brazil* to begin the *Extraordinary Visitation*, on 14 February, with a meeting of all the Rectors and the Provincial Council.

The communities visited were 22 and 147 the Salesians he met personally; he also spoke to the students of theology from the Provinces of BCG, BMA, BPA and BRE, who are studying in the studentate at Lapa, San Paolo.

On 17 March he took part in a meeting of the schools of the Salesian Network of Schools in the city of Brasilia.

Between 21 and 25 March he took part in the *Team Visit to the*

Latin America - South Cone Region which was held in the city of Santiago in Chile, with the Rector Major and the Councillors for Formation, Youth Ministry, the Missions and the Economist General. It was the first time that there had been a Team Visit in the Region as such, with the participation of all the Provinces. In the course of the Team Visit the new Archbishop of Santiago, Mons. Ricardo Ezzati SDB, paid a visit and presided at Mass on 24 March.

Between 11 and 20 April Fr Natale Vitali returned to Rome to take part in the *Intermediate Session of the General Council*, in the course of which there was an assessment of the Latin America, South Cone Region.

Having returned to America, on Good Friday he took part in the "Dead Jesus" procession in the Salesian parish of "Nossa Senhora Aparecida" in Itaquera, San Paolo, and on Holy Saturday he had a meeting with Fr. Jonas Abib the Founder of "Canção Nova" a group which is now part of the Salesian Family.

On 1 May the Councillor took part in a Youth Meeting in city of Campinas and on 4 May in the quarterly day of recollection for the Paulist Region.

On 9 May he took part in the

'Curatorium' of the Novitiate, in the city of Alta Gracia, Córdoba, with the five Provincials of the CISUR, and on 10 May in the 'Curatorium' of the Postnovitiate in the city of Córdoba.

On 12 May he had a meeting with the Provincial Council of the BRE Province to prepare for the assessment of the Extraordinary Visitation, and he did the same on 15 May in the URU Province.

On 27 May he concluded the Extraordinary Visitation of the San Paolo Province (BSP) with a meeting of Rectors and of the Provincial Council and on 29 he returned to Rome to take part in the summer session of the General Council.

The Councillor for the Interamerica Region

At the conclusion of the winter plenary session of the General Council, Fr. Esteban Ortiz González, Councillor for the Interamerica Region, on Saturday 29 January set out for Cochabamba, to take part – on 31 January – in the installation of the new Provincial of Bolivia, Fr. Cristóbal López Romero. At the installation Mass the three Salesian Bishops in Bolivia: Archbishop Tito Solari

of Cochabamba, Bishop Jesús Juárez of El Alto and Auxiliary Bishop Fernando Bascopé of El Alto concelebrated and the Rectors and a large number of Confreres took part.

On 1 February the Regional Councillor went to Guadalajara and met with Fr. Salvador Cleofás Murguía, Provincial of MEG, and his Council to reflect on the letter of the Rector Major, with the guidelines given after the Extraordinary Visitation of the Province.

On 3 he travelled to Mexico City to meet with the Provincial of MEM, Fr. Miguel Aguilar Medina, and his Council.

On 4 February he went to San Juan, in Porto Rico, and met with the Council of the Delegation to prepare, among other things, for the Extraordinary Visitation of the Antilles Province which will be held during the second part of the current year (2011); and with the same purpose he went to Havana (Cuba), where he also had a meeting with the Council of the Delegation on 6 February. On 8 February he arrived in Santo Domingo (Dominican Republic) to meet the Provincial Fr. Víctor Pichardo, and his Council.

On 10 February Fr. Esteban Ortiz González arrived in Caracas (Venezuela) to begin the *Extraor-*

dinary Visitation of the "Saint Luke" Province of Venezuela (VEN); after meeting the Provincial Fr Luciano Stefani, and the Provincial Council, on 11 he began to visit the Communities and hold meetings with the Provincial Commissions.

On 9 April he interrupted the Extraordinary Visitation to VEN and travelled to Rome to take part in the *Intermediate Session of the General Council* (11-19 April), during which the two Regions of America: Interamerica and Latin America - South Cone were studied.

On 21 April the Regional Councillor returned to the Venezuela Province to continue the Extraordinary Visitation until 17 May when he finished visiting the 30 Communities of the Province, including the Missionary Communities of the Vicariate of Puerto Ayacucho.

On 20 May he held a meeting with the Rectors of the Communities and the following day closed the Extraordinary Visitation presenting to an Assembly of the Confreres the final report and taking part in the Provincial celebration of the "Day of Fidelity", when the anniversaries of the confreres are remembered; on this occasion, in particular the hundredth birth-

day of Fr Giuseppe Berno, a Salesian missionary was celebrated. Finally in the afternoon of the same day Fr. Esteban Ortiz González held a meeting with the Provincial and his Council.

On Sunday 22 May the Regional Councillor went to Quito and the following day held a meeting with Fr. Marcelo Farfán, Provincial of ECU, and his Council to assess the implementation of the recommendations of the Rector Major after the Extraordinary Visitation, held in 2009. During the following days Fr. Esteban travelled to Guayaquil and Machala to greet the Confreres and the faithful where he had worked as parish priest in the past. On 24 May he presided at Mass in the Sanctuary of Mary Help of Christians at Guayaquil and on Saturday 28 took part in a commemorative dinner for the 100th anniversary of the foundation of the 'Cristóbal Colón' College.

On 29 May he returned to Rome to take part in the summer session of the General Council.

The Councillor for the East Asia and Oceania Region

At the conclusion of the winter plenary session of the General

Council, the Regional Councillor Fr. Andrew Wong left for Manila, in the Philippines on Monday 31 January 2011. On Sunday 5 February he joined the Salesian Family in Makati, taking part in the concelebrated Mass at which Bishop Leo Drona SDB presided. On 9 February he went to Cebu, in the Southern Philippines, to meet the Provincial Council.

On 17 February he left Manila for Saigon (Hô Chí Minh), in Vietnam, for the *Extraordinary Visitation* of the Province which began with a visit to the communities situated on the periphery of the city. On Monday 21 February he went to North Vietnam to visit the various Salesian presences; he also had the opportunity to meet the Bishop of Hanoi and those of other Dioceses in which the confreres are working. On 25 February he returned to South Vietnam to celebrate the Feast of Ss. Versiglia and Caravario in the community at K'Long, a missionary community working with tribal people.

At the beginning March 2011, on 2 he met the Provincial of Vietnam and his Council at the postnovitiate in Dalat. On 3 March he left Saigon to go to Thailand, to prepare for the *Team Visit to the Region*, which began on 8 March with Mass at which the Rector

Major presided, and ended on Saturday 12 March with a conference by the Rector Major and concelebrated Mass. Afterwards between Sunday 13 and Wednesday 15 the Rector Major preached a Retreat for the Provincials, who also had the chance to speak with the Rector Major personally.

On Wednesday 15 March the Regional left Bangkok for Ulanbaatar, in Mongolia, to continue the Extraordinary Visitation; Mongolia, in fact is a Delegation of the Vietnam Province. On this occasion, the Regional was also able to speak with the Bishop of Mongolia, Mons. Wenceslao Padilla CICM.

On Tuesday 22 March from Ulanbaatar he returned to Saigon to continue the Extraordinary Visitation in Vietnam. On Saturday 26 he had a meeting with the Provincial and the Council of the FMA present in Vietnam. On Wednesday 30 he had a meeting with Cardinal John Baptist Pham Minh Man, Archbishop of Thành Phố Hồ Chí Minh (Saigon).

At the beginning of April he continued his visits to the communities in the South and the Centre of Vietnam. On Sunday 17 he met the confreres of the Provincial House for the celebration of Palm Sunday, and stayed there also for

the celebrations of the whole of Holy Week. On Holy Thursday he had the opportunity to concelebrate the Chrism Mass in the Cathedral of Saigon with the Cardinal.

On Thursday 28 April the Regional had a meeting with the Provincial and his Council. And on Friday 29 the Extraordinary Visitation concluded with a meeting with the Provincial, his Council, all the Rectors of the communities in Vietnam, in the house of K'Long.

On 4 May Fr. Andrew Wong left Saigon for Melbourne, in Australia, to start the consultation process for the appointment of the new Provincial. He held meetings with confreres in various places in Australia until 13 May, when he went to Suva, Fiji, to consult the confreres in the formation house of the Pacific zone of the Province. The following day, 14 May, from Fiji he went to Samoa for the consultation. On Monday 16 he left Samoa for Sidney and then Manila.

On Thursday 19 he went to Lahore, in Pakistan, for a special assembly of the confreres who are working in that country. Also present was the Provincial of the Southern Philippines, Fr. George Militante. On 24 May Fr. Andrew

Wong celebrated the solemnity of Mary Help of Christians with the confreres and the students of the Lahore community. In the evening he left Pakistan for the Philippines. On Friday 27 he left for Rome, to take part in the summer session of the General Council.

The Councillor for the South Asia Region

The Regional Councillor for South Asia, Fr. Maria Arokiam Kanaga, after leaving Rome at the end of the winter plenary session of the General Council, arrived in Itanagar, Arunachal Pradesh, on 31 January the Feast of Don Bosco, to take part in the National Assembly of the Past Pupils of India. On 1 February he visited various Salesian houses in West Arunachal Pradesh. He also had a meeting with Bishop Michael Akasius Toppo of Tezpur, before travelling on to Chennai and Tiruchy. After a short visit to his parents, on 5 February he took part in the installation of the new Provincial of Tiruchy, Fr. Albert Johnson.

On 6 February he travelled to Chennai, holding a meeting with the Provincial Council of the INM Province. On 8, he went to Banga-

lore, and held a meeting with some confreres to determine the programme for the Retreat to be preached by the Rector Major and the programme for the Team Visit. The following day he reached Guwahati, where he presided at Mass to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the entry into the Salesian Family of the MSMHC Congregation.

On 11 February the Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes, the Regional began the *Extraordinary Visitation of the Guwahati Province* (ING), with a meeting with the Provincial Council and another with the Rectors of the communities in the Province. Then between 12 and 18 February he visited the three houses in Tura, in the Garo Hills District. Afterwards on 21 he returned to Bangalore to welcome the Rector Major and his secretary, Fr. Juan José Bartolomé. The Rector Major then preached a Retreat to all the Provincials and the members of their Councils and the Directors of Novices in the Region. This was followed by the *Team Visit to the South Asia Region* by the Rector Major and some members of the General Council. The Visit was held in Bangalore, at the National Biblical, Catechetical and Liturgical Centre (NBCLC), between 1 and 5

March. After this the Regional went to Hua Hin, Thailand, to take part in the *Team Visit to the East Asia and Oceania Region* between 8 and 12 March. When this was over Fr. Maria Arokiam took the opportunity to visit the Salesian houses in the south of Thailand for three days. Then between 16 and 18 he visited some communities in Sri Lanka.

After this break, due to the various activities mentioned, the Regional returned to the Guwahati Province to continue the Extraordinary Visitation, beginning at Agartala, in the State of Tripura, starting from 19 March. Then until 19 May the Regional carried out his Visitation in Tripura (6 houses), Mizoram (3 houses), Lower East Assam (5 houses), Jaintia Hills (3 houses); in addition the houses in the city of Guwahati and some in the diocese of Bongaigaon in Assam and Nongstoin in Meghalaya. During these Visitations he also met the Bishops of Agartala, Aizwal, Diphu, Guwahati, and Tura to speak about the Salesian presences in their Dioceses. The Regional also held other meetings on a zonal basis in five different places to share ideas about the problems in these parts of the Province. In every Salesian presence the Regional al-

so visited the houses of the groups belonging to the Salesian Family, such as the FMA, MSMHC, SMI (Sisters of Mary Immaculate) and the VSDB (Visitation Sisters of Don Bosco, Shillong). In this first part of the Visitation the Regional went to 38 houses and presences in total.

Interrupting the programme of the Visitation, on 20 May the Regional travelled to Chennai. Here he received the perpetual vows of two confreres from the INM Province, presiding at Mass on the Solemnity of Mary Help of Christians on 24 May, which was also the 25th anniversary of his own ordination to the priesthood. The following day he celebrated the jubilee with his parents in his home town, Varadarajanpet. After a thanksgiving visit to the Sanctuary of the Marian Basilica in Velankanni on 27 May, Fr. Maria Arokiam returned to Rome on 30 May to take part in the summer session of the General Council.

The Councillor for the North Europe Region

After the winter session of the General Council, the Regional Councillor Fr Marek Chrzan, left

for Croatia to celebrate the Feast of Don Bosco. On Sunday 30 January at Zagreb he took part in the solemn Mass at which 15 new Salesians-Cooperators made their promise. On 31 January he went to Žepče in Bosnia, where in the Salesian school he took part in the Solemnity of Don Bosco, blessing a new monument to the Father and Teacher of Youth.

Between 4 and 6 February he returned to the Generalate in Rome and took part in a seminar on "Rethinking Salesian Youth Ministry."

Between 10 and 16 February he was in the Irish Province for a fact finding visit, during which he took part in the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Our Lady of Lourdes parish in Dublin, entrusted to the Salesians. He then visited all the Salesian communities in Ireland.

On 24 February he began the *Extraordinary Visitation of the Croatia Province*. He began with a meeting with the Provincial Council at Zagreb and a visit to the community of the Provincial house. He then visited: the parish community of Zagreb - Knežija, then the parishes of Zagreb - Jarun, and Zagreba - Rudeš. Between 11 and 15 March the Regional visited the formation house

in Zagreb - Podsused, and then the house in Rijeka (school and three parishes); then the houses of Zadar, Split and Dubrovnik.

Between 2 and 9 April the Regional was in the EST Circumscription with Fr Francesco Cereda and the Provincial Fr Giuseppe Pelizzari and visited some presences in Belarus, in Russia (Moscow and Saint Petersburg) and in the Ukraine, to examine the mission being undertaken and the situation in view of the future re-organisation of the Circumscription.

On 11 April he visited the Croatian confreres in the community of San Tarcisio in Rome; then between 12 and 14 he went to Turin to meet the Croatian confreres and others from the North Europe Region in the formation community of theology at the "Crocetta." Here he also took part in the meeting of the 'Curatorium'.

On 15 April he returned to Croatia to continue the Extraordinary Visitation. First he visited the community of Žepče in Bosnia, and then met the confreres of the community of Badljevina in Slavonia. He spent the days of Easter at Zagreb in the Provincial House. After Easter he visited the confreres in the presences of the community of Beli Manastir.

On 29 April he ended the Extraordinary Visitation at Zagreb, holding meetings with the Provincial Council and the confreres who had come for a special final meeting. On 30 April he returned to Rome to take part on 1 May in the beatification of John Paul II.

Between 7 and 13 May he took part in the *Team Visit to the Atlantic-German zone of the North, Europe Region* in Germany at Aschau-Waldwinkel. On 14 May he took part in the meeting of the Rector Major and his Vicar with the Provincials of the Polish Provinces in Warsaw.

Between 15 and 19 May with the Rector Major and his Vicar he once again visited the Special Circumscription of the EST, taking part in meetings with the confreres in the Ukraine, Belarus and Russia. On 21 May he took part in the ordination to the priesthood of confreres from the Province of Krakow at Oświęcim, in Poland.

On 23 May he went to Brussels to take part in the conclusion of the Extraordinary Visitation of the North Belgium and Holland Province, carried out by Fr Fabio Attard.

On 29 and 30 he went to Warsaw for the Conference of Salesian Provincials of Poland and the East

(KSIP). On 30 May he returned to Rome to take part in the summer session of the General Council.

The Councillor for the West Europe Region

At the end of the winter session of the General Council, the Regional Councillor Fr José Miguel Núñez left Rome to travel to Mérida, to take part on 29 January in the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Salesian presence in that city. On 31 still in Mérida he celebrated with the young people and the Salesian Family the Feast of Don Bosco and presided at the ceremony of the taking of their Promise by the Salesians-Cooperators.

On 1 February Fr José Miguel went to *Seville* to begin in the name of the Rector Major the *Extraordinary Visitation*, of that Province. The Visitation continued until the end of May, with some interruptions for Regional matters and other tasks entrusted to the Regional.

Between 6 and 12 February he went to Mexico to preach a Retreat to the Rectors of the two Provinces (MEG and MEM) at Guadalajara.

On his return he continued the

Extraordinary Visitation of Seville.

On 23 February the Councillor took part in the Prize Distribution ceremony at the "Colegio Mayor San Juan Bosco" in Seville, at the solemn opening of the university academic year.

On 2-4 March in Barcellona he chaired a meeting of the Iberian Conference and the annual meeting of the West Europe Region attended by the Provincials and Vice Provincials of all the Provinces.

On 5-6 March he took part in a Provincial meeting of the Confraternities ("hermandades y cofradías") of Andalucía in the city of La Línea de La Concepción (Cadiz) and on 27 March in a meeting of the "Hogares Don Bosco" at Pozoblanco (Córdoba).

In the month of April on 2 the Councillor took part in the Regional Committee of the Past Pupils at Málaga. On the 9 he took part in the annual meeting of the teachers of vocational training and gave a conference entitled: "Don Bosco and vocational training: challenges and charismatic prospects for a renewed practice."

On 16-17 April at Madrid - Carabanchel Fr José Miguel Núñez chaired a meeting of the Provincial Councils of Spain for the process of the Restructuration

of the Salesian presences in Spain. Later he chaired two other meetings with the Provincials to continue the process, also in Madrid on 9 May and 20 June.

Still in April, between 21 and 24, the Regional took part in Easter Youth Gatherings held in Sanlúcar La Mayor (Seville), San José del Valle (Cadiz) and Antequera (Málaga).

In the month of May on 8 chaired the Provincial Assembly of the Association of Mary Help of Christians at Triana (Seville). On 14 he took part in the ordinations to the diaconate of six confreres from AFO (3), ATE (2) and SSE (1), students in Seville, and in the priestly ordination of a confrere from SSE in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians.

On 15 he flew to the Canary Islands for the Extraordinary Visitation to the three Salesian houses there and to celebrate the novena of Mary Help of Christians on the islands of Gran Canarias and Tenerife.

On 28 May, the Province Feast Day, the Regional Councillor presided at the Salesian house in Triana (Seville), which was keeping the 75th anniversary of its foundation. It was a day of thanksgiving on which to conclude the Extraordinary Visitation

of the Province carried out in the name of the Rector Major over four months.

During the Visitation the Councillor also met the Bishops of the Dioceses of Huelva, Jerez, Cadiz, Mérida-Badajoz, Córdoba, Tenerife, Gran Canaria and Seville.

On 31 May he returned to Rome to take part in the summer plenary session of the General Council.

The Councillor for the Italy Middle East Region

The Regional Councillor for the Italy Middle East Region, Fr Pier Fausto Frisoli, at the conclusion of the winter session of the General Council, took part on 29 January in the celebrations for the 75th anniversary of the Foundation of the Salesian Centre in Taranto.

Then on 30 January he resumed the *Extraordinary Visitation of the "Sacred Heart" Circumscription of Central Italy* (which he had begun in September 2010), visiting in turn the communities of Genoa - Sampierdarena (where he celebrated the Solemnity of Saint John Bosco), Vallecrosia, Alassio, Genoa - Quarto, Varazze, La Spezia, Loreto, Ancona, Macerata, Civitanova Alta, Civitanova

Marche, Porto Recanati, Vasto, L'Aquila, Sulmona, Ortona, Rome - Don Bosco, Rome - Speranza, Rome - Blessed Philip Rinaldi, Rome - San Tarcisio, Rome - Testaccio, Latina, Frascati, Genzano, Arezzo, Rome Borgo - Don Bosco, Rome - Gerini, Rome - Sacred Heart, Rome - Pius XI.

On 18 February he took part in the National Directive Council of CNOS-Schools. On 14 March and 26-27 May he chaired the meeting of the Provincial Council of the Circumscription. On 28 May he concluded the Extraordinary Visitation, presiding at the Assembly of the Rectors and the members of the Provincial Council at Genzano.

The planned journey to Syria with the Provincials of the Region, organised for 1 to 8 May, was cancelled because of the worsening of the political situation in the country.

The Secretary General

Implementing the guidelines for the planned programme of the six-year period, the Secretary General Fr Marian Stempel in agreement with the Rector Major and the Regional Councillors organised in this period *a meeting of the*

Provincial Secretaries of the Inter-america Region, held in the "Tabor" Retreat House at Santa Eulalia, Chosica, Lima, between 2 and 6 May 2011.

As was indicated in the letter calling the meetings, their purpose was updating and an exchange of ideas. Subjects on the agenda were those of particular interest to the Secretary and the Provincial Secretariat with regard to documentation, to the statistics, juridical aspects, the archives and libraries. Special attention was given to the archives and to the various juridical issues. The active participation of the Secretaries and the fraternal atmos-

phere of the meetings should be mentioned, as well as the value of the opportunity to get to know the different situations.

After the meeting at Chosica, thanks to the kindness of the Provincial and several confreres, the Secretary was able to visit some of the houses in the Province admiring the rich variety of the works and the commitment of the confreres.

A special word of thanks for their hospitality is due to the community of the community of the Provincial House, Lima - San José, which hosted the Secretaries and gave them a Salesian welcome.

5.1 Our entrustment to Mary

Below is the text of the talk given by the Rector Major, Fr. Pascual Chávez Villanueva, at the conclusion of the VI International Congress of Mary Help of Christians, held at Czestochowa (Poland) between 3 and 6 August 2011, an important event for the whole Salesian Family.

1. Mary, pilgrim of faith

I want to begin this Marian reflection proposing some passages from the encyclical “The Mother of the Redeemer,” in which Blessed Pope John Paul II presented her as a pilgrim in the faith.

Starting with the Annunciation there begins for Mary “a faith journey”: her whole life is seen transformed by the invitation of God to collaborate in his plan for the salvation of all men through the conception in her virgin womb of his Son, Jesus. Mary “responded, therefore, with all her human and feminine «I,»” (*Redemptoris Mater*, 13). The gospel underlines the fact that Mary grows in her understanding of God’s plan of salvation; on various occasions it is also said that she did not imme-

diately understand what was happening (cf. *Lk* 2,19), or what was being said (cf. *Lk* 2,33; 2,51). For this reason she kept all these things in her heart, meditating on them. It is not possible to grow in faith without the attitude of spiritual depth, of which Mary is the most beautiful example.

We can even say that the one who helped Mary the most to grow in faith was her own Son Jesus, who invited her to follow a path which goes from a motherhood which is simply physical to the fullness of what is already present at the starting point: motherhood in the faith.

From this point of view it is possible to contemplate in the gospel texts passages in which the Mother of Jesus appears successively. Blessed John Paul II highlights this process. With regard to the first of these gospel texts, the finding of the child Jesus in the Temple the Pope writes: “Thus even his Mother, to whom had been revealed most completely the mystery of his divine sonship, lived in intimacy with this mystery only through faith! Living side by side with her Son under the same roof, and faithfully persevering “in her union with her Son,” she “advanced in her pilgrimage of faith,

...And so it was during Christ's public life too that day by day there was fulfilled in her the blessing uttered by Elizabeth at the Visitation." (*Redemptoris Mater*, 17).

With regard to the marriage feast at Cana (*Jn* 2, 1-11), John Paul II insists: "That event already quite clearly outlines the new dimension, the new meaning of Mary's motherhood... Jesus means above all to contrast the motherhood resulting from the fact of birth with what this "motherhood" is to be in the dimension of the Kingdom of God." (*Redemptoris Mater*, 21).

It is necessary to understand in the same sense the passages in which it would seem that Jesus shows a lack of respect for his mother, which in fact have the intention of underlining this process in the faith. In *Lk* 8,19-21, when they tell Jesus: « your mother and brothers are standing outside and wish to see you », he replies: « My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it ». John Paul II comments: "Is Jesus thereby distancing himself from his mother according to the flesh? ... One must nevertheless note that the new and different motherhood which Jesus speaks

of to his disciples refers precisely to Mary in a very special way. Is not Mary the first of "those who hear the word of God and do it?" (*Redemptoris Mater*, 20).

So too, when a woman in the crowd wanting to praise him cries out: «Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts that you sucked», Jesus replies: «Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and do it» (*Lk* 11,27). In the encyclical the Pope comments: "But to the blessing uttered by that woman upon her who was his mother according to the flesh, Jesus replies in a significant way... He wishes to divert attention from motherhood understood only as a fleshly bond, in order to direct it towards those mysterious bonds of the spirit which develop from hearing and keeping God's word" (*Redemptoris Mater*, 20).

But it is above all in the scene at the foot of the cross, as Saint John describes it (*Jn* 19,25-27), that Jesus associates his Mother Mary with his radical emptying of himself ('*kenosis*'). It is precisely in stripping herself from her physical motherhood of Jesus that Mary becomes the Mother of the Mystical Body of Christ, the Church; so that every Christian,

as a 'beloved disciple' of the Lord, is the 'son of Mary' (Origen).

The highpoint of this Messianic Motherhood in the faith and for the faith we find in the last biblical passage to speak of Mary: the book of the Acts, which describing the Apostles gathered in the Upper Room in expectation of the Holy Spirit tells us that "All these joined in continuous prayer, together with several women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers." (*Act* 1,14). Mary is present at the beginning of the Church, as she was at the incarnation of the Son of God in a most special, unique way. "In the redemptive economy of grace... there is a unique correspondence between the moment of the Incarnation of the Word and the moment of the birth of the Church. The person who links these two moments is Mary: Mary at Nazareth and Mary in the Upper Room at Jerusalem. In both cases her discreet yet essential presence indicates the path of "birth from the Holy Spirit." Thus she who is present in the mystery of Christ as Mother becomes-by the will of the Son and the power of the Holy Spirit-present in the mystery of the Church" (*Redemptoris Mater*, 24).

2. Mary in Salesian life

The special Salesian way of reading the Gospel invites us to have a maturity and a firmness also in our devotion to Mary, according to the example and teaching Don Bosco in our way of living and spreading our filial love for the Virgin.

The Salesian charism is above all the result of a divine initiative: "through the motherly intercession of Mary the Holy Spirit raised up St John Bosco to contribute to the salvation of youth" (*SDB Constitutions* art. 1).

The emphasis naturally is placed on God Our Lord, whose plan for the salvation of youth it is – and from the point of view of the Trinity – on the Spirit who operates as the strength which realises God's salvation in history raising up co-workers with God. This language recalls the account of the Annunciation, in which the Holy Spirit is given to Mary "so that the impossible may become possible": the incarnation of the Son of God.

We want to stress the charismatic nature of the Salesian Family which comes to birth as God's plan and initiative rather than man's plan and initiative, yet with

all the sensitivity of God that Don Bosco had in doing the best for the young. Even more, this sensitivity needs to be accepted as a gift of the Spirit, who raised up Don Bosco, and formed in him "the heart of a father and teacher, capable of total self-giving" (*C. SDB* 1), and guided him in the foundation of that spiritual apostolic movement which is the Salesian Family.

The most interesting aspect of this action of the Spirit, however, is that Don Bosco experienced it through the motherly mediation of Mary. It is as though for Don Bosco Mary was the incarnation of the Spirit: given to him as "The teacher under whose guidance he would learn and obtain wisdom." (*MB* I, p. 27). And on the other hand, Mary teaches him to open himself to the action of the Spirit and to allow himself to be led by Him, even to being changed into "deeply the man of God, filled with the gifts of the Holy Spirit ..." (*C. SDB* 21). In this way, and "living as though he saw the invisible" (*Heb* 11,27), Don Bosco dedicated his whole life to the service of the young and placed his charism at the service of the Church, first of all through the Salesian Society and then through the whole Salesian Family.

From this active presence of the Holy Spirit and the maternal assistance of the Virgin Mary we can draw on the strength needed for our fidelity and the support of our hope (cf. *C. SDB* 1). In no way is this some sort of the personalisation of the Holy Spirit in Mary; rather it is a question of an inseparable union through which the Holy Spirit acts as the transforming power of the individual within himself, and as the strength which frees forces capable of transforming history. In this way Mary acts as "mother and teacher" as model and guide, who educates us in the faith and teaches us to become children of God, as she did with her divine Son. Today as yesterday, with us as with Don Bosco, "the Spirit raises up through the motherly intervention of Mary" missionaries of the young, apostles consecrated to their salvation.

2.1 The presence of Mary in the Salesian Family

The presence of Mary is an essential element in the identity of the Salesian Family and consequently of the vocation of every Salesian. Devotion to Mary is essential in our lives as it was in the life of Don Bosco and as it was in the foundation of the Salesian

Congregation and of the first groups of the Salesian Family.

In the life of Don Bosco the action of Mary is describes with three words: "indicate" "guide" and "support". Mary Most Holy pointed out to him the field of his labours, guided him in all his enterprises and supported him in the foundation of the first groups of the Salesian Family. The presence of Mary is real and is possible thanks to the assumption into heaven of Mary, who continues to intervene with motherly care in the history of mankind, as she did at the marriage feast of Cana. For the members of the Salesian Family this solicitude by Mary on behalf of a young couple, who were about to see their festivities interrupted, is also manifested in a way in little John Bosco's "dream at nine years of age" who then receives from Mary the pointer to poor abandoned young people and those in danger, as the specific field of his activity and the gift of an educational approach of kindness as a pastoral method.

As for the beloved disciple at the foot of the cross, Mary was given to Don Bosco as mother and teacher in order to learn that spirituality, that programme of education and that pedagogical system

which is the Preventive System, with its roots in the love of God, which preserves from negative experiences that could seriously impact on the lives of the young, and which releases the best energies present in the hearts of every young person.

For every Salesian Mary ought to be a real mother and teacher who takes him into her school, under her control, and enables him to gradually acquire those attitudes which make educative-pastoral work among the young possible. Devotion to Mary can be expressed through religious practices, but is is above all a life experience as it was for Don Bosco.

With Don Bosco we believe that Mary is present among us and continues her "mission of Mother of the Church and Help of Christians" It is worth noting that Don Bosco very wisely combines the title of Help of Christians with that of Mother of the Church. With regard to this insight of Don Bosco – it should be remembered that only at the conclusion of the Second Vatican Council in the closing address did Paul VI officially proclaim Mary as "Mother of the Church" – it is important that we never separate these two titles. As disciples of Jesus we are the

Church, which has Mary as its mother, and as Christians we continue to be under the protection of Mary and we are called to be 'helpers' of the young in preventing and fighting against all the evils which threaten them, from the physical, economic and social points of view as well as the moral and spiritual aspects

Once again the aspects of 'motherhood' are highlighted, in the sense of the unconditional preferential acceptance of those most in need, and in the sense of loving kindness as a basic attitude in dealing with the young; aspects represented in this twofold title with which every Salesian calls on Mary.

In this way we entrust ourselves to Mary "the humble servant in whom the Lord has done great things, that we may become witnesses to the young of her Son's boundless love." (*C. SDB* 8). Our "*totus tuus*" obliges us to live with the spirit of Mary, the spirit of the Magnificat, in order to live our pastoral and educative Mission.

Entrustment is a filial gesture: abandoning oneself to Mary, as an infant does in its Mother's arms, but with the awareness of someone who entrusts themselves to a person and consecrates them-

selves to her in order to indicate dedication and belonging. In this way our devotion to Mary involves dedication, trust, belonging, availability. The hymn of the 'Magnificat' is an invitation to gather together all the anguished history of humanity, which began to be renewed in Mary, the new Eve, and through her. From this arises the mission of every Salesian which does not consist in doing things no matter how important, but in being "witnesses among the young of the inexhaustible love of the Father manifested in Jesus."

So far we have wanted to show who Mary is in the Church and in our Family, and at the same time to suggest a programme to make it a fact of life, so that our love becomes expressed in docility, imitation and a commitment to make visible, credible and effective the love of God for the young.

2.2 Mary in our lives and in our prayers

The reason for our Marian devotion is the fact that "Mary, Mother of God, holds a unique place in the history of salvation" (*C. SDB* 92). Devotion to her is not a matter of the emotional or sentimental, but rather an expression faith. Our affection for

her is above all a recognition of her role as the Mother of Our Saviour and of the mission with which the Lord himself has entrusted her on behalf of the Church and of humanity. Here we find again the Mariology of Luke and of John, who present Mary as the first one to believe, as the example of the disciple as the teacher of the Christian. But we also find the Mariology of Don Bosco, who venerated her as the Immaculate Help of Christians.

As Christians we can discover four typical features which characterise our devotion to Mary and which we are called to cultivate and to imitate:

- 1) Her life of faith as an openness and a readiness to accept the will of God, well documented in the Gospels especially at the Annunciation;
- 2) Her concern for those in need, those who, precisely on account of their poverty or of being abandoned have more need to experience the fact that God loves them, as she did visiting her cousin or being attentive at Cana;
- 3) Her fidelity under trial, which is at the same time the revelation that salvation is to be found in the cross and in participation in suffering, which Mary learned and lived standing at the foot of the cross;
- 4) Her joy at the marvels worked by the Father, having experienced the faithfulness of God to his promises and the marvels brought about in us, in our young people, so that we too can join in Mary's hymn of the 'Magnificat'

As Salesians, furthermore, we recognise her work as the "teacher" of Don Bosco to whom she indicated the Salesian mission and the apostolic interior life which leads us to unite in a wonderful way passion for God (who calls us and consecrates us to Himself) with the passion for the Kingdom (humanity, the young), to whom we are sent and to whom we dedicate our lives.

For Don Bosco the twofold invocation of the Immaculate and the Help of Christians is not insignificant. They are not two titles which can be switched like labels. Mary Immaculate and Mary Help of Christians are concerned with the Salesian mission, with those for whom it exists and with the method of education.

In so far as she is the Immaculate one Mary represents the di-

vine pedagogy, the force of love which has the great power to open the hearts of men and women and therefore of the young, "so that they know they are loved..." Don Bosco would say, and which leads them to "understand and love the things that are not agreeable to them ... such as discipline, study and self mortification They must learn these things with love" (BM XVII, p. 88)

We are in the presence of the translation into pedagogical terms of what Saint John declares: "This is the love I mean: not our love for God but God's love for us when he sent his Son" (1 Jn 4,10). It means that the experience of love as lived and recognised produces in the human being the desire to respond with all one's efforts, those which flow from the heart. It is not surprising that Don Bosco concentrated all his pedagogy of love and on loving kindness. This led him to make his own the Preventive System which puts the emphasis on going out towards the young, taking the first step and having special regard for the least. Mary Immaculate, therefore, represents for Don Bosco the incarnation of the anticipating love of God, especially for poor, aban-

doned young people and those in danger.

As Help of Christians Mary represents both the defence of those most in need in their abandonment and the motherly care of one who takes them by the hand and leads, educates and forms them. Undoubtedly the title of Help of Christians in the times of Don Bosco had overtones different from those it might have in our day. In any case, the main victims of the current social, neo-liberal and secularised model are certainly the young; either because they lack what is necessary, their normal development is compromised, and they are tempted to pursue life styles which do not lead to its fullness, or, because closed in on themselves, in a comfort zone, they lose the meaning of life, the capacity to give themselves, generosity and service, organising their lives with God, the source of life, on the fringes.

Those to whom we are sent in our mission, the poor, abandoned young people and those in danger are an incentive for our devotion to Mary Help of Christians. It is a matter of those who have no other help than that which comes to them from God who is proud to be their defender.

3. By way of a conclusion... and a point of departure

The challenges we face nowadays in bearing witness to and proclaiming Jesus Christ are different from those the disciples of Jesus met. In facing them successfully we are not alone nor are we stripped of defences. Today as yesterday we have a mother and a model who educates us in the faith and teaches us to be believers: Mary.

If, when the Father sent the Son into the world he entrusted him to Mary as mother and teacher, she will help us to acquire the great attitudes by which she lived and knew how to build up in Jesus: the constant search for the Will of God, and the total acceptance of it in our lives, which leads us to give ourselves like her in the practical and humble service of the young as an expression of our love for Jesus.

If the Father chose Mary the humbly young girl from Nazareth, so that she would collaborate with him in the salvation of mankind, being the Mother of his Son Jesus Christ, and granted her the fullness of grace, with which she fully corresponded, with the obedience of faith and total dedication,

then Mary will also help us to know how to welcome God into our lives so that, guided by the Holy Spirit, we may continue to grow in maturity in our faith and merit the blessing of the Lord: «Blessed are those who hear the word of God and do it. »

How can we make our entrustment to Mary practical and keep it in our hearts, making fruitful the journey undertaken in preparation for this Congress and the experience we have had of the Congress itself?

- Special attention should be given to the current situation of the family which has the primary responsibility for education and is the first place for evangelisation. The whole Church has taken note of the serious difficulties in which the family finds itself and recognises the need to provide extraordinary help for its formation, its development and for the responsible exercise of its task of education. The Salesian charism in guiding families returns to its origins and in coming into contact with the spirit of Don Bosco the family acquires strength and evangelical joy. We too are called to act in such a way that **youth ministry is always more**

open to family ministry. The presence of families and of young couples who under the guidance of Mary share a faith journey, consisting in formation, sharing and prayer, is an expression of a providential gift of Mary Help of Christians who is taking care of the new generations.

- In view of the celebration of the second centenary of the birth of our Father Don Bosco (16 August 2015) I ask the Association of Mary Help of Christians to offer to all the groups of the Salesian Family some **suggestions, guidelines and apostolic experiences with the young in order to emphasise the Marian dimension of Don Bosco's history, pedagogy and spirituality.**

- I should like to invite you to undertake **guidance and the animation of the groups of the Salesian Family**, especially at local level, in a Marian spirit of service, of communion and a special apostolic sensitivity, especially towards those most in difficulty.
- Finally I want to announce that the **VII International Congress of Mary Help of Chris-**

tians will be held in Turin at Colle Don Bosco on the occasion of the second centenary of the birth of Don Bosco in 2015. May it be a Salesian Family event attentive above all to the family as the prophetic place for a commitment to a new evangelisation and to putting into practice the preventive system in the face of the educational emergency of our times.

I conclude this talk of mine with the blessing of God, invoking the help and the intercession of Mary Help of Christians on all of you and on the whole Salesian Family.

Pascual Chávez V.
Fr Pascual CHÁVEZ VILLANUEVA
Rector Major

5.2 Publications for the 150th anniversary of the Unification of Italy

Below is some information from those responsible for the Salesian Historical Institute regarding some significant initiatives on the occasion of the celebrations for the 150th anniversary of the Unification of Italy – publications and other events – relating to the activities undertaken by the Salesians

and the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, in different types of works especially in the field of education, during their presence in Italy for over one hundred and fifty years (it should be noted that the foundation of the Salesian Society took place two years before the proclamation of the Unification of Italy).

On the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the Unification of Italy (1861 - 17 March - 2011) various studies, appearing in books and magazines, have thrown light on the activities of the Salesians throughout the country in the period under consideration. To be recommended in particular for every Provincial Library are the following: *Salesiani di Don Bosco in Italia. 150 anni di educazione in Italia* (Rome, LAS 2011), edited by Francesco Motto; *Le Figlie di Maria Ausiliatrice in Italia (1872-2010). Donne nell'educazione*, edited by Grazia Loparco - Maria Teresa Spiga (Rome, LAS 2011); J. M. PRELLEZO, *Scuole Professionali Salesiane. Momenti della loro storia (1853-1953)* (Rome, CNOS-FAP 2010); G. MANIERI, *Salesiani laici per il mondo del lavoro*, Turin, LDC 2011 (for ordinary readers). Also n. 56 (July-December 2010) of "Ricerche Sto-

riche Salesiane" is entirely dedicated to the Unification of Italy. Two major seminars have been planned: the first in April 2011, at the "Sala delle colonne" in the Parliament Building, with the presence of the Minister for Youth; the second, to be held on 26 October 2011, in the Sala della Protomoteca in the Campidoglio (Rome), where the first civic commemoration of St Don Bosco on the day after Easter Sunday in 1934 took place, in the presence of highest authorities of the State and of the Church.

5.3 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 – June-July 2011.

1. *CHAMBERS Gregory, Provincial of the AUSTRALIA Province*

Fr Gregory CHAMBERS has been appointed to lead the "Mary Help of Christians" Province of AUSTRALIA and succeed Fr Francis J. Moloney.

Born on 13 October 1950 at

Mentone (Australia), Gregory Chambers made his first religious profession on 31 January 1969 in the novitiate at Lysterfield. Perpetually professed on 31 January 1975, he was ordained priest on 10 June 1978 at East Bentleigh.

In the first years after ordination he exercised his educative and pastoral ministry in the houses of Chadstone and Sunbury. Between 1992 and 2005 he was in succession Rector of the communities of Glenorchy, Chadstone and Ferntree Gully. Since 2005 until the present time in 2011 he was School Principal of "Rupertswood College" in Sunbury.

A Provincial Councillor since 1994, in 2009 he was appointed Vice Provincial, a role he occupied until his appointment as Provincial.

2. *CIOLLI Claudio, Superior of the Vice Province of MADAGASCAR*

Fr *Claudio CIOLLI* is the new Superior of the "Mary Immaculate" Vice Province of MADAGASCAR. He succeeds Fr *Erminio De Santis*.

Claudio Ciolli was born in Rome on 16 January 1968 and has been a Salesian since 8 September 1989, when he made his first pro-

fession in Rome at the end of the novitiate year at Lanuvio. He made his first contacts with Madagascar during his initial formation, spending three years in the Salesian houses in Ivato "Notre Dame de Clairvaux" and in Ijely. On 1 September 1996 he made his perpetual profession at Betafo (MDG). Having returned to Rome for theological studies at the Salesian Pontifical University he was ordained priest in Rome on 10 October 1998.

Returning to Madagascar, between 1999 and 2004 he exercised his educative and pastoral ministry in the house in Fianarantsoa. Between 2004 and 2009 he was Rector of "Notre Dame de Clairvaux" house in Ivato. In 2009 he became Rector of the Vice Provincial House. A Provincial Councillor, in 2005 he was Delegate for Youth Ministry in the Vice Province; and in 2009 he also undertook the roles of Delegate for the Missions, Vocations and Salesians-Cooperators.

3. *CRISTIANI Pasquale, Provincial of the SOUTHERN ITALY Province*

To lead the "Blessed Michael Rua" Province of *SOUTHERN ITALY* the Rector Major with his

Council has appointed Fr *Pasquale CRISTIANI*. He succeeds Fr Pasquale Martino.

Pasquale Cristiani was born on 20 September 1951 at Andria, in the Province of Bari (Italy). He made his first profession on 12 September 1969 in the novitiate at Vico Equense. On 24 September 1975 he made his perpetual profession and at the end of his theological studies at the studentate in Castellammare di Stabia, he was ordained priest at Cerignola on 1 July 1978.

After devoting the first years of his priesthood in the apostolate among the youngsters in Cerignola and Torre Annunziata, Fr Cristiani was parish priest of the Minor Basilica dedicated to St Dominic Savio in Lecce and then Rector of the same religious community. Between 2000 and 2005 he was Delegate for Youth Ministry in the Southern Province. When he was appointed Provincial Fr Cristiani was Rector of the "Saint John Bosco" Institute in Taranto.

4. *NGOY Jean-Claude, , Provincial of the CENTRAL AFRICA Province*

Fr. *Jean-Claude NGOY* is the new Provincial of the "Mary As-

sumed into Heaven" Province of *CENTRAL AFRICA*. He takes the place of Fr. Joachim Tshibangu.

Jean Claude Wa Kayumba, was born at Kabenga, Shaba (Dem. Rep. of the Congo) on 15 May 1964, and made his first religious profession on 24 August 1989 in the novitiate at Kansebula. Following the normal Salesian formation curriculum, he made his perpetual profession on 9 July 1995 and was ordained priest at Kipushi on 12 July 1997.

After ordination he worked for two years in Kansebula, and was then for two years (1999-2001) at Rome-UPS in the "Blessed Michael Rua" community in which he was also a Councillor. Having returned to his Province, for three years he was in the community of Lubumbashi-Imara, and then in 2004 he was appointed Director of Novices at Kansebula. In 2006, he was called to the Provincial house in Lubumbashi, as Rector and joined the Provincial Council with the role of Provincial Delegate for Formation and for the Salesian Family. Since 2007 he has been Vice Provincial also exercising the role of Rector of the formation community in Kansebula.

5. *ROLANDI Giovanni, Provincial of the EAST AFRICA Province*

To lead the "Saint John Bosco" Province of *EAST AFRICA* the Rector Major with his Council has appointed Fr *Giovanni ROLANDI*.

Born in Turin on 29 September 1963, Giovanni Rolandi made his profession as a Salesian on 8 September 1983 at the end of the novitiate year at Pinerolo. After his postnovitiate he left for Kenya, where he did his practical training at Embu and theological studies at Nairobi. Perpetually professed on

9 September 1989, he was ordained priest on 13 April 1991 at Colle Don Bosco.

After ordination, he spent three year in the formation house of Rome - San Tarcisio. Having returned to the Province he was at Moshi, in Tanzania, and then in 1995 he moved to Nairobi-Utume, where between 1999 and 2005 he was Rector. In 2005, he moved to the Provincial house and was appointed Vice Provincial and Provincial Delegate for Formation, roles he was still undertaking when he was appointed Provincial.

5.4 Our dead confreres (2nd 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).

SURNAME AND NAME	PLACE of death	DATE	AGE	PROV
L ALFONSI Pietro	Venezia-Mestre (Italia)	18/06/2011	79	INE
P AZEVEDO Geraldo da Costa	Belo Horizonte (Brasile)	02/06/2011	84	BBH
L BATTISTELLA Alessandro	Torino	15/08/2011	83	ICP
L BAZZACCO Giuseppe	Macerata (Italia)	06/08/2011	71	ICC
P BEJARANO Carlos	Bogotá (Colombia)	06/07/2011	77	COB
P BERSANO Julio	São Paulo (Brasile)	31/08/2011	80	BSP
L BOCCHIOTTI Antonio	Roma	08/07/2011	78	ICC
L BONOMI Pietro (Rino)	Arese (Italia)	18/08/2011	84	ILE
P BUSI Domenico	Arese (Italia)	01/06/2011	86	ILE
P BZDOCK Karl - Heinz	Essen (Germania)	07/07/2011	76	GER
P CAMPO GUZMÁN Pablo	Logroño (Spagna)	20/08/2011	90	SBI
P CANTINI Juan Alberto Francisco	Córdoba (Argentina)	14/07/2011	83	ARN
<i>Fu Ispettore per 18 anni</i>				
P CARDEÑO CAMINERO Antonio	León (Spagna)	27/08/2011	88	SLE
P CASATI C. Annunzio (Nunzio)	Sesto San Giovanni (Italia)	16/07/2011	61	ILE
L CÉLÉRIER Roger	Toulon (Francia)	26/05/2011	87	FRB
P CELLA Leonardo	Salerno (Italia)	29/08/2011	79	IME
P CHAKKRAMAKIL Joseph	Kochi, Kerala (India)	02/08/2011	67	INK
L CHIOCCA Pietro	Milano (Italia)	02/05/2011	69	ICC
P CHO Andrew Seong Tae	Seoul (Corea del Sud)	20/04/2011	51	KOR
P CINTRA Geraldo	São Paulo (Brasile)	13/07/2011	88	BSP
P COCCIO Aldo	Torino	06/05/2011	88	ICP
P DALLA VECCHIA Leone	Venezia-Mestre (Italia)	26/04/2011	85	INE
P DEDAPPER Marc	Leuven (Belgio)	31/05/2011	65	BEN
P DELALANDE Gilles	Mikolongo, Libreville (Gabon)	23/04/2011	78	ATE
P DESRAMAUT Michel	Toulon (Francia)	11/08/2011	87	FRB
P DEVITO Angelo	Molfetta (Italia)	13/07/2011	89	IME
L DITICCO Tarcisio	Roma	01/06/2011	70	ICC
P DÍAZ PARDO Pedro Antonio	Cali (Colombia)	13/05/2011	98	COM
P DIVER Patrick	Elizabeth, NJ (USA)	06/08/2011	68	SUE
L DUDÁS Károly	Székesfehérvár (Ungheria)	24/05/2011	86	UNG
P ERBEA Franco	Novara (Italia)	09/07/2011	76	ICP
L FARFÁN ZÚÑIGA José Gabriel	Cusco (Perù)	17/05/2011	85	PER
P FERNÁNDEZ Díez Albino	León (Spagna)	27/06/2011	95	SLE
P FORD Vincent	Cape Town (Sud Africa)	02/06/2011	81	AFM
P FOSKER Roy	Akwatia (Ghana)	19/04/2011	88	AFW
P FRONTINI Angelo	Torino	09/07/2011	86	ICP
P FURDYNA Kazimierz	Aleksandrów Kujawski (Polonia)	26/06/2011	82	PLN
P FURLOTTI Erminio	Arese (Italia)	11/07/2011	91	ILE

SURNAME AND NAME	PLACE of death	DATE	AGE	PROV
P GARCÍA RAMOS Isauro	Cambados (Spagna)	28/08/2011	75	SLE
L GÓMEZ MATÉ Timoteo	Logroño (Spagna)	13/06/2011	89	SBI
L GONZÁLEZ GIL Cipriano	Sevilla (Spagna)	27/09/2011	75	SSE
<i>Fu Ispettore per 6 anni</i>				
L GRIENBERGER Karl	Buxheim (Germania)	08/05/2011	92	GER
P HEMBROM Bimal Batholomew	Kolkata (India)	04/05/2011	48	INC
P HOMMEL Piet	Lubumbashi (Congo R.D.)	20/06/2011	77	AFC
P HOORELBEKE Jean-Pierre	Leuven (Belgio)	19/07/2011	56	BEN
L KECKEISSEN Joseph Edward	Quetzaltenango (Guatemala)	03/04/2011	86	CAM
P LABONTÉ Adelard	Woodbridge, NJ (USA)	24/07/2011	86	SUE
P LIZIN Julien	Liège (Belgio)	12/07/2011	77	FRB
L LÓPEZ MARISCAL Pudenciano	Ávila (Spagna)	02/07/2011	94	SMA
P LÓPEZ NÚÑEZ Víctor Manuel	San Salvador (El Salvador)	12/05/2011	87	CAM
P LUTZ Théophile	Toulon (Francia)	18/07/2011	89	FRB
P MAAS Kees	Driebergen-Rijsenburg (Olanda)	09/08/2011	93	BEN
P MACUA José Luis	Barcelona (Spagna)	22/06/2011	75	SBA
L MARINELLI Franco	Arese (Italia)	05/07/2011	80	ILE
L MARTENS Michel	Helchteren (Belgio)	16/08/2010	90	BEN
P MARTIN Laurence	Hammersmith (Gran Bretagna)	20/04/2011	91	GBR
P MAZEWSKI Andrzej	Ljubljana (Slovenia)	27/04/2011	54	UPS
P MERCADO SEPÚLVEDA Ángel	Santiago del Cile	01/05/2011	79	CIL
L MINAR Michele	Torino	18/07/2011	98	ICP
P MONTERO MARROQUI Antonio	Sevilla (Spagna)	30/07/2011	86	SSE
P MURPHY Ralph	Los Angeles (USA)	14/07/2011	84	SUO
P NASELLI Salvatore	Messina (Italia)	07/06/2011	90	ISI
P NELISSEN Jan	Apeldoorn (Olanda)	10/05/2011	89	BEN
L NGUYEN Van Tho Giuseppe	Ben Cat, Go Vap (Vietnam)	06/08/2011	67	VIE
P NIETO CORTES Luis Alfonso	Medellín (Colombia)	31/05/2011	86	COM
P NOWAK Tadeusz	Kraków (Polonia)	29/06/2011	42	PLS
P NOWAK Władysław	Bielsko Biala (Polonia)	15/07/2011	88	PLS
L OLIVEIRA Mário Pires	Belo Horizonte (Brasile)	31/05/2011	78	BBH
P PARDO Giuseppe	Messina (Italia)	16/07/2011	80	ISI
P PAULA António Pacheco	Belo Horizonte (Brasile)	04/05/2011	87	BBH
P PENZO Pietro	Castelfranco Veneto (Italia)	13/06/2011	82	INE
P PIÁS SILVEIRA Manuel Oriental	Paysandú (Uruguay)	09/08/2011	93	URU
P PILLET Lorenzo	Torino	21/08/2011	91	ICP
L PINAKATT Abraham	Moshi (Tanzania)	23/07/2011	78	AFF
P POJER Valentino	Venezia-Mestre (Italia)	13/06/2011	86	INE
L ROSSETTO Felice	Venezia-Mestre (Italia)	10/05/2011	88	INE
P RUBINKIEWICZ Ryszard	Lublin (Polonia)	30/04/2011	72	PLS
L RUFFATO Giorgio	Venezia-Mestre (Italia)	07/08/2011	84	INE
L SALVIATO Gino	Roma	13/07/2011	96	ICC
L SANABRIA Antonio	Neiva (Colombia)	18/06/2011	90	COB
L SÁNCHEZ Marcos	Barcelona (Spagna)	22/06/2011	82	SBA
P SECHI Antonio	Cagliari (Italia)	24/07/2011	94	ICC
P SLOMP Albano	Campinas (Brasile)	28/07/2011	92	BSP

SURNAME AND NAME	PLACE of death	DATE	AGE	PROV
P SNARSKI Stanisław	Piaseczno (Polonia)	23/04/2011	81	PLE
P SOLÍS VILLAVICENCIO Humberto <i>Fu Ispettore per 6 anni</i>	Quito (Ecuador)	13/04/2011	91	ECU
P SORANO Giuseppe	Messina (Italia)	31/07/2011	93	ISI
P SOSA VELÁZQUEZ José Tomás	Fernando de la Mora (Paraguay)	03/05/2011	95	PAR
P STEFANI Dusan	Venezia-Mestre (Italia)	11/06/2011	91	INE
P STRALLA José Domingo	San Nicolás de los Arroyos (Arg.)	24/06/2011	77	ARN
P TATULLI Francesco	Salerno (Italia)	23/08/2011	65	IME
P TOPNO Nathaniel	Borgang, Assam (India)	28/07/2011	67	IND
P TORRAS PENA Alfonso	Arévalo (Spagna)	07/08/2011	84	SMA
L TRABUCCHI Carlo	Pinerolo (Italia)	08/08/2011	71	ICP
P TROADEC Denis	Mulhouse (Francia)	16/08/2011	71	FRB
P VERDECCHIA Amedeo <i>Fu Ispettore per 9 anni</i>	Civitanova Marche Alta (Italia)	04/06/2011	88	ICC
P VIK Ladislav <i>Fu Ispettore per 12 anni</i>	Praga (Rep. Ceca)	22/07/2011	88	CEP
P VIOTTI Sebastiano	Torino	09/05/2011	89	ICP
L VIVAS RIVERO Francisco	Roma	03/07/2011	76	UPS
P WARNAKULASURIYA N. Fernando	Nochchiyagama (Sri Lanka)	16/06/2011	29	LKC
P XALXO George	Heseg, Ranchi (India)	06/05/2011	61	INN
P YAO Lucas	Chaochou (Taiwan)	22/08/2011	94	CIN
P ZAJEC Ciril	Belgrado (Serbia)	22/07/2011	83	SLO
P ZANOLO Pietro	Lombriasco (Italia)	31/08/2011	85	ICP
P ZUCCHI Romano	Bra (Italia)	26/08/2011	72	ICP





