



acts

of the general council

year XCIII

may-august 2012

N. 413

official organ
of animation
and communication
for the
salesian congregation

Direzione Generale
Opere don Bosco
Roma

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of the Salesian Society
of St John Bosco

OFFICIAL ORGAN OF ANIMATION AND COMMUNICATION FOR THE SALESIAN CONGREGATION

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1. LETTER OF THE RECTOR MAJOR

«WITNESSES TO THE RADICAL APPROACH OF THE GOSPEL»

*Called to live in fidelity
Don Bosco's apostolic project.
"Work and temperance"*

1. CONVOCATION OF THE GC27. 1.1 The steps taken in deciding on the theme. 1.2 Fundamental purpose of the theme. 1.3 Fruits to be hoped for from the implementation of the theme. 1.4 Other tasks. 2. SALESIAN LIFE AND MISSION IN TODAY'S GLOBAL CONTEXT. 2.1 Cultural challenges. 2.2 Ecclesial challenges. 2.3 Institutional challenges. 2.4 Personal challenges. 2.5 Young people as a challenge. 3. THE RADICAL APPROACH OF THE GOSPEL IN SALESIAN CONSECRATED LIFE. 3.1 The radical approach of the gospel in consecrated life. - *Vocation* (C 22 and 25; 97 and 98). - *Spiritual experience: disciples of Christ and seekers of God*. - *Disciples of Christ* (C 61-84). - *Seekers of God* (C 85-95). - *Fraternal life: in fraternal communities* (C 49-59). - *Mission: sent to the young* (C 26-48). 3.2 *The radical approach of the gospel: in the Salesian terms of work and temperance. - Work and temperance. - Work - Temperance.* 3.3 Requirements to make the theme concrete. *Processes to be set in motion. - Mentality to be changed. - Structures to be changed.* 4. CONCLUSION. 5. PRAYER TO SAINT JOHN BOSCO.

Rome, 8 April 2012
Solemnity of the Resurrection

Dear Confreres,

We have just finished the plenary session of the General Council at which we have reflected on the theme and on the aims of the next General Chapter. Even before the Team Visits, as a Council we had examined the challenges which are facing us in the Congregation; the Team Visits provided us with further elements to help us understand the situation. Now the choice of the theme for the General Chapter is meant to be a response to such challenges so as to help the Congregation to follow the paths which the Spirit is pointing out to us at this time in our history.

1. CONVOCAATION OF THE GC27

On the day on which we celebrate the Solemnity of Easter I am happy to be writing to you this letter, through which it is my intention to **convoke the XXVII General Chapter**, according to the norms of article 150 of our Constitutions.

As its theme it will have: **“Witnesses to the radical approach of the gospel”**. It is a particularly important occasion for us since the Chapter is «the principal sign of the Congregation’s unity in diversity» (C. 146). We shall be able to strengthen this unity by reflecting together on how to be «faithful to the Gospel and to their Founder’s charism, and sensitive to the needs of time and place» (C 146). From this moment we entrust ourselves to the Spirit of the Risen Christ so that he may enlighten and accompany us, and to Mary Help of Christians so that she may be our teacher and guide.

I invite you to see this event as a new and promising stage in the life of the Congregation, which since the Second Vatican Council has undertaken a continual and profound spiritual and pastoral renewal so as to be able to respond to the will of God, for the purpose of rendering the Church better service, in dynamic fidelity to Don Bosco and for the needs and expectations of the young (cf. C 146).

The next General Chapter will be the 27th in the history of our Society. It will take place in Rome at the “Salesianum” in the Generalate. It will begin on Saturday 22 February 2014 in Turin, the cradle of our charism; we will go there to breathe the air of our home, to meet our Father Don Bosco, to draw on the sources of the charism of our founding, as we did at the previous General Chapter. We will open the Chapter with a concelebrated Mass in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians and with a visit to the places of our Salesian beginnings. Then we will leave for Rome, the seat of the Chapter. As Moderator of the GC27 I have appointed Fr Francesco Cereda, who from this moment has the

responsibility for accompanying its preparation and celebration.

The theme chosen concerns the witness of the radical approach of the gospel, which finds in the motto “*work and temperance*” (cf. C 18) a practical application in life and activity of what Don Bosco expressed in “*da mihi animas cetera tolle*”. It is aimed at helping us understand better our charismatic identity making us aware of our call to live with fidelity Don Bosco’s apostolic project. Often referred to during the Team Visits, the theme appeared to me and to the General Councillors to be an essential element of our spirituality; a radical style of life in fact represents Don Bosco’s inner frame of mind; it was the support of his untiring work for the salvation of youth and enabled the Congregation to flourish.

It is a huge topic and for this reason in the GC27 we want to focus attention especially on four main areas: living in the grace of unity and with joy the Salesian consecrated *vocation*, which is a gift from God and a personal plan of life; having a strong *spiritual experience*, taking up the way of life and action of Jesus obedient, poor and chaste and becoming seekers of God; building up *fraternity* in our communities of life and action; generously dedicating ourselves to the *mission*, walking side by side with the young so as to give hope to the world.

1.1. The steps taken in deciding on the theme

In choosing the theme of the GG27 we started from the life of the Provinces. In fact in preparation for the Team Visits the Provinces carried out an assessment of the extent to which the GC26 had been assimilated and offered some future prospects; they also identified the main achievements of recent years, the important challenges, the resources available to face up to the future, the difficulties they were encountering.

In this way the Team Visits became the first steps in the preparation for the GC27, since they made us aware of the state of the Congregation in its various contexts: its strong and its weak points, the opportunities and the challenges.

A recurring and evident theme was the need to live our Salesian life and mission to the young with greater dynamism, credibility and fruitfulness. All this once again pointed to the need to return to that radical approach of the gospel, which belongs to our apostolic consecration and finds a typical Salesian expression in the motto so dear to Don Bosco “work and temperance”. At the same time, though with different emphases, other topics emerged such as inculturation, vocations, formation, the renewal of our educative pastoral presence, the rethinking of youth ministry, social communication.

At the end of the plenary session of the General Council June-July 2011, each Councillor gave me his suggestion with regard to the GC27. In this case too the theme mentioned most, with a variety of motives and different emphasises referred to the need to ensure more conviction with regard to our identity («who are we?»), our activity («what are we doing?»), our educative pastoral project («what are we offering?»), all aspects which refer to a radical approach to living the vocation of consecrated apostles.

The process for choosing the theme has now concluded with the shared reflection which took place in an extraordinary meeting of the General Council between 26 March and 4 April this year. The result was the choice of the theme as indicated above.

1.2. Fundamental purpose of the theme

The fundamental aim of the GC27 is that of helping each confrere and community to live the apostolic plan of Don Bosco with fidelity; in continuity with the GC26, the GC27 therefore is meant to further strengthen our charismatic identity. This aim is explicitly presented in the opening articles of the Constitutions: we Salesians in fact are called to «carry out the Founder’s apostolic plan in a specific form of religious life» (C 2); and in this specific form of life, «our apostolic mission, our fraternal community and the practice of the evangelical counsels are the inseparable elements of our consecration, which we live in a single movement

of love towards God and towards our brothers» (C 3).

Our *Ratio fundamentalis institutionis et studiorum*, in presenting “our identity as Salesians as the starting-point and goal of formation”, summarises it, highlighting some fundamental features. It says: «In Don Bosco and in the Salesian Constitutions we find the elements which define that “original style of life and action” (C 10), which the Holy Spirit raised up in the Church, that “specific form of religious life” (C 2) in which “we find our own way to holiness” (C 2)».¹ This vocation is the basis of all our formation (cf. C 96).

Still according to the “Ratio”, the fundamental hallmark of our vocation is for it to be **“a project of apostolic consecration”**, distinguished by five features which define the profile of the Salesian as:

- educator and pastor of the young inspired by pastoral charity (nn. 30-32);
- responsible member of a community (n. 33);
- witness to ‘gospel radicalism’ (n. 34);
- animator of communion in the spirit and mission of Don Bosco (nn. 35-36);
- a part of the Church, open to the flow of events and in touch with reality (n. 37).

The recent General Chapters – and obviously this is not mere coincidence – have developed these different aspects, recognising that they are fundamental. In particular, the GC XXII and XXVI dealt with the “project of apostolic consecration”: the first by drawing up the definitive text of our Constitutions and Regulations; the second aimed at «strengthening our charismatic identity with a return to Don Bosco, by reawakening in the heart of every confrere the passion of “da mihi animas”».² In these two Chapters we find all the other elements which characterise the Salesian apostolic project: the GC XXIII outlines the features of

¹ FSDB, n. 26.

² P. CHÁVEZ, *Da mihi animas, cetera tolle*, in AGC 394, Rome 2006, p. 8.

the Salesian as educator and pastor of the young; the GC XXIV as animator of communion in the spirit and in the mission of Don Bosco; the GC XXV as a responsible member of a community.

The last characteristic, “a part of the Church...” is not so much a specific item, as the actual *context* in which the Salesian lives and works. In any case, each General Chapter finds its place and takes place within the ecclesial and cultural context.

From this simple analysis emerges a realisation: the only feature of the profile of the Salesian that has not been the object of deeper examination on the part of a recent General Chapter is the third: “witness to ‘gospel radicalism’”. In the past a radical approach referred mainly to the evangelical counsels of obedience, poverty and chastity; nowadays the theology of the consecrated life emphasises the fact that this is a call and not a freely made choice; it has its foundation in God and its roots in the Lord Jesus; it refers to all the aspects of the consecrated vocation, including fraternal life and the mission. Our Rule of Life too identifies the root of our vocation in God and in Christ, when it declares that we Salesians, «surrendering ourselves totally to God whom we love above all else, we commit ourselves to a form of life based entirely on gospel values» (C 60).

Evidently, witnessing to radical gospel values at personal and community level is not a feature which takes its place at the side of the others, but rather a fundamental dimension of our life. For this reason it will be important for us to develop the theme of the radical approach of the gospel, beyond that of a reference to the following of Christ obedient, poor and chaste, and also bearing in mind the other aspects of our apostolic consecration.

1.3. Fruits to be hoped for from the implementation of the theme

As fruits from the GC27 we want to make our Salesian life even more authentic and therefore *visible, credible and fruitful*. This will be possible when it is based profoundly and vitally on

God, when with courage and conviction rooted in Christ and in his Gospel, its charismatic identity is strengthened. It is for this reason that during the last six-years period we committed ourselves to returning to Don Bosco, re-awakening in the heart of every confrere the passion of “*da mihi animas, cetera tolle*”. Living with fidelity the apostolic project of Don Bosco, in other words living our charismatic identity, will make us more authentic; from the living out of this identity will flow visibility, credibility and vocational fruitfulness.

Six years ago in the letter convoking the GC26, I wrote: «More than a crisis of identity, I think that what we Salesians are experiencing today is a crisis of *credibility*. We are in a stalemate situation. We seem to be under the tyranny of the “status quo”; there is resistance to change, unconscious rather than deliberate. Even though we are convinced of the efficacy of evangelical values we find it difficult to reach the hearts of the young, for whom we should be signs of hope. We are shocked by the fact that faith is irrelevant to them in building their lives. We feel ourselves out of tune with their world and remote, if not completely excluded, from their plans and projects. We find that our signs, actions and language are no longer effective; we seem to make no impact on their lives».³

In the same letter I continued: «Alongside the vital momentum that can lead to witness and self-sacrifice even to the extent of martyrdom, Salesian life is not immune to the “the insidiousness of mediocrity in the spiritual life, of the progressive taking on of middle class values and of a consumer mentality”.⁴ In the documents known traditionally as his “spiritual testament” Don Bosco wrote: «When signs of an easy life appear among individuals, in rooms or houses, the decline of our Congregation will have also begun [...] When the desire for ease and comfort grows up amongst us, our pious Society will have run its course”⁵».⁶

³ P. CHÁVEZ, *Da mihi animas, cetera tolle*, in AGC 394, Rome 2006, pp. 9-10.

⁴ CIVCSVA, *Starting afresh from Christ*, n. 12.

⁵ P. BRAIDO (ed), *Don Bosco educatore, scritti e testimonianze*, LAS, Rome 1997, pp. 409, 437.

⁶ P. CHÁVEZ, *Da mihi animas, cetera tolle*, in AGC 394, Rome 2006, p. 10.

If we believe in our vocation and live it with conviction, then we are credible; in fact I also wrote: «The lack of vocations and vocational frailty make me think that many of us are perhaps not convinced of the social, educative and evangelising usefulness of our mission; others perhaps find that the degree of our commitment to work falls short of their aspirations because we fail in our efforts at renewal and the taking up of new work; some may feel themselves hemmed in by ever-growing emergency situations».⁷

Visibility is not primarily taking care of our image, but the beautiful witness of our vocation. If we bear witness with fidelity and joy to the apostolic project of Don Bosco, that is to say the Salesian consecrated vocation, then our life will become attractive, especially to the young, and therefore we shall have a new *flowering* of vocations. If the Lord Jesus becomes our life's fascinating focus then our vocation will become attractive; on this account we need to cultivate our witness to the beauty of our vocation.

I am convinced that in order to achieve the objectives of the GC27 a *spiritual and pastoral conversion* is required. New contexts, cultural challenges and the difficulties within consecrated life require us to continue to seek paths of renewal and of growth which make our lives more significant. In the face of the current situation in which we are living it is urgent that we change our strategy. What will be really decisive will be the living out of our identity as consecrated persons at the service of the Kingdom. This is also what gives us significance: centring our lives on God, the only Absolute, who is calling and inviting us to follow his Son in giving our lives in love; living the prophecy of communion and fraternity; re-discovering our mission among the young as the place *par excellence* to meet the God who continues to speak to us.

We have to continue to deepen and acquire an ever better *knowledge of Don Bosco*: it is necessary to study him, love him, imitate and invoke him (cf. C 21). We must know him as a teacher of life whose spirituality we absorb as sons and disciples; as the

⁷ *Ibidem.*

founder who shows us the path of vocational fidelity; as the educator who has left us the precious heritage of the preventive system; as the legislator, because the Constitutions, which have come to us directly from him and then through subsequent Salesian history, provide us with a charismatic reading of the gospel and of the following of Christ.⁸

It is necessary to enkindle the fire of *spiritual and apostolic passion* in the heart of every confrere helping him to motivate and to unify his life with the commitment to giving himself totally to the “glory of God and the salvation of souls”. This aspect too as the previous one is in continuity with the GC26, which still needs to be fully implemented.

The approach of the year 2015, the bicentenary of the birth of Don Bosco, represents a grace for the Congregation, which is called to embody his charism in the various contexts, or in other words the spirit and mission of our founder and father. Such a celebration will constitute a goal for the GC27.

Visibility, credibility and fruitfulness are the fruits we hope to obtain as a result of putting into practice and achieving the fundamental aim of the GC27; we must be aware of this. So we have to act in such a way that these fruits are sown and developed; for this reason we can say that, in addition to being fruits, they are also secondary aims to be achieved of the GC27.

1.4. Other tasks

As well as the examination of the theme, the GC27 has other particular tasks. First of these is the election of the Rector Major and the members of the General Council for the six year period 2014-2020. There is also the carrying out of an assessment of some requests made by the GC25 and the GC26 or of changes these introduced.

⁸ Cf. P. CHÁVEZ, «*But who do you say that I am?*» (Mk 8,28). *Looking at Christ through the eyes of Don Bosco*, in AGC 384, Rome 2003.

First of all a re-think regarding the organisation and structuring of the Departments for our Salesian mission: youth ministry, missions, social communication is considered important (cf. the GC26, 117, 118).

Then it is also necessary to reflect on the grouping of the three Regions of Europe (cf. the GC25, 124, 126, 129); this is becoming even more necessary following the decision to re-shape the Provinces in Spain, which after the GC27 will become two instead of six.

In addition the need is also felt, following the change which took place to the Constitutions, to evaluate the decision to entrust the Salesian Family to the Vicar of the Rector Major (cf. the GC25, 133 and the GC26, 116).

Finally, “such a review directs attention to the overall structure of the General Council”, with the need for the GC27 to carry out an evaluation of the structures for animation and central government of the Congregation (cf. CG26, 118).

2. SALESIAN LIFE AND MISSION IN TODAY’S GLOBAL CONTEXT

We can find the secret to renewal in the Congregation in article 3 of our Constitutions, where we read: «our apostolic mission, our fraternal community and the practice of the evangelical counsels are the inseparable elements of our consecration, which we live in a single movement of love towards God and towards our brothers. Our mission sets the tenor of our whole life».

The Salesian mission is not to be identified with our works or activities; rather it is the expression of our zeal for the salvation of the young, arising from the passion of “*da mihi animas cetera tolle*” it is nourished by a mysticism the source of which is “in the very heart of Christ, the apostle of the Father” (C 11).

The world in which we are living and in which we carry out the mission of Don Bosco on behalf of young people is not only the stage on which we appear and act. Rather it represents the place where we respond to the young and through them and with them we also respond to God. It is therefore opportune to examine even if only briefly the global challenges of the present time in which we are living throughout the world recognising that these challenges are at the same time opportunities for the renewal of our Salesian life and of our mission.

2.1. Cultural challenges

A typically western phenomenon, the first challenge without a doubt is *post-modernism*, which brings with it positive features with regard to the dignity of the human being and to his wellbeing, but also counter-values. The influence of post-modernism, it is true, is not to be found everywhere, but where it is, it is felt as a serious oppressive conditioning, but slowly and progressively it is taking over the way of thinking and the life styles of the social élite and is putting down its roots also unfortunately in the hearts of some Salesians, influencing their way of life.

A second challenge is *inculturation*, marked also by an increasing *intercultural mentality*. Globalisation, increasing migration and the fusion of cultures create possibilities for encounters which produce a certain purification of cultures and the invitation to appreciate the differences. At the same time this can lead to the relativistic positions of multiculturalism, with a watering down of differences and in constant levelling down of values; but they can also lead to a rejection of diversity, to the defence of special interests even to the extent of reaching a point of opposition to and the exclusion of those who are different.

The third challenge regards *secularisation*. «Living one's faith in Jesus becomes increasingly difficult in a social and cultural setting in which that faith is constantly challenged and threatened; [...] The impression is given that unbelief is self-explanatory,

whereas belief needs a sort of social legitimization which is neither obvious nor taken for granted». ⁹ If in fact it is true that this process can encourage a certain growth in maturity in the autonomy and sense of responsibility in people and a more aware participation in the social dynamics and cultural processes, it is equally true that sometimes it becomes immanence and makes it impossible to make room for God. The process of secularisation, constantly on the increase has become a real danger for us Salesians too, and not only for those working in the developed countries but also for those living among peoples who still have a profound religious sense.

2.2. Ecclesial challenges

The current situation means that the *new evangelisation* is not something 'optional' but a missionary obligation. Even in continents for many years evangelised "the faith cannot be taken for granted, but must be explicitly proposed in all its breadth and richness". ¹⁰ We are therefore in a situation in which many have still not yet heard of the gospel, and those who have need to realise that the links for the transmission of the faith consisting of the family, the Church and society are not broken. This reminds us of the problem of the language we use which often is not understood. What we have to say often appears irrelevant in cultural and social contexts marked by ideological pluralism and by religious scepticism.

The Church and more especially consecrated life is "tempted by a dimming of hope". ¹¹ This unease in consecrated life arises almost naturally, since its main task is 'the affirmation of the primacy of God and of eternal life' whereas nowadays it has to live in a cultural climate "where it often seems that the signs of God's presence have been lost from sight". ¹² This unease does not arise

⁹ JOHN PAUL II, *Ecclesia in Europa*, n. 7.

¹⁰ JOHN PAUL II, *Ecclesia in America*, n. 69.

¹¹ JOHN PAUL II, *Ecclesia in Europa*, n. 7.

¹² JOHN PAUL II, *Vita consecrata*, n. 85.

solely from outside causes nor from its natural incompatibility with certain worldly ways of thinking; it also arises from within since, among other things, consecrated life has unexpectedly found itself deprived of those particular roles in society which for so long had given it a sense of security and of social importance.

Pluralism which can slip into *relativism*, presents us with an even greater challenge. It is true that there is an ever compelling need to encourage and maintain intercultural and inter-religious dialogue in order to collaborate in the building of a single human family from the diversity of peoples, cultures, languages and religions; but it is necessary to do this without neglecting to give witness that salvation comes from Christ. For this reason we have to learn and teach to reject «nothing in them which is true and holy» and to reject as alien to the spirit of Christ any discrimination or persecution directed against persons on the basis of race, colour, condition of life or religion».¹³

2.3. Institutional challenges

Looking at initial formation we observe a greater weakness in two fundamental areas: *vocational discernment and personal accompaniment*. The “Criteria and Norms” of the *Ratio* are not known. There is no clarity regarding how accompaniment needs to be planned so that its practice has fallen into disuse. And to this can be added the discontinuity and fragmentation of the phases of our formation, with a negative impact especially on the two procedures mentioned, and in general on the formation of the confreres as individuals sufficiently mature to take up the Salesian vocation and mission.

Also evident is a lack in the *assimilation of the guide-lines of the Congregation regarding pastoral work*. These are a means to assist in the understanding and carrying out of the Salesian mission in the various fields of missionary animation, youth ministry, social communication and vocation ministry.

¹³ JOHN PAUL II, *Ecclesia in America*, n. 51.

Finally we note in the Congregation a weakness in *direction and animation*. Government and animation do not always foster a change of mentality; they do not promote the necessary procedures nor succeed in breaking down resistance to change: nor do they help the individual to accept personal responsibility and the task of shared responsibility.

2.4. Personal challenges

Sadly one has to mention *some failings* in the life of the Salesian: *individualism* in taking pastoral decisions, the way in which free time is spent, the place given to personal wellbeing at the expense of availability for the mission; but also an *activism* which leaves little room for the spiritual life, for regular study, for constant learning, for the practice of reflection. Confreres are not accustomed to *self-formation*, and some do not even feel the need for it.

Often there is no real awareness of the *identity of our vocation* as consecrated Salesians, so that personal identification with the vocation itself is compromised. Rather than being dedicated to one's vocation, what seems to be of more interest is being at ease with oneself and with others. The affective and effective separation from the world of youth is on the increase; often they are not understood or recognised as being the sole reason for our existence.

Last but no less important, is the *affective dimension* of the Salesian, which is little appreciated. Emotions, sentiments and affections are neglected if not ignored; education to an interior life and forms of emotional expression is defective, through a lack of appropriate formation and of skilled formation personnel. All this is reflected in the educational attitudes we take up and in the pastoral work we undertake, especially as regards the education of the young to love, the care given to engaged couples, and attention to married and family life.

2.5. Young people as a challenge

Finally – as I have already written on another occasion¹⁴ – I seem to observe in the Congregation a quite worrying phenomenon: here and there I notice a more or less conscious unwillingness and sometimes a clear inability to be sympathetic towards, to learn about or understand and to accept graciously the new forms of expression which are a feature of today's young people, not least since the collective experiences with which they formulate their 'spectacular' life styles,¹⁵ those which they normally exhibit in their free time, are almost always on the fringes of the usual social institutions.

The GC26 throws light on 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».¹⁶

This affective loneliness is not the only kind, nor would I say the most widespread form of poverty which today's young people experience. The large majority of those living in the developing countries are very well acquainted with economic poverty with family life at risk, racial discrimination, a lack of educational and cultural opportunities, the absence of preparation for work, the shameless exploitation by third parties, illegal employment as labourers, a life hemmed in, with various addictions and other social ills.

¹⁴ Cf. P. CHÁVEZ, *The inculturation of the Salesian charism*, in AGC 411, Rome 2011.

¹⁵ Cf. J. GONZÁLEZ-ANLEO - J. M. GONZÁLEZ-ANLEO, *La juventud actual*, Verbo Divino, Estella 2008, p. 44. For a description of young peoples' life styles in western society consult the monograph *De las 'tribus urbanas' a las culturas juveniles*, in "Revista de estudios de Juventud" 64, 2004, pp. 39-136.

¹⁶ GC26, n. 98.

The current picture of the confusion of the young is such a desolate one that calls for an urgent conversion, for compassion (cf. *Mk* 6,34; 8,2-3), no less than for action (cf. *Mk* 6,37; 8,4-5). Like and with Don Bosco, through education and preventative measures the Congregation is engaged in helping them to find themselves, to accompany them with patience and confidence in building up their personalities, offering them the means to gain their livelihood; but at the same time offering something suitable for them to have a relationship with God.

To recreate the Salesian charism in the most varied situations where we find ourselves it is not enough to adapt it to the different youth contexts; even more it is necessary to invest in the young, making them become the protagonists and trusted collaborators without ever forgetting that they are the reason for our consecration to God and for our mission. We want to do this while living in their world, speaking their language, standing side by side with them not only as those to whom we are especially sent, but above all as companions on the journey.

3. THE RADICAL APPROACH OF THE GOSPEL IN SALESIAN CONSECRATED LIFE

During the Team Visits we have been able to observe that there are many *positive features* in the life of the Congregation. In general the confreres are aware of the identity of Salesian consecrated life and reflect its values. In addition the establishing of the charism in the various countries, places and contexts where the Congregation is to be found has been good. In several parts of the world the increase in the number of presences and in vocations has been very satisfying. In recent times positive experiences of fraternal life have become normal. Above all following the GC26, the awareness has grown in everyone that a deeper knowledge of Don Bosco is an essential element in the real renewal of Salesian life. In some Regions the Provinces have seen a

promising expansion and new types of works have been started which make fidelity to Don Bosco's charism visible.

Besides these positive aspects, nonetheless *significant difficulties* are being experienced: in some parts of the Congregation the ageing of the confreres, the shortage of vocations and the complexity of the works are making the hoped-for renewal difficult; in others it is a struggle to organise pastoral activities with the choice of the young as the primary focus. Problems remain in finding the necessary space for community life and difficulties are also found in trying to arrange valid and effective procedures for ongoing formation. Here and there there is a lack of enthusiasm in living the vocation and there are weaknesses in animation on the part of the confreres who are Rectors.

To face up to current and future challenges to Salesian consecrated life and to the mission throughout the Congregation, the need arises to trace out the *profile of the new Salesian*; nowadays he is called to be:

- a *mystic*: in a world which is feeling ever more clearly the challenge of secularism, we need «to find a response in the *acknowledgment of God's absolute primacy*», through the «total gift of self» and in «permanent conversion in a life offered up as true spiritual worship».¹⁷
- a *prophet*: «In today's multicultural and multi-religious world, there is also a demand for the witness of that *evangelical fraternity*». Our religious communities are being called to be courageous in living the gospel as an alternative life style and «a stimulus to purifying and integrating different values through the reconciliation of divisions».¹⁸
- a *servant*: «The presence of new forms of poverty and marginalization ought to call forth that creativity in *the care of those most in need*»;¹⁹ which marked the birth of our Congregation

¹⁷ JOHN PAUL II, *Ecclesia in Europa*, n. 38.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*.

and will result in the rebirth of our Provinces, to the benefit of poor young people and those marginalised for economic, sexual, racial or religious reasons.

All of this requires a change both of mindset and of practice: to begin a process of real conversion, progressing from a closed mentality to one open to and ready for change, looking to the future with hope and optimism. It is necessary therefore to consider certain strategies.

3.1. The radical approach of the gospel in consecrated life

Observing the current situation of the Church and within it of our Congregation, we cannot ignore the fact that the call to “the radical approach of the gospel” constitutes an urgent need and a theme of great relevance starting from the practice of the evangelical counsels. For example, with regard to consecrated *chastity*, the problems of pedophilia and of sexual abuse which have arisen in recent years creating a great scandal;²⁰ as Benedict XVI himself has written, «have obscured the light of the Gospel to a degree that not even centuries of persecution succeeded in doing»,²¹ even though it needs to be recalled that the problem is not one of the present day only.

However, it is not just the issue of consecrated chastity which raises problems; very often, in fact, difficulties in this area are the consequence and the expression of other negative situations related to the evangelical counsels of poverty and obedience. In particular, the practice of *poverty*, which is one of the central points of the GC26 (cf. nn. 79-97), has become more compelling following the world-wide financial and economic collapse. As religious we cannot reduce poverty to being more careful in the management of resources important though this is; in fact poverty is the way of understanding and living a gospel value fundamental to our con-

²⁰ Cf. P. CHÁVEZ, «*I am the vine, you the branches*» (Jn 15,5a). *The vocation to remain always united to Jesus to have life*, in AGC 408, Rome 2010.

²¹ BENEDICT XVI, *Pastoral Letter to the Catholics of Ireland*, Rome 19 March 2010, n. 4.

secration. In this regard the Holy Father Benedict XVI has expressed himself very strongly and with insight on the moral roots of the current economic crisis.

In one of my first letters, «You are my God, my happiness lies in you alone»,²² I wanted to undertake a serious analysis of this situation, provoked by a “liberal model” of consecrated life, which in particular undermines *obedience*. In fact I am convinced that one of the points mentioned there can be recognised as one of the roots of this current problematic situation; it is the issue of individualism, which sometimes is hidden behind the right to “privacy”, something which often, paraphrasing the biblical text, “covers a multitude of sins”. All of this is linked indissolubly to difficulties with obedience; I noted this link in fact in the letter just mentioned: «So came into being a great deal of *individualism*, that made obedience well-nigh impossible».²³

However, the radical approach of the gospel in consecrated life cannot be limited to the practice of the evangelical counsels. It involves one’s whole being, touching its vital elements: the following of Christ and the search for God, fraternal life in community, and the mission. Every one of these areas is imbued with the spell of the vocation, and therefore called to express the radical attitude of the gospel.

This radical approach was proclaimed by Jesus himself throughout his prophetic ministry, which finds its most explicit expression in the “Sermon on the Mount”, with the proclamation of the Beatitudes, which turn the world’s logic on its head, as well as the subsequent statements which point to the interior aspect of the law and to love as the supreme law (cf. *Mt* 5-7). Once again, the radical approach of the gospel appears with the full light of the sun when Jesus speaks about the consequences of following him, sharing with him a life that is not comfortable or planned, wher-

²² Cf. P. CHÁVEZ, «*You are my God, my happiness lies in you alone*», in AGC 382, Rome 2003.

²³ P. CHÁVEZ, «*You are my God, my happiness lies in you alone*», in AGC 382, Rome 2003, p. 21.

ever he goes, subordinating everything to the Kingdom (cf. *Lk* 9,57-62). And, above all, when, following the first announcement of the passion and in response to Peter's objection, addressing not only the disciples but the whole crowd he says: «If anyone wants to be a follower of mine let him renounce himself and take up his cross and follow me. For anyone who wants to save his life will lose it; but anyone who loses his life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it» (*Mk* 8,34-35).

Vocation (*C 22 and 25; 97 and 98*)

As religious, we Salesians are called to this radical approach of the gospel in consecrated life. If in fact it is true that the radical approach of the gospel applies to every disciple of Jesus, it is equally true that we are called to live it in a practical way in consecrated life. For us the radical approach is first of all a call, a vocation. Unfortunately, in our reflection, in our way of living and acting in practice reference to God's call is rather poor. A vocation is not chosen but given; we can only recognise it and welcome it; so too with the radical approach of the gospel, before being a commitment and a task it is gift and grace.

A vocation does not come from personal initiative, since it is a call to a specific mission, which is not determined by us but by the One who calls. We read in Mark's gospel that Jesus «summoned those he wanted. So they came to him and he appointed twelve; they were to be his companions and to be sent out to preach with power to cast out devils» (*Mk* 3,13-15). The gospel of John too confirms that being a disciple and an apostle is not a personal choice, but a selection on Jesus' part, a vocation: «you did not choose me, no I chose you» (*Jn* 15,16a); and the mission is «remain in my love» (*Jn* 15,9b). Only in this way can those who are called obtain the fulness of joy: «I have told you this so that my own joy may be in you and your joy may be complete» (*Jn* 15,11); becoming his intimate: «You are my friends if you do what I command you» (*Jn* 15,14); being fruitful: «I commissioned you to go out and bear fruit, fruit that will last» (*Jn* 15,16b).

This anthropological and theological dimension of vocation is fascinating/enchanting. There is a Person who gazes on you, loves you and calls you and you can accept or refuse the proposal. To a personal appeal one can reply “yes” or “no”. All this happens with the greatest freedom. Rightly we can say that handing over one’s life, one’s only life, all one’s life represents the highest level of human consciousness. In Sacred Scripture we find the story of the great “friends of God”: Abraham, Moses, David, Elijah, the prophets, Joseph, Mary the apostles; they give up their own plans and allow God to take over their lives so as to write, with Him, the history of salvation. However, not all those who were called accepted the call. For example we may recall the meeting of Jesus with that rich man who asked him: «Good master, what must I do to inherit eternal life?»; but to Jesus’ invitation «Go and sell everything you own and give the money to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven; then come follow me» (*Mk* 10,17-22), he went away sad.

In the past the religious vocation was often presented as a single event in a person’s life. Even though among the numerous calls which occur in life there are some events which indicate the future, the Christian vocation needs to be understood more than ever as an uninterrupted dialogue between God who calls and the disciple who responds. Great freedom therefore is required to give of oneself totally and hand oneself over to the person beloved. Obviously, in order to leave everything and to give oneself totally to someone one needs to be very much in love. Not by chance the most eloquent image used to describe this relationship is covenant. From this it can be seen that we cannot be consecrated and not be at the same time mystics, full of passion for God and for man.

Our specific vocation is to Salesian consecrated life, which places us as disciples and apostles of the Lord Jesus in the footsteps of Don Bosco. It is described in synthesis in article 3 of the Constitutions, which speaks about our vocation as a call to follow Christ obedient, poor and chaste, to fraternal life in com-

munity, to dedication to the mission, in dialogue with God at the service of our brothers. These are the constitutive elements of a vocation to be given space in personal and community life. In our life there needs to be space which is “balanced and harmonised” for *spiritual experience, fraternal life in community and the mission*.

Among these features of our vocation the “*grace of unity*” is a fundamental challenge to be faced seriously and with determination, at the risk of fragmentation, dissipation, activism, spiritual superficiality, a generic approach to pastoral work, the loss of the sense of vocation, emptiness. For this reason I now deal with these fundamental elements of our apostolic consecration, which need to be lived with the radical approach of the gospel: the spiritual experience, fraternal life, the mission.

Spiritual experience: disciples of Christ and seekers of God

It should not surprise us that the spiritual experience which is the foundation of consecrated life and which makes us seekers of God and disciples of Jesus is characterised in the Spirit as all-embracing, unifying and dynamic:

- *all embracing*, because it places us in the presence of a God full of zeal who admits of no rivals and with a all-consuming presence; there is no room for half-measures in our giving of ourselves to Him: since, «Anyone who prefers father or mother to me is not worthy of me; anyone who prefers son or daughter to me is not worthy of me. Anyone who does not take his cross and follow in my footsteps is not worthy of me» (Mt 10,37-38);
- *unifying*, because it gathers together all aspects of life around the one thing that is important and necessary, the Absolute, as is seen in the reply of Jesus to Martha, who was so preoccupied with the many things to be done for Him except the important one, which Mary on the other hand had discovered (Lk 10, 41-42);

- and *dynamic*, because it gives us “a new heart and a new spirit”; what one has to do, the law that has to be fulfilled, is not outside ourselves but within us; the Holy Spirit becomes in us the driving force in life, as Saint Paul says: «the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death» (*Rm* 8,2).

Only a spiritual experience like this can be the source of a religious life that is dynamic and significant, of a living prayer, of a fraternal community, of an apostolic zeal, of a fruitful ministry; it transforms a person's life and that of a community from within, giving rise to new forms of interpersonal relationships and of behaviour, to a new kind of prayer and of worship, a typical form of ministry and above all to an alternative cultural model, which is the sign and the fruit of our waiting for the Lord who comes.

Disciples of Christ (C 61-84)

The religious vocation once accepted leads to the decision to give oneself entirely to God who consecrates us to Himself. In fact consecrated life is a pathway that starts from the Love of God, who has fixed his gaze on us, has loved us, has called us, has seized us; and it is a pathway that leads to Love in so far as it is a sure way to reach the fulness of life in God. This means that the whole of consecrated life is marked by love and needs to be lived under its emblem, so that it can only be lived in happiness even in times of trial and difficulty, with the conviction and enthusiasm of someone who sees love as the driving force of life. From this flow the serenity, the luminosity and the fruitfulness of consecrated life, features which make it so attractive.

Consecration therefore makes us become people who are unconditionally handed over to God and in more practical terms makes us “the living memorial of Jesus' way of living and acting” obedient, poor and chaste,²⁴ transforming us into signs and bear-

²⁴ Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Vita consecrata*, n. 22.

ers of the love of God for all mankind. This, in fact, is the first contribution that we as religious can and must make. Unfortunately this is not recognised when a reductive anthropological model deprives life of its religious dimension, basing it on short-term projects of life; for example the myths of science, technology and the economy, with the illusion that their progress is unlimited, condemning life to the immanence of this world without any horizons of definitive transcendence, since in the end everything comes to an end with death. To a world focused on efficiency and productivity, the economy and on well-being, the religious presents himself as a *sign of God*, of his grace and of his love. It was God and his Love that Jesus came to bring to us. This is the good news! God is the first contribution we can make to mankind. This is the great hope to be offered. This is our first prophecy.

Speaking with young people who hope to be Salesians, I am convinced that basically in consecrated life they are looking for an answer to three great desires: a deep thirst for spirituality, even though not always identified with a clear experience of the God of Jesus Christ; a life of communion, even though not always associated with the community, especially when this does not stand out for its welcome, a deep interpersonal relationship, the family spirit; and finally a decisive commitment on behalf of the poor and needy, even though they are not always ready to give themselves definitively, which is easy to understand in a culture characterised by short-term or at least not permanent commitments. It is the role of formation to provide ways of coming to a mature expression of those values to which young consecrated persons show themselves more sensitive, helping them in addition to recognise and also accept those aspects that they experience as difficulties.

The vocation to follow and imitate Jesus Christ implies a progressive modelling of ourselves on Him so as to become precisely "the living memorial of his way of acting and being obedient, poor and chaste" as He was.

Certainly, a life centred in this way on God and on giving oneself to others is clearly 'countercultural', going against the absolute value given to the economy and to materialism, against hedonism and the worship of the body, against individualism and every kind of authoritarianism. We are living in an historical, cultural and social context in which the evangelical counsels are not appreciated; indeed they are considered inhuman and responsible for producing diminished people, something from which we ought to free ourselves. For example, obedience seems an attack on fundamental human rights: the freedom to decide for oneself, self-determination and self-fulfilment. Chastity is considered as the deprival of the benefits of married life: giving up having someone on whom one can rely in good and bad times alike, and with whom to share joys and sadness, the successes and the trials of life; giving up the possibility of becoming a father and of having children; giving up the pleasures of married life, with the bodily joy which the spouses give to each other, without obviously reducing everything to physical pleasure; giving up tenderness, ordinary intimacy, knowing that there is someone close to you, the pleasure of shared glances, of saying to someone "it is great that you are here". Poverty is even less appreciated in a world which has made well-being and the economy the supreme values; which means that it is seen as an evil to be conquered, something from which to free oneself in order to be fully autonomous, not depending on anyone; what matters is to possess in order to be, not wanting to deprive oneself of anything, the search for ways of living the easy consumer culture life-style, which makes us insensitive to the poor and incapable of serving those most in need.

This more and more wide-spread way of thinking which does not make a life according to the gospel attractive can also infiltrate among consecrated persons who feel tempted in their personal life to withhold from God what they publicly gave Him through their profession.

Without idealising the ordinary way of life, it is important to emphasise that the vows are not merely the renunciation of val-

ues. They respond to the three great forces which endanger human life and which the first letter of John censured in masterly fashion as follow: «The love of the Father cannot be in any man who loves the world: because nothing the world has to offer – the sensual body, the lustful eye, pride in possessions – could ever come from the Father but only from the world» (1 Jn 2,15b-16). In his own person Jesus has inaugurated another fully human way of living life, totally consecrated to God and entirely vowed to Man. This is only possible if God is acknowledged as the Absolute in one's life, making His Will our plan of life, dedicating ourselves with generosity to collaborating with Him in the carrying out of His design for the salvation of mankind: free from everything and from everyone to make ourselves the servants of all. Precisely because this is not an inhuman life, but rather charismatic, in the full meaning of the word, the fruit of the action of the Spirit, who prepares someone for this form of evangelical life, it requires suitability in human terms, the result of nature and of the education received, and maturity, the work of the formation process.

On the other hand, the radical approach of the evangelical counsels is not only a tradition of the Church, it is also found in the context of biblical revelation. I am referring, in particular, to the obedience which in the Sacred Scriptures, starting with the Old Testament is combined with the fundamental attitude of the believer, that is to say faith. In the Scriptures, in fact, genuine believers are radically obedient; we can think of Abraham, David, Moses and the prophets. We could even say that in their way of seeing things neither poverty nor celibacy appear yet as values. Nevertheless it is not a question of extraordinary personages since the experience of Israel was described as: an enslaved people liberated to become a holy people which knows the joy of serving God in freedom.

This Old Testament view finds its most perfect incarnation in terms of obedience in the Son of God, Jesus. Both the Letter to the Hebrews and the Letter to the Philippians highlight the fact

that the believer by his very nature and by definition is obedient. Again I would say that one of the most fascinating features of modern Christology is this recovery of Jesus' freedom which can only be explained by his radical obedience to the Father. Obedience represents the attitude *par excellence* of the Son of God. It seems to me that this helps a little to overcome the prejudice there is in today's culture against obedience. The biblical outlook helps us to understand the difference between 'submitting oneself,' which implies a certain servility, and which is unworthy of a human being and the act of 'obedience' which in all the biblical languages has as its root the act of listening. In practice, the one who listens well is precisely the one who accepts what he hears; therefore there is no authentic listening which is not accompanied by obedience.

This understanding makes the *living of the values of the gospel* possible, joyful and fruitful, as we make ever more our own Jesus's way of living obedient, poor and chaste, becoming his disciples. Only a progressive modelling of oneself on Christ brings about the *sequela Christi*.

Seekers of God (C 85-95)

Speaking to those taking part in the Assembly of the USG (Union of Superiors General) and of the UISG (International Union of Women Superiors General, in the Clementine Hall in the Vatican, on 26 November 2010, Pope Benedict XVI told us: «Your last two Assemblies were dedicated to reflecting on the future of the consecrated life in Europe. This has meant rethinking the very meaning of your vocation which entails, first and foremost, seeking God, *Quaerere Deum*: you are seekers of God by vocation. You devote the best energies of your lives to this research. You move from what is secondary to what is really essential to what is really important: seeking God, keeping your gaze fixed on him. Like the first monks, cultivate an eschatological orientation: behind the provisional seek what remains, what does not pass away (*cf. Address at the Collège des Bernardis*, Paris, 12 Septem-

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ber 2008). Seek God in the confreres or sisters he has given you, with whom you share the same life and mission. Seek him in the men and women of our time, to whom you are sent to offer the gift of the Gospel with your life and your words. Seek him particularly in the poor, the first to whom the Good News is addressed (cf. Lk 4:18). Seek him in the Church, where the Lord makes himself present, especially in the Eucharist and in the other sacraments, and in his word, which is the main road for seeking God. It introduces us into conversation with him and reveals to us his true Face. May you always be enthusiastic seekers and witnesses of God!».

He then immediately added: «The profound renewal of the consecrated life starts from the centrality of the word of God, and more practically, from the Gospel, the supreme rule for all of you, as the Second Vatican Council states in the Decree (cf. n. 2) and as your Founders understood well: the consecrated life is a plant with a mass of branches whose roots are sunk in the Gospel. The history of your Institutes in which the determination to live Christ's Message and to configure your own life to it, was and remains the fundamental criterion of vocational discernment and of your personal and community discernment. The Gospel lived daily provides the element that gives fascination and beauty to the consecrated life and presents you to the world as a reliable alternative. Contemporary society stands in need of this, and the Church expects this of you: to be a living Gospel».

Therefore consecrated persons take on their sanctification as their main life's task. And this is also true for our Congregation, as the minutes of the Founding of the Salesian Congregation clearly affirm.²⁵ Not by chance our Rule of Life concludes the first

²⁵ «The gathered group then decided to form a society or congregation with the aim of promoting the glory of God and the salvation of souls, especially of those most in need of instruction and education, while providing the members with mutual help towards their own sanctification" from the *Minutes of the Act of Founding of the Salesian Congregation*, Turin, 18 December 1859. Critical text by the Salesian Historical Institute, translation by Fr A. Lenti.

part, immediately after the formula of profession, affirming first of all that «the confreres who are living or have lived to the full the gospel project of the Constitutions are for us a stimulus and help on the path to holiness», and, then, that «The witness of such holiness, achieved within the Salesian mission, reveals the unique worth of the beatitudes and is the most precious gift we can offer to the young» (C 25).

In his Letter "The Father consecrates us and sends us", Fr Juan E. Vecchi wrote: «Consecrated persons are seen as experts in the experience of God. Such experience is at the origin of their vocation. Their plan of life and what they usually do tends to cultivate this and foster it. All Christians, on the other hand, should want to have a certain experience of God; but they can give their attention to it only at intervals and in less favourable circumstances, and so they run the risk of neglecting it altogether. Those who are consecrated offer themselves as confidants for all in the world who are in search of God. To those who are already Christians they offer the possibility of having a new religious experience in their company; those who are not believers they join in their process of searching.

Nowadays this kind of service is becoming widespread and much sought after, as is shown by the opening of convents and monasteries to those who want to use them for days and periods of reflection. We, on the other hand, are called to provide a similar service among young people. There is a law of life which is applicable in all circumstances: no value will survive in society without a group of people who dedicate themselves completely to promoting it. Without medical personnel and the organization of hospitals good health would not be possible. Without artists and the corresponding institutions the artistic sense of the population would decline. The same kind of thing happens with the sense of God: religious, whether contemplatives or not, form the group of mystics who are able to help those at least who are close to interpreting life in the light of the Absolute and experiencing it.

This applies to all the essential aims of religious life. And so the Founders placed the sense of God above all the features and activities of their institutes. Believers and non-believers alike see mediocrity in consecrated religious as a deformity, and the religious themselves feel an unfillable void if this dimension disappears». ²⁶

The affirmation of the Absolute nature of God requires from us a prophetic leap: this is the task of religious life today, this is the best service we can offer to our brothers and sisters, since only faith, hope and love have the great power to overcome mediocrity and absorb the decadence of our culture, fragmented by individualism, hedonism, relativism, nihilism and every kind of immanentistic ideology.

If in the past the danger to religious life was that of losing a firm grounding on the earth and in history, concentrating primarily on its role of reminding people of the transcendent, nowadays it runs the risk of enfeebling itself in an earthliness which forgets any other dimension. This happens when we think that salvation is our work, when we give in to the temptation of Prometheus and without wishing to make an idol of activism. The religious life loses the purpose for its existence, forgets its mission and turns itself into a paradoxical form of secularism. Thinking we shall acquire more relevance in society for what we are doing, we lose our identity and deprive the world of the hope it is looking for from us!

This then is why we have to carefully cultivate our spiritual life, at both personal and community level. Undoubtedly it will be necessary to overcome an idea of the spiritual life which is of an intimistic nature, extraneous to or on the fringes of the life of the world; but at the same time it will be necessary to give greater importance to the experience of prayer, to improve the quality of community life, and in a professional manner and being well-prepared carry out our service of evangelisation, so as to

²⁶ J. VECCHI, *The Father consecrates us and sends us*, in AGC 365, Rome 1998, p. 25.

be able to be prophetic signs in the face of the current values which this world canonises, and to be irrefutable witnesses to the God of Love.

Fraternal life: in fraternal communities (C 49-59)

In a society where individualism reigns, in a culture where selfishness prevails, in families where loneliness is on the increase it is natural that people should see communication as a fundamental need. Nowadays on the one hand, this is becoming easier and encouraged by the means of communication; one only has to think of the use of the mobile phone and all the other forms of communication such as *youtube, facebook, twitter...* But on the other hand, it can find an obstacle in the virtual world. It is true that one can be in contact with very many people, in any part of the world and all at the same time; but the use of these channels of communication does not guarantee communion, since this is always the result of a personal link, of a real relationship with someone who seeks to be acknowledged, recognised and respected in their own individuality, and of the acceptance of one's own and other peoples' limitations, of the effort to share and to live together. All these are elements which are the foundation of any kind of genuine family or community experience.

For us Salesians, community life is a very important factor in our religious choice. In fact for us to "live and work together" is a fundamental requirement which ensures a sure way of fulfilling our vocation (cf. C 49). It is impossible to imagine Salesian religious life without that communion which is realised in the common life and in the shared mission. The requirement for fraternity arises from the fact of our being sons of the same Father and members of the Body of Christ; religious life creates a real family made up of people who share the same faith and the same project of life. From the typically Salesian standpoint, we are called to create and to live the family spirit as Don Bosco wanted it and lived it.

Obviously, as in other areas of religious life, here too we can identify some dangers, for example, that of organising a style of relationships which are merely functional or hierachical or falsely democratic. Rather, our relationships ought to be fraternal and friendly, which lead us to love each other to the extent of sharing everything. This criterion helps us to see that the community is well understood and lived, when it is nourished by communion and leads to communion. A community without communion, with all that this implies with regard to acceptance, appreciation and esteem, mutual assistance and love, is reduced to a group in which people may have a place but where in fact they are left isolated. On the other hand, in religious life, communion without community is a narcissistic way of living and consequently a contradiction, since it is a subtle form of individualism.

Nowadays religious have to make a great shared effort in order to create community, where the spiritual dimension, human qualities and apostolic commitment of each member means that life is really good, beautiful and happy. In other words, without the human dimension, the quality of spiritual life and apostolic commitment there is no real fraternity.

In addition at a time when the presence of lay people in the Congregation is increasing so that they form the majority, and not only as employees or co-workers but also as those who are co-responsible or even as the directors of our works, so much the more do the communities need to stand out for their life of communion, so that this spreads out in concentric circles to the groups of these with co-responsibilities and the co-workers, and all those people close to our communities.

Another not indifferent aspect of religious life nowadays needs to be pointed out: that of the multicultural nature of the communities, in a society more and more pluricultural. The witness given by communities made up of people of different ages, backgrounds, languages, cultures, formation and traditions but united by faith, hope and charity is of real value even more so

since the temptation to xenophobia is being felt more and more strongly. In addition the religious community is a great contribution which we offer in a world divided by social injustice, by inter-ethnic conflicts and by certain social, cultural and economic models which are destroying solidarity and putting fraternity at risk for ever. God is community. God is love. That is the good news! How much then are we being called to offer to make the world more human.

Looking specifically at the profession of the evangelical counsels, we can recognise that a high quality community life is of great help for us to observe our religious vows. In fact it helps us to be more easily open to the demands of obedience; it makes us aware of the value of sobriety and of sharing the use of possessions; it strengthens our commitment to a chaste life and to oblationary love and assists our fidelity, protecting us from affective retreats or from other negative experiences (cf. C 83).

The profound renewal of our religious and Salesian life will therefore be achieved also through a profound renewal of our fraternal life in community. Of particular importance in this is the style of animation and government of the *Rector*, in his role of spiritual authority, which helps the confreres in their vocational journey, by means of a lively and intelligent form of community animation and attentive personal accompaniment; an authority which builds unity, which creates a family atmosphere able to foster fraternal sharing and co-responsibility; a pastoral authority which guides and directs all the people, the activities and the resources towards the objectives of education and evangelisation which are the special features of our mission; an authority which knows how to make the necessary decisions and to ensure their implementation.

Mission: sent to the young (C 26-48)

While fraternal life does not have the same importance and the same ways of being practised in all the Orders and Congrega-

tions, even though, as we have seen, the religious vocation by its very nature is a coming together and therefore a creator of fraternity, the mission has always been recognised by everyone as an identifying element of religious life. It could not be otherwise given that the mission of religious is a participation in the mission of the Church and this, in its turn, a continuation of the mission of God. «He summoned those he wanted. So they came to him and he appointed twelve; they were to be his companions and to be sent out to preach with power to cast out devils» (*Mk* 3,13-15).²⁷ Indeed, in the eyes of the world it is the mission that makes religious life relevant and effective.

However, it is necessary to distinguish between mission and the specific aims of an Institute of consecrated life. The mission does not consist in doing things but essentially in being signs of the love of God in the world. The specific aims on the other hand reflect the identity, especially for apostolic consecrated life, with the pastoral or promotional activity which the religious undertake in the various areas of human life. Being is not to be identified with doing; even though it is the activity which ought to be the consequence of the being and its clear manifestation.

In fact, the mission is nothing other than the historical expression of the saving love of God, made manifest in the sending of the Son by the Father and the mission which with the gift of his Spirit Jesus gives to the apostles. The awareness of being sent puts us on our guard against the temptation of wanting to take charge of the mission ourselves, of its contents, its methods and to run it instead of being at its service.

Precisely because we proclaim an Other and we offer his salvation, we cannot proclaim ourselves and our plans. Our task is to make God's salvation present, becoming his witnesses. This mission involves our whole lives and frees us from the not imaginary danger of a purely functional approach, activism and self-centredness.

²⁷ Cf. P. CHÁVEZ, *Spirituality and mission*, in AGC 410, Rome 2011.

John's gospel expresses in an incomparable manner the love of God in the mission of the Son when following the meeting of Jesus with Nicodemus he says: «God sent his Son into the world not to condemn the world, but so that through him the world might be saved» (*Jn* 3,17). Mark's gospel then concludes the passage about the heated debate of the apostles regarding the problem of authority with the clear explanation Jesus gives of his human life: «The Son of Man himself did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many» (*Mk* 10,45).

This is the mission of Jesus and also that of the consecrated person. This is the gospel, this is the good news which we are called upon to proclaim and to incarnate to fill the world with hope. This is why consecrated life still has a future in today's world! There can be no doubt that tomorrow we shall be less numerous but certainly we need to be more significant than yesterday.

Sometimes it can happen that we are sent to a community to undertake some mission that does not correspond with our expectations; or else sent to a place where those for whom we are working seem not to be interested in what we are or what we are doing. This is the time when we are being offered the chance to come to a more mature view of the significance of the mission, for the simple fact that we are faced with questions which help us to purify and to raise to a theological and not simply sociological level our motivation: «who am I? who sent me? Who are those to whom I have been sent? What should I do?». It is then that I become aware that what is at stake is my life but also theirs.

Only if at that moment I have the ability to understand that I am a person consecrated to God and vowed to the young, that it is He who has sent me, that they have been entrusted to me, that my mission is to make myself their travelling companion so as to help them to give meaning to their lives and to make life

choices will I find the reasons and the strength to spend my life for them: *«I offer myself totally to You. I pledge myself to devote all my strength to those to whom you will send me, especially to young people who are poorer»* (C 24). To do this a very simple thing is necessary: to open the doors of one's heart so that little by little their hearts may be gained and shaped and guided towards Christ, the Only One who can fill their lives with meaning and with happiness.

Then the days won't be long enough, we shall spend less time watching TV or on other 'hobbies' and much more being available to them: to welcome them, listen to them and to guide them. Then and only then, their world will become more comprehensible and we shall make our own their difficulties, their doubts, their motives, their fears, their expectations, their needs so that they can learn to listen to themselves, accept themselves, decide for themselves, in short not be simply negative or reactionary but act positively banking on those things in which they believe.

The radical approach of the gospel in the apostolic mission has meaning/ sense, and is present and can be measured in the growth of pastoral charity, like that of Don Bosco: *«For you I study, for you I work, for you I live, for you I am ready even to give my life»*.²⁸ This radical attitude would make us ready to go to those places where the mission is calling us and in which all the creature comforts, the opportunities, our circle of dear ones are not to be found.

3.2. The radical approach of the gospel in the Salesian terms of work and temperance

Having come to this point we can ask ourselves a question: if consecrated life is the soul of the Church and represents a human resource and a cure for this society, then what kind of consecrated life is necessary and significant for today's world?

²⁸ DON RUFFINO, *Cronaca dell'Oratorio*, ASC 110, Quaderno 5, p. 10.

The reply can only be that which is a *mystical, prophetic and servant religious life* with the radical approach of the gospel both personal and communitarian, a life therefore full of humanity and of spirituality, the source of hope for mankind. Our Congregation too is being called today to pursue this path and to find ways to express, according to our identity, how every Salesian can be a mystic, a prophet and a servant, and consequently that every community might be so.

The mission of consecrated life has a specific prophetic role in the Church and in the world. Above all I like to say that consecration itself is already prophecy, to the extent that it witnesses to the Absolute God and to gospel values which nowadays more than ever go against the current, in a society marked by secularism, religious indifference and practical atheism. Gospel values are a prophetic rejection of the idols, which this world has made and proposes for man to adore. In addition consecrated life is always going to challenge those people – the young in particular – whose sights are limited to this earth, with a fruitless immanentism without a future.

For this reason, when it is lived to the full and with joyful gratitude, religious life is a prophecy of the ultimate realities, of the final destiny of the whole of creation, of history and of the universe. It is a question of a prophecy nowadays more than ever necessary precisely because our post-modern era is characterised by the loss of human hope and the lack of utopias, condemning mankind to the inferno of pragmatism, of over-efficiency and of a purely functional approach, without faith, hope or charity.

Consecrated life is a prophetic sign when it makes present, visible and credible the *primacy of the love of God* and bears witness to it, with a strong sense of communion and of fraternity, with a style of life at the service of the poor and the abandoned of the world who are a sorry reflection of society and obscure the loving presence of God. We are aware and we are convinced that

«without faith, without the eyes of love, the world is too evil for God to be good, for a good God to exist».²⁹

The primacy of the love of God keeps the consecrated person from the temptation to just doing a job and being a perfectionist. He doesn't work because he *has* to reach perfection understood in abstract terms or under his own full control. His work and daily efforts are the way in which he *responds* to a love infinitely greater than his activity and his efforts. Because he has been and still is constantly and unconditionally loved, he responds with generosity. The radical approach, therefore is always the expression of the *sequela*. The «go, sell everything» was said in the context of a meeting and a dialogue which began with a loving glance («looked steadily at him and loved him») and concludes with an invitation to share and to be together («follow me») (cf. *Mk* 10,21).

At the heart of our project of life as consecrated persons is not that of being perfect or of being radical, but of being «signs and bearers» of a love which preceded our response, which fascinated us and is the basis of our “yes”, for ever (cf. *C* 2). The safest test to distinguish between merely doing one's duty and a *sequela* is the presence of joy. It is also the way to assess the quality of the work and of temperance. A sad austere way of life and a commitment to work which destroys the look of serenity on the face and extinguishes the smile are symptoms that something needs to be looked into. This also has a profound effect on the “face” of a community: a joyful community is a clear and evident sign of its vocational “good health” that makes it “attractive” and welcoming.

Work and temperance

Since GC27 is in close continuity with GC26, I think their relationship could be described through one of the most vivid and well-known Salesian “icons”: the **dream of the personage with ten diamonds**. This dream was also considered by the

²⁹ B. LONERGAN, *Metodo in teologia*, Sígueme, Salamanca 1988, p. 118.

GC25, which studied the theme of the Salesian community. Then the GC26, with the intention of “starting afresh from Don Bosco in order to reawaken the heart of every Salesian with the charismatic identity and the apostolic passion”, *contemplated* the mantle of this personage especially from the front, that is to say its witness to God through the three diamonds “of extraordinary size and splendour”: faith, hope and pastoral charity. Speaking in fact about the five key issues of the GC26, I wrote that really it was a question of «just the one theme: Don Bosco’s programme of spiritual and apostolic life»,³⁰ which the theological life intends to foster and bring about.

We cannot forget that the mantle is in two parts. The three diamonds on the chest refer to the Salesian mysticism, centred on “*da mihi animas*”, that is on pastoral charity accompanied by the vitality of the other two theological virtues. The five diamonds on the back constitute Salesian asceticism. The two diamonds of work and temperance, clearly placed on the shoulders support the entire mantle and «act as hinges between the mystical and ascetical aspects by translating them together into daily life».³¹

In presenting this dream, Fr Egidio Viganò wrote: «Don Bosco considered [the contents of the dream] an important frame of reference for our Salesian vocation. The careful choice and presentation of the special characteristics must be seen as an authoritative identikit of a true Salesian, and Don Bosco tells us that as long as we cherish these characteristics the future of our vocation in the Church is assured, however if we neglect them the Congregation will face total extinction».³²

Article 18 of the Constitutions, which has as its title “Work and temperance”, presents these two things, “for us inseparable”,³³ as

³⁰ CG26, Presentation, p. 10.

³¹ E. VIGANÒ *Be on the watch with your robes hitched up* in AGC 348, Rome 1994, p. 26.

³² E. VIGANÒ, *The Salesian according to Don Bosco’s dream of the ten diamonds* in AGC 300 Rome, 1981, p. 5.

³³ E. VIGANÒ, *Interioridad apostólica. Reflexiones acerca de la gracia de unidad como fuente de la caridad pastoral*, CCS, Madrid 1990, p. 68; cf *Don Bosco, saint* in AGC 310 Rome 1983 p. 14.

an essential element of the Salesian spirit, *«the watchword and badge of the Salesian»*:³⁴ «the two weapons armed with which, Don Bosco wrote, we will succeed in winning over everything and everyone».³⁵

With regard to the theme for the GC27, one could say, that it represents the Salesian way of understanding and putting into practice the “radical approach of the gospel”, «in which in a practical manner they incarnate, hour after hour, day after day, the ideals and the dynamism of our faith, of our hope and of our charity».³⁶ Don Bosco only wanted to found «a Congregation of religious ‘with their sleeves rolled up’ and which would also be ‘a model of frugality».³⁷ In fact, the text of the Constitutions says: «Work and temperance will make the Congregation flourish»;³⁸ «the seeking of an easy and comfortable life will instead bring about its death».³⁹

«For Don Bosco work was not simply occupying time with any kind of activity even exhausting, but *dedication to the mission with all one’s ability and full-time*»,⁴⁰ «it is a means to holiness».⁴¹ «The Salesian gives himself to his mission with tireless energy, taking care to do everything with simplicity and moderation. He knows that by his work he is participating in the creative action of God and cooperating with Christ in building the Kingdom. Temperance gives him the strength to control his heart, to master himself and remain even-tempered. He does not look for unusual penances but accepts the daily demands and renunciations of the apostolic life. He is ready to suffer cold and heat, hunger and thirst, weariness and disdain whenever God’s glory and the salvation of souls require it» (C 18).

³⁴ MB XII, p. 466.

³⁵ DON BOSCO, *Lettera di a Don Giuseppe Fagnano*, 14 novembre 1877, in E. CERIA, *Epistolario*, Vol III, Torino 1959, p. 236.

³⁶ E. VIGANÒ, *Don Bosco, saint* in AGC 310 Rome 1983, p. 14.

³⁷ L. RICCERI, *Letter to Salesians* in AGC 269, Roma 1973, p. 41.

³⁸ C 18 - MB XII, p. 466.

³⁹ C 18 - Cf. MB XVII, p. 272.

⁴⁰ J. VECCHI, *Spiritualità salesiana. Temi fondamentali*, LDC, Leumann 2001, p. 101.

⁴¹ L. RICCERI, *Work and self-restraint* in AGC 276, Rome 1974.

The commentary on this article in "The Project of Life of the Salesians of Don Bosco" says that «The text of the Rule first highlights the role that work and temperance have in the Congregation's life and mission. For Don Bosco they were a programme of life (a "motto" to be put alongside "da mihi animas, cetera tolle") and a guarantee for the future».⁴²

And it continues: «In our tradition the two elements are inseparably linked. In the dream of the ten diamonds, the diamonds of work and temperance on the two shoulders, seem to support the mantle of the personage. In the make up of the Salesian and in his apostolic life work and temperance cannot be separated one from the other: they have complementary functions of incentive and support. The reality of life calls on the one hand for enthusiasm and on the other for renunciation, on this side for commitment and on that for mortification.

It should be noted that from a Salesian point of view "work and temperance" represent a positive reality. *Work* gets an individual moving, stimulates his creativity, prompts him to a certain self-affirmation and sends him into the world; the qualities of Salesian work, for example, are alacrity, spontaneity, generosity, initiative, constant updating, and, naturally, union with one's fellows and with God. *Temperance*, as a virtue that leads to self-control, is a "hinge" around which moderating virtues turn: self-restraint, humility, meekness, clemency, modesty, sobriety and abstinence, economy and simplicity, and also austerity; this complexus adds up to an overall attitude of self-control. In this way temperance becomes a preparation for the acceptance of many difficult or unpleasant requirements of daily work... For us – wrote Fr Viganò – "temperance is not the sum total of what we give up but a growth in the practice of pastoral and pedagogical charity"».⁴³

⁴² *The Project of life of the Salesians of Don Bosco*, A guide to the Salesian Constitutions, Rome 1986, p. 216.

⁴³ *Ibidem*, quoting E. VIGANÒ, *An evangelical project of life*, LDC, Turin 1982, pp. 118 ss.

It also seems important to point out the connection between work and temperance. Work also has an ascetical dimension; disorganised work which creates tension in a confrere should be avoided; self-discipline and the ability to rest is needed. Likewise, to avoid the danger of it being merely an effort of the will, temperance has a relationship with the mystical, in other words it goes hand in hand with the mission.

Trying to find a link between Don Bosco's plan of life "da mihi animas, cetera tolle" and this motto of the Salesian "work and temperance", we could say that work is the visible sign of Salesian mysticism and the expression of the passion for souls, while temperance is the visible sign of Salesian asceticism and the expression of "cetera tolle". In this too we see a continuity between GC26 and GG27.

Work

Don Bosco's great regard for work is well known, even to the point of a certain "scandal" according to the words of Fr Alberto Caviglia, who speaking about Don Bosco said: «Here is the scandal of a saint: he says "let us work" much more often than "let us pray"». ⁴⁴ In fact there are many quotations that we can find in which he encourages people to work: «Speaking to the FMA at Alassio in 1877 he said: «When I visit your convents and am told that there are piles of work I feel at ease. Where there is work there is no devil». ⁴⁵ On another occasion: «A candidate for Salesian life must love work... If you join the Congregation you will want for nothing, but you must work... No one should enter if he intends to sit around twiddling his thumbs...». ⁴⁶ For this reason he was able to offer his Salesians «Bread, work and heaven» and dared to say that «Whenever it may happen that a Salesian succumbs and dies while working for souls, then you will say that our Congregation has gained deservedly a great tri-

⁴⁴ Cf. E. VIGANÒ, *Un progetto evangelico di vita, o.c.*, p. 102.

⁴⁵ BM XIII, p. 89.

⁴⁶ BM XIII, p. 333.

umph». ⁴⁷ He himself worked so much as to die not from illness; he was “simply worn out because of too much work”, according to the words of the doctor attending him. ⁴⁸ These few quotations are sufficient for us to be sure that work is the badge of the Salesian, a characteristic of our nature, which takes us back to our origins.

For this reason for Don Bosco those he used to call “loafers”, have no place in the Congregation. In other words those who do not know how to take the initiative, are lazy or idle, who don’t know how to work hard; and for us Salesians this is a criterion for vocational discernment.

We understand that the one-sided emphasis on work, as confirmed by the isolated quotations from Don Bosco, could be used to justify the not infrequent behaviour of confreres excessively concentrated on their “own” work or who make work, even apostolic, the only factor in their consecrated life. This is not Don Bosco’s way of thinking. He associated work with “union with God” and an uninterrupted tradition from the first generations of Salesians coined the expression “sanctified work”. ⁴⁹ Work is the “apostolic mission”. If one loses sight of who is the One who sends and supports with the strength of his Spirit, and what is the purpose of the mission, one runs the risk of turning work into an “idol”. Not any kind of work therefore is apostolic work.

Work “in autonomy” is not for us Salesians; on the contrary we are called to “live and work together” (C 49), knowing very well that that does not mean always working “side by side”, in the same places and at the same time, but rather according to a shared community project sustained and verified together, since “In an atmosphere of brotherly friendship... we are partners in our apostolic plans and experiences” (C 51). The local and Provincial communities are the areas within which one generously spends one’s energies.

⁴⁷ BM XVII, p. 250.

⁴⁸ Cf. BM XVIII, p. 424.

⁴⁹ Cf. J. VECCHI, «*When you pray say: Our Father...*», in AGC 374, Roma 2001, pp. 33-39.

In addition we can add something about “a professional approach” to work, about the sense of responsibility which ought to accompany every kind of work, and even more what we call the “apostolate”. A ‘more or less’ approach, improvisation, the monotonous repetition of what is no longer suitable for those for whom we are working, an allergy for reflection and planning are not signs that show an “apostolic passion”, but rather “idleness”.

Making a habit of discussing things with the confreres and lay people, identifying some possible aims, devoting time to the preparatory stage, carrying out careful and accurate evaluations, improving in the light of experience, considering the proposals of the Congregation and of the local Church, carefully recognising the signs of the times, making use of the means which the human sciences offer us are only some of the things which indicate a serious and honest approach in our work.

The reflection made by Fr Viganò on the subject is still valid and to the point: «We come from the poor, from a working class culture. And this is God’s plan, since we are for the poor, for the working class people [...] We are at the dawn of a new culture which is stimulated by the world of work; now is the hour of technology, of industry, in which work occupies a central place. Well then: when we speak about our work, we ought to feel that we are “prophets” and not simply “ascetics”. We ought to speak about work in depth and extensively. It is not just a way of behaving in a correct manner, it should be a religious prophecy where there is also considerable room for asceticism, but where there is a whole form of witness for the people of today, useful in gospel terms for the world of work».⁵⁰ Precisely, and as has been said, Don Bosco knew how to respond to the educational and social needs of his time, in an imaginative original way, educating *through work and for work*; he made work a means of education but also a way and a part of life.⁵¹

⁵⁰ E. VIGANÒ, *Un progetto evangelico di vita*, o.c., pp. 106s.

⁵¹ Cf. P. BROCCARDO, *Don Bosco. Profondamente uomo, profondamente santo*, LAS, Roma 2001, pp. 119-120.

Obviously we are interested in reflecting on how faith, hope and charity stimulate the Salesian to be a person not only engaged in changing the world through his work but also a great worker in the Church. From this point of view, that which identifies the Salesian is not any sort of profession, but his vocation as a consecrated apostle; it is not surprising therefore that one speaks about the "professional quality" of the "work of the Salesian", precisely because it is seen in relation to the mission, it truly is work that is pedagogical, pastoral, educative, qualified and uptodate with the backing of the human sciences and the theological disciples according to the Salesian style of «taking care to do everything well with simplicity and moderation». «This is the kind of work that contributes to shaping the spiritual personality»⁵² of the Salesian.

In fact the Constitutions point out that with his work the Salesian cooperates in the creative action of God, making the world more human, and also collaborating with Christ in the work of Redemption. In this way the Salesian identifies himself not only with his profession but above all with his vocation. This is why «tireless energy» which article 18 speaks about, does not mean either restlessness or activism, but apostolic work for the salvation of souls and his own sanctification.

Spirituality and commitment to work are the characteristics of every Salesian, whether priest or brother; work is a feature of the common charismatic identity. On the other hand, each of the two forms of the Salesian consecrated vocation has its own specific way of undertaking the work, with the main attention given to the area of either the ministry or lay involvement, without on this account emphasising in an exclusive manner one or the other. Precisely for this reason every Salesian whatever may be the form his vocation takes, does not disdain the manual work with which he takes care of the house, makes the educational setting beautiful and educates the young to manual work.

⁵² J. VECCHI, *Spiritualità salesiana*, o.c., p. 102.

Temperance

Commenting on the dream of the ten diamonds Fr Egidio Viganò gave quite a profound and up-to-date interpretation of temperance: «It is to be understood as self-control, a moderation of one's inclinations, of the instincts of the passions, being reasonable, cutting off from worldliness, not fleeing to the desert but remaining among people with one's heart under control: being in the world without being of the world. This sort of temperance is a basic attitude to life, of self-control... Rightly theological tradition speaks about temperance as one of the "cardinal virtues": an axis on which hinge various other and complementary attitudes of self-control. In fact, these are the virtues which rotate around the central nucleus of temperance: *continence*, against the tendency towards lust; *humility*, against the tendency towards pride...; *meekness* against bursts of anger...; *mercy*, against certain inclinations towards cruelty and revenge; *modesty*, against vanity in showing off one's body (fashion!); *sobriety* and *abstinence*, against excesses in food and drink; *economy* and *simplicity*, against easy waste and extravagance; *austerity* in the tenor of life (Spartan-like), against the temptation to comfort».⁵³

Basically it is a matter of the necessary *Christian asceticism* so little appreciated in today's society, so strongly conditioned to hedonism and ethical relativism, in the name of absolute freedom, which rejects every limitation, and in the name of natural and ideological spontaneity, considers it to be an alienating neurosis. The lack of asceticism is the consequence and an expression of the rejection of God. The meaning, the justification for, and the fruitfulness of Christian asceticism is to be found in fidelity to the mystery of the death and resurrection of Christ.

Nor should it be forgotten that working among the poorest, drawing close to those who are suffering, «the joys and hopes, the

⁵³ E. VIGANÒ, *Un progetto evangelico di vita*, o.c., pp. 119s. Interesting is his application of temperance, in addition to work, to fraternal life, to one's personal life style, to prayer and to contemplation, which is found in J. VECCHI, *Spiritualità...*, o.c., pp. 105-106.

griefs and anxieties»⁵⁴ of so many women, men and young people who struggle to live are a strong stimulus to reject every kind of softness and free and easy life-style for each one of us and for our communities and therefore to live frugally, with the essentials and with temperance. The poor can become our genuine "educators", since every day they demand from us that we be faithful to the promise we have made to give our whole life for them.

It is true that asceticism «ought to be related to the cultural anthropology of the times in which one is living. So nowadays temperance has to take account of a more developed concept of man, of the discoveries by the human sciences (especially of psychology), of the characteristics of our bodily existence, of the profound value of sexuality, of the process of personalisation, of the reality of pluralism, of the importance of the community dimension, of the demands of social life».⁵⁵

A Christian asceticism therefore which takes into account the harmonious integration of soul and body; which makes people open to oblation love; which is capable of dealing in a Christian manner with the tensions which modern life implies: 'stress', the monotony of work, the superficiality of relationships. An asceticism of silence is necessary in this noisy civilisation, so as not to lose oneself in an over-abundance of information; an asceticism which knows how to be disciplined with regard to the means of social communication, sleep, recreation, food the senses, etc... The value of asceticism is not measured by the suffering caused by giving things up or by the amount of effort made but rather by the progress made in exercising charity or by its gospel-style effectiveness. Like the ascetics of all times, Don Bosco underlined the essential connection between mortification of the body and prayer: "He who does not mortify his body cannot pray!" Temperance is indispensable for holiness, precisely because it produces that freedom of spirit that makes us ready to love even to the extreme.

⁵⁴ VATICAN COUNCIL II, *Gaudium et spes*, n. 1.

⁵⁵ E. VIGANÒ, *Un progetto evangelico di vita, o.c.*, pp. 125s.

Reflecting on the asceticism of Don Bosco, over and above the circumstances which characterised it, has much to tell us today. Don Bosco was a holy educator who loved deeply and who knew how to make himself loved by practising temperance to an heroic degree. What Don Bosco asked Don Rua to do sending him as a young Rector to Mirabello, "study how to make yourself loved", is only possible with a strong asceticism that comes from the practice of temperance.⁵⁶ For Don Bosco this is always in view of the 'mysticism' of "da mihi animas", because it is a discipline in the education to the gift of oneself in love: "Lord, make me save the young with the gift of temperance!" Therefore Salesian temperance ought to be cheerful, daily, kind, simple, intelligent, heroic, pleasant and something which can be seen in the serene, radiant, joyful face of the Salesian.

3.3. Requirements to make the theme concrete

In order to more easily make the theme concrete and achieve the aim of the GC27, it is necessary to observe certain requirements, setting in motion some procedures, encouraging a change of mentality, making changes to some structures.

Processes to be set in motion

The GC27 proposes the aim of helping each confrere and community to live in fidelity the apostolic project of Don Bosco, and that is to say to continue to strengthen our charismatic identity.

This will enable us to make our Salesian consecrated vocation visible, credible and fruitful; in particular it will make it possible for us to propose Salesian life convincingly to the young as a plan of life worth taking up and in this way giving vocational fruitfulness to our presence.

⁵⁶ Cf. E. VIGANÒ, *Study to make yourself loved. Commentary on the Strenna*, Rome 1984.

From these objectives follow some procedures that need to be given preference, which are the basic paths to be followed to facilitate the achievement of the objectives.

The first process regards the way of living nowadays our *Salesian consecrated vocation* in the grace of unity and with joy, as witnesses to the radical approach of the gospel and of our particular expression of work and temperance.

The second process regards *knowledge of Don Bosco*, which needs to be constantly improved so as to make it the inspirational motive of our spiritual life and of pastoral activity from both the personal and the community points of view.

The third process regards the *lived, personal community attitude towards the Constitutions*, which are Don Bosco's apostolic project and constitute our charismatic identity to be lived faithfully and with joy in our vocation.

Mindset to be changed

Here are taken up again those attitudes already described among the institutional and personal challenges, which need to be changed, both in the living out of the vocation and in the carrying out of the mission.

Above all attention needs to be given *to culture and to cultures* so as to create a common mindset which is able to seize the opportunities which the cultural challenges offer, in particular as regards post-modernity, inculturation, relations between cultures, secularisation.

In addition the *ecclesial challenges* need to be further considered so as to find ways of responding to the requirements of the new evangelisation, to the renewal of consecrated life, to overcoming relativism.

Care needs to be taken to increase the *culture of the Congregation*, in particular with regard to the formation demands of a serious vocational discernment and of a effective personal ac-

companiment, to the sharing of agreed criteria in connection with our pastoral activity, to the formation of the leaders of the confreres, the young and the lay people.

Finally there is a mindset to be changed at the *personal level*, so as to foster the overcoming of various forms and style of individualism, the deepening of the identity of consecrated life, the acquiring of affective, sexual and emotional maturity.

Structures to be changed

There are also some structures to be changed, which concern our way of living and of organising ourselves, in order to achieve the fundamental objective of the GC27, in other words so that we can really live to the full Don Bosco's apostolic project.

Above all the style and organisation of *community life* need to be changed; it needs to be strengthened, ensuring the right number and quality of its members, the right balance between the community and the work, a simplification of the complexities of the works, a re-definition of roles, a redesigning of the presences.

In addition what needs to change is the form taken of the presence and the exercise of the *role of the Rector* of the community; the quality of the Rectors needs to be assured, promoting for all the confreres already in initial formation preparation in "leadership", enabling the Rectors to carry out their task of accompaniment, helping them to animate and to motivate the religious community and the educative pastoral community, making sure that they have the help necessary so that they can carry out their fundamental duties.

Finally the way of managing *human resources* needs to be changed; there needs to be a strengthening of the co-involvement and the charismatic use of the resources, looking for new forces, increasing a sense of the Salesian Family, fostering the co-responsibility of lay people, ensuring the charismatic development of the presence in the area.

4. CONCLUSION

Dear confreres, I conclude this letter convoking the GC27 inviting all of you, and indeed all the communities and Provinces, starting from now to cultivate those attitudes and that atmosphere which are conducive to making "work and temperance" a concrete reality. In this way we can be "witnesses to the radical approach of the gospel" that the Church, society and young people expect, and return to the essentials in the spirit of the Gospel, so loved and desired by Don Bosco.

This is the credible response to give to someone such as the novice who wrote to me some months ago who hopes that our daily life may not be a real obstacle to Jesus having young disciples and apostles ready to be joyful and credible witnesses to the radical approach of the gospel. It is a question of young people who come to our communities, convinced and enthusiastic about their vocation and who sometimes then have a different experience of religious life; one which does not coincide with that offered them in their vocation animation and in initial formation.

Someone might wish to justify himself by saying that sometimes these young people create an idealistic image of consecrated life, a life that does not exist in reality. However, when they hear the words *poor, chaste and obedient* or the call to make their own "*Jesus' way of being obedient, poor and chaste*" they would expect to find a faithful following and a generous imitation of Jesus, as have so many men and women from the times of the primitive Church, who captivated by the person of the Lord left everything and everyone to become his disciples and witnesses.

At this point the question usually comes up, «but is it possible to live like Christ?» It is certainly not a rhetorical question. It arises from that image of consecrated life that we project through our style of life (food, drink, clothes, use of time, etc.),

our experience of prayer, our interpersonal relationships in the community, our dedication and professional approach in carrying out the mission. There are confreres and communities who live with great joy, generosity, fidelity and with a radical approach, and others on the other hand whose lives are based on the easy life, individualistic, unconcerned about others, about the young or about the poor.

It is evident that precisely because the most precious gift that we have is life, denying ourselves, giving up having a wife, children, a house, and organising life according to one's own plans, and handing over everything to Christ in the Congregation for poor and abandoned young people, is worth while only if one takes seriously the commitment to faithfully reproduce in ourselves his image and to be his witnesses. We cannot reduce the Congregation to an institution of social or pastoral services. We are a family, not born from flesh and blood but generated by the Spirit who calls us together and unites us in communities of disciples and apostles of Christ for young people in the footsteps of Don Bosco.

Today as yesterday God is calling us to holiness in Salesian life. And this is possible if we live as Christ did, as our beloved founder and father lived with great joy, attractiveness and a smiling face, but with the great radical approach of the gospel, expressed in his twofold motto "work and temperance".

We are drawing close to the bicentenary of his birth and we have to reach it having recovered the joy, the enthusiasm and the pride of being Salesians, so as to be able to put before today's young people in all honesty the beauty of our vocation.

To Mary, the Immaculate Help of Christians I entrust this GC27 and above all, all and each one of you dear confreres, whom I love with the heart of Christ Jesus.

5. PRAYER TO SAINT JOHN BOSCO

Bearing in mind that on the one hand the GC27 is a point of arrival in this period of preparation for the Bicentenary of the birth of our beloved father and founder, and on the other a point of departure for a new period in the history of the Congregation, I ask you to use the prayer to Don Bosco that I already suggested to you for this three year period 2012-2015. It is the evening prayer that corresponds to the morning prayer of entrustment to Mary Help of Christians.

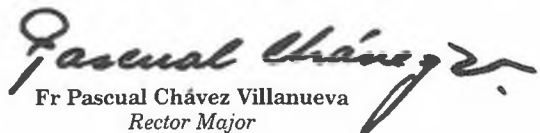
Saint John Bosco,

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

Be our guide as we walk the path of friendship with the Lord Jesus,
*so that we may discover in Him and in his Gospel
the meaning of our lives
and the source of true happiness.*

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

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


Fr Pascual Chávez Villanueva
Rector Major

2. GUIDELINES AND DIRECTIVES

2.1 CALENDAR OF PREPARATION FOR THE 27th GENERAL CHAPTER

In preparation for the GC27 the following calendar indicates the main events.

April 2012

In the period between 26 March and 4 April the Rector Major and the General Council studied the theme of the 27th General Chapter, its various aspects and the calendar. On 2 April the Rector Major appointed Fr Francesco Cereda Moderator of the GC27, according to the norms of article 112 of the General Regulations.

On the same day 2 April the Rector Major, according to the norms of art. 112 of the Regulations, appointed the Technical Commission for the GC27, composed of the following confreres: Fr Fabio Attard, Fr Pierfausto Frisoli, Fr Filiberto Gonzalez, Fr Maria Arokiam Kanaga, Bro. Jean Paul Muller, Fr José Miguel Nuñez.

The Commission, chaired by the Moderator, met together in Rome between 2 and 4 April and in various sessions studied and formulated the following items:

- Calendar of preparations for the GC27, starting from the opening date decided by the General Council.
- Outline for reflection and work on the theme of the GC26, offered as a help to the Provinces.
- Suggestions for the preparation and carrying out of the Provincial Chapters.
- Juridical norms useful for the elections.

The contributions drawn up by the Technical Commission were passed to the Rector Major by the Moderator and have become part of this number 413 of the Acts of the General Council.

On 8 April the Rector Major officially convokes the 27th General Chapter, in accordance with articles 150 of the Constitutions and 111 of the General Regulations. He thereby specifies its principal purpose, place and opening date.

With the Acts of the General Council n. 413 the letter of convocation, the theme for the GC27, the guidelines for the calendar of preparation for GC27, an outline for reflection for the local and Provincial communities the instructions for the carrying out of the Provincial Chapters, and the norms for the elections are being sent to the Provinces.

July 2012

The Moderator sends to the Provincials the forms for the minutes and the model sheets for the contributions of the Provincial Chapters and of the confreres to the GC27. They are also placed on the site of the Direzione Generale.

The Rector Major appoints the Commission for the review of the minutes of the elections of the Provincial Delegates to the GC27 (cf. Reg. 115). Under the direction of the Moderator, this verifies the calculation of the number and the lists of the confreres belonging to the Province or Vice Province in view of the PC.

September 2012 - June 2013

Starting from September 2012, and as soon as possible the Provinces send to the Moderator of the GC27 the "General list of confreres belonging to the Province in view of the PC" (cf. AGC 413 n. 2.4.3.1).

During this time in the Provinces the preparations for and the carrying out of the Province Chapter take place (C. 171-172), the date of which should be fixed according to the following dead line.

15 July 2013

Not later than this date the following documents in digital form should have reached the *Moderator of the GC27*:

- The minutes of the Provincial Chapters.
- The minutes of the election of the Delegates to the GC27 and their substitutes.
- The contributions of the Provincial Chapters.
- The contributions of individual confreres.

Proposals which arrive later than 15 July 2013 cannot be taken into consideration.

Provincial Chapters which study themes concerning their own province and make deliberations which need to be approved by the Rector Major with his Council in accordance with C. 170, must send the deliberations concerned to the *Secretary General*.

August 2013

The contributions received will be put in order and classified by a group set up for the purpose. In the meantime the Rector Major appoints the pre-capitular Commission for the preparation of the working documents to be sent to those taking part in the GC27 (cf. Reg. 113).

September 2013

The pre-capitular Commission is at work.

November 2013

The working documents for GC27 prepared by the pre-capitular Commission are sent to the Provincials and the Provincial Delegates to the GC27.

December 2013 - February 2014

The members of the GC27 study the working documents in their own communities.

22 February 2014

The 27th General Chapter begins.

Conclusion of the Chapter

The duration of the GC27 is expected to be about two months; 12 April 2014 is expected to be its final day.

2.2 AN OUTLINE FOR REFLECTION AND WORK ON THE THEME OF THE GC27

In this outline, some suggestions are offered to the Provinces. They can be useful in focusing the attention of the confreres, of the local communities and the Provincial Chapters on the theme of the GC27. In particular they can guide their reflection and their work.

2.2.1. The Letter convoking the GC27

Our journey towards the GC27 begins with the personal study of the Rector Major's letter convoking the Chapter and community discussion of its contents. The theme of the GC27 is not a customary one; it is a challenge to the way of life of each confrere and each community; it sends us back to the gospel roots of our vocation; it requires us to bear witness to the "better" and to the "more".

The theme might appear too difficult and demanding; but what is at stake is precisely the future of consecrated life, its "very existence", its identity. It is on this that the need to root oneself in Christ and in the gospel is based; from here derive the visibility, the credibility and the fruitfulness of our vocation. We are sustained by the conviction that witnessing to a radical approach is not primarily the result of our efforts; but rather of the superabundance of grace, an excess of gratuity, the richness of the gift.

We can often feel tired or find ourselves living our lives by "routine". Not everyone feels ready for this new experience of the Spirit. Will this theme of the GC27 succeed in banishing inertia from our lives? Let us leave it to the Spirit; He will know how to renew our hearts, inflaming us with the love of God and re-awakening in us the "love as before" for the Lord Jesus.

2.2.2. The Process of preparation for the GC27

In all the Provinces the General Chapter is preceded by the Provincial Chapter. This is an explicit requirement of our Constitutions (C. 172). It is the task of the Provincial Chapter "to elect one or two delegates to the General Chapter and their substitutes" (C. 171) and "to forward proposals to the Moderator of the General Chapter" (Reg. 167).

The carrying out of these tasks does not exhaust the nature or the competences of a Provincial Chapter. It would be a mistake to think that the Chapter needs to be held with the approach of a General Chapter for the *sole reason* of electing the delegates or for forwarding proposals to the Moderator. In fact articles 171 and 172 of the Constitutions and art. 167 of the General Regulations list a lengthy series of the aims and tasks, which, however, are not all or always to be undertaken in every Provincial Chapter.

Reflection on the subject of the radical approach of the gospel is a concern not only for those confreres who will be taking part in the GC27. The convocation of the GC27 is intended to foster a profound process of reflection aimed at the conversion of each confreres, of all the communities, of every Province. With the publication of the letter a wide-ranging process is set in motion at grass roots that is spread over a period of time and which involves the whole Congregation. In this process a very important occasion is the "representative assembly of all the confreres and local communities", which is what the Provincial Chapter is.

The GC theme does not require the undertaking of an academic or doctrinal reflection to be written up in theological terms, either spiritual or pastoral "to be sent to the Moderator". It is a "challenge" issued to everyone. It is the voice of the Spirit urging us to examine ourselves to "examine our own works", to carry out a "review" to "examine our conscience and be converted". "He who has ears let him listen to what the Spirit is saying". It is the Spirit speaking to us too and inviting us to listen (cf. Rev. 2,1-29).

The dream of the diamonds to which the Rector Major explicitly refers in the letter convoking the Chapter, presents us with an “either or” situation, a courageous review of personal and community life. In dramatic form, this dream speaks about the responsibility every confrere has for his own life and for his contribution to making the face of the Congregation bright or obscure. The mirror image description of the Congregation in the future “as it ought to be” (“qualis esse debet”) and “what it runs the risk of becoming” (“qualis esse periclitatur”), offers a frame of reference and of comparison anything but rosy, indeed decidedly disturbing. There is no room for half measures or compromises.

Therefore those responsible for this process are each and every one involved at the same time. The General Chapter will be held in Rome in 2014 and over 200 confreres will be taking part in it; but it would be more correct to say that it has already begun and taking part in it are all the confreres in the Congregation: the individual confrere who examines his conscience about his fidelity to the apostolic plan of Don Bosco; the local community which assesses its own way of bearing witness to the primacy of God, to fraternity, to the apostolic mission; the Provincial Chapter which reviews fundamental options, the style of life and of work of the communities, their credibility and fruitfulness, in the contexts in which they are living.

Therefore the convocation of the Provincial Chapter by each Provincial is a great opportunity being offered to every Province. It can become a time of prophecy in which, in an atmosphere of prayer and a sincere search for the common good, problems are faced, their causes identified, and suitable decisions are taken. This process can happen only by starting from the involvement of everyone, and it requires courage, humility and a willingness to be converted.

2.2.3. Structure of the theme for the GC27

Studying the letter convoking the GC27, we can identify a num-

ber of ways of developing the theme of being witnesses to the radical approach of the gospel. The experience of these recent years leads us to concentrate our attention on some priorities and not to lose focus. For this reason we have identified *three key topics*, which are proposed to Salesian communities and especially to the Provincial Chapters.

These key issues refer to what ought to characterise the Salesian of the future; as the Rector Major puts it in his letter, he is being called to be a *mystic, prophet, servant*; this applies also to the Salesian community. In this letter 'mystica' prophecy and service are linked to the fundamental features of our apostolic consecration, in other words to spiritual experience, to fraternal life in community, to the mission to youth.¹ Therefore in reference to the Salesians, we are speaking about mystics in the Spirit, prophets of fraternal life, servants of the young.

In the first place, developing each of these three key issues, the fundamental point to bear in mind is that of its being *a witness to* the radical approach of the gospel. It is a question of identifying the signs which make it visible; in fact we have to offer a beautiful witness to our vocation, testimony that it is something fascinating, attractive, joyful, aware that its real attraction is the Lord Jesus. Then it is important not to lose sight of the "the radical approach of the gospel" of these key issues; it is a question of returning to the roots of the vocation. Consecrated life is a search

¹ It is worth recalling here that Benedict XVI, in his address to those taking part in the *General Assembly of the Union of Superiors General and the International Union of Female Superiors General* on 26 November 2010, highlighted these same elements of identity for consecrated life: seeking God leading to a desire for what is really important; brotherhood: which is *Confessio Trinitatis* and model of Church communion.; the mission which spurs on to take the Gospel to everyone. This was re-proposed again by Pope Benedict during Madrid World Youth Day in his *Address to young women religious at the San Lorenzo all'Escorial Monastery* on 19 August 2011, in which he spoke specifically of living the radical approach of the gospel as part of consecrated life, in the same three expressions: a spiritual experience, fraternal life, dedication to the mission. This is also the fundamental view of consecrated life present in the Apostolic Exhortation of John Paul II *Vita consecrata*, in which the identity of this vocation is expressed in the three essential aspects: "mysterium Trinitatis", "signum fraternitatis", "servitium caritatis".

for something “more” to live for, something “further” to which to give expression, of something “better” to be proposed. The something “better” is not the ordinary; the something “better” is the “more”.

As well as this we have to bear in mind that these three key issues express our *vocation* in its fullness. Therefore it cannot be forgotten that witnessing to the radical approach of the gospel is not mainly an effort on our part, but is a call; God Himself calls us to bear witness to the radical approach of the gospel; witnessing is not a boast or a privilege, neither is it the result of our human efforts, nor is it our choice; it is most of all a grace and a gift; it is a vocation. It is a vocation which demands from us a faithful response, expressed joyfully, the grace of unity in personal and community life.

Finally in the three key issues it is necessary to pay attention to developing the *Salesian character* of the witnessing to the radical approach of the gospel, in other words, what is specific for us Salesians in bearing witness to the radical approach of the gospel, that which distinguishes ours from other forms of consecrated life. The motto “work and temperance” is a visible Salesian expression of the radical approach of the gospel, as the dream of the ten diamonds shows. Therefore it is up to us to examine further the Salesian features of mystica, of prophecy and of service.

Mystics in the Spirit. To God who has chosen us, called us, and reserved us for himself, we respond with total and exclusive dedication. The primacy of God, which arises from the free and loving initiative of God in our regard, is translated into the unconditional offering of ourselves. Our desire for self-fulfilment is expressed in the giving of ourselves. Love is the measure of our gift and the measure of love is that it is without measure. Immersed in our work we often run the risk of neglecting God; we are not capable of balancing our tasks/commitments, our work runs the risk of distancing us from God. By vocation we are “in search of God” and “following Jesus”. Our vocation has its roots in the

gospel; it is the gospel which gives attractiveness and beauty to our vocation. Only with the strength of the Spirit can we live this call; He is the one who in the history of the Church continually draws new people to perceive the attraction of such a demanding choice; He is the one who has raised up Don Bosco, to whose apostolic project we have committed ourselves through religious profession.

Prophets of fraternity. Fraternal life lived in community is an alternative life style, a counter-cultural proposal, and therefore it is prophecy. Wide-spread individualism, social exclusion, cultural acceptability are challenges to which the Salesian community responds, showing that it is possible to live as brothers, sharing one's life and communicating in depth. There is the danger that we can live in community without knowing one another. Our living together in community is first of all a vocation and not a personal choice or for convenience sake: we are called by God. Fraternal life finds its fruitful expression in self-giving;² it needs to discover gratuity and an ability to relate. The young people who are drawn to consecrated life are fascinated by the way fraternal life is lived. It gives witness also in international communities that it is possible to work together on a common apostolic project. Differences constitute a treasure to be recognised and appreciated also by the educative pastoral communities, in which the various vocations are united in living and working together. Fraternity shows the face of the Church, the house of communion.

Servants of the young. Our whole life is dedicated to the young especially the poorest; it is dedicated to the Gospel cause. Our dedication to the young and to the Gospel is rooted in God's call and our total and exclusive dedication to Him. The most beautiful gift we can offer the young is the possibility of an encounter with the Lord Jesus; it is the offer of an education inspired by the

² Cf. BENEDICT XVI, *Caritas in veritate*, 34. The gift "by its nature goes beyond merit, its rule is that of superabundance".

gospel and opens for the young “the door to the faith”. Sometimes there is the danger that we feel ourselves to be more masters than servants; that we are more servants of the works than of the young and of the gospel. We dedicate ourselves to the mission “with tireless energy taking care to do everything with simplicity and moderation” (C. 18), following the example of the Lord Jesus who “like the Father is always at work” and imitating Don Bosco who spent himself “until his last breath”. Apostolic work sometimes requires self-abnegation, fatigue and sacrifice, which make sense if directed towards a greater good: “the glory of God and the salvation of souls”.

2.2.4. Method of community discernment

In the GC25 and the GC26 we adopted the method of community discernment, which gave good results. It is a question now of continuing, improving and further developing this method. We have to find a way of carrying out a real “discernment in the Spirit”. In the process of discernment there are the following stages: listening, interpreting, the way ahead. For each of the key issues the local communities and the Provincial Chapters are invited to carry out a process of discernment following these three stages.

Listening. In the first stage it is a matter of ‘listening’ to the situation; facing up to it in its priority areas; seeing where the major challenges are; ‘listening’ to what is challenging us the most; highlighting the more promising aspects from the point of view of the confreres, the communities and the Province and what needs to be developed, but also that which poses the greatest risks and which needs to be confronted and overcome. It is a question of hearing the signs and of seeing the expressions of the radical approach of the gospel already in action, but also the manifestations of infidelity to the vocation, counter-witness and conformism.

Interpreting. Starting from the points mentioned, in a second stage it is a matter of interpreting the situation and the signs

heard; of identifying the deep causes of the good or bad state of affairs; knowing how to interpret the challenges and the dangers. Reading the situation ought to lead us to understanding it in depth, identifying the root causes and not being content with a surface view of the effects mentioned; we could speak of a “radical” interpretation. The keys to understanding the situation are the Gospel, the life of the Church and the Constitutions; then we can really speak about a “spiritual and pastoral” interpretation.

Way ahead. The third stage consists in identifying the path to be followed; it is a matter of discovering what will lead us towards new forms of the radical approach of the gospel what will enable us to re-enforce those already present but not yet fully developed, what will help us to overcome forms of infidelity, weakness and danger. The path needs a goal or objective; for each key area it would be well to limit oneself to one or at the most two objectives. These objectives then need to be worked out in stages or procedures and things to be done; they refer to the life of the Province but also of the Congregation.

In the process of discernment we need to concentrate on some priorities, in the stages of listening, interpreting and the way ahead; we need to get to the roots and to the fundamentals without losing focus. The written document, the result of the discernment process, will be an indication of the efforts of the Province to implement the Chapter theme and will represent its contribution to the GC27.

For each key issue it would be best that the *written document to be sent to the Moderator as the contribution of the Provincial Chapter for GC27 be not more than two or at the most three pages.*

2.2.5. Contributions to be sent to the Moderator of the GC27

Before 15 July 2013 the various contributions should reach the Moderator of the GC27; these can be of three different kinds:

- *Contributions of Provincial Chapters on the theme of the GC27 "Witnesses to the radical approach of the gospel"; these contributions should refer to the three key issues; each of these will have its own form which will be provided by the Moderator;*
- *contributions of individual confreres or groups of confreres on the theme of GC27 "Witnesses to the radical approach of the gospel"; these contributions should refer to the three key issues and will have their appropriate form;*
- *contributions of the Provincial Chapters, of individual confreres or groups of confreres on issues regarding the life of the Congregation, the Constitutions or Regulations; these too will have their own separate form.*

2.3 THE PROVINCIAL CHAPTERS

Some suggestions are offered to the Provinces and Vice Provinces which may be useful for the preparation and carrying out of the Provincial Chapter.

2.3.1. Tasks of the Provincial Chapter

“The provincial chapter”, declares art. 170 of the Constitutions, “is the fraternal gathering in which the local communities strengthen their sense of belonging to the provincial community, through their common concern for its general problems. It is also the representative assembly of all the confreres and local communities”.

The tasks of the provincial chapter are indicated in art. 170 of the Constitutions and art. 169 of the General Regulations.

In the present case the provincial chapter is convoked primarily and specifically for the preparation of the GC27. In consequence:

- *Primarily and principally it will study the theme of the GC27: «Witnesses to the radical approach of the gospel».*
- *It will elect the Delegate (or Delegates) to the General Chapter and their substitutes (C 171,5).*

In addition to fulfilling these primary requirements, the chapter *can deal with other matters of more immediate concern to the province* and considered of particular importance, as provided for by C 171,1-2.

2.3.2. The preparation of the Provincial Chapter

After receiving the Rector Major's letter convoking the GC27, it is desirable that the Provincial **call his council together**:

- to appoint the *Moderator of the Provincial Chapter* (R 168)

- to analyze more deeply the purpose and topic of the GC27, and to clarify the objectives of the PC which is to prepare it;
- to take notice of the study outline on the theme assigned to the GC27;
- to study the norms governing the preparation and carrying out of the provincial chapter;
- to invite possible experts and observers to the chapter (R 168).

If it is considered opportune, the Provincial with his council may appoint a *preparatory commission*, to help the Moderator in preparing the provincial chapter. A provincial preparatory commission is not prescribed by the General Regulations. It has nevertheless proved useful in many provinces for the preparation of the provincial chapter. It is for the Provincial and his council to decide how it should be made up.

The provincial chapter should be convoked by a letter from the Provincial encouraging the confreres and the communities to reflect on the theme and to participate in the chapter's work. In it he will announce:

- the name of the Moderator of the provincial chapter;
- the members of the preparatory commission (if there is one);
- the date for the opening and place of the chapter, which could be spread over more than one session;
- the manner of grouping of communities which have less than six confreres, for the purpose of electing the delegate to the provincial chapter and his substitute (cf. R 163).

After the election of the delegates of the local communities, the Provincial in a second letter will:

- communicate to the confreres the names of those elected;
- and present the list of perpetually professed confreres eligible for election to the chapter as delegates of the confreres of the province (cf. R 165,1-2).

2.3.3. The Moderator of the Provincial Chapter

The Moderator of the Provincial Chapter:

- will decide and inform the communities of the dates by which must take place the election of:
 - the delegates of the communities and their substitutes;
 - the delegates of the confreres (from the provincial list);
 - eventual new substitutes for community delegates if a substitute is subsequently elected from the provincial list as a delegate of the confreres;
- will send to the communities the norms governing the election of the delegates of local communities and the forms for recording the minutes of their elections;
- will also announce the method to be used for the election of delegates of the confreres of the province.

2.3.4. The provincial preparatory commission

It will be the task of the **provincial preparatory commission** (if there is one) to study, suggest to the Provincial, and foster all the initiatives it may consider useful for:

- sensitising the confreres to chapter perspectives (by conferences, study days, group and community meetings, etc.);
- helping the confreres to prepare themselves spiritually for the work and obligations associated with the chapter (through retreats, days of prayer, celebrations, etc.);
- clarifying the chapter theme and helping the confreres in their study of it: every confrere could well be given a copy of the letter convoking the GC27, of the study outline found elsewhere in this edition of the Acts.

The preparatory commission can also suggest to Provincials ways of involving members of the Salesian Family (FMA, DBV, Cooperators, Past-pupils, ...), lay collaborators, friends of our works, (religious, competent members of the clergy - including our Bishops

and Prelates etc.) requesting their collaboration in the form and areas allowed by our norms and local situations.

In the provincial chapter it is important to find some special way of *involving young people* both at local community level and at that of the celebration of the PC.

The Moderator, in conjunction with the preparatory commission:

- will send out forms to the communities, for collecting the contributions and reflections of the confreres and/or communities;
- will lay down a date by which the forms must be returned to the Moderator of the provincial chapter;
- will study the contributions and proposals sent in by the communities and confreres, and arrange them in a manner which will facilitate their use for the provincial chapter's reflection and decisions.

2.3.5. The carrying out of the Provincial Chapter itself

Every effort should be made to ensure that the provincial chapter is celebrated in a *fraternal atmosphere of reflection and prayer*, and that it is seeking God's will as we try to bring an ever better response to the expectations of the Church and of youth. This will be helped by an appropriate preparation of the liturgy as regards content, method, aids, etc.

Every provincial chapter will have its own brief *collection of regulations*, containing norms for work, discussions, and the organization of the capitulars into study groups or commissions. For these regulations the norms indicated by the Constitutions and General Regulations should be kept in mind (C 153, R 161, 164, 169) together with any indications found in the provincial directory.

For the *communication of proposals and contributions to the GC27*, the indications given by the Moderator of the GC27 must

be scrupulously observed. In particular, proposals and contributions must be written on the appropriate forms. Proposals from provincial chapters will carry the details of the voting. They can be written in *Italian, French, Spanish, English or Portuguese*.

2.3.6. Participation of the communities and confreres

It will be convenient at the end of these suggestions to list some duties of the communities and individual confreres.

The communities

- Accompany the whole of the capitular process by their daily prayer.
- Elect their delegate to the provincial chapter and his substitute. They compile the minutes of the election, following the model supplied by the Moderator of the PC.
- Receive and study the motives and material sent them by the Moderator of the PC.
- Deepen their knowledge of the theme proposed in view of the GC27, and submit contributions and proposals to the Moderator of the PC.

The individual confreres

- Follow, through information and prayer, the preparation, realization and conclusions of their provincial chapter.
- A climate of personal conversion is proposed so as to assume the spiritual and pastoral implications of the topic for GC27, "Witness to the radical approach of the gospel", and its practical expression in the motto, pointed out by Don Bosco to every Salesian "Work and temperance".
- Vote in the election of the delegate of their own community and his substitute.
- Take part in the election of the delegates of the confreres of the province.

- Make a personal study of the theme, availing themselves of aids and of the exchange of ideas in their own community,
- Submit personal contributions and proposals to the Moderator of the provincial chapter and collaborate in the drawing up and discussion of proposals and contributions from their own community.
- Send, if they so wish, personal proposals and contributions directly to the Moderator of the GC27, using the appropriate forms.

2.4 NORMS FOR THE ELECTIONS

2.4.0. Introduction: lawfulness and validity of acts

The provincial chapter is a community act, whose value and consequences transcend the provincial community and the time at which it takes place.

The provincial chapter in fact elects delegates for the General Chapter and draws up proposals for the latter. In addition it can make decisions which, after the approval of the Rector Major with the consent of his council (cf. C 170), have binding force for all the confreres of the province, including those who have not taken a direct part in the decision-making.

Its realisation therefore is governed by norms which guarantee that its acts are valid and lawful. These norms are listed in the universal law and in our own proper law (Constitutions and General Regulations), from which the provincial chapter derives its authority.

The observance of the laws concerning validity and lawfulness, and precision in compiling official documents, ensure clarity and expedition at successive stages of the work and eliminate delays, reference back, explanations and sanations.

As a service to provincials and moderators of provincial chapters the following list of norms and juridical indications is provided. These norms refer to:

- *Canonical erection of houses*
- *Appointments*
- *Calculation of number of confreres and the various lists needed*
- *Minutes of the elections*
- *Special cases*
- *Formal indications*

2.4.1. Canonical erection of houses

The canonical erection of the house is indispensable (cf. can. 608, 665§1) before the confreres can meet in an assembly which has the power of validly electing the delegate to the provincial chapter, and before the president of such an assembly of the confreres, who is the Rector according to C 186, can take part by right in the chapter (C 173, 5). The document of erection should be in the house archives or those of the province.

For individual houses which existed before 1926 as communities in their own right (and not "filiali" i.e. dependent on another community) it is sufficient that there be evidence of its existence before that date in which houses were canonically erected without individual documentation. The same form of erection was made for the houses of Poland existing before 1930.

It is necessary therefore:

- a) to verify in good time the canonical erection of each house;
- b) to verify that in houses recently canonically erected a Rector has been appointed.

It should be remembered that "the one in charge" of a canonically erected house, if he has not been appointed Rector, cannot take part by right in the PC and cannot organise the election of the Delegate of the community to the PC.

- c) to put in hand the necessary procedure for the canonical erection of those houses not yet erected, before the election of the delegates.

For the canonical erection of a house the Provincial must ensure that it has at least three confreres (cf. can.115 §2); after consulting his council and obtaining the written consent of the diocesan bishop or the equivalent (can. 609 §1), the Provincial must make formal application to the Rector Major (cf. can.608-610); and finally have received from the Rector Major himself the decree of the canonical erection (cf. C. 132 § 1,2).

- d) to indicate the way that canonically erected houses that do not have six confreres should meet together so as to elect the delegate to the PC and his substitute (cf. R. 163).

In the case of *canonically erected* houses with *less than six confreres* the norms of R 163 apply: if possible the provincial should arrange that they meet together so as to form the number of at least six members under the presidency of the rector who is senior by first profession. Thus united they will elect the delegate for the provincial chapter and his substitute. If however because of special circumstances the members of a house with less than six professed members cannot join with another in like condition the provincial will join the community with less than six professed members to a larger one (with six or more professed) and together the members of the two communities with equal rights (both active and passive) will proceed to the election of the delegate and his substitute for the provincial chapter. It should be remembered too that the rector even of a community with less than six professed members (provided it be canonically erected) takes part in the provincial chapter by right.

- e) to assign to a canonically erected house those confreres who belong to a house not yet canonically erected.

In the case of houses *not canonically erected* the provincial will assign the group of confreres concerned to a house already canonically erected in which they can fulfil their duties and exercise their rights as electors together with the confreres of that house. It should be remembered that the "one in charge" of a house not canonically erected does not take part by right in the PC.

2.4.2. Appointments

A verification must be made to see that the appointments of those who take part by right in the provincial chapter are in order and have not lapsed. This is especially important in places where the provincial chapter takes place at a time when there is normally a change of personnel and new assignments.

An appointment is in order when:

- a) it was made in accordance with the Constitutions;
- b) the person appointed has taken possession of his office in the manner prescribed;

c) his term of office has not expired.

The Superior Council, on 23.6.1978, made the following decisions concerning entry into office and its cessation:

- the appointment of confreres to various offices, at either local or provincial level, becomes effective from the moment that the confrere formally takes over the office;
- such confreres remain in office until their successors formally take over the same office; this must happen not more than three months after the expiry of their mandate.

What has been said above is to be applied, case by case:

- to provincials and superiors of vice-provinces or special circumscriptions (cf. C 162, 168);
- to members of provincial councils (cf. C 167);
- to superiors of provincial delegations (cf. C 159);
- to rectors (cf. C 177);
- to directors of novices (cf. C 112).

For a vice-rector, given that with the approval of the provincial he can take the place of the rector if the latter is seriously impeded (cf. C 173, 5), there must be a formal document regarding his appointment as vice-rector. Sufficient for this purpose is the letter of obedience given to the confrere. There must also be a formal document indicating that the provincial has recognized the serious impediment preventing the participation of the rector in the provincial chapter and approves his substitution by the vice-rector.

2.4.3. Calculation of number of confreres and the various lists needed

The calculation of the number of confreres who belong to a province (or a vice-province) for purposes of the provincial chapter is very important. It determines:

- a) the number of delegates of the province (or vice-province) who take part in the provincial chapter (cf. C 173, 7; R 161-166);
- b) the number of delegates which the province (or vice-province) sends to the General Chapter (cf. C 151, 8; R 114-115, 118)

For *circumscriptions with a special statute* both the composition of the provincial chapter and the number of delegates to the General Chapter are laid down in the decree of erection of the circumscription concerned.

On this account it is very important to have the following **lists of confreres**.

- A general list of confreres belonging to the province made for purposes of the PC.
- A list of those who take part in the chapter “by right”;
- A list of confreres having “active voice”;
- A list of confreres having “passive voice”.

The norms governing the compiling of each of these lists are as follows:

2.4.3.1. A general list of confreres belonging to the province (or vice-province) for purposes of the PC.

It should be noted that this list of confreres belonging to the province “for purposes of the provincial chapter” does not coincide with the list that is asked for each year for statistical purposes; the latter includes also confreres in “irregular” situations.

The following are to be considered *as belonging to the province (or vice-province) for the purpose of the PC*:

- A) confreres who made their first profession in the province (or vice-province) and are still resident in it at the time the list is compiled (C 160);
- B) confreres who came from another province (or vice-province) as a result of a *definitive transfer* and who still reside in the province at the time the list is compiled (cf. R 151);

The *making of definitive transfers* belongs to the Rector Major (cf. R 151). *Definitive transfer* is considered to have taken place in the following cases:

- confreres who in the act of erection of a new province or vice-province are assigned to it (cf. ASC 284, p. 68, 3.2);

- missionaries who return definitively to their home country and are assigned by the Rector Major to the province he considers most suitable for their condition
- all those for whom the Rector Major (or the Vicar General) has issued a decree of definitive transfer.

C) confreres who at the time the list is compiled reside in the province (or vice-province), though coming from another province (or vice-province) on *temporary transfer*, in accordance with the norm of art. 151 of the Regulations;

Temporary transfer is brought about:

- either by a mandate of obedience (e.g. when a confrere is sent by obedience to exercise an office (rector, director of novices, teacher, etc. in another province), as long as the mandate lasts;
- or by agreement between two provincials, when a confrere is sent to help in another province (cf. R 151).

The confreres who have been transferred, even if only temporarily, are to be included and vote only in the province where they are actually working.

D) confreres who belong to the province (or vice-province) by one of the above-mentioned titles: (A, B, C), but who are *temporarily absent for lawful reasons*.

In accordance with R 166 the following are to be considered as "*lawfully absent*" (and hence to be included in the list):

a. confreres of the province (or vice-province) who at the time the list is made are living temporarily and by express mandate of their own provincial of origin in a Salesian house of another province (or vice-province) for specific reasons of *study, health or work received from their own provincial*;

The confreres referred to here, those temporarily absent for reasons of study, health, or for work given them by their own provincial, are not "transferred", even temporarily, to another province. They

- vote in the house where they are resident (outside their own province) for the election of the delegate of the community;
- but for the election of the delegate of the provincial community they are included in the provincial list of their own province.

It should be noted that the work given them by their own provincial, which is referred to here must be effectively a work for their own province of origin. This is evidently not the case of a confrere who resides and works in an interprovincial house: in a formation community or an interprovincial study centre, for instance, the formation or teaching personnel belong in all respects to the province of the territory in which the house is situated, and are counted only in that province. Here it is a matter of "temporary transfer" as long as their assignment lasts.

b. confreres who have received from their own provincial permission for "*absentia a domo*" (cf. can. 665, §1) or who have received from the Rector Major (or from the Apostolic See) the indult of "*exclaustration*" (cf. can. 686). Confreres who are "exclaustrated" (can. 686) or "*absentes a domo*" (can. 665), and whose permission to be absent has not expired, are Salesian religious and therefore to be included in the general list. Nevertheless:

- those exclaustrated in accordance with common law (can. 687) are deprived of the right of active and passive voice;
- those "*absentes a domo*" can be deprived of the right of active and passive voice in the judgement of the provincial especially when leave of absence is granted for vocational reasons, at the time the concession is granted; cf. the letter of the Vicar General of 20.01.1985.

To be still more precise the following, although still belonging to the province (or vice-province), *must not be counted for purposes of the provincial chapter* and must therefore not be included in the above-mentioned general list:

- a) confreres who have made a formal request for dispensation from priestly or diaconal celibacy; or who have made a formal request for secularization or for dispensation from perpetual or temporary vows;

The practice is that for the purposes of the provincial chapter, confreres who have made a formal request to leave the Congregation are not counted, even though the request is still under consideration and has not reached a definitive conclusion.

- b) confreres who are *unlawfully outside community for any reason i.e. confreres in "irregular" situations.*

It will be opportune to keep in mind the following norm, given by the Rector Major on the occasion of the SGC and to be considered still valid: Transfers from one province to another which took place without the prescribed formalities, and for which there are no clear facts or documents, are to be considered definitive and hence with the loss of all effects of the former membership after ten consecutive years of residence in the new province.

The “general list” of the confreres of the province is the one to be used for calculating

- both the number of delegates of the provincial community to the provincial chapter (one for every 25 or fraction of 25 members: R 165, 3),
- and the number of delegates to the General Chapter (one if the total number of confreres is less than 250, two if the number is 250 or more: R 114).

As soon as this general list has been compiled, a copy is to be sent to the Moderator of the GC27, according the norms and the forms he provides. It is his duty to verify the calculations of the individual provinces (or vice-provinces), so as to ensure the validity of the election of delegates to the General Chapter.

2.4.3.2. List of those who take part in the provincial chapter “by right”

This is a list which the provincial or the moderator of the provincial chapter will communicate to the confreres, so that they know which members attend the chapter by right, in view of the elections at provincial level.

In accordance with C 173 the following are members “by right” of the provincial chapter:

- the provincial (or superior of a vice-province);
- the provincial councillors;
- the delegates of the individual provincial delegations;
- the moderator of the provincial chapter;

- the rectors of canonically erected houses, even if the number of confreres is less than six;
- the director of novices.

As was said earlier, the composition of the chapter of the circumscriptions with a special statute is laid down in the respective decree of erection.

2.4.3.3. Lists of confreres having “active voice” (electors)

They are of two kinds of lists:

A) *List for the election of the delegates of each community to the PC.*

This list is compiled in each community and includes all *perpetually and temporarily professed confreres who reside in the community concerned*, including those of other provinces (or vice-provinces) who are there temporarily for reasons of study, health, or for a mandate received from their own provincial of origin (cf. R 165,2).

B) *Provincial list for the election of delegates of the provincial community to the provincial chapter.*

To this list, which is important for the election at provincial level, belong *all the confreres, both perpetually and temporarily professed, included in the “general list” of the province, except those who are deprived of active and passive voice.*

Those deprived of active and passive voice, even though they be included in the general list of the confreres of the province, are:

- a) confreres who have an indult of exlaustration, in accordance with can. 687;
- b) confreres who have received permission for “*absentia a domo*”, and to whom in receiving such permission the right to active and passive voice was not granted.

In the case of the “*absentes a domo*”, their deprival of active and passive voice must be clear from the document by which the provincial (with the consent of his council) grants permission for absence; cf. the letter of the Vicar General of 20.01.1985.

2.4.3.4. Lists of confreres with passive voice (eligible for election)

They are of three kinds of Delegates: Delegates of the community for the PC, Delegates of the province for the PC, and Delegates of the province for GC27. For this reason there are three types of lists:

A) *List of confreres eligible for election to the provincial chapter as "delegates of a community".*

It includes *all the perpetually professed members of the community* (including those of other provinces residing there even if only for reasons of study and health),

- except for those who are already members by right of the provincial chapter (cf. list 2.4.3.2)
- and those deprived of active and passive voice.

B) *List of confreres eligible for election to the provincial chapter as "delegates of the province".*

This list includes all the perpetually professed members on the "general list" of the province (list 2.4.3.1), with the exception of:

- those who are already members of the provincial chapter by right (list 2.4.3.2),
- the delegates already validly elected by the communities,
- confreres deprived of active and passive voice: those exclaustated and "absentes a domo" to whom the right to active and passive voice was not granted.

C) *List of confreres eligible for election to the GC*

For the election within the provincial chapter of the delegate or delegates of the province to the General Chapter, it should be kept in mind that *all the perpetually professed on the "general list" (list 2.4.3.1) are eligible for election, except:*

- the provincial, who is a member of the General Chapter by right;
- Rector Majors emeriti, present in the province, who are also members by right of the General Chapter;
- confreres deprived of active and passive voice.

2.4.4. Minutes of the elections

A) The rules for voting and scrutinies for the *Delegate of the local communities* are set out in arts.161-163 of the General Regulations (cf. also C 153).

The corresponding minutes of the election of delegates of the local communities and their respective substitutes must be drawn up on the appropriate forms and be examined by the relevant provincial commission.

This provincial commission for the examination of the minutes of the election of the delegates of the communities will be appointed by the provincial in agreement with the Moderator of the provincial chapter.

B) The rules for voting and scrutinies in the voting for delegates of the province to the PC are set out in art.165 of the Regulations.

The corresponding minutes of the election of the delegates of the province must contain the following details:

- the date of the scrutiny,
- the names of the scrutineers,
- an indication that the procedure required by the Regulations has been observed,
- the results.

The minutes drawn up on the appropriate forms, must be endorsed by the signatures of the one presiding over the scrutiny and of the scrutineers.

C) The rules for voting and scrutinies in the voting for *the delegate(s) of the province to the GC27* are set out in art. 161-162 of the General Regulations (cf. also C. 153).

The minutes relating to the election of delegates to the GC27 and their substitutes must be drawn up only on the special forms provided for the purpose by the Moderator of the GC27 and in accordance with the instructions they carry.

These minutes must be sent without delay to the Moderator of the GC27, who will pass them to the appropriate juridical commis-

sion appointed by the Rector Major for the prescribed examination (cf. R 115).

2.4.5. Special cases

A) *Salesian Bishops*, even though retired from office and resident in a province, have neither active nor passive voice, and if they are invited to the provincial chapter they do not vote. The same norm applies to Bishops reinserted in Salesian communities (cf. AAS 1986, p.1324).

B) *Rector Majors emeriti* have both active and passive voice in the local community in which they are inserted and in the election of delegates of the provincial community; but if they are elected as delegates to the provincial chapter either of the local community or the provincial community they have active voice in the provincial chapter but not passive voice, since they are already members by right of the General Chapter.

2.4.6. Formalities for compiling the lists of confreres

1. Names of the confreres are to be *numbered* progressively.
2. *Names are to be given in alphabetical order and spelled as in the Annuario for 2012.*
3. Use capital letters for the PATERAL SURNAME and lower case for the Christian name.
4. Indicate by the appropriate *sign* whether the confrere is
 - a) Priest (P),
 - b) Deacon (D),
 - c) Lay Salesian (L),
 - d) "clerical" student, (candidate for the priesthood) (S).
5. Indicate by the letter 't' if the confrere is in temporary vows.
6. If a member of the provincial chapter, indicate the title to participation:
 - a) by right
 - b) delegate of local community
 - c) delegate of provincial community.

4. ACTIVITIES OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL

4.1 Chronicle of the Rector Major

– December 2011

The month of December opened with the return to residence of all the Councillors for the *winter plenary session of the General Council*.

On Friday 2 December the morning was devoted to a sharing between the members of the General Council.

The following day the Rector Major went to the Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops for a meeting with the Secretary, Archbishop. Nikola Eterović. He devoted the rest of the day to some meetings with the Councillors and with the Provincial of the Middle East, Fr. Maurizio Spreafico. On December 3 he received Bishop Clement Muleka, SDB.

The sessions of the Council began in the evening of Monday 5 December. There followed a welcoming supper for the new Provincials, gathered in the Generalate for the formation course.

The following day, Tuesday the 6th, the first meeting of the Council took place. Afterwards the Rector Major held the *first meeting with the Provincials, thus starting off their course.*

The sessions of the Council followed in accordance with the programmed calendar, at the usual times. They were interspersed with various meetings and activities of the Rector Major.

On the afternoon of Wednesday the 7th, together with Fr. Francesco Cereda, he went to the UPS to speak at the Academic Senate.

On Thursday the 8th, the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, Fr. Chávez celebrated the centenary of “The Holy Family” Salesian Parish in Florence. He returned to preside at Mass for the World Council of Salesian Cooperators. In the course of the celebration, Mr. Andrea Zapparoli, a Major in the Carabinieri Corps, made his promises as a Cooperator. On Sunday 11th Fr. Chávez also celebrated the concluding Mass for the World Council.

In these days there were also many personal audiences, in the various times available between the sessions of the Council. In the first place were audiences with the Provincials taking part in the formation course: Fr. Claudio Cacioli (ILE), Fr. Michael Casey (IRL), Fr. Claudio Ciolli (MDG), Fr. Pasquale

Cristiani (IME), Fr. Jean-Claude Ngoy (AFC), Fr. Alejandro Hernández (CAM), Fr. Albert Johnson (INT), Fr. Artur Pereira (POR), Fr. Prasert Somngam Paul (THA), Fr. Raphael Jayapalam (INM), Fr. Mark Tips (BEN).

Other noteworthy audiences were: Saturday 10th with Dr. Ercole Lucchini and Fr. Bruno Ferrero, director of the Salesian Bulletin; Sunday 11th with Fr. Valentín Viguera, General Assistant of the Monasteries of the Visitation Order.

Monday 12th, in the evening Fr. Chávez went to the UPS for the annual meeting with the confreres of the Vice Province.

Tuesday 13th, the Rector Major went to the Vatican in the morning, accompanied by Fr. Francesco Cereda, for an appointment with the Secretary of State, His Eminence Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone.

Saturday 17th, the morning was devoted to the retreat with the Provincials; there was also an exchange of greetings with the Past Pupils. In the evening, together with his Vicar, Fr. Chávez met the Salesian community of the Vatican.

Monday 19th, at midday the Rector Major, together with Fr. Fabio Attard and Bro. Jean-Paul Muller, met the directors of "Edulife". In

the afternoon he held the last meeting with the Provincials, who were finishing their course.

Tuesday 20th, in the first part of the morning there was a Council meeting and at midday the celebration of Mass, followed by the lunch on the occasion of the Rector Major's birthday.

On this and the following days many people, confreres, members of the Salesian Family and others were received by the Rector Major to exchange greetings, also in view of the forthcoming Christmas festivities.

On Wednesday 21 December, in the evening, together with some Councillors, he attended the "Christmas Concert", organized by the "Don Bosco in the World Foundation".

On 23 December, the Rector Major, together with all the Council, passed the morning in the novitiate of Genzano, for a spiritual retreat in preparation for Christmas. In the afternoon he held a meeting with the Executive Council of the USG. After supper he presented the Strenna for 2012 to the Councillors.

Saturday 24, in the morning Fr. Chávez went to the Generalate of the FMA to offer Christmas greetings to Mother Yvonne Reungoat and to the Sisters of the Council.

On his return he received the Director and the Principal of the Auxilium, then Mother Antonia Colombo and two other Sisters of the "Ersilia Canta" community. At midnight he presided at the Christmas Mass. He celebrated the morning Mass for the Auxilium community.

In the afternoon of 26 December Fr. Chávez went to Verona for a medical check-up, which was carried out on the following day.

On his return to Rome he took up his regular office work. Among the noteworthy audiences was that with Fr. Roberto Dal Molin, appointed Provincial of North-East Italy.

Saturday 31st, the last day of the year, following tradition, in the afternoon he presented the Strenna 2012, first in the Generalate of the FMA and after that in our own Generalate.

– January 2012

The Rector Major passed the first days of the new year in residence, devoting himself to regular office work, interspersed with various audiences, particularly with General Councillors. Among the other meetings the most notable were that with Fr. Carlo Nanni, the Rector Magnificus of the UPS, and that with Fr. Ladislav Miko, a

missionary from Quetta, in Pakistan. On the 6th he celebrated the feast of the Epiphany, presiding at Mass in the Generalate.

On the morning of Sunday 8 January, feast of the Baptism of the Lord, the Rector Major received a family of Salesian cooperators from San Severo, then, in the Don Bosco parish of Cinecittà, he presided at Mass and baptized two babies.

Monday 9, the activities of the General Council resumed with meetings presided over by the Rector Major, which on various days were held morning and evening.

As always, the meetings were interspersed with audiences and other meetings. They included the following noteworthy audiences: on Tuesday the 10th with Archbishop Eliseo Ariotti, Apostolic Nuncio in Paraguay; on Wednesday the 11th the audiences with a group of Salesian Cooperators from Civitavecchia, then with Mr. Angelo Orsini of the "Auxilium" Association of Chiari, followed by that with Signora Carola Carazzone, President of the VIS, and on Friday 13th with those with responsibility for the DBI.

In the afternoon of Thursday 12 January Fr. Chávez went to the Vatican for the installment of the new Rector of the Salesian com-

munity, Fr. Sergio Pellini. In the afternoon of the following day he held a meeting at the Testaccio with the student community.

Sunday 15, in the morning the Rector Major presided at Mass for the participants in the States General of Formation. In the afternoon he went to Verona for a medical check-up. He returned on Monday evening.

Tuesday 16, in the evening, together with the Vicar Fr. Adriano Bregolin, and the Regional Councillor Fr. Pier Fausto Frisoli, he held a meeting with the Provincial Council of the ICC, concluding with supper with the General Council.

Among the audiences in these days the following were noteworthy: that with Fr. Pejo Orkić, the new Provincial of the Croatian Province on Tuesday the 18th and that with Fr. El Rai Munir, the new Provincial of the Middle East Province, on Thursday 19th.

From the afternoon of January 19th the Rector Major took part in the Spirituality Days of the Salesian Family, which ended on the morning of Sunday 22. In the afternoon of the same day, Fr. Chávez went again to Verona for the current checks-ups.

On Tuesday 24 January, the feast of Saint Francis of Sales, the

Rector Major presided at the community Mass.

In the evening of Wednesday 25th he went to the Korean Embassy to the Vatican for a dinner organized in his honour by the Ambassador, Thomas Han.

Thursday 26th, at the usual time, Fr. Chávez chaired a Council meeting. In the evening, after Evening Prayer, he gave the Good Night to the community of the Generalate, speaking about the work done in the plenary session of the Council.

Friday 27th, in the morning the Rector Major presided at the last meeting of the plenary winter session. At 11.00 he met the Rectors of the Central Italy Circumscription (ICC) and at midday he presided at Mass with the General Council.

Monday 30 January, the Rector Major left for Turin. At the airport he was met by the Provincial, Fr. Stefano Martoglio, who took him to Chieri to visit the FMA community, where he met with children and members of the Educational Community, and blessed the restored building. Then he visited the Don Bosco museum, accompanied by the mayor. After lunch he went to the Crocetta. There he met the community, prayed the first vespers of the Solemnity of

St. John Bosco, had supper and then went to Valdocco.

Tuesday 31, *feast of Don Bosco*, in the morning Fr. Châves gave a number of interviews for TV and newspapers, then he blessed the new area for Youth Ministry of the ICP Province, then he met the Archbishop of Turin, Mons. Cesare Nosiglia, who stayed for lunch. In the afternoon he spoke with some confreres and in the evening he presided at Mass for the SYM.

- February 2012

Having returned to Rome on the morning of February 1st, on February 2nd, the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord and day of Consecrated Life, the Rector Major presided at the community Mass. Later he went to the Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops for an appointment with H. E. Mons. Nikola Eterović; afterwards he went to the seat of the USG.

Saturday 4th, the Pisana rises to a snow-white scene, all covered with a layer of snow fallen during the night and making access difficult. Two appointments were missed, one of them with members of the Salesian Historical Institute.

Tuesday 7th February, Fr. Chávez leaves for a few days' rest and returns on Monday 13th.

Tuesday 14th, in the morning he left for Verona for further medical tests, including biopsy of the liver, in the hospital of Burgo Trento, where he is under the care of the head of department Dr. Biti, of Dr. Giovanna Fattovich, of Dr. Tonon and their assistants and nurses. During his stay, in which he was cared for by the Rector and confreres of the community of the Don Bosco Institute, he also received visits from the Provincial, Fr. Eugenio Riva, from the confreres of the Salesian Community of Mainz (Germany) and from the General Director of the Hospital, Dr. Caffi. He came back to Rome on the evening of Friday February 17th.

Saturday 18th, the Rector Major received Fr. Shiran Karawgodage, Provincial Economist of Sri Lanka, then he presided at the concluding Mass of the retreat for the FMAs of the ILS Province. After supper he received Fr. Francis Alencherri, founder of the missionary presence in Bangladesh.

Sunday 19th, in the morning Fr. Chávez received Sister Pina del Core, the Principal of the Faculty of Educational Sciences of the Auxilium. In the evening, accompanied by his secretary, Fr. Juan José Bartolomé, and by his Vicar he left for Nairobi for the Team Visit to the Africa-Madagascar Region.

Monday 20th, on arrival at the airport of Nairobi, they were met by the Provincial Fr. Gianni Rolandi and other members of the Provincial Council and confreres, who took them to the Retreat House of the Dimesse Sisters, the site chosen for the team visit.

This took place from Tuesday 21 to Saturday 25 February, following the pre-arranged programme, which included a visit to "Don Bosco Boys' Town" and to the theologate of Nairobi-Utume on the evening of Thursday the 23rd. During these days, besides presiding over the team visit, the Rector Major received the visit of the Apostolic Nuncio H.E. Mons. Mons. Alain Paul Lebeaupan, and spoke personally with various Provincials and confreres.

On Sunday 26 February, at Nairobi Upper Hill, accompanied by many of the participants in the Team Visit Fr. Chávez presided at the Mass in the Parish of Mary Help of Christians. This was followed by the blessing of the renovated Provincial House of the East African Province (AFE), a meeting with Salesian Cooperators and dinner.

In the afternoon he met the FMAs and then about a hundred confreres of the Province. After supper he left for the airport.

Monday 27th Fr. Chávez returns home. In the evening he presided at Mass for the community of the Generalate, which was festively celebrating the 100th birthday of Bro. Egidio Brojanigo.

Tuesday 28th, at mid-morning the Rector Major received Mr. Angelo Orsini, of the 'Auxilium' Association of Chiari, then at midday he held a meeting on site with the Councillors about matters of ordinary administration.

Wednesday 29th, after vespers he gave the Good Night for the confreres of the community of the Generalate, giving an account of the Team Visit to the Africa-Madagascar Region.

- March 2012

The Rector Major passes the first two days of March in residence, continuing with normal work. Among the audiences to be noted was that with Fr. Jesu Pudumai Doss, Dean of the Faculty of Canon Law of the UPS, on 1st March.

Saturday 3rd, in the morning Fr. Chávez left for Sicily. On arrival he was met by the Provincial, Fr. Gianni Mazzali, and by the FMA Provincial, Sister Anna Razionale, who took him to the Salesian House of Ragusa. Here he met the boys, animators and members of

the Salesian Family. He had dinner with the community together with the Provincial, the bishop of the Diocese of Ragusa, Mons. Paolo Urso, and the mayor of the city. In the afternoon he went to the Cathedral of Noto for the opening of the cause of beatification of *Nino Baglieri*, CDB, presided over by the diocesan bishop, Mons. Antonio Staglianò. After the celebration he went to Modica. He had supper in the Salesian House, together with the Provincial, some representatives of the Salesian Family, the family of Nino Baglieri and the young animators of the "Youth Festival". The day ended with Compline, the promises of eight new Salesian Co-operators and the Good Night.

Sunday March 4th, the Rector Major visited the home of the Baglieri family, some artistic sites in Modica and went to the 'PalaRizza' for the "Youth Festival". After watching the musical about the life of Nino Baglieri he gave an address and then presided at Mass. He had dinner with the FMA community together, with the Provincial and the FMA Provincial, the Bishop of the diocese of Noto, the Mayor of Modica, the President of the Province of Ragusa and some CDBs. In the afternoon he returned to the 'PalaRizza' for a meeting with the youth, after

which he left for Catania and returned to Rome.

Monday 5th, Fr. Chávez received relatives of Fr. Salvatore Giacomini, who was a missionary in the United States.

In the following days the Rector Major underwent more medical tests and treatment in the Policlinico Gemelli in Rome. Notable among various activities was the meeting on Wednesday 7th with some benefactors for a part of the rebuilding of the ENAM institute in Haiti, and also on Saturday 10th, the meeting with members of the Salesian Historical Institute.

Monday March 12, in the evening the Rector Major began the *Team Visit to the Italy-Middle East Region*, which went on to Saturday 17th. As always, during the time of the Team Visit he spoke personally with the various Provincials and confreres attending.

Saturday 17, after the conclusion of the Team Visit, in the evening he received Fr. Fabio Attard and the Spanish coordination team for the last World Youth Day.

Monday 19, the Feast of St. Joseph. Fr. Chávez joined the community in celebrating the name-day of the Rector, Fr. Giuseppe Nicolussi, and of several other confreres: Fr. Giuseppe Zucchelli, Fr. José Serrano, Fr. Saimy

Ezhanikatt, Fr. Giuseppe Casti, Fr. José Pastor Ramírez.

Tuesday 21, at midday the Rector Major received Fr. João Paulino Guterres, Superior of the vice Province of East Timor - Indonesia. In the afternoon he granted a newspaper interview.

Tuesday 21, in the morning he recorded two video-messages, one for the international team of the Youth Ministry and another for the SUO Province.

Saturday 24, Fr. Chávez spent the morning in the Generalate of The Sisters of Mary Immaculate, for whom he was preaching the retreat for the opening of their General Chapter, and celebrated Mass. In the early afternoon he received two benefactors from Switzerland. In the evening he received Mons. Pavanello, SDB, Bishop emeritus of Campo Grande.

Sunday 25, in the morning, the Rector Major spoke to the participants at the meeting of the Principals of centres of philosophical studies, affiliated or aggregated to the Congregation, gathered with Fr. Francesco Cereda and the Department of Formation. Then he celebrated Mass and stayed for dinner with them. In the evening he received Fr. Agustín Pacheco, Director of the Mission Office in Madrid.

Monday March 23, there began an *extraordinary plenary session of the General Council*, in view of the convocation of the GC27. The meetings were held from Monday March 23 to Wednesday March 26, in two daily sessions, one from 11.00 to 13.00 and the other from 18.00 to 19.30. The meetings of the Council were accompanied by personal meetings with the Councilors, with reference either to the prospects of the CG27 or to the specific tasks of each Councillor. From among others, several meetings can be singled out, that with Fr. Carlo Nanni, Rector Magnificus of the UPS, on Monday 26, and those with the new Provincials appointed during the course of the session: Fr. Abrahám Béla, the new Provincial of Hungary, accompanied by the Provincial Economist Fr. Flavio De Paula (29 March); Fr. Janez Potočnik, the new Provincial of Slovenia, accompanied by the Provincial Secretary Fr. Marjan Lamovsek (30 March, morning); Fr. Leonardo Mancini, the new Provincial of the Circumscription of Central Italy (30 March, afternoon).

- April 2012

On 1 April, Palm Sunday, the Rector Major presided in the Generalate at the Blessing of the Palms, followed by the procession

and by the concelebration of Mass. In the evening, after supper, he gave the Good Night for a group of confreres who were making a retreat in the 'Salesianum'.

In the following days the meeting of the Plenary Session of the Council were continued. During these the theme of the General Council was brought forward – in its various aspects – which the Rector Major officially approved and notified in the final session, also naming the Regulator of the GC27, Fr. Francesco Cereda, whom he had appointed.

On 4 April, after the final session of the Council, the Rector Major received Sister Clemencia Rojas and Sister Pina Del Core, reductively Director of the Community and Principal of the Faculties of the Auxilium.

On 5 April, Holy Thursday, in the morning Fr. Chávez received the Superior General of the Sisters of the Charity of Christ, Sister Apollinaris Shimura Yuriko, accompanied by Sister Maria Urakawa. In the evening he presided at the Lord's Supper in the Generalate.

The following day, Good Friday, in the morning, accompanied by the Vicar, the Rector Major travelled to Milan, where he was welcomed by the Provincial Economist, Fr. Giordano Piccinotti, who took

him to Chiari, to visit Fr. Silvio Galli, a holy Salesian and a great friend, gravely sick. There he met the Provincial, Fr. Claudio Cacioli, the new Provincial of the North East Fr. Roberto Dal Molin, the Rector Fr. Stefano Vanoli and the confreres of the community.

Back in Rome next day, Holy Saturday, in the evening he presided at the Pasqual Vigil, with the community of the Generalate, with the participation also of the FMA community "Ersilia Canta", together with a good number of the faithful from the vicinity.

In the afternoon of Easter Sunday Fr. Chávez received Mother Yvonne Reungoat, accompanied by Sister Maria Luisa Miranda, by Sister Giuseppina Teruggi and by Sister Cavaglià. Afterwards he received Fr. Sergio Pellini, Rector of our community in the Vatican.

After spending two successive days in residence, on Wednesday 11 April the Rector Major travelled to Verona for another medical check-up and to start some very important treatment, prescribed by the doctors. He returned to Rome on Wednesday 18th.

Thursday 26 April, Fr. Chávez left for Turin for the celebration of the World Congress of Past Pupils of Don Bosco, on the occasion of the Centenary of the Confedera-

tion. In the evening he gave the welcoming greeting.

Friday 27, he received the organizer of the EXPO 2015.

Saturday 28: He passed the day at Colle Don Bosco together with the Past Pupils.

Sunday 29, in the morning he addressed the Congress of the Past Pupils on the subject: "The Don Bosco Past Pupil in Society and in the Church" and then presided at Mass. After lunch he returned to Rome.

Monday 30, Fr. Chávez went to Loreto for the 'Forum' of the young people of the ICC Circumscription.

4.2 Chronicle of the General Council

4.2.1 *Winter plenary session 2011-2012*

The *winter plenary session of the General Council* began on 1st December 2011. It engaged the Councillors right up to 27 January 2012. Meetings of groups or commissions for the study of the various topics were linked to the plenary meetings, of which there

were 26 all together. During the session, from 6 December to 12 December, the meeting of the new Provincials was also held. They joined with the Rector Major and his Council. The Councillors also made their own contribution to animation meetings, especially those which took place in the Generalate. As always, together with the more outstanding topics or problems for the animation and guidance of the Congregation, the necessary time was given to ordinary affairs coming from the Provinces, such as the appointment of members of the Provincial Councils and the approbation and appointment of Rectors, the opening and canonical erection of houses and/or activities, matters concerning confreres and financial-administrative matters. From this point on there follows a summary of the more outstanding affairs relating to the agenda.

1. Appointment of Provincials

In this session Superiors were appointed for seven Provinces. In this matter the Council proceeded with careful discernment, taking as its basis and referral the results of the consultation carried out in the Province. Here is the

list, in alphabetical order, of the Provincials appointed in the course of the session: Fr. Nestor CASTELL, for the Province of Uruguay; Fr. Robert DAL MOLIN, for the Province of North East Italy; Fr. Edson CASTILHO Donizetti, for the Province of São Paulo, Brasil; Fr. EL RA'I Munir, for the Province of the Middle East; Fr. Albert LORENZELLI, for the Province of Chile; Fr. Pejo ORKIĆ, for the Province of Croatia; Fr. Janez POTOČNIK, for the Province of Slovenia.

In n. 5 of this number of the A.G.C some information is given about each of the Provincials appointed.

2. Reports of the Extraordinary Visitations

The examination of reports on the Extraordinary Visitations to the Provinces, presented by the respective Visitors is one of the most useful parts of the work of the Council for the animation of the Congregation in its various local Circumscriptions. The examination of the report provides an opportunity to reflect together on the progress of each Province, noting what the Visitor has singled out and offering further suggestions

for the action of government. From this they derive useful guidelines for the concluding letter of the Rector Major, along with proposals for initiatives of support on the part of the General Council. During this session the reports were studied of the eight following Provinces or Vice-Provinces: the Province of the Antilles; the Province of Paraguay; the Province of Thailand; the Province of Chile; the Province of Guwahati, India; the Province of Panjim, India; the Province of Warsaw, Poland; the Vice-Province of Mozambique.

3. Topics of study and practical decisions

In the course of the session, as well as discharging matters regarding the Provinces and Regions, the Council dealt with some topics applying more generally to the government and animation of the Congregation, with particular attention to the Project of animation and government for the six year period and to the life and activity of the Council itself. Practical decisions made in connection with each of the points examined. The principal matters dealt with are as follows.

– **Team Visits 2011-2012.**

The topic of Team Visits programmed for the years 2011-2012 was resumed briefly, in regard to the practical preparation for the final two visits to be made: at the end of February that to the Region of Africa-Madagascar and in mid-March to Italy-MOR.

– **The change of the Vice Provinces AFO and AFW to the juridical status of Provinces.**

In view of the request to the Rector Major by the respective Superiors with the consent of their Councils; and considering the consolidation of the two Vice Provinces principally with regard to their communities, the structures of animation and government, and the introduction of significant procedures with regard to economic-financial matters, and having fulfilled the necessary conditions of stability and vocational prospects for the future; having heard the favourable opinion of the Regional Councillor Fr. Guillermo Basaños, the General Council gave its consent for the erection of:

- the **Salesian Province of English-speaking West Africa**, with the title “*Blessed Artemides Zatti*”, with headquarters in Ashaiman (Ghana), made up of the communities and the confreres

of the existing Vice Province of English-speaking West Africa;

- the **Salesian Province of French-speaking West Africa**, with the title “*Our Lady of Peace*”, with headquarters in Abidjan (Ivory Coast), made up of the communities and the confreres of the existing Vice Province of French-speaking West Africa.

– **Decision regarding the Salesian presences in North Africa and their collocation.**

The study undertaken regarding the general situation in *North Africa* (Morocco, Tunisia and Libya) has led to the following proposals: that the communities in Morocco and Tunisia are not to be assigned to any Circumscription of the Region of Africa; that the assignment be made either to Spain (probably to the current SSE) or to Italy (possibly to ISI). Given the significant presence in these two countries of subsaharian immigrants, the Councillor for the Missions would favour either the sending on a permanent basis of Africa Salesians *ad gentes* in each of these missions, and the presence on a temporary basis of some Salesians belonging to the Region of Africa, especially those with experience of pastoral work in Muslim contexts.

– An update on the subject studied in the Intermediate Council Meeting.

The General Council took up again the subject dealt with in the intermediate session of October 2011, that is the analysis and examination with practical conclusions of the East Asia - Oceania Region and of the Africa - Madagascar Region. The study of the reports presented by the Regional Councillors made it possible to consider the steps taken in this six year periods, the challenges which are emerging and to make some practical suggestions to help with the consolidation and the development of the Salesian charism in these Regions.

– Recognition of a new Group of the Salesian Family.

On 24 January 2012, the liturgical feast of Saint Francis of Sales, the General Council gave its favourable opinion with regard to the belonging to the Salesian Family of a new Group called “*Visitation Sisters of Don Bosco*” (VS-DB). It is a Religious Congregation of Diocesan Right, founded on 31 May 1983 by Archbishop Hubert D’Rosario SDB (1919-1994), archbishop of Shillong (1969-1994). At present the Congregation has 106 professed sisters, 16 novices and

9 aspirants present in 18 houses in the States of Meghalaya and Assam, in North East India. The mission of the Congregation concerns the three areas of evangelisation, education and development support especially of the poor living in rural villages and economically depressed areas. The Visitation Sisters of Don Bosco in addition operate in disadvantaged areas dedicating themselves to catechesis.

– The division of the Province of India-Guwahati into two Provinces with the erection of a new Province with headquarters in Silchar.

Considering the development of the Salesian mission and the territorial extension of the “Mary Help of Christians” Salesian Province of Guwahati (Assam, India); given the results of the consultation carried out in the Province; given the favourable opinion of the Provincial with his Council and also following a proposal of the Provincial Chapter, the General Council has given its consent to the sub-division of the Province of Guwahati (ING), with the *canonical erection of the Salesian Province of Silchar*, with the name “*Blessed John Paul II*”, and with headquarters at Silchar, India (INS). Following the subdivision

the ING has 225 members including novices, and 29 houses including the University; The INS Province has 210 members including novices and 34 houses including the Theologate in Shillong [cf. in n. 5.3 of these AGC the decree of erection].

– New organisation of the Salesian presences in the Special Circumscription of East Europe.

With the presentation by the Regional Councillor for North Europe, the General Council examined and approved the proposal for a new arrangement of the *Salesian presences in the Special Circumscription of East Europe (EST)*, about which the confreres concerned were invited to express their opinion so as to have the replies prior to the next intermediate session of the General Council planned for 26 March to 4 April 2012. It is proposed that the Delegation of the Byzantine-Ukraine Rite be set up as a Circumscription of the Ukraine of the Greek-Catholic Rite. Regarding the communities and works in the Ukraine of the Latin Rite, it is proposed to assign the communities and works in Belarus and the communities and works in Russia to the Polish Provinces.

– Structures of animation and government of the Congregation.

During the session in various meetings the General Council examined the subject of the review of the *structures of animation and government of the Congregation* (General Council [composition, organisation, functioning] and *Direzione Generale*), a review requested by the GC24 and the GC26 and for which a time-plan was drawn up to be followed so as to arrive at the GC27 with a response to the request and a proposal on the part of the General Council.

– Relaunching DBI.

During the session, with a presentation by the General Councillor for Youth Ministry the General Council examined the subject of the *relaunching of DBI (Don Bosco International)*, redrawing its *Vision and Mission Statement* and drawing up a three year strategic plan, by which this body would be a real civil face of the Congregation in Europe, in particular with regard to questions concerning the Salesian mission. In a Europe under attack and with the loss of a place in society for the Church especially in the cultural field, the presence of the Salesians in inter-

national decision-making centres including the European Union and the United Nations in Geneva, as was stated in the GC26, is becoming of strategic importance.

- Approval of the Economic Budget for 2012.

During the session the General Council – with a presentation by the Economist General – examined and approved, according to the norms of the General Regulations, the *Budget for 2012* of the *Direzione Generale Opere Don Bosco*.

- Distribution of the “Mission Fund”.

The General Council considered and approved the proposals made by the commission for the distribution n. 149 - December 2011, of assistance through the Mission Fund. These are funds coming from the Missions Offices for the benefit of the many projects and work of the Congregation.

- Among the more **significant occasions** in the course of the session the following can be mentioned in particular the **Spirituality Days of the Salesian Family** (19-22 January 2012) were, as always, a beautiful experience of Salesian spirituality based on the theme of the Strenna for 2012, with a very successful combination

of enlightening talks, of efficient group work, of fraternal communication among those taking part and the groups of the SF, of celebrations and of prayer. In the course of the Days the Rector Major presented the *Salesian Family Charter*.

4.2.2 Extraordinary intermediate session of the General Council

Between 26 March and 4 April 2012 there was an *extraordinary intermediate session of the General Council* with the presence in addition to the Rector Major and his Vicar of all the Councillors.

The main issues dealt with were the following.

- **Letter convoking the GC27.** The main item on the agenda of the meetings was the study of the letter convoking the next GC27, which will begin on Saturday 22 February 2014 in Turin, with the theme: **Witnesses to the radical approach of the gospel.** *Called to live in fidelity Don Bosco's apostolic project.* “*Work and temperance*”.

- **The appointment of new Provincials.** During the session

four Superiors were appointed to four Provinces: Fr Béla ÁBRAHÁM, for the Province of Hungary; Fr Leonardo MANCINI, for the Circumscription of Central Italy; Fr Thomas VATTATHARA, for the Province of Guwahati, India; Fr George Joseph MALIEKAL, for the new Province of Silchar, India.

– **A new Circumscription with a special statute.** Following the discernment process undertaken by the General Council and having obtained the consent of the Council, the Rector Major canonically erected the new *Circumscription with a Special Statute of the Greek-Catholic Ukraine*, with the name “*Mary Help of Christians*”, with headquarters at Lviv (Ukraine) [cf. at n. 5.4 in these AGC the decree of the erection]

– **A new arrangement of the Salesian presences in the Special Circumscription of East Europe.** After a careful discernment process undertaken by the General Council and having the consent of the Council the Rector Major decided:

- that the Circumscription with a Special Statute “*The Immaculate Conception of Mary*” of East Europe, erected on 8 December 1993, be canonically closed;

- that the Salesian houses in Latin Ukraine with their works and confreres be transferred to the “Saint Hyacinth” Province with headquarters in Krakow, Poland;
- that the Salesian houses in Belarus with their works and confreres be transferred to the “Saint Stanislaus Kostka” Province, with headquarters in Warsaw, Poland;
- that the Salesian houses in Russia with their works and confreres be transferred to the “Saint Adalberto” Province with headquarters in Piła, Poland.

– **Evaluation of the structures of the Central Government of the Congregation.** The XXVI General Chapter asked the Rector Major with his Council to “promote for the next General Chapter an evaluation of the structures for the animation and central government of the Congregation, involving the Provinces” (GC26,118). For this purpose a working procedure has now been approved and appropriate consultation forms prepared which will be sent to the Provincials and their Councils. The contributions of the members of the General Council have already arrived. In this regard discussions with external consulters (religious, lay...) are anticipated.

– **Possible proposal for a new arrangement of the three Regions of Europe.** Following a presentation by the Regional Councillor for West Europe, the General Council undertook a first reflection on the proposals drawn up by the three respective Regio-

nal Coucillors regarding a new arrangement of the three Regions of Europe. Study will be resumed in the next plenary summer session of the Council after which the proposals will be presented to the Provincials of Europe at their next meeting in November 2012.

5.1 Decree regarding the heroicity of the virtues of the Servant of God Laura Meozzi, FMA

Below in the original Latin and our translation in English (from the Italian), is the text of the Decree on the heroicity of the virtues of the Servant of God Laura Meozzi, read in the presence of the Holy Father on 27 June 2011. In virtue of this decree Sr Laura Meozzi is declared Venerable.

LATIN TEXT

CONGREGATIO
DE CAUSIS SANCTORUM

KATOVICENSIS

BEATIFICATIONIS et CANONIZATIONIS
SERVAE DEI

LAURAE MEOZZI

SORORIS PROFESSAE
CONGREGATIONIS FILIARUM
MARIAE AUXILIATRICIS
(1873-1951)

DECRETUM SUPER VIRTUTIBUS

«Anima et corpore cum Iesu cruci affigi, constanter consummari. Ascendere, per viam crucibus stratum semper ascendere; minime se retrahere et in labiis risum praeberere... Per amorem et per dolorem se in Iesum transformare».

Ad hunc sensum, quem ipsa Dei Serva Laura Meozzi significaverat, totam suam vitam intendit: in

eo quidem exhibentur et propositum cordis eius versus sanctitatem et intima communicatio profundae fidei, quae eam eius Sponso similem reddidit.

Florentiae die 5 mensis Ianuarii anno 1873 e familia opibus instructa ortum habuit et post tres dies ad baptismalem fontem est translata. Vix decurso tempore eius infantiae in terra natali, anno 1877 administrationis rerum causa, familia Romam se transferre debuit. Hac in urbe Laura scholastica studia frequentavit apud collegium Sororum a Sancta Dorothea, ubi accuratam suae indolis formationem accepit; peculiarem in modum per assiduam eucharisticam communionem et annua exercitia spiritualia iuvenis Laura in se amorem erga Iesum fovebat, desiderium nutriens magis magisque cum Ipso se coniungendi, simulque in misericordiae opera incumbens. Illis annis se a Domino vocari ad vitam consecratam perspicue percepit, ita ut, aliquot superatis familiae difficultatibus, anno 1896 Serva Dei apud Institutum Filiarum Mariae Auxiliatricis iter formationis inceperit.

Religiosis emissis votis, soror Laura assiduum opus docentis implevit, quod maximi aestimatum est praesertim ob singularem

sensum maternitatis apud alumnas collegii et iuvenes mulieres plebeias, quae confluebant ad oratoria, laboratoria aliasque formas aggregationis, quas ipsa maxime proponere proponebat. Thesaurus suae prudentiae formativae ac peritiae didacticae reservabat sororibus, docentibus aliisque, quas omnes his verbis saepe hortabatur: "Primum matres estote, deinde docentes".

Anno 1922 Generale Capitulum Instituti missionarium ambitum dilatare decrevit. Soror Laura, quinquaginta fere annos aetatis, missa est ad regendam primam communitatem in Polonia, nempe ad oppidum *Różany*, ad regionem versus septentrionalem orientalem nationis. Ibi una cum sororibus in paupere tugurio ligneo hospitium invenit et, accommodatis casulis praeexistentibus antiqui valetudinarii militaris, exstruendum curavit primum collegium pro pueris qui priore bello mundiali crudeliter vexati erant. Perpersa Episcopi Vilnensis hortatione, anno 1924 illa communitas religiosa curare etiam coepit iuvenes, difficultatibus socialibus ac difficili indole affectas. Annorum decursu varia sunt propagata opera, nempe collegium pro studentibus, scholae diversae, cursus caesionis et con-

fectionis vestium pro adolescentibus, amplum oratorium ad cooperationem paroecialem, denique primus noviciatus in oppido *Różany*.

Ardua Servae Dei operositas fide inconcussa in Providentiam firmabatur. Ipsa misericors Cor Iesu ferventi cultu prosequabatur, et ex assidua eucharistica participatione lumen hauriebat et fortitudinem ad cotidianam vitam gerendam. «Iesum tantummodo diligere et quaerere; pro Eo vivere et operari!», ecce eius spirituale propositum; et in hac cum Domino communione vitam egit virtutes et Consilia evangelica iugiter excolens. Consoroeres moderabatur prudentiam exercens et iustitiam; fortiter suaviterque difficultates oppetebat; sincero ac constanti caritatis spiritu, simul cum integritate et comitate, fratribus inserviebat.

Anno 1931 omnes communitates in Polonia existentes erectae sunt in Visitatoriam, id est quasi-Provinciam. Interim alterum supervenit bellum mundiale, quod, inter cetera, induxit ad Germanicam ac deinde Sovieticam occupationem religiosarum domuum regionis centralis et meridionalis. Sorores confugere sunt coactae aliae ad nonnullas familias, aliae ad quandam sedem Sa-

lesianam, aliae vero sub pyrobolis perierunt vel deportatae sunt aut in Germaniam aut in Sibiriam. Soror Laura, in Italiam regredi nolens, manere statuit apud suas filias Polonas, earumque pericula et tribulationes communicare. Bello iam composito, Serva Dei opus incepit varias communitates restaurando quadam cum prospera sorte, recipiendo res quae permanserant in domibus olim conditis, et novum movens impulsus ad opus materialis et moralis restitutionis gentium loci. Status tamen eius physicus, canceroso morbo oppressus, qui ob incommoda et labores in deterius ruebat, debilitatis et prostrationis indicia ostendere coepit, quae in dies celeriter ingravescabant, graves ei afferentes dolores. Supremum exsequens actum fidentis dedicationis, suam Domino oblationem consummavit, in cuius misericordes manus suum tradidit spiritum noctu diei 30 mensis Augusti anno 1951.

Perpensa eius sanctitatis fama, apud Curiam dioecesanam Katovicensem a die 1 mensis Octobris anno 1986 ad diem 15 mensis Aprilis anno 1989 instructa est Inquisitio Dioecesana, cuius iuridicam auctoritatem approbavit Congregatio de Causis Sanctorum

decretum vulgans die 16 mensis Decembris anno 1994. Confecta *Positione*, disceptatum est, ex consuetudo agendi modo, an Serva Dei heroum in modum christianas exercuisset virtutes. Positivo cum exitu die 25 mensis Septembris anno 2010 actus est Peculiaris Congressus Consultorum Theologorum. Patres Cardinales et Episcopi, in Ordinaria Sessione die 12 mensis Aprilis anno 2011 congregati, audita relatione Ponentis Causae, Exc.mi D.ni Raphaelis Martinelli, Episcopi Tusculani, edixerunt Servam Dei heroico in gradu theologales, cardinales iisque adnexas virtutes exsecutam esse.

Facta demum de hisce omnibus rebus Summo Pontifici Benedicto XVI per subscriptum Cardinalem Praefectum accurata relatione, Sanctitas Sua, vota Congregationis de Causis Sanctorum excipiens rataque habens, hodierno die declaravit: *Constare de virtutibus theologalibus Fide, Spe et Caritate tum in Deum tum in proximum, necnon de cardinalibus Prudentia, Iustitia, Temperantia et Fortitudine, iisque adnexis, in gradu heroico, Servae Dei Laurae Meozzi, Sororis Professae Congregationis Filiarum Mariae Auxiliatricis, in casu et ad effectum de quo agitur.*

Hoc autem decretum publici iuris fieri et in acta Congregationis de Causis Sanctorum Summus Pontifex referri mandavit.

Datum Romae,
die 27 mensis Iunii A.D. 2011.

† ANGELUS Card. AMATO, S.D.B.
Praefectus

† MARCELLUS BARTOLUCCI
Archiepiscopus Tit. Mevaniensis
a Secretis

ENGLISH TEXT

CONGREGATION FOR THE CAUSES OF SAINTS

KATOVICE

BEATIFICATION and CANONISATION OF THE SERVANT OF GOD

LAURA MEOZZI

SISTER PROFESSED OF THE COGREGATION OF THE DAUGHTERS OF MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS (1873-1951)

DECREE ON THE VIRTUES

«Crucifixion of soul and body with Jesus, in constant consummation. Rising, always rising by the way of the crosses without stopping, and with a smile on one's lips. Being transformed into Jesus by love and by pain».

To this ideal as she herself expressed it the Servant of God Laura Meozzi directed her whole life: it reveals the constant aspiration

of her heart towards holiness and an intimate relationship of profound faith which made her similar to her heavenly spouse.

Born in Florence on 5 January 1873 into a well-off family Laura was baptised three days later. She had scarcely passed her infancy in her native city when in 1877, on account of some practical difficulties her family had to move to Rome. Here Laura went to school in the College of the Sisters of St Dorothy where her character was well formed and in particular through frequent holy communion and the annual retreats the young Laura grew in love with Jesus and nourished a desire for an ever more complete union with Him, while at the same time devoting herself to charitable works. In those years she became fully aware of being called by the Lord to consecrated life, so that overcoming some family difficulties in 1896 the Servant of God began her formation in the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.

After having made her religious vows, Sister Laura undertook a busy life as a teacher and was much appreciated especially for her marked sense of being a Mother among her pupils in the Colleges and among the working class girls who crowded the Ora-

tories and the workshops and various groups she organised with great commitment. For the Sisters, those who were teachers as well as the others, she shared her wisdom in the work of formation and of teaching and often reminded them: «First of all you are mothers, and then teachers».

In 1922 the General Chapter of the Institute decided to expand in the area of the missions. Sister Laura, on the threshold of fifty years of age was sent to lead the first community in Poland in the city of *Różanystok*, in the far north-east of the country. There with the other Sisters she took up residence in a poor wooden building and adapting the pre-existing buildings of a former military hospital set up the first school for children sorely tried by the first world war.

At the invitation of the Bishop of Wilno, in 1924, the religious community began to take care of girls with special social and personal problems. As the years passed, to this was added a college for students, various schools, courses of sewing and dress-making for the adolescents, a large oratory in conjunction with the various parish activities and finally the first novitiate in the city of *Różanystok*.

An unfailing trust in Providence sustained the intense work of the Servant of God. She nourished a great devotion to the Merciful Heart of Jesus and from her frequent mass attendance drew light and strength for her daily life. «Loving and seeking only Jesus; living and working for Him!», was her spiritual programme, and in this communion with the Lord she lived a life constantly practising the virtues and the evangelical counsels. With prudence and justice she guided her co-Sisters, facing the obstacles with energy and sweetness, with a sincere and constant spirit of charity, marked by uprightness and gentleness she served her brothers and sisters.

In 1931 all the communities in Poland became a Vice Province or pre-Province. But then came the second world war which among other things brought the German occupation and then that by the Soviets of the religious houses in the centre and south. The Sisters were forced to find refuge, some with families, others in some Salesian house, while others again were the victims of the bombing or were deported to Germany or Siberia. Sister Laura, giving up the chance to return to Italy, decided to stay with her Polish

daughters and to share their dangers and sufferings. At the end of the war the Servant of God began the work of the reconstruction of several communities, in whatever way she could, recovering what was left of the houses that had been opened and giving fresh impetus to the material and moral restoration of the people. However, her health affected by a cancerous infection made worse by the shortages and hard work began to show signs of its weak condition, which quickly increased causing her great suffering. With a final act of trusting abandonment she completed her offering to the Lord into whose merciful hands she gave up her spirit on the night of 30 August 1951.

Because of her reputation for holiness, between 1 October 1986 and 15 April 1989 in the Curial Offices of Katowice the Diocesan Enquiry was held the juridical validity of which was recognised by the Congregation for the Cause of Saints with a decree dated 16 December 1994. The *Positio* having been prepared, as is customary the question was discussed whether the Servant of God had exercised in an heroic manner the Christian virtues. Following the positive outcome, on 25 September 2010 the Special Meeting of

the Theological consultants was held. The Cardinals and Bishops assembled in an Ordinary Session on 12 April 2011, having listened to the report of the Proponent of the Cause, His Lordship Mons. Raffaele Martinelli, Bishop of Frascati, declared that the Servant of God had exercised in an heroic manner the theological and cardinal virtues and others connected with them.

A careful report of everything having been presented to the Supreme Pontiff Benedict XVI by the undersigned Cardinal Prefect, His Holiness accepting and ratifying the opinions expressed by the Congregation for the Causes of Saints today declared: *«It is certain that the theological virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity towards God and towards her neighbour, the cardinal virtues of Prudence, Justice, Temperance and Fortitude and the other virtues associated with these were practised to an heroic degree by the Servant of God Laura Meozzi, professed Sister of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, in the case and for the purpose here concerned»*.

The Supreme Pontiff therefore ordered that the present decree be published and preserved among the acts of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints.

Published in Rome on 27 June in the year of the Lord 2011.

† ANGELO Card. AMATO, S.D.B.
Prefect

† MARCELLO BARTOLUCCI
Titular Archbishop of Bevagna, Mevania
Secretary

5.2 Relevance for the Church of the message and the witness of Antonino Baglieri, Volunteer With Don Bosco

Below is the text of an address given by the Rector Major, Fr Pascual Chávez Villanueva, in the Cathedral of Noto, in Sicily, on 3 March 2012, on the occasion of the introduction of the Cause of Beatification and Canonisation of Antonino Baglieri, Volunteer with Don Bosco.

Your Lordship,
Distinguished Religious and Civil Authorities,
Brothers and Sisters of the Church of Noto,
Members of the Salesian Family
Relatives and Friends of Nino Baglieri,

With great joy I accepted the invitation to take part in this Vth anniversary of the death of Nino Baglieri, which coincides with the opening of his Cause of Beatifica-

tion. In particular, I want to highlight the relevance for the Church of the message and the witness of this Volunteer with Don Bosco.

Anyone who knew Antonino Baglieri, but also anyone who is acquainted with him through his writings and the multimedia documentation available is impressed by his experience so unusual but at the same time so marked by a simplicity and its everyday character. He himself describes the presence of God in his life so naturally and with simple language, so lacking in presumption or self-satisfaction, without looking for sympathy. Without hiding his moments of weakness, his limitations, he allowed, and today still allows a strong light, a deep rooted faith shine through:

«The fall from the fourth floor opened up my weakness and human frailty. I was now good for nothing, confined to bed, in need of everything, totally unable to move. Where was my pride, my strength now? Those legs which ran and jumped are now still, nothing can move them. My hands which wanted to conquer the world, now are even incapable of catching a fly. In spite of all this, I had learned that I had to thank God for everything. That was why the Lord made me able to move at least a part of my body. He had left me the use of my eyes to see the colour of His marvellous creation,

my nose to smell the scents of the earth; my ears to hear His Word. The Lord left me my brain to think with, to reason, to discern right from wrong. He still left my heart to beat with love. *My soul* still lives in me, there is *life* in me, but the most beautiful thing is that God is within me. He loves me and I am His son. He gives me the grace to discover the seeds He has planted in my heart. Nourished with prayer they have sprouted within me and growing have changed my life. The *faith* which gives me strength and trust to accept my cross, to thank and praise God for the gift of life. The *hope*, since I know that these sufferings of mine are not an end in themselves but offerings to God, which accompanied by prayer, can help so many brothers and sisters meet Jesus. *Charity*, a sure way which opens the gates of heaven for us, since it is only by love that we shall be judged. Let us thank God for all the gifts He gives us. Every part of our body is His gift. The eyes to see the light of creation, the ears to hear the melodious sounds of nature; smell to scent the perfumes of the flowers; the mouth to speak and to proclaim the good news; the heart to love everyone and to make it the dwelling place of Our Lord. Legs to walk His paths, hands to help brothers and sisters in difficulties. Let us put them at the service of others and we shall receive in recompense a hundredfold».¹

1. A witness to fidelity and to a love for life

«*Human life is sacred* – we read in number 5 of the *Donum vitae* – *because from its beginning* it represents the creative activity of God and always remains in a special relationship with the Creator its sole end. Only God is the Lord of life from its beginning to its end».

The human and spiritual experience of Antonino Baglieri takes on the significance of a glowing witness in times like these in which not rarely the very fundamental values regarding human life are questioned, or the right is claimed to suppress it or moral neutrality is claimed for scientific research.

For almost 39 years Nino Baglieri lived as a tetraplegic; and the final 29 were a hymn to life and to faith. «His spiritual and pastoral journey – Mons. Calogero La Piana, Archbishop of Messina has written – can easily be described as: *living and bearing witness with joy to the salvific value of suffering accepted with love and the cross embraced in communion with the Crucified*

¹ N. BAGLIERI, *In cammino verso la luce. Prefazione di S.E. Mons. Angelo Comastri, Elledici, Leumann (TO) 2001, pp. 70-71.*

One... The serenity and joy with which Nino lived his personal Calvary for so many long years of his earthly life helped me to understand the profound meaning of the words of the Apostle Peter: *If you can have some share in the sufferings of Christ, be glad because you will enjoy a much greater gladness when his glory is revealed* (1 Pt 4,13).²

In the life of the Church the mystery of suffering has emerged and still emerges today as the "fast lane" for evangelisation. «This is why, – Mons. Stagliano has written– in one of my letters, addressed in particular to priests I could not refrain from referring to this eloquent prophecy, expressed not only in words but above all in the silence, in the hidden cries of sufferings offered, of pain transfigured by the Cross, the living and life-giving gospel, life full and over-flowing... I make my own the commitment and the promise of the Bishops of this Church who have gone before me: Mons. Salvatore Nicolosi, Mons. Giuseppe Malandrino and

Mons. Mariano Crociata. From my letters and reflections on this exemplary holiness "on the wings of the Cross", which arises in the faith lived by the people, of those who suffer and those who have in some way come into a relationship with Nino Baglieri, as Bishop of Noto, I feel able to declare, "not at second hand" but from personal experience, that the opening of the diocesan process for the beatification and canonisation of this son of the Church of Noto, is not only possible but something to be hoped for and a duty».³

This extraordinary "mystery of suffering", which Antonino lived in his own life and by which he allowed himself to be transfigured, helps us to reflect on a further issue: the incarnated, concrete, physical nature of human life. Far from being a "soul without a body" he can be seen as a soul "fully incarnated" and in this way reminding us that the Redemption and spiritual experience always occur through our flesh and our life story.

² C. LA PIANA, *In profonda comunione con il Crocifisso, una fede coraggiosa e forte*, in G. RUTA (ed.), *Sulle ali della Croce. Nino Baglieri e... tanta voglia di correre*, Coop. S. Tom. – Elledici, Messina – Leumann (TO) 2008, p. 251.

³ A. STAGLIANO, *Prefazione*, in G. RUTA (ed.), *Nino Baglieri a 360°... L'atleta di Dio sotto vari punti di vista*, Coop.S.Tom. – Elledici, Messina – Leumann (TO) 2011, pp. 14-15.

2. In the steps of the spirituality of the Salesian Family of Don Bosco

«I have been asked many times to speak about Nino Baglieri, feeling within myself a special strength in being able to indicate the relevance of his witness. It is not a general kind of duty but a real desire to tell everyone especially the members of the Salesian Family about the same need, joy and beauty of “becoming saints” which Nino recognised in his life and which he succeeded in communicating to all those he met personally or came in contact with through his letters».⁴

The spirituality of the Family of Don Bosco in ordinary circumstances is more inclined to emphasise the joy and the aspect of a holiness “within our grasp”, which links the demands of the Gospel with cheerfulness and celebration. And yet, in the same soil, were born and flourished the spiritual experience of the Cooperator Blessed Alessandrina Maria da Costa, the Portuguese mystic, love’s victim for the conversion of sinners, of the Venerable Fr Andrea Beltrami, who offered himself as a victim for the salvation of

the young, of Blessed Luigi Variara, a Salesian and in 1930 the founder of a Womens Congregation in the Leper Colony of Agua de Dios in Colombia, of Blessed Eusebia Palomino, Daughter of Mary Help of Christians, victim for the salvation of Spain.

The spiritual experience of Nino Baglieri has the characteristic of simplicity; Antonino does not “voluntarily” make himself a victim of expiation and reparation. In ordinary circumstances he does not manifest ecstasies or mystical visions. He accepts his long crucifixion, docile to God’s action in him, and manages to achieve and to bear witness to a more authentic joy, a joy that becomes the sister and companion of suffering when this is illuminated by the glorious cross of Christ; a joy that enables him to incarnate, in an intense and singular way another characteristic feature of the Salesian charism, a dynamism and a passion in proclaiming the Gospel in spite of his disability.

I think that I am interpreting the joy and the gratitude of many for the opening of the cause of beatification and canonisation, entrusting to God’s will and placing in the hands of the Church the

⁴ P. CHÁVEZ VILLANUEVA, *Prefazione*, in G. RUTA (ed.), *Nino Baglieri a 360°*, op. cit., p. 7.

process the recognition and the authentication of the Christian virtues lived to an heroic degree. «I cannot hide the desire that his witness linked essentially to the Word of God, of which he is a humble and eloquent echo, may be glorified and spread everywhere and and run swiftly (cfr. 2 Ts 3,1) not only in Sicily and in Italy, but throughout the whole world».⁵

3. *The attitude of 'sentire cum Ecclesia' as a practical way of life and of relationships*

With the passing of time, the human and spiritual experience of Antonino Baglieri was the experience of *communion* with the various *charisms* and the different *spiritualities* with which he came into contact. Movements, Congregations and Institutes of Consecrated Life, Associations, local Church organisations and others found a place in his life and testimony a practical place of contact and of communion.

As Mons. Salvatore Nicolosi, the retired Bishop of the diocese says:

«His room, his bed and his stretcher became altars of light, from

which the Gospel shone out and which with time gathered so many persons around him and reached so many parts of the world through the many testimonies he gave (at Lourdes, at Loreto, at Rome in 1988 for the centenary of Don Bosco...) and the many contacts he had with missionaries, bishops, distinguished Church figures. How many times I too met him and how much light I received! As the Bishop I was at his side in a paternal manner but I also received so much strength from him. He became almost my special collaborator who with his witness and his words also helped me overcome some of the trials of my ministry».⁶

«The human and spiritual life story of Nino Baglieri, writes Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, Secretary of State of His Holiness Benedict XVI – can therefore be listed among the those witnesses of hope. However such a result cannot be achieved completely except in a context of communion with the Church, of the experience of sacramental and fraternal life. «Life in its true sense is not something we have exclusively in or from ourselves: it is a relationship». Benedict XVI writes in *Spe salvi*» (n. 27)».⁷

⁵ P. CHÁVEZ VILLANUEVA, *Prefazione*, in G. RUTA (ed.), *Nino Baglieri a 360°*, op. cit., p. 11.

⁶ S. NICOLOSI, *Un esemplare cammino umano, cristiano, ecclesiale*, G. RUTA (ed.), *Sulle ali della croce*, op. cit., p. 258.

⁷ T. BERTONE, *Prefazione*, in G. RUTA (ed.), *Sulle ali della croce*, op. cit., p. 8.

This spirit of communion continues to be a feature of relationships with those who knew him. «In this journey of holiness – Mons. Staglianò pointed out – Nino will not leave us on our own certain that as he so greatly desired and left written in his spiritual testament, he will continue his mission: “So I love everyone and everyone loves me, and from heaven I shall continue my mission, I shall write to you from Paradise”».⁸

4. In the stream of the evangelising mission of today's world

The passion to proclaim the Gospel which was a special characteristic in the lives of so many *converts* of which the history of spirituality is so full, is one of the more evident and relevant characteristics of the spiritual experience of Antonino Baglieri.

«His house had become a sanctuary, the present World Director of the Volunteers with Don Bosco says – the goal of pilgrims, who often arrived to comfort him and left comforted and regenerated by his words, by his joyful accep-

tance of the cross, by his gentle and fraternal smile. A Volunteer with Don Bosco, without the use of his legs and arms but able to move consciences, to become a giant of faith, to cross the five continents with his message and his word».⁹

On 17 July 2004 Antonino Baglieri sent to the hundreds of young people gathered at *Colle Don Bosco* to take part in a *Confronto*, on the 50th anniversary of the canonisation of Saint Dominic Savio, the following message:

«I am totally paralysed. I can move only my head, but my heart is full of joy and of a great strength to bear witness to the Lord to the whole world. He enables me to walk through the world while being confined to bed; to embrace the world even though I cannot move my hands. I am happy to be able to communicate to you all my joy in the Lord. Jesus is the true joy and I invite you to savour his joy: open your hearts to His love. Jesus is the companion of your life the faithful friend who never leaves us. He takes care of each one of you, He takes you by the hand and leads you through the ways of this world. Believe me, this world does not give happiness. Flee from those who are selling death. How many young people are lost on the ways of this world: drugs,

⁸ A. STAGLIANÒ, *Prefazione* in G. RUTA (ed.), *Nino Baglieri a 360°*, op. cit., p. 17.

⁹ MESSAGGIO DEL RESPONSABILE MONDIALE CDB DEL 5 MARZO 2007, *Ringraziamento*, in G. RUTA, *Sulle ali della croce*, op. cit., p. 286.

sex, power, enjoyment and entertainments that leave us empty and disappointed. We always go in search of something to bring us happiness but then it is over and we go looking again. Real Joy is within you. You just have to discover it. Jesus is the true joy. Let yourselves be guided to his love and everything will be easier. He helps you to overcome all life's difficulties, nourishing you with his word that is Light for your steps. Meet him often in the Sacraments, especially those of confession and communion in order to have the strength to be genuine Christians, children of God. Your heart needs to be open to the Love of Charity for your brothers and sisters. Be bearers of peace and always ready to forgive everything and everyone. Don't be indifferent in the face of the problems of your brothers and sisters, carry their sufferings with them".¹⁰

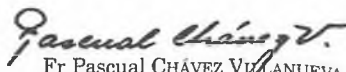
These words take on their real force because they are spoken by a man whose life provides an example of a journey of faith; Grace led him, from an adolescence of questioning through a period of despair as a young man to con-

version and to the witness of a life redeemed.

«Nino was a man fully part of this world, living deeply his lay state. Nino was a man urged on by a dynamism that was typically Salesian with which he lived and bore witness to his faith».¹¹

The evangelising mission of Antonino Baglieri continues through his writings and through the prayer group *Friends of Nino Baglieri*, through the commitment of those who still today are moved by his memory and by his passion for the Kingdom.

May the opening of his Cause of Beatification be for all of us, for the Church of Noto, for the Volunteers with Don Bosco and the whole Salesian Family, a reason for giving thanks to the Lord and a stimulus for a renewed commitment to walk together on the path of holiness.


Fr Pascual CHÁVEZ VILLANUEVA
Rector Major

¹⁰ The long letter is given in its entirety by the Rector Major of the Salesians, Fr Pascual Chávez, in his contribution *My testimony concerning Nino Baglieri*, in G. RUTA (ed.), *Sulle ali della croce, [On the wings of the Cross]* op. cit., pp. 248-249.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 248.

5.3 Decree for the canonical erection of the “Blessed John Paul II” Province of Silchar (India)

Prot. n° 301/2011

**DECREE
FOR THE CANONICAL ERECTION
OF THE
“BLESSED JOHN PAUL II”
SALESIAN PROVINCE
OF SILCHAR**

The undersigned,
Fr. Pascual CHÁVEZ VILLANUEVA,
*Rector Major of the Salesian Society
of Saint John Bosco*,

- considering the development of the Salesian mission and the territorial extension of the “Mary Help of Christians” Salesian Province of Guwahati (India);
- in view of the results of the consultation carried out in the Province;
- having heard the favourable opinion of the Provincial and his Council, and also following a proposal of the Provincial Chapter;
- having obtained the consent of the General Council in the meeting of **15 December 2011**, in accordance with the articles 132 §1,1 and 156 of the Constitutions:

DETACHES from the “Mary Help of Christians” Salesian Province of Guwahati the following Houses:

1. AGARTALA, “Saint John Bosco”; 2. BISHRAMGANJ - Don Bosco Centre, “Saint John Bosco”; 3. BISHRAMGANJ - Saint Francis Xavier, “Saint Francis Xavier”; 4. CHERRAPUNJEE, “Saint John Bosco”; 5. JOWAI - Bosco Pnar, “Saint John Bosco”; 6. KHLIEHRIAT, “Holy Family”; 7. LAWNGTLAI, “Saint John Bosco”; 8. MARIAM NAGAR, “Queen of Peace”; 9. NONGPOH, “Blessed Virgin Assumed into Heaven”; 10. NONGSTOIN, “Saint Peter”; 11. RALIANG, “Mary Immaculate”; 12. SAIHA, “Saint John Bosco”; 13. SELING, “Saint John Bosco”; 14. SHILLONG - Don Bosco, “Saint John Bosco”; 15. SHILLONG - Juniorate, “Saint Dominic Savio”; 16. SHILLONG - Mathias Institute, “Saint Paul”; 17. SHILLONG - Mawlai, “Saint Dominic Savio”; 18. SHILLONG - Nongthymmai, “Blessed Philip Rinaldi”; 19. SHILLONG - Pastoral Centre, “Saint Francis of Sales”; 20. SHILLONG - Salesian Training Centre, “Saint John Bosco”; 21. SHILLONG - St. Anthony, “Saint Anthony”; 22. SHILLONG - Sun-

nyside, "Saint Dominic Savio"; 23. SHILLONG - Theologate, "Sacred Heart"; 24. SILCHAR, "Saint John Bosco"; 25. SON-APAHAR, "Christ the King"; 26. UMRAN, "Saint Joseph"

and in addition the **Salesian presences**, not yet canonically erected, in:

1. MAWJRONG, "Mary Queen of Peace"; 2. MANDWI, "Saint Stephen"; 3. UMDEN, "Saint Joseph"; 4. RAMBRAI, "Mount Calvary"; 5. RANGBLANG, "Saint Mary"; 6. LAITKOR, "Saint Joseph"; 7. SHILLONG - Youth Centre, "Saint John Bosco"; 8. HAFLONG, "Saint Francis Xavier"

and by the present **Decree**,

CANONICALLY ERECTS

the new **SALESIAN PROVINCE OF SILCHAR**, with the title "**BLESSED JOHN PAUL II**", with headquarters in **SILCHAR (India)**, the "**Saint John Bosco**" house, with the aforementioned **Salesian houses and presences**

Territorially the Province comprises the following Dioceses: Agartala, Aizawl, Jowai, Nongstoin, Shillong.

The following decisions have been made:

1. Belonging to the Province are the confreres who at the date of the canonical erection, are living and working in the Salesian houses and presences listed above. By the agreement of the two Provincials a possible change of Province - within three years - can be made.

2. Regarding confreres in initial formation and those who are studying or working outside the Province, the Province to which they belong will be determined starting from the choice made by the confreres themselves.

3. The definition and the collaboration of the Centres for initial formation, the Centres for animation, and of the large Institutes such as Don Bosco University at Guwahati and economic relationships will be regulated by an agreement to be drawn up between the Council of the Guwahati Province and the Council of the Silchar Province and to be approved by the Rector Major.

The present Decree will come into force on the ***Solemnity of Mary Help of Christians, 24 May 2012.***

Rome, 31 January 2012
Solemnity of Don Bosco.

Fr. Pascual CHÁVEZ VILLANUEVA
Rector Major

Fr. Marian STEMPEL
Secretary General

5.4 Decree for the canonical erection of the “Mary Help of Christians” Greek-Catholic Special Statute Circumscription of the Ukraine

Prot. n° 076/2012

**DECREE
FOR THE CANONICAL ERECTION
OF THE
“MARIA HELP OF CHRISTIANS”
GREEK-CATHOLIC
SPECIAL STATUTE
CIRCUMSCRIPTION
OF THE UKRAINE**

The undersigned,
Fr. Pascual CHÁVEZ VILLANUEVA,
*Rector Major of the Salesian Society
of Saint John Bosco,*

- considering the development of the Salesian mission in the Ukraine and the need for a better animation of Salesian life and vocation, inculturating the charism of Don Bosco in the Greek - Catholic Church of the Ukraine;

- taking into account that for a more effective animation, the Delegation of the Ukraine Byzantine-Ukraine Rite, with headquarters at Lviv (Ukraine) was established;
- in view of the results of the consultation carried out in the Delegation;
- given the favourable opinion of the Superior of the Circumscription of East Europe with his Council;
- following the process of discernment undertaken in the General Council and having obtained the consent of the same in the meeting of **29 March 2012**, in accordance with the articles 132 §1,1 and 156 of the Constitutions:

by this present Decree,

CANONICALLY ERECTS

The new **SPECIAL STATUTE CIRCUMSCRIPTION of the GREEK - CATHOLIC UKRAINE**, with the title **“MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS”**, with headquarters in **LVIV (Ukraine)**, **“Blessed Philip Rinaldi” house**, to which the following Salesian houses belong:

- Lviv – Delegation, “Blessed Philip Rinaldi”
- Lviv – Mary Help of Christians, “Mary Help of Christians”
- Lviv – St. Fr. of Sales, “Saint Francis of Sales”
- Lviv – St. John Bosco, “Saint John Bosco”
- Lviv – Vynnyky, “Saint John Bosco”

The following decisions have been made:

1. Members of the Circumscription are those confreres who at the date of the canonical erection are living and working in the houses listed above and other Salesian presences in the Ukraine.

2. Also members are confreres in formation coming from the Greek-Catholic Ukraine, even though belonging to external formation communities or to the UPS.

3. The Superior of the Circumscription shall have two meetings a year with the Rector Major and/or the Regional Councillor to assess together and to present the progress of the Circumscription. In addition regarding important issues the Regional Councillor will be consulted and involved, be-

fore these are considered by the Council of the Circumscription.

4. The Council of the Circumscription is to be composed of three confreres: the Vicar, the Economist and a Councillor.

5. Given the limited number of confreres, representation at the General Chapter for the present will be by the Superior of the Circumscription alone.

6. Times for formation in common and pastoral coordination for the Rectors, the confreres and those in formation of the Ukraine Greek-Catholic and the Latin Ukraine should be ensured.

7. Regarding other matters, what is established in the Constitutions for a Province applies: Chapter of the Circumscription, appointment of the Councillors of the Circumscription, appointment of the Rectors, the opening of houses, the canonical erection of the communities, etc.

The present Decree will come into force on **1 September 2012**.

Rome, 29 March 2012.

Fr. Pascual CHÁVEZ VILLANUEVA
Rector Major

Fr. Marian STEMPEL
Secretary General

5.5 New Provincials

Here we list (in alphabetical order) certain data for the Provincials appointed by the Rector Major with his Council during the Plenary Session December 2011 – January 2012 and the extraordinary Intermediate Session in March 2012.

1. ABRAHÁM Béla, Provincial for HUNGARY

Father Béla ABRAHÁM has been appointed to lead the Saint Stephen Province, HUNGARY. He takes the place of Fr Simon Manjooran.

Born on 20 March 1968 in Budapest (Hungary), Béla Abrahám did his philosophical and theological studies at the Diocesan seminary in Esztergom-Budapest and was ordained priest for this Archdiocese on 15 June 1991. The same year, thanks to the collapse of the Communist regime and renewed opportunities for religious to return to their communities, Fr Béla entered the Salesian novitiate at Szombathely, where he made his first profession on 8 September 1992. After the period for first vows prescribed by the Constitutions, he made his perpetual profession on 28 June 1998.

He worked for a number of years in Salesian parishes in Budapest, was rector, novice director and then bursar at Óbuda, Budapest. From 2005 he was the rector of the Salesian Retreat House at Péliföldszentkereszt and vice-principal of the senior school at Nyergesújfalu. He has also held various positions of responsibility at Province level: from 1995 to 2000 he was in charge of Salesian Youth Ministry and gave it a particular tenor in the post-Communist era; from 2000 to 2006 he was a provincial councillor, from 2006 to 2009 vice-provincial, and from 2006 to 2011 provincial economist.

2. CASTELL HENDERSON Néstor Luis, Provincial, URUGUAY

Fr Néstor Luis CASTELL HENDERSON is the new Provincial of the St Joseph's Province, URUGUAY. He replaces Daniel Fernando Sturla, ordained Auxiliary Bishop of Montevideo.

Néstor Luis Castell was born in Salto (Uruguay) on 26 February 1963 and has been a Salesian since 31 January 1983, the date of his first profession at Montevideo. He was perpetually professed on 31 January 1989, and ordained priest at Salto on 19 October 1991.

After his ordination, from 1992 to 1995 he exercised his educational and pastoral ministry in Montevideo – “Villa Colón”. Then from 1996 to 2003 he worked in the theologate at Montevideo, as vice-rector. In 1996 he became a member of the provincial council. In December 2003 he was appointed Rector at Maturana, Montevideo, a task he carried out for six years, until February 2010. In May 2006 he was appointed as vice provincial, which he carried out until 2009, and was then appointed provincial economer, a role he had until he was appointed provincial. Most recently he was also the provincial delegate for the Salesian Family.

3. *CASTILHO Edson Donizetti, Provincial of SÃO PAULO, Brazil*

To lead the “Mary Help of Christians” Province, SÃO PAULO, Brazil, the Rector Major with his Council has appointed Fr *Edson Donizetti CASTILHO*. He succeeds Fr Marco Biaggi.

Edson Donizetti Castilho, born on 18 November 1963 in Cruzeiro (Brazil), made his first profession on 12 January 1983 in the novitiate at São Carlos. He made his perpetual profession on 31 January 1989, and was ordained priest

at Cruzeiro, the city of his birth, on 11 January 1992.

After his ordination, from 1992-1993 he worked at St Joachim’s at Lorena, then from 1994 to 1997 at the provincial house in San Paulo as delegate for Youth Ministry for the Province. In 1997 he went to Rome to do his licentiate in education at the U.P.S. He then returned to Brazil and 1999-2000 worked at the postnovitiate at Lorena. Then from 2001 to 2006 he was Rector at St Joseph’s in Campinas. He spent 2007 as rector at Lorena St Joachim’s; then was transferred to San Mooca, San Paulo, as vice rector of the community and in charge of the Salesian Publishing House. Both at Campinas and Lorena he was involved with activities to do with UNISAL, and was appointed its rector in 2010, when the administration was transferred from Americana to San Paulo.

4. *DAL MOLIN Roberto, Provincial of NORTH EAST ITALY*

Fr *Roberto DAL MOLIN* is the new Provincial of the St Mark’s Province, NORTH-EAST ITALY. He replaces Fr Eugenio Riva.

Roberto Dal Molin was born on 21 October 1967 at Verona (Italy) and has been a Salesian since 8

September 1988, the day he made his first profession at Colle Don Bosco, following his novitiate at Pinerolo. He made his perpetual profession on 18 September 1994, and was ordained priest at Verona on 22 June 1996, following his theological studies at the Crocetta, Turin.

After his priestly ordination, from 1995 until September 1997 he was in the postnovitiate community in Rome, San Tarcisio. He was then transferred to the provincial house in West Venice Province in Verona, and involved in province leadership. He remained in Verona until 2003, when he was sent to Mogliano Veneto, to the Vocational Guidance community, and was also delegate for Youth Ministry, expressed in various ways and through various groups. In September 2006 he went to Nave (Brescia), as rector of the postnovitiate. He has now been asked to take up the leadership of the North-East Italy Province.

5. *EL RA'I Munir, Provincial of the MIDDLE EAST*

The Rector Major with his Council has appointed Fr *Munir EL RA'I* as Provincial of the Jesus the Adolescent Province,

MIDDLE EAST. He succeeds Fr Maurizio Spreafico.

Born on 13 February 1968 at Aleppo, Syria, he made his first profession on 8 September 1988 in Rome, after completing his novitiate at Lanuvio (Rome). He did his postnovitiate in Nave (Brescia), then returned to the Middle East Province for practical training at Aleppo, and theological studies at Cremisan. He was ordained priest on 13 July 1996 at Aleppo.

After ordination he returned to Italy to pursue further studies at the UPS. On his return to MOR, after a year at Cremisan, he was appointed rector of the house at Aleppo (Syria). He became a member of the provincial council in July 2005, and in 2008 was appointed vice provincial, a role he has carried out until his appointment now as provincial.

6. *LORENZELLI Alberto, Provincial of CHILE*

Fr *Alberto LORENZELLI* takes the place of Fr Leonardo Santibáñez Martínez as leader of the St Gabriel the Archangel Province, *CHILE*.

Born on 2 September 1953 in Argentina, at San Juan Matanza, of Italian parents, Alberto Loren-

zelli has been a Salesian since 24 September 1973, when he made his first profession at the novitiate at Pinerolo (Turin). Following the normal Salesian formation curriculum, he made his perpetual profession on 15 September 1977 and was ordained priest at Genoa-Sampierdarena on 24 January 1981.

After his priestly ordination, his pastoral and educational ministry was to a large extent carried out at Genoa-Sampierdarena, where he became rector in 1996 until 2002, when the Rector Major called on him to become provincial of the Liguria-Tuscany Province, based at Genoa. At the end of this six year period, in 2008 the Rector Major with his Council appointed him as provincial of the Central Italy Circumscription, a role he carried out until his appointment now as provincial in Chile. Over the past six years he has also been President of the Italian Conference of Major Superiors (CISM) [cf AGC 379 no. 5.6 and AGC 403 no. 5.6]

7. *MALIEKAL George Joseph, Provincial of SILCHAR Province, India*

The Rector Major with his Council has appointed Fr *George*

Joseph MALIEKAL as Superior of the new Province of St John Bosco, based in *SILCHAR*, India,.

He was born on 13 June 1958 at Arakulam-Thodupuzha (Kerala, India) and made his first religious profession as a Salesian on 25 May 1978, in the Guwahati Province. He made his perpetual profession on 11 February 1984, and was ordained priest on 30 December 1986.

After his priestly ordination, he spent some years in the theologate at Shillong, and was then sent to Jirikinding, as parish priest, then to Sojong, as rector and parish priest, from 1992 to 1996. Then he spent two years as rector of the house and the Don Bosco School at Tura, and in 1998 came to Rome to pursue further studies, residing in the community at the Gerini-Institute. On his return to the province, he spent a year in the theologate in Shillong. Then, coming back to Rome, he completed his studies with a Doctorate in Church History at the Gregorian University. He returned to India to the Sacred Heart theologate in Shillong, as lecturer, a role he continued until now.

8. *MANCINI Leonardo, Provincial of CENTRAL ITALY Circumscription*

Fr *Leonardo MANCINI* is the new Provincial of the Sacred Heart Circumscription, *CENTRAL ITALY*, based in Rome, having been appointed by the Rector Major with his Council to succeed Fr Alberto Lorenzelli, who has been appointed as Provincial of Chile

Born on 18 February 1964 in Rome, Leonardo Mancini has been a Salesian since 8 September 1984, the day he made his first profession in the novitiate at Lanuvio (Rome), in what was then the Roman Province. On 22 April 1990 he made his perpetual profession and then on 12 October 1991 was ordained priest in Rome, after his theological studies at the U.P.S. Then at the U.P.S. he pursued his Licenciante in Theology.

After his priestly ordination, he spent two years in the house at Cassino, then in September 1994 was sent to Pius XI in Rome, where from 2000 to 2006 he was rector of the community. He was then appointed rector of the community at Villa Sora, Frascati, until 2011, when he was appointed rector and novice director at the novitiate at Genzano Rome, a role he has carried out until now. He has been a member of the provincial council on a number of

occasions, firstly in the Roman Province, then in the Central Italy Circumscription. Most recently he has also been involved in provincial services to Schools and CNOS/School.

9. *ORKIĆ Pejo, Provincial of CROATIA*

The Rector Major with his Council has appointed Fr *Pejo ORKIĆ* as Provincial of the St John Bosco Province, *CROATIA*, for the next six years. He takes the place of Fr Ivan Marijanović

Pejo Orkić was born on 19 January 1966 at Kopanice, in north Bosnia, and has been a Salesian since 15 August 1990, the day he made his first profession in the novitiate at Podsused, Zagreb. He spent a year in Rijeka, then Italy, where he spent a year in practical training in Chiari (Brescia), and then went for his theological studies to the U.P.S. in Rome. He was perpetually professed on 8 September 1995, and was ordained priest on 19 July 1997 at Kopanice, his birthplace.

Following his ordination to the priesthood, he remained in Italy where he worked for two years in the novitiate at Lanuvio (Rome). On his return to Croatia he was put in charge of the Vocational

Guidance Community at Rijeka and then went to Zagreb. For three years, 2001-2003 he was rector of the community at Pod-sused, Zagreb, then from 2003 to 2006 at the Theology students' community, Zagreb. He was a provincial councillor from 2003 to 2009, and was provincial delegate for Youth Ministry. In 2008 he was made rector and parish priest at Zagreb-Knežija, roles that he has carried out until now.

10. *POTOČNIK Janez, Provincial of SLOVENIA*

Fr *Janez POTOČNIK* succeeds Fr Alojzij Slavko Snoj as Provincial of the Sts Cyril and Methodius Province, *SLOVENIA*.

Born on 24 December 1959 at Florjan, Gornji Grad (Slovenia), Janez Potočnik made his first religious profession on 14 August 1977 in the novitiate at Zelimlje. He made his perpetual profession on 25 September 1983, and was ordained priest at Gornji Grad on 29 June 1987.

After his ordination he was sent to the house at Zelimlje where he remained until 1994, except for one year, 1992, which he spent at Rudnik, Ljubljana. Until then he was in charge of the "Ministrant"

magazine and also the Salesian Bulletin, tasks that he has carried out until now. In 1994 he was appointed rector of the house at Rakovnik, Ljubljana, a role which – except for a brief interruption – was reconfirmed several times, and which he has been carrying out ever since. He has helped out in various aspects of province leadership at Ljubljana: as novice director (1999-2000), provincial councillor (1994-2003 and from 2009 onwards), vice provincial (2004-2006), Youth Ministry and Formation delegate. Since 2005 he has been director of Zavod Salesianum, a Salesian institute dedicated to the education of the young, especially those at risk.

11. *VATTATHARA Thomas, Provincial of GUWAHATI, India*

Fr. *Thomas VATTATHARA* (also known as *V.M. Thomas*) has been appointed by the Rector Major with his Council as Provincial of the Mary Help of Christians Province, *GUWAHATI, India*, in its new configuration, following the creation of the Province of Silchar.

Thomas Vattathara was born on 18 February 1951 at Kongor-pilly, in Kerala State (India), and made his profession as a Salesian

on 24 May 1969 in the novitiate at Shillong-Sunnyside. After his early Salesian formation, he made his perpetual profession on 24 May 1975 and was ordained priest on 28 December 1978 in Kongorpilly.

After his priestly ordination, from 1985 to 1988 he was made rector of the house of Don Bosco in Guwahati and since 2005 until now of the Don Bosco Institute in Kharguli. He has been provincial councillor for Guwahati from 1988 to 1990, and Youth Ministry delegate and delegate for youth groups and movements from 2003 to 2006. As a leader for so many young people in the North-East of India and a formator of religious and lay people, he also set up various projects for needy youth in Assam State.

5.6 Mons. COSTELLOE Timothy, Archbishop of Perth (Australia)

On 20 February 2012 the Vatican Press Office announced that the Holy Father Benedict XVI, accepting the resignation from the pastoral ministry in the Archdiocese of *PERTH, Australia*, presented by Mons. Barry James Hickey, having reached the age limit had appointed as his succes-

sor Mons. *Timothy COSTELLOE*, SDB, at the time Titular Bishop of *CLUAIN IRAIRD* and Auxiliary of Melbourne (Australia)

Born in Melbourne on 3 February 1954, Timothy Costelloe made his first profession as a Salesian on 31 January 1978 and his perpetual profession on 8 September 1985. On 25 October 1986 he was ordained priest at East Bentleigh, St. Peter's [In n. 398 of the AGC can be found the other details of his curriculum vitae].

Appointed Bishop by Benedict XVI on 30 April 2007, Mons. Timothy Costelloe was consecrated on 15 June the same year by Mons. Denis James Hart, with Cardinal George Pell and Mons. Ambrose Battista De Paoli, co-consecrators.

At present he is a member of the Bishops' Committees for Catholic Education, Doctrine and Morals of the Australian Bishops' Conference as well as President of the Committee for Catholic Education of Victoria.

The Archdiocese of Perth, dedicated to the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, is a Metropolitan see with three suffragan dioceses: Bunbury, Geraldton and Broome. It covers 471,118 km², and has a population of about 1.5 million of whom 365,000 are Catholics.

5.7 Salesian personnel at 31 December 2011

Prov.	Tot. 2010	Temp. Professed				Perp. Professed				Tot. Professed	Novices	Tot. 2011
		L	S	D	P	L	S	D	P			
AET	140	10	47	0	1	21	14	0	47	140	1	141
AFC	230	9	64	0	0	27	14	0	100	214	22	236
AFE	170	1	47	0	0	15	13	0	90	166	9	175
AFM	55	1	4	0	0	6	5	0	37	53	1	54
AFO	161	1	49	0	0	14	14	0	76	154	9	163
AFW	144	6	65	0	0	14	15	0	39	139	15	154
AGL	82	4	22	0	0	8	3	0	43	80	6	86
ANG	77	4	23	0	0	8	4	0	38	77	9	86
ATE	132	4	29	0	0	11	14	0	66	124	7	131
ANT	173	2	19	0	0	14	6	0	117	158	3	161
ARN	204	9	21	0	0	25	7	0	139	201	3	204
ARS	261	4	9	0	1	33	7	0	201	255	1	256
AUL	105	3	10	0	0	13	2	0	76	104	0	104
AUS	78	0	6	0	0	5	0	0	66	77	0	77
BEN	204	0	2	0	0	29	3	1	162	197	0	197
BOL	163	4	32	0	0	13	14	0	91	154	4	158
BBH	138	4	14	0	0	16	5	0	86	125	4	129
BCG	148	8	15	0	0	20	8	0	84	135	4	139
BMA	93	3	24	0	0	9	4	0	52	92	3	95
BPA	103	1	13	0	0	7	2	0	68	91	1	92
BRE	108	2	21	0	0	13	0	0	63	99	10	109
BSP	146	5	21	0	0	14	1	0	97	138	10	148
CAM	193	3	21	0	0	21	5	0	139	189	0	189
CEP	158	0	6	0	0	11	1	1	135	154	0	154
CIL	176	1	19	0	0	11	5	0	129	165	3	168
CIN	113	1	8	0	0	26	4	1	72	112	0	112
COB	160	1	29	0	1	11	6	0	108	156	6	162
COM	162	4	30	0	0	17	4	0	99	154	8	162
CRO	86	1	15	0	0	2	3	0	65	86	3	89
ECU	182	3	15	0	0	16	5	0	133	172	1	173
EST	110	1	15	0	0	0	4	0	75	95	1	96
FIN	211	2	22	0	0	14	9	0	158	205	3	208
FIS	108	4	21	0	0	10	3	0	69	107	7	114
FRB	237	1	4	0	0	30	5	0	184	224	0	224
GBR	82	1	2	0	0	6	0	0	73	82	0	82
GER	311	5	2	0	0	63	1	2	224	297	2	299
GIA	110	0	8	0	0	14	3	0	85	110	1	111
HAI	68	0	16	0	1	3	5	0	43	68	2	70
INB	224	3	51	0	0	12	10	0	133	209	8	217
INC	241	2	50	0	0	16	7	0	154	229	5	234
IND	234	3	48	0	0	6	15	0	157	229	10	239
ING	434	14	113	0	0	31	43	0	222	423	24	447
INH	191	2	53	0	0	5	11	0	117	188	17	205
INK	340	2	88	0	0	8	16	0	218	332	8	340
INM	358	4	92	0	0	15	14	0	231	356	19	375
INN	180	4	46	0	0	14	17	0	97	178	8	186
INP	100	0	28	0	0	7	5	0	58	98	2	100
INT	217	1	76	0	0	6	22	0	96	201	15	216
IRL	90	0	7	0	0	8	0	0	77	92	2	94
ICC	520	2	30	0	0	63	13	2	375	485	3	488
ICP	537	1	14	0	0	123	5	2	369	514	3	517
ILE	321	1	22	0	0	40	8	0	233	304	0	304

Prov.	Tot. 2010	Temp. Professed				Perp. Professed				Tot. Professed	Novices	Tot. 2011
		L	S	D	P	L	S	D	P			
IME	241	0	14	0	0	26	9	0	184	233	3	236
INE	400	3	19	0	0	74	4	1	280	381	3	384
ISI	230	0	8	0	0	18	4	1	189	220	2	222
ITM	191	24	69	0	0	9	9	1	69	181	21	202
KOR	125	4	25	0	0	20	6	0	63	118	0	118
LKC	65	2	16	0	0	4	2	0	40	64	2	66
MDG	99	5	29	0	0	6	7	0	48	95	7	102
MEG	195	4	19	0	0	13	2	0	149	187	6	193
MEM	163	4	15	0	0	11	11	1	113	155	3	158
MOR	107	1	7	0	1	11	4	0	84	108	1	109
MOZ	62	4	16	0	0	4	2	0	31	57	1	58
MYM	75	6	32	0	0	1	2	0	30	71	6	77
PAR	92	5	16	0	0	4	5	0	61	91	4	95
PER	155	3	28	0	0	9	9	0	89	138	2	140
PLE	271	2	14	0	0	14	4	0	236	270	4	274
PLN	289	0	23	0	0	7	10	0	241	281	3	284
PLO	205	1	24	0	0	2	7	0	159	193	6	199
PLS	216	0	21	0	0	6	3	0	179	209	4	213
POR	102	0	0	0	0	26	2	1	72	101	1	102
SLK	218	3	12	0	0	15	10	1	174	215	4	219
SLO	102	0	5	0	0	7	1	0	85	98	0	98
SBA	162	0	1	0	0	25	0	1	132	159	0	159
SBI	173	0	1	0	0	45	5	1	119	171	0	171
SLE	203	2	0	0	0	64	0	0	132	198	3	201
SMA	272	0	3	0	0	65	7	0	191	266	1	267
SSE	209	1	6	0	0	22	7	0	164	200	2	202
SVA	144	0	3	0	0	21	7	1	108	140	0	140
SUE	179	1	9	0	0	31	2	0	125	168	4	172
SUO	97	0	3	0	0	19	3	0	72	97	2	99
THA	91	2	8	0	0	12	5	0	63	90	0	90
UNG	39	0	2	0	0	1	6	0	28	37	0	37
URU	100	1	5	0	0	4	2	0	80	92	3	95
VEN	200	3	32	0	0	14	5	0	137	191	5	196
VIE	309	28	71	0	0	24	39	0	118	280	20	300
ZMB	80	1	26	0	0	6	3	0	37	73	7	80
UPS	134	0	0	0	0	8	0	0	124	132	1	133
RMG	79	0	0	0	0	17	0	0	61	78	0	78
Tot.	15643	282	2090	0	5	1609	608	18	10433	15025	414	15439
Ep.	119									121 (*)		121 (*)
TOT.	15762	262	2090	0	5	1609	608	18	10433	15146	414	15560

Note (*): At 31 December 2011 there are 121 SDB Bishops (not counting Daniel Sturla Berhouet, not yet consecrated)

** The column D indicates permanent Deacons

5.8 Our dead confreres (4th list 2011 and 1st list 2012)

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

Deceased 2011 – 4th list

NOTE: We print a 4th list of the dead for 2011, news of whose death came after the publication of AGC n. 412.

SURNAME AND NAME	PLACE of death	DATE	AGE	PROV
P ANDÚJAR ROMERO Eusebio	Sevilla (Spagna)	15/12/2011	84	SSE
P BIRRI Ermes	Castello di Godego (Italia)	19/12/2011	82	INE
P BORELLI Piero	Vercelli (Italia)	31/12/2011	69	ICP
P BORRONI Gian Paolo	Passirana di Rho (Italia)	17/12/2011	70	ILE
P CONTI Gaetano	Messina (Italia)	25/12/2011	95	ISI
P DOPHEIDE Hans	Ferntree Gully, Victoria (Australia)	25/12/2011	75	AUL
P ESCOBAR GARZÓN Jorge	Cuenca (Ecuador)	24/12/2011	98	ECU
L FRIGO Giorgio	Castello di Godego (Italia)	25/12/2011	93	INE
P GOICOECHEA ITURBE Fermin	Logroño (Spagna)	14/12/2011	83	SBI
P LEO MARINO	Salerno (Italia)	31/12/2012	97	IME
P MARINELLI Ulrico	Roma (Italia)	30/12/2011	101	ICC
P OTTOBONI Mario	Porto Viro (Italia)	27/12/2011	86	INE
L PENNAPARAMBIL Anthony	Kuravilangadu (Kerala, India)	26/12/2011	72	INM
P ROSSI Pietro	Venezia-Mestre (Italia)	26/12/2011	87	INE
P SARTORI Silvio	Campo Grande (Brasile)	22/10/2011	91	BCG
P TINKA Karel	Zlín (Rep. Ceca)	20/12/2011	91	CEP
P ZULIANI Vinicio	Stony Point, NY (USA)	29/12/2011	84	SUE

* * *

Deceased 2012 - 1st list

SURNAME AND NAME	PLACE of death	DATE	AGE	PROV
P ADAMS Louis	Herentals (Belgio)	16/02/2012	91	BEN
P AGUIAR SERVIN Félix Enrique	Fernando de la Mora (Paaraguay)	19/04/2012	92	PAR
P ANDREOLETTI Pietro	Torino (Italia)	17/02/2012	77	ICP
L AO Joseph	Hong Kong (Cina)	09/03/2012	85	CIN
P ARMINANA GARCÍA Jaime	San Juan, Alicante (Spagna)	10/03/2012	77	SVA
P AYERS John	Alafua, Apia (Australia)	04/04/2012	83	AUL
P BALDAN Giovanni	Americana (Brasile)	15/01/2012	92	BSP
P BARRA Alessandro	Torino (Italia)	14/01/2012	62	ICP
P BARUFFA Antonio	Roma (Italia)	20/03/2012	73	ICC
P BEDON Sante	Torino (Italia)	07/02/2012	81	MOR

SURNAME AND NAME	PLACE of death	DATE	AGE	PROV
P BENNETT John	Manchester (Gran Bretagna)	18/02/2012	94	GBR
P BONACELLI Guglielmo <i>Fu Ispettore per 4 anni</i>	Roma (Italia)	09/02/2011	101	ICC
L BONATO Bernardino	Torino (Italia)	16/02/2012	81	IME
P BROCCOLI Gaetano	Salerno (Italia)	04/03/2012	86	IME
P BYRNE Laurence	Oakland (USA)	03/03/2012	89	SUO
P CADROBBI Luigi	Castello di Godego (Italia)	02/02/2012	89	INE
P CALAMA Gregorio	Cádiz (Spagna)	28/01/2012	80	SSE
L CAPO Oscar	Barcelona (Spagna)	09/03/2012	75	SBA
P CAPORALI Paolo	Arcadia, CA (USA)	06/03/2012	88	SUO
P CARRILLA Jesús	Barcelona (Spagna)	19/04/2012	89	SBA
P CASALS Esteban	Barcelona (Spagna)	29/01/2012	98	SBA
L CASTRO ANTOLÍN José	Foz, Lugo (Spagna)	13/04/2012	77	SLE
L CAVEDON Beniamino	Torino (Italia)	04/04/2011	86	ICP
P CHIOFALO Domingo	Buenos Aires (Argentina)	17/02/2012	87	ARS
P COGLIANDRO Mario	Messina (Italia)	11/01/2012	95	ISI
P CONCA Pietro	Ivrea (Italia)	08/01/2012	100	ICP
L CORTESI Giovanni	Dovadola (Italia)	15/04/2012	77	ILE
P CREMASCHI Pietro	Milano (Italia)	16/01/2012	96	ILE
P CUA Armando	Roma (Italia)	24/03/2012	91	UPS
P De la CAL ARENALES Amado	Avila (Spagna)	07/01/2012	78	SMA
P De PARSCAU Xavier	Toulon (Francia)	13/02/2012	85	FRB
L DESTEFANIS Giovanni	Torino (Italia)	24/01/2012	67	ICP
P DVORÁK Václav	Rumburk (Rep. Ceca)	11/02/2012	78	CEP
P FERNANDO Peter Mathew	Polur (India)	05/02/2012	86	INM
P GARCIA COLADO Marcos	Barcelona (Spagna)	04/04/2012	83	SBA
L GAZDIK Jan	Roma (Italia)	27/01/2012	84	UPS
P GERMANI Rino	Bologna (Italia)	09/03/2012	87	ILE
P GIACOMINI Salvatore	San Francisco (U.S.A.)	18/01/2012	88	SUO
P GIANOTTI Saverio	Pordenone (Italia)	24/01/2012	90	INE
P GIULIANI Alessandro	Bologna (Italia)	21/03/2012	47	AET
P GŁUCHOWSKI Leszek	Pila (Polonia)	01/02/2012	60	PLN
L GRZNAR Józef	Beckov (Slovacchia)	11/03/2011	90	SLK
P GUZMAN GUZMAN Macrino <i>Fu Ispettore per 6 anni</i>	Guadalajara (Messico)	03/04/2012	78	MEG
P HAJDUKIWSKYJ Stanislaw	Roma (Italia)	23/02/2012	88	ICC
P HERIOT Leo	Melbourne (Australia)	24/02/2012	80	AUL
P HORVATH Ignaz	Laxenburg (Austria)	02/03/2012	77	AUS
P ILARI Giuseppe	Messina (Italia)	25/03/2012	67	ISI
L IRIARTE UNZU Santiago	Logroño (Spagna)	12/03/2012	97	SBI
L JUGMANS Léon	Bruxelles (Belgio)	26/03/2012	99	FRB
P JURÁNYI Ferenc	Budapest (Ungheria)	28/03/2012	91	UNG
P KETELSLEGERS Maurice	Gent (Belgio)	18/01/2012	82	BEN
P KMOTORKA Stanislaw	Firenze (Italia)	27/02/2012	82	ICC
S LARRAÑAGA Raúl Edgardo	Buenos Aires (Argentina)	23/04/2012	30	ARN
P L'HOSTIS François	Guingamp (Francia)	27/04/2012	92	FRB
P LÓPEZ Juan Ignacio	Buenos Aires (Argentina)	27/02/2012	89	ARS

SURNAME AND NAME	PLACE of death	DATE	AGE	PROV
P MAAR Zoltán	Szekesfehervar (Ungheria)	21/02/2012	90	UNG
P MACHÁČEK Miroslav	Ostrava (Rep. Ceca)	09/03/2012	86	CEP
P MALDONADO ABAN José Never	La Paz (Bolivia)	26/03/2012	69	ANG
P MALGARINI Giuseppe	Castelfranco Veneto (Italia)	06/02/2012	100	INE
P MAQUIERA Prudencio	Barcelona (Spagna)	09/02/2012	83	SBA
P MARITANO Lorenzo	Giaveno (Italia)	30/03/2012	81	ICP
P MAROSA Martin	Verzej (Slovenia)	25/04/2012	99	SLO
P MARUOKA Yusto Shusei	Beppu (Giappone)	14/03/2012	82	GIA
P MAZURKIEWICZ Stefan	Bukowice (Polonia)	08/02/2012	92	PLO
P MIGGISCH Alfons	Mödling, Niederösterreich (Austria)	26/01/2012	77	AUS
P NARDELLI Tercilio José	Joinville, SC (Brasile)	08/02/2012	89	BPA
P NEDUMALA Scaria	Imphal, Manipur (India)	15/03/2012	73	IND
<i>Fu Ispettore per 6 anni</i>				
P NÚÑEZ SALGUERO Narciso	Sevilla (Spagna)	12/03/2012	87	SSE
L OCHOA ALDASORO Joaquín	Ávila (Spagna)	09/03/2012	70	SMA
P OMENACA Jesús	Barcelona (Spagna)	26/04/2012	79	SBA
P PAGLIETTA Domingo	Córdoba (Argentina)	02/03/2012	81	ARN
P PAOLONE Antonio	Civitanova Marche Alta (Italia)	20/04/2012	93	ICC
L PIA Salvatore	Roma (Italia)	22/02/2012	71	ICC
L PICOTTINO Carlo	Torino (Italia)	26/02/2012	89	ICP
P RECA Andrzej	Syców (Polonia)	13/02/2012	81	PLO
L REYNDERS Gerard	Heusden (Belgio)	28/02/2012	89	BEN
P RONCAL LOYOLA José Luis	Valencia (Spagna)	05/01/2012	77	SYA
L RUARO Giuseppe	Quito (Ecuador)	10/03/2012	84	ECU
P SALVUCCI Ezio Olivio	Córdoba (Argentina)	05/02/2012	84	ARN
L SAMELE Michele	Salerno (Italia)	08/02/2012	92	IME
P SAMOTYI Romano	Roma (Italia)	05/04/2012	94	ICC
L SÁNCHEZ PÉREZ Pedro	Sevilla (Spagna)	31/01/2012	83	SSE
P SCALABRINO Pietro	Torino (Italia)	10/01/2012	83	ICP
<i>Fu Ispettore per 6 anni</i>				
P SCHMIDT GAZZANO Luis	Montevideo (Uruguay)	18/04/2012	75	URU
P SOLÍS HERNÁNDEZ Jesús	México D.F. (Messico)	27/02/2012	91	MEM
P SPADARO Giorgio	Roma (Italia)	28/02/2012	84	ICC
P SZÓKE János	Budapest (Ungheria)	06/01/2012	84	UNG
P TASSINARI Clodoveo	Beppu (Giappone)	27/01/2012	99	GIA
<i>Fu Ispettore per 6 anni</i>				
L VALENCIA LÓPEZ Julián	Arequipa (Perù)	10/03/2012	95	PER
P VALENTINI Bartolomeo	Manique (Portogallo)	12/02/2012	99	POR
P VAN LOCHEM Jan	Soest (Olanda)	26/03/2012	89	BEN
L VAN PELT Maarten	Someren (Olanda)	08/01/2012	90	BEN
P WAGNER Werner	München (Germania)	03/04/2012	59	GER
P WOLFRAM Francis	Bronx, New York (USA)	25/01/2012	79	SUE
P YVINEC André	Caen (Francia)	02/02/2012	81	FRB
P ZAMORA Carlos	Barcelona (Spagna)	04/04/2012	79	SBA
<i>Fu Ispettore per 6 anni</i>				
P ZIEBLA Waclaw	Tolkarnicko (Polonia)	24/01/2012	91	PLE
P ZUBIZARRETA José María	Barcelona (Spagna)	06/02/2012	81	SBA