



# acts

**of the general council**

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year XCIII    september-december 2012

**N. 414**

official organ  
of animation  
and communication  
for the  
salesian congregation

Direzione Generale  
Opere don Bosco  
Roma



# acts

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

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OFFICIAL ORGAN OF ANIMATION AND COMMUNICATION FOR THE SALESIAN CONGREGATION

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september-december 2012 **N. 414**

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**«This is your mother»**  
(Jn 19,27)

**MARY THE IMMACULATE HELP OF CHRISTIANS**  
**Mother and teacher of Don Bosco**

1. MARY THE IMMACULATE HELP OF CHRISTIANS, IN THE LIFE OF SAINT JOHN BOSCO. 1.1 The motherly intervention of Mary in the life of Don Bosco. 1.2 Don Bosco's response to Mary in his life - *Immaculate - Help of Christians*. – 2. MARY THE IMMACULATE HELP OF CHRISTIANS, IN THE SALESIAN CONGREGATION, TODAY. 2.1 “*Mary is present among us*” (C. 8). 2.2 “*We contemplate and imitate...*” (C. 92). 2.3 “*We recite the rosary each day*” (C. 92). – 3. MARY, MODEL OF FAITH, OF HOPE AND OF LOVE. 3.1 “*Blessed are you who believed*” (Lk 1,45). 3.2 “*The one who believed, who helps and who infuses hope*” (C. 34). 3.3 *Mary, “model of pastoral love”* (C. 92). – 4. “*THROUGH THE MOTHERLY INTERVENTION OF MARY THE HOLY SPIRIT RAISED UP SAINT JOHN BOSCO*” (C. 1). – 5. CONCLUSION.

Rome, 15 August 2012  
*Solemnity of the Assumption of Mary*

My Dear Confreres,

I send you my greetings with greater affection than ever as an expression of gratitude for your filial closeness and the esteem in which you hold the successor of Don Bosco and for your untiring prayers in this time of trial and suffering.

I can tell you that I have learned to hand myself over totally to the Lord so that He may do with me whatever He wills. The great school of suffering especially at the most critical times is what helps us to recognise our fragility and limitations, and therefore to hand over control of our lives to God.

During this time of illness I felt very close to me all of you and also the members of the Salesian Family, the co-workers, friends and the young, and it has moved me to see how the Lord listens and responds to the many requests and in return bestows on me a marvellous grace.

Therefore, if life is always a gift, illness makes us aware of how every day and every moment are a special gift of his and so

we have to live it with immense gratitude and ever increasing responsibility.. To Him be glory and honour for ever!

I am writing to you this time on the Solemnity of the Assumption of Mary in order to share with you some Salesian reflections of mine on Mary. As a Congregation, with the whole Salesian Family, we are preparing to celebrate the Bicentenary of the birth of our Father and Founder, Saint John Bosco. During this first year we wanted to focus on the historical dimension of his life and work. From this point of view and especially in view of the further consideration of his pedagogy and spirituality, I want to invite you to contemplate the figure of Mary the Immaculate Help of Christians, in everything and always the Mother and Teacher of Don Bosco, so that he could say, towards the end of his life: "All the blessings... were thanks to Our Lady".<sup>1</sup>

In this way I intend to follow in the footsteps of my Predecessors, especially the more recent Rector Majors and at the same time to reflect further on what our Constitutions say to us about the most Holy Virgin Mary.

To me it seems very significant that the first Letter dear Fr Egidio Viganò wrote as Rector Major was devoted to a reflection on Mary the Immaculate Help of Christians with the title: *"Mary is renewing the Salesian Family of Don Bosco"*.

Referring to the passage in the Gospel of *Jn* 19,26-27, he made the comment: «I thought instinctively of our Congregation and the whole Salesian Family that today needs to re-examine closely the reality of Mary's spiritual motherhood and live again the attitude and resolve of that disciple. And I thought to myself: We must make the evangelist's affirmation our own programme of renewal – 'make a place for Our Lady in our home!'.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> E. CERIA, *Biographical Memoirs of Fr John Bosco* (BM) XVII, p. 471.

<sup>2</sup> EGIDIO VIGANÒ, "Mary is renewing the Salesian Family of Don Bosco", ASC n. 289 (1978), p. 5.

## 1. MARY THE IMMACULATE HELP OF CHRISTIANS, IN THE LIFE OF SAINT JOHN BOSCO

To speak about the presence of Mary in the life story of our Father means in practice to consider his whole life; that would be impossible in a few lines. A superb summary is offered us in our Constitutions, where in article 8 we find three key words which capture the maternal presence of Mary in the life of the Founder: **she *showed* Don Bosco his field of labour among the young and was the constant *guide and support*, especially in the foundation of our Society**. In addition, right at the beginning of the Constitutions, we find this same conviction: **“Through the motherly intervention of May the Holy Spirit raised up St John Bosco”** (C. 1).

### 1.1 The maternal intervention of Mary in the life of Don Bosco

We are told first of all that Mary “**showed** Don Bosco his field of labour among the young”. This undoubtedly constitutes a re-evocation of the dream at nine years of age on which certainly we have all had an opportunity to meditate, particularly this year, having in our hands the *Memoirs of the Oratory*, the book which is the “route map” for this first stage of preparation for the Bicentenary.

One of the features that has most impressed me in this “account of the foundation” is the close connection between the Lord Jesus and his Mother Mary. When little John asks a two-part question, the first about the identity of the mysterious Personage and the second his name (one cannot but recall the biblical text of *Ex* 3,13), in both cases he is referred to Mary:

- But *who are you*, that speaks so?
- I am the *Son of the Woman*, whom your mother has taught you to greet three times a day.

- My mother tells me not to mix with people I don't know unless I have her permission. So tell me *your name*.
- *Ask my mother* what my name is.

She is this “lady of stately appearance ...wearing a mantle that sparkled all over as though covered with bright stars”. She explains the vision and indicates the mission which God is entrusting to him: «This is the **field of your work**. Make yourself humble, strong and energetic; and what you will see happening to these animals in a moment is what you must do **for my children**».

This last expression is extremely significant: receiving his orders from Mary, little John identifies her as the Mother of the young who are poor, abandoned and in danger; those who at the end of the dream are transformed from wild animals into gentle lambs, “which were all jumping and bleating as if to welcome that man and lady”.<sup>3</sup>

He is given not only “information about his field of work and its purpose” but also the method, in other words that “*loving kindness*” which, together with reason and religion, will constitute the system which later, Don Bosco will call “preventive”. «You will have to win these friends of yours not by blows but by gentleness and love. Start right away to teach them the ugliness of sin and the value of virtue».<sup>4</sup> “Under the guidance of Mary his teacher, Don Bosco lived with the boys of the first Oratory a spiritual and educational experience which he called the ‘Preventive System’” (C. 20).

In this same perspective, even if twenty years later (1844), we find a similar dream. Mary is once again there, in the form of a beautiful Shepherdess who, while she shows him the field of his mission, suggests to the young priest the *method* to use in carrying out this mission, in company with other co-workers.

<sup>3</sup> JOHN BOSCO, *Memoirs of the Oratory*. Trans. Daniel Lyons SDB. Don Bosco Publications, New Rochelle, New York 1989. p. 18-9.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibidem*.



«I then saw that four-fifths of the animals had been changed into lambs and their number greatly increased. Just then several shepherds came along to take care of the flock; but they stayed only a very short time and promptly went away. Then something wonderful happened. Many of the lambs were transformed into shepherds, who as they grew took care of the others. As the number of shepherds became great, they split up and went to other places to gather other strange animals and guide them into other folds».<sup>5</sup>

In this text, I should like to underline that which constitutes the “typically Salesian method” of vocation promotion, without on that account denying the validity of other proposals or different methods; but, for us, the advice coming from the Mother of God herself is: “change some of the lambs into shepherds”.

It is sufficient to recall what I said in one of my previous letters, on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the founding of the Congregation: almost all the young men gathered around the Founder corresponded to that “description” which Mary had indicated to Don Bosco 15 years earlier. «One thing is certain: the Salesian Congregation was founded and expanded drawing in young men who were convinced by the apostolic passion of Don Bosco and by his dream of life. We need to **tell young people** the story of the beginnings of the Congregation, of which the young men were ‘co-founders’».<sup>6</sup> That explains the tenacity (which to some appeared obstinacy) with which Don Bosco used this method, unusual in those days, that is to say gathering future co-workers from among the young themselves, forming them with very special care.

This first aspect of Mary’s intervention in the life of Don Bosco continues to be the norm in the life of our Congregation, if we want to live in fidelity to God and to our mission. We were not

<sup>5</sup> JOHN BOSCO,, *Memoirs of the Oratory*, o.c. p. 134.

<sup>6</sup> PASCUAL CHÁVEZ, “He summoned those he wanted and they came to him” (Mk 3.13). *On the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Salesian Congregation*, AGC 404 (2009) p. 29.

the ones to choose the field of activity and the goal to be reached: the most profound concept behind a sense of **mission** is that of being "sent" to collaborate with the Master of the youth harvest. It is not simply a matter of "doing good", since there is so much work to be done for the salvation of the world! Don Bosco, especially as a young priest, had a great variety of apostolic possibilities; nonetheless he was aware of being sent for a specific mission, so much so that he declared that "every concern which draws us from [the care of youth] cannot be good".<sup>7</sup>

It is a typical feature of the gospel: when the apostles go looking for Jesus who is alone on the mountain living to the full his being the son and praying to the Father, they say to him: «Everybody is looking for you!» He answers: «Let us go elsewhere, to the neighbouring country towns, so that I can preach there too; because that is why I came!» (*Mk* 1,37-38). The parallel text in Luke says: «I must proclaim the Good News of the kingdom of God to the other towns too; because that is what *I was sent to do*» (*Lk* 4,43).

Closely reflecting the action of Mary indicated by the first word, we find in the text of the Constitutions two others: she **guided** and **supported** him. This hendiadys can be understood in relation to the two fundamental dimensions of a person: the intellect and the will. Mary is the Mother and Teacher who enlightens the intellect of little John, so that he is able to understand progressively and each time at a deeper level (*intus-legere*), what his mission consists in («In good time you will understand everything»), until the very moving moment comes in which, celebrating Mass in the Basilica of the Sacred Heart in Rome, he will confess: "Now I understand everything". On the other hand, Mary supports him throughout his life, strengthening his will so that he can become ever more "strong and energetic": otherwise he would not have been able to cope with the burdens and the difficulties of the mission.

<sup>7</sup> BM XIV, p. 216.

## 1.2 Don Bosco's response to Mary in his life

In addition to what the reflection on these three words offers us we can meditate on the presence of Mary in the life of Don Bosco considering **the titles** to which he wished to give prominence and which are certainly not accidental: **Immaculate - Help of Christians**. In this regard we find a small “commentary” in our Rule of Life: “Mary Immaculate the Help of Christians leads us to the fullness of our offering to the Lord and gives us courage for the service of our brethren” (C. 92). In the ‘ad experimentum’ text of 1972, these two aspects were separated, and placed respectively under one or other of the titles. The current text, on the other hand unifies them, since our love for God is inseparable from our love and service of our brothers and sisters, especially of the young to whom the Lord sends us.

### *Immaculate*

As I wrote on another occasion, «on the cupola of the sanctuary of Mary Help of Christians there is a beautiful statue of the Immaculate. The Immaculate on the outside and the Help of Christians on the inside. They are the two titles with which Don Bosco wanted to honour Our Lady, because both of them are part of his charism and his mission: the salvation of the young through an all-round education».<sup>8</sup>

It is good to recall if only briefly the significance and the importance that the title of the “Immaculate” had for Don Bosco. We know that the dogma was proclaimed during his lifetime, on 8 December 1854, but it is certain that associations with the Immaculate were already present in popular piety, since it was celebrated as a Feast. It was precisely some years before the solemn proclamation that Mary Immaculate was at the start of Salesian Work. Let us recall at least in part Don Bosco's own account: «On the solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of

<sup>8</sup> PASCUAL CHÁVEZ, “L’Immacolata e Don Bosco” in: *Sacro Cuore*, Bologna, December 2011.

Mary (8 December 1841), I was vesting to celebrate holy Mass at the appointed time. Joseph Comotti, the sacristan, seeing a boy in a corner, asked him to come and serve my Mass. 'I don't know how, he answered completely embarrassed'». <sup>9</sup> Immediately afterwards we find the important meeting between Don Bosco and Bartholomew Garelli, and the "Hail Mary" with which "everything began".

In addition it is well to recall how in the oratory the extraordinary event of the declaration of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception was celebrated. «For Don Bosco the promulgation ...had been the answer to many prayers and Masses he had said to hasten this long-awaited definition. Now he continued to pray to and thank the Lord for having so glorified the Queen of Angels and of men. The feast of the Immaculate Conception became his favourite feast although of course he continued to observe the feast of the Assumption with great solemnity». <sup>10</sup>

Fr Egidio Viganò, in the Letter for the presentation of the renewed Constitutions, speaking about 8 December, wrote: «This feast of Our Lady so full of meaning for every Salesian heart, is a date that was very dear to Don Bosco; it was the date that he said marked the official birth of our charism in the Church. It may be indicative to recall some events associated with this date: in the first place the meeting with Bartholomew Garelli (1841) and the Hail Mary that began that prophetic catechism lesson; the opening of the Oratory of St Aloysius at Porta Nuova; the announcement (in 1859) of the meeting which would launch the Congregation; the consigning (in 1878) of the first printed Rule to the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians; the first appointment of one of our confreres as a Bishop (Bishop Cagliero); and, in 1885, the important announcement of the designation of Don Rua as Vicar of the Founder. On that same

<sup>9</sup> JOHN BOSCO, *Memoirs of the Oratory*, o.c. p. 187-190.

<sup>10</sup> G.B. LEMOYNE, *Biographical Memoirs of Fr John Bosco* (BM) V, 98. In this chapter, Fr.Lemoyne presents a fine summary of Don Bosco's devotion to Mary (pp. 97-101).

8 December 1885 our Father declared that “we owe everything to Mary” and that “all our greatest enterprises and events began and reached fulfilment on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception”». <sup>11</sup>

But what underlines the relationship between the title of the “Immaculate Conception” and Don Bosco is not only an historical or dogmatic coincidence. At the foundation of it we find a fundamental aspect of the “Preventive System” which, and we need to remember this once again, is not so much a clever educational insight, as something «inspired by the love of a God who provides in advance for all his creatures, is ever present at their side, and freely gives his life to save them». And so «Don Bosco passes this on to us as a **way of living** and of handing on the goapel message (...) It **permeates our approach to God**, our personal relationships and our manner of living in community, through the exercise of a charity that knows how to make itself loved» (C. 20). In my view, we will never respond sufficiently to the challenge which this way of understanding the “Preventive System” presents us with.

If God “provides in advance for all his creatures” with his providential Love, this is found in its fullest expression in Mary, the one “**full of grace**”. “Grace” as we know well is above all God himself; but this expression can also underline the fullness of the *gratuitous nature* of the Love of God in Mary. The text of the dogmatic declaration of Blessed Pius IX says so explicitly. Basically it is a question of what St John says: «Not our love for God but God’s love for us» (1 Jn 4,10). We can apply this first of all and in a unique manner to Mary. In this sense it is beautiful to be able to contemplate her the Immaculate Conception as “the most perfect fruit of *God’s anticipatory preventive system*”.

Clearly that does not exclude the human response: on the contrary, it makes it possible and indeed “demands” it, as Pope

<sup>11</sup> EGIDIO VIGANÒ, “The renewed text of our Rule of Life”, AGC n. 312 (1984) p. 46.

Benedict XVI emphasised so well: «The Almighty awaits the “yes” of his creatures as a young bridegroom that of his bride. (...) On the Cross, it is God himself who begs the love of his creature: He is thirsty for the love of every one of us».<sup>12</sup> We can apply this in the very first place to Mary. In this regard the observation of a specialist theologian, Alois Muller is interesting: «From the historical point of view to tell the truth they did not speak at first about the immaculate conception of Mary, but about the absence of sin in her life»;<sup>13</sup> this means that the Church has always seen in the “full of grace”, not only the totally free gift of God, but also Mary’s response of love, full and total.

### ***Help of Christians***

As far as the title “Help of Christians” is concerned (and which, here it should be remembered, appears in the Vatican Council II, in *Lumen Gentium*, united to that of “Mother of the Church”), we know how much importance it had for Don Bosco. In the Letter already quoted, Fr Egidio Viganò wrote: «Then there is a reason that derives from a characteristic aspect of devotion to Mary Help of Christians: it is a Marian dimension that is of its very nature *for critical times*. Don Bosco himself expressed it to Fr Cagliero in his well-known affirmation: “The Madonna wishes us to honour her under the title of “Help of Christians”; the times are so sad that we have real need of the most holy Virgin’s assistance in preserving and defending the Christian faith”».<sup>14</sup>

Continuing his reflection Fr Viganò “brought up-to-date” the difficulties of our times very different from those our Father had to face; but different in many ways also from those pressing on

<sup>12</sup> BENEDICT XVI, “*They shall look on Him whom they have pierced*”. Message for Lent 2007.

<sup>13</sup> ALOI MULLER, “Maria nell’Evento Cristo”, in: J. FEINER e M. LOEHRER ed., Queriniana, Brescia, 1971, vol. VI, p. 536.

<sup>14</sup> EGIDIO VIGANÒ, “Mary is renewing the Salesian Family of Don Bosco”, ACS n. 289 (1978), p. 10-11.

us today: times change at an alarming rate, and likewise youth culture with which we have to deal on a daily basis. One thing however needs to be underlined: by invoking Mary with this title, we do not want her to help and to defend us 'against' anyone. If we believe in the Incarnation of the Son of God as the principle which enables us to affirm his union with every man and woman in the world (cf. *GS* 22), whatever their situation might be, we can say something similar about the universal Motherhood of Mary.

However, this does not lead us to ignore the many negative situations and the many disturbing problems; to face up to these we ask her help and her protection, especially when we set ourselves against evil, against sin, against the "culture of death" so contrary to the life of which Mary as woman and as mother is the shining symbol and the powerful protector. Together with the joy of being able to observe in the different parts of the world the vitality of our charism and its beneficial effects, there emerges the sadness at seeing the devastation caused by those negative forces which through actions, people, structures and institutions – all of them expressions of the "mysterium iniquitatis" – undermine the happiness and compromise the salvation of our young people, especially these least protected. It is above all on their behalf that we ask Mary to be Mother and Help, "the motherly face of the Love of God".

I think that we can reflect further on this title trying to find an analogy with that of the Immaculate Conception which we considered previously. If the definition of the Immaculate Conception re-affirms on the dogmatic level everything that the Preventive System means for Don Bosco, would it be an exaggeration to see in the dogma of the Assumption of Mary, proclaimed by Pope Pius XII in 1950, a close connection with the title the "Help of Christians"? It is worth remembering as the liturgical texts emphasise that the Ascension of Jesus does not mean his "detachment" from the world or a lack of care for the Church and for humanity, but the contrary:

“He ascended, not to distance himself from our lowly state but that we, his members, might be confident of following where he, our Head and Founder, has gone before”.<sup>15</sup>

Can we not therefore in an analogous manner maintain that the Assumption of Mary marks the beginning of her protection and of her maternal help on behalf of all Christians, indeed of all men and women in the world? This way of thinking about her, in addition to linking our devotion to Mary with the titles of Immaculate-Help of Christians to the Magisterium of the Church, enables us to understand why for Don Bosco, the feast of the Assumption was one of his favourites as the text of the ‘Memoirs of the Oratory’ previously quoted indicates, and this not only for its coinciding (more symbolically than strictly chronologically) with his birthday, but for its rapport with the title of the “Help of Christians” and the significance of his devotion.

## **2. MARY THE IMMACULATE HELP OF CHRISTIANS, IN THE SALESIAN CONGREGATION, TODAY**

Undoubtedly the intervention of Mary at the beginning and in the early development of our Congregation continues, throughout history. Don Rua wrote in 1903: «I have no doubt at all that with an increase among Salesians of devotion to Mary Help of Christians there will also be an increase in esteem and affection for Don Bosco, no less that in the commitment to preserve his spirit and to imitate his virtues».<sup>16</sup>

I believe we are all convinced of this. But if that is true, then we need to recognise that a generous response of fidelity in carrying out our mission is necessary. We can ask ourselves: are

<sup>15</sup> Preface of the Ascension of the Lord I.

<sup>16</sup> MICHAEL RUA, Circular Letter of 19 June 1903, in *Lettere circolari di Don Michele Rua ai Salesiani*, DIREZIONE GENERALE DELLE OPERE SALESIANE, Torino, p. 353.



we, nowadays, ready to ensure that Mary Immaculate Help of Christians shows us the field of our mission and continues to guide and support us in carrying it out? In this way we shall give a practical response to her invitation: «Do whatever He tells you» (Jn 2,5) and we shall become servants of the young to ensure for them joy and the fullness of life in God.

It is undeniable, and I have been able to experience it with great joy, that wherever they may be the Saleians are promoting devotion to Mary Help of Christians. In every Province there are Churches and shrines dedicated to Her; and likewise the Christian people identify us with this title of Mary, just as in the times of our Father they called her “Don Bosco’s Madonna”. However we cannot rest content with what the confreres who have gone before us have done, nor can we limit ourselves to promoting simply in external forms devotion to Mary. In other words: our work of evangelisation and education, especially on behalf of poor young people who are abandoned or in danger must in itself be a practical experience of the Love that is freely given, anticipatory and effective which we contemplate in Mary the Immaculate Help of Christians, in order to make them her children as she asked little John in his dream to do.

## **2.1 “*Mary is present among us*” (C. 8)**

Recognising that it is impossible to sum up in a few pages what the maternal presence of Mary Help of Christians means for us today, or the various different expressions and manifestations of our devotion to Her, I shall limit myself to presenting what we find about Her in our Constitutions, while trying to fill it out with some references to the Word of God.

Without any doubt fidelity to our charism, or better to God’s will in carrying out our mission, consists in the observance of the Constitutions. To the question: “What would Don Bosco do

today?" we cannot give subjective or sentimental answers, and even less individualistic ones. It is rather a matter of putting into practice our Rule of life: «If you have loved me in the past, continue to love me in the future by the exact observance of our Constitutions» (SDB Constitutions and Regulations, Foreword). Nor is it out of place to recall what the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consecrata* says: «When the Church approves a form of consecrated life or an Institute, she **confirms** that in its spiritual and apostolic charism are found all the objective requisites for achieving personal and communal perfection according to the Gospel» (VC 93; my emphasis).

Well then, in our Constitutions we can find many references to Mary. In the first place two articles dedicated entirely to Her (art. 8 and art. 92) to which I have already referred several times. Article 92 corresponds, in the main, to the "ad experimentum" text of 1972; on the other hand article 8 is totally new and corresponds to the purpose which the first part of the Constitutions has. This section, which consists in the articles from 1 to 25 ("The Salesians of Don Bosco in the Church"), presents our **charismatic identity**; before speaking about what "we do" it defines **who we are**, in the Church and in the world, on behalf of the young especially.

And it is precisely in the first chapter, in which our identity is presented that it was decided to place an article on Mary the Immaculate Help of Christians, to underline that she "forms part" one might say, of the Salesian charismatic patrimony. «We believe that Mary is present among us and continues her 'mission as Mother of the Church and Help of Christians'» (quoting Don Bosco). Our filial devotion to Her characterised by 'entrustment' ("We entrust ourselves to her"), contemplates in particular her nature as "the humble servant in whom the Lord has done great things", and is a direct and immediate reference to the nucleus and heart of our mission: «that we may become **witnesses** to the young **of her Son's boundless love**» (C. 8).

## 2.2 “*We contemplate and imitate... (C. 92)*”

On the other hand, article 92 is to be found in the *context* of the life of prayer, characterised by an expression which immediately refers to its Christian identity: “*in dialogue with the Lord*”. In this context the fundamental features of Salesian devotion to Mary the Immaculate Help of Christians are presented.

First of all I should like to pause and to consider the two words with which this devotion is described: ***we contemplate-imitate***. It seems to me it would be of interest to compare this twofold characteristic with the experience of one of the greatest saints of modern times, Saint Teresa of Lisieux. In her use of language which at times could appear sentimental and even somewhat sugary, we find a depth of an extraordinary Christian life and, in particular, what Hans Urs von Balthasar identifies as the fundamental attitude of the little Carmelite saint: her passion for the **truth**, for the authentic, her instinctive rejection of every falsehood,<sup>17</sup> also (and above all) in the religious field. Speaking about devotion to Mary, Saint Teresa of Lisieux, then at the end of her life, declared:

«The priests should help us see (in Mary) practical virtues! It is all very well to speak about her privileges, but it is necessary first of all that one can imitate her. She prefers imitation to admiration, and her life was very simple (...). How much I would have liked to be a priest so that I could say everything I think about this! (...) There is no need to say things about her that are not true or that one doesn't know. (...) For a sermon about the Most Holy Virgin to please me and to be profitable for me it should make me see her real life, not an imaginary life: and I am sure that her real life was extremely simple. They make it so remote. It needs to be presented as something to imitate, highlighting her virtues, saying that **she lived by faith as we do** illustrating it from the Gospel. (...) We know

<sup>17</sup> Cf. HANS URS VON BALTHASAR, *Teresa de Lisieux. Historia de una Misión*, Barcelona, ed. Herder, 1957.

very well that the Most Holy Virgin is Queen of heaven and of earth, but she is **much more Mother than Queen**».<sup>18</sup>

I believe that for us Salesians “men with a gift for synthesis”, rather than them being alternatives, it is a question of not seeing them as opposites (as perhaps was necessary at the time and in the environment of Saint Teresina), but of integrating the two in such a way that contemplation enables us to admire in Mary “the marvellous workings of the grace of God” and at the same time encourages us to imitate her. God certainly does not work in us in the “same” way as in Mary, but that does not mean in a completely different way, but rather in a *similar* way.

In fact, contemplating in the two great Marian dogmas, that of the Immaculate Conception and that of the Assumption, what God in the infinitely free gift of his Love accomplished in Mary, we come to understand in faith what God wants to accomplish also in us, if we on our part live with the attitude of the Mother of God. We only have to think that «He chose us (in Christ) before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and blameless before him in love» (*Eph* 1,4); and that the Assumption of Mary constitutes “a sign of sure hope and solace for the pilgrim people of God” (cf. *LG* 68): in her is fully fulfilled what God wants to accomplish in us in a *similar* way.

We need to stay for a moment with the idea of “imitation”. For some Christians such a word could produce a certain uncomfortable feeling and even rejection, since it would seem to be reduced to an automatic repetition of actions and words. This is not so. Genuine imitation is totally different: it means taking the *attitudes* and the *essential motivations*, assimilating them personally and putting them into practice creatively. With regard to our imitation of Christ, we can recall some texts from Paul: it is a question of **thinking like Christ** (cf. *1 Cor* 2,16), **feeling like Christ** (cf. *Phil* 2,5), in order to **act like Christ**.

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<sup>18</sup> Cf. TERESA DE LISIEUX, *Obras Completas*, Burgos, Ed. Monte Carmelo, 6a.ed., 1984, pp. 952-960.

We can say something similar with regard to our contemplation and imitation of Mary the Immaculate Help of Christians.

As well as these reminders we find in the text of the Constitutions another expression-hendiadys describing our Marian devotion: «we develop a *strong filial* devotion to her» (C. 92): this invites us to go beyond any purely sentimental and therefore weak devotional approach yet without falling into dry and sterile overfanciful conceits. The commentary on the Constitutions says: that this «not only implies our tenderness to her who is the 'Mother most amiable' but also our courage in imitating her in her complete dedication to the will of God».<sup>19</sup>

Finally in this same clarification of our devotion, article 92 concludes, we: «celebrate her feasts to encourage a **more convinced and personal imitation**». It seems to me that in the texts of our Constitutions there is a perfect balance between the amazed contemplation of what God accomplished in Mary and the encouragement to imitate her as her children in her great virtues, especially in her *fundamental threefold theological attitude of: faith-hope-charity*.

## 2.3 "We recite the rosary each day"<sup>20</sup> (C. 92)

Before speaking specifically about Mary as the model for our life of faith-hope-charity, I should like to say a word about our Marian prayer, in particular about the Holy Rosary. During my life as a Salesian, and even more as Rector Major, I have been able to observe with great joy and much admiration, the practice of saying the Holy Rosary on the part of so many confreres, especially the elderly ones, "with holy exaggeration", who with

<sup>19</sup> *The project of life of the Salesians of Don Bosco. A Guide to the Salesian Constitutions*, Rome 1986, p. 709.

<sup>20</sup> The expression "we recite the rosary each day" was placed, at the GC22, in the article of the Regulations which presents the typical expression of Salesian devotion to the Virgin Mary. Now it is in the text of the Constitutions at the end of article 92, at the express wish of the Holy See.

great simplicity and constancy throughout the day express in this way their union with God and their love for Blessed Mary. I would like to invite all the confreres to continue this extraordinary practice of piety, not by routine or because "we have to", but trying to appreciate ever more its significance and the motives behind it.

Above all I believe that it is a question of a practice that perfectly combines vocal prayer with the contemplation of the mysteries of the life of Jesus, in company with and in imitation of Mary, who «kept all these things pondering them in her heart» (Lk 2,19; cf. 3,51b).

In his Apostolic Exhortation *Marialis Cultus*, Paul VI wrote: «There has also been felt with greater urgency the need to point out once more the importance of a further essential element in the Rosary, in addition to the value of the elements of praise and petition, namely the element of contemplation. Without this the Rosary is a body without a soul, and its recitation is in danger of becoming a mechanical repetition of formulas (...) By its nature the recitation of the Rosary calls for a quiet rhythm and a lingering pace, helping the individual to meditate on the mysteries of the Lord's life as seen through the eyes of her who was closest to the Lord. In this way the unfathomable riches of these mysteries are unfolded» (MC, 47).

It is interesting to note that a very important area of current theology, especially in the field of Christology and Mariology, is trying to renew what is at the foundation of the holy Rosary, that is the "theology of the Mysteries". One of its main representatives declares: «Quite rightly in the modern age there has been a demand for the re-establishment of a "place" for the systematic theology of earlier times, that is the inclusion of the *mysteria Christi*, therefore of a practical Christology in the treatise on Christology which had become more and more abstract».<sup>21</sup> And a

<sup>21</sup> ALOIS GRILLMEIER, "I Misteri della Vita di Gesù", in: J.FEINER-M.LOEHRER, *Mysterium Salutis III*, Queriniana, Brescia, 1973, p. 10.

little further on he states: «The liturgical movement, the renewal of theology in the spirit of the study of the Fathers (H. de Lubac, J. Danielou, H. U. von Balthasar), the rediscovery of dogmatic ecclesiology and its synthesis in Vatican II, of the 'history of salvation' and of a Christology in the context of the history of salvation (O. Cullmann; Constitution *Dei Verbum* of Vatican II); all of this means the start of a new way of looking at the 'mysteries' of Christ. Nevertheless, it would appear that there is a barrier preventing the Christian of today from meeting the person of Christ in his mysteries. (...) We have to rediscover the mystery and the individual mysteries of Christ, in the heritage of the past, on the basis of newly built foundations».<sup>22</sup>

We hope that this little encouragement will help us to live with creative fidelity our devotion to Mary through the Holy Rosary, and also to introduce our young people to this kind of simple and practical prayer and meditation.

### 3. MARY, MODEL OF FAITH, OF HOPE AND OF LOVE

Given the wealth and variety of Marian attitudes presented for our contemplation and offered for our imitation (both in article 92 of the Constitution and in some of the others which mention the Mother of God), it would be opportune to gather them together around the three theological virtues, so as then to relate them to the three gospel values: obedience, poverty and chastity; to this end we will have recourse to biblical reflection, since – as Paul VI recalls in his Apostolic Exhortation *Marialis Cultus* already quoted: «Today it is recognized as a general need of Christian piety that every form of worship should have a biblical imprint (...) Devotion to the Blessed Virgin cannot be exempt from this general orientation of Christian piety; indeed it should draw inspiration in a special way from this orientation in order to gain new vigour and sure help» (*MC* 30).

<sup>22</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 34.

First of all a general observation: it is interesting to note the significance that the figure of Mary assumes, as the historical process of the New Testament unfolds. The process starts with the earliest texts – the letters of Saint Paul and Mark’s gospel, which make only some passing reference, then moving on to Matthew and Luke who, from independent positions (in this section even more than in others!), both reflect on the human origins of Jesus in close connection with his mother Mary; until one arrives at the figure of the Woman, the new Eve, in John’s works: the fourth gospel and the Apocalypse. We could say that to the extent that the Christian community enlightened by the Holy Spirit reflected more deeply on the mystery of Christ, so too was it discovering progressively the importance of Mary.

### **3.1 «*Blessed are you who believed*» (Lk 1,45)**

«We contemplate and imitate her faith», says the article in the Constitutions we are considering. And in the context of the education in the faith of our young people, we read in article 34: «The Virgin Mary is present in this process as a mother. We make her known and loved as the one who believed» (C. 34). A question this text immediately poses for us is: do we evoke in our boys/girls a devotion to Mary which puts her faith in the foreground?

Faith we know is the fundamental attitude of the believer since as the Letter to the Hebrews says, «Without faith it is impossible to please God» (*Heb* 11,6). Elizabeth calls Mary “the one who believes” par excellence, congratulating her on this account and proclaiming her “blessed”. This greeting takes us back to a moment in the life of Mary that we can call a ‘watershed’, in other words the Annunciation. It is on that occasion that Mary, while becoming aware that God has a marvellous plan for her, the “full of grace” (no translation can do justice to the wealth of the original word in the gospel, *kecharitoméne*!) is invited to collaborate freely with Him. The question put to the angel Gabriel:



«How can this be since I have no husband?» is in no way an objection or an indication of doubt but rather an expression of her desire to correspond giving her full consent, as consciously and freely as possible to the divine invitation, In paradoxical terms, Mary freely and joyfully accepts (the optative mood is that of wishing!) to become the “handmaid” of the Lord: «let it be to me according to your word».

I should like to underline some features to be discovered in this gospel text, located precisely in the fullness of time (cf. *Gal* 4,4):

- Mary’s faith is above all, *trust* in God. As I said on another occasion: “Mary does not entrust herself to God’s plan but rather to the God of the plan”. Faith is not, in the first place the acceptance of some objective reality that God reveals, but the unconditional assent, typical of love, to Him and to what He wants from us. “Ask me anything and I shall do it” is one of the typical expressions of love even on the human level; even more so in the relationship of a person with God. Something similar happens in our life: we do not entrust ourselves to God because we already know beforehand his plan for us, but for the reason that it is He who invites us to place ourselves in his hands, like a child in its mother’s arms.
- Mary’s faith is expressed and takes practical form in her *obedience*. The great believers in the history of salvation are genuinely the *obedient ones*: beginning with our “father in faith” Abraham, right up to Mary. Saint Paul describes his apostolic vocation in this way: «through whom [Jesus] we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the *obedience of faith*» (*Rm* 1,5). A faith that does not lead us to seek God’s will in order to then put it into practice in life is not genuinely Christian, because it would be reduced to a sterile intellectual exercise or to an inconclusive vague desire.

- In Latin there is a significant convergence between three words: **fides** - **fiducia** - **fidelitas**. The **faith** understood as **trust** which leads to obeying God, as time passes, leads to and proves itself in **fidelity**: especially in those moments in which one either "lives by faith" or else everything collapses and breaks down. In this sense, the article in the Constitutions invites us to contemplate in Mary "fidelity at the hour of the cross".

It is precisely this faith-trust that is translated into obedience which marks the path that Mary follows from the Annunciation at Nazareth, to Jerusalem, to Golgotha, to the foot of the Cross. A journey undoubtedly difficult and sorrowful; because, we have to admit, accepting God unconditionally into her life in no way, humanly speaking, made things easy for Mary; on the contrary it complicated things tremendously. I shall underline two typical aspects of Mary's experience of faith:

- 1) All her human expectations (starting from her plan of life with Joseph!) seem to go up in smoke: the birth of her Son in a place where the animals lived because «there was no place for them in the inn» (*Lk* 2,7); the sorrowful prophecy of Simeon just 40 days after the birth of her Son; the scene at twelve years of age in Jerusalem about which the gospel says: «But they did not understand what he meant» (*Lk* 2,50). As I wrote in a Letter some years ago, «Precisely because in any relationship with God it is always He who takes the initiative and decides on times and means, the relationship is never always the same. Mary learned this very soon: from the moment she gave birth to her son, she did not understand what was being said of him (*Lk* 2,18-19); the more she heard of the future of her son, the less did it coincide with what she had been told at the annunciation (*Lk* 1,30-33.35). The loss of the child Jesus in the Temple was a warning sign of a still more harrowing future (...) she had to live in the same house as a son who knew he was God but was for a time still submissive to her (*Lk* 2,49-51). No wonder that

Mary, who could not understand it all, “kept all these things, pondering them in her heart” (*Lk 2,19*)». <sup>23</sup>

- 2) But above all it is the relationship of Jesus with his Mother that demonstrates Mary’s faith journey: it would seem that during his public life the Son is distancing himself from her more and more; and we even find texts which give the impression that Jesus “plays down” this human motherhood: it is sufficient to recall *Mk 3,31-35* (progressively “softened” by *Mt 12,46ss* and *Lk 8,19-21*) and *Lk 11,27-28*: «Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it». There is certainly no question at all of any disrespect with regard to his Mother, but rather of showing her real greatness as the model of the one who “hears the word of God and puts it into practice”, but there is no doubt about the price she had to pay in this process of growth in faith. Precisely because no one, like her, has been so “close” to the Son of God made Man, it was so painful to live this progressive distancing of the “son” so as to be able to grow more and more in faith in the “Son” with a capital letter, the Son of God.

And yet, recalling the words of Elizabeth, faith, of which Mary is the incomparable model, is the source of *happiness*: of the only real happiness. We find here an interesting *inclusion* between the first “beatitude” of the Gospel (certainly before those which the gospel gives in the sermon on the mount!) and the last, which appears in *Jn 20,29*: «Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe!». In fact, the **beatitude of the faith** makes all the others possible: without it it would be absurd to declare that the poor, those who suffer, the despised are happy... There is a precise continuity between the first beatitude, in the singular, and the last one in the plural, as if to say: “blessed are those who are similar to Mary...”.

<sup>23</sup> PASCUAL CHÁVEZ, *The Word of God and Salesian life today*, AGC n. 386 (2004), p. 51.

There is a small nuance that I should like to note. The translation of the words of Elizabeth fluctuate between two meanings, apparently similar, but in reality very different: “Blessed is she who believed *that the promise* made her by the Lord *would be fulfilled*” or “Blessed is she who believed *because the promise* made her by the Lord *will be fulfilled*”. The version which undoubtedly corresponds better to the real situation in Mary’s life and also in ours, is the second: we are happy because we believe that what we believe in by faith will be fulfilled. But even here we have to add: not according to our expectations but according to God’s plan, fully accepted in the “obedience of faith”, the foundation of our consecrated obedience.

### **3.2 “*The one who believed, who helps and who infuses hope*” (C. 34)**

Significantly, in the text of the Constitutions, in Mary as in the life of every Christian faith and hope although they are in themselves distinct are intimately connected, in that faith is based on the historical reality of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God made man, whereas hope looks towards the future: «For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope» (*Rm* 8,24).

This distinction can lead us to separate the two attitudes, producing that nostalgia for the past which paralyzes us as regards the future. In the Letter convoking the GC26, I wrote: «A challenge, often felt as a threat, concerns the *uncertainty of the future* of consecrated life, especially with regard to the questions raised about its survival in certain parts of the world. The drop in numbers, lack of vocations and increasing age of the members create in the Congregations a lack of future prospects, the need for large-scale reshaping, and the search for a new cultural stability. To all this must sometimes be added a lack of vitality, vocational frailty, and painful desertions. It all leads to a lack of motivation, discouragement and paralysis. In such conditions it is difficult to

discern a strategy of hope that will open up horizons, provide new paths to follow and ensure the necessary *leadership*».<sup>24</sup>

As the programme of the GC26 indicated, “to reawaken the heart of every Salesian” was a question of “living our faith” (cf. *Heb* 2,4; *Rm* 1,17; *Gal* 3,11) so as to nourish hope and make pastoral charity possible. The great danger in these days is not so much the loss of faith as rather a weakening of hope, the inability ‘to dream’ a promising future in the carrying out of our mission with the young. What happened to Gideon may happen to us. He certainly believed in everything that was the faith of the people in the past, but in no way did that give him courage for the future, rather the reverse:

«The angel of the Lord appeared to him and said to him: – ‘The Lord is with you, you mighty man of valour’. And Gideon said to him: – ‘Pray sir, if the Lord is with us why has all this befallen us? And where are all his wonderful deeds which our fathers recounted to us, saying: “Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt?”’. But now the Lord has cast us off and given us into the hand of Madian’». (*Judges* 6,12-13).

It is precisely when we are living in difficult times that Mary Help of Christians, “Our Lady of difficult times”, shows herself a Mother who “infuses hope”. When we trace Mary’s faith journey we discover that, in fact, it is precisely hope that is involved. She could have felt tempted to think: “Was it not all a dream, beautiful certainly but one that has vanished in the face to the hard reality of the present time?”. In his Encyclical on hope Benedict XVI writes addressing Mary:

«Then, when Jesus began his public ministry, you had to step aside, so that a new family could grow, the family which it was his mission to establish and which would be made up of those who heard his word and kept it (cf. *Lk* 11:27f). (...) In this way

<sup>24</sup> PASCUAL CHÁVEZ, “*Da mihi animas, cetera tolle. Charismatic identity and sharing apostolic zeal. Starting again from Don Bosco to reawaken the heart of every Salesian*”, AGC 394 (2006) p. 26.

you saw the growing power of hostility and rejection which built up around Jesus until the hour of the Cross, when you had to look upon the Saviour of the world, the heir of David, the Son of God dying like a failure, exposed to mockery, between criminals.(...) The sword of sorrow pierced your heart. Did hope die? (...) In this faith, which even in the darkness of Holy Saturday bore the certitude of hope, you made your way towards Easter morning. (...) Thus you remain in the midst of the disciples as their Mother, as the Mother of hope. Holy Mary, Mother of God, our Mother, teach us to believe, to hope, to love with you».<sup>25</sup>

If at first we used to speak about a “blessing of faith”. now we can speak about a “blessing of hope”, which Mary also makes her own: “Happy is the man who does not lose faith in me!” (*Mt* 11,6). The description St Paul gives of Abraham, declaring that “in hope he believed against hope” (*Rm* 4,18), could be applied with greater reason to Mary: on the one hand, because the whole passage speaks about faith in the risen Jesus Christ (cf. *Rm* 4,24-25) and, on the other because, even more than in the case of Abraham, Mary in facing a situation before which – humanly speaking – there is no room for hope, in other words death.

There is a very beautiful passage, in the form of a prayer which Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini offered his Archdiocese on the occasion of the year 2000. It is worth reading and meditating on; here I quote some of the more significant paragraphs.

«You, O Mary learned to wait and to hope. With trust you awaited the birth of your Son announced by the angel, you continued to believe in the word of Gabriel even during the long time when you understood nothing, you hoped against all hope under the cross and finally at the tomb, you spent Holy Saturday infusing hope in the disciples feeling lost and disappointed. You obtain for them and for us the consolation of hope, that which could be called ‘consolation of the heart’ (...) You, O Mother of hope, waited patiently in peace on Holy Sat-

<sup>25</sup> BENEDICT XVI, Encyclical Letter “*Spe Salvi*”, Rome, 30 November 2007, n. 50.

urday and you teach us to look with patience and perseverance at what we are living through in the Saturday of history when many, even Christians, are tempted to no longer hope in eternal life or in the return of the Lord (...) The little faith we have in reading the Signs of God's presence in our history becomes impatience and flight, just as it did for the two disciples of Emmaus who in the face of some signals of the Risen Lord did not have the strength to wait to see how things turned out but left Jerusalem (cf. Lk 24,13ss). We pray to you O Mother of hope and of patience: like your Son to have mercy on us and to come to us and to seek us out on the path of our flights and impatience, as he did with the disciples of Emmaus. Ask that once again his word may warm our hearts (cf. Lk 24,32)».<sup>26</sup>

If faith is closely connected with and is expressed in obedience, can we not perhaps find an equally close connection between hope and *poverty*? In fact, only someone who does not feel satisfied can "hope"; and only someone who knows that "the best is yet to come" can really hope.

Significantly all the beatitudes reach out to a future of promises; at the same time they become serious pieces of advice (not really threats) for someone who having everything closes himself off from the future as indicated by hope (cf. Lk 6,24-26). In other words, only someone who recognises his own poverty and cultivates in himself the heart of a poor man can nurture hope! But this interior attitude does not arise from the awareness of the scarcity of his own possessions but from the greatness of those that we are waiting for. It is God awaited as the Supreme Good who makes us poor and therefore full of hope.

I think that here can be found an extremely rich seam to be mined contemplating our Father Don Bosco, whose unwavering faith in the providence of God and in the maternal protection of Mary is demonstrated in an extraordinary ability to *hope*: not in the passive sense of "waiting" for things to happen, but in

<sup>26</sup> CARLO MARIA MARTINI, Pastoral Letter "*La Madonna del Sabato santo*" for 2000-2001.

the sense of getting down to work because “*things happen*”, an unequivocal proof of his pastoral love (of which we shall speak later). In Don Bosco we find an extraordinary ability to change difficulties and obstacles into challenges and reasons to continue to go ahead. As an authentic son of Don Bosco, the Salesian «does not give way to discouragement in face of difficulties (...) and does not bewail his own times» (C. 17) and, as an apostle and educator, «proclaims to the young “new heavens and a new earth”, awakening in them hope and the dedication and joy to which it gives rise» (C. 63).

### **3.3 *Mary, “model of pastoral love” (C. 92)***

If of the three theological virtues «the greatest of these is charity» (1 Cor 13,13), it is undoubtedly to charity that faith and hope lead, and certainly Mary is an eminent example and model of love. Taking up the words of Hans Urs von Balthasar in the title of his famous book, “Only Love is worthy of faith”, we can apply them in the first place to the Most Holy Virgin: only the Love of God gives meaning to her faith and nourishes her hope.

The words of our Constitutions in this regard, although brief, are particularly significant. Above all in relation to God: «Mary Immaculate Help of Christians leads us to the fullness of our offering to the Lord» (C. 92). This theological attitude however is inseparable from the love of our neighbour: «we contemplate and imitate (...) her concern for the needy», she «gives us courage for the service of our brethren», «model of prayer and pastoral love» (C. 92).

The gospel references are well-known: in the first place the intimate rapport (not only because in the text of Luke it immediately follows) between the experience of God in the Annunciation and the journey which “in haste” Mary makes to visit and be of service to her cousin Elizabeth. Rather: the “sign” which the angel Gabriel gives the Virgin is not so much a convincing



theoretical confirmation such as to minimise her confidence in God, as rather an invitation to the mission, "to set out" to take to Elizabeth and her family (including the child not yet born, John the Baptist) the One who is the Bearer of Joy, Jesus.<sup>27</sup>

Contemplating Mary's "concern for those in need" we spontaneously think of the account in St John's gospel of the wedding feast at Cana. Without taking anything away from the symbolic and theological significance of the first "sign" worked by Jesus according to the fourth gospel (already highlighted by the first Fathers of the Church down to the latest exegetes and scholars), we should not fail to recognise its more simple and immediate significance. In it we can discover not only the solicitude and concern for the needs of others, but also Mary's sensitivity as much in regard to those responsible for the situation, as to Jesus himself. And it is not out of place to emphasise the "Salesian" aspect of this miracle: the first "sign" of Jesus is dedicated to the joy of the festivities.

But above all, regarding this central aspect of the life of Mary and of every Christian, we cannot limit ourselves to isolated quotations or incomplete aspects. «For the grace of God has appeared for the salvation of all men». (*Tit* 2,11); «The kindness and love of God our saviour for mankind were revealed (*filantropia*, in the Greek text)» (*Tit* 3,4). If we take seriously the fact that God's plan of salvation is nothing other than the definitive and full manifestation of his Love, and if Mary collaborated in a singular manner in our salvation, we need to examine further this collaboration from the perspective of Love.

Quite rightly present day theology starting from the unanimous testimony of the New Testament, insists in placing the origin of our salvation in the loving Will of the Father, who by the work of the Holy Spirit has sent us His Son born of Mary; and it

<sup>27</sup> A detail which I consider significant has not often been mentioned: Mary is more concerned about loving and serving others than about herself or her situation, and for Joseph that creates a problem that will only be resolved by another direct intervention of God: cf. *Mt* 1,18-21.

gives great emphasis to the **Trinitarian** nature of the Paschal Mystery. With wonder and joy the Easter Proclamation addressing the Father declares (evoking *Rm* 8,32):

Father how wonderful your care for us!

How boundless your merciful love!

To ransom a slave you gave away your Son!

From this point of view, to the “*kénosis*” of the Son, who “strips” himself of his divine condition, assuming the human condition, making himself obedient unto death, death on the cross (cf. *Phil* 2,5-8), corresponds the “*kénosis*” of the Father, who gives us everything in Him (cf. *Rm* 8,32).

At the crucial moment of Jesus’ life when «having loved his own who were in the world he loved them to the end» (*Jn* 13,1), given that «A man can have no greater love than to lay down his life for his friends» (*Jn* 15,13), we find Mary at the foot of the cross: we have three verses with a surprising force (*Jn* 19,25-27).

We are accustomed – rightly so – to consider this text as the “testament” of Jesus, who entrusts to the beloved disciple the symbol of all the men and women who believe in Him, his own Mother: «Behold your Mother!»; and this fills us with extraordinary joy. But what is not always taken sufficiently into consideration is what it means saying to his Mother: «Woman, behold your son!», inviting her to share to the full his own renunciation (“*kénosis*”), the total emptying of himself. In fact, the hardest sacrifice that can be asked of a mother is that she accept another in the place of her own son. Here we find the most radical expression of the Holy Virgin Marys’ faith, hope (against all hope) and love. I make so bold as to refer to the Mother of the Lord the expression in John’s gospel (*Jn* 3,16) regarding God the Father: “Mary loved the world so much that she gave her only Son”.

In a way similar to the other two theological virtues, here we find the most profound and enriching significance of our consecrated *chastity*. Speaking about chastity does not mean, in the

first place, speaking about “renunciation”; but rather – as article 63 of our Constitutions says – of “love that becomes a gift”, following the example of our Father: «Don Bosco lived chastity as a love for God and for the young which has no limits» (C. 81). I should like to conclude this section with one of the most beautiful expressions in our Rule of Life: the Salesian «turns with filial trust to Mary the Immaculate Help of Christians, who **helps him to love as Don Bosco did**» (C. 84).

#### 4. “THROUGH THE MOTHERLY INTERVENTION OF MARY THE HOLY SPIRIT RAISED UP SAINT JOHN BOSCO” (C. 1)

In the Salesian “Credo” in which are reflected our deepest convictions, the relationship between the Holy Spirit and Mary is inseparable. This fully corresponds with the biblical revelation in the New Testament in which, in the first place we find a very significant “pneumatological inclusion”. In fact, the first of the texts in which Mary appears (*Lk* 1,35; *At* 1,14), has as “protagonist”, in a certain sense the Holy Spirit. In the first it is said that it is the Spirit who makes possible the incarnation of the Son of God: «The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you»; for this reason in the profession of faith of the Church, we proclaim: “By the power of the Holy Spirit he was born of the Virgin Mary and became man”. In the last – the Acts – it is said that after the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, the apostolic community and “Jesus’ brethren” (*At* 1,14; cf. *Ap* 12,17) were waiting for the Paraclete, gathered around Mary.

One of the illustrious founding teachers of our University in Rome, Fr Domenico Bertetto, writes:

«In her life [Mary’s] we can note three epiphanies of the Spirit, with particular sanctifying effectiveness: the Immaculate Conception, which, from the first moment of her earthly life

makes the Person of the future Mother of God, the Temple of the Holy Spirit, Who dwells in Her in order to prepare her for her future mission; the Annunciation, in which Mary Most Holy is overshadowed, as the new Ark of the Covenant, by the Holy Spirit in view of the human conception of the Son of God; Pentecost, in which Mary implores and enjoys the visible effusion of the Holy Spirit the soul of the Mystical Body».<sup>28</sup>

This is an interpretation that goes back to the Fathers of the Church, in reference to the text of *Jn* 19, according to which “the Church comes to birth at the foot of the cross”. Jesus dying, “consigned the Spirit” (*paredoke to pneuma*), uniting in this way Easter and Pentecost; here we find once again, Mary the Mother of Jesus and the Mother of the Church represented by the “beloved disciple”.

I like to consider this rapport between the Holy Spirit and Mary in the light of another text from our Constitutions, article 98. It is the mention of the Holy Virgin Mary in the context of formation; and this it is worth recalling once again does not refer to a stage in life (“initial formation”) nor does it deal with a “dimension” parallel to others, but embraces them all: it is a matter of understanding the whole life of the Salesian, in all its dimensions, in the key of formation, that is to say: being conformed to Christ Pastor-Educator, in the way our Father was: “[every Salesian] enlightened by the person of Christ and by his gospel lived according to Don Bosco’s spirit”.

It is important to note that article 98 presents the two principal characteristics of our charism: *pastor and educator of the young*, before mentioning the two forms of living the same consecrated Salesian vocation: the lay and the priestly. Sometimes there can be an unfortunate misunderstanding in this regard as if only the Salesian priest were a pastor, and the Salesian brother on the other hand only an educator: this is a direct undermining of the very identity of being a Salesian!

<sup>28</sup> D. BERTETTO, *Spiritualità salesiana. Meditazioni per tutti i giorni dell'anno*. LAS-Roma, 1974, p. 1058.

In this context, this reference to Mary, precisely as *Mother and Teacher*, not only reminds us of the dream at nine years of age and her presence in the life of Don Bosco, but goes much further: it refers to the fundamental mission of Mary as Mother and Teacher of Jesus, the Son of God made man. The text seems to allude to the “gestation” of the Salesian (“tends to becomes”) as such: in the way in which as Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit brought to the light the Saviour, so also she brings to the light each one of us by the power of the same Spirit, as educators and pastors of the young.

## 5. CONCLUSION

I should like to conclude this letter inviting the Congregation, and each confrere in particular, to meditate and to “incarnate” in his life the prayer that we address every day to the most Holy Virgin Mary. It is a valuable text, a veritable plan of life, which helps us each day to renew the meaning of our Salesian life in “a Marian key”. It is a prayer which is at the same time simple and profound, in which, while we profess our love “filial and strong” for her, we commit ourselves to putting into practice the “programme” of our vocation: the Salesian mission.

Sharing the insistence (theologically based) of my beloved predecessor Fr Egidio Viganò about the meaning of *consecration* as a work exclusively of God and not as a human act, not even in relation to Him (cf. C. 24: “You *consecrated* me to yourself ... I *offer* myself totally to you”), I recall that here we are not dealing with a prayer of consecration to Mary, but of affectionate entrustment, like a small child who abandons himself to the loving arms of his Mother.

Invoking Mary Immaculate Help of Christians (C. 92), we recall the title with which the Vatican Council II presents her: “Mother of the Church” (cf. Ap 12; LG 62ss). In the Church the Holy Spirit raised up, “through the motherly intervention of

Mary" (C. 1), Don Bosco, and through him the Congregation and the Salesian Family. As she was for our Father, Mary continues to be for us "inspiration and support" (in article 8 of the Constitutions we read: *showed* Don Bosco his field of labour – was the constant *guide and support*). Therefore it is not a question merely of an attitude of personal devotion – without doubt, laudable and to be recommended – but of the contemplation of Mary in God's plan of salvation, and in particular in the putting into practice of our mission. Therefore we are promising Mary "faithful to our Salesian vocation... to work always".

The mission does not consist in "doing things", it cannot be reduced to spending oneself in a general sort of way for the benefit of the young, especially the poorest, in reality it is a matter of cultivating genuine "all-round development", from the perspective of the apostolic mission, which determines as its ultimate purpose their *salvation* (cf. C. 12). "For the greater glory of God and the salvation of the world": is what I recalled in the Letter convoking the GC26 as the secret (of Don Bosco) regarding the purpose of his activity: "When I dedicated myself to this part of the sacred ministry I intended to consecrate all my labours to the greater glory of God and the salvation of souls; to work to produce good citizens for this earth so that one day they might be worthy inhabitants of heaven".<sup>29</sup> Evidently, "promising" Mary this, and through her intercession the Lord of the harvest, is at the same time a humble request: «without me you can do nothing», the Lord Jesus tells us. Playing with the words somewhat, it is not a 'promethean promise', since in truth we know, – as we say at the end of the prayer – that by *serving God*, we become *useful to Him*, not just servants: As He himself wanted (cf. *Jn* 15,15).

Since the Salesian mission is a process that comes into being from faith and from obedience to God, it is expressed in prayer

<sup>29</sup> PASCUAL CHÁVEZ, "*Da mihi animas, cetera tolle. Charismatic identity and sharing apostolic zeal. Starting again from Don Bosco to reawaken the heart of every Salesian*", AGC 394 (2006), p. 38.

and as prayer. Having recourse to the motherly intercession of Mary we implore her aid for all that we “carry in our hearts” with our particular charismatic sensitivity (cf. C. 11): the Church, the Congregation and the Salesian Family, in particular the young and among these in a special way the poor, those to whom the Salesian mission is primarily addressed. Finally we invoke her for the whole of the human race. This “priority of prayer” reminds us of the example of Jesus: before giving his life for everyone, he begs the Father for everyone and makes the simplest and most profound request that can flow from a Heart at the same time divine and human: «Father I want those you have given me to be with me where I am» (Jn 17,24). No one is excluded from the salvation of Christ..., nor from his prayer. And therefore neither from our apostolic prayer.

As we continue, so we invoke Mary as Mother and Teacher (cf. C. 98): we ask Her that as she was for Don Bosco so she might be for each of us. I believe that we can reflect on this part of the prayer in the light of the dream of the ten diamonds, which constitutes an «icon» for the next 27<sup>th</sup> General Chapter: the front part of the cloak (“kindness and wholehearted service of others”) is supported by the back part which probably is not noticed at first sight: “union with God, his purity, humility and poverty”. This makes it possible to put into practice our mission, understood precisely as “loving kindness” and “total dedication”, and not simply as a strategy or educative-pastoral tactic aimed at achieving our aims.

Both parts of the cloak are held together by the two diamonds of **work** and **temperance**: and this immediately reminds us of the next General Chapter, focused on *a Salesian radical approach to the gospel*.

Concluding these fundamental attitudes in which Don Bosco is our model, we cannot possibly forget the *ecclesial* dimension: “loyalty to the Pope and to the Bishops of the Church”, nowadays more than ever necessary.

The conclusion of our prayer takes us back to the beginning and clearly rounds it off. If the mission has as its purpose the greater glory of God and the salvation of souls, and our work is the service of God “with fidelity and generosity until death”, its ultimate aim cannot be limited to a human or earthly satisfaction: we can find it only “in our Father’s home”. And here too we find our special Salesian touch with two key words: joy and life together, which can be found to the full only in God and in eternal life.

My dear confreres, I offer you this letter which I have had in my heart for quite some time trusting that it will be a strong stimulus for a renewal that is spiritual and profound, personal, and at community and congregational level, to which the Lord is calling us through the celebration of the Bicentenary of the birth of our beloved Don Bosco and that of the 27<sup>th</sup> General Chapter. Like the beloved disciple let us take Mary the Lord’s gift from the cross, and take her home. May she be as she was for Don Bosco, Mother and Teacher.

To Her Mary the Immaculate Help of Christians, to her motherly care and guidance I entrust each and everyone of you.

  
Fr Pascual Chávez Villanueva  
*Rector Major*



## 4. ACTIVITIES OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL

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### 4.1 Chronicle of the Rector Major

#### – *May 2012*

On Tuesday 1 May, the Rector Major at Loreto – where he had gone the previous day (cf. AGC 413, chronicle of the Rector Major) – presided at the closing Mass of the ‘Forum’ of the SYM of the ICC Circumscription, and after lunch returned to Rome.

On Wednesday morning 2, Fr Chávez received Fr Gennaro Geggioni, Superior of the Vice Province of Ethiopia and Eritrea, and then the Economist General, Brother Jean-Paul Muller.

In the afternoon of the same day he left for Verona for some medical checks, which will be followed up during May and June both in Verona, at the Borgo Trento Hospital and in Rome.

On Friday morning 4, he went for some treatment at the Vatican health centre where he met Fr Giuseppe Costa, Director of the LEV. At midday he met a group of Don Bosco Past Pupils from Guatemala and in the afternoon he chaired a meeting for the signing of an agreement between the Lombardy-Emilian Province (ILE) and the Vice Province of Ethiopia-Eritrea (AET).

On Saturday 5, at midday, the Rector Major presided at Mass for the Feast of the Community of the Generalate.

The following days were devoted to ordinary work in the office and several audiences; but there were also various occasions for further medical checks (including another journey to Verona on the afternoon of 9 May and the morning of 10). On Tuesday 8, there was also a meeting with the Secretary of State, Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone.

On Saturday 12, at midday, Fr Chávez received Fr Kazimierz Radzik, Superior General of the Congregation of Saint Michael the Archangel (“Michaelites”), accompanied by the Provincial of Italy and the Vicar General of the Michaelite Sisters. At the end of lunch, the Rector Major felt unwell, with a heart flutter, on account of which he was taken to the Gemelli Polyclinic for observation until midday 16.

On Thursday 17, at midday he presided at Mass for those taking part in a meeting of the Editors of the Salesian Bulletins of the world. In the afternoon he gave an interview to a group of confreres, mem-

bers of the Salesian Family and young people from Japan.

On the following days work in the office and audiences were interspersed with some medical treatment.

On Monday 21 he attended a meeting of the Executive Committee of the USG at the Generalate of the Xaverians. In the evening he received our confrere Archbishop Riccardo Ezzati, Archbishop of Santiago, Chile.

On Thursday 24, the Rector Major celebrated the Solemnity of Mary Help of Christians in the Generalate.

On Saturday afternoon 26, the Rector Major met the Consultative Committee of the Salesian Family, to whom he gave a presentation of the theme for the Strenna for 2013.

In these days he received the General Councillors who were gradually returning to Rome for the summer plenary session of the General Council. On the afternoon of 27, Pentecost Sunday, some Councillors go to Loreto for a Retreat.

The Rector Major spent the last days of May in his office with ordinary business matters, but also with two medical checks at the Vatican health centre. On Monday 28 he had a visit from Mother Yvonne Reungoat.

## – June 2012

Fr Pascual Chávez began the month of June with ordinary work in the office. Among the visits and audiences should be mentioned on Saturday 2, that of Fr Maurizio Tisato, Rector of the Community of Mogliano Veneto, accompanied by Mrs Renata and Dr Tanuz.

On Monday morning 4, with most of the Council the Rector Major went to the Saint Tarcisio Community where he was shown the newly re-structured church in which he celebrated Mass, and the square dedicated to Saint Tarcisio. After lunch he returned to the Generalate.

On Tuesday 5 June the meetings of the *summer plenary session of the General Council* began according to the prepared calendar. In the time available the Rector Major also received the Councillors, various confreres and other people on different occasions. In particular: on Wednesday morning 6 he received Fr Tullio Orler and at lunch Bishop Luis Felipe Gallardo SDB of Veracruz, in Mexico, and Fr Pasquale Cristiani and Fr Angelo Santorsola, Provincial and Vice Provincial of Southern Italy. On Friday 8 he received Fr Abraham Kavalakatt, Rector of the Loreto community.

On Saturday afternoon 9, Fr Chávez, with the Vicar and some other members of the Council went to the UPS for the *Team Visit to the UPS Vice Province*, which continued until the evening of Monday 11.

On Tuesday 12 the meetings of the session of the Council continued as usual. Among those the Rector Major received in these days should be mentioned Mr Louis Leung, a Past Pupil and benefactor of ours from Hong Kong, accompanied by his wife, by another couple of the Friends of Don Bosco and by Archbishop Savio Hon Tai Fai SDB, Secretary of the Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples,

On Friday 15, the Feast of the Sacred Heart, at the usual time the Rector Major presided at the meeting of the General Council; afterwards he left for Milan, with Fr Francesco Cereda, to preside at the house of Chiari - San Bernardino, at the funeral of well-deserving confrere, Fr Silvio Galli.

The following days at the Genarate there was the usual rhythm of office work and meetings associated with the period of the plenary session of the Council. On Thursday 19, in the evening there was a visit from Fr Pio Visentin and Brother Luciano Loreggian, from

the Mainz community, in Germany and on Friday afternoon the Rector Major saw Fr Eugenio Fizzotti and Fr Rino Pistellato (Ukraine).

On Saturday morning 23, the Rector Major presided at the "Curatorium" of the UPS, and then received the Salesian Bishops from Colombia, Mons. Héctor López and Mons. Camilo Fernando Castrelón, accompanied by the Bishops from the dioceses of Granada and San Vicente del Caguán, in Rome for the "ad limina visit" to the Holy Father. In the evening he received Fr John Jairo Gómez (COM).

On Sunday 24, the Solemnity of the Birth of Saint John the Baptist, as is the tradition, there was the celebration of the feast of the name day of Don Bosco and of his Successor. The Rector Major presided at Mass and during the day received the greetings of Mother Yvonne Reungoat and some of her Councillors, of Mother Antonia Colombo, and of Sr Apollinaris Shimura, Superior of the Sisters of Charity of Jesus and other Councillors.

On Monday morning 25 the Rector Major went to the Vatican for a medical examination and this was followed by a meeting with the Polish Provincials. Among others he also received Fr Simon

Manjooran, former Provincial of Hungary and then Fr Aloysius Dovravec, Fr Adriano Bregolin and later Fr Marek Chrzan.

On Tuesday 26, at the usual time there was a Council meeting and then in the afternoon Fr Cáavez went to the Vatican for an appointment with the doctor treating him.

On Wednesday morning 27, the Rector Major presided at the usual Council meeting. In the afternoon he received the IME Provincial Fr Pasquale Cristiani, accompanied by his Vicar Fr Angelo Santorsola. He then saw Mrs Gaetanina Ancona, foundress of the 'Mamma Margaret Fraternity'.

On Thursday morning 28, the meeting of the General Council took place at the usual time; in the afternoon Fr Chávez went to the Vatican for another medical appointment. On his return he received Bro. Mario Olmos.

On Friday 29, the Solemnity of the Apostles Peter and Paul the patronal feast of Rome, the Rector Major presided at the community Mass. In the morning there was a meeting of the General Council; in the afternoon with all the Council he went to the Community in the Vatican for an evening meal in which our Cardinals and Bishops in the service of the Holy Father in the Curia also took part.

On Saturday 30 June with the whole Council the Rector Major left for Le Combes in the Val d'Aosta for some days of rest together.

### **4.3 Chronicle of the General Councillors**

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

The Vicar of the Rector Major, Fr Adriano Bregolin, at the end of the winter session of the General Council, left on **27 January** for a visit to the Province of **Vietnam**. Arriving at Ho Chi Min City on the evening of the 28, he was met by the Provincial Fr. Giuseppe Tran Hoa Hung and by the confreres of the Provincial House. The following day Sunday 29, he presided at Mass in honour of Don Bosco in the parish of Xuan Hiep. Then he went to the Community of Ben Cat, where he spent time on a short visit. In the church he also met young people from the parish and then he had lunch with the community and some members of the Pastoral Council.

In the afternoon accompanied by the Provincial and with his secretary Fr Saimy Ezhanikatt, he went

to Da Lat City, where there is a Salesian community with the parish, oratory and post-novitiate with about 80 students. After a festive supper, the Vicar gave a conference on the Salesian formation process and especially the post-novitiate phase.

The following day, 30 January, there was a meeting with the Salesian Family from the Da Lat region and surrounding area and then solemn concelebration in honour of Don Bosco. After a very festive lunch for which the young confreres from the post-novitiate were responsible, Fr Adriano Bregolin left for Saigon City.

On 31 January, the Solemnity of Saint John Bosco, the day began with a celebration for the Salesian Family in the Saigon area. On this occasion too the Vicar gave a conference to the members of the Salesian Family about the great issues proposed by the Rector Major: life, the family, education, evangelisation and the cultivation of one's vocation. This was followed by a festive lunch for everyone. The young confreres provided the musical accompaniment.

In the afternoon Fr Adriano was taken on a visit to the city of Saigon and in particular to the war museum and to the diocesan Cathedral.

In the first days of **February** there was a meeting with the community of the Theologate, at the side of the Provincial House. After Mass the Vicar met the students and the teachers of theology and gave them a conference "Charismatic Identity and vocational identification".

In the afternoon there was a very friendly meeting with the FMA in their Provincial house. Those present included aspirants, novices, Junior Sisters and also Sisters coming from the other communities.

On 2 February Fr Adriano Bregolin was taken on a visit to the novitiate at Ba Thon. Also here he gave a conference for the novices and prenovices and then said Mass with all the community.

In the evening he left on his return journey to Rome.

On his return he took a few days break. Then on 19 February, with the Rector Major he left for Nairobi for the *Team Visit to the Africa and Madagascar Region*. At the end of the Visit he spent a day at the Provincial house on the occasion of the blessing of the new community residence. With the Rector Major he then returned to Rome on 27 February.

On 29 February he left for Chile to preside at the installation of the

new Provincial Fr Alberto Lorenzelli.

Having arrived on 1 **March**, he had a meeting the following day with the Provincial Council and then with the Rectors of the Province. On 3 March he concelebrated with the Archbishop of Santiago and gave the homily at the installation of the new Provincial.

On 4 March he visited the Provincial house of the FMA; for the occasion the Sisters from the neighbouring communities were also present. He celebrated Mass and spoke to the Sisters. In the afternoon he left to return to Rome.

Having returned to Rome, between 13 and 17 March at the Salesianum he took part in the *Team Visit to the Italy and Middle East Region* and then between 26 March and 4 April in the *plenum* of the General Council in the course of which the theme for the 27<sup>th</sup> General Chapter was agreed.

On 6 **April** he accompanied the Rector Major on a short visit to the confrere Fr Silvio Galli, who was seriously ill in the Salesian community of Chiari where he lived.

On 11 he accompanied the Rector Major to Verona for some medical checks and for the start of some specific treatment for hepatitis. He returned on 18.

Between 26 and 29 April he was with the Rector Major in Turin for the Centenary of the World Confederation of Past Pupils with celebrations being held at Colle Don Bosco and Valdocco and with the conclusion in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians.

On 30 April he accompanied the Rector Major to Loreto on the occasion of the *SYM Forum* of the Circumscription of Central Italy returning to Rome on the evening of 1 May.

On 5 **May**, he was present representing the Rector Major at the first showing of the film *Main*, in the Auditorium at the Music Park in Rome.

Between 12 and 16 May he was closely involved in the events connected with the health of the Rector Major, who was kept in the Gemelli Hospital in Rome for several days.

On 17 he left for **Haiti**, on the occasion of the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the presence of the Salesians in that country. He was accompanied by Dr. Bruno Bruni, Dr. Megale Agostino and Dr. Cristiano Hoffman, representing the charitable organisations of the UIL and the CGIL Trades Unions which had been sponsoring the reconstruction of workshops at the ENAM

School in Port-au-Prince. Having arrived on 18, he had a meeting and a festive supper with the members of the Provincial Council and the Rectors of the Vice Province.

On 19 he went to the school at Gressier, where the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary was commemorated with a solemn concelebration and a musical show. Young people from all the works in the Vice Province took part. In the afternoon with the other guests who were with him he was taken to the Salesian House of ENAM and here there was a technical meeting, especially in connection with the new construction being financed by the Italian Trades Unions.

The following morning 20 May Fr Adriano Bregolin went to Pétiion-Ville for a Solemn Concelebration at which the Salesian Archbishop Louis Kébreaud presided. This was followed by a festive lunch with state and administrative authorities present. In the evening the Vicar was taken to the *Karibe Convention Center*, where there was a recital by young people from our works. Present for this occasion were many Ambassadors and Ministers of the Republic of Haiti.

On the morning of 21 May the Vicar had a meeting with the Superior Fr Sylvain Ducange and

some members of the 'Rinaldi Foundation' to consider the situation of the Vice Province after the terrible event of the 2010 earthquake. At the end of the morning he left to return to Europe.

Having returned to Rome and considering the precarious state of health of the Rector Major, on 24 May he went to Turin for the Feast of Mary Help of Christians, presiding at Mass in the afternoon in the presence of the Salesian Family and taking part in the procession. On 25 he returned to Rome.

During the month of *June* he took part in the meetings of the *plenum* of the General Council.

Between Saturday 9 and Monday 11 June he took part in the *Team Visit to the UPS Vice Province*.

On 15, with the Regional Councillor Fr Marek Chrzan, he went to Krakow, in Poland and the following day 16 June went to Miejsce Piastowe for a celebration on the occasion of the *Centenary of the death of Fr Bronislaw Markiewicz*, founder of the Congregations (male and female) of Saint Michael the Archangel. Here he visited the works of these groups of the Salesian Family and celebrated the solemn Mass in the presence of a large group of young people from the various works of the

Michaelites in Poland. The day ended with his taking part in an Oratorio in memory of the Blessed Markiewicz in the auditorium of the nearby city of Krosno.

On 17 June the Vicar returned to Rome and joined the other Councillors for the continuation of the *plenum*.

### **The Councillor for Formation**

After the end of the winter session of the General Council, in the period *February-May 2012* the main task of the General Councillor for Formation, Fr Francesco Cereda, was the carrying out, in the name of the Rector Major, of the *Extraordinary Visitation of the "Mary Seat of Wisdom" Vice Province in Rome* (the UPS Vice Province). This Visitation had begun in November 2011; it was interrupted during the winter session of the General Council; and, taken up again at the beginning of February 2012. It ended on 26 May.

During this time, in addition, on 14-19 *February* the Councillor visited the "Ratisbonne" International Institute in Jerusalem for the specific formation of Salesian priests, and chaired the "Curato-

rium" held there. He also took part in the *Team Visit* to the Africa and Madagascar Region in Nairobi on 20-26 February and that to the Italy and Middle East Region in Rome on 12-17 *March*. Between 26 March and 4 April he took part in the extraordinary intermediate session of the General Council.

On 30 *April* in Verona he led a day of reflection for the General Chapter of the Canossians on the subject "Walking before God in fidelity to the end". On the days 8-12 *May* in Barcelona - Martí Codolar he took part in a meeting of the Provincial Delegates for Formation in Europe, during which issues of fundamental interest were considered: there was a study day on the Salesian consecrated vocation in its two forms, with the participation of Fr Andrea Bozzolo, Principal of the Salesian Centre of Theological Studies at Turin-Crocetta; subjects considered included formation to the affective life and to chastity and intellectual formation; there was an interpretation of the statistics of the Congregation for 2011; and a day of study was devoted to the formation implications of the Project for Europe and of the presence of missionaries in Europe.

On 4 *June* he presided at the "Curatorium" of the specific for-



mation for Salesian Brothers at Turin-Valdocco; and the same day he had a meeting with the Central Commission for the 'Project for places of Salesian interest', which concentrated on events on the world-wide calendar for the celebration of the Bicentenary, of animation material, on the logistical aspects, on establishing the international character of the communities of the Salesian places of interest, on the need for confessors at the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians in Turin and for the Basilica of Don Bosco at Colle. On 9-11 June he took part in the *Team Visit* to the "Mary Seat of Wisdom" and the Salesian Pontifical University in Rome. On 17 he chaired the "Curatorium" of the "Blessed Zeffirino Namuncurá" formation community at Rome-Gerini and with Sr Piera Cavaglià had a meeting with the Coordinating Committee of the International Historical Congress of the Bicentenary, which will be held in November 2014. In Rome on 18 he took part in the Administrative Council of the UPS and on 23 in the "Curatorium" of the UPS.

On 21-23 *July* in Turin he coordinated the Commission for the 'Project for Europe' in preparation for the IV Meeting of the Provincials of Europe to be held in Rome

30 November-2 December; it will be considering the subject of migrations in Europe.

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

After the conclusion of the winter plenary session of the General Council, in the period between February and May 2012, the Councillor for Youth Ministry (YM), Fr Fabio Attard, was mainly engaged in visits of animation and formation to the pastoral coordinators Salesians and lay people in various Provinces.

At the beginning of *February* 2012 Fr Fabio visited Medellín, Colombia, to see the structure and process of the pastoral animation of the Province. In various meetings he was in addition able to explain better the process of re-thinking currently taking place throughout the Congregation.

During the same month the Councillor spent more than two weeks in Africa. In the first place he was able to meet those responsible for the *Institute of Youth Ministry* in Nairobi, to consider the future of this important institute. Then Fr Fabio spent a week in the Province of Madagascar for a YM workshop for a group of Salesian

pastoral coordinators in various works in the Province.

Having returned to Nairobi, the Councillor took part in the *Team Visit to the Africa and Madagascar Region*.

After some days back in Rome, the Councillor went for a week to Indonesia, taking part in the Regional meeting of YM Delegates in the East Asia and Oceania Region. Also present at this meeting were all the Provincials of the Region.

It was a very important meeting at which it was possible to see the various processes being used in the YM sector, in particular those regarding re-thinking. In this meeting the Provincials decided to strengthen the process of reflection on YM in the Region, by determining that the Delegates would meet annually.

In *March* the Councillor took part in the *plenum* of the General Council which had as its priority the decision regarding the theme for the approaching GC27.

At the end of March, Fr Fabio was invited by the Pontifical Council for the Laity to give two conferences on Youth Ministry, the continental challenges and those regarding contents, to those taking part in a world meeting of movements, groups and ecclesial communities which was held at Rocca

di Papa. The meeting looked at the experience of the WYD in Madrid 2011 and planned some guidelines for the next WYD in Rio de Janeiro in 2013.

At the end of *April*, the Councillor was invited by the Bishops of Flanders, Belgium, to give a conference on youth ministry and vocational animation. Taking part in the assembly were the Flemish Bishops and their YM Teams.

During the first two weeks of *May*, Fr Fabio Attard gave two sessions of reflection on YM and on the re-thinking process in the two Provinces of the Philippines. In that held in Cebu, South Philippines he gave a reflection to the Rectors and to the Salesian pastoral coordinators on the YM model in the Congregation. In Manila, North Philippines he was able to meet various YM teams of Salesians and lay people from Salesian works sharing with them the challenges of evangelisation within the educational processes. The subject of the new evangelisation was the basis of this seminar.

Having returned from the Philippines, on 18 May 2012, the Councillor gave a conference on *Youth Ministry and the challenges of evangelisation*, at the Saint Thomas Theological Institute, Messina. The conference was the

official academic conclusion to the Masters in YM which the Institute has offered in the last two years.

At the beginning of June in Rome Fr Fabio began to take part in the summer plenary session of the General Council.

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

**February 2012.** When the winter plenary session of the General Council finished, between 27 January and 25 February 2012 Fr Filiberto González carried out, in the name of the Rector Major, the *Extraordinary Visitation of the Blessed Michael Rua community*, in via della Pisana 1111, Rome (Community of the Generalate). During this time he had two meetings with all the community, at the beginning and at the end; two other meetings with the Rector of the community and his Council, at the beginning and half way through the visitation. He personally met for a considerable space of time each of the confreres of the community, including those belonging to this community who are looking after the parish of the Nativity of Mary in the Selva Candida district of Rome. He also visited the Salesian community at the Vatican,

which is responsible for the management of the Vatican Press, of the *Osservatore Romano* and of the Vatican photographic Service. In addition he also had meetings with the various groups of Salesians engaged in the services at the Direzione Generale: the group of Salesian Brothers, the General Secreteriat and the secretaries of the Councillors, the translators, the Archives and the Historical Institute and the lay personnel in the various sectors of the Direzione Generale and of the Salesianum.

**March 2012.** Between 1 and 4 March, with the team of the Social Communication Department, he had a meeting with those responsible for Salesian Publishing houses in Europe. Between 8 and 12, accompanied by Fr Donato Lacedonio, he had a meeting of the multimedia centres of Europe in the city of Ostrava, in the Czech Republic. Between 13 and 17 he took part in the *Team Visit to the Italy and the Middle East* held at the 'Salesianum' in Roma. On 22 he took part in a session of the Council of the SEI Publishing House in Turin. Between 23 and 25 he took part in the Provincial meeting for the Delegates for Youth Ministry, the Missions and Social Communication in the Province of Slovakia (SLK) with Fr Julian Fox and

Fr Donato Lacedonio, at the Provincial House in Bratislava. Between 26 March and 4 April he took part in the extraordinary intermediate session of the General Council.

**April 2012.** Between 10 and 18 April Fr Filiberto chaired a meeting for the Salesian publishing houses, presses and radio stations of America held at Lo Cañas, Santiago. Chile, accompanied this time by Fr Jaime González. During the meeting he visited the Salesian press the 'EDEBE Don Bosco' publishing house, the "Cetera Tolle" multimedia production centre, the Provincial house community and the community of the "La Gratiud Nacional" School.

**May 2012.** Between 2 and 8 May in Lisbon, Portugal, in the CONFHC Retreat House of the "Irmãs Franciscanas Hospitaleiras da Imaculada Conceição", he chaired three successive different meetings again accompanied by Fr Julian Fox and Fr Donato Lacedonio. The first was for the Social Communication Delegates of the Provinces of Europe; the second for the spokespersons for the Project for Europe; and the final one for the organising team of the *EuroClip Don Bosco*. On 12 with Sr. Giuseppina Teruggi from the Social Communication Sector of

the FMA, he led a meeting for formation personnel and for those in formation to celebrate for the first time *Salesian SC Day*, taking up the theme proposed by the Pope for "World Communications Day". The day was held at the FSC of the UPS, attended by the personnel from the SC Department of the SDB and the SC Sector of the FMA, as well as all the Salesians in the FSC. It is hoped to hold this meeting every year both in Rome and in all the Provinces of the SDB Congregation and of the FMA Institute. Between 16 and 20 May in the Generalate he chaired a meeting of the Editors of the Salesian Bulletin from around the world, this time with all the personnel of the Department. Finally between 20 and 23 May he took part in a meeting of the publishing houses: ELLEDICI of Italy, CCS of Spain and 'Edições Salesianas' of Portugal, at the Turin ELLEDICI.

At the end of May he was in Rome to take part in the summer plenary session of the General Council.

## **The Councillor for the Missions**

Immediately after the conclusion of the winter session of the General Council the Councillor for the Mis-

sions, Fr. Václav Klement, began the *Extraordinary Visitation of the Poland – Kraków Province (PLS)* which lasted between 28 January and 15 April, with two interruptions. The first was to enable him to take part in the *Team Visit to the Africa and Madagascar Region* (Nairobi, 20-25 February), at which he led a workshop on the missionary culture in the Provinces. He left the PLS Province a second time for the meeting of the Delegates for Missionary Promotion in Spain at Madrid (24 March) and for the extraordinary intermediate session of the General Council (Rome, 25 March-4 April). During his stay in the Kraków Province Fr. Klement appreciated the charismatic development in the new fields of the Salesian mission, the excellent formation setting of the inter-province theologate in Kraków and various contributions of the Province in the area of social communication and the organisation of various national, regional and world meetings of the Congregation.

The period between 17 April and 8 May was devoted by the Councilor to a *visit to the missionary Province of Amazzonia* (Brazil-Manaus, BMA). During the first two weeks he was accompanied by the Provincial Fr Benjamin Morando to the 5 frontier missionary

presences in the region of Rio Negro (São Gabriel da Cachoeira, Santa Isabel, Maturacá, Marauí and Iaueté). Sadly on the return journey to the Provincial house in Manaus Fr. Benjamin suffered an embolism: and was immediately taken to the hospital where in spite of the excellent medical attention he died on 5 May. Together with five Bishops and about thirty Salesians Fr. Klement took part in his funeral in the packed church of Saint Joseph the Worker in Manaus. A personal appreciation by the diocesan Bishop Dom Edson Damian (São Gabriel do Cachoeira) during the Funeral Mass of the great missionary who spent 48 years in Brazil, was published in *Cagliero*<sup>11</sup> for the month of June.

Before the summer plenary session of the General Council Fr. Klement made a visit to South Korea for a medical checkup, to renew his residence permit and for a short break in the community at Neri (13-25 May). In addition he promoted the missions when he went to the three houses of formation at Kwangju, Seoul and Neri and through the various Catholic Media.

During the summer session, with the Economist General, the Councilor guided the annual meeting of the Directors of the five Missionary Offices (Bonn, Madrid, New

Delhi, New Rochelle and Turin) at the "Don Bosco Mission" in Bonn (15-17 June). During the meeting the Provincial Fr. Josef Gr  nner (GER) introduced to everyone the new Director of the Missionary Office Fr. Clemens Schliermann who will take over on 15 August 2012.

### **The Economist General**

After the winter plenary session of the General Council, Brother Jean Paul Muller took part in the "Don Bosco Forum" and in the International Youth Conference about immigration in Europe at Bonn. During the formation meeting for new Economers (Rome, 12-17 February), the current situation in the 14 Provinces from which they had come was studied.

Taking part in the *Team Visit in Kenya* (20-26 February) the Econome visited various Formation centres, the work in progress of re-structuring the Provincial house and various youth centres. Having returned to Rome, on 27 February, he had a meeting with the members of the "Pro University" Foundation to consider a more serious collection of funds for the Salesian University.

On 28 February he went to Haiti to visit with some Directors of Mis-

sion Offices, the centres being built for vocational training in Gressier, Port-au-Prince and Fleuriot. Afterwards in New Rochelle (SUO) visiting the Provincial Economers Office and "Salesian Mission", discussing the situation of society and of the Church in the United States led to an examination of and to reflection on the accompaniment of the confreres involved in Province-level roles. The urgent need to seek funds for the Missions, in combination with the local and national challenges is one of the main tasks of the Salesian centres in New Rochelle.

After his return to Rome, during the *Team Visit to the Italy and Middle East Region*, various meetings with Provincials and Economers provided important information for the Economist General to carry out his task. Later the needs of the Direzione Generale demanded some serious meetings with advisors, lawyers and confreres in various sectors. As a member of the Administrative Committees, the Economist took part in half-yearly meetings of "EduLife", "Don-Bosco-Network", and the "Don Bosco in the World Foundation".

Immediately after Easter until 14 April the Economist was in India, at Guwahati, Shillong, Silchar

and other places for the procedures necessary in preparation for the start of the new Province of Silchar (INS). In New Delhi during a short meeting in the SPCI centre he learned about the progress of the process of coordination of the various aspects of the youth mission at national level in India.

Between 17 and 19 April there was a meeting in Bilbao for the Provincial Economers of the West Europe Region: it was also an opportunity to strengthen the relationship between the Direzione Generale and the changing situation in Spain. Various meetings with unemployed young people provided a strong insight into the challenges to which the Salesians are being called.

Taking part in Berlin in a European meeting for Psychopedagogy, the Ecomer noted the connection between the economic situation and the subsequent behaviour of some groups of young people. Also in Berlin, between 23 and 26 April, the Provincial Economers of the North Europe Region met together having as their main topic the need for consolidation in a large number of the Provinces.

On 28 April the Ecomer was invited to a conference of the "Ordo socialis" pointing out the urgent need to provide young people with

a better education and preparation in social teaching. Afterwards on the occasion of the Annual Assembly of the AGIDAE and a meeting with the Economers of Italy there was an opportunity to reflect on the new requirements in Italy (Taxation, IMU, etc.).

Later in the Mission Office in Bonn Jean Paul Muller found a suitable occasion to inform the confreres and the collaborators about the handing over of his responsibilities as the Director to his successor in summer 2012.

In the month of May, the Ecomer tried, by means especially of conversations with individual Provincial Economers to help with the making of the necessary decisions regarding improved administration and transparency in various Provinces in the world. Work drawing up a "risk profile" in various regions and the preparation of the means to review the structures of government according to the demands of the GC26 have been tasks across a wide range of issues throughout the whole period.

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

When the winter session of the General Council finished, the Re-

gional Councillor Fr Guillermo Basañes went to Mozambique to begin the consultation process for the appointment of the new Superior of this Vice Province. On Monday 30 January with this intention he presided at an Assembly of the confreres at the headquarters of the Vice Province in Maputo.

Afterwards in the first two weeks of February Fr Basañes was in Buenos Aires (Argentina) spending some time with his family.

On 16 February he returned to the Region, arriving in Nairobi (Kenya) to make preparations for the *Team Visit* which was held in the house of the "Dimesse Sisters" with the presence of the Rector Major and seven General Councillors between 21 and 25 February. Afterwards on Saturday 26 with the Rector Major the Regional took part in the blessing of the new facilities of the Provincial House at Upper Hill (Nairobi).

On 27 and 28 February he was engaged in the work of the *Curatorium* at the studentate of theology at Utume (Nairobi), and on 29 February that of the postnovitiate at Moshi (Tanzania).

On 3 March Fr Basañes was already in Kigali (Ruanda) to begin the *Extraordinary Visitation of the Vice Province of the Great Lakes* (AGL). On 5 March he presided at

the opening of the Visitation with the Provincial Council leaving the following day for Uganda, where between 6 and 22 March he visited all the communities in the country.

On Saturday 24, having just returned to Italy he was able to go the same day to the Sanctuary of the Sacred Heart in Bologna, where, in the name of the Rector Major he presided at the funeral of the confrere Fr Alessandro Giuliani, former Provincial Economist of AET.

Between 26 March and 4 April the Regional Councillor took part in the Intermediate Plenary Session of the General Council in Rome.

On Holy Thursday he left Rome for Yaoundé (Cameroon), stopping off on Good Friday in Nairobi, where he was able to go to the Sanctuary of Mary Help of Christians, hear confessions for four hours and take part in the celebration of the Passion of the Lord, returning to the airport immediately afterwards.

He presided at the Easter celebrations at our parish in Mimbo-mam (Yaoundé) and at the theologate, where from Monday 9 to Sunday 15, he preached a retreat to about sixty confreres.

On Monday 16 April Fr Basañes having returned to the Vice



Province of AGL, continued the Extraordinary Visitation of the houses in Ruanda and Burundi, concluding on 23 May with a meeting of the Provincial Council in the Provincial House in Kigali. He celebrated the Solemnity of Mary Help of Christians at Gatenga (Kigali). The same day he left for Rome, where he arrived on 25 May, and then left again on 27 for a week's retreat at Loreto, before beginning the work of the summer plenary session of the General Council.

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

Immediately after the conclusion of the winter session of the General Council, the Regional Councillor for Latin America - South Cone Fr Natale Vitali travelled on 27 January to Buenos Aires and Córdoba to begin the *Extraordinary Visitation of the Province of North Argentina* (ARN).

On 30 January he arrived in the novitiate at Alta Gracia, Córdoba, to receive the professions of the 14 novices from CISUR. There was a storm and heavy rain and wind and the Mass was celebrated without light and with a wind that took

the roofs off many buildings in the city of Córdoba. Present were the five Provincials of CISUR and many young people.

On 31 January the Regional began the Extraordinary Visitation visiting the "Artemides Zatti" House for the Sick in the city of Córdoba.

29 communities were visited in the course of the Extraordinary Visitation. He also visited 9 works "under lay management", that is to say without any specific presence of a Salesian community, but fully integrated in the ARN Provincial Pastoral Plan. As regards Salesian educative pastoral works he visited 44 schools, 3 higher institutes, 23 parishes, 13 public churches, 17 social centres and 50 oratories.

The Province begun in 31 January 2010 following the combination of the two former Provinces ACO and ARO, is located in five geographical areas. At the beginning of the year each area has its pastoral day for the planning of the year. The Regional was also able to take part in four of these days.

On 4 March, accompanied by the ARN Provincial, Fr Vitali took part in Montevideo in the episcopal ordination of Mons. Daniel Sturla SDB, Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Montevideo.

After the short parenthesis of the extraordinary intermediate Council meeting in Rome – between 26 March and 3 April – the Regional returned to Córdoba to conclude the Extraordinary Visitation. On 17 and 18 May he had a meeting with the Salesian Rectors and the 9 lay directors of the lay works and on 19 he had a meeting with the Provincial Council.

On 21 May he travelled to Asunción to carry out the consultation for the new Provincial of Paraguay. He held two meetings one at Ypacaraí and the other at Coronel Oviedo. He was also able to take part in the Feast of Mary Help of Christians in the Sanctuary of Mary Help of Christians in Asunción, where that day 14 Masses were said all very well attended by the people.

Immediately afterwards he returned to Rome for the summer plenary session of the General Council.

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

After the end of the winter plenary session of the General Council, Fr Esteban Ortiz González, Regional Councillor for Interamerica, on Saturday 29 January

travelled to Mexico City (Mexico), where the following day he had a meeting with the Provincial Fr Miguel Aguilar and his Council to assess the implementation of the guidelines of the Rector Major after the last Extraordinary Visitation of the Province carried out by Fr Filiberto González, Councillor for Social Communication in 2009, and to organise inter-community meetings for the consultations prior to the appointment of the Provincial which will be held next November.

On 31 January, Feast of Saint John Bosco, after saying Mass with the pupils of the 'Santa Julia' School, the Councillor left for Lima (Perú).

On 1 February, in Lima, he had a meeting with the Provincial Fr Santo Dal Ben and his Council to reflect on the progress being made by the "Saint Rose of Lima" Province (PER).

On 2 February Fr Esteban Ortiz González travelled to Cochabamba (BOL), and on the journey made a short stop at Santa Cruz, where he visited the Community of Muyurina, in order to come to know directly the situation there following the abusive invasion of the land of the Agricultural School. Arriving the following day at Cochabamba, he had a meeting with the Provin-

cial Fr Cristóbal López and his Council.

On 4 February he travelled to Medellín (Colombia) to carry out the consultation prior to the appointment of the new Provincial; the same day he had a meeting with the Provincial, Fr Vidal Niebles and his Council, and the following day began a series of meetings in different places in the Province (Barranquilla, Cali, Dosquebradas and Medellín); in total 123 Confreres took part in these meetings.

On 8 February the Regional Councillor travelled to Santo Domingo (Dominican Republic), with a short stop on the way to greet the Provincial of Bogotá, Fr Mario Peresson, who recently had a serious operation which thanks be to God went well.

On 9 February, in Santo Domingo, Fr Esteban Ortiz had a meeting with the Provincial Fr Víctor Pichardo and his Council to present the Letter of the Rector Major after the recent Extraordinary Visitation of the "Saint John Bosco" Province (ANT).

On 10 February he travelled to New York to begin the *Extraordinary Visitation of the "Saint Philip the Apostle" Province of the East United States (SUE)*; on this visit the Regional Councillor was ac-

companied by Fr Nestor Impelido, from the North Philippine Province (FIN).

On 12 February he held a meeting with the Provincial Fr Thomas Dunne, and his Council to have a first impression of the situation of the New Rochelle Province.

On 13 and 14 February, the Regional took part in a joint meeting which is held each year of the Provincial Councils of SUE (New Rochelle) and SUO (San Francisco).

Starting on 15 February with Belle Glade (Florida) he began the visits to the 19 Communities making up the New Rochelle Province.

On 24 March, Fr Esteban Ortiz took part in the Provincial Feast Day at Orange (NJ); then on the same day he returned to Rome to take part in the plenary intermediate meeting of the General Council.

On 4 April he returned to the New Rochelle Province to continue his visits to the Salesian Communities and arrived in Edmonton (Canada), where he celebrated the Easter Triduum.

On 17 May he completed his visits going to the final Salesian Community at the Provincial House, and he also visited the Mission Office in New Rochelle.

On 22 May, at the conclusion of the Extraordinary Visitation of the Province of New Rochelle (SUE), the Regional Councillor held a meeting with the Rectors of the Communities; the next morning he had a meeting with the Provincial Council and in the afternoon in the course of a Province Assembly he presented the final report of the Extraordinary Visitation.

On 24 May he celebrated the Solemnity of Mary Help of Christians with the community of the Provincial House and the following day he left for Rome.

During the week 27 May to 2 June he made a retreat at Loreto, with some other Councillors.

Finally on 5 June the summer plenary session of the General Council began.

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

At the end of the winter plenary session of the General Council, the Regional Councillor for East Asia - Oceania, Fr Andrew Wong, arrived in Jakarta on 5 February for the *Extraordinary Visitation of the Vice Province of Indonesia-Timor* (ITM). He began the Visitation holding a meeting with the Delegate and his Council. Afterwards

he began visiting the communities and other presences in the Delegation of Indonesia.

On 3 March the Regional interrupted the visit to the communities in order to take part in a meeting of the Provincials and Youth Ministry Delegates. This took place between 5 and 8 March in the Indonesian city of Bintaro. The General Councillor for Youth Ministry Fr Fabio Attard was present.

On 9 March the Regional took up again the Extraordinary Visitation to Indonesia, visiting the novitiate at Sumba. On 16 March the last day of the Visitation to the Delegation of Indonesia, the Regional had a meeting with the Delegate and his Council at Jakarta.

From Indonesia Fr. Andrew Wong went to Hong Kong to carry out the consultation prior to the appointment of the new Provincial of China. He began on 19 March meeting the confreres who are working in Hong Kong. The following day, 20 March he went to Macau to meet another group of confreres. Then on 21 March he went to Taiwan to consult a final group of confreres.

On 24 March the Regional returned to Rome to take part in the Extraordinary Intermediate Session with the Rector Major and the General Council. The session last-

ed from 26 March until 4 April. On 6 April the Regional left Rome for Dili, East Timor, to continue the Extraordinary Visitation in East Timor.

Fr. Andrew Wong arrived in Timor on 7 April, Holy Saturday. On 11 April he began to visit the communities and other Salesian presences in Timor, until 11 May. At the conclusion of the Visitation of the whole Vice Province the Regional met – between 12 and 16 May – in separate meetings the Provincial, the Provincial Council, the Provincial Delegates and Commissions, the Salesian Brothers and finally the Rectors.

On 19 May the Regional, leaving Timor, went to Manila for some medical checks and to meet some confreres of the Province. On 24 May he left Manila to return to Rome for the summer plenary session of the General Council

Before the plenary session began, between 27 May, the Solemnity of Pentecost, and 2 June, with some of the other Councillors he was in Loreto for a retreat.

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

At the end of the winter plenary session of the General Council, the

Regional Councillor for South Asia, Fr. Maria Arokiam Kanaga, left Rome on 29 January and arrived in Imphal, Manipur, on 31 January to preside at the celebration of the Solemnity of Saint John Bosco. Afterwards between 1 and 5 February he held a consultation in view of the appointment of the new Provincial of Dimapur, with discernment meetings of groups of confreres at Imphal, Dimapur, Dibrugarh and Harmutty. He did the same between 6 and 11 of the same month of February at Silchar, Shillong, Guwahati and Tura for the consultation for the two new Provincials of Guwahati and of the new Province of Silchar.

On 13-15 February the Regional presided at the Assembly of the SPCSA (Salesian Provincials Conference of South Asia), before leaving on 17 February for East Africa for the *Team Visit to the Africa and Madagascar Region* with the Rector Major and his Council. Before the *Team Visit* began he was able to visit – on 18-19 February – the Salesian missions of Kampala and Bombo in Uganda, and then reached Nairobi on 20 February to take part in the *Team Visit* which was held between 20 and 26. Afterwards on 27-29 February, he visited the two houses of Juba and Maridi in Southern Sudan and on

1-3 March the houses of Moshi, Mogororo, Mafinga, Iringa and Dar-es-Salaam, in Tanzania.

On 6 March he arrived in Hyderabad, India, and on 6 he began the *Extraordinary Visitation of the Hyderabad Province* with a meeting with the Rectors and the Provincial Council. In the period between 7 and 20 March he visited 7 houses before returning to Rome, for the Extraordinary Intermediate Session of the General, held in particular in preparation for the approaching GC27, with other tasks. In the stop over at Dubai, during the flight he was able to visit the Salesian presence at Fujairah (EAU). When the intermediate session of the General Council was over Fr. Maria Aockiam returned to Hyderabad on 7 April and continued the Extraordinary Visitation until 19 May. The Visit took the Regional to all the 27 canonically erected communities and the 5 connected presences all in the State of Andhra Pradesh, with the exception of Muniguda in Odisha.

On 20 May the Regional was in Guwahati for the installation of the new Provincial Fr Thomas Vattathara. Then he concluded the Extraordinary Visitation of Hyderabad with a meeting with the Provincial Council and all the

Rectors on 22 May and then he went to Silchar for the inauguration of the new Province and the installation of the new Provincial Fr. George Maliekal. On 26 May he returned to Rome for the Summer Plenary Session of the General Council. Before the work began, between 27 May and 2 June, with some other Councillors he made a retreat at Loreto.

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

At the conclusion of the winter session of the General Council, the Regional Councillor for North Europe Fr Marek Chrzan left for Bratislava to start the *Extraordinary Visitation of the "Mary Help of Christians" Province of Slovakia (SLK)*. At the beginning of the visit he took part in the Feast of Don Bosco at Bratislava in the parish of Don Bosco in via Meletičova.

A meeting with the Provincial Council at Bratislava and visits to the communities in the Province were the first stage of the Visitation. Afterwards Fr Marek visited the parish community in Bratislava. On 4-7 February he went to Azerbaijan in Baku to visit the community of Slovak confreres who carry out the mission in that

country and belong to the SLK Province. The following days in Slovakia he visited the communities of Sastin, Bratislava-Mamateyova, Bratislava-Daliborovo, Bratislava-Trnávka, Žilina, Námestovo, Dubnica nad Váhom, Nová Dubnica, Trnava, Partizánske, Banská Bystrica, Rožňava, three communities at Košice, the community at Michalovce and at Humenné.

On 25 March he returned to Rome to take part in the extraordinary intermediate session of the General Council. Having returned to Slovakia, he spent the Easter season at Bratislava in the Provincial House. After Easter he went to Russia (Siberia) to visit the Slovak confreres in Yakutsk. On 13 April he continued his visits to the communities in Slovakia at Prešov, Bardejov, Poprad and the presences at Veľký Biel and Sabinov. Then he had a concluding meeting with the Rectors of the communities on 27 April at Prešov. Afterwards he again visited the community for the elderly confreres at Hody and on 30 April he had a final meeting with the Provincial Council at Žilina.

On 1 May he went to Poland, to Krakow to take part in the conclusion of the International Games of the Salesian Youth Sports Association, attended by 1,200 people from

12 European countries. On 4-7 May he chaired a meeting of the Provincials of the North Europe Region at Zadar in Croatia.

On 8 May he went to Barcelona in Spain to take part in a meeting for the Provincial Delegates for Formation in the whole of Europe. On 12 and 13 May he took part in the Province Youth Festival at Krakow in Poland. Between 16 and 18 May he visited the "Crocetta" formation community in Turin to meet the young confreres of the Region, especially those from Slovakia; he also visited the Brothers' community at Turin-Valdocco, praying one day of the Novena in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians. On 19 May he returned to Poland to take part in the ordination to the priesthood at Szczyrk and to hold a meeting of assessment and planning for the Provincials of Poland and the East Circumscription (KSIP), which took place at Aleksandrów Kujawski in the Piła Province (PLN) at the recently renovated Salesian school.

On 24 May he took part in the Feast of Mary Help of Christians and the installation of the new Provincial of the Province of Slovenia in Ljubljana.

On 25 May he returned to Rome to take part in the summer session of the General Council.

In the month of June during the plenary session of the Council, on 4 June the Regional was in Zagreb to take part in the installation of the new Provincial of the Province of Croatia. In addition, on 15, with the Vicar of the Rector Major, Fr Marek Chrzan went to Poland where on 16 at Miejsce Piastowe he took part in the Celebrations for the *Centenary of the death of Father Bronislao Markiewicz*, founder of the Congregations (male and female) of Saint Michael the Archangel.

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

At the end of the winter session of the General Council, on 28 January the Regional Councillor Fr José Miguel Núñez left Rome to take part in Seville in the presentation to the Salesian Family of the process of preparation for the Bicentenary of the birth of Don Bosco, with its stages including the presentation of the visit to Spain of Don Bosco's relic.

On 29 January the Councillor began the *Extraordinary Visitation*, in the name of the Rector Major, *of the Madrid Province*. The visit continued until the end of the month of April. During these three

months the Councillor visited all the houses in the Province, had two meetings with the Provincial Council and chaired two meetings with the Rectors. He took part in a meeting of ADMA at Puertollano, had a meeting with the Regional Council of the Past Pupils, a formation meeting of the Salesian Family and the Provincial meeting of the "Hogares Don Bosco". He also had personal meetings with the Bishops of Alcalá de Henares, Ávila, Ciudad Real, Getafe, Guadalajara and Salamanca.

During 5-7 March he presided at the annual meeting of the Provincials of the West Europe Region, held this time in Madrid.

On 17 March, Fr José Miguel took part in Seville in the ceremony for the conferral of an award as an illustrious friend of the "San Juan Bosco" University College, on His Eminence Cardinal Angelo Amato SDB who came to Seville for the occasion. The Councillor gave the academic address before the Assembly with the title: "*Honrados ciudadanos y buenos cristianos. Formar personas en la Europa de las libertades, desde la clave educativa de Don Bosco*".

Between 26 March and 4 April, Fr José Miguel was in Rome taking part in the extraordinary in-



intermediate session of the General Council. During Holy Week he then made a three day retreat.

On 13-15 April the Councillor presided at the Seminar of the West Europe Region on Evangelisation in the Salesian School, held in Lisbon with representatives from all the Provinces in the Region and coordinated by the National Youth Ministry Centre in Madrid.

Having concluded the Extraordinary Visitation of Madrid on 30 April, during the month of May Fr José Miguel Núñez assisted the Councillor for Italy and the Middle East, carrying out the extraordinary visitation of the formation houses in the Province of Turin: the two-year course of formation for Brothers, which is held in the community of Saint Francis of Sales at Valdocco, the novitiate at Pinerolo and the theological studentate and Faculty of Theology at Turin-Crocetta. This service concluded with meetings with the Provincial Council and with the Rectors on 22 and 23 May.

Fr José Miguel then returned to Rome, taking part in the retreat at Loreto between 27 May and 2 June, and afterwards in the meetings of the summer plenary session of the General Council.

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

When the winter plenary session of the General Council was over, Fr Pier Fausto Frisoli celebrated the Feast of Don Bosco in the Salesian house in Florence. Then he took up again the *Extraordinary Visitation of the Special Circumscription of Piedmont and the Val d'Aosta* (ICP).

Between 1 and 3 February he visited the Mission Office in Turin and then the communities of Vigliano Biellese, San Benigno Canavese, Venaria Reale, Turin Valsalice, Chieri, Novara, Trino Vercellese, Bra, Casale Monferrato, Châtillon, Borgomanero.

Between 12 and 17 March he coordinated the *Team Visit to the Italy and the Middle East Region*, at the Generalate. He then visited the communities of Fossano and Turin Agnelli. Between 26 March and 4 April he took part in the extraordinary intermediate session of the General Council. Then he returned to Piedmont, to visit the communities of Turin 'San Paolo', Asti, Ivrea, Turin 'San Giuseppe Lavoratore', Lombriasco, Vercelli.

Between 2 and 4 May he chaired the Provincial Conference of the Region in Rome - Sacro Cuore. Then he completed the Extraordi-

nary Visitation, meeting the communities of Turin 'Maria Ausiliatrice' and Turin 'San Francesco di Sales'.

Then with Fr José Miguel Núñez, on 22 and 23 May, he had meetings with the Provincial Council and the Rectors, for the conclusion of the Visitation.

On 24 May he celebrated the Feast of Mary Help of Christians in

the Salesian house of Alassio, where he opened the re-structured buildings of the Oratory and presided at the local Procession

On 26 May he opened the new headquarters of the Salesian University Institute (IUSVE) and the University Campus at Venezia-Mestre. He then returned to Rome for the summer plenary session of the General Council.

## 5. DOCUMENTS AND NEWS ITEMS

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### 5.1 Decree concerning the miracle for the Beatification of the Venerable Servant of God Maria Troncatti, FMA

*Below is our translation in English (from the Italian) of the Decree "regarding the miracle" promulgated by the Congregation for the Causes of Saints for the approval of the miracle attributed to the intercession of the Venerable Maria Troncatti, FMA, in view of her Beatification.*

#### CONGREGATION

#### FOR THE CAUSES OF SAINTS

#### APOSTOLIC VICARIATE OF MÉNDEZ

#### BEATIFICATION and CANONISATION OF THE VEN. SERVANT OF GOD

#### MARIA TRONCATTI

#### PROFESSED SISTER

#### OF THE INSTITUTE OF THE DAUGHTERS OF MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS (1883-1969)

#### DECREE REGARDING THE MIRACLE

The Venerable Servant of God Maria Troncatti was born in the village of *Corteno Golgi*, in the Province and Diocese of Brescia, on 16 February 1883. Having come of age she entered the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians and in the year 1908 took perpetual vows. The Great War having broken out she worked

as a red-cross nurse caring for the wounded soldiers in the Military Hospital in Varazze. Later, sent to Nizza as infirmarian and catechist in the large community of the Mother House of the Institute, where she was always ready to respond to every need. In 1922, in response to the request she had made at the end of the novitiate she was sent to Ecuador, in the eastern zone of the Amazon forest, where she undertook various medical and other tasks and the constant untiring work of catechesis with special attention to the role of «spiritual mother» for the orphans, the sick left to themselves and the children often suffering from atrocious diseases totally in need of food and education. The people called her "buena madrecita". On 25 August 1969, the small plane in which she was travelling from the mission to another city to a retreat crashed and the Servant of God returned to the Father's House. The Supreme Pontiff Benedict XVI on 8 November 2008 decreed that the Servant of God practised the virtues in an heroic manner.

For the purposes of the beatification, the Postulation of the Cause has submitted to the judgement of this Congregation for the Causes of Saints the cure considered miraculous, which occurred in the Arch-

diocese of Portoviejo, in the Province of Manabi, in Ecuador, of Signora Josepha Yolanda Solórzano Pisco, who in the month of April in the year 2002 began to notice signs of an illness, which was taken to be a simple case of influenza. But her health gradually deteriorated so much that in a few days the general condition of the sick woman, who in the meantime had been admitted to hospital, showed signs of a state of very serious prostration, accompanied by strong headaches, abdominal pains, vomiting and nausea and widespread pallor. In the following days new problems emerged, such as the production of large blood-blisters, severe fever and frequent bouts of delirium, so that the medical treatment was intensified to the extent that the sick woman was left in an unconscious state.

In this very serious situation the relatives and friends of Yolanda had her released from hospital so that she might die in her own home. A priest of the Society of Saint Francis of Sales spoke to them about the spiritual greatness of the Servant of God and encouraged them to pray for divine help asking through the intercession of the Servant of God the cure of Yolanda. And so at dawn on 18 May 2002, everyone saw the sick woman recover con-

sciousness with the restoration of all her faculties, the disappearance of the irritation, her breathing normal, a reduction in her pain and her ability to speak restored.

Abundantly clear is the permanence of the cure, as well as its connection with the invocation of the Venerable Servant of God, of Josepha Yolanda Solórzano, who up to today enjoys excellent health and since then has been living a normal life.

Regarding this cure considered miraculous, in the Curia of the Archdiocese of Portoviejo – in the period between 21 July and 12 September 2008 – the Diocesan Enquiry was celebrated, whose authority and juridical validity were recognised by the Congregation for the Causes of Saints with a decree dated 13 February 2009. The collected acts were then submitted for the examination and judgement of a Medical Board which in its meeting on 7 April 2011 unanimously declared that the cure had been rapid, complete and long-lasting, and scientifically inexplicable according to present day medical knowledge. On 22 October 2011 the special assembly of the Theological Consulters took place and on 21 February 2012 the ordinary session of the Cardinals and Bishops, with the Presenter of the

Cause Mons. Francesco Monterisi. And in both meetings, that of the Consulters and that of the Cardinals and Bishops, to the question whether it was clearly a matter of a miracle worked by God, the answer was in the affirmative.

After the undersigned Cardinal Prefect presented an accurate report of all this to the Supreme Pontiff Benedict XVI, His Holiness, accepting and ratifying the votes of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, today declared that: *It is certain that the miracle took place worked by God through the intercession of the Maria Trocatti, professed religious of the Congregation of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, that is the rapid, complete and long-lasting cure of Signora Josepha Yolanda Solórzano from «serious malaria of «plasmodium falciparum» with multi-organ failure».*

The Supreme Pontiff directed that this decree be published and preserved among the Acts of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints.

Given in Rome on 10 May 2012.

† ANGELO Card. AMATO, S.D.B.  
Prefect

† MARCELLO BARTOLUCCI  
Arcivescovo Tit. di Mevania (Bevagna)  
Secretary

## 5.5 New Provincials

*Below (in alphabetical order) we provide some biographical details of the Provincials appointed by the Rector Major and his Council in the course of the plenary session June-July 2012.*

### 1. CHAQUISSE Américo Raúl, Superior of the Vice Province of MOZAMBIQUE

To guide the “Mary Help of Christians” Vice Province of MOZAMBIQUE the Rector Major with his Council on 14 June 2012 appointed Fr Américo Raúl CHAQUISSE. He takes the place of Fr. Manuel Leal Gomes.

Born on 23 February 1966 in Maputo (Mozambique), Américo Raúl Gomes made his first religious profession on 31 January 1987, at the end of the year of novitiate at Catembe-Maputo. Perpetually professed on 29 August 1993, he was ordained priest at Maputo on 11 August 1996.

After ordination between 1996 and 1999 he carried out his educative and pastoral ministry at Moamba. Transferred to Maputo - “Dom Bosco” house, he worked there for a year. Then in September 2000 he was sent to the UPS in Rome, for specialised studies. Hav-

ing returned to Mozambique he was in the "Dom Bosco" house in Maputo, where he was Vice Rector and Economist and from 2008 until the present Rector.

Within the Vice Province from 2006 he was Economist and Delegate for Missionary promotion.

**2. FEDRIGOTTI Lanfranco,**  
*Provincial of the Province of CHI-  
NA*

Fr Lanfranco FEDRIGOTTI is the new Provincial of the "Mary Help of Christians" Province of CHINA. Appointed by the Rector Major with his Council on 22 June 2012, he succeeds Fr Simon Lam.

Lanfranco Fedrigotti was born on 23 June 1949 at Tiarno di Sotto (Trento, Italy) and has been a Salesian since 16 August 1966, when he made his first profession at the end of the novitiate at Albarè di Costermano, in the West Venice Province. While doing his practical training he left for Hong Kong, China, as a missionary. Perpetually professed on 16 August 1972, he did his theological studies in the "Salesian House of Studies" in Hong Kong, where he was ordained priest on 21 June 1977.

After ordination, in the years 1978-1980 he carried out his educative pastoral ministry at Tainan

(Taiwan), and then in 1981 in the house of Hong Kong - Kowloon. In 1982 he came to Rome for further studies in Sacred Scripture at the Biblical Institute, obtaining first the Licence and then a Doctorate. Having returned to Hong Kong, from 1985 until 1998 he was a teacher at the "Salesian House of Studies" and also the Vice Rector of the community. For three years 2001-2004 he was Rector of the Salesian School in Hong Kong. Afterwards in September 2004 he was appointed Rector of the "Salesian House of Studies" where he has been until the present.

At Province level from 2004 he was a Provincial Councillor and from 2005 Provincial Delegate for Formation.

**3. GÓMEZ John Jairo,**  
*Provincial of the Province of MEDELLÍN,  
COLOMBIA*

To lead the "San Luigi Bertrando" Province of MEDELLÍN, Colombia, the Rector Major with his Council on 21 June appointed Fr John Jairo GÓMEZ RÚA. He succeeds Fr Vidal Niebles.

John Jairo Gómez was born on 27 December 1963 at Medellín (Colombia). He made his first religious profession on 31 January 1984 in the novitiate at Rionegro

(Colombia). On 9 January 1990 he made his perpetual profession and having completed his studies of theology at the Salesian theologate in Bogotá, he was ordained priest at Medellín on 17 October 1992.

After two years (1993-1995) of pastoral work in the house of Tuluá, also as Vice Rector, in 1995 he moved to Rionegro, for two years as Vice Rector and one as Rector. In December 1998 he was appointed Director of Novices and Rector of the novitiate at La Ceja, a role he carried out until December 2006.

A member the Provincial Council from 2004, between December 2006 and 2010 he was Vice Provincial and at the same time Provincial Delegate for Formation and for the Salesian Family.

#### 4. *GURIA Nestor; Provincial of the Province of DIMAPUR, INDIA*

Fr. *Nestor GURIA* is the new Provincial of the "Saint Francis of Sales" Province of *DIMAPUR, India*, appointed by the Rector Major with his Council on 14 June 2012. He takes the place of Fr. James Poonthuruthil.

Nestor Guria, born at Torpa-Ranchi (Bihar, India) on 7 October 1963, made his first religious profession on 24 May 1976 at Shillong,

where he had made his novitiate. Then following the normal course of Salesian formation he made his perpetual profession on 31 January 1982 and was ordained priest at Shillong on 3 January 1985.

After ordination he exercised his educative-pastoral ministry between 1985 and 1991 at Dibrugarh - St. Joseph's Seminary. In September 1991 he came to Rome to the UPS for further studies. Having returned to India, he worked for two years (1993-1995) in the philosophical studentate at Dimaipur, then from 1995 to 2001 at Tinsukia-Hijuguri - Don Bosco, as Rector of the community. From September 2002 until December 2005 he was Rector and parish priest of Tinsukia - Church, and afterwards Rector for a year in the house of Dibrugarh - Don Bosco.

In August 2006 he was appointed Vice Provincial, a role he carried out until his present appointment as Provincial. He was also Provincial Delegate for Formation, for Youth Ministry and for the Salesian Family.

#### 5. *LEDESMA Néstor Alejandro, Provincial of the Province of PARAGUAY*

To lead the "Mary Assumed into Heaven" Province of *PARAGUAY*

the Rector Major with his Council on 8 June 2012 appointed Fr *Néstor Alejandro LESEDMA PERALTA*. He succeeds Fr. Walter Jara.

Born at Asunción (Paraguay) on 11 July 1970, Néstor Alejandro Ledesma made his profession as a Salesian on 31 January 1998, at the end of the novitiate at Ramos Mejía (Buenos Aires). After philosophical studies and practical training he did his theological studies in Santiago, Chile at the Pontifical University of Chile. Perpetually professed on 31 January 2004, he was ordained priest at Asunción on 2 December 2006.

After ordination, he did pastoral work for a year in the house of Lambaré - Don Bosco Roga, and then went to the Provincial House in Asunción, where he remained until the present, from 2010 being Vice Rector and Economer.

At Province level, from 2007 he was Delegate for Youth Ministry in its various sectors (catechetics and especially SYM). In December 2009 he was appointed Provincial Economer a role he is still carrying out.

**6. ALVES Francisco de Lima, Provincial of the Province of MANAUS, BRAZIL**

Fr. *Francisco de Lima ALVES* is the new Provincial of the "Saint

Dominic Savio" Province of *MANAUS, Brazil*. Appointed by the Rector Major with his Council on 27 June 2012, he takes the place of Fr Benjamin Morando.

Francisco de Lima Alves was born on 8 October 1966 at Quixelô (Ceará, Brazil) and has been a Salesian since 31 January 1990, the date of his first religious profession which he made at Porto Velho. After philosophical studies and practical training he did his theological studies in Rome-UPS. Perpetually professed on 15 September 1996, he was ordained priest on 13 December 1997 in Manaus.

After ordination he exercised his ministry for two years (1998-1999) in the house of Belém-Carmo; and then returned to the UPS in Rome for further studies (2000-2001). Having returned to Brazil, he worked in the following houses: Ananindeua, Rector (2002-2004); Manaus-Don Bosco, Rector (2004-2006); Manaus-Zumbi (CESAF), Rector and Economer from June 2006 until December 2007. In December 2007 he was appointed Rector of Manaus-Domingos Savio. In January 2009 he was sent for a year as Rector of the house Manaus-Don Bosco; then in January 2010 he returned to Manaus-Domingos Savio, again as Rector until his appointment as Provincial.



At Province level from 2004 he was Vice Provincial and at the same time Provincial Delegate for Formation and then Delegate for Youth Ministry.

**7. PISTELLATO Onorino, Superior of the Circumscription of GREEK-CATHOLIC UKRAINE**

Fr Onorino PISTELLATO is the first Superior of the "Mary Help of Christians" Circumscription with special statute of *GREEK CATHOLIC UKRAINE*-, erected by a Decree of the Rector Major on 29 March 2012 (cf. AGC n. 413). He was appointed by the Rector Major with his Council on 12 June 2012.

Born on 28 August 1944 at Gardignano, Scorzé (Province of Venezia), Onorino Pistellato made his first Salesian profession on 16 August 1961, as a member of the Novarese-Elvetica Province. Then following the usual Salesian course of formation he made his perpetual profession on 7 August 1967 and was ordained priest on 28 April 1973.

After ordination between 1974 and 1980 he exercised his ministry in the house of Novara - Istituto San Lorenzo. In July 1980 he was transferred to Maroggia (Switzerland) as Rector (1980-1985); then

he was Rector of Borgomanero (1985-1991), and from 1991 Rector of Lugano (Switzerland). In September 1993, with the closure of the Novarese-Elvetica Province he was transferred to the Lombardy-Emilian Province. At the end of his three years as Rector of Lugano, Fr Pistellato left as a missionary, for the Circumscription of East Europe, and was appointed Rector of Sankt Petersburg (1994-2004).

In 2005 he moved to the house of "Mary Help of Christians" in Lviv (Ukraine). In that year the Provincial Delegation of the Ukraine being set up Fr Onorino Pistellato was appointed the Delegate. In October he went to reside in the house of the Delegation in Lviv, which had been canonically erected. Now the new Circumscription with special statute has been entrusted to his guidance as Superior.

**8. SWERTVAGHER Camiel, Superior of the Vice Province of AFRICA GREAT LAKES**

To lead the "Saint Charles Lwanga" Vice Province of *AFRICA GREAT LAKES* the Rector Major with his Council on 15 June 2012 appointed Fr Camiel SWERTVAGHER. He succeeds Fr Gabriel Ngendakuriyo.

Camiel Swertvagher was born on 27 March 1952 at Veurne (Belgium) and made his first religious profession on 8 September 1973 as a member of the North Belgium Province. After philosophical studies, in September 1975 he left for the house of Ngozi in Burundi, belonging to the Central Africa Province, for practical training. Having returned to Belgium for theological studies he made his perpetual profession on 13 May 1979 and was ordained priest on 4 April 1981 at Oud-Heverlee.

After ordination, he returned to the Central Africa Province and exercised his educative pastoral ministry successively in the following

houses: Kicukiro [Kigali] - School (1981-1991); Kigali-Gatenga (1992-1994), Rector; Kansebula (1994-1995), Rector; Kigali-Kimihurura (1995-1996); Lubumbashi-Provincial House (1996-1999), Rector and Vice Provincial. Between 1999 and 2005 he was Provincial of the Central Africa Province.

When in August 2006 the Vice Province of Africa Great Lakes was canonically erected Fr. Camiel Swertvagher was appointed Vicar of the Vice Province and at the same time Delegate for Formation and for the Salesian Family. Now the responsibility of being Superior of the Vice Province has been entrusted to him.

### 5.3 Our dead confreres (2<sup>nd</sup> 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).

SURNAME AND NAME	PLACE of death	DATE	AGE	PROV
L BALZAN Umberto	Châtillon (Italia)	08-07-2012	76	ICP
P BÉGHIN Oscar	Liège (Belgio)	04-06-2012	81	FRB
P BENVENGA Luigi	Salerno (Italia)	09-07-2012	88	IME
L BRUNO Vito	Torino (Italia)	09-06-2012	85	ICP
P CABANELAS SALGADO Emilio	León (Spagna)	13-05-2012	77	SLE
P CARROLL William	Farnborough (Gran Bretagna)	09-06-2012	92	GBR
P CERISIO Nicola	Latina (Italia)	15-07-2012	89	ICC
P DE CARLI Raúl	Buenos Aires (Argentina)	20-06-2012	88	ARS
P DE RENZIS Alfredo	Taranto (Italia)	31-05-2012	92	IME
P DUQUE GÓMEZ José Octavio	Medellín (Colombia)	22-06-2012	63	COM
L FERNÁNDEZ Carlos Alberto	Buenos Aires (Argentina)	24-05-2012	62	ARS
L FERNÁNDEZ CEREO Ignacio	Sevilla (Spagna)	11-05-2012	91	SSE
L FERRARESSO Giovanni	Castello di Godego (Italia)	10-07-2012	103	INE
P FERRERO Giuseppe	Torino (Italia)	18-05-2012	86	ICP
P GALLI Silvio	Chiari BS (Italia)	12-06-2012	84	ILE
L GARCÍA BONILLA Mariano	Arévalo, Ávila (Spagna)	06-05-2012	85	SMA
P GEROTTO Antonio	Americana, SP (Brasile)	23-05-2012	81	BSP
P GOMES Artur	Poiars da Régua (Portogallo)	25-06-2012	96	POR
P GONELLA Corrado	Verona (Italia)	28-05-2012	86	INE
P GUERRERO GARCÍA Santos	Lagos de Moreno, Jal. (Messico)	03-06-2012	70	MEG
P GUTIÉRREZ MARTÍN Glicerio	Madrid (Spagna)	26-05-2012	81	SMA
L HERRMANN Host	Murnau (Germania)	04-06-2012	71	GER
P JAMNIK Franc	Ljubljana (Slovenia)	10-05-2012	87	SLO
P LABUN Zygmunt	Reda (Polonia)	16-07-2012	47	ZMB
P MACHNIKOWSKI Kazimierz	Szczecin (Polonia)	13-05-2012	79	PLN
P MANZONI Francesco	San Salvador (El Salvador)	04-05-2012	98	CAM
P MORANDO Beniamino	Manaus (Brasile)	05-05-2012	68	BMA
<i>Fu Ispettore per 9 anni</i>				
P MUSSA Luigi	Torino (Italia)	01-07-2012	84	ICP
P NIHOUL Fernand	Bruxelles (Belgio)	05-07-2012	80	FRB
<i>Fu Ispettore per 6 anni</i>				
P ORTYNSKYJ Johannes	Ensdorf (Germania)	23-05-2012	90	GER
P PADINJARAPARAMBIL George	Kanjirappally, Kerala (India)	19-04-2012	75	AFE
P PANAMPARA Abraham	Vijayawada (India)	12-06-2012	83	INH
P PEVERE Roque Antonio	La Plata (Argentina)	03-06-2012	88	ARS
P POLITOWICZ Stanisław	Czaplinek (Polonia)	07-05-2012	77	PLN
P REBOK Walentyń	Buenos Aires (Argentina)	06-07-2012	68	ARS
P RENATO Olivo	Venezia-Mestre (Italia)	07-05-2012	91	INE
L ROBLES GONZÁLEZ Deodato	Léon (Spagna)	31-05-2012	71	SLE
P ROGGERO Domenico	Buenos Aires (Argentina)	18-06-2012	84	ARS

SURNAME AND NAME	PLACE of death	DATE	AGE	PROV
<b>P STELLA Sidney</b>	Civitanova Marche (Italia)	13-07-2012	88	<b>ICC</b>
<b>P TOLL Zdzisław</b>	Bydgoszcz (Polonia)	13-06-2012	58	<b>PLN</b>
<b>P TOMASIK Juanusz Seweryn</b>	Zalesie Górne (Polonia)	11-05-2012	80	<b>PLE</b>
<b>P VAN DER MEULEN Johan</b>	Leuven (Belgio)	28-06-2012	55	<b>BEN</b>
<b>P VERDECCHIA Giuseppe</b>	Civitavecchia (Italia)	05-06-2012	80	<b>ICC</b>