



acts

of the general council

year XCVI

january-june 2015

N. 420

**official organ
of animation
and communication
for the
salesian congregation**

**Direzione Generale
Opere don Bosco
Roma**

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of the Salesian Society
of St John Bosco

OFFICIAL ORGAN OF ANIMATION AND COMMUNICATION FOR THE SALESIAN CONGREGATION

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LIKE DON BOSCO, WITH THE YOUNG, FOR THE YOUNG!

Bicentenary of the birth of Don Bosco

Strenna 2015

1. A BEAUTIFUL SPIRITUAL INHERITANCE. – 2. THE STRENNA, AN EXPRESSION OF UNITY FOR THE WHOLE OF OUR SALESIAN FAMILY. – 3. LIKE DON BOSCO: WITH HIS PASTORAL HEART AND HIS OPTION FOR EDUCATION, CAUGHT UP IN GOD'S PLAN. - 3.1. *Don Bosco with the heart of the "Good Shepherd"* - 3.2. *The history of God and of Mankind.* – 4. WITH THE YOUNG, FOR THE YOUNG! especially the poorest. - 4.1. *With the young! being with them and among them.* - 4.2. *With the young! showing them our special pastoral love.* - 4.3. *With the young! especially the poorest.* - 4.4. *With the young! because they have the right to meet role models of believers and adults.* - 4.5. *For the young! for whom a personal encounter will be the opportunity for them to feel accompanied.* - 4.6. *For the young! because the young, especially the poorest, are a gift for us.* – 5. IN THE BICENTENARY OF THE BIRTH OF DON BOSCO. - 5.1. *A first Centenary.* - 5.2. *Celebrating the Bicentenary.* – 6. MAMMA MARGARET, MOTHER AND TEACHER OF DON BOSCO. – 7. WITH MARY, THE MOST LOFTY COLLABORATOR OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

Rome, 8 December 2014

Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of Mary

My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I want to begin this letter which is intended to be an extended commentary on the subject of the Strenna, by greeting most affectionately all my Salesian Brothers, and the Salesian Sisters to whom by tradition each year in the person of Mother General the Strenna is first presented. It then becomes a single programme for the whole of our Salesian Family throughout the world.

I accompany this presentation of the Strenna with my very sincere best wishes for Christmas and the New Year – both of them celebrations of the Gift and Grace of the Lord. I would very much have liked this to be an opportunity for a personal exchange of greetings. This not being physically possible, I hope that at least this expression of my feelings may reach each one

of you as I offer you this simple commentary on the central theme of the Strenna for this year 2015.

1. A BEAUTIFUL SPIRITUAL INHERITANCE

I am calling our family tradition of the Strenna *a beautiful spiritual inheritance*, since it is something that was always very close to Don Bosco's heart. As part of our tradition, the first messages – similar to mottos – go back to the 1850s. In the “Biographical Memoirs”¹ we read that it was a practice of Don Bosco every so often to write a little note to someone to whom he wanted to give a piece of advice. Some of these have been preserved and they are very personal invitations to do something good or to avoid something that is not quite right. But besides this, from the first years of the Oratory, towards the end of the year, Don Bosco had begun to give a strenna/motto to all his boys in general, and another to each one individually. The first one, the general one, used to consist in recommending certain forms of behaviour and some things for them to remember so that *the new year about to start would go well*. Don Bosco continued to give these strennas almost every year.

The last Strenna – Don Bosco's last Strenna for his boys – was given in a situation that was very special. We find this too in the Biographical Memoirs.² Feeling that his final hour had come, Don Bosco had Don Rua and Mons Cagliero called, and with the little strength that he still had gave them his final recommendations for themselves and for all the Salesians. He blessed the houses in America and many of the confreres living in them. He blessed all the Italian Cooperators and their families, and finally he asked them to promise him that *they would love each other as brothers and sisters... and that they would recommend frequent communion and devotion to Mary Help of Christians*.

¹ Cf. *BM* III, p. 433-434.

² Cf. *BM* III, p. 266.

Taking up these words of Don Bosco, Don Rua in his third circular letter described that moment and those words, and added that: “*this could serve as the Strenna for the new year and be sent to all the Salesian houses. He would like it to be for the whole of one’s life and gave his approval that it might be the Strenna for the new year.*”³

2. THE STRENNA, AN EXPRESSION OF UNITY FOR THE WHOLE OF OUR SALESIAN FAMILY

It is a distinguishing feature of our Salesian Family that in the first place it is *a charismatic family*⁴ in which the Primacy of God-Communion is the heart of *Salesian mysticism*. This is so because it takes us back to the origin of that “charism” of the Spirit that has been passed on to us by Don Bosco, by us “to be lived, safeguarded, deepened and constantly developed... in harmony with the Body of Christ continually in the process of growth.”⁵

In this communion we recognise *the diversity* and at the same time *the unity* that has its origin in baptismal consecration, in sharing the Spirit of Don Bosco and in participation in the Salesian mission at the service of the young, especially the poorest.⁶

For this reason, in every Strenna we emphasise this aspect of *communion* which holds the first place in our Family. To the extent that the same Strenna can help the pastoral planning of the different branches and groups it is welcome; but this is not its purpose. *The intention is not to make it a pastoral plan for the year, but rather for it to be a message that builds up unity and communion for the whole Salesian Family in a common*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Cf. *Salesian Family Charter*, art 5.

⁵ *Mutuae Relationes*, 11.

⁶ Cf. *Salesian Family Charter*, art. 4.

objective. Then it is up to each “branch” of the family to see how to give it practical expression in their life and to put it into practice.

For this reason dear brothers and sisters of our Salesian Family, for this year 2015 which the Lord is giving us I propose as the Strenna:

**LIKE DON BOSCO,
WITH THE YOUNG, FOR THE YOUNG!**

**3. LIKE DON BOSCO: WITH HIS PASTORAL HEART
AND HIS OPTION FOR EDUCATION *CAUGHT UP IN
GOD’S PLAN***

To say **LIKE DON BOSCO**, nowadays, means first of all coming to know, and rediscovering in all its fulness, the spirit of Don Bosco which today as always needs to have all its charismatic power and relevance.

From everything that could be said regarding this charismatic gift, for the present I should like to underline just two of its aspects:

- *Pastoral Love* (or the heart of the “Good Shepherd”) as the driving force behind who Don Bosco was and what he did.
- His ability to *interpret “Today” in order to prepare for “Tomorrow”*.

3.1. Don Bosco with the heart of the “Good Shepherd”

The heart of Jesus the Good Shepherd is the hallmark of all our apostolic work and an essential point of reference for us. At the same time we find in Don Bosco a practical approach “*in Salesian fashion*” (shaped by the extraordinary spirit of Valdocco or the similar spirit of Mornese or what is most typical of every group in our Salesian Family). But we know that the

first point of convergence which applies to all is the charism of Don Bosco raised up by the Holy Spirit for the good of the Church. This is what we call the Salesian charism which includes and has a place for everyone.

In Don Bosco, “the happy expression (which was his plan of life) ‘that you are young is enough to make me love you very much’ was the watchword and even before that the fundamental educational option of the Saint.”⁷ We know very well that for his boys and for his youngsters “Don Bosco undertook a striking series of activities by his words, writings, institutes, journeys, meetings with civil and religious authorities; for them, above all else, he showed an attentive concern for each one individually, so that in his fatherly love the boys might see a sign of a higher love still.”⁸

It was this special love for the young, for each young person, that led him to do everything that was possible, to break every mould, to confound every stereotype in order to reach out to them. As Fr Francis Dalmazzo at Don Bosco’s “canonical process of holiness” declared under oath in 1892: «One day I saw Don Bosco leave Don Rua and me who were accompanying him to give a helping hand to a young builder’s labourer who was in tears because he was unable to pull an overloaded cart; and this was on one of the main roads of the city.»⁹

This special love for the young led Don Bosco to put his whole being into finding ways to help them in their growth and development, their human welfare and their eternal salvation. This set the scene for the whole life of our father, being everything for them even to his last breath. One of our Sisters, a Don Bosco scholar, expresses this very well when she writes: “Don Bosco’s love for these youngsters was shown in practical and timely gestures. He took an interest in all of their lives,

⁷ JOHN PAUL II, *Iuvenum patris*, n. 4.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Ordinary Process, published version pp. 870-972, quoted in BOSCO Teresio, *Don Bosco visto da vicino*, ELLEDICI 1997, p. 108.

recognising their most urgent needs and instinctively those most hidden. To state that his heart was given over entirely to the boys means to say that his whole being, intelligence, heart, will, physical energy, his whole being was directed towards their good, to promoting their all-round development, to desiring their eternal salvation. For Don Bosco, therefore, being a man of heart meant being totally consecrated to the good of his boys and giving them his all even to his last breath.”¹⁰

This same zeal led him to try to find a solution with similar criteria to the problems of young girls, with the support and cooperation of the Co-Foundress Mary Domenica Mazzarello and the group of young women united with her and in a parochial setting dedicated to the Christian formation of girls.

His pastoral heart led him in the same way to rely on other collaborators, men and women, those ‘consecrated’ with formal vows, ‘cooperators’ associated in sharing his pedagogical and apostolic ideals.”¹¹ To this should be added his activity as a great promoter of a special devotion to Mary the Help of Christians and Mother of the Church, and his care and continuing affection for his past-pupils.

And as his personal driving force at the centre of all this activity and his vision there was “the fact that he achieved his personal holiness through his commitment to education lived with zeal and an apostolic heart”¹² *pastoral love*. For Don Bosco, precisely because *he felt himself to be a part of God’s plan*, this pastoral love meant that God held the first place in his life. He was the one who gave meaning to his life, to his activity, to his priestly ministry, to such an extent that he abandoned himself to Him to the point of recklessness. Because *he felt that he was a part of the plan of God*, this pastoral charity meant loving young people whatever might be their condition or

¹⁰ P. RUFFINATO, *Educhiamo con il cuore di Don Bosco*, in “Note di Pastorale Giovane”, n. 6/2007, p. 9.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹² *Ibid.*, 5.

circumstances, in order to lead them to the fullness of that human life that was found in the Lord Jesus and which took practical form in the possibility of living as an upright citizen and a child of God.

This is the key to our existence, our living and putting into practice the Salesian charism. If each one of us can come to feel *in our very being*, in the depth of our being that same fire, that passion for education that Don Bosco had, meeting each young person at a deeply personal level, believing in each individual, convinced that in each one there is always a seed of goodness and of the Kingdom in order to help them to give the very best of themselves and to draw them to a close encounter with the Lord Jesus, then we shall certainly embody in our lives the best of the Salesian charism.

3.2. The history of God and of Mankind

I believe, and many of us believe, that Don Bosco had a special ability to know how to read the signs of the times. He knew how to make his own many of the values offered by his own times in the fields of spirituality, social life, education... and he was able to give to all of this the very personal stamp that distinguished him and set him apart from the other great men of his times.

All of this enabled him to understand the present as though he already lived in the future! Don Bosco viewed the present with the eyes of 'God's historian'; the eyes of someone who knows how to look at history and to recognise in it the signs of the Presence of God. History as present, not in the past! Looked at with that clarity which, at best it is possible to have only by interpreting events in God, and in this way respond to the needs of his boys.

Because of this way of his of living and acting, we too are called today to ask Don Bosco to teach us to read the signs of the times in order to help the young.

The Special General Chapter expressed this same conviction when it said that “Don Bosco had to a very high degree a sense of awareness of the needs of the times... His first collaborators were formed in this spirit... Modern society with its rapid and profound changes demands *a new type of person*, capable of overcoming the uneasiness caused by changes, and continuing to look for solutions rather than take refuge in ready-made answers... capable of distinguishing what is permanent from what is changeable without going to extremes”¹³, and in this desire to bring the charism up to date, the path before us is rightly that of seeking for ourselves his pastoral heart combined with that same capacity for flexibility, adaptation seeing with the eyes of faith ‘the here and now’.

4. WITH THE YOUNG, FOR THE YOUNG! especially the poorest

4.1. WITH THE YOUNG *being with them and among them*

We say **WITH THE YOUNG!**, brothers and sisters of our Salesian Family, because the starting point for our *making flesh and blood (INCARNATING) the Salesian charism* is by our **BEING WITH THE YOUNG**, being with them and among them, being in contact with them in their daily lives, knowing their world, loving their world, encouraging them to be the protagonists in their own lives, reawakening their sense of God, helping them to live with high aims.

The world of the young is a world of possibility. In order to be leaven in this world we have to *know and appreciate in a positive and critical manner what the young appreciate and love*. The challenge to our mission among the young is linked to our prophetic ability to read the signs of the times, as we said earlier

¹³ SGC, n. 665.

about Don Bosco; in other words, what is God saying to us and asking of us through these young people with whom we are in contact.

This challenge begins with our having the ability to listen and having the courage and the daring to enter into a dialogue that is “horizontal,” without entrenched positions, without considering ourselves ‘a priori’ in possession of the truth. When we take up the position of the «apprentist» we learn a great deal about them and about the image of the Church we are incarnating for them. Young people with what they say, through their presence or their ‘indifference’, with their replies and their absence, are demanding something from us. And also the Spirit within them and through them is speaking to us. We never emerge from an encounter with them **unscathed** but rather mutually enriched and stimulated.

4.2. WITH THE YOUNG! showing them our special pastoral love

And we say **WITH THE YOUNG!** because what fills our hearts from the vocational call of Jesus that each one of us has received is the special pastoral love for boys and girls, youngsters, young men and women; a special love that will show itself in us as it did in Don Bosco, as a real ‘passion’, seeking what is best for them, putting into this all our energies, every effort and every last breath we have.

Our communities, whatever Family group they may belong to (*whether they are communities of religious, communities of prayer and commitment, communities of witness...*) should seek to acquire “visibility” among the young in their own locality. This visibility requires discernment, choices and self sacrifice. Above all it means generosity in service, joyful, friendly relationships, in a community project of prayers, gatherings and service. More than that it needs an “open house policy”, with a variety of initiatives for bringing people together and

with proposals that respond to the problems that young people in the local area have. Who knows whether the young people appreciate the value there is in being able to avail of a “Salesian house”, being able to count on a group of friends. Being really significant will demand that our communities experience a healthy tension, which leads on to enquiry, discernment and the making of decisions that have to be constantly assessed, prayed about and confirmed in fraternal life and pastoral practice.

4.3. WITH THE YOUNG! especially the poorest

On different occasions I have said that when Pope Francis talks about going to the *peripheries*, addressing the whole Church, he is challenging us in a very real and direct way because he is asking us to *be present on the peripheries with the young who are there, cut off from almost everything, excluded and without opportunities.*

At the same time I want to say that as the Salesian Family these *peripheries* are something typically our own, *because the periphery forms an integral part of our Salesian DNA.* What was Don Bosco’s Valdocco if not the periphery of a large city? What was Mornese if not a rural periphery? We need to make sure our examination of conscience as individuals and as the Salesian Family sees us facing up to the strong demand from the Church, which in its turn is *part of the essential nature of the Gospel.* It will be necessary to question ourselves about being with and for the young, especially the poorest, the needy, the excluded... But it will not be necessary to decide where we ought to be going, *‘our pole star’* because it is among the least, the poorest, those who have the most need of us that the most characteristic feature of our charismatic identity is to be found, and it is against this charismatic identity that we need to measure ourselves in order to find our place, our way of responding today to the mission, in the “here and now.”

4.4. FOR THE YOUNG! *because they have the right to meet role models of believers and adults*

It is constantly becoming ever more evident that our service to young people, to a large extent consists in being *role models of believers and adults to look up to*. Young people are looking for and want to meet up with good Christians who are also “normal”, people they can not only admire but also imitate. In this as in other areas of their lives “under construction”, they need to be able to see themselves reflected in others, they want to find their own identity and learn to live their own faith but by “contagion” (through a life witness) rather than by indoctrination.

It is for this reason that our pastoral activity cannot follow a uniform, one-directional model, given that the circumstances of adolescents and young people are so varied. Especially for us men and women educators, this has very serious implications such as being ready to “lose one’s life” giving it up for the Kingdom, accepting poverty, austerity, a sober lifestyle as a freely chosen pastoral approach at personal and community level, always putting in the first place people, encountering them and being of service to them.

4.5. FOR THE YOUNG! *for whom a personal encounter will be the opportunity for them to feel accompanied*

Working for and with the young always has been and is not only a privilege of being in contact with people who are alive, filled with potential, with dreams and freshness... but, above all, it is an opportunity that is given to us to walk with them *in returning to Jesus in order to make our own his life and his message*, without filtering out its radical nature, without trying to avoid its uncomfortable challenge to our scale of values and our way of living. We are convinced that the Gospel, today as always, has all the potential of being listened to, heard and accepted anew as Good News in the world of the young.

In this being listened to and accepted, the Gospel presents us with the challenge of committing ourselves decisively to *the personal encounter*, personal spiritual accompaniment in which every Salesian educator, man or woman, can propose pathways, suggest choices. Following the example of Don Bosco, we have a great need for men and women educators open to something new, ready to innovate, experiment, to take the risk of being personally genuine witnesses in the lives of the young. We are being asked to approach them individually, spontaneously, showing genuine interest in “the things they like” without presuming to invade their personal space. A form of accompaniment that is based preferably on a positive and affectionate respect for the other person, and one that should take the form of a role of “facilitating”, “appreciating” and “guiding”. When we talk about undertaking “processes of education to the faith” these consist not so much in bringing into young peoples’ lives something from the outside, as in helping them to throw light on their deepest inner selves where God dwells, and to develop the potential and the capabilities that they have within themselves. It is a matter of accompanying them in their lives, helping them to discover their deepest inner identity and their plan of life.

4.6. FOR THE YOUNG! because the young, especially the poorest, are a gift for us

It was the Rector Major Fr Juan E. Vecchi who wrote that “*poor young people have been and still are a gift for us.*”¹⁴ And we certainly cannot think that Fr Vecchi was defending poverty. But it is certain that if we are with them and among them, *it is they who first of all are good for us, who evangelise us and help us to really live the Gospel in what is the most typical feature of the Salesian charism.* I make bold to say that ***it is the young, boys and girls and especially the poorest and those most in need who will save us,*** helping us to emerge from our

¹⁴ AGC 359, p. 24.

routine, from our apathy and from our fears. Often we are more concerned with maintaining our own securities than opening our hearts, our ears and our minds to what the Spirit may be asking of us.

For their sake and in their presence we cannot escape the urgent demands that from the youth situation itself are knocking on our door. We collaborate through our manifold works and services in promoting welcoming the young, listening to their *silent cries*: young people alone, victims of violence, with family squabbles, with emotional wounds, confused, with suffering and sorrow. The Good News urges us to listen to and to accept without pre-conditions their needs, desires, fears and dreams. Likewise it urges us to help them regain their ability to keep on searching, their indignation in the face of opportunities that being closed to them are empty promises: to encourage them to dream, to promote action, to collaborate, to seek a better society. To accept “God’s embrace” as a gift, learning to weep with Him and to smile with Him.

5. IN THE BICENTENARY OF DON BOSCO

5.1. *A first Centenary*

We are celebrating the Bicentenary of the Birth of Don Bosco. Naturally, there was **a first Centenary**, of which I want to offer a brief historical survey.¹⁵

We can begin by saying that *in 1915 there was not one Centenary but two*, both very “Salesian”: the birth of Don Bosco and the decision to make 24 May the date for the celebration in honour of Mary the Help of Christians. This was done by a decree of Pope Pius VII, in order to give thanks to the Mother of God

¹⁵ NOTE: The information which I have greatly summarised was kindly given to me by Fr Jesús Graciliano García, who had prepared for the Spanish Salesian Bulletin eleven short articles, one for each month, based on the history of the first Centenary.

for his liberation from captivity, establishing the Feast of Mary the Help of Christians on 24 May the date of his return to Rome.

The idea of celebrating the first centenary of the birth of Don Bosco in a solemn manner emerged well before the actual date. Fr Paolo Albera wanted to give the celebration a twofold character: that it might serve to extend devotion to Mary Help of Christians and also knowledge of Don Bosco and his work with the intention also of speeding up the Cause of Beatification.

By 1914 the planning of the celebrations for the first centenary of the birth of Don Bosco was already well advanced. The press had made known to the public at large the main events that were to take place on this occasion and the authorities who would be taking part. A selection of plans for the construction of the monument and of the new church had been made. The Holy See had approved a change in the date of the General Chapter and the resignation of the members of the Superior Chapter from their respective responsibilities by a year. Cardinal Gasparri, as the Cardinal Protector of the Salesian Congregation, had written a letter in the name of the Pope.

However, subsequent events proved very adverse. In 1914 and 1915 a series of tragic events took place: a very strong earthquake which struck a part of Sicily causing serious material damage although fortunately without any loss of life among the SDB and FMA; a fire that completely destroyed the Chilean house in Valdivia; the death of Pius X, who was very close to the Salesians. Another earthquake at the beginning of 1915 devastated the Abruzzi region, causing the death of three Daughters of Mary Help of Christians and two Salesians were lost in the ruins.

The most tragic, sorrowful and prolonged event was the outbreak of the First World War which divided the world into two warring factions, leaving millions of dead in its wake. Italy at first neutral entered the war on 2 May 1915 just on the vigil of the proposed celebrations for the centenary of the feast of Mary Help of Christians.

The war had a serious impact on Salesian works in many countries. About 2000 young Salesians were called to arms on one side or the other from the nations at war. The war prevented or made very difficult contact and communication with the Salesian houses of the FMA and the SDB. To a large extent it also reduced the help from the Cooperators. Don Albera continued to call for prayer, urging above all the commemoration of the 24th of each month dedicated to Mary Help of Christians. Clearly in these circumstances the glittering programmes planned for the centenary would be either cancelled, reduced or postponed until a more appropriate time. It was decided to postpone external festivities, limit the programmes and give them a more religious and private character, always with the hope that peace would soon arrive and the obstacles removed. But peace was slower to arrive than had been hoped and many of the planned celebrations would never took place.

Nevertheless and in spite of the fact that the day before the feast on the 23 May, as already mentioned Italy declared war on Austria, and joined the allies, on 24 in a crowded Basilica a Solemn Pontifical Mass was celebrated at which the Cardinal of Turin presided.

There were also celebrations in Valsalice and Castelnovo. For the conclusion of the centenary, the Rector Major invited all the friends of Don Bosco to a two-part pilgrimage: the first on 15 August to visit the tomb of Don Bosco and the second on 16 to visit the places where it had all begun at the Becchi, where Don Bosco was born and at Castelnovo, where he was baptised. At Valsalice the crowd was so great that an altar had to be set up in the portico in front of the tomb. Thousands of people assembled, occupying the whole courtyard and the spaces nearby. Hymns, prayers and gifts were offered prior to Benediction at which Don Albera presided from the terrace in front of the tomb of Don Bosco. Everyone present was given a attractive memento with Don Bosco's picture and some of his sayings.

On the second day, the 16 August, gathered around Don Bosco's house at the Becchi were numerous groups of young and old, ecclesiastics and lay people who had come from Turin and the neighbouring countryside. Waiting for them were Don Albera and all the Superior Chapter. Don Albera celebrated Mass and then there was the laying of the foundation stone of the new church that was to be built there in honour of Mary Help of Christians to mark the double Centenary. At Castelnuovo a commemorative plaque was unveiled followed by a festive lunch, and then the official ceremony to mark the occasion. Don Albera was declared an "honorary citizen."

In America it was possible to celebrate both Centenaries, that of the feast of Mary Help of Christians and that of the birth of Don Bosco. In all the American countries where Salesian work was established huge events were celebrated in honour of Don Bosco and of Mary Help of Christians. In various places the name of Don Bosco was given to roads and centres, and churches were erected to commemorate the occasion. Argentina and Brazil were the countries which particularly distinguished themselves in these circumstances.

5.2. Celebrating the Bicentenary

That then is the history of the celebration of the first Centenary. Now there are many activities, most of them quite simple, that are taking place in the whole world for the Bicentenary. As I did on 16 August at the Becchi at the beginning of the Bicentenary I want to emphasise its real meaning.

Today – as I said on that occasion – while we celebrate the Bicentenary of this historic fact, we give special thanks to God for what He has done through His intervention in history, in this piece of history here on the Becchi hill. Several times in what I have written I have said in one way or another that the Salesian charism is a gift that God through Don Bosco has given to the Church and to the World. It developed over time from

the knees of Mamma Margaret through the friendship of good life- teachers, and above all in daily life spent with the boys.

The Bicentenary of the birth of Saint John Bosco, of Don Bosco, is a jubilee year, a “year of Grace” that we want to live in the Salesian Family with a profound sense of gratitude to the Lord, with humility but with joy, because the Lord Himself is the One Who has blessed this splendid apostolic movement, founded by Don Bosco under the guidance of Mary Hep of Chrisians. It is a jubilee year for the thirty groups which now make up this great Family and for many others who taking their inspiration from Don Bosco, from his charism, from his mission and spirituality, are hoping to be recognised as members of that Family.

It is a jubilee year for the whole Salesian Movement which in one way or another relates to Don Bosco and his initiatives, activities, proposals, and moves ahead sharing a spirituality and in its efforts on behalf of the young especially those most in need.

This Bicentenary ought to be for everyone throughout the whole Salesian world, a precious occasion that is offered us in order to look at the past with gratitude, the present with trust and to dream the future of the evangelising mission of our Salesian Family with vigour and the novelty of the gospel, with courage and a prophetic outlook, allowing ourselves to be guided by the Spirit who will always draw us closer to the newness of God. The Bicentenary is already becoming an opportunity for a real spiritual and pastoral renewal of our Family, an occasion to make the charism more alive and to make Don Bosco as he always has been ever more relevant for the young, on our progress towards the *physical and human peripheries* of society and of the young. The year of the Bicentenary and the subsequent path that we will need to follow ought to be for us a time to bring about what, in all humility, forms part of our most vital charismatic reality.

This Bicentenary ought also to be, and it is already becoming so, the occasion to recall to mind the many women and men who

in this exciting enterprise have given their lives in an heroic manner for this ideal in the most difficult and extreme situations in the world, for which they are a triumph and a priceless treasure the value of which only God knows.

With this conviction, we feel more inspired not only to admire Don Bosco, not only to recognise his relevance but to feel very deeply the **essential commitment to imitate the man** who from the hills of the Becchi arrived in the Valdocco periphery, and the rural periphery of Mornese, in order to become fully involved himself and with others in doing everything possible to seek the welfare of the young and *their happiness in this life and in the next.*

6. MAMMA MARGARET, MOTHER AND TEACHER OF DON BOSCO

I would not want to finish this commentary on the Strenna in this Bicentenary Year of the birth of Don Bosco, which has as its core his educative and pastoral style of work without referring to her who was his mother and teacher. And this because to ignore or be silent about his mother, Mamma Margaret, is to ignore the fact that so many of the natural gifts that we recognise in Don Bosco have their origin, certainly in God, but through the human mediation of his family and in a special way of his mother. This is the reason for this simple reflection¹⁶.

In May 1887 Don Bosco went to Rome – and it was for the last time – for the consacration of the Church of the Sacred Heart the perpetual monument to his love for the Pope. He was almost at the end of a long laborious life, to the shortening of which the construction of that church had contributed. On

¹⁶ NOTE: I asked Fr Pier Luigi Cameroni, SDB Postulator for the Causes of Saints, for his help in this short reflection. This he gave and I thank him sincerely.

Sunday 8 May a reception was held in his honour with the participation of Church and Civil Authorities, Italian and foreign. At the end of the reception many of the guests spoke in a variety of languages. Someone asked out of curiosity what was the language that Don Bosco liked best. Smiling he replied: «The language I like best is that taught me by my mother, because I can express my ideas with little effort, and again I don't forget it as easily as other languages!»¹⁷.

Don Bosco always acknowledged the great values that he had acquired in his family: the peasant's wisdom, a healthy astuteness, a spirit of work, a true appreciation of what was important, readiness to work hard when something needed to be done, optimism under all trials, resilience in times of misfortune, the ability to start again after set-backs, cheerfulness always and everywhere, a spirit of solidarity, a lively faith, genuine and deep affection, a readiness to welcome and to be hospitable; all virtues that he had found at home and that had formed him. He was so marked by these experiences that when he thought about setting up an educational establishment for his boys he did not want any other name for it than "house" and he described the spirit that it ought to have as a "family spirit". In order to give it this proper tone he asked Mamma Margaret, already elderly and tired to leave the tranquillity of her home in the hillside to come down to the city and and to look after the boys he had taken from the streets, those boys who would cause her no little heartache and grief. But she went to help Don Bosco and to become the Mamma to those who no longer had family or affection.

It was precisely the presence of Mamma Margaret at Valdocco during the last ten years of her life that had its influence in no small way on that "family spirit" that we all consider as being at the heart of the Salesian charism. In fact, that decade was no ordinary one but the first during which the foundations

¹⁷ *BM XVIII*, p. 274-275.

were laid for that atmosphere that was to pass into history as the atmosphere of Valdocco. It was spurred on by a very practical need that Don Bosco had invited his Mother. In fact, in God's plans this presence was to rise far above the limits of a practical necessity to become a providential collaboration in a charism just coming to birth. Mamma Margaret was very conscious of this being her "new vocation." She accepted it with humility and a clear mind. This explains the courage she showed in the most difficult circumstances. One need only think of the cholera epidemic: of the actions and the words that were almost prophetic, such as using the altar cloths to make bandages for the sick. Especially significant is the example of the famous "Good Night" something peculiarly a part of Salesian tradition. It was something to which Don Bosco attached great importance and was begun in fact by Mamma Margaret with a little sermonette given to the first young boarder.¹⁸ Don Bosco was to continue this practice not in church in the form of a sermon, but in the playground or inside the house or under the archways in a fatherly and friendly fashion. The inner qualities of this mother were such that her son, even when he had become something of an educational expert, could always learn something from her. Summing up in some way what has been said, one can quote the judgement of Don Lemoyne: «In a sense she embodied the Oratory.»¹⁹

As it matured, this relationship between the mother and son developed into Mamma Margaret sharing the educational mission of her son: «My dear son, you must know how sorry I am to leave this house, your brother, and everyone else I hold so dear, but if you think this would please the Lord then I am ready to follow you,» She leaves her little house at the Becchi and follows him to be among the poor and abandoned boys of Turin. Here for ten years (the last of her life) Margaret

¹⁸ Don Bosco writes about this episode in the "Memoirs of the Oratory". Cf. *Memoire dell'Oratorio di S. Francesco di Sales*, a cura di A. GIRAUDO, LAS Roma, p. 172-173.

¹⁹ BM III, p. 266.

devoted herself without reserve to Don Bosco's mission and to the beginnings of his work, exercising a twofold motherly role: spiritual motherhood for her son the priest and educational motherhood for the boys of the first Oratory making her contribution to the education of such holy sons as Dominic Savio and Michael Rua. Illiterate, but full of that wisdom that comes from on high she is the help of many poor street boys, nobodies children. Finally, the grace of God and the exercise of the virtues made Margaret Occhiena an heroic mother, a wise teacher and a sound adviser to the Salesian charism as it came to birth. Mamma Margaret is a simple woman and yet she shines out among the extraordinary number of holy mothers who live in the presence of God and in God, with a union with Him made up of almost continuous silent prayer. The "most simple thing" that Mamma Margaret continues to repeat through the example of her life is this: that holiness is within reach, it is for everyone and it is achieved in faithful obedience to the particular vocation that the Lord has entrusted to each one of us.

7. WITH MARY THE MOST LOFTY COLLABORATOR OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

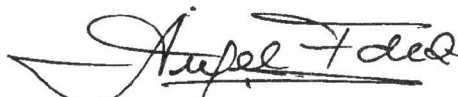
I finish keeping very much in mind the words of Pope now Saint John Paul II at the conclusion of the letter already mentioned in which he invites us to have always before us Mary Most Holy as 'the most lofty collaborator of the Holy Spirit.' The Pope invited us to look to Mary and to listen to her when she says: «Do what He tells you» recalling the marriage feast of Cana (*Jn* 2.5).

In a beautiful final passage addressed to the SDB in those days but in a context that is most appropriate for all our Salesian Family today, the Pope says: "To her I entrust you, and with you the whole world of youth, that being attracted, animated and guided by her, they may be able to attain through

the mediation of your educative work, the stature of new men for a new world: the world of Christ, Master and Lord.”²⁰

The strength of that desire and of these words which the Pope of that time dedicates to us is such that I think we can add nothing more than an ‘Amen’ entrusting all the members of our Salesian Family to the Grace that comes from the Lord, the intercession of Mary Help of Christians and the heart of the Good Shepherd.

May the Lord bless us all.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Ángel Fernández Artime". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping initial 'A' and a long, horizontal flourish at the end.

Fr Ángel FERNÁNDEZ ARTIME, sdb
Rector Major

²⁰ JOHN PAUL II, *Iuvenum patris*, n. 20.

2. GUIDELINES AND DIRECTIVES

2.1 CONVENING THE PROVINCIAL CHAPTERS

Letter of the Vicar of the Rector Major addressed to the Provincials and their Councils, regarding the convening of the Provincial Chapters in the year 2015-2016, according to the three year sequence required by the Constitutions in article 172.

Rome, December 12, 2014
Prot. N. 14/0393

Dear Provincials,

In keeping with the three-year sequence laid down in Article 172 of the Constitutions, the Provinces and Vice-Provinces are called upon to convene their Provincial Chapters in the year 2015-2016. Articles 170-174 of the Constitutions and 161-169 of the Regulations provide the necessary guidelines for achieving a fruitful experience of communion, discernment and convergence on practical issues within the provincial community.

The local communities too are involved in the Chapter process, according to the guidelines that will be issued by the Provincial and the Moderator of the Provincial Chapter. In the last Provincial Chapters the opportunity to participate was offered to some members of the Salesian Family and some lay people with responsibilities in our works; this seems to be an accepted practice and deserves to be continued.

The Rector Major with the General Council call attention to the **two tasks** to be carried out by all Provincial Chapters, the first of which is an ordinary task, while the second is specific: *“The implementation of the GC27”* and the *“Reshaping of the Salesian presences of the Province”*. These are the titles of the two documents that will have to be sent in for approval.

1. “The implementation of the GC27”

With regard to the first task, I wish to remind you that, according to the Constitutions, after the conclusion of a General Chapter, the Provincial Chapters have to determine how to implement its deliberations (cf. C 171). Each Province will continue the process begun during the Provincial Chapter in preparation for the GC27, assessing and improving its implementation. It is a matter of once again taking up the Provincial Chapter's contribution to the GC27 and reviewing it in the light of the Chapter itself.

2. “Reshaping the Salesian presences of the Province”

As regards the second task, the Province is called upon to reshape its presences. It is called to determine criteria and guidelines for the communities and works: strengthening them and ensuring their relevance; re-dimensioning and closing them; looking at growth prospects and opening new works. In this operation it will be necessary to ensure the number and quality of each community, the availability of confreres, the balance between the various types of presences in the Province, the balance between expansion and the qualification of the confreres, the different ways of managing the works, the shared responsibility of laypeople, the involvement and shared responsibility of the Salesian Family in the area, the care of vocations to Salesian consecrated life, financial sustainability...

It is all a matter of governance for which the Provincial Chapter is responsible; in fact, the Regulations say that “it belongs to the Provincial Chapter to suggest ideas and criteria for the planning and reorganization of the works of the Province” (R 167). This is a task to be taken up by all the Provinces; in the case of having to reshape the Province, this task is urgent and must be completed before the reshaping. With the approval and the guidelines given by the Rector Major and the General Council, the Province will continue its work of

implementing the Chapter, laying down definite times for its realization.

In this regard, in addition to the 24th, 25th and 26th General Chapters, the GC27 offers some practical operational guidelines:

- “Ensuring consistency in number and quality of communities by wisely and courageously reshaping communities” (GC27 69.6).
- “Promoting in Provinces a profound assessment of our significance for and presence among poorer youth in our works in accordance with the criteria offered by General Chapters and the Rector Majors, in view of “structural pastoral conversion” and a shift towards new poverties” (GC27 73.1).
- “Encouraging international communities also through a worldwide redistribution of confreres and the promotion of missionary projects in the Congregation” (GC27, 75.5).
- “Creating teamwork with other Salesian Family Groups who are working for the young and promoting their rights” (GC27 71.2).

3. Methods of implementation

The Provincial Chapters will be held starting from **September 2015**. The two Chapter documents that have been mentioned and any changes in the Provincial Directory must be approved by the Rector Major and the General Council. They should be sent, in digital form only, to the General Secretariat by **May 15, 2016** and be accompanied by a letter of introduction from the Provincial.

I would like to remind you that the *Provincial Strategic Plan* is prepared by the Provincial with his Council; it would be appropriate to envisage it for six years, from one General Chapter to the next, so that it can meet the General Chapter’s

requirements. The Provincial Chapter can offer the Provincial and his Council certain criteria, guidelines and priorities for completing or drawing up the Provincial Strategic Plan, which will therefore cover the period from 2015 to 2021. The Provincial Strategic Plan does not need to be approved by the Rector Major and the General Council; it is sent to the Regional Councillor for his information and comments, if any.

The *Provincial Educative and Pastoral Plan* and the *Provincial Formation Plan* too are the responsibility of the Provincial and the Provincial Council and do not need the approval of the Rector Major and the General Council; they can be studied in the Provincial Chapter; they are sent to the Councillor for Youth Ministry and the Councillor for Formation respectively for their information and observations, if any.

To foster a true experience of discernment, discussion and sharing, the primary concern should not be that of drafting documents. The documents should receive proper attention and be prepared well; at the same time, long-windedness and repetitions should be avoided.

I thank you for your kind attention and I send you my cordial greetings.

In Don Bosco

Fr Francesco Cereda
Vicar of the Rector Major

4. ACTIVITIES OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL

4.1 Chronicle of the Rector Major

– *July 2014*

The day after the final meeting of the summer plenary session of the General Council, on 12 July 2014 the Rector Major paid a visit to the 'Auxilium' Faculty, presiding at the Community Mass.

On 13 he received – in addition to others – Mons. Ponen Paul Kubi CSC, Bishop of the Diocese of Mymensingh, Bangladesh, who had come greet him, and on 16 Cardinal Raffaele Farina SDB. On the same day 16 he paid a visit to the 'Madre Santa' community of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians and presided at Mass.

Between 20 July and 4 August he was with his family at Luanco (Spain), his home town, for a period of rest and to visit his parents.

– *August 2014*

Having returned to Rome, on 5 August he went to Mornese, where he presided at the ceremony of the religious profession of a group of FMA. In the evening he was taken to Valdocco where he spent two days with those taking part in the "Campobosco" of the Iberian (Spain and Portugal) Provincial

Conference: young people, confreres and sisters. He devoted the following days basically to office work, also in preparing the Strenna for 2015.

On 15 August he left for Turin accompanied by his private secretary and by Fr Julio Palmieri, a missionary in Pakistan. The particular reason for this journey to Turin was for *the opening of the Bicentenary of the Birth of Don Bosco*. On the afternoon of the same day 15, he presided at Mass in the entrance of the Madonna del Castello, at Castelnuovo, and on 16 he presided at a solemn Concelebration in the Temple of Don Bosco, at Colle Don Bosco, in this way officially opening the celebrations for the Bicentenary. After Mass he was made an honorary citizen by the Mayor of Castelnuovo. More than a dozen other Mayors from Monferrato Piemontese were present and attended the Mass and the festive celebrations.

Having returned to Rome on 18, he continued with work in the office and received several confreres including the Provincial of North Belgium, Fr Mark Tips.

On 30 and 31 August he was in Sicily, accompanied by his private secretary presiding at the opening of the Bicentenary in the Sicilian Province with a Youth Gathering at 'Palacatania', in Catania. The Mother General, Sr. Yvonne Reungoat was also there. On 31 August he paid a visit to the community of the theologate in Messina in order to become familiar with this formation house, and also visited the sick confreres living nearby.

– September 2014

During the first week of September 2014 the Rector Major was busy with office work and also with several visitors including Mons. Cantillas Precioso SDB, Bishop of Maasin-Leyte, in the Philippines.

On 8, he presided at the first professions of the novices at Genzano di Roma, and on 9 he had a meeting at the Pisana with the new missionaries who were preparing to receive the crucifix at the approaching missionary expedition. He also had a meeting with the new Director of the Mission Office in Turin, Bro. Giampietro Pettenon SDB, from the INE Province.

On 10 September he arrived in *Tunisia* with his private secretary

and paid a visit to the Salesian foundation in Manouba-Tunis, a school and oratory, and the work in Menzel-Bourguiba, a school of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. During the two day visit he met with the young people in the oratory and in the school, with the teachers and various leaders from both the school and the oratory-youth centre. He also had an audience with the Archbishop of Tunis, Mons. Illario Antoniazzi, and visited the school of the Marianists in the centre of Tunis. He returned to Rome on the evening of the 12. During the visit the Rector Major was also accompanied by the Provincial and the Provincial Economist of ISI.

On 15, again accompanied by his secretary, he arrived in Krakow to begin *a week's visit to Poland*, travelling to the four Polish Provinces with the Regional of Central and North Europe Fr Tadeusz Rozmus. In Krakow he had a meeting with young people and the leaders of the International Voluntary Service Group organised by the *PLS Province*, and afterwards the confreres in the Theologate. After supper he gave an interview to the local Salesian Bulletin and to the regional newspaper 'Dziennik

Pdsolski'. Then he had a meeting with members of the Salesian Family at which were present the Superior of the Krakow FMA community representing the Provincial who was already in Italy for the FMA GC, the President of the Past Pupils, the Regional Representative of the VDB, the Coordinator of the Provincial Council of the ASC and various confreres from the Provincial house.

On 16 September he first had a meeting with the PLS Provincial Council. Then the Rector Major left for Oświęcim, where he met students and staff from the Salesian school, from other schools in the city and from other Salesian schools in the Province. The Mayor of the city was also present. The Provincial Fr Dariusz Bartocha, presided at Mass in the Sanctuary attended by the educative community and also members of the SYM from various houses. The Rector Major gave the homily. After lunch he met confreres who had come in large numbers to greet him. He then paid a visit to the Memorial Museum of Auschwitz-Birkenau. In the evening he arrived in Wrocław, and thus began his visit to the *PLO Province*.

On the morning of 17 he met the confreres who had come to the

Provincial house from various houses in the Province, and in the afternoon he had a meeting with the Provincial Council. In the evening he concelebrated Mass at which the Provincial Fr Alfred Leja presided, and gave the homily.

On the morning of 18 he first paid a visit to the Sanctuary of Częstochowa stopping to pray in front of the image of the Black Madonna of Jasna Góra; later he met the novices and the confreres from the novitiate at Kopiec and had lunch with them. After lunch he left for Warsaw.

He arrived in Warsaw in the afternoon, thus beginning his visit to the *PLE Province* on the feast of Saint Stanislaw Kostka, patron of the Province. He immediately concelebrated Mass at which the Provincial Fr Andrzej Wujek presided, and gave the homily, greeting especially the confreres who were celebrating various jubilees. After Mass he met the confreres (all the Rectors and parish priests, and many other confreres from the Province) and had supper with them. After supper he had a meeting with the Provincial Council.

On 19 he had breakfast in Warsaw and then left for Łódź, where he met the pupils and staff of the school and had a moment of

prayer with them. Before lunch he had a meeting with the confreres and after lunch went to visit Archbishop Marek Jędraszewski, Vice President of the Polish Bishops' Conference. He then left for Szczecin (Stettin) where he arrived in the evening thus beginning the final stage of his visit to Poland.

After supper with about twenty of the confreres from the *PLN Province*, he gave a short address to the young people of the *SYM* who had come together for the occasion, and at the end of a social evening gave them the Good Night.

After breakfast on 20, he said Morning Prayer with the young people of the *SYM* and then joined in a discussion with them about "Don Bosco among the poor." At midday he presided at a Mass with bilingual texts so that all the congregation could follow the celebration. In the afternoon he met the Provincial Council and then the confreres of the Province with whom he had supper. After supper there was another period of prayer with the young people during which he blessed a picture of Don Bosco, that will be carried in pilgrimage around the various houses of the *PLN Province* during the Bicentenary year.

On 21, after breakfast and Mass in the parish church at which the Provincial Fr Marek Chmielewski presided and the Rector Major gave the homily, he left by car for Berlin, where he took a plane for the return flight to Rome.

Early on 22 September he went to the Generalate of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians and presided at the opening Mass of the General Chapter XXIII of the Institute. After breakfast he took part in the opening ceremony giving an official greeting in the name also of the Congregation and all the Salesian Family. He also stayed for lunch and on his return to the Pisana he had a meeting with Mons. Joseph Arshad, Bishop of Faisalabad, Pakistan.

On the following days he received several confreres, including on 26, in the morning a group of teachers of Salesian Studies from the Regional Centre for Ongoing Formation in Quito, on a study pilgrimage to the Salesian places in Piedmont, and in the afternoon a group of the Salesian Family from Ecuador.

On 27 he left with his secretary for Turin to take part the next day, 28 September, in the 145th *Missionary Expedition*. In the

afternoon he met the Provincials of the Mediterranean Region who were having a meeting at Valdocco and then returned to Rome on 29.

On 30 September, after visiting the sick confreres in the infirmary of the UPS, he presided at the Mass and celebration for the installation of the new Superior of the "Mary Seat of Wisdom" Vice Province, Fr Eugenio Riva. In this way he concluded a very busy month.

– **October 2014**

Between 1 and 5 October the Rector Major, accompanied by his secretary, went to visit the Salesian houses in *Albania and Kosovo*, belonging to the IME Province. Having arrived in Tirana, Albania, before lunch he spoke briefly to the educative community. In the afternoon he met the Salesian Family and the EPC, and answered some of their questions. After Mass he had supper with the SDB and FMA present.

On 2 after giving the 'Good Morning' to the youngsters in the school he left for Gjiilan where he met the Salesians, the youngsters in the school and the civil authorities. In the afternoon he left for Pristina, in Kosovo, where on his arrival, presided at

Mass in the Cathedral. This was followed by supper with the Salesians and the Bishop, Mons. Dodë Gjergji.

The following day the Rector Major took part in the opening of a new sports hall. In the afternoon he celebrated Mass with the Salesian confreres and the Salesian cooperators and then left for Scutari. On his arrival he was met by some young leaders of the SYM, Salesians and Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.

On Saturday 4 after morning prayer with the members of the SYM and the Salesian Family and after breakfast he took part in the festival of the SYM in Albania and Kosovo, at which he gave a short address. Before lunch he presided at Mass. In the afternoon he met the members of the SYM and in the evening the Salesian Family.

On Sunday 5 October after breakfast he left for Tale, on the way to the airport of Rinas, and stopping off at the house of the FMA presided at the local parish Mass with the families of the young children.

Throughout the visit to Albania and Kosovo he was accompanied by the Provincial and Provincial Economist of IME.

Between 6 and 8 October the Rector Major went to Madrid to

sign the documentation for the new Province of "Saint James the Great" (SSM). He took the opportunity to visit the sick confreres in the houses of Arevalo and León, as well as the Mission Office in Madrid.

On the evening of 10, accompanied by his secretary, he left for the city of Cagliari, in Sardinia in order to be present on 11 at the celebrations for the centenary of the work.

On 11 he met the youngsters from the Sixth Form and before lunch celebrated Mass with them and their parents and members of the Salesian Family in Sardinia. After lunch with the Salesians and representatives of the Salesian Family he went to the Town Hall where in a special session the Mayor conferred on the Rector Major him honorary citizenship, in recognition of the work undertaken by the Salesians during the 100 years of their presence in the city. Later he said evening prayer with the Salesian Family and after supper he took part in a Prayer Vigil with the SYM of Sardinia.

On 12, after a prayer with the young people of the Diocesan Youth Movement (representatives of various parishes and communities in the Diocese), he spent some time speaking with them and also

celebrated Mass. After lunch he returned to Rome.

On 13 October, accompanied by his secretary, the Rector Major began a visit to *Ukraine*. Having arrived in the city of Lviv, with the Regional Councillor, Fr Tadeusz Rozmus, he went to the Salesian parish to greet the young people and the confreres.

On 14 he took part in the Solemn Liturgy in the Byzantine rite, at which Mons. Josyf Milian, Auxiliary Bishop of Kiev presided. In the Liturgy, the Rector Major gave the homily and at the end, according to the oriental rite, he too gave the final blessing, first with the relic of Don Bosco and then with Holy Water to all the people.

After lunch which took place in the hostel with the young residents, the Salesian Family and other co-workers he paid a visit to the Salesian houses in Lviv and a meeting in the prenovitiate at Vynnyky where he had supper and met with other members of the community, Mons. Andrés Sapelak 95 years of age former Eparch for the Ukrainian faithful in Argentina.

On 15 October, after Mass in the house of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, he went to see the Salesians from the PLS

Province present in the Ukraine and afterwards the confreres belonging to the UKR Circumscription. Before lunch he presided at the installation of the new Superior, Fr Karol Maník, former Provincial of SLK. After lunch he held a meeting with the Provincial Council.

On 16 he returned to the Generalate in Rome, where on the following days among other audiences he received the missionaries who were at the Pisana on a course for new missionaries. In the afternoon of 17 he paid a visit to the community and the work at Borgo Don Bosco in Rome.

On 22, in his role as Grand Chancellor, he presided at Mass for the opening of the academic year of the Auxilium Faculty of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians; and he did the same on the 23 at the UPS.

On 24 October the Rector Major presided at Mass at the GC XXIII of the FMA, with a special invocation of the Holy Spirit on the day of the elections of the Mother General and of her Council. He then waited in the FMA Generalate for the election of the Superior General, so that he was one of the first to greet Mother Ivonne Reungoat, as she

was re-elected for a new six year period.

Between 25 and 29 he made a trip to the Salesian special places in Piedmont with three confreres of the Generalate community, all over 80 years of age, who for many years have been at the service of the Congregation at the centre working very closely with the Rector Majors and the Councillors: Bros. Renato Celato, Michele Rinero and Cesare Borlengo.

On 31 the Rector Major left for Luanco, his home town, to be with his parents as they celebrated their 55th wedding anniversary.

– **November 2014**

After two days with his family, on 3 November the Rector Major arrived in Madrid, from where the following day with his secretary he left for *Guatemala*. In Guatemala, on 5 and 6 November he met some members of the Salesian Family, the young people of the SYM and the young confreres in the postnovitiate and theologate, and especially the confreres at the CRESCO (Regional Formation Centre for Salesian Brothers) which depends on the two Regions of America. On 6 he also had a meeting with the CAM Provincial Council.

On 7 November he left for *Venezuela*, where he remained until 12. Arriving in Caracas, in the afternoon of 7, he met the Cardinal Archbishop, Jorge Liberato Urosa Savino, and some other Bishops of the metropolitan area. He had supper with them and some members of the Salesian Family and friends of the Salesian work in Venezuela.

On 8 he presided at Mass in *Sarría*, a district of the capital, together with that of Valencia the first work of the Salesians in Venezuela. After Mass he met the Salesians who had come to greet the Rector Major and speak with him briefly.

After lunch with the Salesians present, he left for *Altamira*, another district of Caracas, where he met about 800 young people of the SYM. He went to see the FMA who were in the infirmary nearby and then the SDB in our infirmary. Finally he had a meeting with the whole Salesian Family in the Tempio Don Bosco.

On 9 after breakfast he went to the theologate in *Macaracuay*, another metropolitan district, where he met the confreres in the initial stages of formation together with young members of various branches of the Salesian Family. Before having lunch with

them he presided at Mass. In the afternoon he left for the agricultural school in *Barinas*, where he was welcomed by the youngsters, members of the educative pastoral community, friends of the work and members of the Salesian Family. In the evening after supper he took part in a "noche llanera" (a typical social evening in the plains of Venezuela) at which he also received the greetings of the Mayor of Barinas and a special mark of recognition on behalf of the city for the work carried out by the Salesians.

On 10, after breakfast and discussion with the young students and staff, the Rector Major had a meeting with the Salesians and then presided at Mass for all the school community and more youngsters who had come from other Salesian house. After an open air lunch with a large "asado" (barbecue), he left for Valencia. On his arrival he was greeted by the youngsters and staff of the Don Bosco House (a hostel catering for youngsters in difficulty) and before supper he met the Salesians from the local area.

On 11 he went to the Don Bosco College, more in the centre of the city of Valencia, where he was

welcomed by all the youngsters from the school and members of the Salesian Family and co-workers. A member of the City Council on behalf of the Mayor who with another unexpected engagement was unavoidably absent presented the Rector Major with a special honour. Afterwards he had a meeting with the Salesian Family and presided at Mass. After lunch with the Salesians, he left to return to Caracas.

In Caracas, on the morning of 12 he held a meeting with the Provincial Council and then greeted the lay personnel who work in the Provincial house. In the afternoon he took the plane to return to Rome.

On 14 November he went to the UPS for the conferral of a Doctorate "Honoris Causa" on Fr Federico Lombardi, Director of the Press Office of the Holy See.

On 15 he presided at the closing Mass and attended the farewell lunch with the General Chapter of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.

The following days were devoted to office work and a number of private interviews.

On 18 November the Rector Major took part in a special meeting in one of the halls of the

Italian Parliament in the context of the International Congress on Salesian History taking place at the 'Salesianum' between 19 and 23, at which he was present for the whole time presiding at the Masses and giving the concluding address.

Among the visitors he received during this period, were, on 22, Mons. George Rajandran Kuttinadar SDB, Bishop Eparch of Thuckalay of the Syro-Malabar rite and on 24 Mr. Rodney López Clemente, Ambassador of the Republic of Cuba to the Holy See.

On 25 November at the FMA novitiate at Castelgandolfo he met the novices of the two European novitiates located in Rome.

Between 26 and 28 November he took part in the General Assembly of the Union of Superiors General and between 28 and 30 in the meeting of the Provincials of Europe, both at the Salesianum.

On 1 December the winter plenary session of the General Council began.

4.2 Chronicle of the General Councillors

The Vicar of the Rector Major

During this first six-month period while carrying out his role the Vicar of the Rector Major, Fr Francesco Cereda, has been for the most part at the Generalate and in Rome. He attended to the ordinary administration of the Congregation and, in the absence of the Rector Major, also presided at three meetings of the General Council. He contributed to the creation of a closer connection between the General Secretariat and the Juridical Office. He followed the preparations for the International Historical Congress for the Bicentenary of the birth of Don Bosco and for the V Meeting of the Provincials of Europe.

On 16 August he took part in the opening of the Bicentenary at Colle Don Bosco. On 28-29 August he was in Slovakia, where at Šaštín he took part in the celebration of the 90th anniversary of the presence of the Salesians in that country and chaired a meeting of the Provincial Council. On 5-6 September at La Spezia he presented the educative pastoral programme for the year 2014-

2015, "Like Don Bosco with the young and for the young," to the teaching staffs in the FMA Province of Emilia - Liguria and Tuscany and took part in the celebration of the centenary of the presence of the La Spezia FMA community. On 8 September at Colle Don Bosco he presided at the celebration of the first professions of the Salesian novices from Pinerolo and on 14 September he presided at the ceremony of the SDB and FMA perpetual professions at Milan. On 22 September he took part in the opening day of the General Chapter of the FMA. On 29 September he took part in the special Audience with Pope Francis, for the members of the Universal Biblical Alliance and the directors of the LDC in Turin, for the presentation of the Italian Language Bible "*The Word of the Lord – The inter-confessional Bible in modern-day language*". On 30 September he took part in the installation of the new Superior of the UPS Vice-Province, Fr Eugenio Riva.

On 12 October in the Salesian community of the Vatican he met the Salesian Cardinals and Bishops taking part in the Extraordinary Synod on the family. On 13 October he took part

in the opening ceremony of the Bicentenary in the Province of Southern Italy, in the "San Carlo" Theatre in Naples. On 20 October he had a meeting with Cardinal Di Montezemolo and the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem for the conclusion of the agreements regarding Salesian property in the Holy Land. Between 20 and 25 October he made the *canonical visitation of the community in the Vatican*. On 29 October the memorial of Blessed Michael Rua, he presided at Mass at the General Chapter of the FMA. Between 27 October and 17 November he carried out the *canonical visitation of the 'Blessed Michael Rua' community of the Generalate*. On 5 November together with a delegation from the Archdiocese and the city of Turin he took part in the General Audience, at which Pope Francis announced his visit to Turin on the occasion of the exposition of the Shroud and the Bicentenary of the birth of Don Bosco. On 7 November he took part in a Congress of the Faculty of Christian and Classical Literature at the UPS.

At the "Salesianum" in the Generalate in Rome between 18 and 23 November he took part in the International Historical

Congress for the Bicentenary; and then between 25 and 28 November in the Six-monthly Assembly of the Superior Generals and between 28 and 30 November in the V Meeting of the Provincials of Europe.

The Councillor for Formation

After the conclusion of the summer plenary session of the General Council, the Councillor for Formation, Fr Ivo Coelho, between 18 and 22 July went to India to visit some formation communities in the INB and INP Provinces: the prenovitiate in Pinguli, the centre for the specific formation of candidates for the priesthood at Pune, and the novitiate and postnovitiate in Nashik. Back in Italy he took part in the celebrations for the opening of the Bicentenary of the birth of Don Bosco, on 5-17 August, at Castelnuovo and the Becchi.

Then in the course of three months starting at the beginning of September he took part in Regional Formation Commission meetings in the various Regions where he familiarised himself with the formation situation in

each Region, held discussions about the subject of Salesian personal accompaniment, and was present for the Regional formation planning for the six-year period. At all these meetings there was also a talk on missionary formation given by someone from the sector for the Missions.

In more detail: between 3 and 6 September, with his collaborator Fr Salvador Murguia and three other Councillors (Filiberto González, Guillermo Basaños and Tim Ploch), he took part in a meeting of the *Interamerica* Regional Commission at Tlazala in the MEM Province. He then paid a visit to all the formation communities in the MEM and MEG Provinces. Next, in Ecuador, he visited the novitiate, the prenovitiate, the postnovitiate and the Salesian Centre for Ongoing Formation in Quito. In both Mexico and Guadalajara, as well as in Ecuador he also met the Provincials and their Councils.

Similarly between 26 and 28 September, he took part in the *America - South Cone* Regional Formation Commission at Santiago - Lo Cañas, in Chile. He also paid a brief visit to the communities of the postnovitiate and of the theologate in the same

place and met the Provincial Fr Alberto Lorenzelli.

There followed other meetings by the Councillor with his collaborator Fr Chrys Saldanha, with various Regional Formation Commissions: at Mumbai, India, between 6 and 9 October for the *South Asia* Region; at Nairobi, Kenya, between 13 and 18 October, for the *Africa and Madagascar* Region. There was also the opportunity to visit all the formation houses in East Africa (AFE) and Ethiopia (AET) and for meeting with the Provincial of AET, Fr Estifanos Gebremeskel and his Council. Afterwards in Munich in Bavaria, Germany between 15 and 17 October, the Councillor took part in a meeting of the Formation Commission of the *Central and North Europe* Region. Then in Seoul, South Korea between 9 and 11 November, he took part in a meeting of the Formation Commission of the *East Asia - Oceania* Region and also a formation course for formation personnel (13-16 November). He also found time to visit the formation houses of the Province and for meetings with the local Council and also the Provincial Council.

In Rome, on 29 October he took part in the "Curatorium" of the UPS and on the same day together

with the Rector Major, the Vicar and the Economer General, in a meeting with the Vice-Rector of the Gregorian Pontifical University on the question of collaboration in initiatives for the protection of minors.

Finally between 19 and 23 November he took part in the International Historical Congress in the “Salesianum”; on 24 November in a meeting of the UPS Personnel Group; and then in the meeting of the Provincials of Europe on the ‘Project for Europe’ held at the Pisana between 28 and 30 November.

The Councillor for Youth Ministry

After the conclusion of the June-July 2014 session of the General Council, the Councillor for Youth Ministry Fr Fabio Attard, took as his priority the accompanying of the Regions in the assimilation of the new edition of *Salesian Youth Ministry. A Frame of Reference*.

Therefore from the first week of September until the last week of November 2014 eight meetings in 6 Regions were organised: Lomé (Togo), Nairobi (Kenya), Johannesburg (South Africa), Port-au-Prince (Haïti), Brasilia

(Brazil), Hyderabad (India) and Melbourne (Australia). Taking part in each meeting in addition to the Youth Ministry Delegate were also some members of the Provincial Team.

As well as in these Regional Meetings the Councillor also took part in the following:

- a meeting of those responsible for centres of professional formation in all the Provinces of Africa and the Caribbean, at Nairobi (Kenya) between 14 and 17 July 2014. The aim of the meeting was to strengthen the first steps of the ‘BTAfrica’;
- a meeting about the contribution of fundamental moral theology to youth ministry, during the summer session of the *Masters in Youth Ministry*, that the ICC organised between 24 and 26 July 2014 at Genzano (Rome);
- a study day for the local coordinators of Youth Ministry in the INE Province, at Auronzo on 28 July 2014;
- the “Campobosco” organised by the Madrid CNSPJ for 500 young people at the Salesian special places between 3 and 8 August 2014;
- a conference to those responsible for Youth Ministry in the IUS entitled *Education in values in the IUS*, during a meeting at São

Paulo (Brazil) on 19-20 August 2014;

- the Logistical Commission for the meeting of the 'SYM Don Bosco' 2015, which met on the following days: 29 July, 29 September, 28 October, 5 December 2014;
- a meeting for the 15 people – SDB, FMA and Lay people – who form the Commission for the content of the meeting of the 'SYM Don Bosco 2015', held in Rome between 6 and 8 October 2014;
- a round table discussion held at the UPS, Rome, on 10 October 2014, commemorating the first anniversary of the death of Fr Riccardo Tonelli.

The Councillor for Social Communication

August 2014. When the plenary session of the General Council ended, the Councillor for Social Communication, Fr Filiberto González, remained in the Generalate to undertake, with the Team, a study of the Project of the Rector Major, the general planning of the work of the Sector for the six-year period and the particular planning for the next six months.

On 28 August he left for the city of Guadalajara, Mexico, in the MEG Province, in order to visit his family, hold several meetings in the two Mexican Provinces and visit some houses in the MEG Province.

September 2014. On 1 September in the MEM Provincial house in México city Fr Filiberto had a meeting with the Delegate for Social Communication and his team in the MEM Province, in order to present the Plan of the Rector Major for the six-year period 2014-2020, emphasise the priorities of the GC27, invite them to update the PSCP and speak about the situation of the national Salesian Bulletin and the events of the Bicentenary of the birth of Don Bosco.

Between 2 and 6 September he took part in a meeting of Provincial Formation Delegates in the Interamerican Region, together with the Regional Fr Tim Ploch, the Councillor for Formation Fr Ivo Coelho and his collaborator Fr Salvador Murguía and the Councillor for the Missions Fr Guillermo Basaños. At the meeting Fr Filiberto González spoke about the importance of the formation of Salesians in Social Communication understood as a

cultural, social and pastoral field of work in which to be present as consecrated persons for the education and evangelisation of the young.

On 8 September he accompanied Fr Ivo Coelho and Fr Salvador Murguía to the MEG Provincial house; on 9 he joined them at Mass and at a meeting with those in formation and the formation personnel from the studentate of theology in Tlaquepaque. Here on 10 he presided at Mass, had a meeting with those in formation and the formation personnel and spoke about the priorities of the GC27, the Rector Major's Plan for 2014-2020 and the SC programme.

On 12 September he had a meeting with the MEG Delegate for SC and his team in order to present the Rector Major's Plan for the six-year period 2014-2020, emphasise the priorities of the GC27, invite them to update the PSCP and speak about the situation of the national Salesian Bulletin and the events of the Bicentenary of the birth of Don Bosco.

On 15 he visited the community responsible for the churches entrusted to the Salesians in the city of Guadalajara, also in the MEG Province. On 18 he spoke

to the MEG Provincial and his Council about the message of the Rector Major.

On 20 and 21 September, in the Chapalita College in Guadalajara, he gave the greetings of the Rector Major to more than a thousand young people who together with the Salesians in the MEG Province were celebrating the "Campo Bosco" as part of the Bicentenary of the birth of Don Bosco.

On 22 he visited the Salesian community entrusted with three schools in the city of Guadalajara.

On 26 he left Guadalajara, Mexico, for Quito, Ecuador. On 27 he arrived at the Provincial house in Quito and between 28 September and 1 October chaired a meeting of the Social Communication Delegates from the *Regions of America South Cone and Interamerica* gathered together in the St Patrick's Spirituality Centre in Quito, with the aim of: establishing the priorities of the Provincial Social Communication Project and the duties of the SC Delegate deriving from the GC27 and the Plan of the Rector Major 2014-2020, and coming to a knowledge of the new arrangement of the SSSC in order to adapt and apply it in one's own Province.

October 2014. On 2 October Fr Filiberto González met the Provincial in the Provincial house of ECU, in Quito, and then in the evening took the plane to fly back to Rome, and the Generalate where he stayed for the next few days.

On 14 October he left for Nairobi, Kenya. On the morning of 15 he arrived at the AFE Provincial house and met the Formation Delegates for the *Africa and Madagascar Region*, and spoke about the importance of SC in the all round formation of Salesians.

Between 16 and 20 he chaired a meeting of the SC Delegates from the Africa and Madagascar Region, with the aim of: establishing the priorities of the Provincial Social Communication Project and the duties of the SC Delegate deriving from the GC27 and the Plan of the Rector Major 2014-2020, and coming to a knowledge of the new arrangement of the SSSC in order to adapt and apply it in one's own Province and to draw up a draft of the SC Project for the Region to be presented to the CIVAM for approval.

On 16 October with all the SC Delegates together with Fr Ivo Coelho and the Regional Formation Delegates he visited

the international formation community for theologians at Utume. On 20 he left Nairobi and arrived back in Rome on 21 morning.

November 2014. Between 11 and 13 November Fr Filiberto González was in Madrid. On 12 he took part in a meeting of the Editorial Commission of the CCS and met the Editor of the Salesian Bulletin. On 13 he had a meeting with the SC Delegates of the two new Provinces of Spain: SMX, SSM.

Having returned to Rome, on 14 and 15 November he took part in the events connected with the XXV anniversary of the foundation of the Faculty of Communication Studies at the UPS, including the conferral of a Doctorate *Honoris Causa* on Father Federico Lombardi, and presiding at the concluding Mass on 15.

On 18 he took part in the presentation of the topic of the Salesian Missionaries in Patagonia which on the occasion of the Bicentenary of the birth of Don Bosco, was held in Montecitorio, the Italian Parliament in Rome.

Between 19 and 23 he took part in the International Congress on Salesian History at the Salesianum.

Finally between 28 and 30 he took part in the meeting of the Provincials of Europe.

The Councillor for the Missions

When the summer session of the General Council ended, between 15 and 18 July in Nairobi Kenya, the Councillor for the Missions, Fr Guillermo Basaños, took part in an interregional meeting on Professional Training and Development Offices.

Between 23 and 29 he made his first contact with the continent of Asia, visiting the Salesian house in Bangladesh, founded and led by his predecessor Fr Francis Alencherry. On this occasion he was able to go to our two foundations in Utrail and Lokhikul.

His next engagement was in Shillong, India, taking part in the Regional Course for Missionary Formation. First of all he stopped off and visited the Province of Kolkata on 31 July and 1 August, meeting a number of confreres and passing through several houses. Very significant was the time spent sharing ideas with all the Provincial Delegates for Missionary Promotion in the

South Asia Region gathered together in the Provincial house.

On 2 August Fr Guillermo arrived in North East India, landing in Guwahati and immediately greeting the confreres in the 'Don Bosco Institute' and the ING Provincial house, as well as the "Missionaries Sisters of Mary Help of Christians" in their Generalate. The same evening he arrived at the INS Provincial house in Shillong, where he was welcomed by the confreres especially those on the Missionary Course.

Between 3 and 6 August the Councillor divided his time between the Missionaries and visiting our various houses in the INS Province, as well as some other groups of the Salesian Family. On 5 August he presided at the first professions of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians in Shillong.

Between 6 and 9 August Fr Basaños visited some centres in the ING Province paying particular attention to the International Missionary Aspirantate in Sirajuli. Afterwards in the evening of 16 August the Councillor arrived in Quito, Ecuador, to be present for the final part of the Regional Course for Missionary Formation. In addition

to some visits to parts of the capital of the country, Fr Guillermo was able to go between 21 and 25 August, to some centres in the Andes part of the Province as well as the Vicariate of Méndez; where he was able to preside at an assembly of confreres as well as the commissioning of some missionary volunteers. Very significant was the short time he spent in front of the grave of Blessed Maria Troncatti, at Macas.

Between 26 August and 1 September, the Councillor paid a visit to his parents and relatives in Buenos Aires, Argentina, before going immediately afterwards – between 2 and 5 – to Mexico to take part at Tlazala, in the MEM Province, in a Regional Meeting of Provincial Formation Delegates, in the context of missionary formation.

Having returned to the Generalate, from 7 September onwards in Rome and Turin he was closely involved in the preparation course for new missionaries, members of the 145th Missionary Expedition. On the day of departure, Sunday 28 September, he concelebrated at the side of the Rector Major in Turin-Valdocco.

After having met the missionaries attending the UPS Formation

Course during their Retreat in Rome, on 30 September, the following days (between 1 and 3 October) with the Economist General for the first time he visited the Mission Office in Bonn.

After the meeting of the Executive Committee of the “Don Bosco Network” at the Pisana, on 6 October, Fr Guillermo Basaños went to visit our confreres in the CIN Province between 8 and 15, which was followed by a period of missionary promotion in the two Philippine Provinces FIN and FIS. Especially around Manila and in Cebu, between 16 and 21 October, the Councillor was able to meet many confreres, especially the young ones in initial formation as well as a good number of aspirants.

On his return to Europe, on the weekend of 24 and 25 October, in Bulgaria Fr Guillermo took part in the celebrations for the 20th anniversary of the presence of the Salesians in that country which had been marked especially by the high quality missionary service offered to the *Romany* people.

On Monday 27, meeting up again with the missionaries on the Formation Course at the UPS, he took the opportunity to greet the FMA Councillor for the Missions

Sr Alaide Deretti, who had just been re-elected during their General Chapter.

On 30 October the Councillor left again for the American continent, where between 3 and 5 November he chaired the annual meeting of the Directors of Mission Offices in New Rochelle, USA. During the previous days he had been able to visit for the first time the church where he had been baptised (in 1965), in Washington D.C.

After a short visit to some nearby Salesian houses in the SUE Province, Fr Basaños left for the west where in both Los Angeles (SUO), and Tijuana and Ciudad Juárez (MEG), he was able to visit – between 6 and 12 November – the main works of the Salesians with the immigrants at the frontier. In all his travels he was accompanied by the two Provincials.

Having arrived in Mexico City, he set out again with Mons. Héctor Guerrero SDB, Bishop Prelate of the Mixes, to visit the missions in the Prelature until 16 November.

On his return to Rome, Fr Guillermo took part in the Salesian Historical Congress at the Pisana, between 19 and 22 November, which was followed

by the meeting of the Provincials of Europe, on the “Project for Europe”, between 8 and 30.

The Economer General

Immediately following the conclusion of the plenary session of the General Council, the Economer General, Bro. Jean Paul Muller, went to the Manaus Province (BMA) for some reflection together with the Provincial and the Provincial Economer on the current situation of the Province, with the present concerns about the mission in Rio Negro.

On the last days of July (28-30) he gave a talk at a Congress in Stockholm, Sweden on “Substantial Economy.”

In August, after some days of retreat he was present at the opening of the Bicentenary at Colle Don Bosco, on 15 and 16 August, before leaving for the Province of Belo Horizonte (BBH), where the Extraordinary Visitation was taking place during which the Economer General examined the functioning of the Economer’s Office and the economic situation of this Province.

Back in Rome at the end of August, he had a meeting with a

group of Volunteers who had returned from their mission in Africa and Asia. Between 4 and 7 September he then took part – giving a talk and offering some suggestions to be considered – at the formation course for Economers held at Peio Terme in the Lombardy-Emilian Province (ILE). Having returned to Rome, the Economer had to appear in Court and hold meetings with lawyers which filled his diary, but there were also some moments of encouragement such as taking part in the opening of the GC23 of the FMA and a meeting with representatives of the FAO in Rome.

In the first days of November Jean Paul Muller met a group of American Past-Pupils in Miami before taking part in a meeting of the Mission Offices at New Rochelle, New York. For the first time this meeting was held with the participation of the lay people engaged in sectors of responsibility in our Mission Offices in order to make plans for the six-year period and to strengthen the coordination among them.

In the months September-November, in addition to the engagements already mentioned the Economer with various

working-parties composed of technical experts prepared various documents in view of global solidarity in the Congregation and of the demands of the Holy See regarding the Administrative Report and in reference to the document of the Congregation for Consecrated Life and the guidelines for the management of the material goods in Institutes of Consecrated Life.

In Utrecht (Holland), at the invitation of a Foundation, he gave a talk on the conclusions of the GC27 on the sustainability of Salesian works in developing countries. Immediately afterwards in Berlin, at the “Conference on youth at risk in the Salesian context in Europe” he spoke about the prospect of changes in implementing Salesian pedagogy of today’s Europe. In Rome, after the International Historical Congress he took part in the meeting of Provincials about the “Project for Europe.”

The Councillor for the Africa and Madagascar Region

When the summer plenary session of the General Council ended, the Regional Councillor for Africa and Madagascar,

Fr Américo Chaquisse, set out on 11 July to make *some fact-finding visits to the Region*.

Between 14 and 18 July in Nairobi, he chaired a Regional meeting of the BTA ("Bosco Tech Africa") and PDO ("Planning and Development Offices") attended by all the Provincial delegates of the Region and the Directors of the Planning and Development Offices of the Region, of Haïti and the Dominican Republic. Then between 22 July and 2 August he was in the *Vice Province of Zambia* (ZMB), visiting the communities of Mansa, Kazembe, Lufubu, the prenovitiate of Chingola, Kabwe, Bauleni, Makeni (novitiate). He concluded the visit holding a meeting with the Council of the Vice Province.

In August, between 2 and 14 he paid a visit to the *Vice Province of Southern Africa* (AFM) and the communities of Lansdowne (Capetown), "Salesian Institute"; then Ennerdale (Johannesburg), the prenovitiate community. On 11 August he went to Lesotho, visiting the community of Maputsoe-St Luke, where he took part in a meeting of the Council of the Vice Province; and afterwards he visited the community in Maseru. Between 14 and 21 August he went to the *Vice*

Province of Madagascar (MDG), visiting the community in Ivato ("Notre Dame de Clairvaux"), and the novitiate at Ambohidratrimo. On 16 August in the Vice Provincial house he presided at the Mass for the installation of the new Superior of the Vice Province Fr Charles Armand; and in the evening chaired a meeting of the Council of the Vice Province. Afterwards Fr Américo Chaquisse went to the community of Ijely and then the community of Betafo (aspirantate). Between 21 August and 1 September he paid a visit to the *Province of East Africa* (AFE). In Nairobi he visited the prenovitiate (Bosco Boys) and the studentate of theology (Utume). He then went to Tanzania where he visited the studentate of philosophy at Moshi, followed by the aspirantate at Dodoma and the novitiate a Morogoro, where he stayed for two days before returning to Nairobi-Upper Hill the Provincial house.

In September, between 1 and 15, he went to visit the *Vice Province of Mozambique* (MOZ). He spent two days with his family and then left for Moatize and Matundo. Returning to Maputo, he visited the community of Inharrime and on 13 September he presided at the Mass when the new Superior

of the Vice Province Fr Marco Biaggio was installed. Between 15 and 29 September he went to visit the *Province of Central Africa* (AFC). Starting from Kinshasa, he visited the community in Masina, before going to Lukunga and the following day to Kingabwa and then Gombe. In Kingabwa he held a meeting with the Council of the Provincial Delegation AFC RDC-west. He also had a meeting with the two Delegates of the Delegations ATE Congo Brazzaville and AFC RDC-west. Returning to Lubumbashi, he visited the studentate of theology in Lubumbashi and then the community of the novitiate and post-novitiate in Kansebula, passing through on the way the community of Tabacongo and the community of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians in Kwesu. Having returned to the Provincial house went to visit the community of the prenovitiate and the "Cité des jeunes" and also Rwashi-Maison des jeunes and Rwashi-Chem Chem. He then held a meeting with the Provincial Council and finally visited the community of Salama, Imara and left for the AGL Vice Province.

Between 30 September and 6 October he was able to visit the *Vice Province of the Great Lakes*

(AGL), going to the community in Kimihurura (IFAK), the prenovitiate in Gatenga and the postnovitiate in Kabgayi. Then he went to visit the community of the novitiate in Butarel, also greeting the confreres of the community in Butare-Rango. He then went to Burundi, where he visited the community of Rukago, before going to Bujumbura-Buterere and the next day the community of Ngozi-Burengo. Having returned to the Vice Provincial house in Kigali, he held a meeting with the Council of the Vice Province. After returning to Rome where he stayed between 7 and 17 October in order to obtain entry visas for various countries, he went back to Africa and between 18 October and 3 November he paid a visit to the *Vice Province of Ethiopia-Eritrea* (AET). Between 21 and 24 October the Regional chaired the meeting of the CIVAM. On 25 he began the visits going to the community of the novitiate, meeting the formation team. On Sunday 26 October he held a meeting with the Council of the Vice Province attended also by the General Councillor for Formation. On 27 he visited the community of the prenovitiate at Mekanissa and the community of the "Bosco

children". On 28 and 29 he visited the community of the postnovitiate in Adigrat and the aspirantate in Makallé. On 30 he visited the community in Dilla; on 31 that in Adamitullu; on 1 November the community of Zway and also met the Bishop of the diocese.

On 2 November he returned to Rome and spent a few days there. The between 8 and 15 November he was in the *ViceProvince of Tropical Equatorial Africa* (ATE), where on 10 he began the consultation process for the appointment of the new Superior of the Vice Province. He then moved on to visit – between 12 and 14 November – the Delegation of ATE Congo-Brazzaville, where on 13 he met with the confreres for the consultation and also hold a meeting with the confreres of the Delegation to assess the progress made in the Delegation with regard to the process of the unification of the two Delegations, AFC RDC-west and ATE Congo-Brazzaville, into a future Vice Province. On 16 November he returned again to Rome where between 19 and 23 November he took part in the International Historical Congress for the Bicentenary and between 28 and 30 November in the meeting of the Provincials of

Europe on the "Project for Europe" held at the "Salesianum".

The Councillor for the Latin America - South Cone Region

When the summer session of the General Council finished the Regional Councillor, Fr Natale Vitali Forti, on 12 July 2014 undertook a journey to the Region, initially devoting 4 days to the serious study of the **Portuguese language in the BSP Provincial house**. He thanks the Provincial for this opportunity.

He then went to **Paraguay**, on 17 and 18 July, to carry out an assessment of the Extraordinary Visitation undertaken three years previously. He held a meeting with all the Rectors and with the Provincial Council.

Then on 21 July he had a meeting with the Provincial Council of **Uruguay**, in Montevideo.

On 23 July he was already in the Province of **Belo Horizonte, Brazil**, to begin the **Extraordinary Visitation**, which ended on 12 November.

He spoke with 114 professed Salesians; visited 23 Salesian communities, 15 schools and 3 night schools for young people,

1 university faculty, 16 parishes, 5 public churches, 14 social centres, 17 festive oratories, 2 university preparation centres and two formation houses.

He also had two meetings with the Provincial Council, the Rectors and met almost all the Salesians on the Province Feastday, the Youth Ministry Commission, and the Provincial Consultative Committee of the Salesian Family.

He also had meetings with all the groups of the Salesian Family present in the Province: 11 groups of Cooperators, 3 groups of Past Pupils, 5 groups of VDB, 3 groups of ADS and 7 groups of ADMA.

During the Vistitation he also took part in the following events:

- "Curatorium" of the "Regional Centre for Salesian Brothers" on 4 and 5 August;
- Pastoral Congress of Salesian Institutions at American level in the city of Sao Paulo on 19 and 20 August;
- Provincial Council of the Porto Alegre, Brazil Province, on 21 August;
- National Congress of Past Pupils of Brazil in the city of Itajaí, between 22 and 24 August;
- Days of Recollection for the university students of UNISAL, on 30 and 31 August;

- National Congress of ADMA of Brazil at Niterói, on 6 and 7 September;
- "Curatorium" of the theologate of Buenos Aires with the two Provincials of Argentina, on 30 September;
- National Congress of the Past Pupils of Argentina, in the city of San Antonio di Arredondo, Córdoba, between 3 and 5 October;
- Meeting of the two Provincial Councils of Argentina, on 7-8 October, in the city of Córdoba;
- Meeting of the 11 Provincials of the Region in the city of Brasilia, between 22 and 25 October;
- Meeting of the Provincial Delegates of the South Cone Region in Brasilia, between 22 and 25 October;
- Meeting of the Brothers of Brazil in the city of Barbacena, between 30 October and 1 November;
- Meeting of the team of the Salesian Regional Centre for Ongoing Formation of Quito to plan the activities of the Centre for the next year.

When the Extraordinary Visitation of the Belo Horizonte Province was finished, the Councillor took part in the "Curatorium" of the Theologate

of Lapa, BSP, where the six Provinces of Brazil are involved. The Provincials of Brazil also attended on 22 November.

On 23 and 24 November he took part in the "Curatorium" of the Novitiate of Curitiba, BPA, where five of the six Provinces of Brazil are involved with 17 novices, who were admitted to first profession.

On 25 and 26 he took part in a meeting of the Provincials of Brazil and 26 and 27 also with the FMA Provincials of Brazil in a meeting of the Salesian Network of Schools in Brazil in the city of Brasilia.

On 28 November he returned to Rome.

The Councillor for the Interamerica Region

Having left Rome at the conclusion of the session of the General Council in the month of July, Fr Timothy Ploch, Councillor for the Interamerica Region, presided at the installation ceremonies of two new Provincials: Fr Jorge Molina of the Sacred Heart Province of Ecuador (ECU) and Fr Ted Montemayor of the Saint Andrew the Apostle Province, San Francisco (SUO). He then made his first "getting to know

you" visit to the "Saint Luis Beltrán" Province of Medellín, Colombia (COM), between 24 and 31 July. He took part in the "Curatorium" of the two inter-provincial formation communities: the novitiate and the postnovitiate in Copacabana. He also held a meeting with the Provincial Council.

The first days of August were devoted to the "Curatorium" of the theologate in Bogotá, in Colombia and to the CRESCO in Guatemala. After this he made his second "getting to know you" visit to the "Divine Redeemer" Province of Central America (CAM) between 6 and 14 August. He visited each of the six countries making up the Province; took part in the Province Feast-day in Guatemala City; met the Provincial Council, and also had a meeting with Cardinal Oscar Rodríguez Maradiaga of Tegucigalpa, Honduras. The Regional then flew to New Jersey, United States of America, for two weeks with his family.

Between 1 and 9 September the Regional continued his visits, this time to the Province of "Our Lady of Guadalupe" with headquarters in Mexico City (MEM), during which he visited various houses, met the Provincial Council, and

took part in the meeting of Provincial Formation Delegates in Tlazala. Between 10 and 18 September he was in the St John Bosco Province of the Antilles, Santo Domingo (ANT), in order to both familiarise himself with Salesian life and ministry there and conduct the consultation process for the new Provincial given that Fr Víctor Pichardo will complete his six year term of office in December. In the course of the consultation process he met the confreres gathered together in La Vega and Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. He visited Puerto Rico and held a meeting with all the confreres there. In Cuba he visited Havana and met the confreres gathered together for their annual retreat at Santiago de Cuba. After this between 19 and 26 of the month he had a "getting to know you" visit to the "Saint Rose of Lima" Province in Perú (PER), meeting the Provincial Council and visiting several communities and works. Then on 27 September he began his "getting to know you" visit to the Province of "Our Lady of Copacabana" Bolivia (BOL). In the course of the visit he had a meeting with the Provincial Council with the purpose also of seeing how the recommendations

of the Rector Major at the conclusion of the Extraordinary Visitation of the Province in 2012 were being implemented. He visited communities and works in various areas of the Province and took part in the opening of a meeting of the Development Office.

At the beginning of October, still in Bolivia, the Regional familiarised himself with the communities and centres in the Cochabamba area. He had to cancel some planned visits to other places since he had been taken ill and had to spend 8 and 9 October in a hospital in Cochabamba. On 13 October he resumed his travels, this time going to the "Blessed Philip Rinaldi" Vice Province, Port au Prince, Haïti (HAI). Since the time had been cut short, there he was able to meet the Provincial Council only to see how the recommendations of the Rector Major at the conclusion of the Extraordinary Visitation of the Vice Province in 2012 were being implemented. He did manage to go the novitiate in Port au Prince and to take part in a meeting of Provincial Delegates for Youth Ministry. On 19 October he arrived in Mexico City for the annual Regional meeting of the Provincials until 26. At the end of

the Provincials' meeting he flew to the "Saint Philip the Apostle" Province of the East United States with headquarters in New Rochelle (SUE) to carry out the consultation for the next Provincial given that Fr Tom Dunne concludes his term of office in July 2015. He met the confreres gathered together in Canada (Surrey, Toronto, Montreal), in Stony Point, New York; Chicago; New Orleans; and Tampa in Florida.

On 4 November from the USA he flew to Quito, in Ecuador, for a meeting of the "Extended Team" of the Salesian Regional Centre for Ongoing Formation (CSRFP) with the Regional Councillor for America South Cone, Fr Natale Vitali. Afterwards between 6 and 15 November Fr Tim Ploch made his "getting to know you" visit to the "Saint Peter Claver" Province, Colombia - Bogotá (COB). The next visit was to the "Saint. Andrew the Apostle" Province of San Francisco (SUO), where he had a meeting with the Provincial Council, again to see how the recommendations of the Rector Major at the conclusion of the Extraordinary Visitation of the Province in 2013 were being implemented. Finally, the Regional made his "getting to

know you" visit to the "Saint Luke" Province of Venezuela (VEN), between 21 and 26 November, before returning to Rome on 27 November for the winter session of the General Council.

The Councillor for the East Asia and Oceania Region

After the conclusion of the summer session of the General Council, Fr Václav Klement undertook a short visit to all the ten Provinces and the four Delegations in the Region (Cambodia, Indonesia, Mongolia and Papua New Guinea - Solomon Islands). During the four and a half months the Councillor managed to re-establish contact with the Region after his 'absence' in the previous six year period, visiting a majority of the local communities, leaving until the next year only a visit to three countries in the Region: Pakistan (FIS), Fiji and Samoa (AUL).

In each Circumscription the Regional met the Provincial Council, some of the Commissions (Youth Ministry and Formation), or all the delegates of the main sectors together and visited the houses of initial formation. He

also led the quarterly Day of Recollection or other meetings in order to present the GC27 to the confreres. In view of an examination of the East Asia - Oceania Region in the General Council, he carried out in each Provincial Council an analysis of the *SWOT* in order to understand the current situation and needs of each Province. To strengthen the sense of the Region Fr Klement has begun to share a monthly 'Good Night', setting up a regional 'Facebook' and using the Regional news service '*AustraLasia link*'.

In order of time the Regional Councillor began with the Vice Province of Myanmar (MYM, 13-25 July) where he met almost all the confreres personally, this being his first visit to the country. He then went to the houses in Thailand, Cambodia and Laos (THA, 26 July - 9 August). In Hua Hin (THA, 10-14 August) he led the Retreat for 95 VDB with 8 assistants from the four Regions of Asia, in the presence of their central Coordinator Olga Křižová.

The Regional was present during the first visit of Pope Francis to Asia (KOR - Seoul, 15-19 August), taking part in both the beatification of the 124 Korean Martyrs (Seoul), and in

the conclusion of the 6th Asian Youth Day (Haemi).

He then took up his visits again in the Province of North Philippines (FIN, 20 August-5 September), the Delegation of Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands (FIN, 6-16 September), South Philippines with the consultation for the next Provincial (FIS, 17-29 September), Vietnam with the consultation for the next Provincial (VIE, 30 September-9 October), East Timor and Indonesia (ITM, 13-22 October), Hong Kong - Macau - Taiwan (CIN, 23-29 October), New Zealand and Australia (AUL, 1-8 November), South Korea (KOR, 13-18 November), Mongolia (VIE, 18-21 November) and finally Japan (GIA, 22-30 November).

During the visit to Manila, the Regional Councillor chaired the "Curatorium" at Parañaque (28 August) in the presence of 6 Provincials (FIN, FIS, ITM, MYM, THA and VIE) and the three Superiors of Delegations (Mongolia, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea-Solomon Islands).

Following the consultation process carried out in Vietnam, he chaired the first meeting of Salesian translators in the Retreat House in K'Long (9-11 October)

attended by 22 SDB, FMA and committed lay people from the ten countries in the Region.

His attendance at two Regional Meetings for Delegates for Youth Ministry in Australia-Melbourne (AUL, November 10-13) and for the formation of formation personnel in South Korea-Seoul (KOR, November 13-16) was useful so that he could understand better the dynamics of the two main sectors. Finally Fr Klement returned to Rome on 30 November.

The Councillor for the South Asia Region

When the summer session of the General Council had ended, on 12 July the Regional Councillor Fr Maria Arokiam Kanaga, went to New Delhi to meet the Standing Committee of the SPCSA and the Administrative Council of the "Don Bosco Tech India".

Having returned from Delhi to Rome on 17 July, on 18 he went to Quito, in Ecuador, to begin a month's course in Spanish. At the weekends he visited some of the more significant Salesian works in Ecuador at Quito, Ambato, Macas and Guayaquil. On the return journey to Europe he stopped off in Mexico, for four days, between

25 and 29 August, visiting the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Guadalupe and some Salesian works in Mexico City and in Puebla. During the whole month of September, he attended a course in French in Lyons, in France, staying in a Salesian community.

He returned to India from Rome on 2 October. After a visit to the Theologate of Kavarapettai in Chennai, he took part in a meeting of the Regional Commission for Formation in Mumbai between 6 and 8 October, led by Fr Ivo Coelho and his team. Between 10 and 17 October he was in the Province of New Delhi for the consultation for the new Provincial and to visit some centres. On the way to southern India he visited the Province of Panjim: he had a meeting with the Provincial Council and visited two houses which had new developments. Between 19 and 26 October the Regional was in the Province of Bangalore leading the consultation for the new Provincial, meeting the confreres in groups in six different places. Later Fr Maria Arokiam arrived in the Province of Tiruchy and had a discussion with the Provincial Council and visited some centres between 26 and 30 October.

During the first four days of the month of November, the Regional was in Hyderabad to take part in the regional meeting of the Youth Ministry Provincial Delegates organised by Fr Fabio Attard and his team for the presentation of the new 'Frame of Reference for Salesian Youth Ministry.' He took the opportunity to visit some houses and formation communities in the Province and attend a meeting with the Provincial Council. From Hyderabad he went to Mumbai to take part for two days in the Congress of Salesian Schools in India. Between 10 and 13 November he was in Chennai for a meeting with the Provincial Council and for some usual medical checks. Between 14 and 21 November he was in Sri Lanka for a Committee meeting of the Provincial Conference of South Asia (SPCSA) and to visit all the houses in that Vice Province. Returning to Chennai, on 22 he met the Administrative Council of the "Don Bosco Tech India".

On 25 November the Regional returned to Rome. After going to Fossano (Piedmont) to visit the community of the SMA Sisters, in the last days of the month he took part in the meeting of the Provincials of Europe on the subject of the "Project for Europe."

The Councillor for the Central and North Europe Region

After the conclusion of the summer session of the General Council, the Regional Councillor Fr Tadeusz Rozmus remained in Italy for a short holiday. On 20 July he left for Malta as part of the process of becoming familiar with the Provinces that he had begun in some of the Provinces during the previous months after the GC27. In Malta he met the confreres, members of the Salesian Family and visited all the Salesian houses. Then he went to Poland to spend some days with his mother and family.

From 1 August he was engaged in supply work in a parish in Austria and from the 10 August he visited the Austrian confreres and in Klagenfurt took part in the installation of the new Provincial Fr Petrus Obermüller. After a short time spent in Rome he continued his visits, getting to know the Provinces in his Region.

In Croatia on 1 September he had a meeting with the Provincial Council and visited the communities of Zagrab, Rijeka and Zepce in Bosnia. From 4 September he was in Slovenia, visiting the houses in Breznica,

Celjedove, Verzej, Zelimlje, Krsten, Lubljana-Kundelejva and Rakovnik and having a meeting with the Provincial Council.

On 7 September he left for Siberia in Russia, where he visited the communities of Yakutsk and Aldan. From 14 September he accompanied the Rector Major during his visit to the four Polish Provinces. On 21 September in Krakow he took part in the conclusion of the Regional Congress of the Salesians Cooperators and between 22 and 25 he was in Berlin to take part in the Provincial Council of Germany.

From Berlin he went to Hungary where between 26 and 29 September he had a meeting with the Provincial Council and visited all the communities in the Province.

On 30 September he left for Brussel to familiarise himself with the situation in the Province of North Belgium (BEN). He visited the communities of Brussel, Ghent, Heverle, Vremde, and in Holland took part in a meeting of the Dutch confreres and then visited the confreres in the new community in Amsterdam.

From 6 October he was in Poland to visit the houses of formation. He met fifteen novices

and formation personnel in the novitiate of Kopiec, the postnovitiate in Łąd and the theologate in Krakow. From Poland he went directly to the Ukraine to accompany the Rector Major during his visit and at the installation of the new Superior of the Special Circumscription Fr Karol Maník.

Between 20 and 24 October he was again in Russia, where he visited the communities of Saint Petersburg, Gatchina, Moscow and Rostov. He also took part in meetings in Saint Petersburg and Gatchina with the Economist General, the Provincial of Piła (PLN) and the local confreres.

Directly from Moscow he went to the Province of France-Belgium (FRB) where he met all the Councillors and visited the communities in Paris, Ressins, Lyons. In Ressins he took part in a formation meeting for young Salesian confreres, FMA Sisters and other members of the Salesian Family.

At the beginning of November in Vienna he took part in a formation meeting for the young missionary confreres present in the Provinces of AUS and BEN. Between 3 and 5 November he was in the Czech Republic, where in three places he met the confreres who had come from

various parts of the Province. He visited the Salesians of Prague, Brno, Frystak and Zlin.

On 6 November he went to Slovakia, where he visited the Salesian centres in Žilina, Dubnica, Šaštín, Trnava and Bratislava. On 9 November he returned to Rome.

On 14 November, on his way to Georgia, he stopped in Berlin and took part in a Congress on the current state of youth poverty in Europe. He was in Georgia from 15 November and met the confreres in Tbilisi, Tzhaltbila and Turtzh.

Finally on 24 November he returned to Rome and between 28 and 30 November took part in the meeting of the Provincials of Europe in the context of the "Project for Europe" and then the winter plenary session of the General Council.

The Councillor for the Mediterranean Region

In the period immediately after the conclusion of the summer session of the General Councillor, the Councillor for the Mediterranean Region Fr Stefano Martoglio, devoted himself to studying the Spanish language for the first

time, going to stay in Spain between 13 July and 5 August. Welcomed as a brother by the confreres in Spain he was a guest in the community of the Mission Office in Madrid. He is very grateful for the attention shown to him.

On his return to Italy from Spain, from 6 August he took part in "Campo Bosco", a gathering of 500 young people from the Spanish Provinces in the Salesian special places to study and understand the charism better. It was a beautiful experience and very enriching, meeting and getting to know a splendid group of young people.

Following "Campo Bosco" he stayed a few days in Turin, his home town until the opening of the Bicentenary of the birth of Don Bosco at Colle Don Bosco, where he was present.

From 17 August he took part in a Retreat for Italian priests in their 'quinquennium' at Zafferana Etnea. A time for meeting, prayer and formation in which the Councillor was also able to speak to the young priests about the prospects for the new region and listen to their ideas. During these days on 20 August, he also took part in a meeting of the ISI Provincial Council to assist in

the life of the Province and its needs.

Having returned to Rome, the Regional then left for Portugal, where he stayed for four days between 24 and 27 August, and was able to meet the Provincial Council for the first time and share information and ideas about the situation in the Province. It was a very important and fruitful meeting which the Provincial Fr Artur Pereira graciously wanted the Regional to begin with a pilgrimage to Fatima, one of the great spiritual lungs of the Mediterranean Region.

Having returned to Italy, on 27 August he went to Florence to take part in the Assembly of the ICC, during which in the name of the Rector Major he received the perpetual professions of some young confreres. In addition, in the ICC Assembly they considered the topic of the reception within the Province of the GC27.

On 29 August Fr Martoglio began the *Extraordinary Visitation of the Southern Province (IME)*, in the name of the Rector Major. The opening took the form of an Assembly at Pacognano di Vico Equense, when the Visitation was introduced with a consideration of the GC27 and its presentation to the Province. The Visitation kept

the Regional engaged – with some intervals – between 29 August, and 26 November. There is a great deal that he could say about the magnificent experience of the Congregation provided by this Visitation of IME, which brings under its jurisdiction, in addition to the houses of the south of Italy also the house in Zurich and the houses in Albania and Kosovo.

During the Visitation of IME two important meetings of Provincials in the Region were held. The first in Turin, between 26 and 30 September: was the first meeting together of all the Provincials of the Mediterranean Region. The Rector Major was also present for some of the time. The ten Provincials of the Region and the coordinators of the national Centres in Madrid and Rome together with the Regional discussed how they might build up the identity of the Region, the steps to be taken and the aims to be achieved in relation to the programming of the Rector Major and his Council for the next six years. The meeting enabled all those taking part to be present in Turin, with the Rector Major and the Councillor for the Missions, for the giving of the crucifixes to the new missionaries on 28 September.

Another meeting of Provincials, those making up the Iberian Conference was held in Madrid between 2 and 4 November 2014. In this meeting there was further reflection on the work of the Conference now inserted in the new Mediterranean Region.

At the end of the Extraordinary Visitation of IME, the Regional

took part in the meeting of the Provincials of Europe, held in Rome at the Pisana between 28 and 30 November. This meeting which takes place every two years enables the Provincials to form and inform themselves, and to formulate plans for pastoral work as Salesians in Europe and as Europeans.

5.1 Decree on the heroicity of the virtues of the Servant of God Joseph August Arribat, S.D.B.

Below in an English translation is the text of the Decree on the heroicity of the virtues of the Servant of God Joseph August ARRIBAT, published by the Congregation for the Causes of Saints on 8 July 2014. In virtue of this Decree Fr Joseph August Arribat is declared Venerable.

BEATIFICATION and CANONIZATION

OF THE SERVANT OF GOD

JOSEPH AUGUST ARRIBAT

PROFESSED PRIEST

OF THE SOCIETY OF SAINT FRANCIS DE SALES
(1879-1963)

DECREE ON THE VIRTUES

«For the Son of Man himself did not come to be served but to serve» (Mk 10,45).

The good and faithful servant the Salesian priest Augusto ARRIBAT lived the life apparently ordinary and simple of the educator, but in such a shining way that in spite of his desire to remain hidden his reputation for holiness spread widely in all the places where he exercised his ministry/mission. In the Salesian house of La Navarre where he died he was often called “the saint

of the Valley”. The Servant of God is the model of a religious, of an authentic Salesian and of the priest educator and the pastor of the young.

Joseph Louis August, usually called August, was born at Trédou near Aveyron, in France on 17 December 1879, the second of seven children in a family of hard-working and deeply Christian country people. After elementary school he immediately began working in the fields but his dream was to become a priest. As a small altar server, he envied “the priests’ happiness”. Only at eighteen years of age was he able to begin secondary studies at the Salesian school in Marseille where he at once found his true path in life becoming a Salesian of Don Bosco.

In 1903, as a result of the laws against religious Congregations then in force in France he was sent to make his novitiate and undertake his studies in Italy. Having received the religious habit from the hands of Blessed Michael Rua, the first successor of Don Bosco, August made his first religious profession on 25 March 1905, committing himself to follow Christ in the mission on behalf of youth and to observe the vows of poverty, chastity

and obedience. While pursuing his studies, not without some difficulty, the cleric Arribat did everything he could as a teacher and assistant among the young, first at Marseille then at La Navarre in the diocese of Fréjus-Toulon. At thirty-three years of age August saw his dream fulfilled when on 21 December 1912 he was ordained a priest.

He spent the first years of his pastoral ministry in the house of La Navarre, providing his services also in the nearby parish of Sauvebonne, in the so-called "Valleys", where he was very well known and appreciated. During the first world war he served as a male-nurse and stretcher-bearer among all kinds of dangers. "Oh! How many rosaries I said" – he used to tell people – "during my nights on duty!"

Having returned to La Navarre after the war he quickly took up his work again among the young, and at the same time he was a teacher of religion, catechist, prefect and confessor.

In 1927 the Servant of God had to leave his beloved La Navarre to become catechist in the house of Nice, the first Salesian house founded by Don Bosco in France in 1875, but almost immediately he was recalled to La Navarre to

become the Rector. Later he would be Rector also of Morges (Switzerland), Millau (Aveyron), Villemur-sur-Tarn and Thonon (Annecy). Completely devoted to the needs of the young, he always spent his time among them carrying out the most humble services. He had a gift for making people feel welcome so that he succeeded in creating in the house an extraordinary atmosphere, building up good relationships with everyone: confreres, pupils, parents, past-pupils, Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, the Cooperators, workers, guests and occasional visitors passing by.

Recognised by all as a man of profound "spirituality in action", the Servant of God used to do "everything for love, nothing by constraint" according to the teaching of Saint Francis of Sales. His faith was lively, his prayer intense, his eucharistic spirituality inspiring. He lived constantly in the presence of God, and especially while celebrating Mass, with simplicity and without any ostentation showed a fervour that drew other people close. A man of hope at all times he relied on God and his providence, calm in difficulties and dangers and giving everyone a sense of strength and serenity. He was at

the service of his brothers in the fullest sense of the word, giving practical expression to his spirit of love in small gestures. A genuine son of Don Bosco, he was very affable, greeting everyone and starting up a conversation even with people far from the Church.

The most heroic period he lived was during the second world war at Villemur, in the diocese of Toulouse. While German soldiers were occupying part of the house he managed to hide and save some Jewish youngsters. For his selfless courage he would be awarded *in memoriam* the medal of the "Just among the nations".

Fr Arribat lived the last ten years of his life in his dear La Navarre, always present among the young, looking after sick confreres night and day, taking care of the cleaning of the house, responsible for the work of the farm and vineyards of the Salesian house. As a confessor he was much sought after by confreres, novices, priests of the diocese and other people. He died on 19 March 1963.

Because of his reputation for holiness between 1995 and 1998 in the Archdiocesan Curia of Toulon the Diocesan enquiry was conducted, the juridical validity of which was recognised by this

Congregation with a decree dated 25 June 2004. The *Positio* having been drawn up there was a discussion according to the usual custom whether the Servant of God had practised the virtue, to an heroic degree. Following the favourable result, on 15 October 2013 the Special Commission of Theologian Consulters was held. The Cardinals and Bishops in an ordinary session on 17 June 2014 chaired by me Cardinal Angelo Amato, recognised that the Servant of God had practised to an heroic degree the theological, cardinal and other associated virtues.

After the undersigned Cardinal Prefect presented an accurate report of all this to the Supreme Pontiff Francis, His Holiness, accepting and ratifying the votes expressed by the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, on today's date declared that: *«It is certain that the theological virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity, towards God and one's neighbour as well as the cardinal virtues of Prudence, Justice, Temperance and Fortitude and the other virtues connected with them were practised to an heroic degree by the Servant of God August Arribat, professed priest of the Society of Saint Francis of Sales, in this*

case and for the determined purpose»

The Holy Father directed that this Decree be published and preserved among the Acts of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints.

Given at Rome on 8 July in the year of Our Lord 2014.

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

† MARCELLUS BARTOLUCCI
Archiepiscopus Tit. Mevaniensis
a Secretis

5.2 The Future of the Charism of Don Bosco starting from Vatican Council II

Below is the text of the Address of the Rector Major, Fr. Ángel FERNÁNDEZ ARTIME, given on 23 November 2014 at the conclusion of the INTERNATIONAL HISTORICAL CONGRESS, held at the “Salesianum” between 19 and 23 November 2014 on the subject “The Development of the Charism Of Don Bosco until the middle of the XX century.” It was one of the major events planned as part of the celebrations for the Bicentenary of the birth of Don Bosco, and was very well attended by confreres and members of the Salesian Family from a number of countries.

1. Introduction

This final conference has a very different character from the previous one. As in a relay race, I begin where others have left off. In fact, I will talk about the broad lines of the Salesian charism after ‘the event of the century’ in the Catholic Church, viz. the Second Vatican Council. Also, I am not doing it from a mainly historical point of view, but rather as a reflection geared to a programme, or as an attempt to read thoroughly, albeit briefly, the recent past, in order to offer some perspectives for the future: in an immediate way, for the historical research that you will have to do later; but above all to continue with the development of the charism in our Salesian Family. I will first outline the *iter* of the Congregation in these decades, and then, offer some perspectives for our whole family in the near future.

2. The Salesian Congregation in the context of the Second Vatican Council

2.1. The Second Vatican Council, an ecclesial event and the global context

Undeniably one can speak of a

'before' and an 'after' the Council; but it would be unfair and simplistic to prescind from many other aspects, both positive and negative, that have marked these years. Among the many elements, we find the so-called "vocational crisis" of the following years, in the Church and also in many areas of our Congregation. A crisis during which a large number of brothers have rethought their life and left us, and a crisis that is still felt heavily in some areas due to the lack of new forces, accentuating the natural ageing of the Provinces; and this challenges us and pushes us even more to pay attention to this phenomenon. But we also find another element that I would call "growth": as we said before, it is true that the time of numerical expansion has given way to a progressive and sometimes dramatic decrease of consecrated persons, but also to the growth of an awareness of one's own vocation, the appreciation of the meaning of consecrated life and not only of the priestly vocation, the emergence of many new lay vocations, etc. There was, and still is, a period of decrease of religious personnel, but of growth of works and presences in new areas and new countries, that is, a territorial expansion and a growth

of services, and this, thanks to a considerable increase in lay vocations, which, as at the origins of our Family, become more and more "co-responsible" for the mission and not just "collaborators". In fact, this situation too has made us "return to our origins" to start precisely from there!

But, to return to the Council, and a wider and more inclusive interpretation, we can say that the Council is situated in what has been called 'the end of modernity': an end to which has led, paradoxically, the maximum push towards the limits; higher expectations have been followed, dialectically, by a big disappointment.

In this perspective, we can say that the Council is rather an attitude of the Church, animated by the Holy Spirit, that wants to deal with 'new times' with its evangelical identity. Undoubtedly there have also been tensions and experiments, some justified and others not. It is a time of changes that, as such, allow some models to die and bring others to life, not that they are always absolutely new, but at least they are renewed, sometimes successfully and sometimes not so much. It has been, and continues to be, a time of intersection of different horizons,

an opportunity that still, in my opinion, we must take advantage of because there remains a lot of the 'spirit of the Council' to be understood and put into practice.

2.2. *The Second Vatican Council and the renewal of consecrated life*

We know that the normative document in this regard, after the Council, is the *Motu Proprio* of Pope Paul VI, *Ecclesiae Sanctae*, of 6 August 1966. In number 16, paragraph 3, the Pope points out: «*To achieve the good of the Church, the Institutes should strive for a genuine knowledge of their original spirit, so that faithfully preserving this spirit in determining adaptation, their religious life may thus be purified of alien elements and freed from those which are obsolete*»¹.

The indication of the Church with regard to religious life was, therefore, 'a return to the sources' of the charism, to be able to point out the most accurate way possible. Underlying this task there is a fundamental element, viz. we have to learn to *distinguish, with wisdom and a spirit of faith, between fidelity and immobility*, a task that is clear theoretically,

but very difficult in practice, and that ultimately, cannot be realized once and for all. The Pope points out, in particular, two aspects: purifying the 'original spirit' from extraneous elements and from those fallen into disuse. It must be said that the Salesian Congregation fully accepted this challenge and this task. To express ourselves with a very graphic image: it was a matter of moving from a 'Valdocco' as a building plan to a 'Valdocco' as a criterion of life and mission.

As Fr E. Viganò will say, «it should be noted that a revision that has been so universal (it has involved every Religious Institute), so all-embracing (it has extended to every aspect of religious life) so profound (it has gone to the very roots of religious life) can be truly called unique in the twenty centuries of the Church's history.»²

2.3. *The renewal of the Salesian Congregation in the light of Vatican II*

The 19th General Chapter, celebrated during the Second Vatican Council, tried to harmonize itself as much as possible with the Church of the Council, but realized that it was impossible to

¹ *Ecclesiae Sanctae*, in *Enchiridion Vaticanum* 2, Dehoniane, Bologna, 1996, p. 747-748.

² VIGANÒ Egidio, *The renewed text of our Rule of Life*, AGC 312 (1985), p. 13-14.

try to 'adapt' at that moment of the situation of the Congregation: it would have been an irresponsible superficiality, beyond the fact that several of the most important documents of the Council were still under discussion. The newly elected Rector Major, Fr Luigi Ricceri, in the immediate post-conciliar period presented to the whole Congregation a mission to be accomplished, starting in this way the preparation for the Special General Chapter, which came to be celebrated five years after the Pope's *Motu Proprio*.

In his first circular letter after the close of the Council, Fr Ricceri wrote to the whole Congregation:

«During the Chapter work there was a strong feeling that all those present looked anxiously at the Second Vatican Council. The atmosphere of Rome had apparently fuelled this climate of tension of an approaching spring, full of promise.

We all agree that the Congregation is at a turning point [...] because before us the Church has made the same decisive and courageous breakthrough, while remaining on the fertile ground of its centuries-old divine-human tradition. The words spoken by Paul VI are appropriate here, and must be well weighed: *'Your Society marks a stage, makes a point*

(as the sailors say), one period ends and another begins'. We have made a generous sowing in the soil of our tradition. Therefore, there will be some new things undeniably, but always grafted onto the vigorous branch of a tradition that in the past has given abundant fruit and cannot disappoint us in the future. We look to the future with *'sagacious adherence to the needs of the times'* (Paul VI *ibid.*)».³

We must recognize that, undeniably, as in the whole Church and in society, so also in the Congregation there had arisen high, and sometimes, enormous, expectations and hopes. Fr Ricceri himself referred to this a few months after the end of the Council with regard to 'renewal':

«In this present Letter I propose some clarifications of one of those words used incessantly everywhere in the name of the Council. In truth it is a keyword: "Renewal"!

I must add here that the General Chapter – faithful to the Council, referred to it constantly and still more to the concepts behind it. But like so many other words which have made history (liberty, democracy, progress, etc.) this one too has its own variety of interpretations and applications oftentimes self-contradictory or arbitrary serving an all too personal point of view – and why not say it? –

³ RICCERI Luigi, *Lettere Circolari ai Salesiani*, Direzione Generale Opere Don Bosco, Roma, 1996, p. 21-22 (the Letter can also be found in ASC 244, dated 31 January 1966).

deviationist and destructive of the genuine meaning of "Renewal"»⁴.

We should add that this same post-conciliar effervescence in the Congregation has produced an extraordinary participation of all the Provinces and, you can also say, of all the members «They set about its preparation with a seriousness never seen before and one which involved all Provinces and all confreres (...) No fewer than twenty small booklets were carefully prepared for the use of the Capitulars. All were conscious of great responsibility almost of a 're-founding': what Don Bosco had done 'personally' had now to be rethought and redrafted, 'communally' in a certain sense, in relationship with the demands of the changed epoch and in complete fidelity to the origins»⁵.

3. The rethinking of the Salesian charism

3.1. What do we mean by *Charism*?

Although this word has acquired 'citizenship' in the theological and spiritual realm, it should be

remembered that its meaning in actual practice does not always correspond to the past. But let us not enter here into these distinctions. Undoubtedly its fundamental connotation is that of being a 'gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church'.

In this regard, a specialist in the subject says: «To Vatican II belongs the glory of having restored to charism its original meaning more fully, not limiting it solely to extraordinary events (...). In this fertile field for reflection was born, shortly after Vatican II, the term, *the charism of the founders*. Paul VI is the first to use such a terminology. (...) And he is also the first to introduce it into an official document: in the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelica Testificatio*, 11 (1971). (...) The most complete definition is provided by *Mutuae Relationes* 11): "The very charism of the Founders (*Evang. nunt.* 11) appears as an "experience of the Spirit," transmitted to their disciples to be lived, safeguarded, deepened and constantly developed by them, in harmony with the Body of Christ continually in the process of growth. "It is for

⁴ RICCERI Luigi, *Lettere Circolari ai Salesiani*, Direzione Generale Opere Don Bosco, Roma, 1996, p. 87. (the Letter can also be found in ASC 248, dated 30 April 1967).

⁵ VIGANÒ Egidio, *Reading the Founder's charism again at the present day*, AGC 352 (1995), p. 6.

this reason that the distinctive character of various religious institutes is preserved and fostered by the Church.”⁶

Fr Egidio Viganò, quoting the text of *Mutuae Relationes*, comments: «The dynamic element which has brought about the maturing of this theological category of ‘charism’ has been precisely the recognition of the divine initiative of the ‘consecration’ as a specific action of God. This in fact was a true conciliar reversion which brought about a rethinking of the significance of the profession and of the specific work of the Founder. It also served to give the name of ‘consecrated life’ to Institutes which had been previously known as ‘states of perfection’»⁷.

3.2. *The Special General Chapter*

No General Chapter had been prepared so far in advance (the Letter of Convocation of Fr. Luigi Ricceri was dated November 25, 1968, almost three years before the opening!) and with so much involvement of all the Salesians. It was also the longest Chapter in the history of the Congregation:

from June 10, 1971 to January 5, 1972. This Chapter drafted the text of the Constitutions “*ad experimentum*” for the following 12 years, in view of the definitive redaction in 1984. But the most precious treasure is the Chapter Document itself, with more than five hundred pages, which represents the greatest effort of the Congregation to rethink and reformulate the Salesian charism. In particular, it would be very enriching to study how the General Chapter assumed and incorporated the Second Vatican Council. Sometimes, in a single page are mentioned 7 different conciliar documents!

3.3. *From GC20 to GC22*

In these twelve years from GC20 (SGC) to GC22, the Congregation had the experience of how to live in fidelity to the charism of Don Bosco by practising a Rule of Life that, for the first time in its history, was not a text written by the Founder. This led, of course, to some resistance, especially from those who felt that they had lost important elements of the Sale-

⁶ ROMERO Antonio, *Carisma*, in *Diccionario Teológico de la Vida Consagrada*, PP. Claretianas, Madrid, 1989, p. 147.150-151.

⁷ VIGANÒ Egidio, *Reading the Founder's charism again at the present day*, ACG 352 (1995), p. 18.

sian tradition. As we said before, it is not always easy to accept the challenge of living faithfully in a totally new situation compared to that of Don Bosco. And all this, despite the fact that, as Fr Viganò writes: «in the redrafting of the Constitutions the effort was made to refer back as much as possible to the spirituality of the Founder, to his more charismatic writings to his well proven experience as a model from which to derive the genuine aspect and indispensable key for the foundational reinterpretation.»⁸

These twelve years, with a constitutional text '*ad experimentum*', were a preparation with increasing intensity for the GC22, whose only goal (besides, of course, the election of the Rector Major and the General Council) was the final drafting of the Constitutions. In a similar way to that of the SGC, it sought to involve all the confreres, both in a personal way, and above all by way of various formal requests. From the Provinces through their Provincial Chapters, the various committees in each of them, and especially the *Precapitular Commission* which received all the suggestions and, working in an exemplary way,

under the leadership of the Moderator, Fr. Juan Edmundo Vecchi, summarized them in two volumes, making a total of almost 1100 pages.

3.4. Don Egidio Viganò

In this process, which involved the entire Congregation, it is right to highlight a decisive figure: Fr Egidio Viganò. In the light of our faith, that invites us to discover God's action in history, it was providential that the person called to lead the Congregation in so delicate a stage as that following the Council had been able to participate in the sessions of the Council as the expert theologian of Card. Raul Silva, Archbishop of Santiago de Chile.

During his first term as Rector Major, he guided the preparation of the GC22. In addition to the various moments of participation during the GC, the closing speech of this Chapter was an extraordinary synthesis of what is, in the new draft of the Constitutions, the Salesian charism: it is, practically, the most authoritative key to its interpretation. I think it is a text of great richness and relevance for the Congregation, even today.

⁸ *Ibid*, p. 10.

Finally, Fr. Viganò mentions another very significant document: his Circular Letter "*Reading the Founder's Charism again at the present day*" of February 1995⁹. This was the last Letter that he wrote to the Congregation, before returning to the Father's House on 23 June that year. We can consider it his 'spiritual testament' and in it are to be found many topics that appeared constantly in his teaching and direction, such as the subject of *consecration*, that accentuated two elements: that consecration is the work of God not of man and in addition that it does not refer to a single factor (usually opposed to 'mission'), but is inclusive, embracing the whole life and activity of the consecrated person¹⁰. It is the theme of the *grace of unity* that "makes (the Salesian) capable of a vital synthesis between the fulness of consecration and the authenticity of apostolic labour."¹¹ I think that it is with this *grace of unity* that we need to walk towards the future.

3.5. *The present Constitutions*

One can say that the reformulation of our charism, as a verbal

expression, culminated in the General Chapter XXII with the approval of the Constitutions, first by the Chapter and then by the Holy See on November 25, 1984. The approval of the Holy See is not to be reduced to a legal requirement. In fact, the 1st article of the Constitutions states: «The Church has acknowledged God's hand in this (the foundation and the life of our Society) especially by approving our Constitutions and by proclaiming our Founder a saint» (C. 1). This statement coincides, practically, with what twelve years later and in a more universal way, John Paul II says in the post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consecrata*, in a text of extraordinary theological depth: «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). This *guarantee* must not only fill us with great joy and security in our vocation – of course, from the

⁹ Letter published in ACG n. 352.

¹⁰ Cfr. - eg. - ACG 352, p. 17.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

point of view of faith – but it should also lead us to, 5 live more fully our *charismatic identity* as a typical path of holiness: «By carrying out this mission we find our own way to holiness» (C. 2). This last statement fully coincides with the first article of the original Constitutions of Don Bosco: «The object of the Salesian Society is that its members, while striving to attain Christian perfection, shall be engaged in the various works of charity, both spiritual and temporal on behalf of the young, especially of the poorer classes.»

Living with fidelity to our Constitutions is for us Salesians, the starting point to live intensely our apostolic consecration together with the vast movement that originates from Don Bosco. In fact, as in the origins of our Congregation, we cannot be truly faithful to our charism if we do not live and share it with the other members of the Salesian Family and the “vast movement of persons who in different way work for the salvation of the young” (C. 5). Therefore, it is not possible to look ahead to the future if it is not shared and truly together.

4. THE FUTURE OF OUR CHARISM. Present and future challenges

At this point, this part seems to me the one that fits least in the context of the historical Congress, and at the same time it is the most lively and involves a process of planning to take us from the present to the future, illumined by all that we have heard, seen and experienced, and by all that is part of our Salesian charismatic heritage.

4.1. OUR DNA must remain THAT OF DON BOSCO

I truly believe, brothers and sisters, that the future of the charism of Don Bosco passes, in the first place and rightly speaking, in the only possible way, through our fidelity to Don Bosco and to the charism that he embodied, because fidelity to Don Bosco is and will be fidelity to the Holy Spirit who raised it up for the good of mankind and of the Church.

All of us, our whole Salesian Family, this large tree that has a single common trunk through which sap of the charism of Don Bosco flows, as stated in our Constitutions, the Project of Life,

our Directories... (as we call our documents), has Don Bosco for its Father, the Father of the Salesian Family and is a gift to the whole Church.

This is why fidelity to Don Bosco means to read his life, his mission, evangelisation and the salvation of youth that is a guarantee of the future of the Salesian charism.

This is why we need to continue to follow Don Bosco, knowing him more and more, in order to love Him more and more (because you cannot love what you do not know), in order to be able to imitate the best in what is essential, and with all the novelty and the prophetic aspect that we must have in these modern times in every historical moment, in every age. In this sense I find very stimulating what Fr. Albera wrote in 1920 ("in no way judgmental" as Fr. Buccellato says in his intervention): "There are many, even among us, who speak of Don Bosco, going by what they have heard; hence the real and urgent need to read his life with great love, with vivid interest if they are to follow the teachings and imitate his example with filial affection."

Don Bosco is our great heritage, of each and every one of the

members of our Salesian Family (because he is the heritage of the Church, as I said). And the identity of all of our family and of each of its groups (and of individual members) becomes stronger, the stronger the recognition of the PATERNITY of Don Bosco in everyone. We do not need to separate ourselves as teenagers do in their personal evolution, distancing themselves from their parents in order to strengthen their identity. Our identity is much bigger, clearer and more solid, the clearer and more manifest the spiritual fatherhood of Don Bosco for all and for each one.

And this has nothing to do with the danger of being self-absorbed mentioned by Pope Francis in *Evangelii Gaudium* 28. We are not, nor will be a self-absorbed group made up of a chosen few who look after themselves, but we are a Religious Family that wants to live a strong discipleship of the Lord Jesus, with a deep sense of belonging and communion with the universal Church and the local Churches, always with a clear charismatic identity, and the specific nature of our charism (as a gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church).

4.2. *The charismatic predilection for young people, especially the poorest*

This is our second major security for the future of the Salesian charism. Young people, especially the poor, abandoned and excluded.

The Salesian Mission, in the whole Salesian Family, has in one way or another, in all its branches characteristic of this preferential option. They are the recipients of the Mission. What we should point out, to be faithful to the charism of Don Bosco, is that they are the recipients that determine the type of activity and works by means of which our mission becomes practical and effective (cf. CSDB 1,2,14,21; CFMA 1,6,65; PVA 2,2b; ADMA 2; VDB 6; 17 DS, c, d; CihscJM, 23).

Our loyalty to God and to young people asks us to be attentive to the needs of the environment and of the Church, sensitive to the signs of the times. And "the education and evangelisation of many young people, especially among the very poor, means that we have to go to them where they are to be found and provide adequate forms of service in the

context of their own life style." (SDB C.41). This openness has led, in the Congregation, in the Institute of the FMA and other groups, to an infinite number of activities and works that are extraordinarily different and admirable. We are confident that through them, young people and among them the poor, God speaks to us and awaits us in them.

As I suggested at the Closing Address at the GC27, «I dare to ask that with the 'courage, maturity and much prayer' with which we are sent to the most excluded young people, we choose in each of our Provinces to take another look at where we can remain, where we should go and where we can leave... Needy young people challenge us with their groans and their cries of pain."¹² It is in this sense, I believe, brothers and sisters, that the Lord calls us in our Salesian family to be strong, not to feel satisfied believing that the present mission is to preserve what others have built in the past. Our fidelity to the Lord and to the young today asks of us boldness where it is needed.

¹² CG27, Final Address, 3.5.

4.3. For fidelity to the charism:
**ALWAYS EVANGELISERS OF
 YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN.**

The predilection for the poorest young people expressed previously is totally inadequate in the totality of our Salesian charism and in our Family if it does not become effective through a holistic education that includes, as an indispensable element, evangelisation: "We educate and evangelise according to a plan for the integral promotion of man directed to Christ, the perfect man (cf. GS 41). "Like Don Bosco, we are called, all and on every occasion, to be educators in the faith" (CSDB 6,7,20 34; CFMA 5,26,66, 75...; PVA 9.1; 9.3; 2 ADMA, VDB 6; 16 DS; CihscJM 5).

In fact, by way of illustrating the importance that our family and most of its members gives to the evangelising dimension I can offer you the concern shown by the Salesian Congregation by devoting the GCXXIII in the year 1990 to the education of young people to the faith, or the commitment of our FMA sisters in their last GCXXIII to "Being today with youth a home that evangelises", from the viewpoint of a discipleship that narrates the experience of Faith, listening to

what God says today, open to the changes necessary to returning to walking with young people, to having the courage together to make prophetic gestures.

With this sensitivity I recalled at the end of the GC27 that as SDBs we are, first of all, evangelisers of the young, fellow travelers, courageous in proposing challenges in faith, and this is why we need to live and grow in a real pastoral predilection for the young.

*4.4. The sharing of the spirit
 and mission of Don Bosco in
 the Salesian Family and the Laity*

We know that one of the fundamental elements of Vatican II was, and continues to be, the theological model of the Church as the 'people of God', thus enhancing the baptismal consecration, which belongs to every Christian. This implies a factor which we do not always take into account, and that is that everyone "reborn in Christ" in so far as he is baptized is called to the perfection of love, that is, to holiness. (cf. *LG 42, quoted in VC 30*). To this perfection of love belongs inseparably the joint work in building the Kingdom of God. This becomes a reality, in our family, by means of the

'communion and sharing in the spirit and mission of Don Bosco'.

We live this spirit of the Council in this reality that is our religious family, which is expressed in article 1 of the Salesian Family Charter: «With humble and joyful gratitude we acknowledge that Don Bosco, by the initiative of God and the maternal mediation Mary, gave rise in the Church to a singular experience of evangelical life. The Spirit shaped in him a heart filled with a great love for God and for his brothers and sisters, in particular the little ones and the poor, and in this way made him Father and Teacher of a multitude of young people as well as the Founder of a vast spiritual and apostolic Family».

In this sense, I think that what one would expect from us now and in the coming years is the growth as a family in a real sense of communion, understanding, knowledge, and also the search for the good of youth and evangelisation. It is to go further, with more force, than what we have already done, which is already valuable in itself, but it can sometimes stagnate in a respectful attitude, with no little

ignorance of the other members of our family.

Moreover, since the Pope asks the whole Church, to be a Church that goes out, this challenge is for us as a family. We are a great religious force in the Church, and with simplicity and humility, we must remember that we are truly yeast in the dough, we have to say that we accept the challenge, as I said above, "To Reawaken the World" (the challenge that the Pope has launched to religious).

To this reality of the family I add the urgency of the mission shared with the laity. Of course this appeal is inevitable for us (religious and consecrated persons and in our family). As I said to my confreres at the end of the SDB GC27: «the shared mission between SDB and lay people is no longer optional – in case there is anyone who still believes it – and it is because the Salesian mission in the world today so clearly demand it..., reflection on this mission, the process of conversion by our SDB confreres in this regard is something we cannot go back on.»¹³

¹³ Address of the Rector Major at the conclusion of the CG27, 3.7.

4.5. The missionary dimension of our Family as a guarantee of authenticity and fidelity to the charism of Don Bosco

The missionary dimension has always been a priority since the beginning of the Salesian Congregation and the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. Even with the shortage of personnel and faced with the difficulties of the beginning, Don Bosco wanted to send the most suitable Salesians and FMA to the 'other end' of the world, in Patagonia.

The Second Vatican Council, renewing the Church's missionary commitment, has stressed, first, the deep theological meaning: «Having been divinely sent that she might be "the universal Sacrament of salvation", the Church in obedience to the command of her founder and because it is demanded by her own essential universality strives to preach the Gospel to all men» (AG 1). «The Church on earth is by its very nature missionary since according to the plan of the Father it has its origin in the mission of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.» (AG 2).

The development of the great tree of our family has meant that some of the younger branches also have a strong missionary character 'ad gentes', in full harmony with the heart of Don Bosco.

In our more recent history as the Salesian Congregation, and also in our FMA Sisters, the missionary dimension in the post-conciliar stage was reflected mainly in two situations, in many ways completely different: the *Africa Project* and the *Project for Europe*.

The first was presented by the Rector Major Fr E. Viganò in 1980 with these words: «I must insist on an all-important premise: *Project Africa is for us Salesians today a veritable grace from God*»¹⁴. Further on after a brief summary of the missionary activity of the Congregation, he wrote: «The place for Don Bosco's charism is in the local churches – to collaborate in bringing the Gospel to the young, to mould them into "honest citizens and good Christians." A hundred years ago the Salesian Vocation went to South America and established itself in strength. Fifty years

¹⁴ VIGANÒ Egidio, Letter, *Our African commitment*, in ACS 297 (1980), p. 5.

later it turned to Asia and has flourished in a number of countries there. Today it goes to the black Continent and will humbly implant itself in loyalty to Don Bosco and become vigorously African. Our Project Africa has been placed under the motherly protection of Mary Help of Christians.»¹⁵

Then in 2008, General Chapter 26, in the context of the “New Frontiers”, declares: «Given the interdependence of peoples, Europe’s destiny involves the entire world and becomes a concern of the universal Church. This opens up a new frontier with respect to the past; for us Salesians it is an invitation to ‘give greater attention to the training of young people in the faith’ (*Ecclesia in Europa*, n. 61)»¹⁶.

The Rector Major, Fr Pascual Chávez, in this regard, in the closing speech of the GC, recalled the words addressed to the Holy Father Benedict XVI: «It is aimed at re-dimensioning our Salesian presence for greater impact and effectiveness in this continent. That is, seeking a new form of

evangelisation in order to respond to the spiritual and moral needs of these young people, who to us appear as wanderers without guides and without destination.»¹⁷

Two projects, at the same time completely distinct yet basically identical, because they are born from the same *charismatic identity*: a fine example in our family of creative fidelity to Don Bosco and his charism, but the challenge for the future is pressing us.

4.6. Not power and strength, but humble service

I conclude by expressing to our Salesian family what, at this time I consider as an intuition that resonates in my heart, that is maturing and entering into dialogue with the data, the reality seen and known, the information...

What I call intuition, that in me is a STRONG BELIEF is this: Our fidelity to Don Bosco as the Salesian Family in this XXI century and in the years after the Bicentenary, asks us a service to the Church, the People of God,

¹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 16-17.

¹⁶ GENERAL CHAPTER XXVI, “*Da mihi animas, cetera tolle*”, Rome, 2008, n. 99 (p. 70-71).

¹⁷ *Ibid*, p. 147.

to the young, especially the poorest, and to the families that is characterized by service in simplicity, familiarity, in humility, to be and to live for others, to give and give oneself to young people from the reality of our presences because we have accepted that this is the way to live. Our fidelity is at serious risk when we live with power and strength, from the moment we have it or offer it or take it... And if this power and force is connected with money, then the risk becomes greater. Pay attention, sisters and brothers, to this real and very dangerous temptation.

Our strength lies in living a real life of communion and fraternity that is more evangelical in order to be more inquiring, attractive in itself, and our communion in service, within each of our institutions or groups, and in our own family will speak for itself.

Wanting to end with the Pope's appeal, I think his call to conversion, to the humility of being a church (and the Salesian Family, I would say) that always welcomes, that testifies to the mercy and tenderness of the Lord, that brings the consolation of God to women and men, does not leave us indifferent, as well as the call to be a poor Church and for the poor. And his invitation to live in joy, with deep joy to the point of being able to wake up the world is a wonderful challenge that motivates us and launches us in the mission entrusted to us¹⁸.

And in the written words as the title of the letter of convocation of the bicentenary of the birth of Don Bosco, this charismatic fidelity is guaranteed if we put our energy and our life into **"belonging more to God, more to our brothers and sisters, more to young people."**

¹⁸ Cf. Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, *Rallegramoci, Parole del Magistero del Papa Francesco*, nota 45, 46, 47, 50.

Cf. La Civiltà Cattolica, *Risvegliate il mondo*. Dialogo di Papa Francesco sulla vita religiosa, 2014 I, 5-6.

5.3 Our dead confreres (2nd list 2014)

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

SURNAME AND NAME	PLACE of death	DATE	AGE	PROV
ALONSO BURGOS Emilio <i>Fu Ispettore per 7 anni</i>	Arévalo (Spagna)	19/12/2014	98	SSM
P ANDRADE Arnaldo de Magalhães	Araxá (Brasile)	12/12/2014	80	BBH
P AXPE BADIOLA Jesús	Logroño (Spagna)	21/09/2014	78	SSM
P BALLERINI Mario	Roma (Italia)	14/12/2014	85	ICC
P BARROS Vieira Humberto de	Recife (Brasile)	27/10/2014	80	BRE
P BERCEDO AGUILAR Benito	Cambados, Pontevedra (Spagna)	13/11/2014	82	SSM
P BLOYET Bernard	Caen (Francia)	10/11/2014	85	FRB
P BRAIDO Pietro	Roma (Italia)	11/11/2014	95	UPS
P BUI Peter Luong	Los Angeles (U.S.A.)	22/10/2014	66	SUO
P CANDUSSO Pietro	Castello di Godego (Italia)	11/12/2014	95	INE
P CAPPEL Amalraj	Veeralur (India)	08/11/2014	63	INM
L CHEMELLO Giovanni	Castello di Godego (Italia)	04/10/2014	81	ICP
P CIPRIANI Aldo <i>Fu Ispettore per 5 anni e 10 mesi</i>	Tokyo (Giappone)	31/10/2014	65	GIA
L COLOMBERO Celestino	Bologna (Italia)	22/10/2014	74	ILE
P CORRIAS Benedetto	Nuoro (Italia)	30/09/2014	69	ICC
E CORSO João <i>Fu per 5 anni Vescovo Ordinario di Campos (Brasile) e per 9 anni Vescovo emerito</i>	São Paulo (Brasile)	15/10/2014	86	—
L COSGAYA HOSPITAL Elias	León (Spagna)	30/12/2014	78	SSM
L CUMAN Ataídes Noel	Belo Horizonte (Brasile)	30/12/2014	72	BBH
P DE BERNARDIN Giuseppe	Venezia-Mestre (Italia)	12/11/2014	92	INE
P DE MARTINI Albino	Lombriasco (Italia)	23/08/2014	89	ICP
P DE PAOLIS Michele <i>Fu per 4 anni Ispettore in Uruguay</i>	Foggia (Italia)	30/10/2014	93	IME
P DIEZ DEL POZO Antonio	Cochabamba (Bolivia)	23/09/2014	88	BOL
P DOMAŃSKI Apoloniusz	Stupka (Polonia)	10/10/2014	82	PLN
P D'SOUZA Richard	Mumbai (India)	17/10/2014	85	INB
P DUMRAUF Antonio Alberto	Bahía Blanca (Argentina)	26/09/2014	86	ARS
P FANTÍN Mario	Caracas (Venezuela)	27/11/2014	79	VEN
P FERNÁNDEZ GÓMEZ Arsenio	Logroño (Spagna)	06/10/2014	94	SSM
P FERNÁNDEZ PABLO Timoteo	Madrid (Spagna)	08/11/2014	85	SSM
P FONDE Joseph	Malta	04/11/2014	87	IRL
P FOX Karl	Hannover (Germania)	15/10/2014	82	GER
L FRANCIONI Marino	Buenos Aires (Argentina)	25/11/2014	92	ARS
L GARCÍA VERDUGO Jesús	Arévalo (Spagna)	14/10/2014	74	SSM
P GAVENDA Teodor	Dubnica nad Váhom (Slovacchia)	09/12/2014	57	SLK
P GIL VÁSQUEZ Jaime	Sevilla (Spagna)	13/12/2014	84	SMX
P GUARNIERI Hugo	São Paulo (Brasile)	17/11/2014	93	BSP

SURNAME AND NAME	PLACE of death	DATE	AGE	PROV
L GURINI Annibale	Monviso (CN - Italia)	13/09/2014	67	ICP
P JENDRYCZKA Henryk	Wejherowo (Polonia)	13/11/2014	80	PLN
P KASOBKI Jan	Trier (Germania)	30/10/2014	85	GER
P LENS John	Manoharabad (India)	28/11/2014	93	INH
P LINDSAY Michael	Bolton (Gran Bretagna)	03/11/2014	92	GBR
L LO WING-TAK Joseph	Hong Kong (Cina)	28/10/2014	74	CIN
P LUZOVEC Janko	Caleta Olivia, Santa Cruz (Argentina)	17/12/2014	83	ARS
P MAIOLINO Domenico	Messina (Italia)	27/09/2014	83	ISI
P MAIRAL LÓPEZ Jesús	Barcelona (Spagna)	13/12/2014	84	SMX
P MARCONETTI Luigi	Campo Grande (Brasile)	11/10/2014	86	BCG
P MARIO Giampaolo	El Alto - La Paz (Bolivia)	29/12/2014	75	BOL
P MATTIELLO Angelo	Borgomanero (Italia)	10/10/2014	80	ICP
P MATTIOLO Giovanni	Venezia-Mestre (Italia)	24/11/2014	94	INE
P MÉSIDOR René	Port-au-Prince (Haiti)	28/10/2014	80	HAI
P MINJ Santosh	Guwahati (India)	15/09/2014	55	ING
P MONTAGNOLI Ermanno	Arese (Italia)	05/10/2014	86	ILE
L MUKENDI Pascal	Lubumbashi (Congo R.D.)	26/10/2014	47	AFC
P MÜLLER Blažej	Prostějov (Rep. Ceca)	11/11/2014	85	CEP
P NERY Benvenuto	Americana (Brasile)	25/11/2014	90	BSP
P NIETO ESTÉVEZ José Antonio	Úbeda (Spagna)	13/12/2014	84	SMX
P NOTELÉ Frans	Leuven (Belgio)	27/11/2014	76	BEN
P OCCHIO Giuseppe	Etobicoke (Canada)	13/12/2014	91	SUE
P OTRADOVEC Ludvik	Brno (Rep. Ceca)	14/11/2014	85	CEP
P PAROUX Jean	Nice (Francia)	15/11/2014	85	FRB
P PEREYRA VILLAREAL Ricardo	Montevideo (Uruguay)	03/10/2014	92	URU
P PÉREZ GÓMEZ Ramón	León (Spagna)	26/09/2014	73	SSM
P PERRONE Francisco	Bahía Blanca (Argentina)	23/12/2014	67	ARS
L PINTON Egidio	Roma (Italia)	30/09/2014	92	ICC
P POLO Giuseppe	Venezia-Mestre (Italia)	01/11/2014	80	INE
P PUN Juan	Lima (Perù)	12/11/2014	82	PER
P REBINSKI Carlos	Posadas (Argentina)	28/11/2014	71	ARN
L REDOLAR SÁNCHEZ José Antonio	Arévalo (Spagna)	09/10/2014	65	SSM
P ROHBACH Michael	Amberg (Germania)	28/12/2014	82	GER
P ROSA Dante	Arese (Italia)	01/12/2014	87	ILE
P SAMPAIO do Rêgo Luiz	Barbalha, Ceará (Brasile)	17/09/2014	76	BRE
P SPIDALIERI Rocco	Salerno (Italia)	27/10/2014	101	IME
P TRAVAGLINO Dante Hugo Hipólito	Rosario (Argentina)	24/12/2014	92	ARN
P VALENTE Giuseppe	Santa Cruz (Bolivia)	04/10/2014	79	BOL
L VEGLIA Mario	Torino (Italia)	19/08/2014	98	ICP
L WATSON André	Toulon (Francia)	30/10/2014	89	FRB
P ZAGO Luigi	Fossamo (Italia)	15/09/2014	71	ICP
P ZIMNOWODZKI Władisław	Łąd (Polonia)	18/09/2014	88	PLN

