



# acts

**of the general council**

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**year XCIX**

**may 2018**

**N. 427**

## Convocation of the GC28

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

**Direzione Generale  
Opere don Bosco  
Roma**



# acts

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

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OFFICIAL ORGAN OF ANIMATION AND COMMUNICATION FOR THE SALESIAN CONGREGATION

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## WHAT KIND OF SALESIANS FOR THE YOUTH OF TODAY?

### *Letter convoking the 28<sup>th</sup> General Chapter*

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Turin, 24 May 2018

My Dear Confreres,

During the plenary session of the General Council we have reflected on the next General Chapter the title of which and the preparation process we have already told you about. Immediately afterwards I devoted some of my time to going over the contents of the more recent General Chapters: from 1972 with the celebration of the Special General Chapter (GC20), which marked an historical conclusion to the process of renewal of our Congregation after Vatican Council II, until the last which took place in 2014. They were therefore forty two years in the life of the Church and of the Congregation during which eight General Chapters took place.

Here we are now at the point of the announcement and the preparation of GC28, which without doubt will once again be «the principal sign of the Congregation's unity in diversity», as our Constitutions point out<sup>1</sup>.

With the specific characteristics of each General Chapter we shall come together as Salesian confreres from the whole world to

<sup>1</sup> C. 146.

face the challenge of reviewing our fidelity to the Lord, to the Gospel and to Don Bosco, sensitive to the needs of times and places, open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit so as to know the will of God at this moment in history<sup>2</sup>.

## 1. CONVOCAZIONE OF THE GC28

On the day of the Solemnity of Mary Help of Christians, from Turin, with great joy I send you this letter in which **I convoke, according to article 150 of our Constitutions, the GC28**. It will have as its theme: ***What kind of Salesians for the youth of today?*** The Chapter will be held at Valdocco (Turin), to where we shall return, sixty-two years after the last General Chapter was held there, in the same holy Salesian place where Don Bosco lived and founded our Congregation. It will be a *special gift* to meet our Father Don Bosco and to feel ourselves truly at home in the place where charismatically-speaking we were all born as Salesians of Don Bosco.

The General Chapter *will begin on Sunday 16th February 2020*, with the solemn Concelebrated Mass in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians. We are hoping that it *will conclude on 4<sup>th</sup> April 2020*, the eve of Palm Sunday. The General Chapter therefore will last seven weeks.

As *Moderator* I have appointed *Fr Stefano Vanoli*, who is generously taking on the responsibility of accompanying the preparation and the carrying out of our General Chapter.

### 1.1. Choice of theme

The theme chosen is the result of an extensive and profound reflection undertaken by the General Council, which has taken

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

into account the current indications of the Church and of Pope Francis, especially the celebration of the two Synods of Bishops on the family, and the preparation of the one to be held in October 2018 on “Young people, the faith and vocational discernment.”

The General Council has also highlighted some questions that have emerged from the ever greater knowledge of the Congregation that has been acquired during the Team Visits and the Extraordinary Visitations, as well as from the overview that each Councillor has been able to have of the situation of the Congregation and that I myself have arrived at following study and the visits I have made so far to sixty-three Provinces.

This overview of the Congregation has enabled us to identify, as I shall explain more fully in the course of this letter, *the need to focus our attention on the **individual Salesian** who as a man of God, a consecrated person and an apostle needs to be capable of being fully in tune **with today's teenagers and young people** and their world, and to educate them, to evangelise them, prepare them for life and accompany them in their meeting with the Lord.* At the same time, we are operating *with the firm conviction that we are not the only ones with responsibility for the mission, nor are we able to carry it out without the collaboration of others.*

There is just the one theme which is divided into three points:

- ***Priority of the Salesian mission among today's youth***
- ***Profile of the Salesian for today's youth***
- ***Together with lay people in the mission and in formation***

## 1.2. Other tasks

In addition to the proposed theme, which will certainly give us a great opportunity and be a time of grace and hope for our Congregation, the General Chapter will need to consider some issues of a juridical nature which are important for the life of the Provinces such as, for example, an assessment of the Secretariate

for the Salesian Family which was established during the previous General Chapter.

Another task will be the election of the Rector Major and of the members of the General Council for the six year period 2020-2026. The members of the General Chapter will be providing this service for the sake of unity and fidelity to the charism of Don Bosco, and no doubt the confreres from all parts of the Salesian world with their prayers will be accompanying this occasion so important for our Congregation.

The “technical commission,” appointed according to article 112 of the Regulations, has already been working with the Moderator during the session of the General Council and the following days to prepare a *timetable* of work for the Provinces so that everything proceeds in the most suitable manner both with regard to the timescale and to the contributions that can be offered.

In all probability, as a result of the replies of the Provinces regarding some features of their life and some juridical aspects connected with them, at GC28, itself there will be need for further consideration of some of the structures of animation and central government of the Congregation and of the Regions.

### **1.3. Fundamental aim of the theme**

The fundamental aim of the theme of GC28, is that of helping the whole Congregation to closely examine, as far as is possible, what is and what ought to be the *profile of the Salesian capable of responding to today's youth*, to all young people especially the poorest and most in need, those excluded and rejected. the weakest and those deprived of their basic rights. And this *in a world ever more complex and going through rapid changes*.

Today's situation needs Salesians, consacrated-apostles prepared and ready to live their lives with the mind and heart of Don Bosco, in this Church and in this society, willing to share, to give of

themselves, and to give their lives for the young people in the world today, with their languages, their own views, their own concerns. We can find many of these young people in Salesian centres: but many more are living in other “playgrounds” in the world.

What the SGC said in its own day when speaking about the unity of the vocation of the Salesian today sounds like a prophecy: «From the rediscovery of this vocational unity will dawn the light of our Salesian “identity” and the possibility of that new type of Salesian required today by the signs of the times»<sup>3</sup>.

This “type of Salesian required today by the signs of the times” will also underline what was considered at the GC24 but which was not sufficiently assimilated. The fact that hundreds of thousands of lay people are now part of the Salesian presence throughout the world demands from Salesians a new openness of mind and heart for the benefit of the Salesian mission in the world. Only by *sharing the mission* will we be able to provide the best answers without disappointing the teenagers and young people of today and of tomorrow who have so much need of us.

#### 1.4. Some questions that we can ask ourselves

There may be confreres who think that if we all have the Gospel as our way of Christian life and Don Bosco as the Father and Founder of our Congregation, and if we profess the same Constitutions in which the Salesian mission is clearly defined, then perhaps there is no need to ask ourselves what ought to be the profile of the Salesian that the Holy Spirit wants nowadays for an authentic mission among and with the young, in a world that is so new and changeable. However, we do need to recognise honestly, as is appreciated in many Provinces, that the current situation is far more complicated and diversified than we imagined. This situation is not the same everywhere nor is it simple. It

<sup>3</sup> SGC, 127.

is for this reason that we are finding contrasting situations which are forcing us to move in the direction of a more radical approach, of greater courage, greater clarity and even greater purification in the light of the Gospel and of the fidelity of our Congregation to the charism received from the Holy Spirit in Don Bosco.

- In this complicated and diversified situation there are confreres, and they are the majority, who are living with total dedication and in tune with the young people, their world and their situation. There are others who feel that this world of youth and the young people themselves are no longer accessible to them.
- Most of the confreres live with a very clear and decisive option for the poor and needy, with a firm commitment to those who every day experience their dignity being trampled underfoot and violated; other confreres seek refuge in life situations that are easy and comfortable.
- The majority of the confreres live the ministerial priesthood like Don Bosco, who, for his boys and youngsters was a priest always and everywhere; while other confreres are greatly influenced by a strong tendency towards clericalism, which does so much damage to the Church herself and from which we are not exempt.
- Many confreres live their lives with total selflessness, sobriety, austerity and generosity in their service of others, in particular regarding those to whom we are especially sent; while there are other confreres who lose their identity and freedom as consecrated religious becoming involved in processes of power-seeking, which quite often are linked to looking for money and to other ties<sup>4</sup>.
- Most confreres, with genuine passion and affection, are living lives that reflect in everyday situations what John Cagliero declared : «Friar or no friar I am never leaving Don Bosco»<sup>5</sup>;

<sup>4</sup> *EG*, 55 and 57.

<sup>5</sup> *BM VI*, 181.

other confreres, however, as the consequence of a great lack of Salesian identity, ask to leave the Congregation in order to live not as consecrated religious apostles, Salesians of Don Bosco, but simply to exercise their priestly ministry in dioceses where they think they will be happy or simply be accepted.

- There are confreres who have understood and are living the shared mission with lay people seen as a great gift to the mission. On the other hand, there are many others who still show great reluctance or even refuse; they are quite happy to see lay people as our dependants but they refuse to share the mission side by side on the same level with them, and all that this implies.
- Most of the young confreres in the stages of formation dream of committing all their energies to the young people to whom they will be sent<sup>6</sup>, preparing their hearts and minds and pursuing their intellectual formation with this aim in view; and on the contrary there are other confreres who dream of appointments, responsibilities that may give them authority and “a certain position”.

This situation of ours made up of contrasts, lights and shadows, is asking from us the same things that Pope Francis, with his lively and direct approach asked from the whole Salesian Family. Today I feel the words: *not to disappoint the deep aspirations of the young* are in a special way addressed to us. This is what the Pope says: «“May Don Bosco help you to not disappoint the deep aspirations of the young: their need for life, openness, joy, freedom and the future; their desire to collaborate in building up a more just and fraternal world, in fostering the development of all peoples, in safeguarding nature and the living environment. Following his example you will help them to experience that only in the life of grace, that is in friendship with Christ, does one fully obtain the most authentic ideals. You will have the joy of accompanying

<sup>6</sup> Cf. C. 24.

them in their search for a synthesis of faith, culture and life at moments when they take weighty decisions or attempt to interpret a reality that is complex»<sup>7</sup>.

## 2. THEME OF GC28

### 2.1. Priority of the Salesian mission among today's young people

Reflection on the history of our General Chapters is deeply rewarding and each General Chapter, with the light of the Holy Spirit that we need to accept with docility and openness of heart, is like an *invitation addressed to our freedom of action* today, since we must not imprudently and almost rashly rely on past glories. Almost without realising it we can be «resisting the Holy Spirit (Acts 7,51), or else we may «suppress the Spirit» (cf. 1 Thes 5,19), running the risk that the Salesian mission that has been entrusted to us may one day be given to others<sup>8</sup>.

For this reason, when we propose as the theme of the Chapter for the whole Congregation that of undertaking a careful reflection on the profile of the Salesian for today's youth, we are doing so from an urgent need to move ahead in freedom and with great honesty along the only path that really counts: fidelity to the Lord in Don Bosco, and fidelity to the young, many of whom are waiting not to be abandoned to their fate or left shipwrecked because we have been incapable of seeing their needs or hearing their calls.

Like Don Bosco and in fidelity to the Spirit, we need to commit ourselves to giving absolute priority to the Salesian mission

<sup>7</sup> FRANCIS, *Like Don Bosco with the young for the young. Letter of Pope Francis to the Rector Major of the Salesians*, LEV, Vatican City 2015, 9.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. SGC, 18.



with the young people of today in order to be as he was, «signs and bearers of the love of God for young people especially those who are poor»<sup>9</sup>. This priority or special concern for the most needy teenagers and youth in today's world, that in a certain sense is different from the world of previous decades, objectively conditions our mission. We can say as on other occasions that this is not something optional, something we can neglect because we do not want to accept its demands. On the contrary it is something essential, a constitutive part of our charismatic identity.

At present three quarters of the world's population of young people are living in countries afflicted by poverty or in those slowly developing, especially on the outskirts of the large cities in the so-called "emergency camps." They are the victims of progress and of development itself, which of its very nature leads to growing social inequality and poverty. This situation continues to be a sharp reminder for us and for our Congregation. Today more than ever with the same sensitivity of Don Bosco we have an original charismatic mission to offer to the Church and to the world, to all young people and to all those boys and girls, teenagers and young people who are excluded, marginalised and thrown away.

The new General Chapter will be an opportunity to courageously undertake a discernment process to see whether our houses, our works and our activities are at the service of the poorest young people<sup>10</sup>; whether they find a place in our hearts and are the centre of our concerns and interests; whether we are concentrating our energy and our efforts on them.

A heartfelt dream I have is that of being able to confidently believe that one day throughout the world on hearing the word *Sale-  
sians*, or sons of Don Bosco, everyone will know that they are speaking about us consecrated persons, who always and in every

<sup>9</sup> C. 2.

<sup>10</sup> Reg. 1.

place or situation opt for the young, all young people, *the boys and girls who are the poorest, the vulnerable, those deprived of their dignity*, because they ***need us and are waiting for us***. Who are these young people? According to the words of Pope Francis they are above all the outcasts, the “left overs”: «We have created a “throw away” culture which is now spreading. It is no longer simply about exploitation and oppression, but something new... The excluded are not the “exploited” but the outcast, the “leftovers”»<sup>11</sup>.

And for us Salesians, those who need us and are waiting for us are:

- the really poor and the “cast offs” in the world
- child migrants, refugees who have arrived alone in foreign countries
- street boys and girls in various continents
- children and young people whose human rights and dignity are violated every day
- young people refused entry at frontiers because of their lack of documents and of opportunities and forced to do anything in order to survive
- children and young people caught up in networks and in some way slaves to various forms of dependence or subjected to real slavery and the loss of their freedom
- young people in the world of work and of technical and occupational formation
- young people from totally dysfunctional families severely lacking in human and affective relationships
- the young, finally, from all races and all cultures in all circumstances who do not know Jesus Christ.

In short, the Chapter will need to be a strong call to return once again to the truly poor in the world and to continue to firmly commit ourselves to them in the places and the centres where we are already at work.

<sup>11</sup> EG, 53.

The Chapter will also be a strong appeal to us to be on the same wavelength as so many teenagers and youths who ask us not to leave them to themselves but to accompany them: young people from good or from broken homes, who need the presence of an educator and of a friend in their own lives and in that of their families.

This priority of the youth mission today ought to make us open our eyes and make us sensitive to the needs of teenagers and youths who in their language, their points of view, and their awareness belong to the digital world. Others are concerned about the care of and respect for the environment and nature. There are young people concerned about the social dimension in which there is the possibility of helping and of serving, young people who seek an opportunity for voluntary service. There are also young people who want to make a genuine and profound faith journey. This same priority enables us to understand, nowadays more than ever, that when the young people have a family, this journey can only be undertaken together. This is also what the Church and the Pope are urging.

All of this and much besides is challenging our fidelity as Salesians today and demands from us reflection on what to do, on how to do it and how to prepare ourselves so as to have something important and significant to say, to offer and to share.

## **2.2. Profile of the Salesian for the youth of today**

Speaking about the Salesians of today and of tomorrow demands that we all turn our gaze towards Don Bosco because he is our model. As GC21 already wrote, Don Bosco «for us is not just a memory of the past, but a charismatic living presence, active and stretching out to the future. In him we reach a better understanding of ourselves and we find the true sense of what it means to belong to the Congregation»<sup>12</sup>.

<sup>12</sup> GC21, 163.

### 2.2.1. *With Don Bosco as the model*

Having Don Bosco as his model the Salesian discovers:

- Don Bosco “the man of God”, whose most wonderful characteristic was the combination of his personality, his life and his work<sup>13</sup>. The splendid harmony of nature and grace he showed in such a magnificent manner in his own person helps the Salesian to realise just how faith can richly illuminate the whole of human life and how life finds its fulness in faith. In fact Don Bosco knew how to interpret the circumstances in which he was living and which surrounded him in an extraordinary manner through the eyes of faith. For this reason *saying Salesian nowadays ought to be the same as saying a man of profound faith*.
- At the centre of his life we discover “da mihi animas cetera tolle”, as an apostolic passion fully motivated and full of dreams for his boys. But the source of all of this are the Gospel and the person and the heart of Christ the apostle of the Father. And it is in Don Bosco that we can see how the Holy Spirit is the inspiration behind a certain “Salesian way” of knowing intuitively the face and the heart of Jesus the Good Shepherd and his mission, in a project of life that is firmly unified, in which the human and the divine aspects are closely united and directed towards a single mission: the salvation of youth<sup>14</sup>. On this account *saying Salesian nowadays ought to be the same as saying an apostolic passion for youth*.
- In imitating Don Bosco the Salesian discovers God’s infinite paternal love and tries to live in the presence of the Father with a heart filled with joyful gratitude and trust. He feels that his mission as educator and pastor culminates in revealing the Father to the young, and he comes to understand Don Bosco much better in his union with God and his extraordi-

<sup>13</sup> Cf. *SGC*, 83 §1.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. *C.* 26.

nary sense of paternal love. And since he recognises that Don Bosco's supreme model is Christ, the Salesian has the opportunity to become ever more aware that «the real world has a pressing need to discover this true face of God and this vocation to sonship that every man has»<sup>15</sup>. For this reason *speaking today about a Salesian ought to be the same as speaking about a son of God who knows that this is what he is and who feels that he is a father to the young*.

- Being Salesian is our way of being deeply Church. «Any kind of dualism between Salesian life and the life of the particular or universal Church is unthinkable. The same Spirit who animates and unifies the Church has inspired our Salesian vocation»<sup>16</sup>. Fidelity to Don Bosco today asks us as a Congregation to be attentive to the signs of the times, attentive to the “cry” of the young people we are speaking about, without losing ourselves in anything that could disfigure our *charismatic identity*. For this reason, as our Constitutions say already in the first version by Don Bosco published in 1875, we need to have at heart the passion for being evangelizers of the young, and the more so if they are poor, and to pay special attention to apostolic vocations, of being educators of the faith for the working classes particularly by means of social communication, and proclaiming the Gospel to those who have not yet received it<sup>17</sup>, since the passion of “*da mihi animas*” does not know frontiers. For this reason *saying Salesian nowadays ought to be the same as saying charismatic identity in communion with the Church*.
- Affirming Don Bosco as our model and affirming fidelity to the charism means for us also *the return to the genuine spirit of Don Bosco of the Oratory*<sup>18</sup>, not so as to do **what he did** but

<sup>15</sup> SGC, 90.

<sup>16</sup> *The Project of Life of the Salesians of Don Bosco. A Guide to the reading of the Salesian Constitutions*, S.D.B., Madras 1987. 131.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. C. 6.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. C. 40.

certainly to imitate **the way he did it**, discovering a Don Bosco who was always flexible in so many ways but firmly rooted in his own mission for the young. Clearly we are not talking about the Oratory so as to limit ourselves to one particular activity among the many that Don Bosco himself undertook. Rather we want to grasp that spirit that moved and guided him constantly: his energy, his educative passion and his creativity, his dynamism and his flexibility, always accompanied by that clarity of vision and that steadfastness of spirit that he possessed and that for us today represents a magisterial lesson in *dynamic fidelity* to his specific apostolic vocation. Don Bosco shows himself to us therefore as a true model of docility to the original charism; docility to the call and to the mission that was entrusted to him together with an openness to the real situation, to the times and to the various demands. For this reason *saying Salesian today ought to be the same as saying apostle of the young always faithful, always flexible and creative.*

- Having Don Bosco as a model means for the Salesian of today having a mind and heart filled with the values of the *Salesian spirit* and of the *spirituality that is our hallmark and our characteristic*. In this Salesian spirit, love is the means and the fundamental method of its apostolate: untiring affability and friendliness are the Salesian names for charity among the young. A welcoming attitude, the ability to take the first step, appreciation shown towards every individual, optimism and joy, the family spirit..., ought to be the distinctive and specific features of our Salesian DNA. For this reason *saying Salesian nowadays ought to be the same as saying always an educator, always a friend.*

### 2.2.2. Vocation and formation

Saying *vocation and formation* is always one way of replying to the question: «What kind of Salesian for the youth of today?». The profile of the Salesian will undoubtedly emerge from the work of the Chapter and this certainty is a source of great hope.

To assist with future reflection, I suggest three factors that need to be taken into consideration:

- a) The Salesian must live with the realization that his is a call and a consecrated vocation to which he must respond day after day.
- b) The mission is carried out together and formation ought to help us to live it this way.
- c) To respond appropriately to the demands of formation and of the mission today, we certainly need to invest in high quality formation teams capable of assisting in the formation of Salesians so that they may be genuine educators and apostles of today's youth.

a) *Formation as a permanent response to God's call*

Formation, understood and lived in faith leads each Salesian, together with his confreres, to respond to God, the one who takes the initiative and calls him to follow Christ more closely. It is God who consecrates us and sends us to the young as we express it in our religious profession<sup>19</sup>. Vocation is not something abstract. It is God who always calls at some particular moment in time, in a specific family, social, religious, cultural and economic context. It is a call of love and of grace which we receive with gratitude and humility, not as a right or something we merit. The young Salesian, a son of his own time needs to respond to this specific call of God, and the task of formation is to help him in his journey towards maturity and in the complete abandonment of himself to God in his following of Christ.

In any case this process of growing to maturity cannot be accomplished outside the real situation in today's world, with its diversity and perhaps complexity. A combination of the needs and of the aspirations of the time<sup>20</sup> strongly marks a vocation.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. C. 24.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. GS, 4-10.

Don Bosco had great sensitivity in being able to read and to interpret the situation and the needs of his time. With this sensitivity he gave life to the Salesian Congregation and overcame the difficulties. The first Salesians were formed in this spirit and we can say that today there is *an urgent need to acquire this characteristic in the area of formation*.

In societies like those of our times, with very rapid and serious changes, the Salesian will need to be able to remain open to such changes, overcoming the natural reluctance one feels when faced with things that are new, unknown situations: he will have to become accustomed to seeking new solutions when necessary, without hiding behind: "it has always been done like that"; he will need to be ready to learn the new and to face up to it, ready for an open discussion, capable of distinguishing between what is permanent and what can be changed, in fact able to live as a religious in these situations.

There is nothing strange in thinking, as the Congregation has already said on various occasions, that formation structures need to be adapted to the needs of the times, places and people: that they need to be varied, decentralised, flexible and functional. The young Salesian will need to be formed in contact with the circumstances of the place in which he is living: the families, the young people of the same age, real Salesian life with its own apostolic activities. He will be formed, as many people are through their efforts, sacrifice, temperance, austerity, far from any kind of *status* or privilege or élitism. All of this should always make us reflect with flexibility on the formation of the Salesian in today's world for the youth of today.

Certainly formation ought to lead us to assimilate the typical features of the Salesian character with a *style of spiritual life*<sup>21</sup> centred in God the Father and in Christ the Saviour, based on a practical faith that helps the Salesian to recognise the presence of

<sup>21</sup> Cf. C. 11, 12; SGC, 667; GC25, 191; GC27, 67§3.



God in everyday life, in history and in human events. The spirit will be that of charity inspired by the sweetness of Saint Francis of Sales, as Don Bosco wanted. With Don Bosco as his model, the Salesian will need to stand out for a hope that is the source of optimism and joy even in difficulties. And he will be sustained by a sincere Eucharistic and Marian piety.

As a son of Don Bosco the Salesian will need to stand out for a *human maturity* that ought to be a feature of our relationships full of good humour, sincerity, understanding, a capacity for friendship and real and mature affection. All of this enriched by a style of fraternal and educative relationships typical of the *family spirit that is our distinguishing feature*.

Naturally this journey cannot be pursued without **intermediaries**. These are varied. At the beginning of the journey people have to meet the first guides. Thinking about today's Salesian, real *discernment and accompaniment*<sup>22</sup> are necessary and ever more urgent. The role of the community, of the laity in the educative pastoral community and of the confreres in their own Province is certainly important but above all, especially in the first years, the effectiveness of the *whole of the formation renewal* will depend to a large extent on the atmosphere we have described, on true discernment, on an accompaniment that is constant, and on the ability of the formation personnel. They need to be very much aware that the formation of the confreres will be influenced by their way of thinking and acting. For this reason it is necessary to identify the best way to obtain the *best teams of formation personnel, stable teams that are not improvised, prepared for this service*. Formation personnel with different and complementary personalities, but very stable in their being Salesians.

We know very well – and this is undoubtedly a great challenge throughout the Congregation – that formation ought to be the re-

<sup>22</sup> Cf. SYNOD OF BISHOPS, *Young people, the faith and vocational discernment*, 2017, 39-52.

sult of the actions of all the confreres, of the formation communities, but also of the communities involved in the active life in every Province. They all ought to feel themselves in some way *formation communities*, which through daily life communicate to the young confreres the authentic values of the Salesian vocation and the joy of living them as such.

As we think about the profile of the Salesian for today's youth and at the same time think about his formation, we shall be faced with some familiar challenges<sup>23</sup> and with situations and convictions that we will have to correct:

- A formation understood as a series of successive stages that conclude with perpetual profession or priestly ordination, without the certainty of having completed a personal and profound process of identification with the vocation.
- Formation understood first of all and principally as the acquisition of academic knowledge of a philosophical, theological, pedagogical and psychological nature.
- The Salesian vocation sometimes falsely identified with a personal project which relativizes the evangelical counsels and forgets the importance that evangelical fraternity has for us, and which ought to be the distinctive feature of each and every community in the Provinces.
- The poor quality that we come across in the "formation personnel", who are not always capable of transmitting in a clear manner the values of consecrated and ministerial life and who do not know how to accompany or to guide the discernment process.
- A certain lack of joy and of life in the apostolic communities where there is a short supply of dialogue, of fraternal affection and of the sharing of one's own daily experience of God.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. GC21, 47.

## b) *Mission and communion*

We note with a sense of responsibility and concern that on not a few occasions there is a lack of direction and of purpose in the formation processes. Too easily formation is thought of as a stage in Salesian life that finishes with the conclusion of studies. To this is erroneously associated the idea that with the award of a diploma or of a licence the objectives of formation have been achieved. With humility we have to recognise that in the Congregation there is not always the clear awareness and the subsequent practice that people are formed *for and in* a mission and formed *for and in* a community: whether that is the religious Salesian community or the pastoral educative community.

On the other hand when formation is understood as a permanent response for the whole of one's life to the God who calls us to be *at the service of young people and prophets of fraternity*, then the direction and the purpose are clear in all the processes of formation; and both the mission and life in common have a clear direction and that purpose.

Here are some factors that highlight the risk that formation may depart from the mission and from the value of fraternal life and therefore from the true formation of the *Salesian profile for today's youth*:

- The tendency to identify "mission" and "work", forgetting that our mission in the Church is that of being signs and bearers of the love of God for the young and of bringing them close to Christ, going far beyond the social services that we may provide.
- Confreres who do not consider the accompaniment of the young and vocational discernment as an essential part of youth ministry.
- Proposals for the formation of our young confreres that give secondary importance or none at all to pastoral experiences among the young, especially the poorest. This is very far from the ideas of Don Bosco, who believed that the Salesian should

not be formed without contact with real life not even during the novitiate.

- Programmes of formation in which there is a lack of reflection on the pastoral experiences of those in formation and an absence of accompaniment in their pastoral ministry.
- Programmes of formation in which the staff are seen only as teachers and not as educators: this tells us something about the need to have true educators and not just teachers.
- Situations where practical training is simply reduced to a period of work in a local community, but which for the Salesian in initial formation does not represent an important stage in which the experience lived is accompanied and assessed, and during which he can count on the help and on the witness of the whole community.
- Formation communities that are living on the fringes or which are indifferent to the enormous and crucial missionary challenges of the Church and of the Congregation.

c) *High quality formation teams*<sup>24</sup>

The formation of a Salesian for today's youth needs formation teams that are convincing in terms of quality and quantity acting in harmony and united. "Quality" means that the formation personnel need to "be living the values of the Salesian vocation" in order to then accompany the lives of the young candidates and of the Salesians. "Quality" demands educators who are living their consecrated Salesian vocation with joy and who know how to transmit that joy; formation personnel who have learned the art of discerning the voice of the Spirit in everyday life and know how to recognise the presence of God in the life of young people. Genuine and upright formation personnel, although not perfect, with a good

<sup>24</sup> It is of interest to know what the Salesian formation personnel are saying in a recent study carried out after a large and wide-ranging enquiry undertaken among those in formation and the formation personnel throughout the Congregation: M. BAY, *Giovani, salesiani e accompagnamento. Risultati di una ricerca internazionale*, LAS, Roma 2018, 377-420.

measure of patience and respect. “Quality” requires formation personnel who know how to accompany lived experiences: the experience of community life, of prayer, of the apostolate, experience of the evangelical counsels. “Quality” also refers to the formation personnel who know how to work in a team together with the Rector or with the one responsible for the specific phase of formation.

When we speak about formation personnel we are also thinking about the presence of lay people, men and women, and of the presence of families during the period of formation. When these people belong to the Salesian Family or have had a Salesian formation, they become a valuable resource for the formation of young confreres.

Naturally as with the previous topics, we need to have the necessary clarity of vision in order to perceive the weaknesses that we discover, enough humility to recognise them and a willingness on the part of the Congregation to take the necessary steps to overcome them.

Some problem areas and dangers that we encounter are:

- The frequent situation of complex works with few confreres available for initial formation and formation teams with few members.
- Confreres trained to be teachers of philosophy or theology in the first stages of formation, but not trained for formation and spiritual accompaniment.
- The presence of confreres, formation personnel in the houses of formation incapable of communicating with the young Salesians.
- Formation personnel who do not show that they have a passion for God and for the young.
- The difficulty of a “vertical” model of formation that does not touch the heart, motivations, attitudes and convictions.
- The situation of formation personnel with little pastoral experience and a Provincial pastoral ministry more linked to single activities than to processes is a real weakness.

- In some Provinces, countries and cultures a strict separation is maintained between confreres in the formation houses: formation personnel and those in formation with a great distance separating them, very far from the family spirit that Don Bosco wanted and the atmosphere of the oratory that he loved so much and of which he personally took care.

### **2.3. Together with lay people in the mission and in formation**

After many years of sharing the mission with lay people in the educative pastoral community, the Congregation feels the need to evaluate the process undertaken, the results achieved and also the forms of opposition that have been met with. The mission shared with lay people clearly appears, especially since the GC24, as a real process of rediscovering charismatic identity, and nowadays as the only way to carry out the Salesian mission in a complicated world and in the diversity of contexts in which we find ourselves.

Another element for reflection is the subject of the mission itself that cannot be limited to the individual Salesian or just to the religious community as the animating nucleus. Nowadays the mission has to be considered as the integration of Salesians and lay people, and for this reason they also work together in formation.

#### **2.3.1. *Achievements and forms of opposition in the mission shared with lay people*<sup>25</sup>**

In the journey undertaken by the Congregation in these years the reality appears to be very diversified. There are countries and Provinces in which a large part of the route opened up by GC24 and by all the previous and the successive teaching of the Congregation has been followed. The results are manifold and prove

<sup>25</sup> Cf. GC24, 19-21, 30-31, 36.

that the discernment of the various General Chapters as well as the guidelines issued by the Congregation are not only possible, but in some parts of the world represent the only solution capable of ensuring the charism of Don Bosco on behalf of the youth who have need of us. We have learned much, we have gathered many fruits and the Congregation needs to show the results obtained for the benefit of the mission.

Nevertheless with regard to the progress of the educative pastoral communities, it is necessary to recognise that in some parts of the world and in some Provinces forms of opposition to the mission shared with lay people have emerged and even more opposition to the idea of a common formation in view of a common youth mission. This fact clearly shows that the process undertaken, its speed and the measures adopted are so different and varied as to make this the priority subject when speaking about Salesians and lay people together.

Pastoral models exist linked to the mission that are very different, which can lead to confusion and sometimes to an inadequate appreciation of the Christian states of life and to an inadequate evaluation of the consecrated person and of the lay person within a Christian view that is correct and synergical.

There are still some erroneous and ambiguous management models which in some cases make us feel "owners and proprietors", "chiefs" who are quite willing to flaunt their "power"; there are also other pastoral models which are correct from a charismatic point of view in which we are "guides", companions and educators in the Salesian educative pastoral system. Sometimes we feel encouraged when translating this model into reality; while in other cases it seems that there is a certain weariness that makes us move from the synergy of communion to a style of "power sharing" without effort and without any educative pastoral vision.

Sometimes it is an issue of serious forms of opposition which strike directly at the model of the "Church of communion" pro-

posed by Vatican Council II; a model that the Church herself is seeking to promote in coming to an understanding of herself: a Church of which, naturally we are a part.

These serious forms of opposition require from us that we stop and examine ourselves, and undertake a courageous examination of the successes and the difficulties encountered in daily Salesian life, and this we intend to do at the GC28. This examination is necessary because these situations of opposition are not always in the open or recognised for what they are and they end up being considered as something normal and an unchangeable "status quo".

### 2.3.2. *Reciprocity in the relationships between Salesians and lay people*<sup>26</sup>

In relationships between Salesians and lay people there come into play *common elements* such as the sense of belonging to the same educative pastoral communities, sharing in the charism of Don Bosco, in many cases the same Christian faith, confidence in the effectiveness of the practice of the preventive system. The more common elements there are between Salesians and lay people, the stronger the relationship and the common educative pastoral approach which becomes not only easier but more fruitful.

We are aware of the *differences* there are between Salesians and laypeople: the difference of vocation, the difference of the state of life, ... Such differences make their own specific contribution; they are a treasure; they can and should contribute much more to building harmony rather than separation or division. Even among the lay people present in Salesian centres in the world we find important differences: Christian believers, those belonging to other religions or to none; members of the Salesian Family; lay people with a real sense of being co-responsible for the mission and others who feel themselves to be "simply" de-

<sup>26</sup> Cf. GC24, 106,117.



pendants; young people fully caught up in the charism and young people who are distant or indifferent within the same work; volunteers and paid workers; families close and distant...

Recognising the great diversity and the many differences is the starting point for imagining, dreaming and building a common pathway in our educative pastoral communities, with the broadest participation and the greatest contribution possible, appreciating in a unique and positive manner the contribution that also comes from the specific condition of being men and women; certainly the educative presence of women and their contribution need to be better recognised<sup>27</sup>.

Another essential element in the relationship between Salesians and lay people in the shared mission needs to be emphasised. It is *reciprocity*. Reciprocity helps to overcome distances, the lack of harmony, an imbalance that arises from the different functions and from the sense of superiority that is sometimes expressed. This reciprocity has to be built up without cancelling the differences: the Salesian always has to preserve his own identity as a consecrated person and not "act as a layperson" and viceversa. Reciprocity is a help in living out fraternal and friendly relationships full of humanity and of maturity, respectful towards people without "betraying" the uniqueness and individuality of each one.

This reciprocity is a fact and it bears its best fruits when it avoids falling into some temptations. As regards the Salesians, on some occasions a "proprietorship" mentality predominates rather than that of service towards everyone. We are all servants in the same mission in the Church and in the world, and our common gaze ought to be always turned towards our young people especially to those most in need. When someone has the right understanding and assimilation of the charism, it is obvious that lay people are not our servants nor simply our "employees" even

<sup>27</sup> Cf. GC24, 25,33,74,166,177-179.

though for most of them, apart from the volunteers, the relationship is always regulated by a work contract. But much more can be done.

We have to be very aware of this temptation as also of the danger of “clericalizing” lay people. Clericalism, far from giving impetus to various proposals and contributions, little by little extinguishes the prophetic fire to which the Church is called to bear witness among the people. It is right to recognise in this fault an over-simplified and partial or even distorted view, and a conscious non-acceptance of the ecclesiology of communion, that requires the recognition of the equal dignity of all vocations.

At the same time the strong temptation felt by some lay people is that of wanting to gain the control and authority for which they reproached the Salesians themselves. It may be one way of saying consciously or unconsciously: «Our time has come! Now we can command and we can have the “power”». No good can come of all this, since it is to betray both the charism and co-responsibility on behalf of those to whom we are sent.

The only possible way will be that of charismatic identity that should always be guaranteed and ensured, and that shared *leadership* which depends as much on the capacity of the people and on the circumstances, as on formation in which are developed a system of accompaniment between Salesians and lay people, and a system for the control and monitoring of the management of the works, of the various roles, and of the financial arrangements.

### 2.3.3. *Joint Formation of Salesians and lay people*<sup>28</sup>

Starting from the GC23 each Province was asked to have a Lay Project. The GC24 asked for the drawing up of a Salesians-Lay People Formation Programme<sup>29</sup> with contents, definition of

<sup>28</sup> Cf. GC24, 43,55,101,103,138,140.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. GC24, 145.

roles, interventions of the Provincials and of the various structures of provincial guidance.

In the last twenty five years many Provinces have developed a variety of plans for the specific formation of lay people (and sometimes for Salesians and lay people together), according to their own needs in relation to the mission. The formation of lay people engaged for the first time in a Salesian work (teachers, educators, tutors, service personnel, social workers...) has been seen as a real challenge. In some places, in the face of the complexity of some Salesian centres, a systematic formation process has been developed for those people who have to provide a service of guidance and coordination: lay directors, coordinators of pastoral work, administrators. ...

It has been pointed out in various interprovincial meetings or during some of the team visits that great differences exist in the quality and in the progress made in this area. The differences have been ascribed to the lack of any "central point of reference" at the service of the whole Congregation, to which the Provinces could turn. In the last General Chapters the issue was not dealt with definitively even though the problem was raised on several occasions. The next General Chapter will provide the possibility of saying something about this or of taking some decisions, if it considers this appropriate.

On the basis of the model of the missionary communion of the Church enriched by the diversity of the charisms and by greater knowledge of them, we accept the basic principle that each one needs the other, to exchange the gifts of each specific vocation whether lay or consecrated. Mutual enrichment requires from everyone the humility to learn, the spirit of listening and a readiness for better preparation and a programme of high quality formation in the sharing of the Salesian charism and in the practice of the preventive system; and this both in the Salesian houses and in the families themselves since their positive influence crosses many frontiers that are more theoretical than real.

### 2.3.4. *Works that are shared or entrusted to lay people*<sup>30</sup>

The GC24 considered this issue looking at some «new situations», offering some guidelines and criteria<sup>31</sup>, but as usually happens, life during these last twenty-two years has taken us along some pathways that at that time were not even thought of.

The current situation is very varied:

- With regard to the *areas covered*: it is a question of schools, social works, oratories...
- With regard to the *collaboration of the Salesians* in works under lay management: some have a Salesian who is there every day; in others a Salesian is present several hours a week; in others the Province representative is there several times during the year..
- With regard to the *way they operate*: in some works an educative pastoral community with its council has been established; others have a council of the work composed solely of lay people, and others again have a council of the work composed of lay people and a single Salesian.
- With regard to the *connection with the Provincial plan*: some works have a Salesian community to which they relate; for others the Provincial and his Council are their point of reference; others are grouped together according to their location and have a Salesian as their point of reference.
- With regard to the *management model*: there are works under lay management which report directly to the Provincial and his Council; others have their own particular and unique *status*, while others form part of a group of works which are regulated by a particular statute for that group of houses.
- With regard to the *model of accompaniment of the works*: some have a Provincial Visitation by the Provincial himself. Others have a Visitation by the Provincial's Delegate, either

<sup>30</sup> Cf. GC24, 39,44-47, 180-182.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. GC24, 180-182.

the Vice Provincial, or the Provincial Councillor for Schools, or some other person given that responsibility. Others do not have a Provincial Visitation and control is limited to that exercised over economic and financial management by the Provincial Economist and to some kind of assessment of pastoral animation by the Provincial Delegate for Youth Ministry.

As regards the *services offered by and the presence of Salesians* in the works entrusted to lay people there are different views and some particular trends:

- Surprisingly in some Provinces it is thought that once the lay management of a work has been established, the consecrated Salesians should no longer be involved in it; that is to say it is considered that their presence is no longer necessary.
- In others the Salesians are only involved in directing the liturgy and for the accompaniment of the young people.
- In others again a Salesian is a member of the educative pastoral community.

In this variety of situations, as you can see, the Provinces have tried to put into practice what was indicated by GC24 as they have considered it appropriate, on the basis of local circumstances, the demands, the needs and the various contexts. Everything seems to indicate that we have to harmonize reflection and practice so that in the future the *profile of the Salesian for today's youth and the mission shared by Salesians and lay people* can ensure the one important thing: being a response that is vital and worthwhile, charismatic and faithful to our service to the youth of today. This requires on our part **a vision**, a capacity for *reflection and decision making*, because otherwise, the pressures of life will lead us along unforeseen paths.

In all probability, also on this issue GC28, will have something to say in view of the decisions to be taken, especially in those cases where the statistics tell us that in some Provinces in the Congregation the works under lay management are so numerous

as to reach almost half the number of those places where there is a Salesian community. The other important process that can certainly be further developed, since it is in its early stages, is that of the mission shared with some group of the Salesian Family (of the 31 groups within it) or that of the total entrustment of these centres ensuring the charismatic identity and the service to the local Church and to society.

### **3. THE “HOUR” OF THE 28<sup>th</sup> GENERAL CHAPTER**

Dear confreres, I can assure you that the General Council, and in a very special way I myself have great hopes for this General Chapter, that it will certainly continue along the chosen path that our Congregation has followed in the last eight General Chapters in pursuance of the commitment to the renewal of consecrated life promoted by Vatican Council II<sup>32</sup>.

The GC28, can be a Chapter in which rather than focusing its attention on an issue of ecclesial or religious life that we think is not sufficiently explored, we will be called to discern with realism, courage and determination, the direction of the path to be followed in this XXI century, at a very special time of renewal and purification in the life of the Church.

We are being called:

1. To give priority and centrality, in practice, in our decisions to the Salesian mission for the poorest and most needy teenagers and youngsters, for those who because they do not have a voice need our voice and our options on their behalf. Also to give priority to the accompaniment of so many thousands of teenagers and youngsters in this digital age who are moving in “another world” from which we cannot detach ourselves and who are asking from us an affective and effective presence and

<sup>32</sup> Cf. AGC 394 (2006), 28-31.

accompaniment for themselves and also perhaps for their families.

2. To continue, all of us, to form ourselves and above all to accompany the formation of the young Salesians of today and of tomorrow, so that the desire in their hearts will be to become "another Don Bosco today" filled with passion for Christ, for the human family so often suffering, and for its young people. Salesians in a constant process of fidelity, committed to highlighting and to eradicating any temptations of superficiality, banality, ostentation, clericalism, power and comfort. Today's youth, who are those who will save us from all these things, need above all a Salesian educator-pastor, friend, brother, and father, who precisely because he is living full of God, is life-giving without seeking his own interests.
3. To continue with "giant steps" using all the apostolic potential that we have, Salesian and lay, in the shared mission; being bold in identifying what until now has not allowed us to develop to the full the prophetic vision that our Congregation has had and which will be decisive for the development of the mission, of the pastoral impact of the Congregation and of the quality of the consecrated life of all Salesians, as consecrated persons "more free from" and "more free for" just like the Lord Jesus.

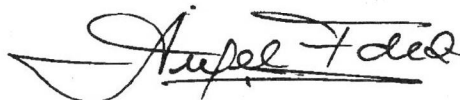
I am convinced that in the large majority of the confreres there is a strong desire for greater human authenticity, for great spiritual depth and for a more radical vocational coherence. Let us ask the Holy Spirit that the 28th General Chapter may be an opportunity to take this step forward as we ask ourselves: *What kind of Salesians for the youth of today?*

I conclude this letter convoking the General Chapter inviting you to call on the Lord through the intercession of Mary his Mother<sup>33</sup>, she who is Mother of the Church and of our Family, the

<sup>33</sup> *The Project of Life of the Salesians of Don Bosco, op. cit.*, 148.

Mother around whom Don Bosco wanted to build his communities and his works as true families.

Lord Jesus Christ,  
 You gave to Don Bosco  
 your own most holy Mother  
 to be his Mother, Teacher and Helper;  
 and through her you showed him his field of work  
 and inspired him to found our Society.  
 Continue to look kindly on this your Family,  
 and grant that we may always be aware amongst us  
 of the living and active presence of Mary,  
 «Mother of the Church and Help of Christians».  
 Entrusted as we are to her and under her guidance,  
 may we always be for young people  
 witnesses of your unbounded love. Amen.



**Fr Ángel FERNÁNDEZ ARTIME, sdb**  
*Rector Major*



## 2. GUIDELINES AND DIRECTIVES

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### 2.1 PROCESS OF PREPARATION FOR GENERAL CHAPTER 28

The preparation of GC28 implies a journey of commitments, marked by the following timetable.

#### *March 2018*

During the period March 19<sup>th</sup>-28<sup>th</sup>, the Rector Major and the General Council studied the theme of General Chapter 28, its modalities and the timetable. On March 26<sup>th</sup> the Rector Major appointed Fr. Stefano Vanoli as Moderator of GC28, according to article 112 of the General Regulations.

On the same day March 26<sup>th</sup>, the Rector Major, according to article 112 of the Regulations, appointed the technical Commission for GC28, comprising the following confrères: Fr. Guillermo Basañes, Fr. Francesco Cereda, Fr. Maria Arokiam Kanaga and Fr. Natale Vitali.

This Commission, presided over by the Moderator, gathered in Rome on March 26<sup>th</sup>-28<sup>th</sup> and elaborated the following contributions:

- Process of preparation for GC28, starting from the opening date fixed by the General Council.
- Guideline of reflection and work on the theme of GC28, presented as a subsidy for the Provinces.
- Suggestions for the preparation and celebration of the Provincial Chapters.
- Juridical norms for the elections.

The contributions prepared by the technical Commission have been forwarded, through the Moderator, to the Rector Major and have become part of the present number 427 of the Acts of the General Council.

#### *May 2018*

On May 24<sup>th</sup>, the Rector Major officially convenes General Chapter 28, according to articles 150 of the Constitutions and 111

of the General Regulations. He then defines the principal purpose, the venue and the opening date of the chapter.

With the Acts of the General Council No. 427, the following have been sent to the Provinces: the letter of convocation of the Rector Major with the theme and purpose of GC28; the guidelines concerning the preparation process for GC28; the guideline of reflection for local and provincial communities; the instructions for the celebration of Provincial Chapters; the norms for the elections.

### *July 2018*

The Moderator sends to the Provincials the forms for the minutes and the pattern of the forms for the contributions of the Provincial Chapters and of the Confrères to GC28. These forms can also be found on the website of the *Sede Centrale Salesiana*: [www.sdb.org](http://www.sdb.org)

The Rector Major appoints the Commission for the revision of the minutes of the elections of the Provincial Delegates to GC28 (cf. Reg. 115). This Commission, under the responsibility of the Moderator, verifies in advance the number and list of the confrères belonging to the Province or Vice-Province in view of the Provincial Chapter.

### *September 2018 - June 2019*

By the end of September 2018, the Provinces will send to the Moderator of GC28 the “General list of the confrères belonging to the Province in view of the Provincial Chapter” (cf. AGC 427 n. 2.4.3.1). From September 2018 to June 2019 the Provinces will do the work of preparation and will celebrate the Provincial Chapters (Const. 171-172). The date of the celebration of the Provincial Chapters must be fixed keeping in mind the following deadline.

### *January 2019*

The Rector Major appoints the precapitular Commission for the preparation of the “Work Document” to be sent to all participants in GC28 (cf. Reg. 113).

*13<sup>th</sup> July 2019*

Within this date, the following documents, in digital format, must be sent to the Moderator of GC28:

- Minutes of the elections of the Delegates and of their Substitutes to GC28.
- Contributions of the Provincial Chapters.
- Contributions of Confrères or of groups of Confrères.

Proposals sent later than 13<sup>th</sup> July 2019 will not be taken into account.

The Provincial Chapters that will study themes concerning the Province, with deliberations that must be approved by the Rector Major with his Council, according to art. 170 of the Constitutions, must send their deliberations to the *General Secretary*.

*August 2019*

The contributions are sorted out and classified by a group created to this purpose by the Moderator.

*September 2019*

The precapitular Commission meets to prepare the “Work Document” (Reg. 113).

*November 2019*

The “Work Document” of GC28, prepared by the precapitular Commission, is sent in digital format to the Provincials and Provincial Delegates to GC28.

*December 2019 - February 2020*

The members of GC28 study, in their respective houses, the work documents.

*16<sup>th</sup> February 2020*

Beginning of General Chapter 28. Arrival within February 15<sup>th</sup>.

*Conclusion of the Chapter*

The duration of GC28 is seven weeks; the conclusion is scheduled on April 4<sup>th</sup>, 2020.

## 2.2 OUTLINE OF REFLECTION AND WORK ON THE THEME OF GC28

This outline offers some suggestions for the journey of the Provinces in preparation for GC28. They can be useful in focusing the attention of confrères, local communities and Provincial Chapters on the theme of GC28, guiding the reflection and work of all.

### 2.2.1. Letter of convocation of GC28

The journey towards GC28 begins with the personal study of the letter of convocation of the Rector Major and with the community discussion on its contents.

The title of the letter from the Rector Major, “What kind of Salesians for the youth of today?”, brings out the will to give an answer to young people, especially the poorest and most excluded, in the light of a charismatic vision that wants them at the centre of our Salesian vocation. For this reason Salesians are needed who are prepared and ready to work with Don Bosco’s mind, heart and hands in the Church and in Society and who accompany the young in the world of work, in the digital world, in the defence of creation, etc. In this pre-Capitular time, all this asks us to be in harmony with *the Church’s synodal journey on young people*, especially by studying the Preparatory Document and the Working Instrument of the Synod of Bishops 2018; it will also be important to bear in mind Pope Francis’ Apostolic Exhortations: “*Evangelii gaudium*” and “*Amoris laetitia*”.

This requires a renewed formation that, as a response to each person’s personal vocation, is permanent or ongoing in nature. Evidently, this response has its roots in initial formation, but is destined to grow dynamically over time and to outline a *profile of the Salesian*, conforming to Jesus Christ and Don Bosco in re-

sponse to the current situations. This profile requires the ability to accompany young people, which is the fruit of the direct experience of those who have first matured the need to be accompanied. In order to accompany others on their journey through life, it is necessary to live the experience of being accompanied. In this profile we must also keep in mind our call to holiness, just as Pope Francis presents it for all Christians in his Apostolic Exhortation “*Gaudete et exsultate*”.

This is a formation that is necessary to strengthen the youth mission shared with the laity of the educative pastoral community. This urgently calls for overcoming the resistance that still makes the shared mission optional; it aims at the good of the young and requires a specific and joint formation of Salesians and lay people. It is opportune at this time *to take up again GC24* and what it had said about sharing in spirit and mission with lay people in order to verify the journey that has been made and the further steps to be taken.

The theme of the Chapter is one; at the same time it is divided into three thematic nuclei: the priorities of the mission, the profile of the Salesian, the sharing of mission and formation with lay people. These are not three separate topics, but are linked elements so that the theme is one and the same. It is unusual for the theme of a General Chapter to be presented in an interrogative form: “What kind of Salesians for the youth of today?” This question makes explicit the desire, the will and the commitment to listen truly to the young, to the confreres in initial formation, to lay people.

After the commitment to bear witness to the radical nature of the Gospel that began in GC27, it seems important to us now to focus on *evangelical prophecy*. Thus Pope Francis wrote on 21 November 2014 in his Apostolic Letter “To all Consecrated People” on the occasion of the Year of Consecrated Life: “I am counting on you to wake up the world, since the distinctive sign of consecrated life is prophecy. As I told the Superiors General: «Radical evangeli-

cal living is not only for religious: it is demanded of everyone. But religious follow the Lord in a special way, in a prophetic way». This is the priority that is needed right now: «to be prophets who witness to how Jesus lived on this earth... a religious must never abandon prophecy» (29 November 2013)”. We could therefore think of the theme of the chapter from the perspective of prophecy.

### **2.2.2. Preparation process for GC28**

The General Chapter is preceded in all the Provinces by the Provincial Chapter. This is explicitly required by the Constitutions (Const. 172). The Provincial Chapter is responsible for electing one or more delegates to the General Chapter and their substitutes (cf. Const. 171) and “forward(*ing*) proposals to the Moderator of the General Chapter” (Reg. 167).

The implementation of these tasks does not exhaust the nature and competence of a Provincial Chapter. It would be erroneous to think that it should meet, in the imminence of a General Chapter, *only* for the election of delegates or to send proposals to the Moderator. Articles 171 and 172 of the Constitutions and article 167 of the General Regulations list a wide range of purposes and tasks, but not all of them are to be accomplished at each and every Provincial Chapter.

The reflection on the theme “What kind of Salesians for the youth of today?” is a priority; it does not concern only the confreres who will participate in GC28. The letter of convocation of GC28 intends to promote a profound reflection, oriented towards conversion, on behalf of every confrère, every community, every Province. In this process a very important moment is the “representative assembly of the confrères and the local communities”, which is precisely the Provincial Chapter.

The theme of GC28 does not call for academic or doctrinal reflection on which to exercise by writing theological considerations, of a spiritual or pastoral nature, to be “sent to the Modera-

tor". It is a "provocation" for everyone. It is the voice of the Spirit that impels us to ask ourselves questions, to "examine our own works", to "revise", to "repent and convert". "Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says". It is the Spirit who speaks also to us and who invites us to listen (Cf. Rev. 2: 1-29).

The General Chapter will be held in Turin Valdocco in 2020 and about 250 confrères will participate in it; but, more correctly, it should be said that it has already begun and that all the confrères of the Congregation are participating in it. The individual confrère asks himself about the profile required of him by the changed circumstances and by the encounter with the young, in order to respond to God's call in this particular moment of history. The Salesian faithful to Don Bosco's apostolic project as presented in the Constitutions reviews his basic choices, his way of life and work; together with him the community and the province verify their credibility and fruitfulness in the contexts in which they live.

The convocation of the Provincial Chapter is, therefore, a great opportunity for every Province. Given the articulation of the theme, it is suggested that in every local community there be moments of listening to the young, to the confrères in initial formation, to the laity. It would then be important to have separate provincial meetings with these three groups and to have their representation at the Provincial Chapter. A significant contribution will be made by the young confrères who, at the very beginning of their formation, lay the foundations for building up the profile of the Salesian and who, as young people, can give a more objective vision of their peers, given their proximity in terms of age, culture, etc.

### **2.2.3. Articulation of the Theme of GC28**

The letter of convocation of GC28 asks us to focus our attention on three thematic nuclei, which are now proposed to the

Salesian communities and to the Provincial Chapters. These nuclei refer to what must characterize the Salesian of the future, so that he may be able to respond to the Salesian mission of today, together with lay people.

### ***Priority of the mission with the youth***

*Expectations of the youth.* GC28 intends to focus on the cornerstone of our father Don Bosco's "project of a strongly united life": "the service of the young" (Const. 21). The elements of this project are always new, always different, from generation to generation, from culture to culture. In this diversity, the Congregation wants to discern and "verify that its works and activities are providing an effective service for young people who are poor" (Reg. 1). We therefore need to evaluate our options and indicate some prophetic guidelines so that poor young people, in the various types of poverty, exclusion and rejection, may be at the centre of our choices. We also need to indicate how to focus our attention and efforts on the priorities of today's youth, their concerns, their problems such as lack of work, the challenges of the digital world, human rights, ecology, ...

*Accompaniment of the youth.* Young people today ask us to be present among them and to be with them; this is the occasion to rediscover Salesian assistance as being with and for the young. They ask us to be accompanied, therefore not to be left alone; they demand competent guides alongside them, who are masters in the art of accompaniment. Therefore, a crucial task for a renewed youth ministry today is the quality of the experience of spiritual accompaniment of young people on the part of each Salesian. We ask ourselves what steps we still have to take so that every Salesian may be an accompanier in the journey of every young person.

*Family and youth ministry.* Parents who are the first and natural accompaniers of young people cannot be absent from the Salesian mission. The reality of families is "a challenging mosaic made up of many different realities, with all their joys, hopes and



problems" (AL, 57). Once again a General Chapter of the Congregation draws attention on the family as the subject and object of the processes of youth ministry, and on the concrete ways in which families can be involved and helped.

### ***Profile of the Salesian today***

*Salesian formation.* In recent years we have repeatedly expressed the need for a more explicit reference to Don Bosco, his figure and his history, so that our pastoral ministry and our spirituality are not generic; in this we have been helped especially by the celebration of the Bicentennial of Don Bosco's birth and by the three years of preparation. We must now ask ourselves what further steps we can take in our "re-starting from Don Bosco", so that our Salesian vocation may be charismatically even more marked.

*Ongoing Formation.* The profile of the Salesian today focuses on an often forgotten reality: the whole life is a response to the Lord who calls. The Lord always calls us in a situation and while He makes His voice heard, through numerous mediations, He asks our personal answer. There is therefore a need for self-formation and ongoing formation. The presence of guides, who know how to accompany the steps of each one, allows us to respond in time to the many appeals we receive. We must ask ourselves how to give impetus to our formation so that it may be ongoing.

*In mission formation.* Formation takes place in the events of history and not only in anticipation of a goal to be achieved and for which special preparation is necessary. If seen only as preparation in view of a mission, the profile of the Salesian easily expires in functionalism and in superficial learning that does not really involve mind and heart and, therefore, existence. That is why it is important to recognise that one is formed in and through situations and to find ways for this to happen in practice. In order to respond to situations and to be able to read the signs of the times it is necessary to take further steps to learn the art of discernment.

*Formation in the community.* Don Bosco's experience says that, in order to be "constructors and builders of communion", it is necessary to be formed in the community. Together we learn to belong to God, to our confrères, to the young. In our formation it is necessary to verify the criteria of vocational discernment regarding the suitability to live in community and the learning of community ways of life. In order to mature the awareness of this community belonging, especially at the beginning of Salesian life, quality teams are necessary, composed of people who, by continually experiencing the values of the Salesian vocation (cf. Const. 98) are able to communicate it to others. Moreover, listening attentively to valid and prepared companions leads us to progressively assume the traits of Jesus Christ, as Don Bosco assumed them and made them his own. We therefore ask ourselves how to ensure the formation and composition of teams of quality formators.

### ***Shared mission between Salesians and laity***

*Achievements and resistances in the mission shared with the laity.* After more than twenty years since the celebration of GC24 on the lay people, it is considered important first of all to highlight the experiences that have led to positive achievements in the mission shared with the laity and the motivations or situations that have facilitated these acquisitions. It is also necessary to identify the resistances, sometimes unconscious, that have so far prevented a path of sharing in the mission with the laity, in order to remove obstacles; changes in mentality and attitudes are often necessary, but equally necessary are planning and institutional decisions.

*Reciprocity of relations between Salesians and lay people.* The Salesian understands himself in the light of the relationship he establishes with other vocations of the Church. In these years the contribution and reflection offered by laity has grown and this has enriched the choices of the Congregation; our vocations are complementary. The presence of lay people in our works, not only as co-workers but as co-responsible for the same mission in favour of young people, has allowed the growth of a new subject:

the educative pastoral community. This constitutes a real experience of Church in which young people are truly listened to and accompanied; and for this accompaniment to be effective, the Salesians alone are not sufficient. Alongside the common elements existing in relations between Salesians and lay people and the awareness of specific vocational differences, we must find ways of enriching and assuming attitudes of reciprocity.

*Joint formation of Salesians and lay people.* Along with positive experiences, improvisations and difficulties in formation with lay people also emerge in the journey of educative pastoral communities. It is therefore necessary to have a specific formation for lay people and then, as a consequence, a joint formation of Salesians and lay people. Formation within the educative pastoral community presents different speeds of the journey and steps taken. Here, too, we need to find ways to move forward.

*Works under shared management or lay management.* Different models of management emerge, which sometimes start from a lack of understanding of the states of Christian life and from a lack of appreciation of consecrated and lay people in a correct and synergic vision. Master models overlap, where the Salesians are leaders and hold power, along with charismatically correct pastoral models in which the Salesians act as guides and formators. Among the various models, attention should be paid to shared management works and to lay management works under provincial responsibility.

#### **2.2.4. Methodology of Community Discernment**

In the last three General Chapters we adopted the methodology of community discernment. In “*Evangelii Gaudium*”, “*Amoris Laetitia*”, in the “Preparatory Document” for the Synod of Bishops on Youth, in “*Gaudete et exsultate*”, Pope Francis invites us to assume the practice of discernment. It is believed that, in harmony with the current journey of the Church and with the ex-

perience gained in our General Chapters, we must continue with this methodology.

In the process of discernment for the study of the chapter theme, the following moments are proposed: listening, interpretation, choices. For each thematic nucleus, the Provincial Chapters are invited to make a discernment according to these three steps. Compared to GC27, in order to adapt to the expressions that Pope Francis uses, the names of the three steps have been changed, but the methodology is the same.

**Listening.** The first moment asks us to *recognise* the situation; to look at it in the face in its priority aspects; to see what challenges us most; to listen to what questions us. It is necessary to highlight what is most promising for the confrères, the communities and the Province, for the young and for lay people and which asks to be developed, but also what is more risky and which asks to be faced and overcome. It is a matter of recognizing the promising and risky expressions concerning the priorities of the mission, the needs of formation, the involvement of the laity.

**Interpretation.** In the second moment, starting from the aspects recognized through listening, it is a question of *reading* the situation; of identifying the deep causes of well-being or discomfort; of being able to interpret the challenges and risks. The interpretation of the situation must lead us to an in-depth understanding of it. The keys to interpreting the situation are the Gospel, the life of the Church, the Constitutions, the signs of the times. This second stage of the discernment process has been the most difficult for us to implement so far.

**Choices.** The third step is to identify the choices to be made. It is a question of finding and, therefore, of *choosing* what makes us advance towards new ways of living the mission of youth, of realizing the profile of the Salesian, of involving lay people. The choices must correspond to the situations that have been listened to and interpreted. These are prophetic and bold choices that strengthen what is already present but still unfinished, overcome what is weak and

at risk, find new ways. These choices must be essential and fundamental and may concern processes and steps to be taken.

The process of discernment requires us to focus on certain priorities, both in listening and consequently in interpretation and in our choices. The written document will be the contribution of the Provincial Chapter to GC28. *For each thematic nucleus, the written document to be sent to the Moderator as the Provincial Chapter's contribution to GC28 should not exceed two pages.*

In the Provincial Chapter, it is recommended that paper documents be avoided as much as possible and that digital technology be used, in order to encourage an ecological mindset and to ensure economic savings. This, too, can be a step forward in holding the Chapter.

### **2.2.5. Contributions to be sent to the Moderator of GC28**

**Within July 15, 2019**, the various contributions must reach the Moderator of GC28; they may be of four different types:

- *contributions of the Provincial Chapters on the theme of GC28* “What kind of Salesians for the youth of today?” These contributions relate to the three thematic nuclei, each with a proper form;
- *contributions of the Provincial Chapters on matters concerning the life of the Congregation, the Constitutions or the Regulations*; these contributions also have their own proper form; on each form there should be only one proposal;
- *contributions of individuals or groups of confrères on the theme of GC28* “What kind of Salesians for the youth of today?” These contributions relate to the three thematic nuclei, each with a proper form;
- *contributions from individuals or groups of confrères on matters concerning the life of the Congregation, the Constitutions or the Regulations*. These contributions shall have a proper form, and on each form only one proposal is to be written.

## 2.3 GUIDELINE OF REFLECTION ON JURIDICAL TOPICS OF GC28

The Rector Major and the General Council have established that, besides studying the capitular theme, GC28 will also deal with *topics of juridical character* referring to the Constitutions and General Regulations, the life of the Province and of local Communities.

Here below are listed nine specific topics on which Provincial Chapters *can give their contribution*. For each of them, normative references are also indicated: the Code of Canon Law, the Constitutions and General Regulations, the “Ratio fundamentalis”, the Deliberations of the General Chapters; there are also references to the official commentary to the Articles of the Constitution of the “*Progetto di vita dei Salesiani di Don Bosco*” (“Project of Life of the Salesians of Don Bosco” - PdV)<sup>1</sup> and some short precise references to ecclesial documents

For each topic, there are questions to which the Provincial Chapter will respond, referring to each point and using the appropriate form. It is necessary to respond to all questions. *Brief answers* are recommended, so as to allow an easier classification.

It is suggested that the Provincial Chapter have a *Juridical Commission* to draft an answer to the various topics to submit to the Provincial Chapter itself. This will facilitate the work of the Chapter and will not detract excessive time from reflection and exchange on the theme of GC28.

<sup>1</sup> *Il progetto di vita dei Salesiani di Don Bosco. Guida alla lettura delle Costituzioni salesiane*, Roma 1986.

## PROVINCE

### 1. Tasks of the Vice-Provincial

*CIC* can. 620; can. 134 §1; can. 618; can. 619

*Const.* 168; 167; 166; 164

*Reg.* 154

*PdV* 880-881

#### *Situation*

- 1.1. Are the tasks of the Vice-Provincial indicated in *Const.* 168 sufficiently clear?
- 1.2. Have any particular problems emerged in the exercise of his tasks?
- 1.3. If so, which ones?

#### *Proposal*

Are there any proposals concerning the specific tasks of the Vice-Provincial? If so, which ones?

### 2. Composition of the Provincial Council

*CIC* can. 627

*Const.* 164

*Reg.* 155; 160

*PdV* 878-882

*GC23 244 - Ratio 247*

#### *Situation*

- 2.1. Is the composition of the Provincial Council as indicated in *Const.* 164 satisfactory?
- 2.2. If not, why?

#### *Proposal*

- 2.3. Do you think that, besides the Vice-Provincial and the Provincial Economist, also the Provincial Delegate for For-

mation should by right be a member of the Council, as suggested in *Ratio* 247?

2.4. If so, why?

2.5. Do you think that, besides the Vice-Provincial and the Provincial Economist, also the Delegate for Youth Ministry should by right be a member of the Council, considering the importance of this Delegate as indicated in GC23 No. 244?

2.6. If so, why?

### **3. Offices, secretariats, provincial commissions**

*CIC* can. 617; can. 618; can. 633

*Const.* 123; 124

*Reg.* 157,5; 160

*PdV* 815-822

*GC23* 244; *Ratio* 247

#### *Situation*

3.1. Considering the current praxis and what is indicated in *Ratio* 247 concerning the provincial commission for formation and in GC23 244 concerning the provincial team for youth ministry, do you consider the indication of *Reg.* 160, concerning “offices, secretariats and commissions of consultation and youth ministry at a provincial level” is enough?

3.2. If not, why?

#### *Proposal*

3.3. Are there any proposals in this regard? If so, indicate them briefly.

### **4. Exclusion of acquiring and holding real estates with the sole object of producing income, and every other kind of interest-bearing investment**

*CIC* can. 634; can. 635; can. 640; can. 1254; can. 1284

*Const.* 77; 187; 188,4

*Reg.* 59; 187; 188



*PdV* 909-914

*Economia a servizio*<sup>2</sup> nn. 14-15; 79; 84-85

### *Situation*

- 4.1. Observing the current praxis, have any problems emerged concerning the request of paragraph two of *Const.* 187? If so, which ones?
- 4.2. Even in the case of absence of specific problems, are there any doubts on the interpretation of the second paragraph of *Const.* 187? If so, which ones?
- 4.3. Are there any problems concerning the economic and financial sustainability of single houses? If so, which ones?
- 4.4. In the case of a positive answer, how were these problems dealt with?
- 4.5. Are there any problems concerning the economic and financial self-sufficiency of the Province as a whole? If so, which ones?
- 4.6. In the case of a positive answer, how were these problems dealt with?

### *Proposal*

- 4.7. Are there any proposals in this regard? If so, indicate them briefly.

In the questions there is a distinction between the economic scope and the financial one. There might be houses or provinces with a sustainable economic budget, but with an unsustainable financial budget, for instance because of the delay in cashing credits or because of excessive debts.

A distinction was also made on the theme of economic and financial sustainability of the houses, from the economic and financial self-sufficiency of the Province. The latter has diverse and distinct tasks: maintenance of the headquarter of the province and of provincial services, sustenance to formation houses, fees of the confrères under formation, extraordinary expenses, etc.

<sup>2</sup> CIVCSVA, *Economia a servizio del carisma e della missione*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Roma, 2018.

## LOCAL COMMUNITY

### 5. Quantitative and qualitative consistency of the community

*CIC* can. 115,2; can. 602; can. 607 §2; cann. 608-611; can. 665 §1  
*Const.* 49; 51;182

*Reg.* 20; 150; 181

*PdV* 408-411; 420-424 - *GC24* 173-174

*Vita fraterna in comunità (Fraternal Life in Community)*<sup>3</sup> 3; 55;  
57; 64; 66

*AGC* 422, 25-36

#### *Situation*

- 5.1. Have any particular problems emerged to guarantee the quantitative and qualitative consistency of the communities? If so, which ones?
- 5.2. In the case of a positive answer, how were these problems dealt with?
- 5.3. Are there any aspects of the matter that require further clarifications? If so, which ones?

#### *Proposal*

- 5.4. Are there any proposals in this regard? If so, indicate them briefly.

### 6. Ecomer in the local community

*CIC* can. 636; can. 638 §2

*Const.* 179; 184

*Reg.* 183; 186; 194,3; 198-202

*PdV* 901-902

*GC26*, n. 121.

<sup>3</sup> CIVCSVA, *La vita fraterna in comunità*, Roma, 1994.

*Situation*

- 6.1. Have any difficulties emerged in applying *Const.* 179,1 and 184 that request that in every local community there be a religious economer as member of the local council? If so, which ones?
- 6.2. In the case of a positive answer, how were these difficulties dealt with?
- 6.3. Has to date the Provincial exerted the faculty foreseen in GC26 121 to appoint a lay person to fill the tasks of local administrator of the work? If so, in what percentage, compared with the total number of houses in the Province?
- 6.4. In the case of a positive answer, have any positive points emerged? Indicate which ones.
- 6.5. In the case of a positive answer, have any difficulties emerged? Indicate which ones.
- 6.6. Are there any aspects of the matter that require further clarifications? Indicate which ones.

*Proposal*

- 6.7. Are there any proposals in this regard? If so, indicate them briefly.

**7. Legitimacy of the Rector – Local Economer**

*CIC* can. 636 §1

*Const.* 55; 176

*Reg.* 172; 198-202

*GC26*, n. 121.

*Situation*

- 7.1. Are there in the Province Rectors who also fill the task of economer?
- 7.2. If so, in what percentage, compared with the total number of Rectors?
- 7.3. In the case of a positive answer, were any problems derived from the attribution of the tasks of local economer to the

Rector? Indicate which ones.

- 7.4. Were any solutions adopted? If so, describe them briefly.  
7.5. Are there any aspects of the matter that require further clarifications? If so, which ones?

*Proposal*

- 7.6. Are there any proposals in this regard? If so, indicate them briefly.

**8. Council of the religious community and Council of the educative-pastoral community**

*Const.* 47; 178-181

*Reg.* 5; 148; 180

*GC24* 156-161; 167-172

*Situation*

- 8.1. Is there, in the houses of the Province, the Council of the educative-pastoral community, formally created as indicated by GC24?  
8.2. In the case of a positive answer, in what percentage compared with the total number of the houses?  
8.3. In houses where the Council of the educative-pastoral community has been constituted, were any interferences noted with regard to the tasks that the Constitutions attribute to the Council of the religious community?  
8.4. In the case of a positive answer, which ones?  
8.5. Are there any aspects of the matter that request further clarifications? Indicate which ones.  
8.6. Were any solutions adopted? If so, describe them briefly.

*Proposal*

- 8.7. Are there any proposals in this regard? If so, indicate them briefly.

## **9. Council of the House run by lay people under provincial responsibility**

*GC24 180-182*

### *Situation*

- 9.1. Are there in the Province any houses run by lay people under provincial responsibility?
- 9.2. If so, in what percentage compared with the total number of houses in the Province?
- 9.3. In the case of a positive answer, have any problems emerged in applying the request of *GC24 180-181*?
- 9.4. Are there any aspects of the matter that require further clarifications? Indicate which ones.

### *Proposal*

- 9.5. Are there any proposals in this regard? If so, indicate them briefly..

## 2.4 THE PROVINCIAL CHAPTERS

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

### 2.4.1. Tasks of the Provincial Chapter

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

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

In the present case the provincial chapter is convoked primarily and specifically for the preparation of GC28. In consequence:

- *Primarily and principally it will study the theme of GC28: «What kind of Salesians for the youth of today?».*
- *It will elect the Delegate (or Delegates) to the General Chapter and their substitutes (C 171, 5).*

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

### 2.4.2. The preparation of the Provincial Chapter

After receiving the Rector Major’s letter convoking GC28, it is desirable that the Provincial **call his council together**:

- to appoint the *Moderator of the Provincial Chapter* (R 168);
- to analyze more deeply the purpose and topic of GC28, and to clarify the objectives of the PC which is to prepare it;
- to take notice of the study outline on the theme assigned to GC28;
- to study the norms governing the preparation and carrying out of the provincial chapter;
- to invite possible experts and observers to the chapter (R 168).

If it is considered opportune, the Provincial with his council may appoint a *preparatory commission*, to help the Moderator in preparing the provincial chapter.

A provincial preparatory commission is not prescribed by the General Regulations. It has nevertheless proved useful in many provinces for the preparation of the provincial chapter. It is for the Provincial and his council to decide how it should be made up.

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

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

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

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

### 2.4.3. The Moderator of the Provincial Chapter

The Moderator of the Provincial Chapter:

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

### 2.4.4. The provincial preparatory commission

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

- sensitising the confreres to chapter perspectives (by conferences, study days, group and community meetings, etc.)
- helping the confreres to prepare themselves spiritually for the work and obligations associated with the chapter (through retreats, days of prayer, celebrations, etc.)
- clarifying the chapter theme and helping the confreres in their study of it: every confrere could well be given a copy of the letter convoking GC28, of the study outline found elsewhere in this edition of the Acts.

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



the form and areas allowed by our norms and local situations.

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

The Moderator, in conjunction with the preparatory commission:

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

#### **2.4.5. The carrying out of the Provincial Chapter itself**

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

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

For the *communication of proposals and contributions to GC28*, the indications given by the Moderator of GC28 must be

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

#### **2.4.6. Participation of the communities and confreres**

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

##### *The communities*

- Accompany the whole of the capitular process by their daily prayer.
- Elect their delegate to the provincial chapter and his substitute. They compile the minutes of the election, following the model supplied by the Moderator of the PC.
- Receive and study the motives and material sent them by the Moderator of the PC.
- Deepen their knowledge of the theme proposed in view of GC28, and submit contributions and proposals to the Moderator of the PC.

##### *The individual confreres*

- Follow, through information and prayer, the preparation, realization and conclusions of their provincial chapter.
- A climate of personal conversion is proposed so as to assume the spiritual and pastoral implications of the topic for GC28, "What kind of Salesians for the youth of today?"
- Vote in the election of the delegate of their own community and his substitute.
- Take part in the election of the delegates of the confreres of the province.
- Make a personal study of the theme, availing themselves of aids and of the exchange of ideas in their own community,
- Submit personal contributions and proposals to the Moderator of the provincial chapter and collaborate in the drawing

up and discussion of proposals and contributions from their own community.

- Send, if they so wish, personal proposals and contributions directly to the Moderator of GC28, using the appropriate forms.

## 2.5 NORMS FOR THE ELECTIONS

### 2.5.0. Introduction: lawfulness and validity of acts

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

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

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

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

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

- *Canonical erection of houses*
- *Appointments*
- *Calculation of number of confreres and the various lists needed*
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### 2.5.1. Canonical erection of houses

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

The document of erection should be in the house archives or those of the province.

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

It is necessary therefore:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **2.5.2. Appointments**

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

An appointment is in order when:

- a) it was made in accordance with the Constitutions;
- b) the person appointed has taken possession of his office in the manner prescribed;
- c) his term of office has not expired.

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

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

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

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

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

### **2.5.3. Calculation of number of confreres and the various lists needed**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- confreres who in the act of erection of a new province or vice-province are assigned to it (cf. ASC 284, p. 68, 3.2);
- missionaries who return definitively to their home country and are assigned by the Rector Major to the province he considers most suitable for their condition
- all those for whom the Rector Major (or the Vicar General) has issued a decree of definitive transfer.



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

*Temporary transfer* is brought about:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- both the number of delegates of the provincial community to the provincial chapter (one for every 25 or fraction of 25 members: R 165, 3),
- both the number of delegates to the GC: one if the total number of confreres is less than 200, two if equals or exceeds 200 (R. 114 as modified by Deliberation n.16 of GC27, in proceedings of the General Chapter 27°, n. 91).

*As soon as this general list has been compiled, a copy is to be sent to the Moderator of GC28, according the norms and the forms he provides. It is his duty to verify the calculations of the individual provinces (or vice-provinces), so as to ensure the validity of the election of delegates to the General Chapter.*

### ***2.5.3.2. List of those who take part in the provincial chapter “by right”***

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

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

- the provincial (or superior of a vice-province);
- the provincial councillors;
- the delegates of the individual provincial delegations;
- the moderator of the provincial chapter;
- the rectors of canonically erected houses, even if the number of confreres is less than six;
- the director of novices.

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

### ***2.5.3.3. Lists of confreres having “active voice” (electors)***

They are of two kinds of lists:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

They are of three kinds of Delegates: Delegates of the community for the PC, Delegates of the province for the PC, and Delegates of the province for GC28. For this reason there are three types of lists:

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

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

- except for those who are already members by right of the provincial chapter (cf. *list 2.5.3.2*)
- and those deprived of active and passive voice.

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

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

- those who are already members of the provincial chapter by right (*list 2.5.3.2*),
- the delegates already validly elected by the communities,
- confreres deprived of active and passive voice: those excommunicated and “absentes a domo” to whom the right to active and passive voice was not granted.

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

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

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

#### **2.5.4. Minutes of the elections**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- C) The rules for voting and scrutinies in the voting for *the delegate(s) of the province to GC28* are set out in art. 161-162 of the General Regulations (cf. also C. 153).

The minutes relating to the election of delegates to GC28 and their substitutes must be drawn up only on the special forms provided for the purpose by the Moderator of GC28 and in accordance with the instructions they carry.

*These minutes must be sent without delay to the Moderator of GC28, who will pass them to the appropriate juridical commission appointed by the Rector Major for the prescribed examination (cf. R 115).*

### 2.5.5. Special cases

- A) *Salesian Bishops*, even though retired from office and resident in a province, have neither active nor passive voice, and if they are invited to the provincial chapter they do not vote. The same norm applies to Bishops reinserted in Salesian communities (cf. AAS 1986, p.1324).
- B) *Rector Majors emeriti* have both active and passive voice in the local community in which they are inserted and in the election of delegates of the provincial community; but if they are elected as delegates to the provincial chapter either of the local community or the provincial community they have active voice in the provincial chapter but not passive voice, since they are already members by right of the General Chapter.

### 2.5.6. Formalities for compiling the lists of confreres

- 1. Names of the confreres are to be *numbered* progressively.
- 2. *Names are to be given in alphabetical order and spelled as in the Annuario for 2012.*
- 3. Use capital letters for the PATERNAL SURNAME and lower case for the Christian name.
- 4. Indicate by the appropriate *sign* whether the confrere is
  - a) Priest (P),
  - b) Deacon (D),
  - c) Lay Salesian (L),
  - d) “clerical” student, (candidate for the priesthood) (S).
- 5. Indicate by the letter “t” if the confrere is in temporary vows.
- 6. If a member of the provincial chapter, indicate the title to participation:
  - a) by right
  - b) delegate of local community
  - c) delegate of provincial community.











