



# acts

**of the general council**

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year CIII

january-june 2021

**N. 435**

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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**MOVED BY HOPE:**  
***“See, I am making all things new” (Rev 21:5)***

*Strenna 2021*

Rome, 25 December 2020  
*The day of the Lord's birth*

**INTRODUCTION**

In every part of the world, in whatever country or religion, the ‘image of the year’ that will remain impressed on everyone’s mind will be the one of an elderly man, all dressed in white, all alone in the wide expanse of St Peter’s Square in Rome on a rainy afternoon towards sunset on 27 March 2020. The man was Pope Francis who has never been alone like this while leading prayer, but at the same time never accompanied by all of humanity in quite the same way. With this gesture he reminded this world of ours, made up of different races, cultures, nations and religions, that God is able to lead even the most disastrous and painful things to what is good. And he invited us to look compassionately at our poor faith.

What we have experienced over these last eleven months is, without a doubt, a challenge we have been faced with and that we cannot ignore as if nothing had happened or as if it were somehow in the past.

**1. A GLOBAL SITUATION THAT CHALLENGES US AND ONE THAT WE CANNOT IGNORE**

I could not write a single page of commentary on the Strenna 2021 by ignoring what has simultaneously affected all of humanity in all countries. We are going through very difficult times; we

have experienced something we could never have imagined or suspected. We have a lot of unanswered questions and we hear dates proclaimed of a proximate end to this pandemic despite the fact that there is no confirmation of this. This has all happened because of COVID-19: an infectious disease caused by a virus hitherto unknown to human beings.

The exceptional nature of the present moment touches us deeply. So much so that not even the social, political and economic crises of recent decades have sown as much fear in the world as this pandemic has. Fear, sorrow, lack of security, tears, loss and desperation have filled the hearts of the rich and poor, the famous and the unsung, elderly and young. Undoubtedly, we are dealing with one of the biggest global crises in the past seventy years. And the decisions that governments need to take will influence the entire world for a long time to come not only the economy but politics, culture, and the very outlook human beings have.

Over these months we have seen so many gestures of generous dedication and sacrifice. Among them all it would seem right to recall the heroic commitment of health workers who have worked to the point of exhaustion; the people who have guaranteed essential services needed for social coexistence; people who have looked after the social order and some politicians, not all, who have honestly taken up their responsibilities with foresight, leaving rivalries aside.

Nevertheless, there have also been some shameful situations marked by selfishness, where there was no willingness to share health items or medical equipment, not understanding that this global economic crisis demands and will demand a global response.

At any rate, the figures speak for themselves. At the end of 2020, 80 million people have been infected and 1,800,000 are dead. Besides, COVID-19 has shown its worst side – isolation, death in total loneliness, the broken hearts of so many families.

There is no doubt that this has shaken many of our presumed certainties. Every country has sought to pass on to its citizens a sense of security. The language employed has been the metaphors

of war: “Let’s fight the virus! We will conquer it”, they say. “We will certainly overcome it sooner or later”. Months ago I was very much struck by the fact that many cities around the world encouraged their citizens with slogans that sought to ward off fear. We found messages like the following:

- Paddington Bear in Bristol with a message on a house that read: “The art of survival. Stay safe”.
- In Tokyo, the “Tokyo Skytree” building displayed the following message: “Together we will win.”
- In Mexico City the Hotel Barceló displayed a message saying: “A united Mexico will resist and emerge stronger”.
- In the Belgian city of Antwerp one can read this message on a house: “This too will pass. Better times will come. And they will be glorious.”
- In Ontario, Canada, many hotels near Niagra Falls are using lights in the rooms to create hearts and messages of hope.
- And in Vancouver, a message painted on the walls of a closed shop at the centre of the city says: “We love you Vancouver. Stay safe. Hang in there. Come back soon. Stay apart and stay connected. We will succeed. We will overcome even this.”

I certainly note all this in a respectful way. It could not be otherwise. But it seems to be so little, so very little, not enough to understand, explain and even involve our heart and our life. I feel that we need something deeper and more vital that will allow us to let what we are experiencing today settle in our hearts and reassure us within ourselves; on the other hand, let us not forget that there are many other pandemics that continue to develop in our world and that hit hard, although not all of them, and because they are far from us they do not make much noise. We as believers and as the Salesian Family of Don Bosco cannot ignore or forget them. I am referring to the 32 outbreaks of war active at the moment while COVID-19 is alive; I am speaking of the arms trade that has not been affected or lessened but increased. I am thinking of other terrible *endemic* situations no less serious than today’s pandemic, even though they do not affect national economies and

therefore don't count. Pope Francis rightly points this out with words addressed to young people, but which reach adults and sometimes entire families. The Pope says that the young are living in "war zones and experience violence in countless different forms: kidnapping, extortion, organised crime, human trafficking, slavery and sexual exploitation, wartime rape, and so forth... Many young people, whether by force or lack of alternatives, live by committing crimes and acts of violence: child soldiers, armed criminal gangs, drug trafficking, terrorism."<sup>1</sup>

And then I ask myself: what is meant by this "new normality" we hear spoken of so much? What will remain with each of us after this year? Will there be a crazy rush to recover "lost time", a lost economy? Will it be just a terrible nightmare, or on the contrary will it leave something positive behind in many people, in how society is organised? Will the "new normality" bring something truly new, change certain things for the better?

I do not know what awaits us, but I feel that there is a journey that we as a Salesian Family can pursue and would do us a lot of good, while at the same time offering our humble contribution to others.

## **2. WHAT DO WE MEAN TO SAY WHEN WE SPEAK OF HOPE?**

"Look, I found this out over the last few months: hope is like our blood: we do not see it but it needs to be there. Blood is life. This is what hope is like: it is something that circulates within, that must do so, makes us feel alive. If you do not have it you are dead, finished, there is nothing more to say... When you do not have hope it is as if you had no more blood... You might be whole but you are dead. That's the way it is."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> FRANCIS, *Christus Vivit*, 72.

<sup>2</sup> G. COLOMBERO, *La Malattia, una stagione per il coraggio* [Illness, a Season for Courage], Paoline, Rome 1981, p. 66.



During these months I have often thought that the interpretation we make of this time we have to live through cannot be like these other ones. We are not driven by the interests of hotel chains or airline companies. Without denying that what ethically creates jobs and livelihoods is good in itself, re-establishing tourism has not been our focus, nor growth in productivity (they keep telling us twice over to make up for lost time and overcome the setbacks we have experienced).

However right this may be, something is still missing in our outlook, in our interpretation and in what motivates us and moves us to act. This is why it is clear to me that we cannot tackle “what comes after”, cannot confront the “new normality”, without living in *hope*. No future is absolute or definitive if it depends on human beings alone. The human being is projection and always tends towards something else. It seems that what is achieved is always halfway on the way to something new. We always aspire to something more and we are always in expectation.

This is the reason for the choice of theme for this year’s Strenna.

So, what is *hope*? What are we talking about when we say *hope*? And what kind of *hope* are we talking about?

It is something that attracts me. There have been many, very many writers who have reflected on hope from a wide range of perspectives.<sup>3</sup> We can talk about hope as a human attitude. We can speak about expectation, to expect and *to hope*. I won’t go into all the complex differences – such as if we should pay attention to what St Thomas Aquinas means by distinguishing between hope as a passion, hope and strength [or magnanimity], and hope as a theological virtue; this is neither the time nor place for that. What I want to say is that the human being is called to hope. And

<sup>3</sup> Just to quote some of those we find in theology and the history of philosophy, we could begin with St Paul, St Augustine of Hippo, St John of the Cross, Luther, Bultmann and J. Moltmann. And then R. Descartes, E. Kant, Baudelaire and M. Heidegger, G. Marcel and J.P. Sartre, Le Senne, Bollnow; and some Spaniards like Miguel de Unamuno, Ortega y Gasset and the great writer Manuel Machado.

whether they want to or not, they always need to choose, with greater or less awareness, between opening to a horizon of fullness or closing themselves within the confines of tangible “hopes”, the kind we can feel and touch.

This natural openness of the human being to hope is not the same as Christian hope even if it is part of the very identity of the person, man or woman.

Just as we say in philosophy, using the Cartesian principle: ‘I think therefore I am’, we could also say: ‘I am alive, therefore I hope’. Because without hope, life would not be life, it would lack meaning in itself since in fact human existence cannot resist living in desperation, in other words “without hope”.

However, *hope* is not simply desire since desire always tends towards something concrete and determined. Nor can *hope* be reduced to mere optimism whose aim lies in calculations and predicting a positive result. Hope, on the other hand, fully concerns the person and has to do with dedication and trust. Indeed, the human being is a projection and a tendency towards “something more”, towards what is beyond the foreseeable, towards something truly new.

What I described earlier tells of a world that has many *marks of inhumanity* about it. I believe this is undeniable and clear to everyone. We do not want it to be like this but in fact it is so. But even in this world with so many marks of inhumanity we can live with a different attitude. There are those who live by complaining, negativity, with hardened hearts. Fortunately, there are also many who try to live moved by an energy that leads one to go looking for life, trying to do what is best, focusing on living by love and service (that heal of their own accord), working under the impetus of hope. When we live moved by *hope* we experience that love, service and a heart filled with humanity and filled with meaning for a world that still knows so much, too much inhumanity. From our point of view, *hope* for the human being is an ingredient of love. This is what St Paul is saying when he says, in his precious hymn to the Corinthians, that love “hopes all things” (1 Cor 13:7).

### 3. WHAT INTERPRETATION CAN WE OFFER AS BELIEVERS?

Surely in a few months this pandemic will come to an end. Other “pandemics” that bring the scourge of inhumanity with them will not disappear with a vaccine. It is certainly the right thing to do to study the coronavirus pandemic and find a vaccine. Sooner or later there will be one. They are already on the way and we are very happy about it.

Many heart-wrenching questions have been pondered in many hearts over these months. The question of the meaning or otherwise of all this has been there. It is a legitimate question and a very human one. This harsh reality of pain and sickness the world is going through today seems to drive people more to scandal and protest than to faith; to doubt rather than to trusting abandonment. But just the same, faced with this human cry or along with it there is always (for us believers) God.

Christian faith constantly shows how God, through his Spirit, accompanies the history of humankind, including in the most adverse and unfavourable of situations. He is the God who does not suffer but has compassion, according to the beautiful expression of Bernard of Chiaravalle: “*Impassibilis est Deus, sed non incompassibilis*” (God does not suffer but he is not lacking in compassion).<sup>4</sup> We read in the history of salvation that God never abandons his people but always remains united with them, especially when their pain becomes so overwhelming. God has not left us, has not gone away, but is suffering in and with those who are suffering because of this scourge, and he continues to save just as he has saved through so many who risk their lives for others, the many who serve and dedicate themselves to others in such a professional way.

<sup>4</sup> BERNARD OF CHIARAVALLE, *Sermons on the Canticle of Canticles*, XXVI, 5 in PL 183, 906.

In all this time, it may seem to many that this discretion of God's, who intervenes only with the silent call of his love, is unbearable<sup>5</sup>. And yet this is the authentic reality of God who shows solidarity in accompanying us, making himself close; far from the image of the God of power who intervenes to change things "magically". Instead, we speak of God who is "making all things new" (Cf. *Rev* 21:5), because this is his plan. Thanks to the work of his Son's redemption, the human being along with other creatures, comes into life leaving behind the groans and suffering that creation was earlier filled with and that is now renewed by his re-creating intervention. It is as if God himself were inviting human beings to look at what he is accomplishing in history and that he will bring to completion at the end of time. As Christian communities we are called to discern the present and interpret God's action as he keeps the promise made at the Covenant, that he would accompany his People (and each individual) with his powerful presence in the face of evil and at the same time with tenderness for those who trust in him.

Faced with this, we believers feel enlightened by faith that becomes hope. As Pope Benedict says: "Redemption is offered to us in the sense that we have been given hope, trustworthy hope, by virtue of which we can face our present: the present, even if it is arduous, can be lived and accepted if it leads towards a goal, if we can be sure of this goal, and if this goal is great enough to justify the effort of the journey."<sup>6</sup>

Christian hope is historical and is based on deep trust in God, the God of Jesus Christ who never abandons his people and is always with him.

It is a hope that goes beyond anything that can satisfy human expectations tied to the "here and now", this present moment, sustained only by our own resources or by the human and mater-

<sup>5</sup> As we also read in a well-known expression of Christian Duquoc in which he affirms the total autonomy of history.

<sup>6</sup> BENEDICT XVI, *Spe Salvi*, 1.

ial means at our disposal. The hope we are speaking about is based on God's promise, and this is its best guarantee.

The hope that moves us makes every little human hope fruitful, showing the great values in which humanity has invested its best energies: truth, goodness, justice, solidarity, peace, love, etc., and they do not turn into utopias but become concrete and partial realisations of the great plan that God has always prepared for all humanity and that becomes definitive in Christ. This is the hope that moves us.

Man's great, true hope which holds firm in spite of all disappointments can only be God – God who has loved us and continues to love us “to the end,” until all “is accomplished” (cf. *Jn* 13:1 and 19:30). Whoever is moved by love begins to perceive what “life” really is... begins to perceive the meaning of the word of hope.<sup>7</sup>

A reliable hope makes us live in the certainty that the future is fully guaranteed. So, hope is linked to having God with us. Such hope totally changes the present, not only because when the future is known as a positive reality the present becomes more bearable, but because this knowledge of the future, through faith, changes the way we live. Living with God is not the same as living without God. He is a God who opens a way even in the deserts of life, challenging disillusionment and scepticism, fear and disenchantment. This is why the hope that moves us leads us to *ask God for the gift of faith*, to ask to trust him who achieves all things in all people, and to trust others.

### **Time of trial as a time of choosing<sup>8</sup>**

The believing response to the hope that God gives rise to is based on the Gospel as God's power for the constant transformation and renewal of life.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, 27.

<sup>8</sup> FRANCIS, *The Holy Father's meditation at the extraordinary moment of prayer at the time of the pandemic*, Vatican City, 27 March 2020.

In his direct kind of language Pope Francis invites us to be “more people of the spring than of the autumn”.<sup>9</sup> The Christian sees the “buds” of a new world rather than the “yellow leaves” on the branches. We do not take refuge in nostalgia and complaint, because we know that God wants us to be heirs to a promise and tireless nurturers of dreams. With a certain faith in God who “comes” and intervenes [*ad-viene* and *inter-viene*].

With the arms of Christian hope – the arms of Christ’s cross – we embrace the entire world and consider nothing or nobody as lost or a failure.

But some questions continue to be legitimate ones: Who do we wish to be, faced with the reality we are called to live through? And how do we want to live through all this? Because we would be losing a great opportunity if we were not to capitalise on the experience we are going through, the pain included.

There are certainly many people who as citizens and from a civilian perspective, with a clear awareness of our humanity and without any faith perspective, are attempting to tackle this situation and this crisis. Quite legitimately so.

But among these there is also us. And today’s world needs the witness of our lives; the witness of us who have found the meaning of our lives in the encounter with Christ and in the God of Jesus Christ. St Paul reminds the Ephesians that before they met Christ they had “no hope” and were “without God in the world” (*Eph* 2:12). It is true that he knew they had their gods, but no hope came from their myths. Despite the gods they were without God.<sup>10</sup> However, knowing God through his Son meant receiving a hope for them, and it also means that for the men and women of today. This is because *faith becomes hope*, “*Faith is Hope*”.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> FRANCIS, *General audience, Wednesday, 23 August 2017*.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. BENEDICT XVI, *Spe Salvi*, 2.

<sup>11</sup> This is the title Pope Benedict chose for the first part of his Encyclical *Spe salvi*.

The outlook of faith in the encounter with Jesus Christ is what makes our way of looking at faith, our way of feeling it in our heart different. Thus, the way of making decisions and discerning what is or is not of value is marked by that person-to-Person encounter. This is why a theologian who reflected very much on *hope*, like J. Moltmann, said that “when faith is transformed into hope, it does not calm people but makes them restless, does not make them patient but impatient. Instead of conforming to a given reality, they begin to suffer from it and oppose it.”<sup>12</sup>

#### **4. A LOOK AT OUR ORIGINS AND THE MANY WITNESSES OF FAITH IN OUR FAMILY**

When we look at the experience of Don Bosco’s life, we become aware that hope is a plant with deep roots that began long ago; roots that become stronger through difficult seasons and ways that require much sacrifice.

This was the case from John’s earliest years at the Becchi, having lost his father, and with Mamma Margaret who had to face up to times of famine and all the problems of life together at home. When he had the very human hope that there might be a future for him, the one he dreamed of, being able to count on the help and protection of Fr Calosso, the death of the old parish priest dashed that hope. The family circumstances and the attentive and perceptive watchfulness of a mother who sought the best for her son – although her maternal heart suffered because of it – led John to become a migrant at twelve years of age.

But it was precisely in these circumstances that the word and even more so the example of his mother opened John’s eyes to a broader horizon, and made him capable of looking upwards and ahead.

<sup>12</sup> J. MOLTSMANN, *Experiencias de Dios*, Sigueme, Salamanca 1983, pp. 103-104.

It would be the same again at the crucial moment of his choice of vocation, where Margaret would ask her son not to worry about her and her future and never to attach his heart to earthly securities: “If you decide to become a secular priest and should unfortunately become rich, I will never pay you a single visit! Remember that well!”<sup>13</sup>

Years later it would be Don Bosco, turning his gaze to the Crucifix, who would revive the heart of his discouraged, tired mother, rekindling in her that hope that would lead her to remain faithful until her death to the mission she shared with her son from the beginnings of the Oratory at Valdocco.

This strongly rooted hope would be so necessary for everything that Don Bosco experienced and that he brought into being from when he was in Turin until his last breath.

The tree is recognised by its fruits. The way in which so many young people’s lives were made to rise from situations of abandonment and desperation to the point of achieving sanctity, shows how much hope had taken its abode in Don Bosco’s heart; it was from this superabundance that he reached out to and transformed the lives of those he met.

Even in his most intense years of work, Don Bosco was never a solitary hero. He always had by his side Him who revived the flame of faith, hope and charity in him. It was an accompaniment of the “on earth as it is in heaven” kind. And also unlimited trust in Mary was the constant nourishment of hope for him. The more this trust was expressed in humanly impossible undertakings – we think of the building of the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians and the beginning of the missions in South America – the more Don Bosco was the first to “see what miracles are”.

Believing that there was always a point accessible to good in every heart, in every one of life’s experiences, even one that seemed to be quite off-course, was the result of this being in tune with heaven, but it was also the result of the fundamental experi-

<sup>13</sup> BMI, 221-22 [English edition].



ence of accompaniment and supervision which Don Bosco the priest had treasured here on earth. It was at Fr Cafasso's school that Don Bosco learned to walk alongside the most desperate, in the prisons and in the poorest parts of Turin at that time. This was how Don Bosco not only "learned to be a priest,"<sup>14</sup> but to become a pastor of that flock with a heart like that of those formidable sowers of hope who walked with him on the same streets of Turin's poorest peripheries: Cafasso, Cottolengo, Murialdo. Hope is formed and formed together: it is a fruit of the Communion of Saints "on earth as it is in heaven".

There is one moment in the history of the Oratory that we simply must recall because it is so close to the worldwide difficulty we all find ourselves immersed in due to the pandemic. It is the end of July 1854. Cholera breaks out in Turin. We know the story so there is no need to repeat it here. The vision of faith and the practice of charity, including in a heroic way, was no private virtue, a characteristic just of Don Bosco or a few super-generous types; it was the lifestyle of that small educative community. Hope is a community virtue, one that is nurtured through mutual example and through the strength of fraternal communion. This is also the witness of the Valdocco Oratory during the cholera, just like the experience of so many educative and pastoral communities during COVID times, and at the forefront are communities of doctors, nurses and health workers who have given and continue to give their lives to save the lives of others.

Moments of crisis like this bring out another feature of hope as Don Bosco lived it. He firmly believed in Providence. A faith and trust that grew ever greater with the passing of the years. It is a thread that ran throughout his entire life and through everything he gave life to. It is perhaps the most tangible way in which one can contemplate "a splendid blending of nature and grace" in

<sup>14</sup> G. Bosco, *Memorie dell'Oratorio di San Francesco di Sales*, in ISS, *Fonti Salesiane: Don Bosco e la sua opera*, LAS, Roma 2014, p. 1233 [Note: also available in the English edition of *Salesian Sources*, Bangalore].

him:<sup>15</sup> what he believed in his heart set his everyday steps and choices in motion, opening paths of hope for so many even when it seemed there were no more ways out.

### **So many other testimonies of hope**

We find valuable examples and life models in Salesian holiness that encourage us to hope as a virtue and attitude of life in God. Let me make just a brief, quick reference to some.

Our confrere **Blessed Stefan Sandor (1914-1953)**: offers us a real example of what it means to move from division to unity and then to communion. The strong sense of his vocation as a Salesian brother led him to make a real choice in defence of life; he deeply believed that his life had to be lived in the midst of his people and culture, which was going through moments of uncertainty and desolation. His upright attitude restores our perspective of “*knowing how to stay*” with our field of mission to enlighten those who risk losing hope, to strengthen those who feel they are failing, and to be a sign of God’s love when he “appears” to be absent from history. Blessed Stefan surmounted the walls created by the division between peoples and the enslavement to ideological totalitarianism, going out to meet others and overcoming all kinds of personal or social fears.

The story of **Blessed Sister Maddalena Morano (1847-1908)** is a very beautiful one. She stood out as a Daughter of Mary Help of Christians for an apostolic daring that made her what Don Bosco always wanted from his daughters in the spirit of Mornese: to be living monuments of the Virgin. As “born teacher”, she knew that the liberating act in her Salesian mission meant teaching her girls to open the frontiers of their hearts and minds so as to transcend the narrow confines of an oppressive culture of poverty and lack of opportunity. She knew how to teach perseverance and not to give into threats; her feminine strength became the kindest and

<sup>15</sup> *Costituzioni e Regolamenti SDB*, 21.

most convincing expression of the responsibility we have towards our vulnerable brothers and sisters. As a solution to the calamitous times she had to endure, she pointed out new directions to those threatened by isolation and taught them the immensity of the goodness of God.

In the **Servant of God Fr Charles Braga (1889-1971)** we find an example of pastoral intelligence, be it in his tireless dedication to the missions or in his accompaniment of members of the Salesian Family. Without losing heart, but with the hope of those who place their faith in Christ our Lord, he had the patience that Don Bosco recommended so much for knowing how to accompany young people as they built a mature personality. This patience was the fruit of the love that flowed in his missionary heart, enabling him to build bridges rather than barriers between cultures. The call he felt to promote unity among people helped him to overcome the differences that could arise among others, convinced that he was always sustained by the divine grace that generates a culture of encounter.

Another valuable example is **Blessed Joseph Kowalski (1911-1942)**. How much faith and courage were needed to give peace to others even when there was nothing else he had to offer other than his own life! Jesus' oblation of love in offering his life for humanity gave us the greatest example of love. It is profoundly echoed by Joseph Kowalski: a confrere who was a witness to peace in the midst of war, who was serene in the midst of confusion and mercy in the midst of hatred.

**Servant of God Antonino Baglieri (1951-2007)** is another model. The path to holiness so often requires a change of values and vision. This was the path experienced by Nino who, after long suffering, discovered the great opportunity to be reborn to a new life in the Cross. Nino was always accompanied by his mother, who with love and compassion always believed in him and his talented life; he was also surrounded by lay and religious friends who reminded him of the beauty of communion. He let himself be touched

by the community that strengthened him, both in his personality and in his faith, and saved him. He understood that by allowing himself to be encountered by others he discovered who he was and gave meaning to his existence, marked entirely by divine mercy – even from his sickbed – to be a ‘craftsman of peace and joy’.

These and so many others are giants of the faith who lived a life of charity and understood what it means to have *hope* in all the significance that word has. Those who hope know that they are not walking alone, and they also know that they need people to accompany and guide them on this journey. Pope Benedict XVI expresses this so beautifully: “The true stars of our life are the people who have lived good lives. They are lights of hope. Certainly, Jesus Christ is the true light, the sun that has risen above all the shadows of history. But to reach him we also need lights close by – people who shine with his light and so guide us along our way.”<sup>16</sup>

## **5. A SALESIAN INTERPRETATION OF THE PRESENT MOMENT**

This is our time. It is the time we have been given for living. It might be most appropriate to ask ourselves what the best way should be for dealing with the post-pandemic period, and perhaps discover the value of *hope* at a time when most people are experiencing fear or just cannot wait for the moment to come when they can forget what has happened this year. But can we really forget what has happened, forget the families who have lost relatives? Forget almost two million victims? Forget the faces of the weakest ones of our society? Forget so many people who have worked on the front line? Would it be right to forget all this? No, certainly not. Indeed, it would be the worst thing we could do.

Thus, we ask ourselves if what we have been going through may be teaching us something, and if we are ready to change something, to rethink some of our values or life views...

<sup>16</sup> BENEDICT XVI, *Spe Salvi*, 49.

- We hope that the *confinement* we have experienced will help us to *open ourselves up*.

We are constantly on the move, in a hurry to respond to everything often in a frenzied rhythm. Unexpectedly, “compulsory quiet” came our way, and perhaps it closed us in a bit on ourselves, within our homes, our families, in compulsory but essential quarantine. Many kinds of fear appeared: fear of the other, especially of the other nearby or not too far away; the fear of contagion coming from who knows where and generating and causing the greatest uncertainty.

This is why “open up” must be the order of the day. Open up spaces, settings, windows onto life. Open ourselves to encountering the other. Abandon everything that closes us in, recover the meaning of our openness, our openness of heart. Recover the vision of a broader horizon.

- From growing *individualism* to greater *solidarity* and *fellowship*.

God’s imprint on humanity is particularly evident in the ability to reach out to others in an act of solidarity with his creation. Selfishness is the opposite act, because it seeks self-satisfaction, makes us self-referential, generates and feeds the ever-growing culture of individualism that ends up manifesting how small we are. During the pandemic we undoubtedly realised that we are too vulnerable, fragile and dependent. All of us. Not just a few. Under the same collective unimaginable and heartfelt threat, all of humanity feels it needs others. We live in need of each other, of mutual care. We do not want to be alone. May this time teach us to bank more on solidarity and fellowship in the face of the “virus of individualism”. How right Pope Francis is! Solidarity is the best victory over loneliness. “Solidarity finds concrete expression in service, which can take a variety of forms in an effort to care for others. And service in great part means ‘caring for vulnerability, for the vulnerable members of our families, our society, our people’. In offering such service, individuals learn to ‘set aside their own wishes and desires, their

pursuit of power, before the concrete gaze of those who are most vulnerable... Service always looks to their faces, touches their flesh, senses their closeness and even, in some cases, “suffers” that closeness and tries to help them. Service is never ideological, for we do not serve ideas, we serve people.’”<sup>17</sup> There are many who await our smile, our word, our presence.

- Moving from *isolation* to the culture of *encounter*.  
It is certainly not easy to come out of our own isolation, especially when we think it is a value. In fact, it is often easier to remain isolated including out of fear of others’ closeness. But in the human heart burns the flame that ignites the absolute necessity to be together: in family, with friends, in the local association, in a volunteer group, with school mates, with colleagues at work, with our football team. This time of vulnerability offers us room for new kinds of empathy and reconnecting. It is the “culture of encounter” of the other as other. “Isolation and withdrawal into one’s own interests are never the way to restore hope and bring about renewal. Rather, it is closeness; it is the culture of encounter. Isolation, no; closeness, yes. Culture clash, no; culture of encounter, yes.”<sup>18</sup>
- From *division* to greater *unity* and *communion*.  
From this perspective we are aware that it is not possible to generate a culture of encounter without safeguarding unity; the same unity that the Spirit of God grants to those who enter into communion with him, and that unites us and spurs us on to live the same calling: that of being God’s beloved children. A lesson we have learnt from the harsh experience of isolation, of journeying apart in the boat of life because of closed borders (geographical and even spiritual), has allowed us to realise that in the end ‘we are all in the same boat’. We are united by the humanity that we are. But a humanity that has been affected. COVID is the first crisis to strike everyone worldwide

<sup>17</sup> FRANCIS, *Fratelli tutti*, 115.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

without distinction. It is a huge paradox: a virus that has created division through fear now brings us together, urges us to be interested in one another. It unites us in an empathy made up of altruism, solidarity, concern. So many expressions of the common good and, we hope, of compassion and mercy. It also brings us together in the search for solutions. And probably the selfishness that divides is a much more ancient and dangerous disease than COVID, one that existed earlier and must be cured. I hope that with the arrival of a vaccine for the virus we can finally vaccinate ourselves against the lack of communion, achieving victory over division. What unites us is the medicine of the Gospel of hope and joy that makes us all the more human and children of God.

- From *discouragement, emptiness and lack of meaning to transcendence.*

From claiming that we are “the absolute masters of our lives and of everything that exists” we have come to feeling that we are very fragile. Many families have found it necessary to invent a thousand different stories to explain to children why it is that they have to stay at home, far from their grandparents, their schoolmates and neighbours, without the possibility of going away for a fortnight or twenty days. I recall the image in the film “Life is beautiful” (1997) where a father (Benigni), in the most unfortunate situation where they are in a concentration camp, invents a game to justify what they are going through for his son. That game becomes his salvation.

The emptiness of this time has been very damaging. We have moved from many certainties to the uncertainty of an unstable and insecure terrain. An emptiness that differs from nihilistic ideologies and which, in any case, opens us up to the need for transcendence.

The Lord speaks to us in this time. And what is he asking of us? What is he offering us? How are we welcoming it? “Amid this storm, the façade of those stereotypes with which we camouflaged our egos, always worrying about appearances, has

fallen away, revealing once more the ineluctable and blessed awareness that we are part of one another, that we are brothers and sisters of one another.”<sup>19</sup> Here we are then: in extreme situations God continues to speak to us through the hearts of people who see and respond in an original, different way, a way that makes a difference.

**We are not saved by our own strengths alone. No one is saved alone**

“A worldwide tragedy like the Covid-19 pandemic momentarily revived the sense that we are a global community, all in the same boat, where one person’s problems are the problems of all. Once more we realized that no one is saved alone; we can only be saved together. As I said in those days, ‘the storm has exposed our vulnerability and uncovered those false and superfluous certainties around which we constructed our daily schedules, our projects, our habits and priorities... Amid this storm, the façade of those stereotypes with which we camouflaged our egos, always worrying about appearances, has fallen away, revealing once more the ineluctable and blessed awareness that we are part of one another, that we are brothers and sisters of one another.’”<sup>20</sup>

Gone is the time for the belief that we can do everything with our own resources, on our own, like ‘giants of vanity’ for whom nothing is impossible.

We must overcome the facile narcissism that has convinced us that the universe bows down before us, deluding ourselves that we possess a “superpower” over everything and everyone ... We have learned, because of this disease, how vulnerable we are; how much we need each other and that alone we are nothing. We discover that the neighbour across the street is important: to say hello to everyone we meet; to erase anonymity and believe in “us” as part of me, without which we cannot live. The others are “me” declined

<sup>19</sup> FRANCIS, *Fratelli tutti*, 32.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibidem*.



as “we”, much more dependent on the richness of humanity in its values of beauty and shared life. Let us abandon fears. Let us create bonds. Let us grow. Let us stop rejecting the other because they are other, different, foreign, etc... Let us start from an “us” that joins the plural and the different with the particular, rich, unique, unrepeatable and beautiful that belongs to each person, to each of us, precious as we are in ourselves.

We cannot be afraid to rediscover the fraternity that unites us as children of God, greatly loved in the Son (cf. Eph 1:5). Because of this we understand solidarity, fraternity, care for others, respect for the value of life, the dignity of the person, the truth of the other which is more than ever now a virtue. We are too precious to give in to the empty selfishness of a disease called indifference, and to self-contemplation or self-referentiality. Especially with regard to our dear young people who are “the burning bush”, the “holy ground” that saves us. It is they, our great hope, who project us towards a common future with many examples of sharing and common projects: in favour of creation and the environment, of our common home, and justice, freedom; peace and universal fellowship.

New responses are needed. A courageous life that is the bearer of something truly new. To be ultimately like Don Bosco today, when cholera is called “coronavirus”, it is necessary to go, to go out, to be a presence and a response.

### **More than ever: presence is witness!**

That is exactly right: more than ever, presence and witness are needed. Our presence, and as a testimony, the joy that comes from our faith “that hopes”, because “faith and hope go forward together”.<sup>21</sup>

And this especially for the young who we cannot leave on their own (more so now than ever!): they are waiting for us with open

<sup>21</sup> FRANCIS, *General audience Wednesday, 20 September 2017.*

arms so that we can once again inhabit their lives, with the strength of a love capable of conquering everything, because in all this only love can triumph! We must once again dream the dream of the young. We must put ourselves in that situation which enables us to overcome what fear has prevented from becoming reality. Oratories, youth centres, schools, training centres, social works, parishes: each of our works must allow itself to be flooded by the living, generous and revitalising heart of each young person who transforms homes (walls of silence) into spaces of life (of the life of young people). We want that life! That is the life that saves us! We listen to the cry of young people who ask for presence, attention, accompaniment, availability, and who also ask us to show them the true face of God. If we pay attention to them, if we listen to them, they will ask us with greater intensity to speak to them first of all about this Lord who enlivens our hope and who does not allow us to become discouraged or to give up (cf. 1 Pet 3:15). They will ask us to offer them the “bread of life” that nourishes our “being for them” and our “being among them”, to generate that life that the Lord wishes to give at this moment in history: the life that will have no end. It is the good news of the resurrection that revives our hope and makes us new people for a new time. Because this world will end. And only what we have loved will remain.

## **6. A SALESIAN FAMILY THAT WITNESSES TO HOPE**

As we have had occasion to experience, the circumstances tied to the pandemic over these months have revealed some signs of a blurring of hope. But I want to insist on and point to some of the fully understood signs of the beauty of evangelical hope we have experienced, signs that place us on a path where we can express the power of the Salesian charism when it is lived in hope. I feel that as Don Bosco’s Family in the Church and the world this is the testimony expected of us: the ability to live in hope.

Some proposals for continuing on this path.

### 6.1. Let us rediscover that “faith and hope go forward together”<sup>22</sup>

***Commitment: let us imitate Don Bosco and his great capacity for enthusing his youngsters to live life as a celebration and “faith as happiness”<sup>23</sup>***

We are all sustained not by abstract ideas and beautiful promises, but by hope founded on *the experience of God’s love* poured out on us through the Holy Spirit who moves everything towards good.

But hope does not go forward alone. In order to hope we need to have faith. Christian hope *makes faith tenacious*, able to withstand the shocks of life; it allows us to see beyond every obstacle, it opens our eyes and allows us to place our life and history within an interpretation made in the light of God’s salvation. Therefore, hope is *waiting for the gift of life every day, waiting for the presence of God*, a God who is Father (Abba), who is intimate and personal. He is a God who is *concerned and interested in our fate*, and places himself on our path with his patience and mercy. While we recognise our poverty and fragility, God gives us his heart. The encounter of personal and community poverty with his fatherly heart lets mercy shine forth.

So then, aware of our fragility and how difficult the task is today of educating and forming people, more than ever we need to be sowers of hope, provocateurs of true hope, whisperers of this same hope. Don Bosco did this in a passionate and almost natural way. And we are involved in this because we truly believe that it is hope that sustains life, looks after it, protects it. “It is the most divine thing that can exist in the heat of mankind.”<sup>24</sup> During this catechesis the Holy Father referred to the great French poet Charles Péguy, who left us with beautiful pages on hope. In one of them he says in a poetic way that God is not so surprised by the

<sup>22</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>23</sup> *20th Special General Chapter of the Salesians of Don Bosco*, no. 328.

<sup>24</sup> FRANCIS, *General audience Wednesday, 27 September 2017*.

faith of human beings, not even by their charity. What really fills him with wonder and moves him is the hope of the people “That those poor children”, he writes, “see how things are going and believe that they will be better tomorrow morning”.

With this kind of trust as educators and people who accompany families, ordinary folk and the people of God in general, I invite you: *let us never lose hope; let us cultivate an outlook on life that is rich in hope*, and never let it die out in our hearts. Let us be lights that invite to hope through the testimony of how we live. Let us pass on happiness in the simple but genuine way we live our faith.

## **6.2. Let us learn that *prayer is the school of hope***<sup>25</sup>

***Commitment: let us journey with the young and their families by praying, learning to pray better and exercising hope by praying better and better.***

“A first essential setting for learning hope is prayer.”<sup>26</sup>

A characteristic of our Salesian spirituality is to perceive God as being very close, very much present in events and with whom, in our simplicity, we can enter into dialogue “with our heart”, a simple, childlike dialogue.

As members of the Church, we are aware that we are born like her in prayer and that prayer sustains her growth and ours as well. Prayer that is a *school of hope*. By presenting our fragility in this personal encounter with Love, we learn to let ourselves be loved by him. Ultimately, we are called to develop *an inner climate of trust* in the Lord, entrusting ourselves to him as the centre of everything. He who makes it possible to live to the full. So, let us put our thoughts, desires, activities, sufferings, hopes, dreams into God’s heart, drawing them up in his heart.

The spiritual life nurtured by prayer is *unifying*, it gives meaning to events, meaning to the various things we do and experience

<sup>25</sup> Cf. BENEDICT XVI, *Spe Salvi*: title of the first part of the Encyclical, no. 32.

<sup>26</sup> BENEDICT XVI, *Spe Salvi*, 32.

and with prayer we discover the meaning of the *gratuitousness of life*, of our life and the lives of the people entrusted to us. This perspective of prayer as a gift is essential for the spiritual journey, knowing that everything has been given to us by the Lord.

In the Encyclical that Pope Benedict XVI offered the Church there are some concrete examples of hope in prayer such as the experience of Vietnamese Cardinal Nguyen Van Thuan who, during thirteen years of imprisonment – nine of which in solitary confinement, in a human situation that would have been one where any person would have despaired of listening to God, being able to talk to Him – it was the power of his hope that enabled him, after his release, to become a genuine witness of hope, “to that great hope which does not wane, even in the nights of solitude.”<sup>27</sup>

As Don Bosco’s family, the Salesian Family, we will take significant steps if, on all the branches of this leafy tree loved by the Spirit, we advance in this school of hope born of prayer and if we also journey alongside our young people and other people.

### **6.3. Let us grow by living with a sense of the fatigue of daily life**

***Commitment: let us help the young and their families, and the People of God, to discover the gifts that God gives us, without complaint, proposing objectives that enthuse them and take away monotony and mediocrity.***

Let us make daily life a valuable opportunity for experiencing, despite fatigue and tiredness, that there is a Love that surpasses us and in the awareness that our work is not indifferent in God’s eyes and therefore not indifferent either for the development of life, of our life, and of history itself that we are trying to build and of the Kingdom of God that we want to help bring about.

I believe that this can be a magnificent horizon for educating to hope. In the first instance for the certainty that comes from

<sup>27</sup> *Ibidem.*

faith, that confirms that not only does God not allow himself to be ever outdone in generosity, but that he acts and always surprises, even amidst our difficulties.

The *extraordinary* takes place only when we begin to *experience* the little ordinary things; daily life, the life of every Christian, is made up of repeated gestures, hard work and without too much sense of satisfaction, but it is also made up of subdued though intimate joys, real encounters, and surprises that surprise the soul.

The passing of the days demands a patient return to oneself, an awareness of one's own life. *Hope and patience* are the two attitudes to be witnessed to as Christians in our fast-paced world. The proliferation of fear in our societies is also due to the fact that we have lost the sense of waiting, and therefore of patience and hope. For this reason, hope and patience are closely linked, and the act of hoping already contributes to overcoming the time of trial.

This is also possible because there is a "natural trust" typical of our Salesian spirit that leads us to trust in the natural and supernatural resources of every individual, especially of every young person, and that urges us not to lament the times in which we live, but to appreciate the values in the world and in history (including in these difficult times), and to "hold fast to what is good" (*1 Thess* 5:21). In fact we share the belief with Card. Nguyen Van Thuan that the habit of complaining is like a contagious epidemic whose symptoms are pessimism, loss of peace, fear and loss of the passion for life that comes from being united with God.

Don Bosco had experienced that nothing can compensate for the value of authentic relationships, of feeling loved, of feeling part of a family, at home. These relationships were a *powerful form of protection in the face of the poverty and loneliness of his boys*. In fact he was a master at rediscovering the concrete nature of happiness in little things, in paying attention to everyone, revealing how much the treasure of our preventive System was preserved in affectionate encounters and in seeing to close ties. Little gestures that are sometimes lost in the anonymity of daily life; gestures of tenderness, affection, compassion that are decisive and important

just the same for others' hope. They are *familiar gestures of attention to detail and the details of every day* and they ensure that life has meaning and that there is communion and communication among us.

#### **6.4. Let us live hope especially in times of difficulty and loss**

***Commitment: Let us allow ourselves to be educated by God. Let us trust him especially in times of darkness.***

St Teresa of Avila, a great mystic, recognises that dryness is God's invitation to "move forward".

We have all gone through times of difficulty and loss in life. In one way or another we have been called *to come to terms with certain painful and humanly difficult personal experiences*. At times our days, our activities, our prayer and all of daily life, may appear unexpectedly empty, dull.

But with *the suffering and pain present in every human life*, we are given a jolt of wonder and hope. Indeed, "the greatness of humanity is essentially determined by its relationship with suffering and with those who suffer."<sup>28</sup>

Suffering and pain seem to be part of everyone's life at one time or another. Jesus did not love suffering, nor did he ever justify it. Indeed, in the encounter with those marked by pain, he is moved and often heals the sick person, showing that it was not at all God's will. Faced with this, instead of withdrawing passively into ourselves, all tired and discouraged, we are asked to cultivate courage, which in the moral and spiritual life is indicated by the term *fortitude*.

In fact, this indispensable strength for the quality of life is linked to awareness of faith.

<sup>28</sup> FRANCIS, "*Un plan para resucitar*" a la Humanidad tras el coronavirus [A plan to restore humanity after the Coronavirus] (PDF), in *Vida Nueva Digital*, 17 April 2020, p. 38.

Many believers are recognised precisely in their moments of greatest difficulty and suffering, when they appear burdened by problems greater than themselves. These trials are not interpreted as occasional mishaps, but as *a moment of necessary purification* and an invitation to abandon the criteria adopted until now, in order to have a more intimate experience of God, allowing themselves to be educated by Him and in this way also fulfil the mission received. We are asked to walk in trust, even in dark moments.

As believers we are convinced that only God has the power to transform the most extreme and difficult moments of our existence into the *sure hope* that our suffering, pain and sadness are not in vain or useless.

It is as if the individual finds him or herself before a crossroads where they must decide whether to give up or instead let new human and spiritual energies emerge. In this latter case there is struggle, tension, conflict but they are sterile; we are called *to keep hold of hope in dark times* because the Gospel always proclaims good news: life can start over again, we can always be born again. “*Spes ultima dea*”, the ancients used say: “Hope is the last to die”. Hope is the last bastion of life. It is like the light at sunset: it still manages to give life to objects before they blend into the darkness and allows us to see our way home before night descends and all is wrapped in darkness.

## **6.5. Hope as a decisive return to the poor and excluded**

***Commitment: in our family, fidelity to the Lord with Don Bosco passes above all through the preferential option for the poorest, the most abandoned and the excluded.***

This is why charismatically today more than ever, we are expected to distinguish ourselves as the Salesian Family by this original option for the poor and the excluded, the discarded, the abandoned, the voiceless and those without dignity. There is no other



way for us. Fidelity to the Lord in Don Bosco requires us to recognise ourselves in the pain of others.

In full communion with the tradition and the purest teaching of the Church, from the first Latin and Greek fathers to the most recent pontiffs, we cannot but be and feel responsible for this world and for the life of each person. *Every injustice against the poor is an open wound that is an open attack* (even if we do not believe it) on our dignity. We should never forget that we do not live only for ourselves. This is why hope makes charity persevere. *Jesus invites us to this stubborn love*, to keep our minds and hearts as open as possible to his action which comes as suddenly as the negative situations we encounter; to become and be an effective ‘field hospital’ for all and especially for injured young people. This requires more courage, more trust and more commitment from us. This is not the time to “pull the oars back into the boat”!

As a religious family born from Don Bosco’s pastoral heart, we are “the hope of those who have no hope”: the most needy and vulnerable young people who are at the centre of God’s attention, and who must always be our privileged beneficiaries.

They are not a “wall” for us but a “door”: what the poor teach us is the authority of the suffering and the marginalised. Let us commit ourselves to bring hope into the hearts of these people, to give them comfort, to lift the weak and needy, to meet the various human and spiritual needs that challenge us every day. Hope heads in the direction of ethics and action. In this, Christian hope differs from a vague optimism – as I have already said.

We must not be robbed of hope, Pope Francis tells us, nor must we kill off the various signs of hope and rebirth that emerge from the world. Indeed, how many people happy to love Jesus by serving him in the poor, people who are generous and empathetic *provide us with precious teachings expressed through their lives!* We thank the Lord for these examples of a consistent and loving life. Men and women for the poor, a sign of hope that the Lord has put

on our path: they are the lives spent and given to their brothers and sisters by these “normal” but heroic people, a simple but rocky heroism, founded on the Gospel lived and proclaimed.

## **6.6. Recognising ourselves in the other’s pain**

***Commitment: to be faithful to Don Bosco today, the Father of our Salesian Family, means being actively on the side of those who suffer any kind of injustice.***

“How dangerous and harmful this is, for it makes us lose our amazement, our excitement and our zeal for living the Gospel of fraternity and justice!”<sup>29</sup> Pope Francis writes in his *Evangelii Gaudium*. And this has to do as much with the injustices, which derive from the economic systems that are the cause of so much poverty, as with all kinds of human suffering.

Reading the Gospel, there is no doubt that the economy and goods must be at the service of people, especially those who live in conditions of real poverty. Therefore, a Christian with an authentic social conscience and a sense of justice, and even more so we consecrated and lay people of Don Bosco’s Family, cannot accept a form of economy based exclusively on the “logic of growth” (so hoped for after this pandemic) , if this is the sure cause of the increase in poverty and the poor: two realities that always go hand in hand.

Therefore, to say no to an economy of exclusion is to say no to any political and economic initiative that forgets the weakest. Christians and members of the Salesian Family must feel uneasy in this situation. Faced with these realities, one cannot remain “neutral” or “without an opinion”. The dignity of our brothers and sisters is at stake and we will certainly have to “get off” the pedestal of our securities to look at their reality without shame. This is what the Lord Jesus did, even though he was considered socially and politically incorrect.

<sup>29</sup> FRANCIS, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 179.

And even if I know that what I will say will later prove uncomfortable for us – for me first of all – I believe in conscience that *we must feel as unbearable for our consciences the pain others feel* and that translates into the situation of the homeless, forced migration, people who “no longer matter”, wars, attacks, persecution for racial or religious motives, sexual abuse, human and organ trafficking, networks of prostitution, abandoned minors, child soldiers: an infinite torrent of painful realities.

It is because we love this wonderful world in which God has put us and because we love the humanity to which we belong – with the kinds of dramas I have just described and with the effort of seeing that nothing seems to change radically – because we also love the longings and hopes and the earth as our common home, because this is our today, the today of our post-pandemic world... it is because of all this, this is a precious opportunity to position ourselves clearly and to educate our young people in social and political commitment in the light of the Gospel and the hope it radiates.

### **6.7. Converting to hope is believing in the plan of the Gospel**

***Commitment: for this reason, as the Salesian Family of Don Bosco, we cannot fail to show who is the reason for our Hope, the God of Jesus Christ and his Gospel.***

In the greatest crises so many certainties disappear, “certainties” that we thought we had, meanings attributed which, in reality, turn out to be unreliable. But, in fact, *the great values of the Gospel and its truth* remain when opportunistic or temporary philosophies and thoughts fail. The values of the Gospel do not vanish, they do not become “liquid”, they do not disappear. For this reason, as the Salesian Family of Don Bosco we cannot give up showing what we believe in.

Evangelisation must be for us an existential and true joy, rooted in the Mystery of Christ, the incarnate, dead and risen God who penetrates the innermost part of human reality. The Gospel is the

absolute message of joy that infuses strength and the boldness to overcome all sadness (Cf. *Rm* 9:2): The Gospel is the vital breath of hope: hope in the Lord who is in our midst and who continually comes to meet us; a hope that generates joy, a hope that encourages us and launches us into a concrete commitment in favour of others and in history, a hope that makes us feel, as Don Bosco's Family, that we are God's mediation for others, signs and bearers of his love: a hope that opens us up to eternal life that has already begun here.

"Faith also means believing in God, believing that he truly loves us, that he is alive, that he is mysteriously capable of intervening, that he does not abandon us and that he brings good out of evil by his power and his infinite creativity... Let us believe the Gospel when it tells us that the kingdom of God is already present in this world and is growing, here and there, and in different ways."<sup>30</sup>

How we should be encouraged at thinking that none of us is hope in ourselves, but that each of us can be the echo of hope for others, that *genuine hope* that is the most *Divine* reality that can exist in the heart of humankind.

Because "If Jesus overcame the world, he is capable of overcoming in us all that opposes goodness. If God is with us, no one will steal from us that virtue which we absolutely need for life. No one will rob us of hope."<sup>31</sup>

### **6.8. A concrete commitment to take up as the Salesian family**

Let us distribute and read (alone, as a family, in groups) the latest Encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti*, which puts fraternity at the centre of everything. It offers us a beautiful reflection on how to heal the world, repair the common home from human and environmental damage, and reduce the consequences of growing social and eco-

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 278.

<sup>31</sup> FRANCIS, *General audience Wednesday, 27 September 2017.*

conomic inequality. With the Pope, we are sure that we will succeed in safeguarding the heritage that the Creator has placed in our hands, only as brothers and sisters, overcoming the temptation to divide and overpower one another. Only together will we build a better world that gives hope to future generations.

### **6.9. A truth to be explored as the fruit of this Strenna**

With the clear aim of leaving a very special memory, I conclude the commentary on the Strenna 2021 with a few lines that express very well what I have shared in these pages and which I invite you to internalise, before making a final reference to our Mother Mary who awaits the birth of her beloved Son, immersed without any pretence in the great plan of redemption.

“We Christians live by hope: death is only the penultimate word, but the last word is God’s, the word of resurrection, of the fullness of life and eternal life. When we abandon ourselves to trust in God and trust in him we have a certainty that gives us serenity, that is, that *we do not have everything in our hands, but are in God’s hands*. Christians shape their life not with their own strength, but with the strength of the Holy Spirit. In times of uncertainty we must trustfully abandon ourselves to his guidance.”<sup>32</sup>

## **7. MARY OF NAZARETH, MOTHER OF GOD, STAR OF HOPE**

Mary, Mother, you know well what it means to have trust and *to hope* against all hope, trusting in God’s name.

Your “yes” to God reawakened every hope for humanity.


You experienced powerlessness and loneliness at the birth of your Son; you preserved in your heart the announcement that a

<sup>32</sup> W. KASPER - G. AUGUSTIN, *Comunione e Speranza. Testimoniare la fede al tempo del coronavirus*, [Communion and Hope: Witnessing to faith at the time of the coronavirus] LEV, Vatican City 2020, p. 121.

sword would pierce your heart (Cf. *Lk* 2:35); you suffered when you saw your Son a “sign of contradiction”, misunderstood, rejected.

You knew the hostility and rejection aimed at your Son until, at the foot of his cross on Golgotha, you understood that Hope would not die. That is why you remained with the disciples as a mother. – “Woman, here is your son” (*Jn* 19:26) – as the Mother of Hope.

“Holy Mary,  
Mother of God, our Mother,  
teach us to believe,  
to hope and to love with you.  
Show us the way to his Kingdom!  
Star of the Sea,  
shine upon us  
and guide us on our way.”<sup>33</sup>  
Amen.



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

<sup>33</sup> BENEDICT XVI, *Spe Salvi*, 50.

## 4. ACTIVITIES OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL

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### 4.1 Chronicle of the Rector Major

*We report here the main events involving the Rector Major from July to December 2020.*

At the end of summer, the Rector Major resumed his activities (which, however, had never been suspended) and so, 1 September was dedicated to meetings with some of the General Councillors.

We find him in Turin from 7 September, both to check on the completion of work on the *Museo-Casa Don Bosco* and for a round of animation meetings. He also presided at the Perpetual Professions at Valdocco, Turin, on 7 September. This ceremony was then repeated the following day at Colle Don Bosco for the First Professions of the novices. Back in Turin, on the 9<sup>th</sup> he met, among others, with the female director of the Museum, Dr. Stefania De Vita, to take stock of the work done.

Some days were then dedicated to the Salesian Family and its organisation, meeting with SF delegates on the 10<sup>th</sup>, while on the 12<sup>th</sup> he addressed the Salesian Family in Ecuador by video conference. On the 14<sup>th</sup> he met the Delegate for the Salesian Family Secretari-

at, Fr Joan Lluís Playà.

Back in Rome, on 17 September he met with Bishop Enrico dal Covolo SDB. And among other meetings, mention should be made of one with Cardinal Joseph Zen SDB from Hong Kong on 23 September. That same evening the Rector Major left for Turin once more so he could more closely follow up the final work on the *Museo-Casa Don Bosco* in view of its opening. He remained in Turin until 27 September.

Back in Rome, on the 28<sup>th</sup> he met online with Provincials from the Mediterranean Region. The same day he shared lunch with a group of Latin American Ambassadors. In the afternoon he met online with Salesians from Peru, celebrating 129 years since the arrival of the first Salesians in this country.

October saw the Rector Major in Turin from the beginning of the month, first of all to speak with Salesians and lay people about the Project dealing with the Salesian Places and Valdocco.

The morning of 3 October was dedicated to the Press Conference on the *Museo-Casa Don Bosco*.

The Hon. Vittorio Sgarbi, well-known critic, and good number of journalists belonging to a range of television and newspaper outlets took part in this Press Conference.

Accompanied by his secretary and spokesperson, Fr Giuseppe Costa, as well as explaining the idea behind the Museum, the Rector Major granted many interviews that allowed him to further specify and present the event of the opening of the *Museo-Casa Don Bosco* to take place before civil and religious authorities. It is worth emphasising the presence of fourteen Latin American Ambassadors to the Holy See.

After the cutting of the ribbon, the Rector Major accompanied the guests on a visit to the new Museum. With the help of the CNOS (*Centro Nazionale Opere Salesiane*) school at Valdocco an elegant buffet was also provided by the youngsters and their teachers who distinguished themselves for their appearance and professional competence.

4 October, the feast of St Francis of Assisi, was the day the Museum was opened to the public. The day began with the celebration of the Eucharist by the Rector Major in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians. Many of the General Councillors took part.

On 5 October and still at Valdocco, the Rector Major met with confreres from the Mary Help of Christians community for the Salesian places.

On 6 October, the final day of his intense sojourn in Turin, the Rector Major presided at a meeting involving the Superior and Vice-Superior of the Special Circumscription for Piedmont and the Valle d'Aosta, as well as the Rectors and Vice-Rectors of the four communities at Valdocco, to agree on common and combined teamwork for the unique Project for Salesian Places.

He returned to Rome on 7 October and on the 15<sup>th</sup>, in his role as Grand Chancellor, he carried out the official activity of the opening of the Academic Year at the Pontifical Salesian University (UPS), accompanied by the General Councillor for Formation, Fr Ivo Coelho. The next day he went to Messina in Sicily where he received the Perpetual Profession of eleven student confreres from various Provinces attending the *San Tommaso Theological Institute* in Messina.

From 19 to 29 October the days were reserved for General Council meetings.

As well as the main task of work by the General Council, on 20 October the Rector Major had a



lengthy interview with RAI-1 (*Radio Televisione Italiana-1*) for its program on the new and recently opened *Museo-Casa Don Bosco* and on some of the current issues regarding the Church and the Congregation.

Then on the 24<sup>th</sup> he was back at the UPS presiding at the Curatorium meeting.

3-15 November saw a continuation of General Council meetings as well as some online meetings with Provincials of the Americas, the Africa and Madagascar Region and the Mediterranean Region.

On 15 November the Rector Major met the Salesian Family from throughout the Americas: from Canada to Tierra del Fuego.

The work of the General Council continued from 25 to 27 November, and in the afternoons of these same days the Rector Major took part in the Assembly of the Union of Superior Generals (USG).

On 26 November he took part in the opening of the Academic Year at the Auxilium Pontifical Faculty in Rome.

On 30 November he took part in the meeting of the USG Permanent Council.

From 1 to 22 December the Rector Major presided over the work of the General Council's winter plenary session.

On the 2nd he presided at the UPS Academic Senate.

On 5 December he gave an on-line interview on the topic: "The Salesian sacrament of presence".

On the morning of 8 December, he presided at the Eucharist at the General House of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, and in the afternoon took part in the opening of the new chapel at the House in Testaccio, Rome where artist Fr Marko I. Rupnik had created a splendid mosaic.

On 10 December, along with his Vicar, the Rector Major met the Regional General Councillors.

On the 12<sup>th</sup> there was a video conference dealing with the work of the Salesian Cooperators World Council.

On the 15<sup>th</sup> the Rector Major received the new Ambassador of Nicaragua to the Holy See.

On 16 December he took part, with the confreres of the community at Headquarters, in the quarterly Day of Recollection in preparation for Christmas.

On 19 December he accepted the invitation to celebrate the Eucharist at Daughters of Mary Help of Christians' *Madre Ersilia Cantà* House in Rome.

In the afternoon of 26 December, as he traditionally does at the General House of the Daughters of

Mary Help of Christians, the Rector Major presented the video commentary on the 2021 Strenna, then immediately after, at the UPS in a “world first”, he gave an interview on the commentary on the Strenna 2021 that received encouraging feed-back from many of his listeners.

Once these tasks were over, the Rector Major spent some days visiting his family in Spain.

## **4.2 Chronicle of the General Councillors**

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

When the summer session of the General Council concluded in July 2020, the Rector Major's Vicar remained at Headquarters to finish a range of matters that he had been working on.

He spent some days with his family, his sister, in August, then at Colle Don Bosco he took part in the celebrations for 16 August together with the Rector Major. Back in Rome, over the following days he resumed his activities at HQ, either in person or online ac-

cording to possibilities in these times.

During September he planned visits to the houses depending on the Rector Major, which are known overall as RMG, and carried out the canonical visitation to the St Francis de Sales community at the Vatican, being able to meet not only with the confreres there but also being able to hear from the superiors of the various Vatican Dicasteries about their great appreciation of the work carried out by our confreres at the Holy See.

Once the visitation to the Vatican community was completed, the Vicar began his visitation to the community at *Sacro Cuore* (Sacred Heart), but he had contracted the COVID-19 virus and had to suspend the visitation for around three weeks. It was not a major issue, but obviously ‘man proposes and God disposes!’

Hence the visitation to the Sacred Heart community, which had begun in September, concluded in October 2020. It was an important visitation in that there was the opportunity to begin reflection as a community on the pastoral care that is entrusted to this work: Headquarters and the pastoral work of the Basilica/parish, the Sacred Heart oratory-youth centre; and also, to commence discernment

and hear all the confreres out in view of the restructuring of the Sacred Heart building itself.

The last visitation to RMG was to the well-deserving *San Callisto* community which looks after the Catacombs by that name. At the moment, given COVID-19 times, they have the great difficulty of seeing the catacombs completely closed in obedience to the Italian Prime Minister's decrees regarding the COVID-19 emergency. This is a difficult situation for the community who are living through this very demanding time in a healthy way.

Once the canonical visitation to houses belonging to the Rector Major were over, in the final ten days of November, the Vicar was able to focus on other meetings in person or online, and on preparing for the winter *Plenum* of the General Council from December - January.

Thanks be to God, the *Plenum* became truly so upon the arrival in Rome of the last of the General Councillors, quite some months after the conclusion of the Twenty-Eighth General Chapter.

### **The Councillor for Formation**

From 1 to 15 August 2020, along with two of his team members, the

Councillor for Formation spent some holiday time at the ICC holiday house on the Arcinazzo *Altipiani* (High Plains), two hours from Rome by car. On return, and under the direction of Fr Silvio Roggia, work began on preparing animation materials to go with the videos so as to disseminate the Sector's documents: *Animating and Governing the Community* and *Young Salesians and Accompaniment*.

Due to the pandemic we had to cancel all planned journeys over these months and opt for an online approach to these meetings. From 26 to 30 August 2020, we held an online meeting of the regional formation commission for South Asia. Similarly, from 7 to 10 September was the meeting of the regional formation commission for Interamerica, and from 14 to 16 September, the meeting of the regional formation commission for America South Cone. During these meetings, we continued the process already begun in July 2020 on revision of the *Ratio*, consulting provincial delegates, members of the various regional formation commissions. Meanwhile, we also began work on the 4<sup>th</sup> Pastoral Year of Theology, a topic that especially involves the specific formation communities in Italy.

On 8 September, Fr Coelho took part in the First Professions of the novices at Genzano. On 25 September he held an online conference with all the confreres of INP on the topic of ongoing formation. From 1 to 5 October, he was in Valdocco for the opening of the *Museo-Casa Don Bosco*.

After the intermediate Council meetings, from 17 to 20 October 2020, the Councillor took part in the online meeting of the regional formation commission for Africa-Madagascar, and from 27 to 30 October, the same for the Mediterranean Region. On 21 October he took part in the online meeting of Provinces of Interamerica, and on 27 October the meeting of Provincials of the South Cone Region, offering some post-chapter reflections and sharing information on the Sector's work. Meanwhile, some members of the Sector offered moments of animation for groups of Rectors and confreres from the various provinces in Italy regarding the new document on *Animating and Governing the Community*.

From 3 to 6 November 2020, Fr Coelho took part in the online meeting of the regional formation commission for Central and North Europe, and from 16 to 19 November, the same meeting for the East

Asia - Oceania Region. On 5 November he held a meeting, together with commission members, for the revision of the Salesian Proper, with Fr Corrado Maggioni, under-secretary of the Congregation for Divine Worship. On 11 November, with Fr Silvio Roggia, he took part in a meeting with the commission preparing for the celebration of the St Francis de Sales Jubilee Year, on the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his death. From 12-13 November he took part in the online meeting of the extended Team at the Ongoing Formation Centre, America - Quito. On 20 November, along with two other Sector members, he offered a number of formation sessions to 4 new provincials for the Africa-Madagascar Region. On 20 November he held a meeting with the commission for the revision of the Salesian Proper. On 21 November he visited the international Salesian community in Testaccio, where he was able to greet the new Rector, Fr Orestes Fistarol. On 22 November he took part in the ordination of Augusto Samuel Francisco (ANG) which was held in the upper church at the UPS. On 27 November he met with Fr Reinhard Gesing, GER Provincial, during his visit to Headquarters.

On 5 December, Fr Coelho presided at the Curatorium meet-

ing for the Gerini international formation community in Rome, but online still due to restrictions imposed by COVID-19. On 7 December he took part in an online meeting together with other Sector members, with Fr Juan Crespo (SMX), in preparation for the School of Salesian Accompaniment (August-September 2021). The same day the Sector team held a meeting with Bro. Marco Bay on the question of consultation in view of revision of the *Ratio*. On 8 December, feast of the Immaculate Conception, the Councillor accompanied the Rector Major to Testaccio for the blessing and opening of the community chapel renewed by artist Fr Marko Rupnik, SJ. From 9-12 December the Councillor's offices were moved from the "Marghera" side of the building to the "Marsala" side. On 12 December the Councillor presided at the online meeting with the six regional/inter-regional formation centres (Quito, Berkeley, Europe, Nairobi, Bengaluru, Manila).

The archives of the Formation sector have been digitally setup within Headquarter's internal network. Work has also continued on the celebration of the centenary year of Fr Albera's death in 2021 (photo exhibition, video, and books on Albera). Work is also continuing

on the preparation of the two aids for meditation for the Salesians of Don Bosco, result of the seminar held in May 2018.

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

The General Councillor for Youth Ministry, together with other members of the Department, has begun the first phase of animation for YM Delegates for the 2020-2026 period. From 11 July until 23 October, 94 individual online meetings with all Youth Ministry Delegates have been held for the following provinces, vice-provinces and delegations: Africa-Madagascar Region (13), South Asia Region (12), East Asia-Oceania Region (17), Inter-america Region (13), America South Cone Region (11), Mediterranean Region (10) and Central North Europe Region (18).

Through remote meetings and in collaboration with a working team, on 21 July and 9 September the Councillor met the team for the *Red América Social Salesiana* network.

Online conferences with the Salesian Provinces in Colombia (SDB and FMA), held on 26 July, saw 120 people involved, including educators and religious.

On 28 August, and present personally at the *Opere Sociali Don Bosco* at Sesto San Giovanni, he spent a day with the EPC Council for Schools and the CFP (Ongoing Formation) Council for the Salesian Lombardo-Emiliana Province. The following day a video conference was organised with a concluding discussion involving more than 120 people from 9 countries of the Secular Movement of the Daughters of the Sacred Hearts Institute.

On the occasion of the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the arrival of the FMA in Tierra del Fuego, the Councillor, on 14 August, met young people from the Rio Grande (Argentina) online, which took place in interview format. On 30 August, instead, he took part in a radio broadcast in Ecuador in a lengthy interview organised by SYM young people. In October the Councillor gladly celebrated the closing Mass for the Central Italy SYM Forum at the Sacred Heart Basilica in Rome. Also, on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the SYM meeting at Cumbaya, Fr Miguel Angel García met with a group of 70 young people. He also had the pleasure of meeting the small SYM team from Africa (24 October, 7 November and 12 December) and the Inter-america SYM group (17 December). He then took part in the General

Assembly of the European SYM (20 and 21 November). In December he met youth ministry delegates and coordinators of the SYM for East Asia-Oceania (2 and 3 December) and for South Asia (5 December). On 8 December, he was involved in contributing to the “International Marian Circle”, a celebration organised by the young people at Valdocco with young people who had taken part in GC28.

From 14 to 17 September there was an online regional meeting with Youth Ministry Delegates from the Africa-Madagascar Region; then from 17 to 20 October with Interamerica and from 24 to 27 October with America South Cone. The South Asia national team (DBYA-SA) organised a meeting on 31 October, while the South Asia Delegates met with Fr Miguel Angel García from 1 to 4 November; the Delegates from Europe (both regions) were linked up from the 5<sup>th</sup> to the 6<sup>th</sup>, while those from East Asia-Oceania were linked from 10 to 13 November.

Participation in the refresher course on charismatic identity on 16 October, promoted by DBTech and organised by the International Formation Centre (ITCILO), was also interesting. On 2 October the Councillor was involved in a round table discussion with entrepre-

neurs working with COB Province: the “Provincial Bosco Skills”, meeting for the second time.

The Councillor offered a formation afternoon to the YM team for ICC on 15 September; it involved members from the Province’s Youth Ministry Office. On 2 December the Councillor also accompanied their reflection in morning and afternoon sessions; then followed an interesting discussion in the afternoon with the Provincial Advisory Group for the Parish and Oratory – for the the same Province.

24 July saw the Councillor involved in an online contribution to the CICSAL-SEPSUR ESCOLAR group, made up of the SDB and FMA Provinces in Argentina, Chile, Uruguay and Paraguay. On 17 September he took part in a conference of the ESA (*Escuela Salesiana América*) central commission; he then gave some guidelines to the Salesian European Schools Commission.

This contribution was also requested on 26 September, for an online formation day with Salesians from Albania and Kosovo.

The Councillor was present for the opening of the *Museo-Casa Don Bosco* (Valdocco, Turin); on 2 October he was involved with the press conference, while on 3 October, he was there for the official opening

ceremony and on 4 October at the Mass celebrated by the Rector Major. During August and September, he worked with an artist to plan, then implement the Youth Ministry Room; specifically, this meant 4 paintings for the room illustrating Don Bosco’s dream. At the Rector Major’s invitation he also took part in various meetings with the Museum team, the Rectors of the communities at Valdocco, together with the Provincial and Vice-Provincial. In November and December, he also followed up the coordination of works for the setting up of this Room with those responsible for the Museum.

At the meeting of Rectors and pastoral coordinators for the COM Province on 8 October, the Councillor offered two formation presentations followed by a wide-ranging discussion.

On 20 October, he held a brief meeting with the CISI (Conference of Italian Salesian Provinces) national Parishes-Oratory Office.

On 23 and 26 October the Councillor met with provincials from the Interamerica and America South Cone Regions respectively. On 3 November the councillor held a meeting with all the provincials from Africa-Madagascar and a formation session with new provincials on the 16<sup>th</sup>.

A brief meeting was held on 28 October with the IUS (Salesian Higher Education Institutes) Administration Council; on the same day he organised two formation sessions by language of belonging, for new Youth Ministry delegates (around 35 of them).

He offered another formation session on 3 November for the Rectors and Provincial Councillors from Paraguay.

On 16 October and 20 November there was a meeting between the SDB and FMA Departments.

Still in November, on the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup>, there was a meeting between the Team and the American Salesian Ongoing Formation Centre (CSFPA).

The Councillor was invited to contribute to the 4<sup>th</sup> Salesian Education Congress, on 17 November, organised by the Salesian University of Ecuador. The same day he held a video conference with members of the Offices and educators belonging to the Pinardi Social Platform (Madrid, Spain).

Commitments of November ended on the 25<sup>th</sup> with a formation session for the Development Offices in the Americas, based on their consultation role in the provinces. Instead, on 5 December the Councillor held a formation session for educators belonging to

the Salesian Schools Network in Peru.

As the President of Don Bosco International (DBI), on 1 July the Councillor signed up for an initiative promoted by Caritas within the network of faith-based organisations in Brussels. In December he was involved in selecting someone to take up a Virtual Internship in DBI. At the same time, together with the executive secretary of DBI, they studied and prepared the online event on the occasion of the Feast of Don Bosco planned for 29 January 2021.

On 12 December he led the day of recollection for the St Thomas community belonging to the UPS Vice-Province.

In July and September, several coordination meetings took place between the Youth Ministry Councillor and the Councillors for Missions, Social Communication and Formation, but also with the Delegate for the Salesian Family Secretariat. Programmes, common initiatives, the composition of the team and the themes to be reflected upon together during the six-year period were shared. At the same time, 13 coordination meetings were held with the Department team at headquarters; coordination meetings were also arranged for the development of the DBI strategic



plan, for our presence in Salesian Missions INC and in DBTechAfrica.

Over these months the Councillor has also been working on preparing a pamphlet on “Youth Ministry and Family”; a document on educative-pastoral keys to GC28; presentation of the Encyclical *Fratelli tutti*.

It is also important to highlight the online consultancy service to some provinces for the development and implementation of the province’s plans (SEPP and OPP), as well as support with regard to the procedures, criteria and practices of lay management of Salesian works.

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

Due to the COVID-19 health crisis with restrictions on movement, the Councillor for Social Communication was not able to travel to Salesian Headquarters in Rome, Italy, to be physically present for General Council meetings.

Therefore, from August to December he joined in from Brazil, online and regularly, with meetings of the General Council.

Over this same period, but still online, he worked from Brazil, holding various meetings at na-

tional, regional and continental level, accompanying the Department’s Communications Team and following up the ordering and planning of various services: Website, ANS, Photos, Videos, Salesian Bulletin.

Specifically, this led to meetings of Communications Delegates from South Cone and Inter-America Regions, Africa-Madagascar, South Asia as well as East Asia-Oceania and Central Europe.

The same applies to meetings with *Salesian Bulletin* Editors from the Americas, South Asia and East Asia-Oceania; with those in charge of Publishing Houses (America and Europe); and those in charge of Radio (the Americas).

The Communications Plan for 2021-2026 (for the Regions) was drawn up at a second meeting of Communications Delegates from the Regions.

At the invitation of the Regionals for America South Cone and the Africa-Madagascar Region he spoke to provincials regarding the overall Communication Plan for 2020-2026.

In October, a ‘Reduced Consultative Group’ online was held with representatives of five regions.

In November he began a personal dialogue online with each of the Communications delegates from the provinces.

As already indicated, only on 25 December Fr Gildásio Mendes was able to arrive at Salesian Headquarters in Rome.

### **The Councillor for the Missions**

After the General Council Summer Session, the Councillor for the Missions, Fr Alfred Maravilla, visited some of the Salesian Mission offices in Europe, accompanied by Fr George Menamparapil, the Coordinator for Salesian Mission Offices. From 16-18 July he visited *Jugendwerk Don Bosco* in Beromünster, Switzerland. Then from 19-21 July he went to Madrid, Spain, to visit *Misiones Salesianas*. He was able to meet with the directors and their lay collaborators for moments of dialogue and sharing. From 3 to 4 August, he was in Warsaw for a two-day meeting with those in charge of the Salesian Mission Office there (SOM). He continued his visit to acquaint himself with the Mission Offices, going to Bonn, where he stayed from 5 to 8 August. This was an opportunity for a closer acquaintance with the *Don Bosco Mission* and to meet the Procurator, Director and their staff *in situ*. Due to COVID-19 re-

strictions, the meeting with all their lay collaborators was held online. The purpose of these visits has been especially, to get to know the Mission Offices close up and to listen to the staff working there, understand their plans for the future and the challenges they face. New health restrictions imposed to fight COVID-19 did not allow him to visit the other Mission offices in Europe, but the Councillor intends to visit them as soon as journeys are allowed. From halfway through August until the beginning of October Fr Maravilla remained at headquarters in Rome with his co-workers in the Mission Sector, finalising planning for the Mission Sector for the six-year period and materials being prepared for Salesian Mission Day 2021.

Given that the pandemic had not relented, in agreement with the UPS, the three-month course in English on Missionary Ministry was postponed until the following year, and the send-off ceremony for the 151<sup>st</sup> missionary expedition was postponed until after Easter 2021.

After 7 attempts, on 7 October Fr Maravilla finally succeeded in departing for Papua New Guinea with one stopover and some days of quarantine in Manila, the

Philippines. From Manila he took a flight for Port Moresby with the new Superior of the PGS Vice-Province, Fr Gregorio Bicomong Jr. After the compulsory 14 day quarantine, Fr Maravilla presided at the installation of his successor, Fr Bicomong, as Superior of the PGS Vice-Province on 29 October in the Archdiocesan Shrine to Mary Help of Christians. Due to health restrictions, confreres from most of the houses followed the installation online.

While handing over to the new Superior in Papua New Guinea, Fr Maravilla, together with the Missions Sector Team, continued with online regional meetings with provincial delegates for mission animation (DIAM) that had been previously planned: 27-29 October (Central and North Europe), 2-4 November (Mediterranean), 5-6 November (Africa-Madagascar), 10-12 November (South Asia), 16-17 November (Interamerica and South Cone), 18-20 November (East Asia-Oceania). On 1 December he returned to Headquarters for the General Council winter session. From there, during December, he also took part in a number of virtual meetings of the Don Bosco in the World Foundation and the Don Bosco Network.

## The Economist General

The Economist had been expected in Bonn at the end of August for the musical spectacular with young people from Medellin, celebrating the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Beethoven. Due to COVID-19 the date was shifted to 2022, but the Economist met just the same with those in charge of Bonn Mission Office and was able to be briefed on the activities they have carried out. This was followed by participation in the “Salesian Forum”, this year in Munich, a by now traditional meeting to reflect on Salesian pedagogy in the current socio-political context of Europe.

From September – December I took part in meetings, conferences and board meetings (CdA or *Consigli di Amministrazione*)... all held online. Among these, three of the Boards had changed members and also modified their statutes, e.g.. Don Bosco International, the Gerini Foundation, the Don Bosco in the World Foundation.

The Don Bosco Network Board meeting was held halfway through September. In fact, a change of Secretary General had been planned. It was a very significant meeting and what emerged was the huge degree of synergy among the large NGOs committed to mission works offered by Salesians.

The emergency connected with the pandemic spread throughout the world has encouraged a more intense accompaniment of various provinces. Meetings with provincial economers/bursars and experts have been organised with the Ecomer's Office team at Headquarters, with the aim of finding out in good time about potential situations of difficulty and taking appropriate preventive measures to avoid further inconvenience. In Rome, visits to the catacombs for pilgrims and tourists have been suspended, and this has had far-reaching consequences, not only for the financial situation of the St Calistus Institute community.

Involvement with Mission Office Board meetings during November and December was mainly to discuss budgets and plans for 2021.

The Ecomer's involvement in various events, especially in October and November, was particularly demanding. There were several occasions when he endeavoured to define the position of the Salesian Congregation and to help acquire new understandings: the presentation of the Encyclical "*Fratelli Tutti*", the "Never again Semitism" conference, "Five years of *Laudato Si*" – the earth needs to take a deep breath", "Child Protection: Prevention through infor-

mation" and the Ecomer Generals Assembly on the "Economy of Francis". Many of the topics discussed will be taken up at formation meetings for Economers/bursars and perhaps we will be able to consider our usual commitments with a different vision.

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

After the General Council summer session, the Councillor for the Africa and Madagascar Region, Fr Alphonse Owoudou, was finally able to go to his Region for the first time, first of all for a brief and providential visit to the confreres and Salesian works in Addis Abeba (Ethiopia) from 25 to 28 July 2020, then three weeks in Cameroon to obtain residence permits for the Democratic Republic of Congo and for the coming return to Italy. On 18 August he was able to go to AFC Province (Democratic Congo). With the help of the AFC provincial and confreres, from 20 August to 3 September he was able to meet and listen to many of the confreres in the three AFC areas, i.e., Lubumbashi, La Botte and Goma, and then conclude with an assembly of the confreres.

On 30 September, the Regional Councillor held a first meeting with some of the provincial, members of Conference Council, to prepare for the CIVAM (Conference of Provinces and Vice-Provinces of Africa-Madagascar) Assembly. Following this first consultation, the Regional Commissions for Social Communication and Formation began their own reflection on planning for the six-year period. The Regional was thus able to join the work of the Social Communication Commission on 15, 16 and 17 October, led by the General Councillor and Regional Coordinator. From Monday 19 October the Regional joined the Rector Major and other Councillors for the intermediate session, lasting ten days. In the meantime, especially on 19 October, he “visited” – through Zoom – regional Formation Delegates who were holding a work session with the Department in Rome. He then consulted with the IUS Coordination, Bosco Tech Africa and the SAFCAM team (Regional Centre for Ongoing Formation) to prepare their contributions at the upcoming CIVAM Assembly. From 2 to 5 November the Regional, assisted by the Presidency Council for the Region, presided at the 19<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of CIVAM, involving all the Superiors of the Re-

gion and Delegates from AFO, AFW/Nigeria and AFE/Sudan. This was an opportunity to review the statutes of the Conference, modify and approve the six-year plans of the Commissions, and make a number of decisions. Then, assisted by Fr Ángel, the Rector Major, the Rector Major’s Vicar and Sector General Councillors, the Procurator General and the person in charge of the Salesian Family Secretariat, Fr Alphonse Owoudou organised an introductory mini-session for the three new Provincials for Africa: Fr Roland Mintsa, ATE, Fr Martin Lasarte, ANG and Fr Innocent Bizimana, MDG. This was from 16-20 November. As far as celebrations are concerned, the Regional replied to the invitation of confreres for the African feast at the Testaccio community (Rome) on 19 November, as well as the priestly ordination of Fr Augusto Samuel Francisco on 22 November at the Pontifical Salesian University. From 2 December, Fr Alphonse Owoudou and all members of the General Council began the plenary session currently underway (at the time of writing), from December to January. On 28 December, he brought the Youth Ministry Coordinators in the Region together to reflect on elements for a set of rules for the

Commission, as well as the main pastoral guidelines to present to Provincials of Africa and Madagascar at one of their next assemblies, in the light of the Rector Major's 8 priorities and the six-year plan of the Youth Ministry Sector.

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

During August and September, the Councillor took part virtually in the various Curatorium meetings for the inter-provincial houses of formation: Novitiate in Barbacena, Postnovitiate in Campo Grande, Salesian Brother Formation Centre (CRESCO), Theologate in Santiago, Novitiate in Curitiba, Theologate in San Justo, Novitiate in Montevideo and Postnovitiate in Córdoba.

In September he also took part virtually in meetings of Social Communications Delegates, Publishers and Radio in the Americas, appreciating the joint work of Salesians and lay professionals in this delicate area of pastoral involvement. During the Formation Delegates meeting for the Provinces of the South Cone, he was able to listen to the proposals and challenges for the next six years.

He met with the two provincial conferences, CISur and CIS Brazil, and was involved with the joint meeting of provincials of the Region from 24 to 26 October, at which he was able to share the planning for the six-year period by all the Congregation's Sectors (Formation, Youth Ministry, Social Communication and Missions), as well as dealing with the respective topics of inter-regional houses: Ongoing Formation in Quito and Brother Formation in Guatemala.

Still in October he took part in the Curatorium meetings for the Theologate in Lapa and the Postnovitiate in Lorena; then in the meeting of Provincial Councils of Argentina and the Salesian Network in Brazil, together with the FMA. In November he arrived back in Rome for the upcoming winter session of the General Council and took part in the meeting of the extended team for the Quito Centre and the first steps preparing for the Salesian Family Spirituality Days to be held at the beginning of the coming year.

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

After taking part online in the General Council summer session,

the Regional Councillor remained in the Vietnam Province looking for a way to get his visa for Italy.

During the four months prior to the winter session, Fr Joseph Phuoc took part in virtual (online) meetings organised by Sector Councillors and provincial delegates for 4 of the Sectors in the region (Formation, Youth Ministry, Social Communication, and Mission animation).

Also, with the help of his predecessor, Fr Václav Klement, the Regional took part in meetings with almost all the National Federations of Past Pupils in the Region, along with World Delegate Bro. Nam and their GEX Councillor, Mr Niel Evangelista.

Even without personal meetings, the virtual manner of meeting sector delegates was of great help to the Regional Councillor since, over a short period, he was presented to many Salesian confreres and members of the Salesian Family responsible for the Salesian mission in their respective countries.

During the same period, Fr Phuoc undertook the consultation (online) for the appointment of the new superiors of the Provinces of Philippines South-Pakistan (FIS), Vietnam-Mongolia (VIE) and the Myanmar (MYM) Vice-Province.

The visa for Italy was finally released in November. Together with Bro. Dominic Nguyen Duc Nam, World Delegate for the Salesian Cooperators' Association and the World Confederation of Past Pupils, Fr Phuoc was able to come to Rome and take part in the winter session of the General Council from 7 December.

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

The Summer Plenary session of the General Council concluded in July 2020. The Regional for South Asia, Fr Biju Michael, stayed on in Rome in expectation of a special flight to travel to India during the COVID-19 restrictions. After attending a General Council meeting on 3 August and an online meeting with the heads of the Past Pupils Association in South Asia and East Asia-Oceania on 5 August, the Regional travelled to Guwahati via Bangalore on 7 August and reached Guwahati, India on 8 August. After a mandatory COVID-19 test, he stayed at Don Bosco University for home quarantine for fourteen days. During the quarantine, on 15 August he participated in the online meeting of AFSAN (Association of Former Salesians, Aspirants and

Novices), and a meeting of the Salesian Co-operators of the Region on 16 August. At the end of the quarantine period and a farewell from the Don Bosco University where he had served before the General Chapter, the Regional had to change the plans made to visit houses in the Province of Guwahati and submit to another seven days of voluntary quarantine due to contact with a COVID-19 patient. He maintained the voluntary isolation in the community of Don Bosco Institute, Guwahati from 23-31 August.

On 31 August, the Regional reached Don Bosco Renewal Centre (DBRC), Bangalore and started a seven-day quarantine during which important online meetings were held. On 1-3 September, the SPCSA Assembly was held online. From 4-5 September the SPCSA Council met online.

On 6 September, the Regional, after a short visit to the FMA community at Bannerghatta moved to the Salesian Provincial House in Bangalore in view of starting the Consultations for a new Provincial of INK province. On 7 September, the Regional addressed the Provincial Council of INK as a start to the Provincial Consultation. On 8-9 September, the Regional visited the Salesian works at Chitradurga,

Karnataka. On 10 September, an additional meeting of the SPCSA (Salesian Provincial Conference of South Asia) Council was held to confirm major decisions for the region. On 10 September, the Curatorium of the Don Bosco Renewal Centre was held in a dual mode (online and offline) and all Provincials attended it. The following days were occupied by further negotiations to formulate the updated legal agreements for registering the sale deed of the DBSM property.

From 18 September, continuous Consultation meetings of confreres in small clusters of communities started, beginning at Kristu Jyoti College, Bangalore. On the same day, the Regional celebrated Mass and gave a conference to students and staff of the Theologate and joined the ceremony of blessing and laying of the foundation stone for a new Don Bosco College at Bangalore. In the afternoon he paid a visit to the FMA Provincial house in Bangalore.

During the trips to conduct the consultation meetings, the Regional took the chance to visit as many of the Salesian communities. On 19 September, the meeting was held at the Provincial House; on 20 September at the Pre-Novitiate house at Mysore after a visit to the Don Bosco Makkalamane in Mysore. On



21 September, the consultation meeting was held at Chitradurga and on 22 September, the Regional preached a full day Tri-monthly Recollection for the confreres gathered at Don Bosco Hospet and celebrated the Eucharist with the confreres. At the end of the day, he visited Don Bosco Devadurga community. On 23 September, after visiting Don Bosco Yadgiri, a consultation meeting was held at Bablad where together with the Provincial community he also participated in the blessing and inauguration of the Laura Bhavan Girl's Hostel. On 24 September, the Regional spent the day at Don Bosco Bidar the northern-most mission station in Karnataka.

On 25 September, the Regional visited the Hyderabad Provincial House and joined the Provincial, Fr Thathireddy Vijaya Bhaskar and confreres for breakfast and had a tour of the facilities and works. The same day, he reached Trivandrum by flight and conducted the consultation meeting at Don Bosco Monvila and visited Don Bosco Kollam en route to Vaduthala. Two consultation meetings were held at Vaduthala on 26 September. On 27 September, the Regional joined the post-novitiate community to begin the celebration of the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the

house and conducted a consultation meeting for the staff and philosophy students. On 28 September, he returned to Bangalore Provincial House as the special permit to visit Kerala was restricted due to COVID-19 protocols. On 29 September, he reached Kannur by flight and conducted a consultation meeting at Angadikadavu. On 30 September, a meeting was held at Don Bosco Sultan Bathery. The Regional then proceeded to Padiyaval Novitiate and after a lively basketball match, gave a conference to the novices and attended the academy organized by the novices. On 31 September, after celebrating the Eucharist with the novices, the Regional left for Bangalore. On 4 October, he concluded the consultation with a second meeting with the Provincial Council members.

On 8-9 October the Regional visited the Salesian provincial House of Chennai and together with the Provincial, Fr K. M. Jose, the Regional visited the Salesian Theologate, Becchi Don Bosco at Kavara-pettai where he released the book "Communicating the Good News: Renewed Focus on Evangelization" edited by Fr. Cassius Correya SDB and addressed the students and staff of the theologate. The Regional also visited Fr. Jayakumar John

(INS) who was awaiting a surgery in a hospital in Chennai.

On 9-10 October the Regional visited the Province of Tiruchy. The Provincial, Fr. Agilan Sarprasadam and the Vice-Provincial Fr. Arul Maran guided the Regional on a visit to Don Bosco Youth Village, Susaipudyanpatti, Don Bosco Amsam, and Don Bosco Manikandam.

On 11 October the Regional visited the Don Bosco Renewal Centre once again to discuss with the confreres the need for renovation of the thirty-year-old facilities.

In order to start the consultations for a new Provincial of New Delhi Province (INN), the Regional travelled to the Chotanagpur region of the Province on 12 October and arrived at the community of Kokar, Ranchi in Jharkhand State. After a few days of quarantine, on 16 October he visited the Salesians at Don Bosco Centre, Jargo and a sub-centre at Kodeng in West Bengal. On 17 October, he visited the communities of Bichna and Bariatu, and on 18 October, the presences at Rurungkocha, Hatia and in the evening he held a consultation meeting of confreres of the region at Kokar. On 19 October the communities of Kereng, Kolebira and Gumla were visited and a meeting was held at Gumla.

From 19-29 October, the Regional, while travelling, attended the intermediary General Council meetings online.

The Jokbahla and Jumaikela missions in Chhattisgarh State were visited on 20 October. On 21 October, the Regional visited Kuar-munda in the Odisha State and conducted the consultation meetings there. On 22 October, the meeting was held at the Pre-novitiate house at Jharsuguda after which he travelled to Delhi.

On 23 October, an online meeting of all the networks of SPCSA, to share ideas and concerns was held while the Regional stayed at SPCI house New Delhi. On 24 October, a meeting of all the SPCSA team members who reside at Delhi, along with the Provincial, Fr. Jose Mathew was held to discuss particularly concerns about space for offices and residence in the wake of the crisis of possible sale of properties in Delhi.

On 25 October, from the Provincial house at Delhi, the Regional conducted the consultation meeting online for communities of Itarhi, Jabalpur, Jhansi, Kanpur, and Lucknow. On 26 October, the Regional travelled to Chandigarh for a visit to the community there, and en route he visited the presence at Ghanaur. From Chandi-

gargh he proceeded to Jharmari in the State of Punjab, where a consultation meeting was organized. On 27 October, the consultation meeting was organized for the Delhi region at the Provincial house. On 28 October, the Regional had a meeting with the Provincial Council. Another online meeting with the Rectors and leaders of the Province was held on 29 October. The General Council meetings also concluded on 29 October.

On 30 October, the Regional had an online meeting with the senior lay and SDB staff of DBTech.

On 31 October, the Regional held a dual-mode meeting with the SDB and lay staff of Bosconet. He also met personally with some confreres of the Don Bosco Technical Institute and the Provincial House.

On 1 November, the Regional visited Don Bosco School, Alaknanda community and held a meeting with the leaders of the Salesian Co-operators of the Province of New Delhi.

From 4 November to 16 November the Regional was treated at the Holy Family Hospital in Delhi for COVID-19. Number of confreres, including the Provincial were hospitalised in November. After discharge from the hospital and further quarantine in the Provincial House, on 25 November he was cer-

tified negative for COVID-19 and, together with the Provincial, he visited the SPCI house, the Gurgaon land of the SPCSA and the Salesian presence at Jhajjar in Haryana. After visiting the work amidst the brick kiln workers there the Provincial guided the Regional to the communities at Najafgarh and Don Bosco Ashalayam and its YaR works and youth ministry (DBARK) offices. He also visited the FMA Ashalayam community.

On 26 November the Regional travelled to Rome to participate in the Winter Plenary Session of the General Council which started on 1 December. In December he attended several meetings online to develop the "Poverty Alleviation" programme in the South Asia Region and also held an online SPCSA meeting on 2 December. The General Council meetings are scheduled to end on 28 January.

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

July 2020. 10 – Conclusion of the General Council's summer session. 11-16 – Visited the following provinces in Poland: PLE and PLS. 17.07-06.08 – at Headquarters in Rome, Italian language course.

August 2020. 07-12 – Holidays in Poland. 13-16 – a visit to get to know the Austria Province (AUS), 15 – Installation of the new AUS Provincial and meeting with the Provincial Council. 17 – joined in the funeral for the former Regional Councillor for North Europe, Fr Štefan Turanský in the Slovak Province (SLK). 18-19 – visited the PLO Province. 20 – met with the community of the inter-provincial Theological Studentate in Krakow (PLS). 21-25 – a visit to get to know the Catholic Greek Rite Ukrainian Vice-Province (UKR), 22 – installation of the new UKR Superior and met with the Provincial Council. 31.08-03.09 – a visit to get to know the Slovak Province (SLK), 01.09 – installation of the new SLK Provincial and met with the Provincial Council.

04-08 – a visit to get to know the Czech Republic Province (CEP) in Brno and Prague. 12-15 – back at Salesian headquarters. 16-20 – a visit to get to know the German Province (GER), in Munich, Burgstetdt, Chemnitz: met with the Provincial Council. 21 – visited the inter-provincial Postnovitiate in Łąd (PLN). 25 – visited the inter-provincial Novitiate in Kopiec (PLO). 26 – visited the PLS Province. 27 – took part in the

solemn celebrations for the founding of the Michaelite Congregation in Miejsce Piastowe, in Poland.

October 2020. 02-06 – took part in the opening the *Museo-Casa Don Bosco* in Valdocco. 05 – met with the community of the International Theological Studentate at the Crocetta, Turin (ICP). 14 – visited the PLE Province. 19-29 – General Council intermediary session – on-line. 30 – met online with those in charge of SC in ECeN. 31 – met with Fr Pierluigi Cameroni, Postulator for the Causes of Saints.

November 2020. 3-4 – online meeting with those responsible for Formation in ECeN. 5 – online meeting with those responsible for YM in ECeN. 5-11 – in Poland for various meetings in Salesian communities: PLE Province: Łódź, Provincial House - Warsaw; PLN Province: Provincial House - Piła, Stettino, Dębno. 11 – arrived back at Salesian headquarters, study of Italian. 17 – online meeting: Curatorium of the International Theological Studentate, Crocetta, Turin (ICP). 25 – online: Curatorium of the Inter-provincial Novitiate for the Polish Provinces - Kopiec (PLO). 26-28 – visit from the German Provincial, Fr Reinhard Gesing to Salesian headquarters. 29.11.2020-28.01.2021-General Council's winter sessione.

December 2020. 01-22 – conversations with Provincials of the EceN Region: Fr Tadeusz Itrych (PLO), Fr Reinhard Gesing (GER), Fr Peter Timko (SLK), Fr János Andrásfalvy (UNG), Fr Martin Hobza (CEP), Fr Jarosław Pizoń (PLO), Fr Tadeusz Jarecki (PLE), Fr Marcin Kaznowski (PLS), Fr James G. Briody (GBR). Met with Fr Pier Fausto Frisoli, Procurator General. Various meetings with Fr Joan Lluís Playà, the Rector Major's Delegate for the Salesian Family Secretariat, in view of the Salesian Family Spirituality Days. Met with Fr Pavel Ženíšek, Missions Sector. 23.12.2020-06.01.2021 – in Poland. Various meetings with confreres of Salesian communities: Warsaw-Provincial House, Piła, Nowogródek, Poznań. Visited my parents in Dębno.

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

From halfway through July and for all of August I had the opportunity to take part in the Curatorium meetings for seven initial formation communities in the Region: the Novitiate in La Ceja in COM, the Copacabana Postnovitiate in COM, the Theologate in Bogotá, the CRESCO formation stage, the

Postnovitiate and Theologate in Guatemala, CAM. I also took part in the meeting for the theologate in Las Cañas, Chile, in the South Cone Region where our confreres from Bolivia, Peru and Ecuador are studying.

Also in August I was able to meet the provincials and their councils from two provinces: Bolivia and Peru. I had a fraternal meeting with the theologate community in Guatemala and with Rectors in Peru. I took part online at the instalment of Fr John Paul Zabala as Provincial in Bolivia.

I arrived back at headquarters in Rome on 18 October and took part in the intermediate session of the General Council in the mornings, then in the first week, in meetings with provincials in the afternoon. Council sessions concluded on Thursday 28<sup>th</sup>, and most of the time was dedicated to the planning of the Rector Major and his Council. We also had two formation sessions, one with Fr Pier Fausto Frisoli, on the responsibility of Councillors to study and speak about cases they needed to address according to Canon Law. The other formation session was with Fr Joshtrom Kureethadam sdb, on *Laudato Si'* and the Pope's initiatives where that encyclical is concerned. We also spent a number of

evening sessions on “administrative procedures”.

In November I visited the confreres from the Region studying at the UPS in Rome, celebrated Mass with them, met them and then had lunch with some of them. In the first week of November, I held a consultation for discerning the new Provincial of the Antilles. The rest of the month was dedicated to writing up the dossier. I took part in the Curatorium meeting for the post-novitiate in Quito and also in Messina where we have students from Ecuador, the Antilles and Haiti.

I also provided continuity for the CRESCO reshaping commission and had the 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting. I took part in the meetings of the Centre for Ongoing Formation extended team in Quito. Thanks to the availability of BOL we now have the second Brother from Interamerica who will soon join this community. I also had the opportunity to meet and greet the Provincial and Council of the Antilles. I would like to thank Fr Francisco Batista for the service he is completing as Provincial.

In December we began the first part of the General Council’s winter session. I presented the consultation for the Antilles, concluding the discernment which led to Fr José Pastor being appointed Provincial of ANT. We also had the

first part of a course for Regional Councillors. At the beginning of the month I met the young Salesian priests from SUE and SUO, for their quinquennial meeting. A meeting with regional centres. I also had a meeting between the two communities responsible for the animation of the two ongoing formation centres in the Interamerica Region: Don Bosco Hall, Berkeley Ca. and the Salesian Centre for Ongoing Formation in America, Quito, Ecuador.

### ***The Councillor for the Mediterranean Region***

After the General Council sessions, the Councillor for the Mediterranean Region went to Spain to visit his family in Burguillos (Seville) from 15 to 31 July. From 3 to 26 August at Colle Don Bosco, he took part in the Italian course organised for prenovices from Spain, Croatia and Portugal, accompanying them spiritually in their activities. He then went to Auronzo, INE Province, where from 4 to 6 August he took part in a formation and planning day. On the 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> he took part in the ICC Assembly in Rome. On the 29<sup>th</sup> he installed the new Provincial of ICP, Leonardo Mancini, presiding

at the Eucharist in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians in Turin at which a large number of confreres and other members of the Salesian family were also present.

He then spent the first days of September back at Headquarters where he took part in a number of online meetings with the Provincial Council of MOR. On 8 September he presided at the first professions of the novices in Genzano. On the 10<sup>th</sup> he moved to Lisbon, for a visit to acquaint himself with and animate the houses in the Portuguese Province. He met with the Provincial Council then visited a number of houses in the south - Lisbon, Estoril, Manique, Setúbal, Evora - and also attended some lessons in Portuguese. From there he went to Madrid to take part in a meeting of the administration council for the Mission office on the 12<sup>th</sup>, as well as the Council of the JyD (*Jóvenes y Desarrollo*) Foundation. On 27 September he was in Catania (ISI) for a meeting of the Mediterranean Region held on the 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> in the mornings, then met the Iberian Conference online and on 30 September was present for the CISI meeting.

From Catania he went to Turin to take part in the opening of the new *Museo-Casa Don Bosco* at Valdocco, which took place on 2 and 3

October. From 4 to 10 October he carried out a visit of acquaintance and animation to ILE Province, taking part in a meeting of Rectors and visiting the following houses: St Ambrose in Milan, Nave, Lugano, Sesto San Giovanni, and the *Beata Vergine di San Luca* and Don Bosco houses in Bologna as well as Castel de' Britti. On 14 October he arrived in Spain where he met the Council of SMX Province and greeted the Rectors online. On 19 October he personally met with the Rectors and Provincial Council of ICP. Then until 30 October, he was part of the General Council's intermediary session in Rome.

On 8 November he took part in an online meeting with all the communities from the POR Province at the conclusion of celebrations for 125 years in Portugal. On 12 November he took part in an online meetings with the two Provincial Councils in Spain. From the 17<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup>, still online he presided over the Curatorium meeting for the houses of formation in Italy (Novitiates at Colle Don Bosco and Genzano, Theologate at the Crocetta, Postnovitiates at Nave and San Tarcisio in Rome. The Curatorium for the Theologate at Messina was shifted to 30 November. From the 24<sup>th</sup> to the 26<sup>th</sup> he took part in the various ordinary ad-

ministration meetings of the General Council.

From 1 to 22 December, he took part in the General Council sessions. During this period he also took part in the various meetings of the commission for distribution of funds for mission projects. He was also present: for the opening and blessing the new community chapel at Testaccio; for the online

meeting with Provincials in Spain and the director the National YM Centre; for another online meeting with directors of the two National YM Centres for the Region; for the online meeting of the Administration Council for the Mission Office in Madrid. After celebrating the Lord's Nativity with the community, on 26 December he left for Spain to spend some days with his family.



### 5.1 New Provincials

*Reported here (in alphabetical order) are some data regarding provincials appointed by the Rector Major with the consent of his Council during December 2020.*

#### 1. RAMIREZ FERNANDEZ José Pastor Provincial of ANTILLES Province (ANT)

On 9 December 2020, the Rector Major with the consent of the General Council appointed Fr José Pastor Ramirez Fernandez as Provincial of St John Bosco Province of the Antilles (ANT) with its headquarters in Santo Domingo. The appointment is for 2021-2026. Fr Pastor Ramírez is currently the Rector and Parish Priest at St John Bosco's in Santo Domingo, Director of the Antilles Salesian Library and also offering his services as chaplain to the Sovereign Order of Malta in the Dominican Republic.

José Pastor Ramírez was born on 28 March 1959 in Jarabacoa, La Vega, Dominican Republic, the first of six children. He grew up in a peasant family who passed the values of the Christian faith onto him, and he met the Salesians at the Jarabacoa oratory where he spent his childhood and early teenage years.

He made his novitiate in Villa Mella, Dominican Republic, and professed his first vows on 16 August 1980; after his perpetual profession on 15 August 1986 in Tlaquepaque, Mexico, he was ordained priest in the city of his birth on 22 July 1989.

His list of studies is extensive: after his philosophical formation (Baccalaureate) at St Thomas Aquinas Seminary in Santo Domingo, and his theological formation (Baccalaureate) at the University of the Risen Christ in Guadalajara, Mexico, he studied Mathematical Physics at the Pedro Henríquez Ureña National University (from 1981 to 1985); he specialised in Spiritual Theology at the Pontifical Salesian University in Rome (from 1994 to 1996); Clinical Psychology at the Catholic University of Santo Domingo (1999-2003); he then gained his Masters in systematic family therapy at the Autonomous University of Santo Domingo (2007-2009), completed courses in Transactional Analysis at "Farma Green", and a number of professional formation distance-learning courses.

He has accreditation with the Hahnmemanniano International Institute (Online Argentina – from 2005 to 2006) and attended a

course in Spiritual Accompaniment at the Salesian Youth Ministry national Centre (2010-2012) in Madrid, Spain. He gained a Diploma in Leadership and Educational Management from Barna, a Diploma in Family Groups from the Centre for Human Integration, accreditation from the *Extensión Universitaria DOMUS CUDE-EC®* in Mexico (2016 to 2018), and a Diploma in Educational Neuropsychology and Cognitive Neuropsychology 2019-2020 from the Neuropsychological Formation Centre in the Dominican Republic with its headquarters in Santo Domingo.

He has been the Rector and Parish Priest of Don Bosco House in Santo Domingo (2000-2002 and from 2019 until today); at provincial level he has already served as a formator, Youth Ministry Delegate, Vice-Provincial (2000-2002) and Provincial (2002-2008).

From 2009 to 2017 he served at the Salesian General House in Rome as World Delegate for the Past Pupils of Don Bosco and World Coordinator for the Salesian Family. He was the creator of the "Salesian Family Joint Formation Programme" (PROFOCO).

Fr José Pastor Ramírez succeeds Fr Francisco Batista Batista as leader of the Province.

## 2. *KOYCKAL Jose Thomas Provincial of the INDIA BANGALORE Province (INK)*

On 10 December 2020, the Rector Major with the consent of the General Council appointed Fr Koyckal Jose Thomas as Provincial of Sacred Heart Province India (INK) with its headquarters in Bangalore.

Fr Koyickal, who will carry out his mandate from 2021-2027, will lead a province with 373 religious active in 44 communities in the States of Karnataka and Kerala in India, as well as in the missions in Nepal.

Fr Koyickal will take over the leadership of INK Province from Fr Mathew Thonikuzhiyil, SDB, who has ably served the Province over the last six years. Fr Koyickal has served the Province as Vice-Provincial since 2015 and has been a member of the Provincial Council since 2010.

Born on 22 January 1965 in Moozhoor, to Thomas and Annamma, he has 3 brothers and 2 sisters, one of whom is also a religious belonging to the Sisters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul. Fr Koyickal made his first profession at the Mount Don Bosco Novitiate in Kottagiri on 24 May 1984 then, after his theological studies at Kristu Jyoti College in Bangalore, he was or-

dained priest in St Mary's Church in Moozhoor on 2 January 1995.

After studying Philosophy and gaining a degree in English Literature from the Salesian Institute in Sonada, Fr Koyickal did his practical training in Salesians works in Irinjalakuda and Aluva. Before going on to theology, he completed his Masters in Social Work at Sacred Heart Thiruppattur (1989-1991) and in 2009, gained a research Doctorate in Social Work at Bharathidasan University in Trichy.

Before being appointed Provincial, Fr Koyickal served as the Rector and Administrator of the Don Bosco Institute in Angadikadavu and as the person in charge of the Social Work Department at that institute. Earlier he had taught at the Don Bosco School in Mannuthy and earlier still served as the Rector of the Don Bosco complex in Snehabhavan, Kochi, and as assistant parish priest and administrator of St Stephen's Church in Thope, Kollam, then as Executive Director of the Fishermen Community Development Programme social work.

During his years of service and especially over the last six years as Vice-Provincial and Youth Ministry Delegate for the Province, Fr Koyickal has become known among his confreres for his human and Sale-

sian qualities, especially his kindness, simplicity, understanding, prayerful and friendly approach, and for his planning and administrative ability.

### 3. *JOHN DAVIS Maniparemben Provincial of the Province of INDIA, NEW DELHI (INN)*

On 17 December 2020, the Rector Major, Fr Ángel Fernandez Artime, with the consent of his Council, appointed Fr Davis Maniparemben, SDB as the 5<sup>th</sup> Provincial of the Salesian Province of Jesus the Good Shepherd, New Delhi, India (INN) for the six-year period from 2021-2027. The New Delhi Province spreads across nearly half of India, encompassing 9 States and 2 Union Territories of India. The Province with 204 Salesians is set to celebrate 25 years of its foundation in January (1997-2021). Fr Davis Maniparemben professed as a member of the mother Province of Kolkata and has been part of the Delhi Province from its inception. He can speak and write Hindi and Bengali in addition to English and his mother tongue Malayalam.

Fr Davis was born on 29 June 1961 to John and Elizabeth. Both his parents have gone to their eternal reward. Two of his sisters

(Sr Annie Joice and Sr Maria Pushpam) are consecrated religious, in the Franciscan Clarist Congregation (FCC). His father, late John Maniparamben, was a freedom fighter in the Indian national struggle for freedom, having been a Second World War veteran and later a soldier in the INA (Indian National Army) founded by the great freedom fighter, Shri Subhash Chandra Bose. Fr Davis did his high school studies at Don Bosco School, Mannuthy, Kerala where he came in contact with the Salesians of Don Bosco. He was fascinated by the work of the Salesians for the education of young students. He became a member of the Salesians of Don Bosco on 24 May 1981. He was ordained a priest on 30 December 1990 at Ollur, Kerala.

His education in different parts of the country (Trichur, Sonada, Shillong, Kolkata, Bangalore) has expanded his vision and ability to understand people and situations. He is a graduate with English Honours and holds a post graduate degree in Counselling Psychology from Bangalore University. He has a professional degree in Education (B.Ed) from the University of Calcutta.

Fr Davis Maniparamben became a Headmaster at Don Bosco

School, Liluah (West Bengal) in the year 1991. Since then, he has been in the educational field bringing out the best from his staff and students in places like Kokar, Kullu, and Alaknanda. He also taught at Jokbhala and guided the Salesian community Jabalpur. Since 2019 he has been Rector and Principal of Don Bosco School Alaknanda, Delhi. In 2019 the Delhi Minority Commission awarded the School, "Outstanding School Award." For a time, he was among the panel of Inspectors for Council for the Indian School Certificate Examination. He is a member of the Peace Committee of the Delhi Minority Commission.

In addition to the long years of experience in Schools, he also has had the experience of being a Parish Priest at Hatia, Ranchi. At the Provincial level he has served 4 terms as a Provincial Councillor (1997-2003 and 2008-2014). Currently he is Provincial Delegate for Past Pupils & ADMA. In the past, he has been at various times Provincial Delegate for Formation, Education & Culture, and Groups & Movements. He has also served as a full-time Youth Ministry Coordinator of the Province. He was elected by the confreres of the Province to be a delegate of the Province at the 28<sup>th</sup> General Chap-

ter of the Salesian Congregation, held in 2020.

Fr Davis Maniparamben who is known for his love for young people, for his dynamism and for his ability to create synergy among groups will be taking up the responsibility of being the Provincial of New Delhi Province from Fr Jose Mathew Koorappallil, SDB who has led the Province from the front in the last six years, with great enthusiasm, courage, and organisational ability.

#### 4. *ZAYA Aung Bosco Superior of the MYANMAR Vice-Province (MYM)*

On 18 December 2020 the Rector Major with the consent of the General Council appointed Zaya Aung Bosco as Superior of the Mary Help of Christians Vice-Province of Myanmar (MYM) with its headquarters in Anisakan.

Don Bosco Zeya Aung, currently the Vice-Provincial and Delegate for Formation in the Vice-Province, will take up the leadership of a Vice-Province that according to the most recent data has 65 Salesians and 3 novices, active in 10 works.

Don Bosco Zeya Aung was born on 26 January 1976 in Mandalay, Myanmar. He made his Salesian novitiate in Anisakan, where he made his first profession on 24

September 1994; he professed perpetual vows on 24 September 2000, again in Anisakan, and was ordained priest on 6 April 2003 in Pathein.

Much of his service has been in Salesian work in Anisakan: first as the Vice-Rector and Economist (2006-2007) of the Novitiate, then as Novice Master and Rector (2011-2015); he has also been Parish Priest (2015-2019) at Nazareth House in Anisakan and is still (since 2015) the Rector there.

From 2007-2009 he studied in Rome at the Pontifical Salesian University (UPS), and can boast of a degree in Psychology.

He has been a Council member of the MYM Vice-Province and is currently the Vice-Provincial and Formation Delegate.

#### 5.2 Decree on the heroicity of the virtues of the Servant of God Ignatii Stuchlý, S.D.B.

*Below in an English translation is the text of the Decree on the heroicity of the virtues of the Servant of God Ignatii STUCHLÝ, published by the Congregation for the Causes of Saints on 21 December 2020. In virtue of this Decree Fr Ignatii Stuchlý is declared Venerable.*

BEATIFICATION and CANONIZATION  
OF THE SERVANT OF GOD

**IGNATI STUCHLÝ**

PROFESSED PRIEST  
OF THE SOCIETY OF SAINT FRANCIS DE SALES  
(1869-1953)

**DECREE ON THE VIRTUES**

*"Hoping against hope, he believed that he would become 'the father of many nations', according to what was said, 'So numerous shall your descendants be.' " (Rom 4:18).*

The apostolic work of the Servant of God Ignatius Stuchly was constantly characterised by hope. At a time of great difficulty for his land and for the local Church, he offered authentic testimony to the joy of the Gospel and planted the charism of Saint John Bosco in Czechoslovakia.

The Servant of God was born in Bolesław, Prussia, on 14 December 1869. As a boy, despite his weakness and often being sick, he helped the family with their work in the fields. As a young man he understood that he had been called to consecrate his life to God. Some priests had spoken to him about St John Bosco and his institution for young people. So, summoned by the Rector Major, Blessed Michael Rua, he went to Turin. He prepared to become a

religious at Valsalice and Ivrea, and on 29 September 1896 he professed perpetual vows. He was sent to Gorizia and there, while fulfilling the role of prefect of the house, he studied theology and was ordained on 3 November 1901. He was confessor and guide for many souls and for many years dedicated himself to poor young people. He used his energies in the Slovenian communities in Ljubljana and Verzej to support the works of the Society of St Francis de Sales. Then in Italy he was placed in charge of the formation of young Salesians from Bohemia and Moravia. He returned to his country in 1927, filling many roles in Frystak, including that of Provincial. These years saw great expansion of Salesian work and the Servant of God, always obedient to his superiors, was able to form a generation of religious who were perfectly observant of their religious vows and the charism of their Holy Founder.

It was from the time of the Second World War that the Servant of God, no longer young and energetic, experienced the most difficult years of his life. He saw the destruction of his own work: houses requisitioned, the religious dispersed or interned in extermination camps or coerced into forced

labour. Then came persecution of the Church and restrictions on personal freedom as a result of the communist regime.

Throughout his life, the Servant of God's practice of virtue made him both authoritative and lovable. He set an example of dedication and self-giving. He nourished his spirituality with faithful prayer and ardent Eucharistic piety. His devotion to the Sacred Heart had shaped him as a true priest of Christ. He attributed the merit of his vocation to the Virgin Mary, invoked with the antiphon "Hail Holy Queen, Mother of Mercy", and throughout his life he cultivated devotion to Mary Help of Christians. He was capable of reawakening ardour and passion for the Gospel in the Church's work to spread the faith. In the midst of the travails of his time he suffered from injustice but was able to persevere in his commitment to apostolic work. He was animated by profound charity: priestly charity and zeal for souls, as well as Salesian charity, going out to all those in need with kindness and joy.

In March 1950, the Servant of God had a stroke and spent the final years of his life in a rest home in Zlin, then in Lukov. The regime monitored him and throughout this time kept him under surveil-

lance and without contact with his religious communities. He died peacefully on 17 January 1953. Memory of his virtues soon became a clear reputation for holiness.

By virtue of this reputation, which still endures and is growing, the Servant of God's Cause of Beatification and Canonisation commenced. The Diocesan Inquiry was held at the Ecclesiastical Curia of Olomouc from 18 October 1993 to 20 January 2001 and its juridical validity recognised by this Congregation in a decree of 29 November 2002. Once the *Positio* was prepared, it was submitted to the judgement of the Historical Consultors on 11 December 2018. Then according to the usual procedures, discussion ensued as to whether the Servant of God had exercised the Christian virtues to an heroic degree. The Special Congress of Theological Consultors voted in favour on 5 November 2019. The Cardinals and Bishops, meeting in Ordinary Session on 1 December 2020, recognised that the Servant of God had exercised the theological, cardinal and related virtues to an heroic degree.

The undersigned Prefect then carefully reported all these matters to the Holy Father, Francis. His Holiness, after accepting and ratifying the voting of this Congrega-

tion for the Causes of Saints has declared today: “*The theological virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity towards God and neighbour, as well as the cardinal virtues of Prudence, Justice, Fortitude, Temperance and related virtues exercised to an heroic degree by the Servant of God Ignatius Stuchlý, Professed Priest of the Society of St Francis de Sales, are proven in the case and for the purpose at hand.*”

Finally, the Supreme Pontiff has given instructions to publish the present decree and to place it in the Acts of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints.

Rome, 21 December 2020.

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

† MARCELLUS BARTOLUCCI  
Archiepiscopus Tit. Mevaniensis  
*a Secretis*



### 5.3 Our dead confreres (1<sup>st</sup> list July-December 2020)

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

SURNAME AND NAME	PLACE of death	DATE	AGE	PROV
<b>P ABBÀ Giuseppe</b>	Rome (Italy)	02.12.2020	77	<b>ICC</b>
<b>P ADULKASEM Michael</b>	Bangkok (Thailand)	02.08.2020	64	<b>THA</b>
<b>L AGUILA Nicolas</b>	Tarla City (Philippines)	21.11.2020	65	<b>FIN</b>
<b>P ALANCHERIL Sebastian</b> <i>Was Provincial for 6 years.</i>	Kolkata (India)	25.11.2020	90	<b>INC</b>
<b>L ALBERDI ARÓSTEGUI Vicente</b>	Barcelona (Spain)	21.10.2020	93	<b>SMX</b>
<b>P ALEGRE GARCÍA Ángel</b>	Girona (Spain)	03.12.2020	83	<b>SMX</b>
<b>P ARAIZ CHURIO Bautista</b>	Barakaldo (Spain)	04.11.2020	82	<b>SSM</b>
<b>L ARTMANN Georg</b>	Hirschau (Germany)	25.11.2020	89	<b>GER</b>
<b>P AVILA Antônio Maria de</b>	Anápolis (Brazil)	15.11.2020	83	<b>BBH</b>
<b>P AYMANATHIL Joseph</b>	Kolkata (India)	20.07.2020	72	<b>INC</b>
<b>P AZZURRO Roberto</b>	Zapala, Neuquén (Argentina)	19.11.2020	86	<b>ARS</b>
<b>P BAGATELLA CORTE Salvador</b>	Irapuato (Mexico)	13.12.2020	86	<b>MEG</b>
<b>P BAJI János</b>	Budapest (Hungary)	11.09.2020	87	<b>UNG</b>
<b>P BANOT Paweł</b>	Oskarström (Svezia)	28.07.2020	89	<b>GER</b>
<b>P BARROERO Giovanni</b>	Rome (Italy)	20.12.2020	91	<b>ICC</b>
<b>P BAZYL CZUK Tadeusz</b>	Łódź (Poland)	31.12.2020	86	<b>PLE</b>
<b>P BENEŠ Benno</b> <i>Was Provincial for 6 years.</i>	Praha (Czech Rep.)	01.12.2020	82	<b>CEP</b>
<b>P BIELAWNY Walerian</b>	Cieszyn (Poland)	22.08.2020	84	<b>PLS</b>
<b>P BIGNET Jean</b>	Toulon (France)	03.10.2020	90	<b>FRB</b>
<b>P BISON Pietro</b>	Udine (Italy)	29.12.2020	70	<b>INE</b>
<b>P BISSACCO Giovanni</b>	Este (Italy)	23.11.2020	91	<b>INE</b>
<b>P BOLKOVAC Ivan</b>	Osijek (Croatia)	31.07.2020	69	<b>CRO</b>
<b>L BONALDO Ennio</b>	Venice-Mestre (Italy)	02.07.2020	86	<b>INE</b>
<b>L BORTOLOTTI TECILLA José</b>	Campinas (Brazil)	29.09.2020	90	<b>BSP</b>
<b>P BRAVO HINOJOSA Francisco Javier</b>	Città del Mexico (Mexico)	29.09.2020	66	<b>MEM</b>
<b>P BYLICA Władysław</b>	Częstochowa (Poland)	10.10.2020	79	<b>PLO</b>
<b>L CAIFFA Antonio</b>	Salerno (Italy)	15.11.2020	81	<b>IME</b>
<b>L CALUZZI Luigi</b>	Garbagnate Milanese (Italy)	16.10.202	81	<b>ILE</b>
<b>P CAMACHO PERICO Enrique</b>	Bogotá (Colombia)	03.09.2020	87	<b>COB</b>
<b>P CAPELA Duarte</b>	Porto (Portugal)	26.11.2020	92	<b>POR</b>
<b>P CARBONELL GONZÁLEZ Agustín</b>	Alicante (Spain)	29.10.2020	83	<b>SMX</b>
<b>P CARDENETE LOPEZ José Luis</b>	Sevilla (Spain)	04.08.2020	80	<b>SMX</b>
<b>P CASTAÑO CASTAÑO Mariano</b>	Ourense (Spain)	11.10.2020	73	<b>SSM</b>
<b>P CASTELLANI Franco</b>	Bahia Blanca (Argentina)	11.12.2020	80	<b>ARS</b>
<b>P CASTELLANOS HURTADO Francisco</b>	Irapuato (Mexico)	16.12.2020	81	<b>MEG</b>
<b>L CELATO Renato</b>	Rome (Italy)	07.08.2020	96	<b>RMG</b>

SURNAME AND NAME	PLACE of death	DATE	AGE	PROV
<b>P CHÁVEZ MARTÍNEZ José Luis</b>	Ciudad Acuña (Mexico)	16.07.2020	80	<b>MEG</b>
<b>P CIBIEN Luciano</b>	Zapala, Neuquén (Argentina)	15.11.2020	86	<b>ARS</b>
<b>L CIRCOSTA Bruno</b>	Salerno (Italy)	04.12.2020	79	<b>IME</b>
<b>P COLAJACOMO Giorgio</b>	Savona (Italy)	08.10.2020	80	<b>ICC</b>
<i>Was Provincial for 6 years.</i>				
<b>P CORREIA Ilidio Eduardo do Rosario</b>	Dili (Timor Est)	19.10.2020	50	<b>TLS</b>
<b>P CRIPPA Mario</b>	Arese (Italy)	14.11.2020	96	<b>ILE</b>
<b>P D'SILVA Reginald</b>	Kolkata (India)	16.08.2020	68	<b>INC</b>
<b>P DAL PASTRO Vittorio</b>	Palmanova (Italy)	22.12.2020	79	<b>INE</b>
<b>P DE CICCIO Antonio</b>	Salerno (Italy)	30.11.2020	83	<b>IME</b>
<b>L DE MARCHI Lodovico</b>	Venice-Mestre (Italy)	13.09.2020	84	<b>INE</b>
<b>P DEBAKKERE Albert</b>	Heusen-Zolder (Belgium)	07.11.2020	85	<b>BEN</b>
<b>P DEMAN Georges</b>	Caen (France)	22.11.2020	90	<b>FRB</b>
<b>P DESTA Tesfay Kidane</b>	Addis Abeba (Etiopia)	03.08.2020	51	<b>AET</b>
<b>P DIAS Elias</b>	Mumbai (India)	30.10.2020	78	<b>INB</b>
<b>P DIETRICH Leonhard</b>	Mühdorf (Germany)	17.11.2020	82	<b>GER</b>
<b>P DOLCIMASCOLO Giuseppe</b>	Pedara (Italy)	30.08.2020	99	<b>ISI</b>
<b>P DOMIĆ Matild</b>	Tornyiszentmiklós (Hungry)	28.08.2020	35	<b>SLO</b>
<b>P DORIGONI Giulio</b>	Castelfranco Veneto (Italy)	17.11.2020	87	<b>INE</b>
<b>P DOUTRELUINGNE Michel</b>	Tournai (Belgium)	19.08.2020	89	<b>FRB</b>
<b>P ENEL Vicente</b>	Villa Regina (Argentina)	27.09.2020	98	<b>ARS</b>
<b>P FAORO Tarcisio</b>	Alassio (Italy)	22.09.2020	84	<b>ICC</b>
<b>L FEDRIGOTTI (Zinetti) Albino</b>	Turin (Italy)	08.10.2020	77	<b>ICP</b>
<b>P FERRARI Antonio</b>	Manerbio (Italy)	18.12.2020	72	<b>ILE</b>
<b>P FRAGA ADRIO César</b>	Beppu (Japan)	15.12.2020	91	<b>GIA</b>
<b>P FRANCIONE Vito</b>	Rome (Italy)	26.07.2020	71	<b>ICC</b>
<b>P FRANCIS CYRIL Edgar Junior</b>	Anisakan (Myanmar)	25.11.2020	91	<b>MYM</b>
<b>L FRIEDRICH Anton</b>	Bad Tölz (Germany)	04.11.2020	67	<b>GER</b>
<b>P FURNARI Francesco</b>	Alcamo (Italy)	03.08.2020	72	<b>ISI</b>
<b>P GANUZA ILARDUYA Juan José</b>	El Campello (Spain)	17.12.2020	84	<b>SMX</b>
<b>P GARCIA CUELLAR Luis Jaime</b>	Bogotá (Colombia)	09.07.2020	89	<b>COB</b>
<b>P GARCÍA GARCIA Jesús Gustavo E.</b>	Fusagasugá (Colombia)	01.11.2020	91	<b>COB</b>
<b>P GASTALDI Néstor José</b>	Córdoba (Argentina)	06.12.2020	85	<b>ARN</b>
<b>L GIANNANDREA Andrea</b>	Salerno (Italy)	11.10.2020	87	<b>IME</b>
<b>P GOŁYŹNIAK Stanisław</b>	Krakow (Poland)	27.10.2020	60	<b>PLS</b>
<b>P GONZÁLEZ PRIETO Florencio</b>	Valladolid (Spain)	14.11.2020	86	<b>SSM</b>
<b>P GONZO Mario</b>	Verona (Italy)	10.09.2020	84	<b>INE</b>
<b>P GORGONE Vincenzo</b>	Messina (Italy)	01.12.2020	91	<b>ISI</b>
<b>P GUARINO Antonio</b>	Naples (Italy)	02.11.2020	88	<b>IME</b>
<b>P GUEVARA ROMAN Segundo Rafael</b>	Cochabamba (Bolivia)	12.07.2020	67	<b>BOL</b>
<b>P HALÁSZ István</b>	Esztergom (Hungry)	15.08.2020	92	<b>UNG</b>
<b>P HANSSENS José</b>	Gent (Belgium)	22.09.2020	85	<b>BEN</b>
<b>P HAUNOLDER Martin</b>	Amberg (Germany)	04.11.2020	93	<b>GER</b>
<b>L HEEREN Kees</b>	Wijchen (Olanda)	31.12.2020	93	<b>BEN</b>
<b>P HELIER Henri</b>	Pouillé (France)	27.07.2020	102	<b>FRB</b>
<b>P HURNÍK Václav</b>	Ostrava (Czech Rep.)	26.12.2020	75	<b>CEP</b>

SURNAME AND NAME	PLACE of death	DATE	AGE	PROV
P HUYGEBAERT Gerard	Bruxelles (Belgium)	18.12.2020	96	BEN
P IDDA Natale	Cagliari (Italy)	29.10.2020	83	ICC
P JACOB CABALLERO Fernando	Santo Domingo (Dominican Rep.)	03.08.2020	86	ANT
P JASITA Joachim	Odessa (Ucraina)	17.11.2020	86	PLS
P JIMÉNEZ CARRASCO Manuel	Sevilla (Spain)	17.11.2020	93	SMX
P JORGE Eduardo Francisco	Córdoba (Argentina)	31.10.2020	77	ARN
P JORION Jacques	Liège (Belgium)	05.09.2020	87	FRB
L JUÁREZ GARCÍA Pedro Gilberto	Irapuato (Mexico)	14.09.2020	73	MEG
P KAIPPALLIMYALIL Joseph	Dibrugarh (India)	27.07.2020	55	IND
P KALLUVACHEL Varghese	Kottayam (India)	26.11.2020	66	INC
P KANJIRATHUMKAL Thomas	Kolkata (India)	03.08.2020	86	INC
P KASPEROWICZ Lech	Szczecin (Poland)	11.10.2020	67	PLN
P KOCH Jean	Mulhouse (France)	19.07.2020	91	FRB
P KOIKARA Felix	Chennai (India)	25.12.2020	83	INM
P KOPIC Jiří Jan	Amberg (Germany)	25.11.2020	87	GER
P KULAK Jan	Lubin (Poland)	10.11.2020	92	PLO
P KULANGARA Louis	Trichy (India)	04.11.2020	77	INT
P KULASZEWICZ Henryk	Suwałki (Poland)	06.10.2020	91	PLN
P KYSEL' Juraj	Tmava (Slovakia)	03.07.2020	75	SLK
P ŁAGOCKI Stanisław	Skawa (Poland)	06.08.2020	88	PLS
P LAGUIA I BUSQUÉ Jaume	Barcelona (Spain)	14.08.2020	94	SMX
L LAMON Ermenegildo	Venice-Mestre (Italy)	24.12.2020	89	INE
P LANZA Giuseppe	Turin (Italy)	03.12.2020	82	ICP
L LEANZA Mario	Catane (Italy)	21.11.2020	83	ISI
P LOPEZ RODRIGUEZ Saturnino	Riobamba (Ecuador)	09.08.2020	81	ECU
P LUCCHIARI Adriano	Bahia Blanca (Argentina)	18.09.2020	90	ARS
P MACH Zenon	Szczecin (Poland)	14.10.2020	70	PLN
P MAMBRINI Alessandro	Civitavecchia (Italy)	13.11.2020	66	ICC
P MANIANCHIRA Matthew	Kolkata (India)	17.07.2020	75	INC
P MARRONE Vincenzo	Turin (Italy)	29.11.2020	80	AFW
P MARYNIARCZYK Andrzej	Lublin (Poland)	27.12.2020	70	PLS
L MARZARO Giorgio	Montebelluna (Italy)	16.12.2020	81	INE
P MASIELLO John	Tampa (Florida, U.S.A.)	24.10.2020	91	SUE
S MATHANGI Akilesh Babu	Patsala Tadiparru, Guntur (India)	15.07.2020	24	INH
P MATUŠIĆ Ambrozije	Zagreb (Croatia)	12.11.2020	76	CRO
<i>Was Provincial for 12 years.</i>				
P MAURI Mario	Turin (Italy)	01.12.2020	93	RMG
P MO John Yeong Ding	Honk Kong (China)	07.08.2020	93	CIN
P MONGIELLO Michele	Salerno (Italy)	14.07.2020	79	IME
P MONTALVO Carlos Efranio	Medellín (Colombia)	09.09.2020	83	COM
L MONZANI Nino	Arese (Italy)	28.10.2020	96	ILE
P MORONE Mario	Naples (Italy)	23.10.2020	89	IME
P NANNI Carlo	Rome (Italy)	19.07.2020	75	ICC
P NUEZ DOMÍNGUEZ Alberto	Huelva (Spain)	05.12.2020	75	SMX
P NÚÑEZ LAMAS José Maria	Vigo (Spain)	17.11.2020	83	SSM
P OCAMPO Lino Maria	Quito (Ecuador)	02.08.2020	88	ECU

SURNAME AND NAME	PLACE of death	DATE	AGE	PROV
<b>P ORLANDO Vito Canio Antonio</b>	Foggia (Italy)	07.12.2020	76	<b>IME</b>
<b>P PABLOS MÉNDEZ Jesús</b>	Arévalo (Spain)	29.10.2020	91	<b>SSM</b>
<b>P PACHECO ALDEA Dionisio</b>	Dondo (Angola)	07.12.2020	77	<b>ANG</b>
<b>P PAGOTTO Pietro</b>	Rome (Italy)	21.11.2020	92	<b>ICC</b>
<b>P PANI Mario</b>	Montero (Bolivia)	11.07.2020	93	<b>BOL</b>
<b>P PASCAL Héctor</b>	Port-au-Prince (Haiti)	20.07.2020	69	<b>HAI</b>
<b>L PASTAS Jorge</b>	Medellín (Colombia)	31.10.2020	85	<b>COM</b>
<b>P PEGORARO Antonio</b>	Turin (Italy)	08.10.2020	88	<b>ICP</b>
<b>L PERDOMO Mario</b>	Buenos Aires (Argentina)	01.07.2020	89	<b>ARS</b>
<b>P PETRÁŠ Karel</b>	Praha (Czech Rep.)	11.12.2020	89	<b>CEP</b>
<b>E PICCININI Bonifacio</b>	Cuiabá (Brazil)	28.11.2020	91	<b>EP</b>
<i>Was Coadjutor Bishop of Cuiabá for 6 years, Archbishop of Cuiabá for 23 years and Archbishop emeritus for 16 years.</i>				
<b>P PIGHI Sergio</b>	Venice-Mestre (Italy)	02.10.2020	87	<b>INE</b>
<b>P PILLONI Antonio</b>	Rome (Italy)	04.10.2020	88	<b>ICC</b>
<b>L PINTO Antonio Manuel</b>	Setubal (Portugal)	28.12.2020	86	<b>POR</b>
<b>L PIOVESAN Tarcisio</b>	Pinerolo (Italy)	15.09.2020	85	<b>ICP</b>
<b>P PONTIGGIA Giorgio</b>	Sondalo (Italy)	28.12.2020	77	<b>ILE</b>
<b>P POPIELSKI Jan</b>	Cieszyn (Poland)	16.07.2020	74	<b>PLS</b>
<b>L PORTA Carlo</b>	Arese (Italy)	12.11.2020	58	<b>ILE</b>
<b>P POSPIŠIL František</b>	Moravské B. (Czech Rep.)	18.10.2020	90	<b>CEP</b>
<b>E RADIZZANI Agustín Roberto</b>	Junín, Buenos Aires (Argentina)	02.09.2020	75	<b>EP</b>
<i>Was Bishop of Neuquén for 10 years, for 6 years Bishop of Lomas de Zamora and for 13 years Archbishop di Mercedes-Luján.</i>				
<b>L RAVIOLA Ettore</b>	Castello di Godego (Italy)	13.12.2020	92	<b>INE</b>
<b>P REDOUIN Xavier</b>	Caen (France)	23.09.2020	88	<b>FRB</b>
<b>P RIBEIRO José Maria</b>	Manique (Portugal)	26.10.2020	90	<b>POR</b>
<b>P RIVOCCHI Giorgio</b>	Rome (Italy)	22.11.2020	94	<b>ICC</b>
<b>P RIZZINI Felice</b>	Arese (Italy)	15.08.2020	98	<b>ILE</b>
<i>Was Provincial for 6 years.</i>				
<b>P ROBLES ROBELS Gabriel José</b>	Valencia (Venezuela)	17.09.2020	83	<b>VEN</b>
<b>P ROCCARO Bruno</b>	Santa Clara (Cuba)	03.11.2020	100	<b>ANT</b>
<b>L ROCCHI Luigi</b>	Turin (Italy)	19.12.2020	78	<b>ICP</b>
<b>P RODIĆ Mihael</b>	Zagabria (Croatia)	25.12.2020	77	<b>CRO</b>
<b>P RUBIO PEÑALVER Antonio</b>	Barcelona (Spain)	22.10.2020	80	<b>SMX</b>
<b>P SADOWSKI Stanisław</b>	Piła (Poland)	11.12.2020	81	<b>PLN</b>
<b>P SAINAGHI BINDA Ambrogio</b>	Macas (Ecuador)	02.09.2020	96	<b>ECU</b>
<b>P SÁNCHEZ GARRIDO Francisco</b>	Sevilla (Spain)	03.07.2020	82	<b>SMX</b>
<b>P SANTI Giuseppe</b>	Farnese (Italy)	28.10.2020	90	<b>ICC</b>
<b>P SANTISTEBAN Alejandro</b>	Lima (Perù)	16.11.2020	94	<b>PER</b>
<b>P SARANITI Luigi</b>	Catane (Italy)	22.11.2020	85	<b>ISI</b>
<b>P SARRIEGUI UNANUE Santiago</b>	El Campello, Alicante (Spain)	08.08.2020	92	<b>SMX</b>
<b>P SCHUH Heinz Bernhard</b>	Köln (Germany)	23.08.2020	87	<b>GER</b>
<b>P SERRANO MORENO Juan Carlos</b>	La Paz (Bolivia)	22.07.2020	58	<b>BOL</b>
<b>P SGARIBOLDI Tarcisio</b>	Sondalo (Italy)	16.12.2020	83	<b>ILE</b>
<b>P SIMIONI Antonio</b>	Forlì (Italy)	09.12.2020	82	<b>ILE</b>

SURNAME AND NAME	PLACE of death	DATE	AGE	PROV
<b>P SIMONATO Olimpio</b>	Messina (Italy)	16.07.2020	91	<b>ISI</b>
<b>P SKALNÝ Jozef</b>	Galanta (Slovakia)	24.12.2020	74	<b>SLK</b>
<b>L SMEELE Kees</b>	Kinshasa (Dem. Rep. Congo)	19.12.2020	82	<b>ACC</b>
<b>P SPAGNOLO Italo</b>	Turin (Italy)	26.11.2020	79	<b>AFW</b>
<b>P STRINGARI Guerino</b>	Itajaí (Brazil)	28.10.2020	89	<b>BPA</b>
<i>Was Provincial for 6 years.</i>				
<b>P STUMMER Johann</b>	Amstetten (Austria)	07.09.2020	86	<b>AUS</b>
<b>P TARENZI Roberto</b>	Rome (Italy)	27.12.2020	80	<b>ICC</b>
<b>P TROTTIER Roméo</b>	Sherbrooke (Canada)	13.09.2020	83	<b>SUE</b>
<b>P TURANSKÝ Štefan</b>	Zapadne Tatry (Slovakia)	12.08.2020	63	<b>SLK</b>
<i>Was Provincial for 3 years and General Councilor for 2 years.</i>				
<b>P UNZUETA G. Sabino</b>	Bilbao (Spain)	04.10.2020	88	<b>SSM</b>
<b>P URSO Gaetano</b>	Catane (Italy)	01.12.2020	75	<b>ISI</b>
<b>P VALADEZ VENEGAS Alfonso</b>	Saltillo (Mexico)	02.12.2020	78	<b>MEG</b>
<b>P VAN WOUWE Walter</b>	Sint-Denijs-Westrem (Belgium)	16.08.2020	88	<b>BEN</b>
<b>P VANLUFFELEN Paul</b>	Malaga (Spain)	21.12.2020	67	<b>BEN</b>
<b>P VARELA Richard</b>	Makati City (Philippines)	14.08.2020	70	<b>FIN</b>
<b>P VARGA László</b>	Budapest (Hungary)	26.12.2020	67	<b>UNG</b>
<b>P VELÁZQUEZ MARTÍNEZ José</b>	Guadalupe La Paz (Mexico)	04.10.2020	60	<b>MEG</b>
<b>P VERA ALVA Juan Vicente</b>	Piura (Peru)	02.12.2020	81	<b>PER</b>
<i>Was Provincial for 6 years.</i>				
<b>P VEZHAMBACHERY Matthew</b>	Aluva (India)	30.09.2020	75	<b>INC</b>
<b>L VISENTIN Fiorino</b>	Milan (Italy)	28.11.2020	88	<b>ILE</b>
<b>P VISENTIN Francesco</b>	Castello di Godego (Italy)	06.08.2020	93	<b>INE</b>
<b>P VU DINH LIEM Joseph</b>	Xuan Hiep (Vietnam)	02.09.2020	63	<b>VIE</b>
<b>P WAHL Otto</b>	Benediktbeuern (Germany)	20.12.2020	88	<b>GER</b>
<b>P WAWRZYNIAK Józef</b>	Bystra (Poland)	23.10.2020	87	<b>PLS</b>
<b>P WILKOLEK Jan</b>	Krakow (Poland)	15.11.2020	89	<b>PLS</b>
<b>P WIMHOFER Karl</b>	Waidhofen an der Ybbs (Austria)	01.09.2020	96	<b>AUS</b>
<b>P WISNIEWSKI (Zevrowska) Józef</b>	Twardogóra (Poland)	08.11.2020	83	<b>PLO</b>
<b>P ZANDONADI FALCHETTO Ricardo</b>	Belo Horizonte (Brazil)	13.11.2020	95	<b>BBH</b>
<b>P ZANTILLI Pietro</b>	Turin (Italy)	20.09.2020	86	<b>ICP</b>
<b>P ZIZZO Francesco</b>	Catane (Italy)	15.11.2020	90	<b>ISI</b>
<b>P ZÚÑIGA ANTOÑANA Donato</b>	Cartagena (Spain)	19.10.2020	83	<b>SMX</b>
<b>P ZYCH Jozef</b>	Chorzów (Poland)	02.10.2020	87	<b>PLO</b>